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QUALIFICATION WORK

on theme "Age Differences and Learning Styles in Teaching English"

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Introduction

Learning and teaching foreign languages especially English language has become one of the state requirements set by the President I.A.Karimovin his decree "On measures of improving the system of learning foreign languages" on December 10, 2012. The given decree identifies major tasks in improving foreign language learning and teaching. We would like to note that special attention is paid to the implementation of western and world standards in improving the system. As it is noted in the decree "total improvement of preparing specialists who speak in these foreign languages and teaching foreign languages to young generation by using the modern pedagogic and information communication technologies and by implementing modern methods of teaching" must be carried out in our country [1].

Topicality of the research. Learner differences and learning styles are one of the most argued and discussed themes in foreign language teaching methodology. Knowing and having better understanding of learner differences and learning styles lets teachers of foreign language judge at such points as at what age to begin teaching and what methods to apply to learners of different ages and styles. Learning styles is considered as new factors in ELT in our country. And we can see that none of the works done and published in our country in language teaching methodology touch these topics.

Learning styles are various approaches or ways of learning. They involve educating methods, particular to an individual, that are presumed to allow that individual to learn best. Most people prefer an identifiable method of interacting with, taking in, and processing stimuli or information. Based on this concept, the idea of individualized "learning styles" originated in the 1970s, and acquired enormous popularity. However, the problem of learning styles was not fully

formulated and studied in our country. Proper definition of learner's learner styles help students learn better and more quickly if the teaching methods used match their preferred learning styles. With proper approach according to learning styles learning improves, so too does self esteem. This has a further positive effect on learning. Students who have become bored with learning may become interested once again. The student-teacher relationship can improve because the student is more successful and is more interested in learning. Thus we think it is useful to learn about learning styles of students in teaching English and the given qualification thesis dedicated to the study of theoretical basis of learning styles and practical implications to find out about students' learning styles.

Aim of the qualification thesis. The main aim of the qualification paper is to study theoretical bases of learner differences and learning styles and to find the best ways of learning about the differences and learning styles of language learners.

The tasks of the research:

- to review literature and theoretical bases about learner differences and learning styles;
- to study opinions and models of scholars on the influence of age and learning styles in teaching a language;
- define the importance of learning styles and strategies in teaching a foreign language;
- to review suggestions about defining learner styles of students in language teaching.

The object of the research is learner differences and styles in teaching English.

The subject of the research is the process of teaching English to different age groups.

Novelty and results achieved in the research. The qualification thesis contains a lot of theoretical explanations of learning styles from the point of view of linguistics, learner psychology and language teaching methodology. The work also compiles practical implications of how to use knowledge about learner age differences and learning styles and strategies in teaching and learning a foreign language.

Practical value of the research. The results of the research are applicable in teaching English as a foreign language, especially in defining learning styles of students by teachers of foreign language. The materials presented in the research also beneficial for students of foreign language departments in doing self independent works, research reports and synopses on Foreign language teaching methodology.

Theoretical value of the work can be seen in compilation of the views of theoreticians on language teaching.

The structure of the qualification paper. The qualification paper consists of introduction, the main body and its chapters, conclusion and the list of references.

Introduction part presents information about the content of the research, its aims, practical value, and research topic's characteristics.

The first chapter of the main body presents literature review on learning styles, and discusses theoretical bases of learning styles and researches on defining the place of learning styles in teaching and learning a foreign language.

The second chapter discusses models of defining learning styles and their usage in practice.

The list of references comprises more than thirty books, materials, and internet sources on language teaching methodology used in the course of the research.

Chapter I
Age differences in learning English
1.1 Age in learning second language

It is a common belief that children are more successful L2 learners than adults, but the evidence for this is actually surprisingly equivocal. One reason for the apparent inconsistency in research findings is that some studies define relative “success” as initial rate of learning (where, contrary to popular belief, older learners have an advantage) while other studies define it as ultimate achievement (where learners who are introduced to the L2 in childhood indeed do appear to have an edge). Also, some studies define “success” in terms of how close the learner’s pronunciation is to a native speaker’s, others in terms of how closely a learner approximates native grammaticality judgments, and still others in terms of fluency or functional competence. It is very important to keep evaluative criteria clearly in mind while judging conflicting claims.

The question of whether, and how, age affects L2 outcomes has been a major issue in SLA for several decades, and a number of recent publications provide reviews from different points of view [23]. Some of the advantages which have been reported for both younger and older learners are listed.

We noted in the earlier section of this chapter on languages and the brain that there is a critical period for first language acquisition: children have only a limited number of years during which normal acquisition is possible. Beyond that, physiological changes cause the brain to lose its plasticity, or capacity to assume the new functions that learning language demands. Individuals who for some reason are deprived of the linguistic input which is needed to trigger first language acquisition during the critical period will never learn any language normally. One famous

documented case which provides rare evidence for this point is that of Genie, an abused girl who was kept isolated from all language input and interaction until she was thirteen years old. In spite of years of intensive efforts at remediation, Genie never developed linguistic knowledge and skills for her L1 (English) that were comparable to those of speakers who began acquisition in early childhood [23].

The tragic case of “Genie” bears directly on the critical period hypothesis. Genie was discovered in 1970, at the age of thirteen, having been brought up in conditions of inhuman neglect and extreme isolation. She was severely disturbed and underdeveloped, and had been unable to learn language. In the course of her treatment and rehabilitation, great efforts were made to teach her to speak. She had received next to no linguistic stimulation between the ages of two and puberty, so the evidence of her language-learning ability would bear directly on the Lenneberg hypothesis.

Analysis of the way Genie developed her linguistic skills showed several abnormalities, such as a marked gap between production and comprehension, variability in using rules, stereotyped speech, gaps in the acquisition of syntactic skills, and a generally retarded rate of development. After various psycholinguistic tests, it was concluded that Genie was using her right hemisphere for language (as well as for several other activities), and that this might have been the result of her beginning the task of language learning after the critical period of left-hemisphere development. The case was thus thought to support Lenneberg’s hypothesis, but only in a weak form. Genie was evidently able to acquire some language from exposure after puberty (she made great progress in vocabulary, for example, and continued to make gains in morphology and syntax), but she did not do so in a normal way. [22]

Lenneberg (1967) speculated that the critical period applies to SLA as well as to first language acquisition, and that this accounts for why almost all L2 speakers have a "foreign accent" if they do not begin learning the language before the cut-off age. Seliger [23] and Long [22] argue instead that there are multiple periods which place constraints on different aspects of language: e.g. different periods relate to the acquisition of phonology versus the acquisition of syntax. They also suggest that these periods do not impose absolute cut-off points; it is just that L2 acquisition will more likely be complete if begun in childhood than if it does not start until a later age. This weaker claim seems warranted since some older learners can achieve native-like proficiency, although they definitely constitute a minority of second language learners.

While most would agree that younger learners achieve ultimately higher levels of L2 proficiency, evidence is just as convincing that adolescents and adults learn faster in initial stages. While "brain plasticity" is listed as a younger learner advantage in 4.3, older learners are advantaged by greater learning capacity, including better memory for vocabulary. [11]

Greater analytic ability might also be an advantage for older learners, at least in the short run, since they are able to understand and apply explicit grammatical rules. On the other hand, Newport [21] suggests that "less is more" in this respect: one reason younger learners develop more native-like grammatical intuitions is that they are in a non-analytic processing mode. This calls for another qualification: younger learners are probably more successful in informal and naturalistic L2 learning contexts, and older learners in formal instructional settings.

