

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

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TTU Course

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Lesson 06: Learning and Learning Style

1) What is learning?

a) Learning as a process:

Learning is clearly more than just intelligence or study skills. It is, rather, a multi-faceted process, involving such factors as:

- ★ each person as an individual learner and his or her learning history, knowledge, experiences, skills, ambitions, interests, attitude, self-belief and circumstances
- ★ the current learning context including teaching methods, resources, materials, peer group and physical environment
- ★ the content and expected outcomes of the learning being undertaken
- ★ and the interactions between these.

We can say that learning has taken place when we both understand something and can explain, teach or demonstrate it to others.

b) Learning at a university level:

Some people think that memorizing 'facts' is all there is to learning. Certainly, it is useful to have information readily available when you need it. For most courses, however, what counts is not how many facts you can fit into your answers, but how you *use* information. You will be expected to demonstrate

different aspects of learning such as:

- ★ that you have made sense of course material
- ★ that you can evaluate and select what is relevant and important, and what can be omitted
- ★ that you can interpret information in a reasonable way, as relevant to the subject discipline
- ★ that you know how ideas are linked and interconnected
- ★ that you can apply knowledge, methods and algorithms to new problems and contexts
- ★ that you can structure and present your ideas and knowledge in a convincing argument

c) Five dimensions for learning:

Many different routes can be followed to arrive at the point where learning has taken place. These vary in level of enjoyment and active engagement; we might not even be aware that learning has taken place. Below are five dimensions along which learning activity can vary.

Five dimensions of learning

- 1 Conscious or unconscious
- 2 With different levels of attention
- 3 Via different sense sequences
- 4 By detail or by the whole picture
- 5 By fast track or by the scenic route

1 Conscious or unconscious

Conscious learning

Learning is conscious when we are *aware* that we are learning, as when we set out to memorize a poem or an equation, or when we recognize that we have understood new material. Typical methods of learning consciously are:

- ★ repeating something
- ★ writing it out

★ checking that we have remembered it

★ telling someone else what we know.

Unconscious learning

We are aware of a small part only of information taken in by the senses, which the brain processes. Learning is unconscious when we are unaware of it happening. Occasionally, unconscious learning may emerge into consciousness later, as when we feel we 'just know' something we didn't realize we had learnt. You may have experienced suddenly recognizing which way to go on an unfamiliar car journey, or surprising yourself by answering a question quickly, and then wondering, 'How did I know that?'

2 With different levels of attention

Our level of attention may vary, depending on:

★ our mental or physical state for learning

★ how focused we are on a single task

★ the way information is presented to us

★ whether the material is completely new.

learning can take place in a relaxed, aware state: it doesn't always require effort and concentration. You may recall occasions when you tried hard to remember something but forgot it quickly, while remembering easily something to which you had paid little attention, such as an advertisement or song.

3 Via different sense sequences

Each of us has our own preferred sequences for seeing, hearing, speaking, writing, and manipulating information in order to learn it.

4 By detail or by the whole picture

Some people learn best when they see the overall picture first; they are confused or overwhelmed by too much detail early on. Others learn best through building up details, allowing the whole picture to emerge. The 'whole picture' may be meaningless to them until they gain a flavour of the specific details.

5 By fast track or by the scenic route

Some people find efficient 'motorway routes', learning exactly what they need and only that. Others take scenic routes, gathering material which, though not essential, adds to understanding, recall and interest. The scenic route can lead to deeper processing and a richer experience. However, it can generate information not relevant to the task in hand. Which way is appropriate depends on the learning task and the time available.

Learning across the dimensions

At any one time, we occupy different positions along each of these five dimensions, depending on information from the environment and according to our needs and focus. It is easier to design effective study strategies when you are conscious of these dimensions and can use them to advantage.

d) Six conditions for learning:

For learning to occur at all, and for us then to know that the learning is complete, we need the following:

- 1 New experiences
- 2 Solid foundations
- 3 Rehearsal
- 4 Processing
- 5 Understanding
- 6 Demonstration

2) Recognizing what kind of learner you are:

a) Learning styles:

When you learn, you use different learning styles. You may use one learning style often and the others rarely. Also, you use different learning styles to learn different things. Therefore, to learn effectively, you must be knowing your learning styles.

Effective learning happens when you use the learning style that suits you best. When you learn in your preferred learning style, you become more interested, engaged and will be able to learn effortlessly

Perhaps the most simple way of describing 'learning styles' is to say that they are different methods of learning or understanding new information, the way a person takes in, understand, expresses and remembers information. While most of us may have some general idea about how we learn best, often it comes as a surprise when we discover what our predominant learning style is.

The learning style means the physical characteristic, thought and feeling that an individual uses for stably acknowledging, reacting and interacting with the environment. It is important and affects the learning motivation and efficiency of the learner.

1. There is no "best" way to learn. There are many different learning styles, and different styles are suited to different people and/or situations.
2. Everyone has a mix of learning styles, typically with one dominant style.
3. Learning styles guide:
 - a. The way we learn
 - b. The way we internalize experiences
 - c. The way we recall information
 - d. The words we use
- B. Why are learning styles important to the learner?
 1. When the learner knows and understands his or her learning style, the learner is more capable of selecting suitable techniques that may improve learning.
 2. Learning styles are not fixed; they can be developed. Less dominant areas can be strengthened.
 3. Research indicates that different learning styles use different parts of the brain. By involving more of the brain during learning, we can remember more of what we learn.
 4. Using multiple learning styles (i.e., trying study skills that are typical of other learning styles) may improve learning and may make learning easier.
 5. Learning styles are often closely related to our working style and to our skills and strengths. This should be a major consideration in career choice.
 6. Knowledge of dominant and less dominant learning styles should not discourage students from pursuing careers in which they are interested.

