LANGUAGE LEARNING STYLES AND STRATEGIES: A BRIEF REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Styles and strategies used in language learning actually different in terms, however, they give effects to the success of language learners. The learning styles comes from personality variables. Take for example; psychology, cognitive make up, socio-culture background and educational experience. Learning strategies relates to the behaviour or thought of learners to enhance their own learning. The functions of learning strategies is to make language learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable. The combination of language learning styles and strategies will create more independent and autonomous learners.

Keywords: Learning Styles, Learning Strategies, and Implication of Learning Styles and Strategies in L2Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning styles and strategies are some of the factors which have contribution to help students in learning and mastering English as a second language or foreign one. Oxford (2001:395) mentions, "A second language is a language studied in a setting where that language is the main vehicle of everyday communication and where abundant input exists in that language. A foreign language is a language studied in an environment where it is not primary vehicle for daily interaction and where input in that language is restricted". Linguists name a second or a foreign language L2.

Styles in learning a subject are general approaches that are used by students in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subjects. Learning styles influence the teaching method and make it become wonderful for some learners and terrible for others. Learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, or techniques which are used by learners of learning styles; the types of learning strategies; implications of learning styles; and strategies for L2 teaching.

LEARNING STYLES

Nunan (1991:168) says, "Learning styles refer to any individual's preferred ways of going about learning". In addition, Oxford (2001:359) describes that learning styles are general approaches, for example, global or analytic, auditory or visual which are used by students in mastering any subject including a language. In general, learning styles result from personality variables such as psychological, cognitive make-up, socio-culture background and educational experience. Some aspects of learning styles will be discussed as follows.

Sensory Preferences

Oxford (2001:360) states, "Sensory preferences refer to physical, perceptual language channel with which the students the most comfortable". There are four main areas of sensory preferences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (movement), and tactile (touch-oriented). Nunan (1991:170) explains that visual students like to learn by watching, listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English, watching TV in English, using English out of class,

e.g., in shops, trains, etc,. learning new words by hearing them, and learning by conversation. In other words, visual students read and obtain a great deal from visual stimulation. In other words, visual students read and obtain a great deal from visual stimulation. Visual students will get confused when lectures, conversations, and oral instructions are not followed by visual backup.

In contrast, auditory students want the teacher to explain anything. They feel OK if they have their own textbook. They will also write anything in their notebook. They study grammar, learn by reading, learn new words by seeing them, enjoy role-plays and similar activities in the interaction of the classroom, but they feel awful with written work. Different with the two sensory preferences above, kinesthetic and tactile students are fond of movement and like working with tangible objects, collages, and flashcards. They do not like sitting in class all the time. They also like to talk in pairs or practice English outside the class. By considering these different preferences, teachers are supposed to provide a range of learning options and activities in class because the class consists of students who are different with each other. The teacher should be creative in giving teaching materials.

Personality type

Personality type that is often called psychological type is another learning style aspect. This short intuitive random versus sensing-sequential, thinking versus feeling, and closure oriented/judging versus open/perceiving.

a. Extrovert versus introvert

Extrovert students, according to Oxford (2001:360) are described as those who love having interaction with people and love having friends. They gain their energy from external world. Compare with extrovert students, introvert ones get their energy from internal world. They seek for solitude and tend to have a few friends who are close to them. Language teachers should help these two different students to learn and work together by enforcing the limit to keep the extroverts' enthusiasm and by rotating the person in charge in leading a discussion to give chance to introverts to participate equally with extoversts.

b. Intuitive random versus sensing sequential

Oxford (2001:360) explains, "Intuitive students think in abstract, futuristic, large scale and non-sequential ways". They like to create theories and new possibilities, often have sudden insight, and prefer to guide their own learning. Meanwhile, sensing-sequential learners prefer facts to theories, need guidance specific instructions from the teachers and seek for consistency. Offering variety and choice is one of the keys to teach both kinds of these learners. Take for example, intuitive random students are given highly organized structure, meanwhile, sensing-sequential ones are offered multiple options and enrichment activities.

c. Thinking versus feeling

Thinking learners love telling the truth though the truth is often hurts others. They love to be considered 'competent' and pretend that they do not need praise though they desire it. In contrast, feeling ones show other people with their empathy, compassion through words and behaviors. They say things which can smooth over difficult situations. When L2 teachers put these learners in a team work or group, the thinking learners are able to show greater overt compassion to their feeling friends. And the feeling learners, on the other hand, might tone down their emotion while working with the thinking ones.

d. Closure-oriented/judging versus open/perceiving

Closure-oriented learners are serious and hard working. They love to be given written information and enjoy specific tasks with deadline. They want to reach judgments or completion quickly and want to clarity as soon as possible. On the contrary, open learners love to stay available for continuously new perceptions. They learn L2 less seriously; treat it like a game rather than a task which should be carried out. Closure oriented and open learners

provide a good balance for each other in the L2 classroom because the formers are task driven learners and the latters know how to have fun.

