



ADOPTING SUITABLE STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES REDUCES STRESS AND ENHANCES EFFECTIVE LEARNING

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Abstract: A learning style can be described as the favorable way in which a person ‘absorbs’ information. Learning styles are what we are born with and can be identified as early as their months of age. An efficient teacher is one who is aware of the learning style of each and every student and helps him to develop and excel rather than interfere or influence. Every classroom will have a mix of Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic learners. Effective teaching and opportunities for learning are created when the needs of all types of learners are addressed.

Respecting learning styles within the classroom and home environment makes children comfortable and confident as the stress and frustration are considerably removed from the process of learning and academic achievement.

Index Terms - _ learning style, psychological wellbeing, Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic learners, strategies,

I. INTRODUCTION

“ADOPTING SUITABLE STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES REDUCES STRESS AND ENHANCES EFFECTIVE LEARNING”

Learning Styles:

Introduction:

Schools and teachers play a central role in enhancing the psychological well being of children. Teachers are key agents of change to foster the cycle of adaptive, holistic learning and development resulting in children who are psychologically healthy and educationally well-equipped to face challenges. It is the duty of the teacher as a facilitator of learning to identify the individual difference among her students and cater to their different learning styles.

A learning style can be described as the favorable way in which a person ‘absorbs’ information. In more technical terms a learning style is the preferred way in which an individual attends to stimulus, processes information, stores the details and also recalls data overtime.

Richard Bandler and John Grinder who developed Neuro Logistic programming (NLP) used the word sub modality to describe the way people take in and process information. Broadly speaking the four learning styles are Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Tactile (Touch).

Definition

Learning styles are what we are born with and can be identified as early as their months of age.

The style that is encouraged or nurture are likely to develop better, children are likely to revert to what is more dominate in then. If this does not happen they remain frustrated and tend to under achieve.

An efficient teacher is one who is aware of the learning style of each and every student and helps him to develop and excel rather than interfere or influence. No one learning style is better or worse than the other. Each style is suited for a particular task, vocation or subject. If a particular dominant style is stimulated properly, it can help the child realize his/ her true potential.

“A wise man is he who does not grieve for the thing which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has” - Epictetus”.

There are no gender differences in learning styles. The table given below shows how to identify the different learning styles and the suitable activities for each style.

Verbal-Linguistic ✓	<p>You love reading, writing, telling stories. You have a good memory for names, places, dates. You are sensitive to nuances and the rhythm of words.</p>
Logical-Mathematical	<p>You have strong problem-solving and reasoning skills.</p> <p>You ask questions logically.</p> <p>You can recognize and manipulate abstract patterns and relationships.</p>
Visual-Spatial ✓	<p>You need a mental or physical picture to understand new information.</p> <p>You do well with maps, charts, diagrams and like puzzles and mazes.</p>
Musical ✓	<p>You enjoy listening to music and are aware of surrounding sounds.</p> <p>You can remember melodies and recognize pitch and rhythm.</p> <p>You are sensitive to the emotional elements of music.</p>
Kinesthetic	<p>You are good at physical activities and hand-eye coordination.</p> <p>You have a tendency to move around, touch things and gesture.</p> <p>You use your body to convey ideas and emotions and to solve problems.</p>
Interpersonal	<p>You enjoy cooperative work.</p> <p>You are good at organizing, communicating, mediating, negotiating.</p> <p>You work effectively with others and recognize their goals, motivations and intentions.</p>
Intrapersonal	<p>You are confident and enjoy working alone.</p> <p>You have good instincts regarding your strengths.</p> <p>You understand your emotions and goals.</p>
Naturalist	<p>You can recognise flora and fauna and make distinctions in the natural world.</p> <p>You see the natural world from a larger perspective, such as how nature interacts with civilization.</p>

Type of Learner	Suitable Activities
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use choral drills Use jigsaw reading Use information-gaps Use dialogue-building & role play Rank & prioritize
Verbal - linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use word flashcards Use worksheets & trace words Use dialogue-reading Reread books Read aloud with a tape Retell stories Prediction & discussion
Logical Mathematical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use word patterns, phonics Use time lines Categorize and sequence Compare & contrast characters & stories
Visual -Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use flashcards & storyboards Use mind maps, graphs, photos Use colour to highlight sounds/forms Use picture dictations Create brochures, posters Circle words
Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model letters with play dough Trace words on students' backs, in the air Touch flashcards placed around room Show/point to objects Play 'Simon says' Act out stories Word-process
Naturalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the environment in activities Draw on similarities & differences in objects
Musical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing songs, raps, chants Use percussion instruments to accompany input Use tongue twisters Use rhythmic, repetitive stories & poems Play background music
Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for self-study Provide tools for self-assessment Listen to audio-books & read along Describe favourite parts of stories

Every classroom will have a mix of Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic learners. Effective teaching and opportunities for learning are created when the needs of all types of learners are addressed.

When a teacher understands the learning style of each child and caters to them, it helps to reduce the stress, because children absorb information in ways that are comfortable for them and this in turn enhances better learning.

Bandler and Grinder coined the terms Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Bradway used looker, listener and mover for the learning styles she discovered among students.

Learning Styles- An Overview of Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic Learners

Characteristics of Visual Learners or Lookers

- Lookers or visual learners use the sense of sight more often and predominantly while absorbing information.
- They pick up, process and remember visual cues more, like colour, shape, size and position.
- They process information as pictures, patterns and processes that have no words.
- They have excellent eye- hand coordination and excel at most activities that involve fine motor coordination.
- They are often very well organized, use visual planners and meet deadlines.
- They are good planners and can organize things very well. Their attention to detail is often impeccable.
- When learning they benefit from visual support like the board, a power point/flash presentation, bullet point, highlighters and materials that have been highlighted, flash cards, charts, maps and colourful pictures.
- In play they choose all materials that are colourful, like to imitate what they have seen, choose construction materials like blocks, jigsaw puzzles, and picture books.
- When they communicate they often use a lot of "seeing" words. For example, they may say "I see where you are coming from", "Show it to me in black and white", "Let's see eye to eye", "That's a bright idea.
- Auditory learners or Listeners prefer sounds, words and music when absorbing information. They process information as words and sounds.
- They are early talkers and also love to have conversations most of the time. They even tend to speak out to themselves when trying to gain clarity.
- They learn new words and languages very easily and have a vast and elaborate vocabulary.
- They can be soothed easily with music, familiar sounds and through conversation in which the words make sense to them.
- They love singing, working with words, puns, word games and puzzles, recitation, elocution, debating, dramatics, poetry and reading aloud.

- They can use speech very well and so they have many questions, explanations and arguments and are clear and precise when they use words to describe situations or people.
- They are good at conversations, marketing, acting, making presentations, presenting lectures and music.
- Auditory learners can also be good listeners since they process information through their ears. They follow instructions with ease and can also give very clear instructions.
- They love listening to music and also to recorded speeches, poems and audio books.
- They love the company of others and need to always be around people that they can talk with or share hobbies like music or poetry with.
- They love attending music concerts and usually are good singers or musicians. They have the ability to also find small variations in pitch, distortions in rhythm and are the ones that understand the small nuances that go into making a song or poem great.
- As learners they enjoy listening to the teachers and can almost always remember what they have heard and repeat it accurately. They excel at phonetics and also enjoy working with words, rhymes, homophones, homonyms and puns. They learn best when they record their own voice, hear something that is read out to them or use acronyms.
- They are tactile learners and so they learn hands-on, while doing something.
- They have well-coordinated bodies and excel at tasks that involve the large muscles in the body like sports and dance.
- They are restless and fidgety and need to "do" things all the time.
- They express emotions easily through actions or gestures and are often up and down on emotional highs and lows. They get frustrated easily too.
- They remember actions, emotions and moves more often than pictures and words. They do not form visual images or record words in their minds and so have difficulty remembering facts.
- They can come up with brilliant ideas, solutions and thoughts while walking, running or moving.
- They like working around people but do not need to keep talking or interacting.
- As children they reach all motor milestones faster, keep moving and do not particularly enjoy books or pictures unless they can move them around; they take to songs and rhymes that have actions or routines to follow or those that they can dance to.
- When they communicate they often use a lot of "move or feel" words. For example, they may say "It

feels good to me", "I catch the idea", "Lets meet on common ground", "I want to be in touch with you about something."

• Interplay of Learning Styles at Three Levels

Learning is a complex interplay of learning styles that operate at the conscious level, at the Subconscious level and at the unconscious level.

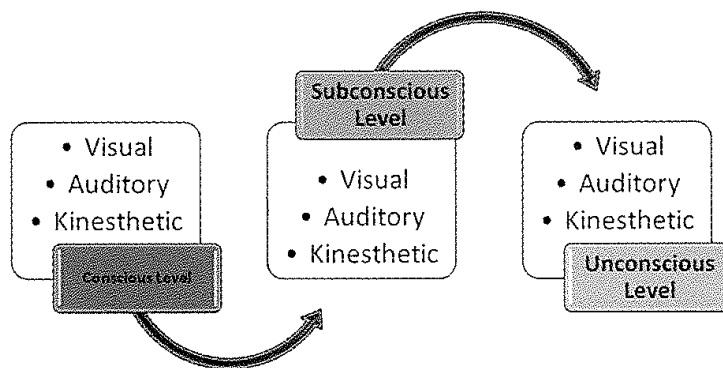


Fig 1: Interplay of Learning Styles at Three Levels.

We all have unique ways of processing information, thinking and learning. Understanding these patterns of processing information is crucial in finding the most effective ways to educate a child. Each learning style is dominant at a particular level or state of mind. Based on the level at which information is processed the thinking and the learning of the child will change and assume a completely different dimension unique to him/her.

Strategies for Teachers

1 Visual Learners

Visual learners in the classroom would function better with the following types of aids: charts, maps, flow charts, visually represented mind maps, sight words, flash cards, pictures art materials, cue cards, graphs, charts that show hierarchy and relationships, highlighters, bullet points, images that can be associated with the concept, diagrams, power point presentations, video clips, organized details, clear visual instructions, arrows and colour coded words. They like to engage in activities that involve fine motor skills. They would also like to work in the mathematics lab.

The classroom needs to be well organized and free from clutter. While seating them in the classroom avoids making them sit in places where there are visual distractions like an open door or window.

- Visual Learners learn by taking large chunks of information in intuitive leaps and not gradually, as isolated pieces of information. Make sure that they can see a visual connection in what they are expected to learn. For example, they can learn all of the multiplication facts as a related set in a chart much easier and faster than memorizing each fact independently.
- While teaching, make sure that you give them the bigger picture as a pie diagram, a hierarchy chart or mind map and then work on the details. When helping the visual child recall information, ask them to close their eyes and see the image in their mind. If you must use a lecture, make sure you have small breaks to do a pen and pencil questionnaire or draw something in between to help the visual child regain their focus.
- Use charts, pictures and visual details including highlighted material in the notes. If needed you can guide the student to write key points in the margin, also teach them to create simple mind maps and to also learn through sequences that can be created for every bit of material that has to be learnt.


Challenges: Encourage them to participate in group discussions and hands-on projects. Teachers have to ensure that they encourage the other styles within them and also develop social skills and communication. Promote team work as they need to be able to also take inputs to increase the knowledge base of their work. Communication again is essential for the visual learner who often tends to remain in a "shell". (Do not force, plan tasks in a way that the child will get to be in all types of tasks and benefit from them.)

Auditory Learners

- Auditory learners excel when they work with words, phonetics, conversations, expression, guessing games, quizzes, word building tasks, vocabulary tasks, audio clips, discussions, debates, audio presentations, seminars, lectures and reading aloud. .
- Recording their own voice and listening to it, rhythmic patterns of learning (like ancient Tamil poems that were handed down for generations), rhyming words, acronyms, small songs and jingles that take in the answer they need to memorize will be very useful.
- Opportunities to ask and to answer questions and working in small groups with others as they can talk things out and gain clarity. Peer tutoring will also be a great way to keep them motivated and also to listen to others and learn.
- Seat them in places in the classroom where they will not be distracted by background noises. They need to be able to listen clearly to process information.
- Have opportunities for role plays, speeches, seminars and oral presentations. After completing a hands-on experiment, allow them to describe what they learnt as a process. This will help them assimilate the information better.
- If you must use graphs and visual aids, ensure that the child has a chance to talk about or listen to information about the visual aid used. Otherwise the information will not be assimilated well.

