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The Relevance of Learning Styles in Teaching English for Medical Students

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the discussion of the role of learning styles in teaching English for the students who learn at the medical university. This article presents different learning styles and their descriptions as well.

Nowadays, English has become a chief language in most aspects in our life. Teaching English for medical students is an ever-evolving process which requires that both students and teachers continuously update themselves. This has increased the demand for acquiring English quickly, efficiently and fluently. In this case, learners' learning styles play an imperative role in delivering the language to the learners. The effectiveness of the impact of educational material on medical students largely depends on the degree and level of illustrative material. The visual richness of the educational material makes it bright, convincing and contributes to a more successful process of its assimilation By realizing these styles deeply, teachers can get a key to teach a learner in an efficient way.

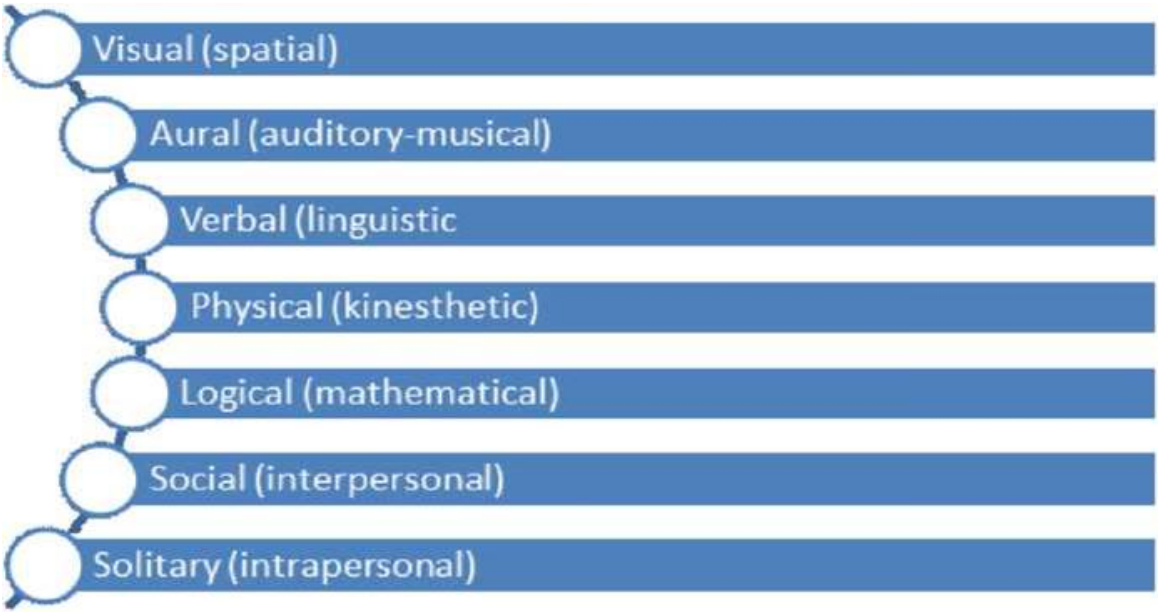
A learning style is not in itself an ability but rather a preferred way of using one's abilities. Learners have various learning styles which can be different in their "natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new language and skills". This has resulted in crucial changes in the field of medical education, with a shift from didactic teacher-centered and subject-based teaching to the use of interactive, problem-based, student-centered learning. Most medical school curricula have adopted new methods of teaching and learning to varying degrees. It has been argued that knowledge of learning styles can be useful to both teachers and students, in that teachers can tailor pedagogy to correlate with the learning styles of

students. Similarly, students with knowledge of their learning styles could be empowered to identify and use the techniques of learning best suited to their individual styles, resulting in greater educational satisfaction. Moreover, some learners have strong style preferences and tendencies and might be based on different situations and tasks.

In general psychology, interest in learning styles goes back to at least the 1920s when Carl Jung proposed the theory of psychological types. In the field of education, the learning style concept has been recognized since at least the mid-1970s. Consequently, many different ways of learning styles have been studied both conceptually and empirically, and numerous theories have been suggested, often classifying individuals into distinct groups.

Students are humans, this means they differ from each other in their preferences. When it comes to learning a new language, each student receives processes and stores information differently. Some students may learn by using books, pictures, papers and pencils, whilst others prefer integration and even hands-on activities. If their ideal learning styles are not recognized in the classroom, studying gets tough- and students who have a hard time tend to lose their motivation.