Other advantages that younger learners may have are being less inhibited than older learners, and having weaker feelings of identity with people (other than close family or caregivers) who speak the same native

language. Children are also more likely to receive simplified language input from others, which might facilitate their learning (a factor that will be discussed in Chapter 5). Other advantages that older learners may have include higher levels of pragmatic skills and knowledge of L1, which may transfer positively to L2 use; more real-world knowledge enables older learners to perform tasks of much greater complexity, even when their linguistic resources are still limited. [4]

It was thought until quite recently that by the age of 5, first language acquisition was largely complete. We have come to understand that this is not the case. Formal literacy skills are still in the early stages of development at five and six years of age, even though the beginnings of literacy can be traced back to experiences in infancy, such as listening to stories. Some structures in spoken language are acquired late because of their connection with the written language. In English, relative clauses are one example of this: Perera [3] reports that children of 11 years tend not to use relative clauses beginning with whose, or preposition + relative pronoun e.g. in which. She suggests that this is because such structures occur mainly in written text and so children have little experience of them in their early years. Children also have problems using words that express logical relations between ideas, like cause and effect. The full use of co-ordinators, including but and yet, is still to be developed after the age of 11 years, and clauses introduced with although or unless can cause problems even for 15 year olds. The meanings of these linking terms are logically complicated and correct use requires the child to have developed both logical Understanding and the language in which to express it. If young first language children find such aspects of English difficult then there seems little reason for including them on syllabuses for child learners of English as a foreign language, and the same would be true for similar aspects of other languages. [4]

Discourse skills in the first language continue to develop throughout the early school years. At 7 years of age, children are still acquiring the skills needed for extended discourse. In telling narratives, for example, children are still learning how to create thematic structure through language, and are still developing the full range of uses of pronouns and determiners [3]. Given the importance attached in the methodology literature to using stories in foreign language teaching [3], teachers need to remember that children may still be finding it difficult to use pronouns correctly in their first language to control reference to characters across a sequence of events and plot actions, and not to demand unreasonable skills in the foreign language.

Important work from the USA is showing that first language proficiency does not develop as a single, global phenomenon, but that different domains of language use develop differently [4]. In a project to investigate the language development of children aged 14-32 months, language was measured across the linguistic domains of phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, conversation and discourse, and have been shown to be largely independent. Extended discourse seems to develop differently from conversation. Furthermore, a connection has been found between children's early experiences with language use in their families, and their language development in various domains. In families where narratives are told around the dinner table, on topics such as what happened to parents at work or siblings at school, children develop narrative and discourse skills faster; children whose families use a wide vocabulary develop faster in the lexical domain. [4]

One implication for teachers of foreign languages to young children is that children will come into foreign language learning at the earliest stages bringing with them differently developed skills and learning abilities in their first language. By the age of five, individual differences in language

domains will be established and so, for example, some children will find it easier to learn vocabulary, than others, or children with more developed conversational skills may transfer these to the new language more easily than others. From the same language lesson, it is likely that different children will learn different things, depending partly on what they find easier to learn. In Vygotskyan terms, it seems likely that a second or foreign language ZPD may not be global, but that different aspects of language will have different ZPD s. [4]

1.2 Learning a second language. Age and second language learning

It has long been hypothesised that children learn a second language better than adults, and this is often used to support the early introduction of foreign language teaching. The Critical Period Hypothesis is the name given to the idea that young children can learn a second language particularly effectively before puberty because their brains are still able to use the mechanisms that assisted first language acquisition. The Critical Period Hypothesis holds that older learners will learn language differently after this stage and, particularly for accent, can never achieve the same levels of proficiency. While some empirical studies offer support for the Critical Period Hypothesis, other studies provide evidence that there is no such cut-off point for language learning. Lightbown and Spada [11] present some of the evidence for and against the Critical Period Hypothesis, and remind us to attend to • the different needs, motivations and contexts of different groups of learners. They suggest that where native-like proficiency in a second language is the goal, then learning benefits from an early start, but when the goal is communicative ability in a foreign language, the benefits of an early start are much less clear: [11]

Further support for making this key distinction comes from a recent study into brain activity during language processing [12]. This study discovered, that the brain activity patterns of early bilinguals, who learn two languages at the same time from infancy, differ from those of learners who begin learning a language after about 7 or 8 years of age; different parts of the brain are used for language recall and activation. Foreign language learning of the sort we are concerned with is thus an essentially different mental activity from early simultaneous bilingualism and from L1 acquisition. [12]

The influence of the first language on the second

The ‘Competition Model’ of linguistic performance is a theory that explains how first language learning may affect subsequent second or foreign language development [12]. In this model, different languages have different ways of carrying meaning, and the particular ways in which a language encodes meaning act as ‘cues’ to interpreting the meaning of what is said. For example, word order in English is a very reliable and helpful cue that helps listeners identify Subject and Object, i.e. who is acting and on what. In a sentence like the cat ate the snake, the cat and the snake do not have endings that show which is the ‘eater’ (the agent or Subject of the verb) and which is the eaten (acted-on or Object). It is their position in the sentence, or the word order, that reveals this; we can tell that the cat is the Subject and does the eating because it .comes before the verb, while the snake, which comes after the verb, has to be the Object. Other languages, such as Italian, do not have restrictions on word order in sentences, and so the order of the words does not offer as much information about meaning as in English; word order is a stronger cue in English than in Italian [12]. All levels of language can provide cues, including lexis, morphology (word endings or prefixes) and phonology (the sound system of a language). Sometimes one source of information

reinforces another, and sometimes they conflict, or are in competition, in which case the most reliable cue wins out. Studies carried out across different languages have led to the important conclu sion that children become sensitive to the reliability of cues in their first language from early infancy (Bates et ah 1984). As babies, they learn to pay attention to particular cues which hold useful information for meaning- Later, if faced with trying to understand a second language, they will transfer these first language strategies to make sense of Lz sentences, trying to find information in familiar places. "Where two languages make use of very different types of cues, the transfer of strategies from Li to Lz may not be very fruitful. Learners may need to be helped to notice and pay attention to the salient cues of the new language. In the case of English, word order is most salient, but so too are word endings that show tense (e.g. walk - ed) and plurality (shop ~ s [14].

Age and first language

The cue effect is compounded by an effect of age* In studies of immersion language learning, younger children (7-8 years) seem to pay more attention to sound and prosody (the ‘music’ of an utterance), whereas older children (12-14 years) are more attentive to cues of word order [11]. Children are generally less able to give selective and prolonged attention to features of learning tasks than adults, and are more easily diverted and distracted by other pupils. When faced with talk in the new language, they try to understand it in terms of the grammar and salient cues of their first language and also pay particular attention to items of L2 vocabulary that they are familiar with [3]. These findings will not surprise experienced primary teachers, but they give further empirical support to the idea that teachers can help learners by focusing their attention on useful sources of information in the new language, as also suggested by Bruner’s scaffolding studies (section 1.4 above). Which cues need explicit attention will vary

with the first language of the learners. How to help pupils do this will be considered in more detail in later chapters, but here I present directing attention as a key principle with many applications in the young learner classroom. [3]

The competition model of understanding a second language, and empirical findings that support the view that first language experience influences second language use, remind us that in learning a foreign language, students are learning both the whole and the parts. In this case, the ‘parts’ are tiny aspects of grammar or phonology that are crucial in reaching a ‘whole’ interpretation. [3]

Influence of teaching on second language learning

There is mounting evidence from foreign language learning contexts of the influence of teaching method on what is learnt. Tlie range of language experiences that children get in their foreign language lessons is likely to influence how their language develops; for example, if lessons provide opportunities to participate in question and answer type talk then they will be good at that but not necessarily at other, more extended, types of talk. Mitchell and Martin [8] document the different teaching styles and beliefs of teachers of French to 1 x year old children (English Li), and show how this seems to result in children producing certain types of language rather than others. Weinert (1994) details how 11-13 year old learners of German (English Li) reproduce in their talk the language types used by their teachers. [8]

Further research is needed into the extent of this teaching effect on language learning, and at what levels of specificity it operates (see also Chapter 5). Current knowledge reinforces an intuitively obvious notion: foreign language learners who depend on their teachers and texts for most of their exposure and input, will not, if this is restricted in type, develop across the full range of the foreign language. A particular aspect of this

concerns extended discourse, i.e. talking at length, and later, writing at length. If, as seems to be the case from the first language research reported above, conversational skills develop independently of extended discourse skills, then we cannot assume that teaching children conversational language will lead to them being able to speak at length in the foreign language, but rather must work on the principle that if we want children to tell stories or recount events, they need to have experience of how this is done in the foreign language. Modelling of language use by teachers, already seen as an important step in scaffolding (section 1.4), needs further to be genre-specific. [8]

The previous chapter was concerned with children using the foreign language as discourse in the classroom and how such use might work to promote learning. This chapter deals with the development of vocabulary as a language resource.

