

## THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNING STYLES (VISUAL) ON TEACHING HOW TO WRITE IELTS TASK 1 ESSAY

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**Abstract:** Learning style is a term pointing out the variations of cognitive nature in the process of second language acquisition. It is the way toward which the learners show a big preference in especially understanding, forming ideas, organizing and remembering the data connected with learning a particular language. As for the statement of Cornett (1983) learning styles are global approaches such as global or analytic, auditory or visual, which are used by the students learning a new language or other subject. Moreover, Brown (2000) states that learning styles' role in giving explanations to justify why some L2 learners achieve more success than others has not been founded well, it constitutes a complex communication with specific L2 contexts in learning. Likewise, Ehrman (1996) mentions that learning styles are not opposite to each other yet they normally operate on a multiple continua; for instance, a person may be more sociable than reversed, or more close than open, or may have equal visual and auditory styles but without much kinesthetic and tactile engagement.

**Keywords:** learning styles, grammatical structures, report essays, diagrams, charts, graphs, second language acquisition, map diagram

### INTRODUCTION

There are a number of factors that influence on the efficiency of English language teaching in all levels of it. One of them is a learning style because it is possible to find a variety of materials and resources to teach the students nowadays; however, not all of them work well with the students who have only one dominant learning style such as auditory, visual or kinesthetic. For this reason, as far as I am concerned, every language teacher should identify their learner's preference to a single learning style in different ways including testing, preparing questionnaire answered in the form of oral interviews or just observations. In this particular study,

I have aimed at proving that none of the learners are able to acquire the second language if the teacher does not use appropriate methods or materials according to their superior learning styles.

Wasanasomsithi (2004) points out about the importance of learning styles in teaching writing that comprehending students' various learning styles in learning a language will assist the teachers in teaching and managing their classes in an effective way to be suitable for the students' preferences toward learning in EFL context. Jacobs et al. (1981) conducted a study with 88 second-year English major students, all of whom the researcher taught the basic writing course, in the program of B.A at the Humanities Faculty of Srinakharinwirot University in Thailand. Their main objective was to identify the English majors' important distinctions in their styles of learning relying on their accomplishment levels during the classes of writing and based on the research results they concluded that visual learners were active enough in getting the knowledge of writing and achieving far better results; however, as for them studies regarding the learning styles of the students in EFL writing class ought to be carried out later to check the demographic and other aspects.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The subject of my case study is a female student named as MokhinurIbragimova, whom I chose to work with, is studying in Russian language-specified class of 10<sup>th</sup> form at school № 288. She was born in 2002 and is 17 years old presently. She has attended the extra classes of IELTS in different learning centers so far but the last one she has been studying in for more than a year is "Stage plus", where I work as an English language teacher. She has been preparing for IELTS at the beginning of foundation level, in which I only conduct speaking classes, since last month. It is visible that she has a wide range of outlook in expressing her opinions and ideas in English language that is because of the fact that she is interested in conversing and socializing with English native and non-native speakers from different walks of life. As the learner of English as a second

language, I would illustrate her to be gregarious as she shows high eagerness to participate in all of my speaking clubs, round-table discussions and debates with her brilliant ideas on various topics. On top of this, she never gives up not gets lack behind even though she sometimes fails or cannot make a good progress, and prior to now I have known her to be inquisitive due to the fact that she always asks about the pieces of information that she does not understand well, especially during writing classes.

Since we have known each other as a teacher and student for almost a long time, she enthusiastically expressed agreement to be the subject of this particular study, which can be proven with the signed consent form enclosed in Appendix 1. Therefore, I decided to check which of the three learning types such as auditory, visual or kinesthetic works well with her in teaching to write an IELTS task 1 essay twice a week within almost 3 weeks.

One of the main reasons why I opted for her to work with according to the objectives of this study is that as far as I know, she is capable of making a good progress in comprehending any language aspects easily. Secondly, I have noticed that she has an ability of making proper outlines of essays and identifying the key points in different diagrams, which are necessary to produce well-written essays in task 1 of IELTS.

Because the researcher's main purpose was to teach to write IELTS Task 1 essays well and to observe whether the subject's knowledge was growing as fast as the researcher was expecting, I conducted the lessons consisting of the following stages such as oral interview, a questionnaire, pre-test while-test and post-test after the explanations of the structures and introduction of proper vocabulary to the learner.

**Lesson 1.** The chosen subject was asked to sign a consent form to express her permission to participate in this particular research. Two pictures were brought to the classroom to examine the learner's background knowledge in making comparison and contrast including the changes and commonalities between them.

