



Learning Generators: ICT and e-Learning Teaching and Learning Methodologies for Language Acquisition

Eva Zanuy Pascual

E-mail: evazanuy@hotmail.com

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia(Spain)

Abstract

The study of learning styles tries to explain the individual differences in the way people use their cognitive resources, learning best depending on the way they both perceive and process information.

The importance of this investigation is to try to optimize the learning process of a foreign language, increasing the level of knowledge of all the students using a Learning Generator or common book for all the students of a definite English level, organizing it previously so that it teaches up to the maximum capacity of each student, considering their Learning Style and thus eliminating the teaching style of each teacher. ICT and e-learning methods prove to be extremely useful in this goal. When we say "books" we could be saying "e-books".

But the higher representation of exercises that benefits the Reflector Style demonstrates that all the editorials, without exception, follow the so called Natural Method. For the Natural Method, to acquire a language means a gradual learning, obtaining the ability of communication without the necessity of using the rules that a teacher explains, which benefits the students with a predominant Reflector Learning Style, since they are observers, compilers and assimilators. The Natural Method fails because it has an excess of representation of a single Learning Style, which happens to be the one with the smallest representation among the students (Reflector Style).

We can conclude with clear evidence that the editorials do not consider the different Learning Styles at the time of programming their books or e-books. They go against e-learning.

It is obvious that the general implantation of the very fashionable natural method in the teaching of English does not give the corresponding results. Students who finish obligatory education do not end up with a level of English that allows good oral and written communication.

Now it is time for the editorials to pay greater attention to the theories on individual learning and new technologies than to the present educative tendencies in language teaching. Books should act as a tool which generates learning, and if we improved them taking into account the different Learning Styles, we would be working with a real Learning Generator for all the students, without any exception at all. If we used a method which benefited all our students, we would be creating students who would learn with the maximum of their capacities and all society would benefit from that.

We could do so by using technology, e-books which deal with individuals so as to generate e-learning. Can we imagine a learning system where all the students learned at their best? What degree of knowledge could those students end up reaching if this system were implanted in a generalized manner? It seems utopia, but it is an attainable utopia if we prepare books that benefit all students.

1. Learning process

The term "learning style" talks about the fact that when we want to learn something each one of us uses its own method of learning or set of strategies. Each one of us tends to develop certain

preferences as far as style of general learning [1]. Those tendencies constitute our own style of learning. Our learning style would come to be the general tendency, the most used.

No learning style lasts all our life and is stable. The learning styles are modified depending on the circumstances, contexts and personal variables of the same student [2]. Consequently, they can be modified for a better advantage. The students will learn how to improve the different styles that they use, and we can help them on it.

Of all the theories on learning styles we have, on the one hand, those theories dealing with the information input or Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) dealing with the entrance of information and, on the other hand, the theories about the information processing by Honey and Mumford [3].

2. Neuro-linguistic programming

The Neuro-Linguistic Programming model, also called visual-auditory-kinesthetic (VAK), takes into account the neurolinguistic criteria that consider that the route of entrance of the information becomes through the eye, ear and body, from which we have the visual representation, auditory and kinaesthetic systems [4]. We do not remember everything that happens, but just part of it.

2.1 Visual system.

When we thought about images, for example, when we visualized in our mind the page of the text book with the information that we needed, we can bring to the mind much information simultaneously.

2.2. Auditory system.

When we use our auditory representation, we do it in a sequential and ordered way. The auditory student needs to listen step by step. The students who memorize in an auditory way cannot forget the word order, because they do not know how to follow.

2.3 Kinesthetic system.

When we process the information associating it to our sensations and movements, that is to say, to our body, we are using the kinesthetic system of representation. We use this system, naturally, when we learn a sport, but also for many other activities.

2.4 Proportion of the representational systems

According to Neuro-linguistic Programming 40% of the people are visual, 30% auditory and 30% kinaesthetic. Nevertheless, the statistical data very usually vary depending on the source, so this data must be taken with extreme precaution. If the statistic makes reference to a study on students, there is usually higher visual representation, whereas if it is made on a sample of different workers, it seems not to have a general pattern of representation, although their score is low in kinesthetic style.

3. Learning styles

Honey and Mumford postulate that the learning styles are four, and that respond to the four phases of a cyclical process of learning similar to the cycle of learning proposed by Kolb [5]; activists, theorists, reflectors and pragmatists.

3.1 Activist style

Activist, opened, enthusiastic, do not consider goals in the long term. They are based on their experiences, they are open minded and they are easily excited in novel situations. They become conceited before the challenges of novel experiences and they become bored with long term activities.

3.2 Reflectors style

Observers, compilers, cautious in giving definitive conclusions. They review and they meditate the experiences, observing them from different perspectives. They make one complete compilation and analysis of information on experiences. So Reflectors students learn better observing.

3.3 Theorist style

Logical, analytical, independent, perfectionists, rational, critical, objective. They analyze the problems in a logical way. They tend to be perfectionist and they order things in a rational scheme. They like to analyse and to synthesize using systematic hypotheses, principles, theories, models and thoughts.

3.4 Pragmatist style

Impatient, practical, functional, direct, realistic, fast in acting. They are experts proving ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work. Their philosophy is "If it is good, it will work". They discover the positive aspect of new ideas and look for applications.