Building up a useful vocabulary is central to the learning of a foreign language at primary level. While opinions differ as to how much grammar of the foreign language can be taught, children are clearly capable of learning foreign language words through participating in the discourse of classroom activities. Vocabulary has moved to centre stage in foreign language teaching in recent years, backed by substantial and increasing research [8]. Alongside the growing importance of vocabulary, there are fascinating and, I suspect, very significant, changes taking place in how we think about the relative nature and roles of vocabulary and grammar. The more we find out about how words work in language and how vocabulary is learnt, stored and used, the more difficult it becomes to uphold the traditional split between vocabulary and grammar. Much important grammatical information is tied into words, and learning words can take students a long way into grammar. This suggests that if we give a high priority to vocabulary development, we are not thereby abandoning

grammar. Rather, vocabulary learning can serve as a stepping stone to learning and using grammar. The interrelation of vocabulary and grammar in language learning will be taken farther in the next chapter.

The chapter begins with an overview of vocabulary development. Children are still building up their first language vocabulary, and this development is intimately tied up with conceptual development. In planning and teaching a foreign language, we need to take account of this first language background to know what will work and what may be too difficult for children. It also becomes quickly apparent that learning a new word is not a simple task that is done once and then completed. [9]

The second part of the chapter covers the many different aspects of vocabulary knowledge pies for teaching that can help learners build up these different aspects and make links between them. The third section applies these principles to activities for vocabulary learning. The final section of the chapter draws on strategy research to consider how children can be helped to develop their autonomy as self-directed vocabulary learners. [9]

1.2.1 Young learners

Children have a reputation for being natural language learners, for very good reason. Almost without exception, they have learned their native language with apparent ease, and by the time they are 6 years old they have brought it to a level of fluency that is the envy of non-native speakers. Parents who bring their children into a second-language setting
and immerse them in a new situation—for example, an elementary school taught in the foreign language—often experience a kind of miracle. After around 6 months, their child begins to function successfully in the new setting and at a linguistic level to which the parents cannot hope to aspire,

even when they have been studying the language seriously for a similar period of time.

These examples of children's natural language learning ability might seem to suggest that the best thing to do to help a child learn a language is simply to place the child in the target language setting and then stay out of the way to let the miracle happen.

Unfortunately, this is not an approach that will make it possible to bring languages to every child. There is, however, both linguistic and psychological theory to help explain children's seemingly effortless second-language acquisition and to provide insights that can make the classroom a better place for such language acquisition to take place. Understanding this theory, showing consideration of learner differences, and understanding the principles of child development and the characteristics of children at different stages of development will help prepare the teacher to create curriculum and activities that bring languages and children together effectively.

Second-language acquisition theory may help explain the puzzling situation of children who acquire languages more quickly and apparently with much less effort than do their parents when placed in a second-language environment. The children are in a setting in which they are surrounded by language that is made meaningful because of the context and because of the way teachers speak to them. They are given time to sort out the language that they hear and understand, until they are ready to begin to use it for their own expressive purposes. Their parents, on the other hand, are usually busy learning vocabulary and grammar rules, and they attempt to apply them later to a setting in which they have something to say. For Stephen Krashen, a linguist who has synthesized much of recent second-language acquisition research in his writing, the children would be acquiring language, while the parents would be learning it.

Krashen has popularized the idea of comprehensible input, the amount or level of language that the student can fully understand, plus just a little more: i + 1. According to Krashen's input hypothesis, the most important factor in the amount of language acquired by a learner is the amount of comprehensible input to which that learner is exposed.

The input hypothesis provides a powerful reason for the exclusive use of the target language for all classroom purposes. However, simply deciding to use the target language is not enough. It must be used in such a way that the message is understood by the student at all times, even though every word of the message may not be familiar. This is accomplished through the use of gestures, examples, illustrations, experiences, and caretaker speech, as described next. When teachers complain that students do not understand them when they use the target language, it may well be because they are using the target language at a level that is too far beyond the child's current ability to understand—actually i + 10 or perhaps i + 50. Learners who are presented with language too far beyond their current level may well conclude that they are not good language learners and/or that this language is simply too hard to be learned. An important part of the teacher's planning time for a classroom based on the principles of second-language acquisition will be devoted to strategies for making the target language comprehensible to the students.

Paying attention to input focuses on the importance of listening skills and on the potential benefits that can come from increased listening opportunities for all students, especially those at the beginning level. An extended listening period gives learners the opportunity to gather meanings and associate them with language. They can give their full attention to understanding the messages that are being communicated, without the pressure to imitate or respond immediately.

In a classroom designed to encourage second-language acquisition, there is an emphasis on communication. The teacher provides students with an environment in which they are surrounded by messages in the target language that communicate interesting, relevant information in language they are able to understand—language that is comprehensible to them.

The teacher uses natural language, not contrived language intended to incorporate all the most recently learned grammar points. It differs from the language used with peers. Part of creating comprehensible input for language acquirers consists of using strategies for making the message understood, variously known as "motherese," "caretaker speech," "teacherese," or "foreigner talk." Some of the characteristics of this speech, as it occurs naturally, will be observed when a grandparent is talking with a young grandchild—or when a skilled teacher is introducing a new language. Here are some features of this kind of speech:

1. A somewhat slower rate of speech (still with the normal rate of speech for that speaker, but at the lower end of the range).

2. More distinct pronunciation (not a distorted pronunciation, however, which actually changes the sounds of the language). For example, most American speakers of English pronounce the "tt" in the word letter as if it were spelled "dd."

When asked to pronounce clearly, they often change their pronunciation of the sound to "tt," thus distorting the language through an attempt to pronounce it "accurately." Such distortions are not in the long-range best interests of the learner.

3. Shorter, less complex sentences.

4. More rephrasing and repetition.

5. More frequent meaning checks with the listener to make sure that he or she understands.

6. Use of gesture and visual reinforcement.

7. Greater use of concrete referents.

8. Scaffolding. The teacher surrounds the learner with language, allowing the student to be a participant in dialogue. In early language acquisition, the teacher actually provides both verbal parts of a conversation. Later, the teacher might embellish one- and two-word responses by the learner into complete utterances in a natural, conversational manner, at the same time modeling extended discourse and providing meaningful listening experiences. Students will become capable of taking over increasing responsibility as participants in the conversation.

Most primary-grade children are still preoperational, and they learn best with concrete experiences and immediate goals. New concepts and vocabulary are more meaningful when presented as pairs of binary opposites. Children like to name objects, define words, and learn about things in their own world; they also have vivid imaginations and respond well to stories of fantasy. They need to know how to feel about something in order to learn it well. Primary-age children learn through oral language; they are capable of developing good oral skills, pronunciation, and intonation when they have a good model. They learn well, especially beginning in first grade, through dramatic play, role-play, and use of story form with a strong beginning, middle, and end. Because of their short attention spans, they need to have a great variety of activities, but the teacher must keep in mind that children of this age tire easily. They require large-muscle activity, and they are still rather unskilled with small-muscle tasks. Teachers of primary students must give very structured and specific directions and build regular routines and patterns into the daily lesson plans.

Intermediate Students (Ages 8 to 10): Grades 3, 4, and 5

Intermediate-grade students are at a maximum of openness to people and situations different from their own experience. For these children, a

global emphasis is extremely important, because it gives them an opportunity to work with information about countries in all parts of the world. As intermediates develop the cognitive characteristics of the concrete operations level, they begin to understand cause and effect. Students in intermediate grades can work well in groups. They can begin a more systematic approach to language learning, but they continue to need firsthand, concrete experiences as a starting point and to benefit from learning that is embedded in context. The phenomenon of "boy germs" and "girl germs" begins to develop during these years, and children may resist partner situations with children of the opposite sex. They continue to benefit from experiences with imagination and fantasy, emphasis on binary opposites, and strong emotional connection to what is learned, as well as story form with distinctive beginning, middle, and end. In addition, they will benefit from themes based on real-life heroes and heroines who display transcendent qualities in overcoming the challenges of life.

Jessica points out that learners in these grades are bringing together much of the vocabulary and functional chunks learned in earlier years and can apply them in more complex situations. In assessment, they should be given meaningful contexts in which to use the language they already know and to create new language, such as when designing commercials or skits, responding to picture prompts, or writing letters to pen pals. Students can work readily with rubrics and they usually enjoy peer editing and scoring activities. Teachers can balance their picture of students' language progress through keeping a record of mini-assessments that check for understanding during a unit, along with larger, rubric-scored assessments at the end of the unit.