**Lesson 2.** An oral interview based on the questionnaire regarding the subject's opinions about her preferred learning style was prepared beforehand and brought to the place of research; moreover, questionnaire printed on a sheet of paper was supplied to check whether the

results would match with those taken from the interview.

**Lesson 3.** Grammar-oriented visual aids were downloaded from the internet to teach to construct sentences necessary to use in writing report essays were also brought to the classroom and a list of vocabulary to depict the map was also found to be significant to present. The grammatical formulas related to passive voice were written and I encouraged the subject to write 7 sentences illustrating the events of life in reality.

**Lesson 4.** The pictures of two different maps were delivered to the research location and the student was inquired to write as many sentences as possible relying on the gained knowledge of the structures of comparison, the sentence formulas of passive voice and learnt vocabulary, as well. More synonyms of formal task one-related words were given by the researcher to broaden the learner's ability to describe a map.

**Lesson 5.** I organized an exam atmosphere allowing the learner to write an essay within no more than 20 minutes. I observed the subject's reaction toward the final assignment and none of the additional materials were provided in this stage of the study.

**Lesson 6.** The written work completed by the chosen subject was brought after it had been checked for mistakes, organization and meaning. All of the mistakes were analyzed in collaboration with my student and I explained the reasons why there are still mistakes by showing the sheet of paper she wrote during the mock examination. This was followed by my suggestions given to improve her writing ability more and conclusions were made regarding almost three-week research.

## RESULTS

**Lesson 1.** As soon as the subject signed the consent form provided by me in order to legally reveal her permission to be observed in my study, I explained that I was willing to examine whether it would be useful to teach IELTS task 1 essay writing to her focusing on only one of the learning styles which has always been efficient in her language learning process prior to now. As my main goal was to check if she had already known to write a report essay to map describing changes during a certain period of time, I conducted my first writing-oriented activity with her as a pre-test of my study. In this very activity, I stucked two pictures: the old and modern views of Dubai in 1985 and 2012 on the

whiteboard. After this, I assigned her to write an essay describing the things which remained stable and changes based on the structures of comparing and contrasting.

**Lesson 2.** Having worked as an English language teacher for more than 2 years, I know quite well that not all methods of teaching grammar and writing work well for every learner. Thus, I found it to be practically useful to determine the chosen subject's superior learning style. For this, I showed a big preference to take an oral interview, which I had planned earlier by making a questionnaire in advance, so that I would be able to identify the most dominant learner style from her own experience.

**Lesson 3.** This time I had different visual aids to teach how to construct the passive voice in the past correctly to her in order that she would be able to depict all the changes in the IELTS task 1 map using a proper vocabulary further. Firstly, I wrote the sentence formulas of passive voice with relevant examples. Then I required her to make up 10 complex sentences based on real-life situations by looking at the abovementioned formulas on the whiteboard of the classroom. All of the sentences in a sheet of paper were later checked and analyzed by me to demonstrate the mistakes and correct them so that she would see and remember to avoid making the same mistakes further.

**Lesson 4.** I introduced that 2 types of maps one of which is the map requiring to only describe locations visible whereas the second is the one, which the learners have to write by comparing and contrasting the changes as well as describing the areas remaining unchanged, exist in IELTS writing task one. I showed both types of maps on the printed sheets of paper. After that, I pointed out the second type to be our goal. Then I asked her to identify the changes and similarities she saw in the picture of the second map to check whether she was able to determine all details in that map and she truly proved her visualization to be enough developed by mentioning all things in it. As she is a visual learner, it was in my preference to write a model essay on the map we analyzed together as soon as I explained the organization and structure of it on the whiteboard. Then I provided her with a list of words that can be used in map description and I asked her to write as many synonyms as she was able to next to each word on a sheet of paper. This was followed by my assistance in writing more academic synonyms on the whiteboard. The subject was supposed to write sentences based on

the comparison of alterations in that particular map and this time I felt more improvement in her map-oriented vocabulary as well as structures of comparison as opposed to the one she wrote in the first lesson.

