

Learning styles are a unique way of learning about a person and what they enjoy. Being a teacher, I have to observe and teach different learning styles every day. There are some students who love to listen to stories, sing songs, and listen to different auditory things. They thrive through singsong directions and love to listen to stories to learn things. Then there are the tactile learners who immediately reach into the box of breakable colorful rocks and want to examine them closely; see how they are made through their sense of touch. Then there are kids who visually learn through posted photos of processes, where things are (i.e. trash cans, markers, scissors, etc....). I also know that a lot of kids learn through a multitude of these options which is why I loved the article by Cindi May. It brought light to the fact that kids (and people, too) learn through a slew of different ways and that putting someone in a box of one specific learning style doesn't help them learn.

Hearing that the strategies of flashcards and outside websites are not actually supporting retention and comprehension was shocking to me. Not because I personally think that those things help me, but because I know how much those things were pushed, especially when I was in high school. I always remember teachers telling me to use flashcards, especially for science tests. I never understood why those would be helpful because I never even enjoyed making flash cards in the first place! I can imagine that they wouldn't help with retention because you use them for one test and then you never revisit them again. It doesn't continue your learning. This is just a small example of one of the reasons that traditional learning styles don't always work when you use one at a time.

When reading the cognitive science findings on some ways to "enhance knowledge acquisition", I had such a large smile on my face. The first thing that stuck with me was the finding that we are supposed to space out our study sessions. I always thought that I was a bad student for not devoting all of my time to studying; especially my first year of college. Now to read that spacing out your learning sessions is a *good* thing makes me feel like I've been doing it right all along! It also makes sense. We go to sleep every night to let our brains go through all of the information that we have learned and refine it for the next day when we need to regurgitate that information.

Another method that I found interesting was the idea that attaching meaning to the material and making connections was a better strategy than just repetition of information. Of course that makes sense! Humans are meaning making machines and when we have meaning we are more apt to retain information and remember it. From what I understood from the publication by Fergus I. M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart out of the University of Toronto, if you focus on the meaning of the information, you remember it better and for a longer period of time. In the paper it goes through two different kinds of processing; shallow processing and deep processing. It was thought by these two scientists that how well you remember something depends on the depth of how you process it. Shallow processing is based on just reading the appearance of words and surface-level encoding; which focuses on sound or appearance rather than context. Deep processing is just the opposite of that. It involves meaning-based encoding. This leads to better recall.

To answer the question on whether I think learning styles affect how we learn; I would say yes, to an extent. From the information that I read in the various scientific findings by Fergus I. M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart about the depth of processing, it really matters how much your learning style gives the information meaning. This means, does your visual learning system give you visuals that are specialized to you? One example I will give of this would be from my favorite show "The Office". Michael Scott is learning Spanish, and he can't quite grasp that different objects have a feminine and a masculine ending (e.g. "O" for masculine and "A" for feminine). After he gets corrected by Oscar for misrepresenting some of the objects, he proceeds to label all the according objects with Female and Male genitalia. This is a prime example of his learning style. This was a way that he could visually learn masculine and feminine objects in Spanish by labeling them with something that he could remember and that had meaning to him. In short, learning styles are directly correlated with depth of meaning. When there is meaning associated with whatever learning style works for you, you have a higher chance of remembering and storing the information that you have learned.