Early Adolescent Students (Ages 11 to 14): Grades 6, 7, and 8

During the middle school and junior high school years, students are undergoing more dramatic developmental changes than experienced at any

other time in life, and on widely differing timetables. The early adolescent must learn to deal with a variety of experiences: emerging sexuality in a changing and often unpredictable body; reaching a cognitive plateau for a time, and then finding new, adult intellectual tools; multiplying and rapidly shifting interests; a fluid and flexible self-concept; a need to rework interpersonal relationships with adults; turbulent emotions; extreme idealism; a need to assert independence; and a powerful peer group. A major goal of all schooling for children of this age is the encouragement of positive relationships and positive self-image. Middle school learners need the opportunity for broad exploration, as well as an introduction to the demands of academic disciplines.

1.2.2 Adolescent learners

Young adolescents are defined in This We Believe (National Middle School Association, 2003) as those students who are 10 to 15 years old. They need educational programs that are designed specifically for their age group because of their uniqueness in terms of intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. The phenomenal growth that is occurring at this time of their lives presents unique challenges for educators. Also, this is a time of life when young people are forming values and making decisions that will impact them for the rest of their lives. This is a most impressionable age, which places additional responsibility on middle grades educators.

The middle grades are usually thought of as grades 5 through 8; however, there are many variations that can be housed in a middle school. More than the grade levels, it is the program that makes a facility a middle grades or middle level school. The program must be responsive to the academic and developmental needs of the young adolescent learner.

Developmental Changes

During this stage of life, young adolescents experience more growth than any other time in their life except for infancy. Families and educators see the physical changes and they hear much about the emotional and social dilemmas of puberty; however, many people are not as knowledgeable about the intellectual changes occurring during early adolescence.

As Lucinda Wilson and Hadley Wilson Horch discuss in their September 2002 article in Middle School Journal, recent research has shown that the early adolescent brain goes through a growth spurt just before puberty and then a period of "pruning," when heavily used connections between parts of the brain are strengthened and unused connections deteriorate. This growth spurt and pruning are most noticeable in the prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain where information synthesis takes place. It is also the part of the brain that controls planning, working memory, organization, and mood modulation. This area of the brain does not mature until about 18 years of age. The process of "hardwiring," which continues throughout adolescence, means that the intellectual activities given the most time, the most opportunity to strengthen the connections in the brain, will influence learning for the rest of the student's life. (Wilson and Horch, 2002, p. 58)

Not only must educators address these developmental changes, they also must deal with the varying rate at which students undergo these changes. The only consistent point about the development of young adolescents is that it is inconsistent. In eighth-grade classrooms, there is a six- to eight-year span in physical development among the students; and in seventh-grade classrooms, there is a six- to eight-year span in academic achievement. (NMSA, 2000, pp. 9-10)

One only has to walk the halls of a middle grades school during class change time to see the differences in physical, emotional, and social development. It is easy to forget the intellectual development differences since they are not readily visible, but if you observe in a middle grades classroom you will soon become aware of these differences, too. For example, young adolescents are moving from concrete thinking to abstract thinking, but this transition is occurring at varying rates for different children, and individual students move back and forth from concrete to abstract continually or function differently in different classes. Students are beginning to think about thinking, and this sometimes confuses them.

Implications for Classroom Instruction

Teachers of middle grades students need to be knowledgeable of the varied developmental characteristics of young adolescents so that they can design instruction and classroom management strategies that address these ongoing changes, and support and capitalize on these characteristics.

Using findings from the brain research, one strategy teachers can use to hold the attention of young adolescents is to design lessons that include a full range of sensory motor experiences, including music, smell, touch, and emotion. Engaging the senses and emotions will increase student attention span and heighten memory. Another strategy is to build lessons using inquiry or problem-based learning in which students are encouraged to ask questions that interest them after the lesson is framed in terms of essential questions or problems to resolve.

Using essential questions to frame the unit, incorporating the senses and emotions to focus the learning, and then facilitating students in finding multiple ways to solve problems can focus adolescent learning while building complex neuron connections within the brain. (Wilson and Horch, 2002, p. 59)

Another strategy to strengthen connections in the brain is to ask students to write reflectively every day. This gives time for students to consolidate learning and seek meaning between various activities. Students should also be encouraged to use peer collaboration and cooperative learning at this age to take advantage of the great range of academic and social maturities while developing group problem solving skills. Allowing for student choice and making lessons relevant to the interests of young adolescents will engage students in learning while addressing their need to show independence. (Wilson and Horch, 2002, p. 59)

Appropriate lessons for early adolescents also need to provide opportunities for movement and physical exercise because there is a developmental reason young adolescent students fidget and are unable to sit still—various bones including the tailbone are hardening, making it uncomfortable for them to sit for long periods of time.

This list of generalizations appears in John H. Lounsbury's "Understanding and Appreciating the Wonder Years" (National Middle School Association, 2000).

- Early adolescence is a distinctive developmental stage of life.
- The general public has limited understanding of these 10- to 15-year olds.
- The accelerated physical and personal development that occurs during this period is the greatest in the human life cycle and is marked by great variance in both the timing and rate of growth.
- These are the years during which each individual forms his/her adult personality, basic values, and attitudes.
- Adolescents reach physical maturity at an earlier age than their grandparents and they acquire apparent sophistication earlier than in previous generations.
- They seek autonomy and independence.

- They are by nature explorers, curious and adventuresome.
- They have intellectual capacities seldom tapped by traditional schooling.
- They learn best through interaction and activity rather than by listening.
- They seek interaction with adults and opportunities to engage in activities that have inherent value.
- Their physical and social development become priorities.
- They are sensitive, vulnerable, and emotional.
- They are open to influence by the significant others in their lives.
- A significant portion of today's teenage population is alienated from society.

These characteristics—compiled from This We Believe (2003), Caught in the Middle (1987), and The Exemplary Middle School (1993)—have been grouped into four categories: physical, intellectual, social, and emotional. All four areas are important and directly impact what should happen in the classroom. No one area should take priority over the other and all areas must be addressed.

In addition to remembering the characteristics of young adolescents, teachers should also consider best practices for teaching writing. These practices need to be linked to developmental characteristics in order to design the most effective instruction and optimize learning for young adolescents. (See the list of best practices available on the home page of the Write in the Middle Web site.)

Intellectual Characteristics

- Enjoys both intellectual and manipulative activities
- Prefers active involvement in learning
- Motivated to learn when lessons are related to immediate goals and interests

- Argues to clarify own thinking and to convince others
- Possesses a vivid imagination
- Exhibits independent, critical thinking
- Forgets easily because his/her mind is so preoccupied with other issues
- Sees relationships among similar concepts, ideas, and experiences and makes inferences
- Seeks to find causal and correlative relationships
- Begins to understand abstract ideas (but research indicates that many remain in concrete operations stage)
- Makes personal-social concerns a priority over academic matters
- Likes to discuss experiences with adults
- Shows intense curiosity about the world and him/herself
- Forms long-lasting attitudes about learning
- Begins thinking about own thinking (metacognition)

Social Characteristics

- Desires to make personal choices
- Desires social acceptance
- Seeks peer relationships in order to conform to group norms
- Has more interest in relations with the opposite sex, but same sex friendships dominate
- Vacillates between desire for regulation and direction and desire for independence
- Wants identification with adults but not always willing to accept their suggestions
- Shows concern for oppressed groups
- Shows willingness to work and sacrifice for social rewards
- Tests limits of acceptable behaviors

- Needs frequent reinforcement that significant adults including parents care
- Diminishes family allegiances and strengthens peer allegiances but still strongly dependent upon parental values

1.2.3 Adult learners

What do we mean when we call someone an adult? What distinguishes adult education, adult training and adult learning from education, training and learning in a more general sense?