b) Different learning styles models

Different models are used to define learning styles. Here's a summary of what four leading theorists say about various types of learners and how they learn:

- One common model is the VARK model that classifies the learners into four categories. The concept of the VARK theory was introduced by **Neil Fleming**, an educational developer, in 1987. VARK is an acronym for these learning modalities: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, Kinesthetic.
- According to psychologist **David Kolb** learning styles are cyclical: Experiencing, Reviewing, Concluding, and Planning. Kolb says that learning styles evolve due to genetics, life experiences, and influences of the environments in which learners exist.
- There are four distinct learning styles According to **Peter Honey and Alan Mumford**: Activist, Theorist, Pragmatist, and Reflector.
- **The Felder Silverman** denotes four areas of personality that contribute to learning. The model creates four dimensions for learning styles. They are active or reflective, sensing or intuitive, visual or verbal, inductive-deductive, and sequential or global.

c) The VARK learning style model:

One of many instruments for determining learning style is the VARK questionnaire, developed by Neil Fleming. The VARK system categorizes learners into four styles: Visual, Aural, Reading/Writing, and Kinesthetic. Many learners show strength in more than one learning style.

Visual learners: learn best from visual images that do not include writing. Graphs and diagrams are easy for them to understand. They remember faces and places and tend to recall information by picturing it in their minds. If you want to invite a visual learner to come to your house, draw a map. In college, a visual learner is going to find it relatively easy to "read" a pie chart in a business class or perceive differences between artists' painting styles.

Aural or auditory learners: do well with hearing information. They remember words to songs and can recall conversations in detail by hearing them in their minds. If you want an aural learner to come to your house, just tell him or her how to get there. In college, an aural learner will remember lecture material in a

variety of classes and may be skilled at memorizing things like music or lines for a theatrical production.

Reading/Writing learners: are at home with written material. They comprehend and remember what they read, and they often enjoy writing. If you want a reading/writing learner to come to your house, provide written directions. College classes have traditionally been geared to the reading/writing learning style; these learners can take notes in most classes and will benefit from reading them as a method for study.

Kinesthetic learners: learn by doing. Hands-on activities and real-life experiences help them remember. If you want a kinesthetic learner to come to your house, the simplest way is to take him or her there yourself or get someone else to do so. Another way to give directions to a kinesthetic learner would be to provide details about what to look for on the way there, making your directions as experiential as possible. College classes like science labs, acting, or sports teach to the strengths of kinesthetic learners.

d) Learning styles Tips and strategies:

VISUAL

- Doodle diagrams of your written information in the margins
- Create a flowchart for the progression of your notes and ideas
- Make flashcards that include pictures or diagrams as visual clues
- Highlight key information in your texts or notes
- Create a chart or a series of boxes to remind you how to complete math equations
- Use a computer to convert data and notes into charts, tables, graphics, pictures, etc.
- Vocabulary mnemonics
- Hangman game
- Timelines

AURAL/AUDITORY

- Use a computer to record your notes read aloud. Convert this information to download for iPod using iTunes
- Read your notes aloud when studying (mind your surroundings!)

- Work with a regular study partner to review out loud
- Work in a group where you can discuss the information
- Tape lectures. If available, set the counter to zero when it begins and note the number at difficult times during lecture. Review these recorded times later for extra review.
- When learning new material, especially equations, talk your way through the material.
- Singing/ creating a song
- Use of metaphors/similes to compare and remember (as long as they are voiced)
- Use Internet resources like YouTube.com
- Invent acronyms
- Mnemonic devices

READING/WRITING

- Re-write your notes after class.
- Use colored pens and highlighters to focus in on key ideas
- Write notes to yourself in the margins
- Write out key concepts and ideas
- Compose short explanations for diagrams, charts, graphs
- Write out instructions for each step of a procedure or math problem
- Print out your notes for later review
- Post note cards/post-its in visible places (when doing dishes, on the bottom of the remote, etc.)
- Vocab mnemonics
- Organize your notes/key concepts into a Power point slideshow
- Compare your notes with someone else's
- Repetitive writing
- Hangman game

KINESTHETIC

- Type your notes after class -Create a YouTube video as a group to study later individually
- Write your notes onto flashcards - Scrabble -Make posters
- Review flashcards while walking, at gym, etc.

- Dog-ear pages in the reading where you can find critical information
- Sit near the front of the room
- Walk back and forth, move in some way, when studying notes
- Read your notes out loud
- As much as possible, create models for the information at hand
- Use the internet to research your subject material
- When possible, visit locations for your material (library, museum, historical sites, etc.)
- To learn a sequence or equation, use one note card for each step.
- Highlight material when reviewing/studying
- Use a dry-erase or chalk board to study or review
- Taboo-type game/ charades
- Correlate physical movements with ideas/terms

e) Benefits of finding out your learning preference:

The following are the benefits of discovering your learning style:

- **Educational Benefits**
 - When you know your learning preferences, you can maximize your potential.
 - It will allow you to have a better understanding of your subject.
 - It can also help you master difficult areas of study.
 - It may also help you overcome some of the challenges of learning new material.
- **Professional Benefits**
 - One invests in knowledge and skills throughout life.
 - To be successful at work, you will have to be aware of the new trends in your industry.
 - Therefore, you will have to learn daily.
 - It can help you become an expert in your field.
 - Most importantly, you can better organize yourself more efficiently.
- **Personal Benefits**
 - You can easily understand information.
 - Learning then becomes an enjoyable, not time-consuming, task.

- It can increase your confidence and self-respect.
- It can help you achieve your personal and professional objectives.