

Your Learning Style and Language Learning

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The Myers-Briggs Type Inventory identifies individual preferences in terms of the following pairs of opposing preferences:

- **Introvert—Extrovert**
 - Introverts think best by themselves by processing ideas in their own minds. They can be tired out by too much contact with other people.
 - Extroverts, on the other hand, are usually energized by being with other people and often think best if they can discuss their ideas.
- **Sensing—Intuitive**
 - Sensing thinkers take in information sequentially through their senses and are most interested in the concrete and the here-and-now.
 - Intuitive thinkers are interested in theories and possibilities and often make good guesses without going through sequential steps.
- **Thinking—Feeling**
 - People with a Thinking preference tend to make decisions objectively in a logical and impartial way.
 - People with a Feeling preference tend to make decisions subjectively on the basis of their feelings and perceived effects on other people.
- **Judging—Perceiving**
 - People with a Judging preference like things to be clear and settled and strive for closure.
 - People with a Perceiving preference like things to be open-ended as long as possible.

Record your Type via LinguaLinks

To see how your personality type correlates with other learning style factors to make up your overall learning style:

See: Your overall learning style

See also

- Your personality type and language learning
- How to discover your learning style and create a learning style profile
- Keywords: learning style, personality types

Your overall learning style

Introduction

Your overall learning style is a composite of the various learning style factors you have identified by taking the learning style instruments. Each person is unique, so it is impossible to predict exactly how your learning style preferences interact and which factors will be more important than others to you. There are also important facets of you as a person and as a learner not identified by these learning style instruments. Nevertheless, certain learning style factors tend to co-occur more frequently than others. People who exhibit the classic correlations will exhibit markedly different overall learning styles.

On the other hand, you may very well not exhibit all the expected correlations. This is not a bad thing at all. It may mean that you are able to learn happily in a variety of ways and settings. Still it may be helpful to understand people with the more markedly different learning styles and how they learn best.

Common correlations

Here are some of the correlations that may occur to produce four very different overall learning styles. More detailed information about each type of learner follows.

Relational Learner — Analytical Learner — Structured Learner — Energetic Learner

LTT Meaning Oriented — Theory Oriented — Solution Oriented — Activity Oriented

Myers-Briggs NF NT SJ SP

Sensory Preference Auditory/Visual — Visual — Visual/Tactile — Tactile/Auditory

Brain Dominance Right— Left Left— Right

See also

- Keywords: analytical approach (to language learning), energetic approach (to language learning), learning style, relational approach (to language learning), structured approach (to language learning)

The Relational Learner

Introduction

A language learning program will be most effective if it takes into account the motivations, strengths and potential pitfalls of the learners. Whether you are organizing a program for other people or for yourself, this module can help you better understand how a Relational Learner learns best.

Motivations — Here are some things usually important to a Relational Learner:

- A chance to develop relationships and understand people and ideas
- A chance to have variety
- A chance to help other people develop
- A chance for personal development and growth
- A chance to understand underlying meanings

Strengths — Here are some strengths typical of the Relational Learner:

- Is intuitive, thus good at grasping systems
- Is adaptable to different situations and cultures
- Is empathetic with others
- Is good at judging other people's reactions

Potential pitfalls — Here are some potential pitfalls of the Relational Learner:

- May be overly sensitive to rejection
- May be so adaptable that personal identity is lost
- May be easily distressed by lack of harmony
- May have a short attention span if the subject or person does not engage interest

Preferred learning environments — Here are some learning environments the Relational Learner will probably enjoy:

- Learning while living in a community of people who are accepting and open to relationships and to letting the learner be involved in their activities and lives
- Learning activities that allow the learner to observe and understand people and their culture
- Classroom setting that allows the learner to have lots of variety, creativity, group-work and communicative activities

Difficult learning environments — Here are some learning environments the Relational Learner will probably find difficult:

- Possible cultural or psychological barriers to spending time with people; as when people are naturally reserved or xenophobic
- Repetitive, unvarying tasks or activities

Language learning approach

To receive a description of an approach to language learning recommended for this type of learner, see: [The Relational approach to language learning](#).

See also — Keywords: learning style, relational approach (to language learning)

The Analytical Learner

Introduction

The motivations, strengths and potential pitfalls of an Analytical Learner are quite different from those of a Relational Learner, and a language learning program needs to take those differences into account. Whether you are organizing a program for other people or for yourself, this module can help you better understand how an Analytical Learner learns best.

Motivations

Here are some things usually important to an Analytical Learner:

- Opportunities to work independently
- Opportunities to integrate data into theoretical models
- Opportunities to solve problems
- Opportunities for intellectual freedom

Strengths — Here are some strengths typical of the Analytical Learner:

- Good analytical ability
- Intuition, allowing the grasp of overall systems
- Critical thinking which can help to solve problems
- Good self-evaluation

Potential pitfalls — Here are some potential pitfalls of the Analytical Learner:

- May be unable to meet high personal standards and become discouraged
- May spend too much time at the desk or computer and not relate to people
- May be unwilling to speak because of fear of making mistakes or dislike of making mistakes
- May be less interested in the culture than in the structure of the language

Preferred learning environments — Here are some learning environments the Analytical Learner will probably enjoy:

- Independent and self-paced work
- Intellectual stimulation involving problem-solving, reading and research
- A classroom where the teacher's intellectual ability and command of the subject matter is perceived as superior and worthy of respect

Difficult learning environments — Here are some learning environments the Analytical Learner will probably find difficult:

- Traditional classroom situations that call for doing things in a rote or mechanical way
- Classes that call for a lot of unrehearsed activities
- Unstructured and disorganized environments

Language learning approach — To receive a description of an approach to language learning recommended for this type of learner, see: [The Analytical approach to language learning](#).

See also — Keywords: analytical approach (to language learning), learning style

The Structured Learner

Introduction

The Structured Learner needs an organized and systematic approach to learning a language or anything else. Whether you are organizing a program for other people or for yourself, this module can help you better understand how a Structured Learner learns best.

Motivations — Here are some things usually important to a Structured Learner:

- A systematic and organized approach to learning
- A chance to apply concepts in a practical way
- Accuracy
- Hands-on activities
- Practical solutions to problems

Strengths — Here are some strengths typical of the Structured Learner:

- Perseverance
- Good planning
- Thorough and painstaking
- Systematic and careful

Potential pitfalls — Here are some potential pitfalls of the Structured Learner:

- May be more concerned with problems or tasks than with people
- May be so concerned with accuracy they are inhibited from talking
- May find learning a language in its natural context too chaotic for personal taste
- May block out input unable to control, thus making it difficult to catch the gist of a conversation
- May have more difficulty achieving an authentic pronunciation than some other types

Preferred learning environments — Here are some learning environments the Structured Learner will probably enjoy:

- A typical classroom setting, with a well-ordered syllabus, clearly presented materials, and clear instructions.
- Hands-on activities
- Problem-solving activities
- Exercises and drills

Difficult Learning Environments — Here are some learning environments the Structured Learner will probably find difficult:

- Unstructured, disorganized, or chaotic environments
- Situations with diverse activities and lots of interpersonal interaction
- Language learning in natural communication settings

Language learning approach — To receive a description of an approach to language learning recommended for this type of learner, see: [The Structured approach to language learning](#).

See also — Keywords: learning style, structured approach (to language learning)

The Energetic Learner

Introduction

While the Structured Learner thrives on order and predictability, the Energetic Learner needs freedom. Whether you are organizing a program for other people or for yourself, this module can help you better understand how an Energetic Learner learns best.

Motivations — Here are some things usually important to an Energetic Learner:

- Lots of activity
- A chance to do things with people
- Variety
- Adventure and risk
- Personal involvement in activities
- Hands-on activities

Strengths — Here are some strengths typical of the Energetic Learner:

- Adaptability
- Willingness to get out into the community and get involved
- Desire to interact with people
- Willingness to take risks

Potential pitfalls — Here are some potential pitfalls of the Energetic Learner:

- May ignore accuracy
- May act too quickly
- May be unwilling to take time to plan a program
- May be satisfied with speaking incorrectly, as long as the message gets across
- May have gaps in knowledge because of unsystematic language learning

Preferred Learning Environments — Here are some learning environments the Energetic Learner will probably enjoy:

- Community language setting with opportunity for involvement in their activities
- Learning activities that can be linked to other enjoyable activities
- Classroom settings that allow for lots of variety, flexibility, action, groupwork, and field trips

Difficult learning environments — Here are some learning environments the Energetic Learner will probably find difficult:

- Traditional classroom situations that require spending time alone, doing repetitive exercises, and working with pencil and paper
- Any program that is rigidly structured and does not allow for variety and spontaneity
- Possible cultural or psychological barriers to joining in activities with people; as when people are naturally reserved or xenophobic

Language learning approach — To see a description of an approach to language learning recommended for this type of learner, see: [The Energetic approach to language learning](#).

See also — Keywords: energetic approach (to language learning), learning style

Implications of your learning style for language learning

Introduction — Your learning style is an important factor in how well you learn a second language. This is especially true when you are working in an unstructured situation and must plan and manage your own language learning activities.

Choosing activities that match your learning style preferences will help you

- feel good about the language learning process
- make faster progress, and
- stay motivated.

Prerequisites — Here is a prerequisite for taking advantage of your learning style for language learning:

- You need to determine your learning style profile.

In this module group — Here are the modules on taking advantage of your learning style for language learning:

- Your learning type and language learning
- OVERVIEW: Your brain dominance and language learning
- OVERVIEW: Your sensory preference and language learning
- Your personality type and language learning

See also

- OVERVIEW: Four approaches to language learning based on learning style
- Keywords: learning style

Your learning type and language learning

Tips

Here are some language learning tips for people with each of the four learning types:

Meaning-Oriented Learners

You probably enjoy using the language to build relationships with people. You want to observe and analyze social situations. It is good for you to plan language learning activities around language functions and communication situations. You may be frustrated by a language learning program based on a grammatical syllabus. An approach to language learning you might enjoy is the Relational approach.

Theory-Oriented Learners

You may be more interested in how the language works and the theoretical implications of the language to linguistic theory. You may be less interested in using the language as a medium for communication. Achieving communicative competence may be needed in order to achieve something you want to do. You may need to work at activities that will help you develop communication skills and to gain a theoretical understanding of the language. You probably have high standards for yourself, which can be good. Do not set

unreachable standards or you may become discouraged. An approach to language learning you might enjoy is the Analytical approach.

Solution-Oriented Learners

Your motivation for learning a language is probably to enable you to accomplish something useful or important. You are probably less interested in linguistic theory for its own sake. You probably like a structured and orderly presentation of materials with hands-on learning. You are likely conscientious and work hard. If you know the purpose of an activity that will help you be productive, you will be more motivated to do it. You will probably be less comfortable with open-ended activities, communicative activities and games. An approach to language learning you might enjoy is the Structured Approach.

Activity-Oriented Learners

You probably are more interested in getting out and doing things with people who speak the language. You may be less interested in studying by yourself. You may enjoy classroom activities that involve action and cooperation, such as games. If you get out and participate in activities where people use the language, you will have fun and learn a lot. You likely relate well to people and enjoy getting to know them. Classroom activities that involve drills and theory may not appeal to you. One approach to language learning you might enjoy is the Energetic approach.

See also

To see how other aspects of your learning style can be used to your advantage, see

- OVERVIEW: Implications of your learning style for language learning
- Keywords: learning types

Your brain dominance and language learning

Introduction

Some language skills involve analytical, sequential, and left-brain processing. Others involve right-brain skills such as guessing, associating, and getting the main idea.

Obviously, those with bilateral dominance have some advantages.

There are, however, good language learners with both left-brain or right-brain dominance who achieve a high degree of fluency and accuracy. They learn to use both left-brain and right-brain skills depending on what works best for the activity at hand.

Guidelines — Here are some general guidelines to follow when you use your brain dominance for language learning:

- Use your left-brain analytical skills to determine the purpose of a learning activity or to set up the activity. Once you are involved in the activity, put most of your attention on the content of the message and let your right-brain go to work.
- According to James Asher, author of the Total Physical Response method, direct association methods for building listening comprehension rely more on right-brain processing than on left brain processing. Do not consciously try to figure out every detail when using these methods. Let your subconscious do the work.

See:

- The Physical Response techniques
- The Look and Listen techniques

In this module group — Here are the modules on using your brain dominance for language learning:

- Tips for left-brain learners
- Tips for right-brain learners

Warnings — Here are some warnings about using your brain dominance for language learning:

- Analytical thinkers who make good linguists sometimes never acquire communicative fluency in a second language because their left-brain, sequential processing slows them down.
- Right-brained, global thinkers sometimes become quite fluent in comprehending and expressing themselves in a second language, but never become truly accurate. They are content to get across the main idea without worrying about the details.