The former question will be addressed in this section. A wide range of concepts is involved when we use the term ‘adult’. The word can refer to a *stage* in the life cycle of the individual; he or she is first a child, then a youth, then an adult. It can refer to *status,* an acceptance by society that the person concerned has completed his or her novitiate and is now incorporated fully into the community. It can refer to a social *sub-set*: adults as distinct from children. Or it can include a set of *ideals and values*: adulthood. [31]

At its simplest, adulthood may be defined purely in terms of age. Thus, in England, people may be assumed to become adult at 18 years old, when they get the right to vote. Until relatively recently, however, the voting age was 21 years, and there are many adult roles—for example, those requiring a specialist education or training—which cannot be entered into until this age or later. Similarly, some aspects of adulthood may be exercised before reaching 18 years old, such as marriage, fulltime employment (including in the armed forces) and taxation. [31]

Yet adult status is not accorded to all at these ages. Thus, those with severe disabilities may never achieve or be allowed full adult status. The

age of majority also varies somewhat from country to country, or even within countries. And, whereas in industrialized countries the age of majority is legally defined, in developing countries it may be more a case of local cultural tradition. In such cases, maturity may be recognized in an essentially physical or biological sense, related to the onset or ending of puberty, and may vary in terms of age, not just for boys and girls but for individuals as well. [30]

It would, of course, be naïve to believe that merely surviving long enough to wake up on one's eighteenth birthday, or passing through puberty, automatically changes one from being a child to being an adult. While the effects of puberty are externally recognizable, we do not (yet) wear barcodes on our sides recording our age, and other peoples' reactions to us depend, in any case, upon many factors other than our absolute age. These include, most notably, our sex and ethnicity, and the reaction will vary with the characteristics of the perceiver as well as our own. [30]

Within industrialized countries, as Rogers (1996) indicates, we also commonly recognize an intermediary stage between childhood and adulthood. Then we may be called variously adolescents, youths or teenagers. So the transition from child to adult is not sudden or instantaneous. [30]

The idea of 'adult' is not, therefore, directly connected to age, but is related to what generally happens as we grow older. That is, we achieve physical maturity, become capable of providing for ourselves, move away (at least in most western societies) from our parents, have children of our own, and exercise a much greater role in the making of our own choices. This then affects not just how we see ourselves, but how others see us as well. In other words, we may see the difference between being and not being an adult as chiefly being about status and self-image.

Adulthood may thus be considered as a state of being that both accords rights to individuals and simultaneously confers duties or responsibilities upon them. We might then define adulthood as: ‘an ethical status resting on the presumption of various moral and personal qualities’ [20]. Having said that, however, we also have to recognize what a heterogeneous group of people adults are. It is this amorphous group which forms the customer base or audience for adult education and training.

As adults, all of us have had a considerable experience of education, though this experience may have been largely confined to our childhood, and may not be continuing. The nature of education may, therefore, seem to be relatively clear to us, with particular associations with educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. [20]

Such a conceptualization—that is, that education is what takes place in educational institutions—is, however, not satisfactory for three main reasons. First, it is circular, defining each concept (‘education’, ‘educational institution’) in terms of the other. Second, it tells us nothing about the qualities of education other than its location (e.g. we might just as well define oranges as ‘things that grow on orange trees’). [20]

Third, with a little thought we would probably recognize that education takes place in other kinds of institutions as well. This final point is at the heart of the distinction between formal and non-formal education (see Chapter 3). The former is defined as taking place in educational institutions, and the latter in other kinds of institutions, the primary function of which is not education (e.g. churches, factories, health centres, prisons, military bases). It might also be pointed out that education may take place outside institutions altogether, as in the case of distance education, though here the association with an institution remains important.

The nature of education has been the subject of a considerable amount of analysis by philosophers of education [11]. Thus, Peters, in one of his more accessible works, identified three criteria for education:

(i) that 'education' implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it;

(ii) that 'education' must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inert;

(iii) that 'education' at least rules out some procedures of transmission, on the grounds that they lack wittingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner.

(Peters 1966, p. 45)

We can critically pick away at this quotation with relative ease. Who decides what is worthwhile, for example: the learner?, the teacher?, the institution?, employers?, the state? How much time must we allow to pass in order to detect commitment? How active (i.e. not inert) do we have to be to be judged as involved in an educational activity? In what sense can children—as distinct from adults, for whom we might at least assume some degree of voluntariness if they are participating in education—be said to be voluntarily engaged in education? Yet these points confirm how useful accounts Hike that of Peters can be in identifying and delimiting many of the key questions we need to address in order to satisfactorily define a concept like education. [10]

A rather simpler definition has been given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They view education as 'organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding valuable for all the activities of life'. The key phrase here, which is not explicit in Peters' formulation, and which may be used to distinguish education from learning, appears to be 'organized and sustained instruction'. This implies

the involvement of an educator of some kind, and probably also an institution, though the education might be mediated through the printed text or computer software. It also suggests that education is not a speedy process, but takes a lengthy, though perhaps not continuous, period of time. Learning, by contrast, could be seen as not necessarily involving instruction, and as often occurring over a shorter timeframe and in smaller chunks. [10]

Clearly, distinctions of this kind are not always cut and dried. They allow us to conceive of education and learning as ends of a spectrum, and as shading into each other. Consequently, there will be instances that could be described quite legitimately as either education or learning or both. To some extent, therefore, the terms may be used interchangeably. [10]

How, then, to distinguish education from training? The distinction may be seen as somewhat analogous to that between education and learning, in the sense of delimiting another dimension to the area of study. The commonest approaches to making this distinction are to use the ideas of breadth and/or depth, or, conversely, to emphasize the lack of immediate application and criticality of education: Probably the clearest if not the only criterion of educational value… is that the learning in question contributes to the development of knowledge and understanding, in both breadth and depth. [9]

Chapter II

Learning styles and language learning

2.1 Defining learning styles

As is the case with a number of ID variables that turn out to be problematic under close scrutiny, learning styles can initially be defined in a seemingly straightforward and intuitively convincing manner. According to the standard definition, they refer to “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills” [26]; thus, they are “broad preferences for going about the business of learning” [11]. In other words, the concept represents a profile of the individual’s approach to learning, a blueprint of the habitual or preferred way the individual perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. These definitions make intuitive sense:

Few would question that different learners can approach the same learning task in quite different ways and it is also a logical assumption that this variation in approach is not infinite but is characterized by systematic patterns. These patterns, then, can be rightfully called ‘learning styles.’ Learning styles are an appealing concept for educationalists because – unlike abilities and aptitudes—they do not reflect innate endowment that automatically leads to success. That is, styles are not yet another metaphor for distinguishing the gifted from the untalented but rather they refer to personal preferences. These preferences are typically bipolar, representing a continuum from one extreme to another (e.g., being more global vs. being more particular) and no value judgment is made about where a learner falls on the continuum: One can be successful in every style position—only in a different way. Thus, ideally, the concept of learning styles offers a “valueneutral approach for understanding individual

differences among linguistically and culturally diverse students" [26]. In reality, however, this neutral status does not always apply to all the style dimensions because certain learning styles correlate more highly than others with desired aspects of language performance in specific settings.

Basic Conceptual Issues

Let us look at some recurring issues in the conceptualization of styles. First, what is the relationship between learning styles and learning strategies? The two concepts are thematically related since they both denote specific ways learners go about carrying out learning tasks. According to Snow et al. [13], the main difference between the two concepts lies in their breadth and stability, with a style being a "strategy used consistently across a class of tasks". In agreement with this claim, Riding [26] added that styles probably have a physiological basis and are fairly fixed for the individual, whereas strategies may be learned and developed in order to cope with situations and tasks. Sternberg and Grigorenko [21] highlighted the difference between the degree of consciousness involved in applying styles and strategies: Styles operate without individual awareness, whereas strategies involve a conscious choice of alternatives. As the authors conclude, although the two terms are often mixed up, "strategy is used for task- or context- dependent situations, whereas style implies a higher degree of stability falling midway between ability and strategy."

On the whole, the argument that styles are stable and have a cross-situational impact sounds convincing but if we take a closer look we find that there is a definite interaction between styles and situations; as Ehrman [21] put it succinctly, "Just as situations determine which hand to use (write with one hand, grip jars to open with the other), so they also have considerable influence on choice of learning strategies associated with one learning style or another". Furthermore, the stability aspect of styles has

also been questioned when researchers found that early educational experiences do shape one's individual learning styles by instilling positive attitudes toward certain sets of learning skills and, more generally, by teaching students how to learn [14].

We also get on shaky ground when we try to analyze what exactly the term 'preference' means when we talk about styles being 'broad learning preferences.' How much do these 'preferences' determine our functioning? Ehrman [15]suggested a relatively soft interpretation of 'preference' by equating it with 'comfort zones:' "For most of us, a preference is just that something we find more comfortable but can do another way if circumstances require it" [15]. As she explained, however, for a minority learning styles are more firmly set and are therefore more than mere preferences.

They do not have the flexibility to change or shift their employed style according to the demands of the situation, and this may land them in trouble. According to Ehrman, a learning style, then, can range from a mild preference to a strong need.

