**Didactics level:3rd year/group 04 Mrs Madani**

**Learning styles and strategies**

1. **Learning Styles**

Learning styles refer to the “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits

that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (Keefe, 1979, as cited in Brown, 2007, p. 120). In other words, learning styles refer to the ways individual learners prefer to approach a learning task. These preferences in learning are determined by cognitive, affective, and physiological factors. Researchers have categorized learning styles in a variety of ways.

* **Brown (2007, p. 121-129)** suggests that five learning styles are relevant to second language acquisition.

**1.1. Field Independence:**

Field independent (FI) learners tend “to perceive a particular, relevant item

or factor in a ‘field’ of distracting items” (Brown, 2007, p. 121). In other words, FI learners tend to see the component parts of the whole, and are unable to see the big picture because of their attention to its parts. FI learners are “closely related to classroom learning that involves analysis, attention to details, and mastering of exercises, drills, and other focused activities” (ibid.). On the other hand, field dependent (FD) learners tend to perceive the whole picture or the larger view and are unable to separate details from the surrounding context. They are more successful in learning the communicative aspects of language. Research has shown that Both FI and FD styles are important and necessary for L2 learning.

**1.2. Left and Right Brain Dominance:**

Research indicates that the two hemispheres of the brain process

information differently, but operate together as one unit. The left hemisphere is believed to be associated with “mathematical and linear processing of information” (Brown, 2007, p. 125). The right hemisphere, on the other hand, is said to be associated with “processing holistic, integrative, and emotional information” (ibid.). Research has found that left brain dominant second language learners prefer a deductive style of teaching. Right brain dominant learners, on the other hand, were found to be more successful in inductive learning. In other words, left brain

dominant learners tend toward analytic, reflective, and self reliant learning, while right brain dominant learners tend toward global, impulsive, and interactive learning. It has also been found that there exists a strong relationship between FI / FD and left and right brain dominant styles. Field independent learners tend generally to be left brain dominant, and vice versa.

**1.3 Ambiguity Tolerance:**

This style refers to the “degree to which [a person is] cognitively willing to

tolerate ideas and prepositions that run counter to [his or her] own belief system or structure of knowledge” (Brown, 2007, p. 126). In other words, ambiguity tolerant learners tend to accept information that contradicts their own views. Lexical items that differ from the native language, the inconsistency of certain grammatical rules of the target language with those of the native language, and differences between the cultural system of the target language and that of the native language are examples of the contradictory information that L2 learners may encounter. The available research shows that learners with high tolerance for ambiguity are more

successful in language learning. These findings suggest that tolerance of ambiguity is an important factor in second language acquisition.

**1.4. Reflectivity and Impulsivity**

These two styles refers to “the degree to which, in the cognitive domain, a

person tends to make either a quick or gambling (impulsive) guess at an answer to a problem or a slower, more calculated (reflective) decision” (Brown, 2007, p. 127). In other words, reflective learners are systematic. They tend to weigh all the considerations in a problem before making a decision and taking an action. On the other hand, impulsive learners are intuitive. They tend to make quick and gambling solutions for problems. In the language classroom, reflective learners tend to think about language and how to convey their message accurately. Impulsive learners, on the other hand, take risks with the language. They are more concerned with

speaking fluently than speaking accurately. Research on R/I shows that both styles are important for success in second language learning.

**1.5. Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic styles**

Visual, Auditory, and kinesthetic styles refer to “the preference that

learners show toward either visual, auditory, and / or Kinesthetic input” (Brown, 2007, p. 129). Visual learners prefer reading and using pictures, flashcards, charts, and other graphics when studying. Auditory learners prefer listening to reading. They enjoy conversations, debates, and interaction with others. Kinesthetic learners show a preference for learning that involves physical activities (such as role plays, demonstrations, manipulating objects, etc.) which allow them to move around and be active. Studies have shown that most successful learners use a variety of modalities in learning. In sum, research on learning styles suggests that learning preferences have an impact on learners’ choice and use of learning strategies, and that both styles and strategies affect the outcomes of learning. In the language classroom, teachers need to be aware of the ways learners prefer to learn. This would help them adapt their teaching method (varying the activities that they use for example) to ensure that they meet the learning preferences of most, if not all, the students. Also,

teachers should help their students to become autonomous learners. This can be done through helping their students discover their own preferred learning styles, develop them, and choose and use strategies that suit their learning styles.

* **Learning styles according to Willing (1987):**

Keith Willing, working with adult students in Australia, produced the following

descriptions:

1. **Convergers:** these are students who are by nature solitary, prefer to avoid

groups, and who are independent and confident in their own abilities. Most

importantly they are analytic and can impose their own structures on learning.

They tend to be cool and pragmatic.

1. **Conformists**: these are students who prefer to emphasise learning 'about

language' over Learning to use it. They tend to be dependent on those in authority

and are perfectly happy to work in non-communicative classrooms, doing what

they are told. A classroom of conformists is one which prefers to see well

organisedteachers.

1. **concrete learners:** though they are like conformists, they also enjoy the

social aspects of learning and like to learn from direct experience. They are

interested in language use and language as communication rather than language as

a system. They enjoy games and group work in class.

1. **Communicative learners:** these are Language use orientated. They are

comfortable out of class and show a degree of confidence and a willingness to take

risks which their colleagues may Lack. They are much more interested in social

interaction with other speakers of the language than they are with analysis of how

the language works. They are perfectly happy to operate without the guidance of a

teacher.

1. **Learning strategies :**

 **What is a Strategy:**
 it is a detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics, business, sport, etc.; or the skill of planning for such situations.

* Rebecca Oxford (2001, p. 362) defines language learning strategies as

“specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own L2 learning”. In other words, language learning strategies refer to the mental or behavioural activities employed by L2 learners that would facilitate L2 learning process.

* Language learning strategies are “among the main factors that help determine how- and how well- our students learn a second or foreign language” (ibid., p. 359). They constitute the necessary tools that the L2 learner uses for the purpose of achieving competence in the target language.
* Researchers have categorized language learning strategies in a variety of ways.

**Oxford’s (1990) strategy classification system has been acknowledged by many scholars as being comprehensive and detailed. She classified learning strategies into:**

**2.1 Cognitive strategies:**

they are the mental strategies that enable learners to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining.

* 1. **Metacognitive strategies:**

They are the strategies that help learners regulate and manage their own learning; that is, strategies that allow students to plan, control, and evaluate their learning.

Learners who are equipped with good metacognitive strategies are aware of their learning and they know how and when to employ the most relevant strategies to accomplish a given task; they know how to accomplish a particular task in the most effective way. They plan their learning in advance, monitor their learning during the task performance, and evaluate their learning after task accomplishment.

**2.3 Compensatory strategies**:

are the strategies that learners use to make up for insufficient knowledge needed for understanding and producing language (guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and “talking around” the missing word to aid speaking and writing; using gestures, etc.)

* 1. **Affective strategies:**

are the strategies that learners use to control their emotions and attitudes about learning. Identifying one’s mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive selftalk, have been shown to be significantly related to L2 proficiency.

2.5 **Social strategies:**

They are the strategies used by learners which facilitate engagement in the target language through interaction with other speakers of L2 (asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms).