



The importance of the clarification of VAK learning styles for language learners

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ABSTRACT

The given article underlined the significance of identifying learning styles in order to be more productive in the period of studying foreign languages. People receive and process information in different ways. It is mainly associated with individuals the way of applying data by their sensory modalities such as seeing, hearing, and touching. Learning styles are the manners and approaches in which learners learn best. In this research, I will review the learning styles based on several theories following the importance they have in the application in learning and teaching a second language process.

Keywords:

Learning styles, VAK Learning Style

Introduction

Every individual has his dominant side or they can have two of mixed learning styles to learn something new. If learners are aware of their own learning styles, appropriate techniques can be applied to the learning process. As a result, the learning procedure can be faster and efficient. (Anne & Sajnal, 2019)

Knowing about the preference side not only helpful in classroom settings but also plays a main role in everyday life. It increases problem-solving skills, analyzing, and analytical skills. Reid (1995) defines learning styles as “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills” (Reid, 1995). Learning styles have great importance in teaching as well. Knowing different ways the students learn and how they absorb the information, teachers can design their lessons effectively. They can engage students in the lesson easily and facilitate learners’ success in their studies. Students learn a second language in different ways than their native language.

Therefore, it is the teachers’ role to identify and deliver the lessons according to the learners’ preferred style of learning to improve learners’ motivation, performance, and achievement by employing different instructions in the teaching process to meet the needs of the students. As Lovelace said (2005), exploring the manners in which learners’ can achieve academic success is important for educators. It can ease the learning process as well as the teaching process itself. In this research, I will review the learning styles based on several theories following the importance they have in the application in learning and teaching a second language process.

Literature review

So much researches have been done so far on learners’ preferred learning styles. Here I will indicate some of them: Dunn and Dunn’s (1978) learning style is considered the most commonly used model which is indicated through five stimuli which are environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, and

psychological. According to this approach, every individual has his own learning style which works well. Some students acquire language by ear, some students gain knowledge by hands-on learning and others learn by seeing. Educators should define which style is appropriate to gain academic success. Honey and Mumford (1982) demonstrated four preferred learning styles. They are: activist, theorist, pragmatist, and reflector. According to their recommendation, each learner should be aware of their learning style and find ways to utilize these manners of learning.

Fleming's VAK Learning Style (1992) identified that learners can rely on three learning styles visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning preferences which can be different for every individual. His theory presents learner styles like that:

Visual learners

Visual learners are good at handwriting and they like drawing pictures and enjoy using colors.. They can visualize the objects easily. If somebody tells her the word "dog" she can make a picture of the dog in her mind rather than visualizing playing with it. These types of learners cannot communicate with others easily.

Auditory learners

Learners who have auditory learning styles learn best by listening and they sing or hum while they are doing other tasks. They have excellent memory remembering the names of the people. When they read say whisper themselves.

Kinesthetic learners

Learners who belong to kinesthetic learning style like acting and moving around by doing physical activities. They use gestures and touching people while speaking. They like handling their problems themselves. They express their emotions physically. Noushin Asadipiran (2016) researched identifying Iranian young learners' learning styles. To conduct this study, she used the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) to measure the students' preferred

learning styles. 60 high school male students, studying in Tehran, Iran, were chosen as the participants for this study.

Participant Profile

For this research, I chose a middle school girl who studies at one of the local schools in our town, Fergana. She is my 12 years old niece who is in form 6. She is interested in many subjects at school and English is her favorite one. She has been learning English for 5 years and now she is at the pre-intermediate level. She is a very well-behaved, intelligent, and hard-working student. She is good at problem-solving skills and she is outgoing by nature. She likes drawing and Art is one of her favorite subjects. She likes reading books and doing different activities during the lesson. Although Farina has mistakes in her speech, she can express her ideas to the listener. Before conducting the research, I interviewed and asked her about the difficulties in learning a second language. After the interview, I have realized that she has some difficulties in learning vocabulary and using it when it comes to making up sentences. I asked her about the process of learning vocabulary. She learns the vocabulary just from the copybook in which she writes during the lesson. Her first language is Uzbek and she is also fluent in the Russian language. When she learns new words she can compare them in all three languages and it is better for her learning vocabulary in the English-Russian dictionary as some of the words are similar in pronunciation. During the lesson, they do writing and reading tasks a lot and they have little time to practice listening and speaking skills. After analyzing her interview I realized that mostly their English lesson is delivered in a traditional way and teacher-centered. I decided to conduct a VAK questionnaire and interview to identify her dominant learning style so that she can use her preferred side to acquire a second language. Oxford and Crookall (1990) analyzed learning vocabulary strategies and they recommended that one should take into consideration learning styles while grasping new words or phrases. It is suggested, they said, visual learners, can learn vocabulary by connecting

the words with their mental images rather than learning individual words themselves.