See also

To see how other aspects of your learning style can be used to your advantage, see

- **OVERVIEW:** Implications of your learning style for language learning
- **Keywords:** brain, right- or left- dominance

Tips for left-brain learners

Tips — Here are some language learning tips for left-brain learners:

- Take advantage of a formal language school program if possible. Your left-brain skills will help you do well and enjoy it.
- Do not fear designing and carrying out a personal language learning program. Your left-brain skills are a strength for this.
- Use your analytical skills to learn the language.
- Break words into their parts and try to identify the rules for putting them together.
- Look for similar rules and patterns in the way words go together to form sentences and other language units.
- Do not be surprised by your frustration at the chaos, ambiguity, and uncontrolled nature of natural language situations. It will eventually make more sense.
- Be careful about expecting too much of yourself. Language learning takes time and does not always yield to an organized and logical approach.
- Use your analytical and organizational skills to figure out the important factors of the communication situation. This will help you learn how to respond appropriately.
- Be careful you do not shut down and stop trying to understand when you cannot figure out all the parts. At those times, make a conscious effort to relax, to let the language flow over you, and to be content with getting the main ideas.
- Take advantage of techniques such as grammatical analysis, drill activities, puzzles, and hypothesis testing.

See also

- Keywords: brain, right- or left- dominance, language schools

Tips for right-brain learners

Tips — Here are some language learning tips for right-brain learners:

- Take advantage of study programs organized around communicative techniques. You may be frustrated by traditional language programs based on a grammatical syllabus.
- Look for help if you have to design and manage a personal language learning program because many of the skills required are left-brain.
- Whenever possible, choose language learning activities that involve interaction with other people and that call for creativity and innovation.
- Use the creativity of your right-brain dominance to have fun with language learning. Think up language learning activities and games for yourself and others, using colors, pictures, and whimsy.
- Use your intuition to guess meanings from context, without necessarily working out all the details.
- Use pictures and images to help you remember ideas and words.
- Find creative ways to communicate when you cannot think of the words or structures you need.
- Use music, poetry, or art to help you learn.

Warning — You may be having so much fun you neglect important details. Remember that you cannot achieve real proficiency in a language without learning to be accurate.

See also

- Keywords: brain, right- or left- dominance

Your sensory preference and language learning

Introduction — In planning and carrying out your language learning program, you can use your sensory preference to choose learning activities that will work best for you.

In this module group —Here are the modules on using your sensory preference for language learning:

- Tips for tactile or action learners
- Tips for auditory learners
- Tips for visual learners

Guidelines — Here are some guidelines to follow when you use your sensory preferences for language learning:

- Some of the language skills you need to develop will not match your sensory preference. Regardless of your preference, you must use auditory skills to develop listening comprehension, and visual skills to learn to read.
- Your sensory preference can aid you to learn a skill based on another sense. It must, however, serve as a bridge to the skill you need rather than a substitute for it. The danger is that you may rely on skills based on your sensory preference and you may neglect other skills you really need.
- Many language educators believe that the best learning environment is one in which all the senses are involved. You will have difficulty if you try to build your language learning only on your sensory preference.

See also — To see how other aspects of your learning style can be used to your advantage, see

- OVERVIEW: Implications of your learning style for language learning
- Keywords: sensory preferences

Tips for tactile or action learners

Introduction — While language skills are largely visual and auditory, tactile or action learners can use their preference for hands-on learning as a bridge to language skills.

There are activities and techniques especially appropriate for tactile or action learners that involve action and involvement. In the early stages of language learning they might choose one of the following:

- The Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques
- The Series technique (using actions)

Tips — Here are some language learning tips for tactile or action learners:

- When you learn vocabulary, try doing an action or touching something while you listen to the word.
- Study vocabulary by typing words on your computer or writing them by hand.
- If available, use interactive, computer-assisted language learning.
- As you begin to develop language skills, look for activities where you will hear and use the language. You could
 - join a sports team or learn a new sport
 - help community members with their work, especially if you have a specific skill you can contribute
 - find a club or association of people organized around a hobby or activity and join in, or get somebody to show you how to do a cultural skill or craft from the culture.

See also: Activities for self-directed language learners

See also

- Keywords: computer-assisted language learning , sensory preferences

Tips for auditory learners

Introduction — Auditory learners have the advantage of being able to understand what they hear and to say what they mean.

They find it easier to cope than visual learners do in a society where the language is not written or where literacy does not have a high functional value.

Auditory learners find the techniques for developing listening comprehension helpful and enjoyable. They can use:

- The Total Physical Response techniques
- The Look and Listen techniques
- The Dialogue techniques

Tips — Here are some language learning tips for auditory learners:

- Use your auditory preference as a bridge to reading and writing skills .
- See if you can get someone to record written stories or dialogues on tape and listen while you read the text.
- Get someone to read portions of a book out loud. Reread them on your own later.
- Look for books on tape or other audio material. Once you can follow the gist of the tapes, play them while you are doing something else.
- If children's literature is available, read aloud to children who speak the target language. Even better, get them to read aloud to you. This is fun and builds relationships as you learn.
- When you read, discuss what you read with others. If you are alone, talk to yourself out loud about what you read.