Finally, how do learning styles relate to personality? This, again, is a source of controversy, because some well-known psychological constructs are sometimes referred to as learning styles and sometimes as personality dimensions. The dimension of extraversion–introversion is a good example, as this popular dichotomy, first brought into wide use by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, can be found in almost every personality and learning style taxonomy. In fact, Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford [16] concluded in a recent overview of ID variables that the influence of personality variables on learning styles has increased greatly in recent years, promoted by the use of the 'Big Five' personality model and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. For this reason, Ehrman [16] actually

characterized certain learning styles as ‘personality-based learning styles,’ which are personality dimensions that have cognitive style correlates.

I believe that the above outline of various style issues conveys well the general impression one gains when dealing with learning styles, namely that they are elusive, ‘halfway’ products: They refer to preferences, but these can be of varying degree; they are related to learning strategies but are somewhat different from them as they fall midway between innate abilities and strategies; they appear to be situation-independent but they are not entirely free of situational influences; and some style dimensions are also listed as major components of personality. Indeed, learning styles appear to have very soft boundaries, making the category rather open-ended, regardless of which perspective we approach it from. Ehrman et al.’s [14] summary of the use of the term is, regrettably, valid: “the literature on learning styles uses the terms learning style, cognitive style, personality type, sensory preference, modality, and others rather loosely and often interchangeably”.

The natural question to ask, then, is this: Do learning styles really exist? Are they independent individual difference factors or is the term merely a convenient way of referring to certain patterns of information-processing and learning behaviors whose antecedents lie in a wide range of diverse factors, such as varying degrees of acquired abilities and skills, idiosyncratic personality traits, and different exposures to past learning experiences [36]? The honest answer, I believe, is that we are not absolutely sure. We still do not know enough about the exact psychological mechanisms that make up the process that we usually conveniently refer to as ‘learning’ to be able to say that learning styles have definite neuropsychological validity and relevance to this process. The problem is that learning - and consequently the related concept of learning styles—is associated at the same time with perception, cognition, affect, and

behavior, and a term that cuts across these psychologically distinct categories does not lend itself to rigorous definition.

One way forward, however, is to make a clear distinction between learning styles and cognitive styles. Although these terms have too often been used in the literature in an interchangeable manner, they are not the same. As Rayner [24] summarized, if learning style is represented as a profile of the individual's approach to learning, this profile can be seen to comprise two fundamental levels of functioning: The first is cognitive, referring to a stable and internalized dimension related to the way a person thinks or processes information; the second is the level of the learning activity, which is more external and embraces less stable functions that relate to the learner's continuing adaptation to the environment. It follows from this distinction that the core of a learning style is the 'cognitive style,' which can be seen as a partially biologically determined and pervasive way of responding to information and situations; and when such cognitive styles are specifically related to an educational context and are intermingled with a number of affective, physiological, and behavioral factors, they are usually more generally referred to as learning styles [2]. In our quest for understanding the nature of learning styles, therefore, we need to take a step back and start with the analysis of cognitive styles.

2.2 Applications of learning styles in the classroom

Various researchers have attempted to provide ways in which learning styles can take effect in the classroom. Two such scholars are Dr. Rita Dunn and Dr. Kenneth Dunn (1978). Dunn and Dunn write that "learners are affected by their: (1) immediate environment (sound, light, temperature, and design); (2) own emotionality (motivation, persistence, responsibility, and need for structure or flexibility); (3) sociological needs

(self, pair, peers, team, adult, or varied); and (4) physical needs (perceptual strengths, intake, time, and mobility)" (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). They claim that not only can students identify their preferred learning styles, but that students also score higher on tests, have better attitudes, and are more efficient if they are taught in ways to which they can more easily relate. Therefore, it is to the educator's advantage to teach and test students in their preferred styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). Although learning styles will inevitably differ among students in the classroom, Dunn and Dunn say that teachers should try to make changes in their classroom that will be beneficial to every learning style.

Some of these changes include room redesign, the development of small-group techniques, and the development of Contract Activity Packages. Redesigning the classroom involves locating dividers that can be used to arrange the room creatively, clearing the floor area, and incorporating student thoughts and ideas into the design of the classroom (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). Small-group techniques often include a "circle of knowledge" in which students sit in a circle and discuss a subject collaboratively as well as other techniques such as team learning and brainstorming. Contract Activity Packages are educational plans that facilitate learning by using the following elements:

1) clear statement of what the students needs to learn; 2) multisensory resources (auditory, visual, tactile, kinaesthetic) that teach the required information; 3) activities through which the newly-mastered information can be used creatively; 4) the sharing of creative projects within small groups of classmates; 5) at least 3 small-group techniques; 6) a pre-test, a self-test, and a post-test (Dunn & Dunn, 1978).

One of the most significant issues in learning to learn is an individual's taking the responsibility for his/her own learning. The individuals should know what their own learning styles are and what

characteristics this style has and they should thereby behave according to this style. In this way, the individual can acquire the constantly changing and increasing amount of information without need for the assistance of others. When the learner takes the responsibility of his/her own learning, s/he attributes meaning to the process of learning. S/he develops an understanding of his/her own form of learning style and becomes much more satisfied with the environment s/he interacts with. Every opportunity for learning is a chance for him/her. It is in the learner's hand to use different ways and develop the learning styles to some extent (Coffield, 2004).

Learning style is important for many reasons; however, there are three vital ones. First of all, people's learning styles will vary because everyone is different from one another naturally. Secondly, it offers the opportunity to teach by using a wide range of methods in an effective way. Sticking to just one model unthinkingly will create a monotonous learning environment, so not everyone will enjoy the lesson. In other words, learning and teaching will be just words and not rooted in reality. Thirdly, we can manage many things in education and communication if we really recognize the groups we are called to. Of course, we may not know every detail; however, being aware of our students' learning styles, psychological qualities and motivational differences will help us regulate our lessons appropriately and according to the conditions (Mc Carthy, 1982; Felder, Silverman, 1988; Coffield et al., 2004).

Learning style has an important place in the lives of individuals. When the individual knows his/her learning style, s/he will integrate it in the process of learning so s/he will learn more easily and fast and will be successful. Another advantage of the identification of the own learning style by the student is that it will help the student to become an effective problem solver. The more successful the individual is at solving the

problems s/he faces, the more control s/he will take over his/her own life (Biggs, 2001). It is important that individuals receive education in areas suitable for their learning styles. A person educated in an area having no relationship to his/her learning style may lack confidence and s/he may be less successful; s/he may as a result become frustrated. Knowledge of learning style also provides information to the student as to why s/he has learnt in a different way than others. It helps to control the process of learning. It is vital because one of the most important signals in learning is to learn to be autonomous, that is, for the individual to take responsibility for his/her own learning.

Because of this, s/he should know what learning style is. This has to be part of the learning process to enable the individual to obtain knowledge, which constantly shifts and changes, without any help from others. Briefly, confidence in learning will consistently rise when learners know how to learn. Learning to learn and grasping knowledge in a suitable manner will lessen the need for an overbearing control by teachers. At this point, teachers guide the students. The students take responsibility for their learning, they are at the centre of the process and everything is under their control.

They search answers to the problems and benefit from their unique performances and preferences in their learning styles. Those people will identify their aims, unlike those whose learning style preferences are not identified. They know what they want to learn and “how.” This awareness will change their perspectives on learning new things (Fidan, 1986).

2.3 Visual learners

Visual learning is a teaching and learning style in which ideas, concepts, data and other information are associated with images and

techniques. It is one of the three basic types of learning styles in the widely used. [1]

Graphic organizers are visual representations of knowledge, concepts, thoughts, or ideas. To show the relationships between the parts, the symbols are linked with each other; words can be used to further clarify meaning. By representing information spatially and with images, students are able to focus on meaning, reorganize and group similar ideas easily, make better use of their visual memory.

A review study concluded that using graphic organizers improves student performance in the following areas:[2]

Retention

Students remember information better and can better recall it when it is represented and learned both visually and verbally.[2]

Reading comprehension

The use of graphic organizers helps improving the reading comprehension of students.[2]

Student achievement

Students with and without learning disabilities improve achievement across content areas and grade levels.[2]

Thinking and learning skills; critical thinking

When students develop and use a graphic organizer their higher order thinking and critical thinking skills are enhanced.[2]

Visualizing data - When working with data, students build data literacy as they collect and explore information in a dynamic inquiry process, using tables and plots to visually investigate, manipulate and analyze data. As students explore the way data moves through various plot types, such as Venn, stack, pie and axis, they formulate questions and discover meaning from the visual representation.

2.4 Auditory learners

Auditory learning is a learning style in which a person learns through listening. An auditory learner depends on hearing and speaking as a main way of learning.[1] Auditory learners must be able to hear what is being said in order to understand and may have difficulty with instructions that are written. They also use their listening and repeating skills to sort through the information that is sent to them. [2]

Auditory learners may have a knack for ascertaining the true meaning of someone's words by listening to audible signals like changes in tone. When memorizing a phone number, an auditory learner will say it out loud and then remember how it sounded to recall it.

Auditory learners are good at writing responses to lectures they've heard. They're also good at oral exams, effectively by listening to information delivered orally, in lectures, speeches, and oral sessions.

Proponents claim that when an auditory/verbal learner reads, it is almost impossible for the learner to comprehend anything without sound in the background. In these situations, listening to music or having different sounds in the background (TV, people talking, etc.) will help learners work better.

Auditory learners are good at storytelling. They solve problems by talking them through. Speech patterns include phrases "I hear you; That clicks; It's ringing a bell", and other sound or voice-oriented information. These learners will move their lips or talk to themselves to help accomplish tasks.[1]

Proponents say that teachers should use these techniques to instruct auditory learners: verbal direction, group discussions, verbal reinforcement, group activities, reading aloud, and putting information into a rhythmic pattern such as a rap, poem, or song.[1]

Proponents recommend techniques like these to auditory learners:

Record class notes and then listen to the recording (repeatedly), rather than reading notes.

Remember details by trying to "hear" previous discussions.

Participate in class discussions.

Ask questions and volunteer in class.

Read assignments out loud.

Study by reading out your notes

Whisper new information when alone.[2]

An auditory learner may benefit by using a speech recognition tool on computers and telephones.

Although learning styles have "enormous popularity", and both children and adults express personal preferences, there is no evidence that identifying a student's learning style produces better outcomes, and there is significant evidence that the widely touted "meshing hypothesis" (that a student will learn best if taught in a method deemed appropriate for the student's learning style) is invalid.[6] Well-designed studies "flatly contradict the popular meshing hypothesis".[6] Rather than targeting instruction to the "right" learning style, students appear to benefit most from mixed modality presentations, for instance using both auditory and visual techniques for all students.[7]

2.5 Kinesthetic learners

Kinesthetic learning (also known as tactile learning) is a learning style in which learning takes place by the student carrying out a physical activity, rather than listening to a lecture or watching a demonstration. People with a preference for kinesthetic learning are also commonly known as "do-ers". Tactile-kinesthetic learners make up about five percent of the population.

Kinesthetic intelligence was originally coupled with tactile abilities, and was defined and discussed in Howard Gardner's Frames Of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. In his book, Gardner describes activities (such as dancing and performing surgery) as requiring great kinesthetic intelligence: using the body to create (or do) something.

Margaret H'Doubler wrote and spoke about kinesthetic learning during the 1940s, defining kinesthetic learning as the human body's ability to express itself through movement and dance.

According to the theory of learning styles, students who have a predominantly kinesthetic style are thought to be discovery learners: they have realization through doing, rather than thinking before initiating action. They may struggle to learn by reading or listening.

When learning, it helps for these students to move around; this increases the students' understanding, with learners generally getting better marks in exams when they can do so. Kinesthetic learners usually succeed in activities such as chemistry experiments, sporting activities, art and acting; they also may listen to music while learning or studying. It is common for kinesthetic learners to focus on two different things at the same time, remembering things in relation to what they were doing. They possess good eye-hand coordination. In kinesthetic learning, learning occurs by the learner using their body to express a thought, an idea or a concept (in any field).

In an elementary classroom setting, these students may stand out because of their need to move; their high energy levels may cause them to be agitated, restless or impatient. Kinesthetic learners' short- and long-term memories are strengthened by their use of movement.

Rita Dunn contends that kinesthetic and tactile learning are the same style.[4] Galeet BenZion asserts that kinesthetic and tactile learning are separate learning styles, with different characteristics. She defined kinesthetic learning as the process that results in new knowledge (or understanding) with the involvement of the

learner's body movement. This movement is performed to establish new (or extending existing) knowledge. Kinesthetic learning at its best, BenZion found, is established when the learner uses language (their own words) in order to define, explain, resolve and sort out how his or her body's movement reflects the concept explored. One example is a student using movement to find out the sum of 1/2 plus 3/4 via movement, then explaining how their motions in space reflect the mathematical process leading to the correct answer.[5]

2.6 Application of learning styles in foreign language teaching

The research synthesized in this chapter has four implications for classroom practice: assessing styles and strategies in the L2 classroom, attuning L2 instruction and strategy instruction to learners' style preferences, remembering that no single L2 instructional methodology fits all students, and preparing for and conducting strategy instruction.

Assessing Styles and Strategies in the L2 Classroom

L2 teachers could benefit by assessing the learning styles and the strategy use of their students, because such assessment leads to greater understanding of styles and strategies. [19]

Teachers also need to assess their styles and strategies, so that they will be aware of their preferences and of possible biases. Useful means exist to make these assessments, as mentioned earlier. Teachers can learn about assessment options by reading books or journals, attending professional conferences, or taking relevant courses or workshops. [29]

Attuning L2 Instruction and Strategy Instruction to Learners' Style Needs

The more that teachers know about their students' style preferences, the more effectively they can orient their L2 instruction, as well as the strategy teaching that can be interwoven into language instruction,

matched to those style preferences. Some learners might need instruction presented more visually, while others might require more auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile types of instruction. Without adequate knowledge about their individual students' style preferences, teachers cannot systematically provide the needed instructional variety. [19]

Remembering that No Single L2 Instructional Methodology Fits All Students

Styles and strategies help determine a particular learner's ability and willingness to work within the framework of various instructional methodologies. It is foolhardy to think that a single L2 methodology could possibly fit an entire class filled with students who have a range of stylistic and strategic preferences. Instead of choosing a specific instructional methodology, L2 teachers would do better to employ a broad instructional approach, notably the best version of the communicative approach that contains a combined focus on form and fluency. Such an approach allows for deliberate, creative variety to meet the needs of all students in the class. [21]

The discussion so far has, hopefully, shown that the concept of cognitive and learning styles is potentially important from a theoretical and research perspective. But does the notion have any practical value? That is, can it be used in any way to promote the effectiveness of instructed SLA? The honest answer is yes and no. An increased awareness of learner styles both in the learners and the teachers can have some educational potential but there are also some serious problems concerning any real practical applications. Let us start by considering the positive features.

In her book on understanding second language learning difficulties, Ehrman [14] justified the extensive treatment of learning styles by claiming that "Learning style mismatches are at the root of many learning difficulties" (p. 50). Indeed, the general assumption shared by the

advocates of learning style research is that a more principled teaching approach that would take into account the impact of various style characteristics on learning could reduce or even remove many mismatches and can thus enhance learning effectiveness. [14]

What kind of mismatches are we talking about? We can conceive of at least six types of possible style conflict:

1. Mismatch between the student's learning style and the teacher's teaching style, a conflict that has been dramatically termed a style war by Oxford et al. [18].

2. Mismatch between the student's learning style and the syllabus, for xample when the latter does not cover grammar systematically, although analytic learners would need that.

3. Mismatch between the student's learning style and the language task, for example when a visual student participates in a task that involves receiving auditory input (e.g., from a tape).

4. Mismatch between the student's learning style and his or her beliefs about learning, for example when an analysis-oriented learner believes that rote learning is the most effective learning method (whereas that method would suit a memory-oriented learner better). [18].

5. Mismatch between the student's learning style and the learning strategies applied, for example when a field independent learner tries to apply social strategies, or a global learner uses bottom-up reading strategies.

6. We can even conceive of a mismatch between the student's learning style and his or her abilities, for example when an ectenic learner has underdeveloped grammatical sensitivity. So, there is no doubt that some sort of style harmony would be beneficial in many respects for teachers and learners alike. The question, then, is whether this is feasible. Let us

look at how the proponents of a more stylebased instruction envisage creating this harmony in practical terms. [18].

• The most common and somewhat simplistic recommendation is that teachers can modify the learning tasks they use in their classes in a way that may bring the best out of particular learners with particular learning style preferences. Of course, the problem is that learners are not homogeneous in their style preferences, to which the commonsense answer is that teachers should “strive for a balanced teaching style that does not excessively favor any one learning style - or rather that tries to accommodate multiple learning styles” [21].

• A second option, mentioned by Oxford and Anderson [18]., is that by getting students to take a learning style questionnaire and by discussing the results with them we can help them to identify their own learning styles and to recognize the power of understanding their language learning styles for making learning more effective. A description of several practical adaptations of this approach in four countries (Egypt, Hungary, Russia, and Spain) can be found in Reid et al. [23].

• It would also be beneficial for teachers to find out about their own learning styles because, as Kinsella (1995) pointed out, although the maxim that teachers teach the way they were taught has some truth in it, it is probably more accurate to say that teachers teach the way they learned best. She argued that many teachers, either consciously or unconsciously, select methods that reflect their own preferred ways of approaching academic tasks. This, however, as Oxford and Anderson [18]. argued, might not be helpful to all the students and an awareness in the teachers about how their preferred styles compare to the styles of their students might be beneficial.

• We can also help students learn how to operate outside their preferred styles, a phenomenon that is often referred to as style stretching.

As learners become aware of their own learning style preferences, they may become open to guidance in structuring their classroom work and home assignments along lines that begin in their comfort zones and gradually stretch them out of this zone [14].. Cohen [18]. also suggested that learners can be 'brought on board' in this way, that is, learners over time can be encouraged to engage in style-stretching so as to incorporate approaches to learning they were resisting in the past. Because of the complex nature of language and because of its manifold representations in the real world, it is a reasonable assumption that students who can operate in a range of styles in a situation-specific and flexible manner are likely to become more effective learners.

• A further way of empowering students is to teach them learning strategies that would suit their styles. One approach involves what Andrew Cohen (1998, 2002; Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002) has termed Styles- and strategies-based instruction (SSBI), which includes the teacher's assisting learners to develop an awareness of their own preferred learning styles, then determine the nature of their current learner strategy repertoire, and finally, to complement their strategy repertoire with additional strategies that match their styles. As Cohen [14] argued, this is a particularly fruitful area and "The future looks bright for SSBI work" (p. 59).

• In principle, we can also imagine streaming learners according to their learning style preferences and then develop special syllabuses for the different tracks. Although all these (and presumably several other) options are theoretically feasible ways of using learner styles, I believe we also need to be frank about the severe problems that arise in this respect and which have, by and large, prevented styles so far from becoming accessible and practical for classroom use. Let us start with some words of caution by Reid [18]., who pointed out that the complicated and fragmented nature of the area of learning styles with the proliferation of often overlapping

terminology confuses classroom teachers (and we can add, even researchers themselves to the extent that—as we have seen—several of them have proposed abandoning styles research). If we add to this what Ehrman (1996) emphasized, namely that the classification into distinct styles in itself is merely a convenient oversimplification of a more complex picture, we can see that an average classroom practitioner may currently be ill-prepared to meaningfully deal with the style issue. Of course, in an ideal world in which teacher training would include a much more prominent psychological component, teachers could follow Ehrman's [11]. own practice: She believes that different individuals make different style dimensions important and therefore when she decides which style model to apply as a conceptual tool with an individual she takes into account the particular learner's features. In a refreshingly down-to-earth analysis of the possible educational applications of learning styles, Yates [11] warned us that the idea that we can create instructional programs or plan curriculum variations to match our students' cognitive style characteristics reflects a "visionary position that, unfortunately, is neither viable nor justified. It is unrealistic for a classroom teacher to classify students into cognitive style categories to be used to prescribe differential educational experience". Thus, the author continues, it is usually impractical or even unfair to attempt to vary our lesson plans in response to assessments of certain individual differences. However, Yates did recommend one powerful tool a teacher can use in a style-sensitive manner: time management.

In teaching contexts, time is the one effective vehicle we have in striving to accommodate for the individual response. … we can vary presentation times, speed of presentation, time devoted to direct modeling, thinking time, wait-time in questioning, time spent in revision and

remediation, and time allocated for extended practice (i.e., independent enrichment and elaboration work). [19]

That is, in Yates's [19] view, the most effective way for teachers to demonstrate awareness of learning styles is to be sensitive to the students' differential time requirements in coping with certain types of tasks. As he concluded, the idea that different students need varying amounts of time to achieve certain learning objectives is one of the most basic but at the same time rather neglected principles of educational psychology. Whereas few would disagree that time management is an important issue and that it can be used to cater for learning style differences, we need to ask whether there are really no more specific lessons we can learn from styles research. It is true that the heterogeneous nature of style distribution and the complex interference of several coexisting learning styles might make style-based instruction a far too complex issue for ordinary teachers to handle. Yet, I also believe that there are some broad and strong tendencies in terms of our students' style preferences that could be better taken into consideration.

For example, Kinsella [18]. pointed out that in U.S. secondary schools roughly 90% of traditional classroom instruction for adolescents appears to cater for the competent auditory learner whereas in Oxford's (1995) experience, the proportion of real auditory learners is less than half of the total population. Learning style research has clearly demonstrated the need for a more balanced mixture of instructional input, with the materials presented visually as well as verbally, and reinforced through writing, drawing, or speaking activities.

A further practical and forward-pointing research direction has been offered by Oxford [18]: In a qualitative study of written student narratives, the researcher identified specific types of style conflict between teachers and students. Four conflict types, in particular, appeared in the data: (a)

students who disliked ambiguity and whose closure needs were ignored, (b) introverted students coping with extroverted teachers who 'entertained' the class, (c) global, intuitive-random students dealing with analytic, concrete-sequential details provided by the teacher, and (d) students whose sensory preferences were thwarted. The attraction of this approach is that it specifies concrete issues to deal with, making it thus possible to devise specific troubleshooting strategies addressing these conflict situations. I believe that a set of such tried and tested strategies would be a welcome addition to any language teacher training program. (For an interesting follow-up to this study in which the style conflict data is examined in light of Bakhtin's theories, see Oxford & Massey, in press.)

These examples illustrate that it may be possible for future research to come up with style-based teaching suggestions that are both useful and doable; for the time being, however, Peacock's [13] recommendation seems reasonable: An obvious way to decrease the mismatch between teachers' and students' learning styles is to become more willing to involve learners in planning lessons and tasks, and more generally, to give them more control over their learning. [13]

Finally, schooling in the 21st century could include, almost as a routine, some sort of an individualized consultation process for students about their learning styles. Ehrman and Leaver (2003) described how such a process has been successfully implemented in the language instruction at the Foreign Service Institute. There the procedure consists of four steps:

1. Students are first invited to a voluntary consultation, aimed at improving learning effectiveness both for those who are having difficulties and those who think they are doing fine. [17]

2. Once a student has decided to take advantage of this offer, he or she completes a diagnostic learning style questionnaire.

3. The third step is the interpretation of the questionnaire results. At the FSI, this is first done in group sessions so the counselors do not have to repeat the same information for each student, and then in individual sessions to apply the generalizations to the student's own situation.

4. The final step is the follow-up, whereby a designated Learning Consultant makes sure that the recommendations made during the consultation process are put into practice. Students are then welcome to return for follow-up consultations with a counselor on any emerging issue. [17]

Conclusion

I was a novice in doing my research study for the first time. It was very interesting for me but at the same time very difficult. My interest was connected mainly with finding materials for the qualification paper. I was interested in working on research with pupils and teachers. I focused on the topic of learning styles and accommodation in English language learning which I find very important in those days within our educational system. I would like to ask teachers and educators to start paying attention to learning styles.

When I was studying books, articles and other sources to this topic, I learnt a lot of interesting information about learning styles and their models. Moreover, I found out how to identify them and accommodate them in language learning and teaching. Each teacher should start with himself in order to understand his pupils. I realized that this is the most crucial point in the study of learning styles.

I am convinced that identifying learning style is fundamental point in language learning. Therefore, I found a relevant questionnaire and sent it to teachers who helped me a lot with my research study. They worked with pupils at schools and identified their learning styles.

As the results of my research suggest identifying own learning styles and strategies could be very beneficial both for students and for teachers. But working on students' learning styles teacher should realize his own learning style because it is likely that this style influences teacher's teaching style. It is possible that this situation brings the advantage to the students with the same learning style as a teacher's one but not for those who have different learning style. Moreover, many specialists suggest to teachers of foreign language not to deal only with teaching a language but to pay attention on learning strategies. Learning strategies are defined as

specific activities, specific behaviour or techniques which a man uses for improving own learning. In contrary to learning styles, learning strategies could be changed and developed.

Thus, knowing about the learning styles and learning strategies could a foreign language teacher improve his teaching and make the lessons more effective for him for students and for curriculum too.

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