Research design

To conduct my research I relied on Dunn and Dunn’s learning style theory and Fleming’s VAK Learning Style theory (1992). Fleming’s VAK learning style is a widely used model to identify learning styles. It was based on Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) models. Both of these researches categorize learning styles into three sensory modalities.

According to Dunn and Dunn (1993) learning style is a starting point of the manner that can trigger students to think deeply, gain new information, and keep it to use in the most appropriate situation.

According to their VAK learning styles theory, learners can be classified into three main categories in terms of absorbing information: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Sometimes learners can be dominant in one of these learning styles and sometimes students have to use a combined learning style according to the task response. The main point of Dunn and Dunn’s theory is the notion that appropriate personality traits have a considerable positive effect on students’ success. (Dunn, 2003; Dunn & Griggs, 2003). My research included two parts. Research 1. Initially, I interviewed my participant for 10 minutes based on the questions of Dunn and Dunn’s learning style theory. I selected 5 questions from every 3 variables accounting for 15 questions overall.

Dunn & Dunn’s learning style theory (VAK)

Perception	Description/Characteristics of Dunn & Dunn’s learning style theory	
V: Visual-Seeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind sometimes strays during verbal activities • Observes, rather than talks or acts; may be quiet by nature • Organized in approach to tasks • Likes to read • Usually a good speller • Memorizes by creating mental images • Thinks in pictures • Easily put off by visual distractions • May focus on the ‘big picture’ and use advanced planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds verbal instructions difficult • Remembers faces • Strong on first impressions • Likes drawing and doodling, may have good handwriting • Enjoys using color • Notices details • Often a quick thinker
A: Auditory – Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks to self aloud • Outgoing by nature • Whispers to self while reading, may hum or sing while working • Likes to be read to • May be particular about the exact choice of words • Memorizes by steps in a sequence • Very aware of rhythm • Easily distracted by noises • May have difficulty with written instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remembers names • May assess people by the sound of their voice • Enjoys music and the sounds of words • Enjoys talking and listening • Can remember – and often mimic – speech by picking up rhythm of the sentence • May need time to think (i.e. discuss it with myself) • May assess a situation on ‘how it sounds’ to them

<p>K: Kinaesthetic - Doing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In motion most of the time/fidgety • Outgoing by nature; expresses emotions by physical means • Taps pencil or foot/fiddles with objects while studying • Reading is not a priority • May find spelling difficult • Likes to solve problems by physically working through them • Very good body control, good timing and reflexes • Is affected by touch or lack of it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes physical rewards • Remembers what they have done rather than seen/heard • May assess people and situations by what 'feels right' • Enjoys handling objects • Enjoys doing activities • Likes to use gestures and touch people while talking to them
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Source: Authors; Adapted from Coffield et al., 2004; Dunn & Griggs, 2003; Dunn, 2001; Dunn, 2003.

Research 2. Then I gave a quiz consisting of 20 questions based on Fleming’s VAK learning theory. She did the online test and the test took 15 minutes to complete.

Data Collection and Findings

In this section, I will present the collected data from my research based on two commonly used theories. This data can help my participant learning process and solve her

existing problem in second language acquisition to some extent. It should be mention that in my interview questions 3,7,12, and 14 describes visual learners, questions 2,4,8,13,15 represent auditory learning modality and 1,6,9,10,11 are related to kineasthetic learning style. The following table shows the questions and the learning styles’ relations

Table 1.
Dispersion of Questions Related to Their Specific Learning Style

Learning styles	Questions
Visual	3,5,7,12,14
Kinesthetic	1,6,9,10,11
Auditory	2,4,8,13,15

My participant answered the questions and I marked the response according to the table which I prepared beforehand. Below I presented the table of the participant’s answer (Table 2).