Challenges: Teachers must make such children participate in concentration games and hands-on projects while ensuring that they encourage the other learning styles within them. These children need to develop the skill of calming down, paying attention to other stimuli and working together with others without dominating them with verbal instructions. They need to be taught how to sort out information more systematically. They use piles of information since they struggle with visual order. As a teacher, you could help them use words or acronyms to make the process of organizing information more effective.

Kinesthetic Learners

- Kinesthetic learners, learn best hands-on, through projects, field visits, role plays, experiments, activities, games and by moving or doing.
- Seat them in the classroom so that they can actively participate in events without distracting others as they will move more often.
- Allow them to use the whole body and work on the board. Even if they write slowly in the notebooks, they can be encouraged to stand, move and work on the board so that they absorb information while using the whole body. ' 
- Use touch and texture to help them pick up spellings or numbers. As they close their eyes you can write with your finger in their palm or back and allow them to process the information. In addition they can also learn by writing on sand, felt, velvet and other textures with their finger.
- Give opportunities to apply all concepts learnt within the classroom in real life settings. If not possible ensure that you immediately associate theoretical information into a practical example emphasizing the application value, the kinesthetic learner will grasp it.

Allow the children to use an abacus, number lines (even to physically move on a line not just the model), modeling clay to make the model of what they are learning, and simple teaching learning materials that can actually be handled by the child will be most essential.

- If you must use a lecture method, pause for a bit to let the child move or create a game where you can "anchor" points onto a finger or shoulder. This movement will get them to focus and the "anchor" will help them recall information when they try to learn the concept later.
- Use the kinesthetic child to distribute books, worksheets, carry books, move around, collect assignments and so on. As they do this, you can give them age appropriate tasks like counting, recalling information etc.

Challenges: Teachers must make them participate in concentration games and in tasks that involve active listening while they encourage the other styles within them. They also have to develop the skill of paying attention to other stimuli and developing communication and vocabulary that will be essential to support

their overall development. Teach them to adhere to deadlines and also put in planned effort each day to meet that deadline.

Guidelines for teachers

Knowing about the unique learning styles and becoming aware ...of one's own learning style is the first step. This self-awareness will help a teacher, parent understand what a child can do with least effort and what would require most effort.

1. If a teacher or parent is working on a one-on-one basis with 'a student, an insight into the exact learning style will be very beneficial to maximize learning.
2. When the teacher is working with a group of children, it may often be impractical to suit the needs of every child. Instead a good lesson plan multi incorporation plan must incorporate the learning styles by including several activities that will benefit visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners alike.
3. Individual assessments (like class tests or observations) will give insight into the areas where a particular child is struggling to succeed. The teacher or parent could work then try and reason out why performance in a particular area was not up to the mark and look for ways to change the method of instruction, teaching, testing or working with the child. 5. While teaching an individual or a child, if you as a teacher or parent find that the child is not interested or focussed, it may also be because their learning style has not been tapped through the method adopted by you. Making changes to accommodate the learning style in the teaching- learning process will make a difference to the motivation level of the child because he/she will be able to absorb information easily.
4. Respecting learning styles within the classroom and home environment makes children comfortable and confident as the stress and frustration are considerably removed from the process of learning and academic achievement.
5. The use of learning styles while constantly motivating, encouraging and supporting children makes a vast difference in the psyche of the child as it contributes to healthy "being" states within.

In the words of Goethe, "Treat people (Children) as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being." The understanding and use of learning styles will undoubtedly get us closer to that vision of the ideal.

In conclusion, a thorough understanding of learning styles and applying this understanding in lesson planning and evaluations will be very beneficial to the child. Children remain motivated and focused longer on what is being taught when they are supported in their dominant learning style. This sustained interest and motivation makes a difference as they choose to spend more time on things that would have otherwise been frustrating and stressful.

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Understanding Learning Styles, Ms.Aarthi Rajratnam, Consultant Psychologist, Specialized in Childhood & adolescent Mental Health