Once you have basic proficiency in the language, use your listening ability to help you learn more about the language and culture .

- Attend lectures or meetings where the language is spoken. Clubs or associations focused on special interests are good possibilities. Find one on a topic that interests you and go listen.
- Ask questions everywhere so you can hear the language spoken by different people about all kinds of topics.
- Listen to the radio and watch TV or videos. In many countries there are all-news radio stations, where the same news is repeated over and over. If you do not understand the first time, keep listening.
- If you can sing, you might want to join a choir.

See also

- Keywords: sensory preferences

Tips for visual learners

Introduction — Visual learners can incorporate two different learning strategies. They can use the written form of the language (left-brain technique) or pictures (right-brain technique) and drawings to help in language learning.

See: The Brain Dominance Inventory

Visual learners will find the techniques involving written text or pictures and drawings helpful and enjoyable. Here are some of them:

- Look and Listen techniques
- Bilingual Reading technique
- Reading the Signs activity
- Shopping Trip activity

Tips — Here are some language learning tips for you as a visual learner:

Learning to listen and speak

- Do not try to write down everything you hear or refer to your notes before you speak. Listening and speaking are not writing skills. You must develop your auditory skills in order to understand what people say to you.
- Begin with comprehension methods that use pictures or drawings rather than words, such as a photo book, the Learnables, and picture dictionaries. Use these along with a recording or a video.
- When building listening comprehension with techniques such as the TPR techniques and games, use them without writing anything down. Plan to write down the words you learned afterwards. This provides notes to help you remember and keeps you focused on auditory learning in the sessions.
- Listen to texts for which you have both an audio recording and a written transcription.

Learning vocabulary words

- Use colors, pictures, or physical groupings of words to help you remember related words, as in the Memory Reinforcement techniques.
- Take written notes when listening to a lecture or sermon.
- Make charts, graphs, or mind maps to aid retention.
- When hearing a new word you want to remember, visualize the spelling.
- Use vocabulary cards as in the Flash Cards technique.
- Use your computer to review, to rework and to organize your data. Look at words on the screen to help reinforce your learning.
- Use mnemonic devices which rely on visualization, such as the Mental Image technique.
- Read as much as you can. (Vocabulary acquired through reading is largely transferable to listening comprehension.)

Learning phrases and routines

- Do not rely on writing alone to help you produce memorized phrases or routines. Listen to recordings or live speeches to form an auditory and visual image of these phrases. Your notes can serve as a memory cue to help you recognize word breaks. You cannot, however, fully reproduce all the nuances of intonation, rhythm, and general phonology by only reading what you have written.
- Read as much as you can. (Grammatical constructions acquired through reading are largely transferable to listening comprehension.)

See also

- Keywords: audio recordings, photographs and photo books, pictures and picture books, sensory preferences, video

Your personality type and language learning

Introduction — According to Madeleine Ehrman, each of the preferences that make up a psychological type has its assets and liabilities when it comes to language learning.

Assets and liabilities

Here are the major assets and liabilities of each personality preference:

Preference	Assets	Liabilities
Extroversion	• Willing to take conversational risks	• Dependent on outside stimulation and interaction
Introversion	• Concentration	
• Self-sufficiency		
• •	• Need to process ideas before speaking may lead to avoidance of risks in conversation	
Sensing	• Hard, systematic work	
• Attention to detail		
• Close observation	• Hindered by lack of clear sequence, goals, syllabus, structure in language or course	
Intuition	• Inferencing and guessing from context	
• Structuring own training		
• Conceptualizing and model-building	• Inaccuracy and missing important details	
• Seeking complexity of discourse		
Thinking	• Analysis	
• Self-discipline		
• Instrumental motivation		
• •	• Performance anxiety because self-esteem is attached to achievement	
• Excessive need for control (language and process)		
Feeling	• Integrative motivation, bonding with teachers or speakers of language	
• Good relations leading to good self-esteem	• Discouraged if not appreciated	
• Disrupted by lack of interpersonal harmony		
Judging	• Systematic work	
• Get the job done (whatever it is)	• Rigidity	
• Intolerance of ambiguous stimuli		
Perceiving	• Open	
• Flexible		
• Adaptable to change and new experiences	• Laziness	
• Inconsistent pacing over the long haul		

Sources

Ehrman 1989

See also

To see how other aspects of your learning style can be used to your advantage, see

- OVERVIEW: Implications of your learning style for language learning
- Keywords: personality types, techniques for language learning