Questions should be answered as “yes” or “no” .

Then I counted the “yes” answers related to learning modality.

No	Questions	Answers	
1.	Are you good with your hands?	Yes	
2.	Do you enjoy listening to audio books (books-on-tape)?		no
3.	Do you like reading?	yes	
4.	Are you aware of, and sensitive to, the sounds around you?	yes	
5.	Are you aware of, and sensitive to, the visual details around you?	yes	
6.	Do you like to move around? Do you sometimes pace or tap your pencil or wiggle your legs?	yes	
7.	Do you love drawing?	yes	
8.	Can you remember the names of the people easily?		no
9.	Do you enjoy doing activities?	yes	
10.	Are you a natural athlete?	yes	
11.	When you were younger, did people think you were "hyperactive"?		no
12.	When you get something new, do you always read the directions?	yes	
13.	Do you tend to hum and/or sing to yourself?	yes	
14.	Do you love writing (letters, journals, etc)?	yes	
15.	Can you talk on the phone for a very long time?		no

Source: 1. <https://www.homeschool.com/articles/Ablaze5/> Learning Styles Quiz
From Rebecca Kochenderfer's new book, [Homeschooling & Loving It](#)

The result is below:

Visual- 5 "yes" answers

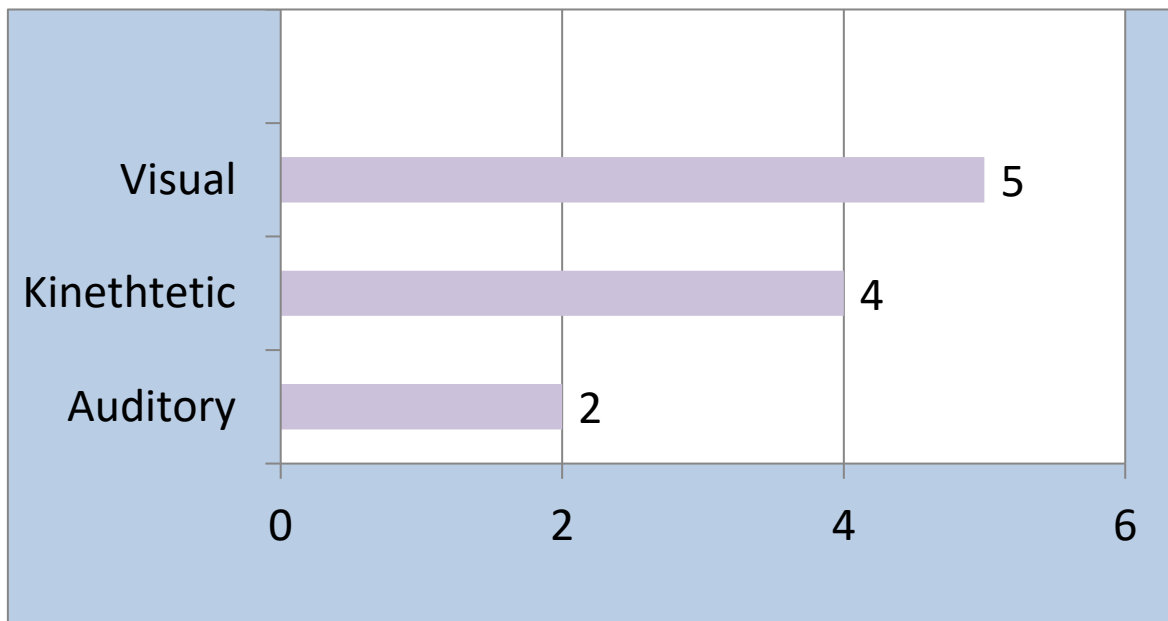
Kinesthetic - 4 "yes" answers

Auditory - 2 "yes" answers

According to the the first result, my participant's dominant learning style is Visual.

Here is the table which represents the findings.

