

## Learning styles

**Topic:** Idioms

**Aims:**

- To apply listening skills to an audio extract of non-native speakers
- To raise awareness of personal learning styles
- To provide concrete learning aids to enable learners to better exploit their strengths for learning a language
- To expand vocabulary focusing primarily on idioms

**Level:** Upper-Intermediate to Advanced

**Materials:**

- Card
- Pens
- Cassette player
- Blank tape
- Dice

### Introduction

Not only does this lesson allow learners to practise their listening skills by listening to other non-native speakers discussing the way they learn, it also gives them the opportunity to put what they hear immediately into practice. The activities here use the learning suggestions made in the extract and put them into a real learning context. The students will be encouraged to experiment with the learning strategies discussed in the audio with the end objective being to analyse their own learning styles. This lesson should be backed up with the continued use of the personalised learning tools created during the class and homework tasks.

If you don't have access to audio players, you can still do the lesson using the script of the audio text.

To download the listening go to:

[http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/prof\\_mp3/Learning\\_Styles.mp3](http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/prof_mp3/Learning_Styles.mp3)

To download the script for the listening go to:

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/learning-styles-audioscript.pdf>

### Procedure

#### Pre-listening task: Warm up

- Look in magazines for pictures of young students talking. Elicit who they are and what they could be talking about with questions such as: 'How old do you think they are?', 'Where do you think they are?'

#### Listening for gist meaning

- Once you have got your students interested in the audio extract and they have a general idea of who they are going to listen to, you can move on

to actually listening to the conversation.

**Tip:** When listening the students should always have something to do and so a reason for listening otherwise they could easily switch off. It's best to start with a gist meaning exercise so they can get a general idea of what the conversation is about before moving onto details.

- Distribute Worksheet A – one per person. Students should listen once and write down T (true) or F (false).
- They can check their answers with their neighbour to see if they have the same answers before listening a second time.

**Tip:** This time they pay attention to the questions where they have differing answers to their neighbour and generally confirm or modify their original answers.

- Feedback as a class as to what the conversation is about.

**Tip:** You do not need to draw this out too much as they will get a chance to discuss the conversation in the post-listening discussion task, however it's important that they are encouraged to think about the actual meaning of the extract and not just to see it as an exercise.

## Answers

True or False

*Are these statements True or False?*

1. The three speakers are all learning English. T
2. Josef uses pictures to help him learn English. T
3. Ana finds learning English vocabulary too difficult. F
4. Paula has a messy notebook. F
5. Josef invents games to remember grammar rules. T
6. Paula thinks that they all learn English the same way. F

## Listening for detail

They should be ready now to move onto details in the audio.

- Explain that they are going to listen to the audio again and this time they must put a selection of quotes into the order they hear them.
- Ask the students to look at the quotes and decide what they all have in common. (They are all to do with learning styles.)

**Tip:** They may find it easier to cut up the sentences into strips and move the papers around as they listen. It is quicker for them to do this rather than you cut up sets of sentences for each student. However, if time is limited in class you may want to prepare this in advance or just ask them to note the order.

- Again they can check their first answers with a neighbour and then listen a fourth and final time.

**Tip:** When they listen this time they should check the order they have put the sentences in and also write down next to each sentence who says it. This is so that they can reflect on the individuals in the audio and the characteristics of their learning styles. You can tell them this before they listen. You may find that the third listening will suffice and that your students don't need the fourth time. Ask them before the final listening if they can remember who said what. If they are unsure then proceed with the final listening.

### Reordering vertically

Put the following sentences into the order that you hear them in the audio text and say who says them.

### Answers

1. I think you'd better borrow Paula's. She takes lots of really good notes. (J)
2. I just draw little pictures and symbols. (J)
3. I like the way you organise everything into columns and charts. (A)
4. I record myself reading grammar rules sometimes too. (A)
5. I find grammar quite difficult. (J)
6. We all seem to have completely different ways of studying and learning. (P)
7. One man's meat is another man's poison. (J)

### Post-listening discussion task

- Before you put the class into smaller groups to discuss the three questions you should spend a couple of minutes clarifying the different learning styles.
- Write on the board the different learning styles listed below.
- Read out a description and ask them to match it with a learning style.

**Tip:** How you then set up the post-listening discussion will depend on the number of people in your class. If you have a large class you could put the class into groups of three or four. Ask one person from each group to take brief notes to feedback to the class about what their group thought. If your class is small then you can begin by putting them into pairs before having a class feedback to compare answers. By doing this you give everyone more talking time.

### Look back at who says what.

1. How would you describe Ana, Josef and Paula as learners? a. visual (Josef) b. auditory (Ana) c. kinaesthetic (Josef) d. linguistic (Ana) e. logical (Paula)

Characteristics of learner styles:

Kinaesthetic – need to keep active, enjoy crafts, use body language to express themselves, touching things helps them learn word.

Logical – like to solve problems, learns by categorising, making charts

Visual – express themselves through pictures, day-dreamers, creative thinkers  
Auditory / Musical – learn best through listening to music, notice rhythms

2. What are their strong points?

*Possible answers: Paula is well organised and neat, she organises her notes well, she uses charts and tables to make her work clear. Ana has a good memory, she can recall vocabulary easily. Josef has an inventive imagination and he learns better when he can touch something or see something written down.*

3. Are there any of the learning strategies discussed in the extract that you already use in your learning? *Students' own answers*

### Follow up activities

#### Personal Dictionaries

- Before discussing how to make a personal dictionary you can show the class a monolingual dictionary. Brainstorm the pros and cons of using a monolingual dictionary. These could include:  
**Pros:** more likely to remember word in English and not in L1, dictionaries provide pronunciation, context and different uses, regular use of a dictionary enables language expansion  
**Cons:** to be too reliant on a dictionary can limit spontaneity when speaking, it can be restrictive when reading, language is organised in alphabetical order which doesn't act as a memory aid

As a link to making their own dictionaries you can say that the advantages of the Personal Dictionary include:

1. the absence of their L1
  2. by making their own categories they may remember the words more easily – words are grouped together in logical lexical sets
  3. the example sentences are provided by themselves so they are required to systematically reflect on the meaning of a new word
  4. including pictures to illustrate words can help the visual learners (refer back to the audio extract and Josef as a visual learner to insist on the utility of pictures)
- On the board draw a copy of the front page of the dictionary. (**See worksheets for a dictionary template**)
  - Fill in your name and the school year of the class you are teaching.
  - The boxes at the bottom enable students to see at a glance which subjects they have already covered in their dictionaries.

**Tip:** Before distributing copies of the dictionaries ask students to look through their textbooks and decide on five subject headings under which they could put at least five words. Remind them at this stage that the dictionaries are personal and that they should choose their own subjects and words and not those of their neighbour.

- Display a copy of an inner page of a dictionary and write in a couple of examples. The words you choose will depend on your class but you could choose a couple of words from their textbook as well. The first word should be a noun or adjective that can be easily drawn. Write the word, draw a picture of it, elicit the word type from the class and elicit a sentence with the word in a correct context. The second word(s) can be a verb or other word type that doesn't lend itself so well to being drawn. Ask the students themselves to volunteer a drawing for your word and come and draw it on the board. Again elicit an example sentence. It's important at this stage that the students understand the importance of putting the vocabulary into a context.

- Distribute copies of front page and five inner pages. Depending on how much time you have you can ask them to do one subject with five words. They can complete the one page in class, check it with you while you monitor the class and then do a subject per week for homework.

### **Recording Grammar Rules**

- This can be an ongoing activity during the lesson while everyone is compiling their personal dictionary.
- Each person is given a grammar point on a piece of card. On the back there is a concise sentence which explains the grammar. For advanced classes they can write their own sentences to explain briefly the grammar point. **(See worksheets for example cards)**
- Set up a recording corner. This can be outside your classroom door to avoid interfering noise.
- Each student in turn goes and records their sentence onto the tape.
- When the dictionaries are finished stick all the cards onto the board with the grammar point showing and the sentences hidden.
- The students listen to the sentences one by one and together have to match them to the grammar points.

### **A Grammar Game Workshop**

- Ask the students to remember who from the audio extract plays card games to remember grammar rules. (Ans: Josef) Tell them that they are going to invent their own games in small groups. They will then write a list of rules to accompany their game and finally move around the workstations set up in the room and test the games.

**Tip:** In one lesson they won't have time to test all the games so explain this at the start of the activity to avoid a feeling of deception. You should make a point of integrating their games into future lessons.

- Put the students into groups of four and give them a set of six blank cards. **(See worksheets for example blank cards)**
- Each group has a grammar point such as 'The present simple'. Ideally it should be something they have recently learned in class. Examples have been provided but you can adapt them to your own students and their needs.
- There should be a free supply of large card, rulers, pens, dice that the groups can help themselves to if they need.
- They have 15 to 20 minutes to invent a short grammar card game that practises their grammar point.
- Once they have invented their game they can move around the workstations.

- These games can and should be used for later lessons.
- Laminate cards after the lesson to preserve and facilitate future use.

Possible areas to base a game on:

- Comparatives and superlatives
- Question tags
- Third conditional
- The future
- The past
- The present
- Modal verbs

### Idioms

**Tip:** It's essential when working on idioms that the students see them in context. Find out if they understand what an idiom is. (Ans: a group of words which when put together have a different meaning from their original meaning.)

- Ask the students to think back to the audio and try to remember the idioms that were used. (Ans: 'Pull your finger out' and 'One man's meat is another man's poison'.)
- See first of all if the students can remember what the definitions were, then ask if they know or can work out the meaning and finally check back with the audio for confirmation. (Ans: 'to make more effort' and 'what's good for one person doesn't have to be good for somebody else'.)
- The following idioms can all be related to learning. It's a good idea to introduce idioms in subject categories so the students can organise and recall them more easily.

**Tip:** If you have a small class you can distribute idioms to half of the class and the definitions to the other half. If you have a large class then this will prove to be too many idioms. Choose about 5 – 8 idioms for one lesson.

Sample idioms:

1. Turn over a new leaf	1. Change some element of your life for the better
2. Break a leg	2. Good luck
3. The early bird catches the worm	3. If you start early you are likely to achieve what you set out to do.
4. Start from scratch	4. To completely begin again.
5. Rome wasn't built in a day	5. You need to be patient and take your time.
6. Practice makes perfect	6. Don't give up the first time you try to do something.
7. Method to my madness	7. Even though what I'm doing looks strange I actually know what I'm doing
8. All in the same boat	8. Everyone has the same problem

### Recording vocabulary

- To use the categorising strategies discussed in audio students are given a set of ten idioms. They must research on the internet or in a good idiomatic dictionary of Idioms and put them into categories in their personal dictionaries. You can pick ten idioms at random that you think will be useful to the students, or simply ask them to find ten each for homework. They must then put them into appropriate categories in their personal dictionaries.
- Homework – Design a picture for each one.
- For the following lesson the students can write a short dialogue in pairs using at least three of the idioms. Remind them that they should concentrate on the context of the idioms and base the script around the idioms and not the other way around.
- They can then perform their dialogue to the class.
- To involve everyone else while they are listening they can try to note the three idioms that each group uses in their script.

### Learning styles questionnaire

- The students fill in a questionnaire (**see worksheets for questionnaire**) which asks them about how they learn and leads to a final analysis of what sort of learner they are and where their strengths lie. The objective here is for them to improve their learning strategies and fully exploit their strengths.
- The students should answer the questions individually and then mingle around the classroom to find others who have similar responses to them. They should stay with these people and form new groups.
- Together they can analysis from their answers and using the descriptions you gave them earlier of learner types, they can perform a self-analysis of the type of learner they are. They are not restricted to being one learner type.
- Then, still in their groups, they can define their learning strengths and devise a learning strategy plan. You should guide them at this point, if need be, as to what a particular learner type might find useful for learning efficiently.

**Lesson Feedback**

- Discuss activities carried out in class. The students should say if they liked or disliked what they did and what they think they learned from each activity.

**Tip:** This is a vital part of the process and can't be a two-minute 'So did you enjoy that?' 'Yes/No' exchange. This will again help them to analyse how they learn best and what activities are best suited to their needs and learning style.

- The students should do this in pairs and on their own. Finally ask them to feedback as a whole class and use this feedback to find out more about your students, their needs and their learner styles.