

Learning Styles (IATEFL 99)

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The area of learning styles is one of overlapping, unintegrated hypotheses. All of the following formulations cover some aspect of how a student learns:

- the Myers-Briggs personality typing
- NLP Visual/Auditory/ Kinaesthetic/Olfactory/ Gustatory preferences
 - NLP “meta-programs” (eg Self-referenced versus Other-referenced versus Group-referenced)
- The Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligences frame
- de la Garanderie’s four ways Learning model
- Transactional Analysis ego-states and their influence on learning
 - Transactional Analysis process scripts (eg Until, After, Never etc....)
- The Eneagram nine personality types and how each type learns best.
 - Steiner’s 4 humours and their teaching-learning implications.

The list could be longer but all this stuff will stay up in the air until it is digested and worked into a teacher-friendly shape that teachers can usefully use. We urgently need a book that integrates the filters above, and many more, into a classroom-worthy instrument. Mario’s workshop did little to move in this direction.

In the 50 minutes we had we looked at the de la Garanderie ideas and very briefly at the Eneagram model.

Antoine de la Garanderie’s 4 Ways

De la Garanderie suggests people learn in one or a mixture of four main ways:

Way 1: the learner receives the new information through eyes or ears and “stores” it in the mental area most suitable to it. So, if I tell you that, in French, the last man in the Tour de France is called “la lanterne rouge (red)”, and if you are working in Way No 1, you will mentally store this information with other things you remember about this race.

Of course, when you mix new information with old, the new may well force a radical re-arrangement of the old.

Way 2: the learner takes in the new information as oral or visual text and simply remembers it

as it comes to her, without integrating it into pre-existent schemata. This seems to be the way teachers encourage students in China to learn the characters and way hodjas require the Koran to be learnt.

Way 3: the learner takes in the text and starts analysing it and judging its internal coherence.

This learner may appear to the teacher to be a bit aggressive, wanting to know “ why? and “where did you get that from?”. The supreme Way 3 exercise is the “explication de texte” as practised on a literary gobbet. Way 3 seems to be prized in places like Oxbridge.

Way 4: the learner does not make any conscious effort on receiving the text but somehow seems to know the information the next day. The processing in Way 4 does not depend on the work of the conscious mind. An example of this kind of processing is the acquiring of the mother tongue between minus nine months and three years old. Suggestopaedia is perhaps the language teaching method that most encourages Way 4.

For more information on Learning Styles and students classroom process in general, see:

Ways of Doing, by Davis, Garside and Rinvoluceri, Cambridge, 1999.

(513 words, minus these ones!)