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Fahrettin ŞANAL¹, İrfan TOSUNCUOĞLU²

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING STYLES

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 60 years, new methods and perceptions have arisen regarding studies on foreign or second language learning styles. Learning style can be generally defined as ideas and activities that students use to accomplish a learning item. Learning style is currently a highly pertinent theme, as the world is transforming rapidly due to advanced communications. The source of any given student's learning style is considered to be the biological and developmental set of characteristics of the learner. On the other hand, if flexibility of learning styles across learning activities is used it can help make the student successful. Therefore, with efficient education as a goal, two ideas should be taken into consideration. Firstly, learners need to recognize and act upon areas of deficiency in their learning. Secondly, instructors should design and plan teaching activities with the students' needs in mind. Both of these ideas are discussed in the article.

Keywords: English, learning styles, teaching, instructors, method

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD, fhsanal@gmail.com

² Doç. Dr., Karabük Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD, irfantosuncuoglu@karabuk.edu.tr

ÖĞRENME STİLLERİNİN ÖNEMİ

ÖZ

Geçtiğimiz 60 yıldan fazla bir zaman süreci içerisinde yabancı ve ikinci dil öğrenim stilleri üzerine yeni metotlar ve algılar gittikçe artış göstermektedir. Öğrenme stili genel anlamda öğrencilerin öğrenilecek olan bir olguyu kavramak için yararlandığı fikir ve aktiviteler dizisi olarak tanımlanabilir. Dünyadaki ileri iletişim faaliyetlerinin hızla gelişmesi dolayısıyla, öğrenme stili son derece güncel bir konudur. Her öğrencinin öğrenme stiliinin kaynağı onun biyolojik ve gelişimsel karakteri olarak tanımlanır. Diğer taraftan öğrencilerin öğrenme stillerine dayalı olarak yapılabilen esneklik onların öğrenim aktivitelerinde daha başarılı olmalarına yardım eder. Bu sebepten dolayı etkin bir eğitim için iki fikir göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Birinci olarak, öğrencilerin öğrenme sırasında eksikliklerinin tanınması ve buna göre hareket edilmesi. İkinci olarak, eğitimcilerin öğrencilerinin gereksinimlerini akıllarında tutarak öğretim planları düzenlemeleri. Çalışmada her iki görüş üzerinde durulmakta ve birtakım çıkarımlarda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce, öğrenme stilleri, öğretim, eğitim elemanları, metot

INTRODUCTION

In the conditions of continuous comprehensive development of international cooperation and international relations, there is an increasing need for individuals and professionals with a good command of a foreign language and they can use it effectively in daily life and professional communication. In this respect, the most important issue is the amelioration of the methodology of teaching foreign languages and especially English as a language of international communication among students. The educational standard prescribes both a basic set of general competencies and a varied set of special competencies

The period after 1950 brought new methods, perceptions and strategies to studies on foreign or second language learning. Studies on descriptions of ‘a learner’, ‘learning’ and, ‘a good language learner’ provided new ideas for academicians. Research on the characteristics of ‘a good language learner’ showed that teaching is concerned with educational psychology, and language learning showed that students have similar and different characteristics according to their preferences (Gürkan 2018: Hand 1990: Jaouen 1990: Martínez 2016: Öztürk 2016: Rubin 1975: Naiman et al. 1978). Cohen (2003) indicated the forms and strategies in the field of teaching have developed over a long time, and educators have sought to move the focus away from teacher, and towards the learners. Moving onto learning style, Ellis (1985) noted that this was, roughly, the way a person receives, conceptualizes, and recalls knowledge. Keefe (1979) expresses that learning style is a combination of cognitive, efficient, and physiological methods, which are continuous indicators of how students recognize and respond to learning in the community. Skehan (1991) express the expression ‘learning style’ as a common predisposition, whether willing or not, towards processing information. Thus, the learning style of a good learner refers to the positive and negative behavioural characteristics of the student in the perception of an item with regard to teachers. Most of the people think that each individual prefers particular learning styles and forms. Learning styles group general ways that individuals prefer to learn. Every individual has a mix of learning manners and styles. Some of the people can believe that they have a prevailing learning style, in comparison with the use of the other styles. Other people might believe that they use various kinds of styles in different settings. One may develop skill

and capability in less dominant types³. On the other hand Surjono (2015) investigated the effects of multimedia selection on students' marks and he also examined and learning styles in an adaptive e-learning system in Indonesia. The findings of the research showed that learners with similar multimedia choices and learning styles outscored their friends with dissimilar multimedia choices and learning styles.

ORIGIN OF LEARNING STYLES

As the origin of learners' learning style is investigated, Asbury et al., (2014) and Dunn & Griggs (1998, cited in Coffield et al. 2004) indicate that learning style concerns students that have basically the same potential, biological and developmental set of characteristics in terms of education, and yet certain teaching methods may be excellent for some learners but unsatisfactory for others. Thus, any kind of learning style may be effected by learners' genes and their genetic make up, their learning practices, cultural background and the community they live in it.

The course of action of recognizing and making sense of the environment begins with a sense of curiosity from the first moment of childbirth. Curiosity is the primary step of learning and learning has become indispensable part of our lives in a planet where everything is developing and changing all the more. On the other hand, individual curiosity and interest are not enough to compensate learning activities. There are lots of environmental and individual components that influence learning process. Many research in the recent years draw attention to concepts such as intelligence, age, gender, methods, techniques and etc., used by individuals in learning activities. Each individual in the learning activity can realize learning process in various ways. Felder (1996) indicates that learners make use of numerous of different methods in order to receive and process the information. Some of the individuals choice may be to use mathematical models, and the other ones may prefer visual aids, or verbal expressions. There may also learners who use their inner and individual tendencies. The existence of these variations can be considered as an implication of different learning styles.

Any kind of learning style is the solid behaviour that includes the perception of stimuli, processing, regulation and interpretation of information/knowledge around the learner (Aydemir et al., 2015). Ackerman et al. (1989), expresses that learning focuses on two entities. One of them is the cognitive measure/s and ability test/s, and the other one is non-cognitive measures that correspond to variances amongst students. Thelan (1954) used the word, for the first time, "style" in psychology. After the year 1970s, these expressions were managed by Kolb as "Experiential Learning Theory" and ongoing years it was used prevalently. Then, these styles became quite popular particularly in educational psychology and they developed in two ways; "cognitive" and "non-cognitive" (Baneshi et al., 2013).

On the base of cognitive process, learning is administered in the type of transferring circumstances in the environment to the central neural system. This transferring type is a sensorial record. The process that existed in the learner's mind differ from recorded stimulus. These differences are termed as the cognitive style. The concept of cognitive style generally reveals the way for learners' interpretations for the problems (Rayner, 2015). Keefe (1979) divided cognitive styles into five subclasses: attentional, physiological, expectancy, receptive, and incentive. Sternberg and Grigorenko (1997) divide them into four groups: cognitive oriented, personality oriented, activity oriented and mental self-government.

³ <https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/>

Accordingly, a teacher has a salient responsibility to expand his/her teaching styles in order to support facilities for learners to broaden their learning styles. According to Friedman and Alley (1984) teachers are very helpful when they give a help to learners in identifying and learning through their own style preferences. Therefore, the teacher has a difficult task determining his/her teaching role. Davidoff and Van Den Berg (1990, cited in Bludov 2005) allude to four phases: plan, teaching, observation and reflection, in consideration of the following;

- Learners can learn better and quicker if the applied teaching method matches the learners' preferences
- Learners' self-esteem improves. Bored or disinterested learners can become interested again.
- Teacher-learner relations can develop positively as the student becomes successful and more interested.

The research on learning styles has led to new trends, making necessary changes for teachers in their classes. Various alternative works have been presented to create opportunities for students to achieve better learning along with course materials.

PROBLEM

Most of the learning style mechanisms with regard to individuals' learning are still not clearly known. For example, does a mutual talk change the emotion, cognition and sense orientation of the other individual? Is it enough to alter behavior or habit? What prevents these changes or what allows them? We still don't really know these aspects. There has been research into the complex physiological, psychological, and social processes in the field of students' learning styles.

Learning styles investigation has drawn attention to studies about the dimensions of psychology and sociology with regard to educational process. The related literature provides a range of models and can help deal with some of the unsolved teaching and learning issues between teacher and student.

METHODS FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

On studying learning styles we must take into account that every teacher also has his/her own approach to the class. The teacher may design the class and activities to be taught according to his/her preferences. On the other hand, teachers need to know that their teaching styles should suit the learners in their classrooms. Teachers should make the necessary modifications in their classes. They need to start by recognizing their styles. Dunn (2000) suggests that a teacher should be more responsive to multiple student learning styles.

The literature on education notes that learners who are included in the activities are likely to be much more succeeding (Dewar 1996: Hartman 1995). If students actively take part in learning activities, they start to feel more independent and their motivation levels rise. The key component for students' activization in learning activities lies in teachers understanding their preferences on learning style, thus influencing the learner's performance, positively or negatively (Birkey & Rodman 1995: Dewar 1995: Hartman 1995). It was also noted that revision, if needed, of materials used in teaching to meet the needs of various learning styles benefits all the learners (Kramer-Koehler et al. 1995). Schroeder (1996) states that an ordinary student learning style shifts as there is a great difference among students in the field of learning style preferences. Thus,

students' learning style preferences can be understood and taken into consideration when preparing instructional materials for them.