Desired Degree in General

In general, the learners can be divided into two degrees: global or holistic students and analytic ones. Global/holistic students who focus on the main idea interact socially. They love communicate events in which they stress the main idea and avoid analysis of grammatical minutiae. Though they do not get all the information, they feel free to guess from the context. Analytic students concentrate mush on the grammar. They will not take risk to guess from the context except in they are sure of the accuracy of their guess.

Biological Differences

Biological factors that give contribution to the differences in L2 learning styles are biorhythm sustenance, and location. Biorhythnm is time in which the students feel good and perform their best. Some L2 students love learning in the morning, some like in the afternoon, and other feel better when they start to learning in the evening. Sustenance refers to the need for food and drink during the learning process takes time. Location is based on the nature environment. Environment factors play roles in the condition, temperature, lightning, and firmness of the chairs. Comfortable environment will influence the success of teaching and learning process.

L2 learners have to find out briefly their learning style preferences. L2 teachers are supposed to offer a great variety of activities within a learner-centred, communicative approach.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Learning strategies are related to learning style, but far more specific. Oxford (2001:362) says, "Learning strategies are specific behaviors or thought processes that the students use to enhance their own L2 learning". Moreover, Nunan (1999:172) clearly mentions that learning strategies are the mental and communicative procedures which are used by the learners in learning and using the language. In addition, Nunan (1999:172) as cited in Oxford (1990) argues that there are two reasons that make learning strategies important. First, strategies are considered as self-directed involvement which is essential for communicative competence. Second, when the students have found out which learning strategies appropriate for them, they will be able to be more self-confident and study more effectively. Nunan (1999:172) as cited in Oxford (1990) says that learning strategies:

- Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence
- Allow learners to become more self-directed
- Expand the role of the teachers
- Are problem-oriented
- Are specific action taken by learners
- Involves many actions taken by learners, not just cognitive
- Support learning both directly and indirectly
- Are not always observable
- Are often conscious
- Can be taught
- Are flexible
- Are influenced by a variety of factors

Strategies used in class can give positive and negative result. Strategies can be useful and give positive result when:

a. The strategies relate to L2 task at hand
b. The learning strategies fit the particular students' learning style preferences to one degree or another

c. The students employ the strategies effectively and link them with other relevant strategies

Strategies in learning a L2 can make it easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. Learning strategies make the students more independent, autonomous, and long life learners.

Six Main Categories of L2 Learning Strategies

L2 strategies have been divided into six major groups. The followings will discuss a little bit about each category.
a. Cognitive strategy
Cognitive strategy lets the learners to manipulate the language material in direct way. The learners do the activity by reasoning, analyzing, taking note, synthesizing, and re-organizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures). They can practice the L2 in natural setting, practice structures and sounds formally.
b. Metacognitive strategy
Oxford (2001:364) says that metacognitive strategy is employed to manage the learning process overall. The activities in this kind of strategy are identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for L2 task, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategies. It is believed that metacognitive strategy has a significant, positive direct effect in cognitive strategy.
c. Memory-related strategy
This short of strategy enables learners to link one L2 item or concept with another although sometimes the learners do not well understand the concept. Unfortunately, this strategy does not always give positive relationship to the learners' performance in L2. Often the negative result caused by this strategy occurs because the strategy can only be useful in the beginning of learning a language, but it is less useful when the students have had advanced knowledge about the language.

d. Compensatory strategy
Compensatory strategy is taken as a way of helping learners to make up for missing knowledge. The activities involved in this strategy are guessing from context in listening and reading, using synonyms, and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and writing, and using gestures or pause words in speaking.
e. Affective strategy
it involves activities such as identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feeling, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing for good performance.
f. Social strategy
Social strategy will help the learners to work with others and to catch the idea about the target culture as well as the target language. The activities which are usually involves in this kind of strategy are asking questions to get verifications, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms.
IMPLICATION OF LEARNING STYLES AND STRATEGIES IN L2 TEACHING
Learning styles and strategies in L2 teaching have four implications for classroom practice: assessing styles and strategies in the L2 classroom, attuning L2 instruction for learners' style preferences, remembering that no single L2 methodology fits all students, and preparing for and conducting strategic instruction.

In attuning the L2 instruction and strategy instructions to learners, the teachers need to know more about their students' style preferences to orient their L2 instruction more effectively. The instruction can be presented in the type of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile. In order that the teachers provide the various instructions systematically, they have [=-0opto have adequate knowledge about their individual students; style preference.

Teachers should always remember that there is no single L2 instructional methodology that fits all students. L2 teachers are to combine methodologies used in the classroom activities in order to meet the needs of all students class. L2 teachers also have to consider various ways to prepare and conduct strategic instruction. They can enrich the teaching materials by taking teacher development courses, finding relevant information from book, report, paper, or internet, and getting in tounch with specialists.

CONCLUSION

In short, learning styles and strategies will give great influence to the success of L2 students. When they have found out which learning styles and strategies that fit them, the students can be more highly motivated in learning L2 so that the process of teaching and learning L2 can be more effective.

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