Differences in student preferences have been loosely categorized into 7 major learning styles:



1. Visual (spatial)

Pictures, images, graphs and diagrams can be the preferred authentic learning media of visual learners. These kind of learners enjoy observing lessons come to life, and often sit at the front of the class to not only get a full view of their teacher's body language and facial expressions, but also to avoid potential visual obstructions (and distractions). Visual learners are detailed note takers. They think in pictures and learn best from visual displays, slide shows, posters, clips and other visual tools. Sometimes, simple things like writing an outline of your grammar lesson on the board will also satisfy your visual learners' desire to take notes and capture everything in their own creative and vivid manners. According to this style students who prefer “sensing” are more concrete thinkers, adapt well towards facts, adept at memorizing while “intuitive” learners are abstract thinkers, innovative, loves patterns, concepts and relationships and oriented towards theories and underlying meanings. The “verbal” learner prefer written and spoken explanations. The “active” learner learns by trying things out, actively engaged and prefers working in a group

2. Aural (auditory-musical)

Auditory learners learn things by listening music, the audios of the lessons. They acquire knowledge through discussions, oral lectures, and mini-presentations. Auditory learners identify

the meanings of words through listening to the tone, pitch, speed and other phonological nuances of your speech. Auditory learners enjoy reading books aloud and might often record their voice.

3. Verbal (linguistic)

These you can see learners who learn best through words regardless of whether they are communicated in speech or writing. While learning something new, students who belong to this category prefer listening to a detailed explanation over viewing a physical, visual demonstration. Like the auditory learners, verbal learners understand in traditional classroom lectures. However, they are also very interpersonal and they like asking question, discussions and teaching fellows. To sum up, verbal learners make great teacher's pets and thrive in group activities that involve lots of interactions and words.

4. Physical (kinesthetic)

Hyperactive students may be curious kinesthetic learners who would rather use their body, hands and sense of touch to explore the world. These learners tend to have difficulties in sitting for long periods of time, but with the right strategy teachers may be able to enthrall these energizer learners. Kinesthetic students are commonly distracted and are often the classroom culprit for distracting others. In fact, ESL games such as pantomime and charades are not only great for giving kinesthetic learners an opportunity to redirect their energy, but also for re-invigorating your half-awake class.

5. Logical (mathematical)

These students prefer using logic, systems and reasoning. It seems that they have a keen sense for numbers, sequence association and problem solving. Teachers can feed logical students by including classroom activities that involve data collection, multi-step processes and investigations. Teachers could break things like non- finite articles and definite articles into tables and charts. This kind of learners processes his or her thoughts in a linear fashion, building up stepwise using logical progression while a “global” learner thinks more holistically and is comfortable making big leaps, grasps the big picture and loves solving complex problems

6. Social (interpersonal)

Group learning encourages the learning experience of social/interpersonal learners. They are quite verbal and are always anxious to open what they have learned in interactive settings. By giving a chance to social -active students to explain themselves, teachers can get what they intended. Teaching a lesson on cultural differences, etiquette social or awareness

7. Solitary (intrapersonal)

From the name suggested, these kind of students are your quiet intelligent who can work alone with few directions from the teacher. They can be shy during the classroom. Solitary learners can be quite extroverted when given the opportunity, as well. The desire for self-study prevent solitary learners from active, voluntary classroom participation. In a group setting, your solitary learner may seem inactive, reserved. To engage solitary learners and keep them from finishing an entire group project on their own. This model has several advantages over other approaches, including the possibility of assessing multiple learning styles, brevity, ease of administration, free access and appropriate psychometric characteristics of the Index of Learning Styles. Furthermore gender differences in learning styles of medical students have yielded contradictory results. Significantly higher number of female medical students preferred the sensing mode of learning as compared to males; whereas a significant number of male medical students preferred the visual mode. In addition, there seems to be research evidence that females prefer to learn by trying things (i.e., active learning style) rather than by thinking things through (i.e., reflective learning style). On the other hand, several studies have challenged the gender effect on learning preferences in medical students and found no evidence for the difference on learning styles

between male and female medical students.

To sum up, knowledge of the learning style preference for an individual student is helpful, since with this knowledge the student is better able to understand himself or herself, and is better able to exploit to this knowledge to his or her advantage to maximize learning. Uncovering the association of performance of individual subjects to specific learning styles will help students to examine his or her own need to expand the ways in which the student chooses to learn, and train to learning differently in order to perform better. A student who is predominantly learning through intuitive ways and struggles in subjects like anatomy and genetics will have to learn and practice to acquire knowledge using sensing methods in order to perform better. They can benefit to learn using sensing learners' strategies to memorize specific details and facts through the use of acrostics and memory cards for example. Pedagogically it is also valuable to the instructor and teacher, not just to know the learning style preference of the class and the individuals but also to teach effectively in specific subjects, and to have activities that enables more of "sensing" learning, such as providing drills and practices for factual memorization in Genetics and Anatomy, although there is a need not to neglect the conceptual understanding of principles in Genetics and Anatomy.

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