According to Birkey and Rodman (1995), there is a crucial difference in the style by which an individual learns and the information that individual perceives. There are differences in how learning styles are described and evaluated. The most prominent thing a teacher can do is to be conscious of diversities among the learning styles in the class.

On the other hand, Gardner (2006) looks at learning styles from a very different point of view. It has been highly influential in all disciplines, particularly in foreign language teaching and learning contexts. It challenged traditional notions about intelligence among individuals at schools. Conventionally, intelligence was accepted as a fixed and inborn capability, that can be measured by means of IQ test. Gardner expresses that all humans in the world have these intelligences. In line with this combination of intelligences varies from one individual to another. His theory of multiple intelligences (MI) has not been accepted within the context of psychology (academic). On the other hand, it has met with positive feedbacks from many scholars. The following items are aspects of Gardner's Multiple intelligences:

- plays with words -Verbal
- plays with questions -Logical
- plays with pictures -Visual
- plays with music - Music
- plays with motion- Kinesthetic
- plays with socializing- Interpersonal
- plays alone -Intrapersonal

Some of the styles mentioned above are used while teaching by instructors and teachers.

SOLUTION

In order to understand learning style models, we should begin with one of the basic perceptions of the 20th century in the field of psychology: individuals rely upon formed filters to arrange their relations towards the world. These filters include many factors such as: biochemistry, cognition, experience, gender, psychology, psychodynamics, and so forth. Since no individual is capable of switching the filter on or off endlessly, it is clear that each learner has a style that s/he uses to choose, select, perceive, and understand the nature of assigned activities. Therefore, in a world that is rich in diverse information, individuals are selective in the information they receive. Individual ways of selection can be defined as our style, as we create our own personal viewpoint. This is very common for most people, and there are measures by which we can characterize learning styles in the globe. The aim of learning style study is to try to find individuals who utilize the items for better perception and interpretation of the conditions and situations around them. In this regard, we should design situations and environments with regard to the success of the students.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

A number of models and techniques for teaching learning strategies for foreign and second languages have been developed. These instructional models include many features for students

who have different learning styles. Teachers should use a strategy to apply different styles of teaching. S/he can set alternative or supplementary activities for the students. The teacher, for example, might have the students write a play or short story even, to utilize the students' holistic/integral abilities. As such, a wide range of activities prepared by the teachers can give students a set of choices that include elements for the various learning styles.

The teacher should necessarily be good not only at offering students supplementary opportunities but also trying to develop the learning skills and preferences of their students. That is to say that teachers should form a systematic set of class activities. The teacher's role is to form an equilibrium of learning styles and strive at being flexible and to be tolerant to up to date teaching styles. S/he ought to prefer to have a dynamic and practical vision of learning styles, as it asserts the implementation of possible and relevant different learning styles for the best achievement. Individuals' learning styles are not constant, and can change within the content of a study or task from course to course, lesson to lesson (Gilbert and Swanier 2008). The theory of the learning styles places emphasizes on the truth that an individual has various methods to learning and studying activities. On the other hand, if flexibility of learning styles across learning activities is used it can help make the student successful.

To sum up, in order for education to be conducted effectively, two ideas should be taken into consideration. Firstly, learners need to recognize and act upon areas of deficiency in their learning. Secondly, instructors should design and plan teaching activities with the students' needs in mind. We think that further and more detailed research with more appropriate new methodologies needs to be done, as changes in the field of education and novelties in the sphere of learning and teaching perceptions are very rapid.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Over the last sixty years, new methods and perceptions have arisen regarding studies on foreign or second language learning styles. Learning style can be generally defined as ideas and activities that students use to accomplish a learning item. Learning style is currently a highly pertinent theme, as the world is transforming rapidly due to advanced communications.

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To sum up, the source of any given student’s learning style is considered to be the biological and developmental set of characteristics of the learner. This means that an instruction method may be successful for some, but completely unsuitable for others. The theory of the learning styles places emphasizes on the truth that an individual has various methods to learning and studying activities. On the other hand, if flexibility of learning styles across learning activities is used it can help make the student successful. Therefore, with efficient education as a goal, two ideas should be taken into consideration. Firstly, learners need to recognize and act upon areas of deficiency in their learning. Secondly, instructors should design and plan teaching activities with the students’ needs in mind. Both of these ideas are discussed in the study.