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Языковедение и иностранные языки

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LANGUAGE LEARNING STYLES AND STRATEGIES

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We have often wondered why we have difficulties learning a foreign language from a particular instructor, whereas another seems to explain things in just the right way. There was a question why the course that somebody said was easy turned into a very complicated one for another person. The reason of these discrepancies may be differences in learning styles.

What is learning style? To put it simply, learning style (or learning preference) is the way you tend to learn best. It involves your preferred method of taking in, organizing, and making sense of information. Learning styles do not tell us about a person's abilities or intelligence, but they can help us understand why some tasks seem easier for us than others. There are several benefits of thinking about and trying to understand your learning preferences.

People learn most effectively when the strategies used are closely matched with their preferred learning style. Sometimes we can improve our learning by knowing what our strengths are and then doing more of what we're good at. But it's also important to know our weaknesses in order to enhance our skills in these areas [1].

Three main learning style preferences are distinguished: auditory (learning by hearing), visual (learning by seeing), and kinesthetic (learning by doing).

If English instructors try to improve the effectiveness of students' work, they should be aware of the main learning categories that best match the way the students like to learn (e.g. visually), and check to see if they follow the suggested strategies (e.g. enhancing visual learning). Thus, teachers can help foreign language students develop their natural style preferences [3].

So, if a group of students prefers learning by hearing they have to use the strategy called *enhancing auditory learning*. Therefore the students should listen to instructions and information given orally; sit towards the front of the room so they can hear well and so that they won't be distracted by different sources of noise; repeat information silently to themselves. The right strategies of language learning could be the following: rehearsing information either silently in head or out loud; studying with a partner and taking turns reading to each other and discussing key concepts; working in quiet areas to minimize hearing music or other distractions; using rhymes or jingles to help remember important points; using textbook diagrams and illustrations; reading instructions and questions out loud to themselves (or subvocalize in test situations).

When preferred learning style is visual (learning by seeing) the proposed strategy is *enhancing visual learning*. That is, during language classes students should watch for key words written on PowerPoint slides or the board to help organize notes; listen and write down what they hear; fill in their notes and check for understanding after each class; use visuals like symbols and colors in notes; ask the instructor for clarification of details; ask if other visual information is available. While learning independently the students may make an outline of key topics in chart or diagram format; make pictures in mind; look for sketches, diagrams, or charts to help interpret information; write down problems and questions and practice writing solutions or responses; use flash cards to help rehearse; draw boxes or circles around concepts and draw lines or arrows to show how they are related to one another.

In contrast, *kinesthetic* students are comfortable without visual input and therefore enjoy and profit from conversations and oral directions. They are excited

by classroom interactions in role plays and similar activities. As the rule they usually ask questions and participate in discussions; think of the relevance and applicability of the course, themselves, and life in general; use a lap-top to take notes, etc. They like lots of movement and enjoy working with tangible objects, collages, and flashcards. Sitting at a desk for very long is not for them; they prefer to have frequent breaks and move around the room [2].

When kinesthetic students work over improving a language they highlight, underline, or take notes; break reading tasks into small chunks; use the discussion or practice questions in the textbook or study guide to help rehearse information; personalize the information, i.e. think about how the concepts apply to them or other people they know; think about how they can use the information outside the classroom or course. So this group of students learns by doing. It should be mentioned that they typically use their hands when talking to people, try using their hands and gestures when studying and explaining concepts to themselves.

When the learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style these strategies become a useful tool for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning. If there is harmony between the student (in terms of style and strategy preferences) and the combination of instructional methodology and materials, then the student is likely to perform well and feel confident [1]. So the foreign language instructor's purpose is to help students determine their learning style and work out appropriate methodic of a language teaching.

References

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