**Lesson 5.** As this was pre-last day of my research, I decided to take a post-test from her without informing in advance. As soon as she arrived at the learning center, where I conducted my study, I told her that she was going to be examined and I permitted her to enter the empty classroom without any additional materials and the list of vocabulary. She was only given 20 minutes to complete the task and I observed her sitting in that classroom. While she was writing an essay based on the graph, according to her condition I guessed that she did not make any hesitation or even did not take long breaks to think what to write in the middle. I thought that teaching her by more drawing her attention to the visual aids, writing a model essay on the board and supplying her with more suitable vocabulary worked really well relying on the analysis I made in the process of checking the examination paper in the last lesson. I ensured that it was possible to improve her kinesthetic learning style through teaching her in the way appropriate for visual learners due to the fact that she made more progress in writing the last report essay with almost no mistakes in organizational part, structure and even grammar of passive voice in comparison with the previous ones.

**Lesson 6.** This time it is obvious that I was able to change some words in the subject's vocabulary into more relevant formal ones. For instance, the words such as depict, expand, relocate, remain unchanged, establish were used by her to write an essay in that essay. This can prove that the list of vocabulary provided by me on a sheet of paper worked well as she visually remembered most of them and used in her final writing.

## DISCUSSION

According to this piece of writing, it is visible that she has enough background knowledge to construct almost all parts of the sentences grammatically correct except only the usage of passive voices in different tenses; furthermore, she made some mistakes concerning organization, structures, spelling, capitalization and punctuation, too. Therefore, I arrived at a decision to initially teach the grammar and then focus on my own target of study. While being interviewed she pointed out to be competent enough to visually obtain any information, that was one more time proved by the questionnaire, as well. Moreover, she learnt different

linkers like overall it is visible that, one of the visible changes is, to the left of, at the top or bottom of helping her to connect sentences in an understandably logical way. In terms of grammar, after the explanations which I explained to her on the whiteboard and she observed, passive voices in different tenses were made correctly and subject as well as the verb in it agreed with each other in a person. It is seen in the following sentences as seating was relocated, a fountain was removed, the previous stage for musicians was changed, and car park was built. As for organization and the structures of the essay, it is obvious that she followed the model sample essay I wrote on the whiteboard. The essay consists of two parts such as introduction with one paragraph and main body with two paragraphs this time as it was shown in my essay. Nevertheless, I told that she still needs to improve some background awareness about essay writing. To be more precise, I explained her to write only about the locations remaining the same in the first paragraph but changes and additions on the second one to make the content of the essay much clearer. On top of this, I recommended to be more attentive to spelling mistakes and correct them next time.

### CONCLUSION

Having considered all the mentioned above it ought to be concluded that there are different vital factors to take into account while teaching the learners to write successful essays. Even though the learners are able to learn writing quite well with different sources, as the researchers suggested their more efficient achievements can be seen providing that their learning styles are determined and appropriate materials were chosen to teach them. Sometimes confusions concerning the efficiency of the styles of learning may come into existence because usually the learners in the second language acquisition have two dominant learning styles yet if the teachers cannot see teaching based on two of those superior learning styles to be efficient, the researchers suggest to implement the materials relevant for both of those styles and observe the participation of their students to identify which type of learning materials show better results in the process of acquisition. Nevertheless, this particular was not seen in the research conducted by me, as well. Actually, taking an oral interview, quiz did me a favor in having a clear determination of the chosen subject's preference to an exactly dominant learning style. Moreover, that identification was further beneficial for choosing and preparing suitable materials to conduct the writing class successfully. According to Fatt (2000) visual

learners show a big preference to read, observe, data display and visual aids; visual aids prefer learning by watching films, the movies with subtitles in the target language, pictures, and diagrams assisting them to acquire a good knowledge of the subject. In the role of a researcher and at the same a teacher, I explained some grammar rules and taught to write a task one map-based essay by utilizing visual aids, and a whiteboard as the main source of my teaching as she was discovered to have more benefits as a visual learner. As Lewis (2012) states that the visual learning style is regarded to be a learning process by means of which students get knowledge and comprehension via visual tools that are explicit. Certainly, the subject encountered a number of difficulties in primarily learning to write an essay depicting the changes in the locations of the map as it was almost new skill for her to acquire but the activity writing some paragraphs based on the provided maps helped her overcome the challenges. Moreover, it has been proven that teaching with the sources being suitable for the subject's learning style improved most of her mistakes in terms of grammar, organization, and structures in the final essay but there still were some elements of writing that need enhancing especially in the case of spelling and the outline of the essay. As far as I am concerned based on my own observations and the study, three weeks is not adequate period of time for overcoming all of the difficulties and weaknesses that the learner has; however, it was sufficient for being able to give explanations, guidance, to check the student's development and to implement the process of error correction together with time for feedbacks and analysis regarding particular skills such as writing as well as grammar of English language.

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