3.5 Proportion of Learning Styles

According to Honey-Alonso [6] the averages in Learning Styles are; Activist 33 % , Reflector 13 % , Theorist 25 % and Pragmatist 29 %

4. General analysis of editorials

Not only do students have their preferences and their style of learning. All teachers have their own style when giving class, and that style is also reflected when we use the different representational systems. Most of us tend to use a system more often than the others when we teach. In order to detect what our tendencies are, we need to analyze our way of teaching from the point of view of the Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Generally, in all the groups of students we will find different types of learning styles. If our teaching style is the same as that of our students, learning will be easier for them than if is not the same one, and with a book using all the different styles we will be benefiting all our students.

4.1 Analysis according to the Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Each editorial has common characteristics and differential characteristic. One of the main common characteristics that has been found after analyzing different editorials belonging to the same level is the great numerical equality of exercises that benefit the different systems of neurolinguistic representations. The neurolinguistic representation in the editorials would be; Visual 35 % , Auditory 33 % and Kinesthetic; 32 %.

4.2 Analysis according to the Learning Styles

One of the main common characteristics after analysing different editorials on the same level is the great representation of exercises that a Learning Style has over other Styles. The average representation in percentages of the Learning Styles in the analysed editorials would be; Activist 18.4 % , Reflector; 49.4 % , Theorist; 17.8 % and Pragmatist; 14 %.

5. Conclusions

Our students have a preference for certain learning styles, making obsolete the old system centered on the teacher and in order to make learning effective, each student requires of a style of education adapted to his own way of learning [7] .

5.1 Problems when learning

In order to identify learning styles we must take into account the investigations made by David Kolb and Peter Honey. Both investigations are complementary and they help us to identify the different learning styles and to see the different ways of learning that each individual has.



We have seen that books do not follow the theories of the Learning Styles. The excessive representation of exercises that benefit the Learning Style with less students and the small representation of exercises which benefit the students with majority styles demonstrate that the text books follow a mistaken tendency. The higher representation of exercises that benefits the Reflectors Style demonstrates that all the editorials, without exception, follow the communicative or natural the method. The editorials do not consider the different Learning Styles of the students, and they are centred in a method that will soon be obsolete because the academic results do not reflect good results. It is obvious that the general implantation of the very fashionable natural or communicative method in the teaching of English does not give the corresponding results. Students who finish obligatory education do not end up with a level of English that allows good oral and written communication.

Connecting this to the education of second languages, we could say that, at the moment, the deductive method would be the classic one and the inductive one would correspond to the natural method, so fashionable nowadays.

We can conclude with clear evidence that the editorials do not consider the different Learning Styles at the time of programming their books. On the one hand, they do not seem to consider the percentage of representation of the pupils pertaining to each Learning Style. But on the other hand, they seem to consider the present tendency in the methods of education of the foreign languages, since they are centered in natural and communicative methods [8].

5.2 Solutions thanks to ICT and e-learning methods

This investigation analyzing the most widely used text books in the classrooms could discover the reason. Although it may seem excessive, this investigation exceeds expectations since the initial intention was only to see which editorial was better in quality, taking into account the diversity of learning styles, but this investigation has ended up finding the main failure of the tendency in education in second languages; the communicative method fails because it has an excess representation of a single learning style, which is the one of smallest representation among the students.

Now it is time for the editorials to pay greater attention to the theories on Learning Styles than to the present educative tendencies, as the communicative and natural methodologies in foreign languages do not benefit all the students. Text books act as a tool which generates learning, and if we improved them taking into account the different Learning Styles, we would be working with a real Learning Generator for all the students, without any exception at all. ICT and e-learning methods prove to be extremely useful in this goal [9].

Can we imagine a learning system where all the students learned at their best? What degree of knowledge could those students end up reaching if this system were implanted in a generalized manner? It seems utopia, but it is an attainable utopia if we prepare text books that benefit all students. If we used a method which benefited all our students, we would be creating students who would learn with the maximum of their capacities and all society would benefit from that.



References

- [1] Chomsky, N. 2005. L'educació. Barcelona: Columna Edicions.
- [1] Piaget, J. 2001. Psicología y pedagogía. Barcelona, Editorial Crítica.
- [2] Damasio, A. R. y Damasio, H. 1997. Cerebro y Lenguaje. Fundamentos Biológicos II. Madrid: UNED.
- [2] Pueyo, A. A. 1999. Psicología Diferencial. Barcelona, McGraw-Hill.
- [3] Honey, P.; Mumford, A. (1986): "The Manual of Learning Styles". Maidenhead, Berkshire. P. Honey, Ardingly House.
- [4] Dunn, R. y Dunn, K. 1984. La Enseñanza y el Estilo Individual de Aprendizaje. Madrid: Anaya
- [5] Kolb, D. 1984. Experiential learning: Experience as the source of Learning and Developmente. New Jersey: Prentice Hall
- [6] Alonso, C., Gallego, D. y Honey, P. 1997. Recursos e instrumentos Psico-pedagógicos. Los estilos de aprendizaje. Procedimientos de diagnóstico y Mejora. España: Universidad de Deusto, Ediciones Mensajero.
- [7] Despins, J.P. 1985. Connaitre les styles d'apprendissage pour mieux prespecter les Façons d'apprendere des enfanst. Vie Pédagogique, 39, 10-16
- [7] Gardner, H. 1993. Multiple intelligences: the theory in practice. New York: Basic Books.
- [7] Segovia, S. y Guillamón, A. 1997. Psicobiología del Desarrollo. Barcelona: Ariel Psicología.
- [8] Departament d'Ensenyament 2002. Autonomia a l'aula de Llengues Extranjeres: aula espais diversificats. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.
- [9] Varela, R. 1998. Estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros. Madrid: UNED.
- [10] Vez, J.M. 2002. El aula de lenguas extranjeras: umbral para una sociedad de la Cultura. Barcelona: Graó.