Diagram of the interview part



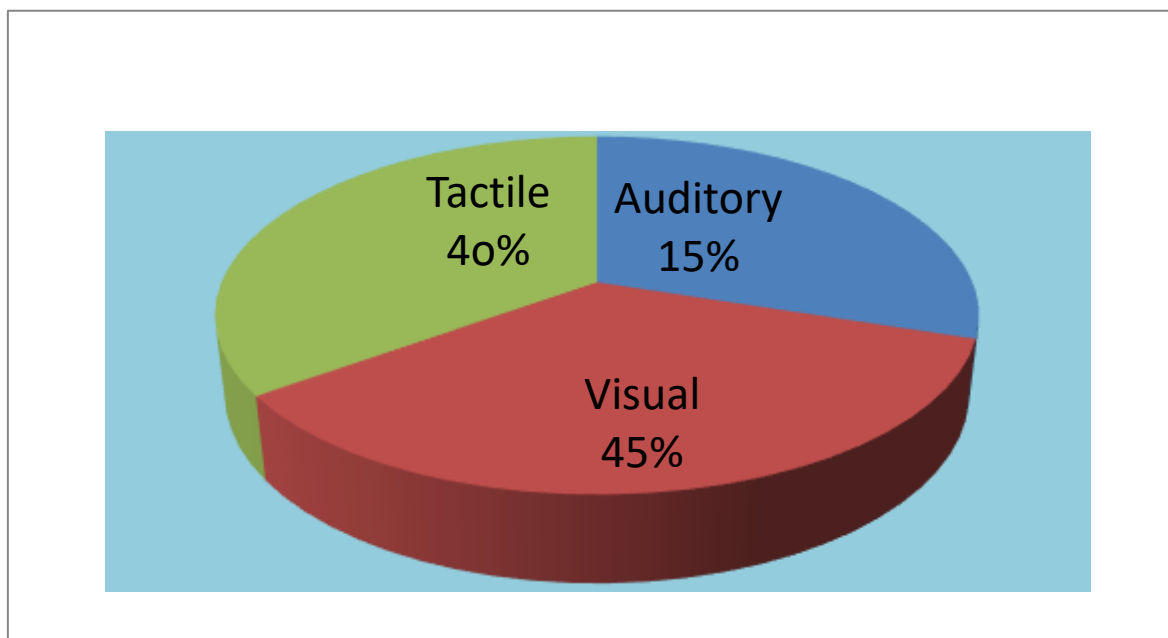
Then I prepared an online test based on VAK theory to be sure she is a visual learner indeed. My second research took 15 minutes to do a multiple-choice quiz consisting of 20 questions including all three variables. She did an online test and we got the result right after the test. The test result is below:

Result of the Test

- Auditory: 15%
- Visual: 45%
- Kinesthetic/Tactile: 40%

According to the result of the test she is a Visual learner.

Diagram of findings



According to the results of two types of research, I found that her most preferred learning style is visual, following kinesthetic

style, after that less dominant is auditory learning style. I advised her on some tips and the most appropriate approaches based on the

above-mentioned theories while learning the language. As she is a combination of visual and kinesthetic learners, I recommend that she should percept new words by visualizing mental images related to new words. She also draws diagrams or charts to divide words into groups. For example, when she is learning words related to the house she should draw the flat and its rooms and draw household kinds of stuff according to their place. In this way, she can improve her creativity skills which leads to memorizing new words easily. She also can improve her vocabulary bank by writing words on the sticky notes and put them in a visible place so that she can see and revise frequently. Reading books and writing down new vocabulary is also works for her learning style and they can even remember the pages that these words come from. Learning new words by activities and moving, acting during the class can help them to be successful learners in the language learning path. I decided to talk to her teacher about her very issue in second language acquisition and explain the research findings in order to facilitate the teaching and learning **process**.

Conclusion

In this research paper, I have reviewed several learning theory styles in order to identify and help my participant acquire a foreign language. My participant is a pre-intermediate level learner who struggles to learn new vocabulary while learning English. I decided to identify her dominant learning style because if she employs the best techniques it will become easier to memorize new words. I conducted two pieces of research, an interview, and a quiz, to identify her preferred learning style. At the end of my research, I revealed that the best techniques for her are to learn a language mostly based on visual and kinaesthetic learning styles. It is also her teachers' responsibility to deliver the lessons according to the learners learning styles. Teachers should have a deeper understanding of each individual's needs and weaknesses to be supported and increased. Then they organize the teaching process effectively based on multisensory approaches to make the

students more motivated, engaged, and with good attitudes towards the learning.

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