



Language learning

PROF. NICOLE NAU

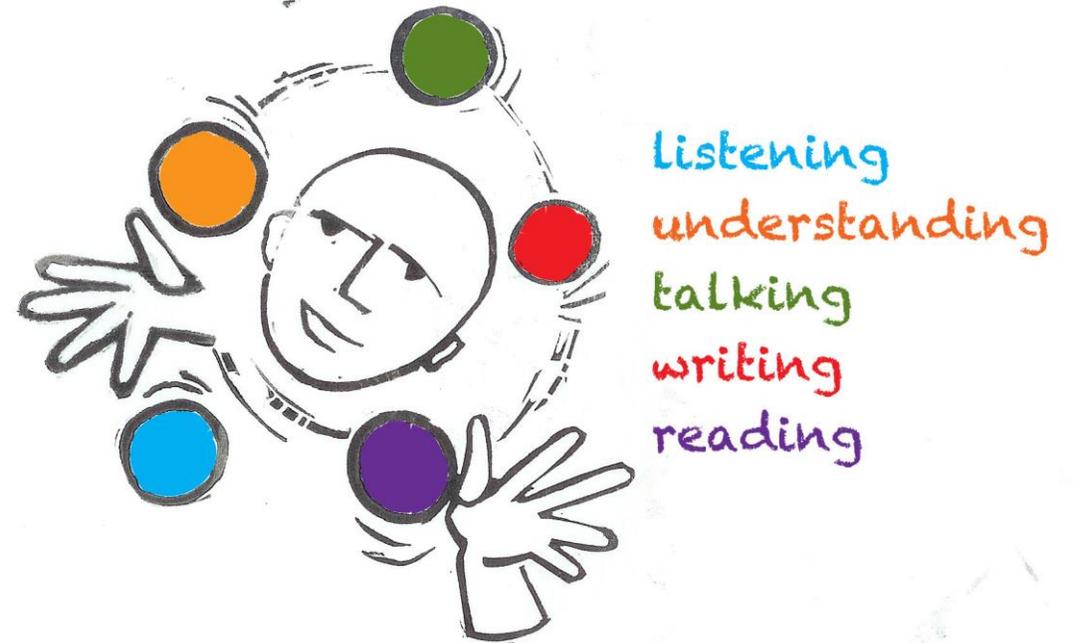
UAM 2019

Welcome!

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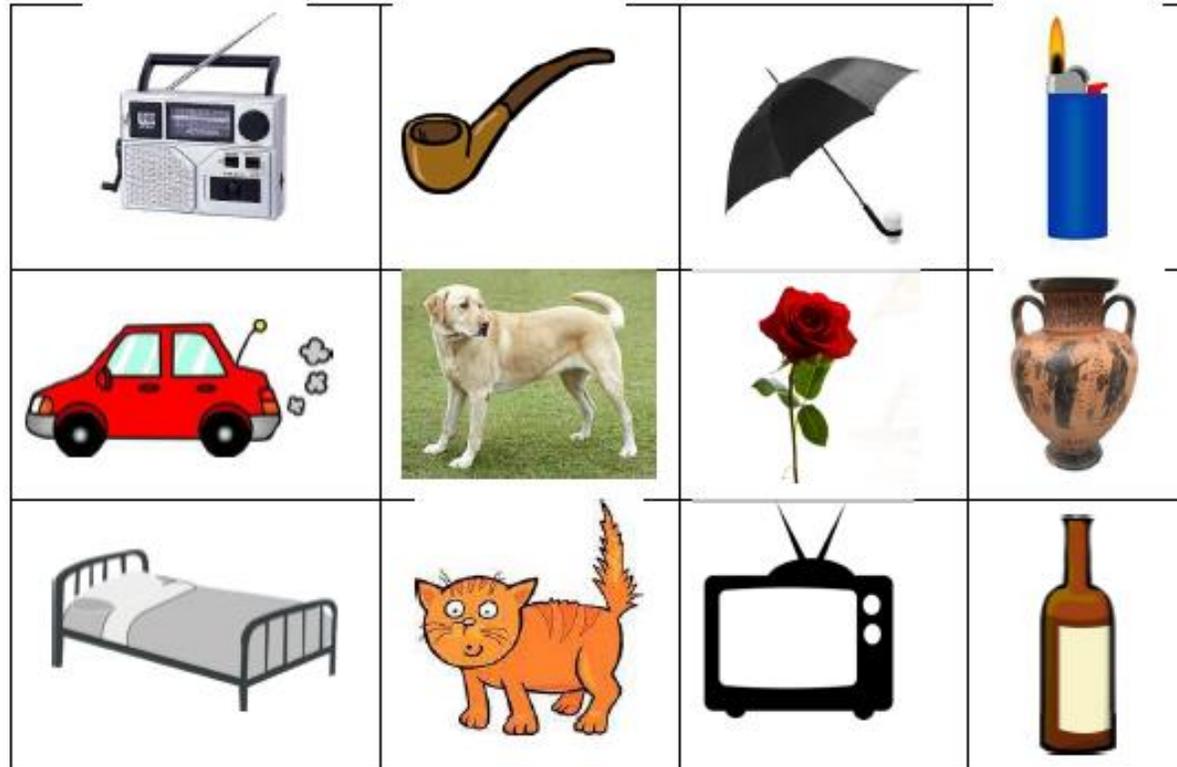
Today

- Learning strategies and motivation: short review and application in analysis
- Learning styles
- Some questions about aptitude



Which words do you remember?

What helped you recall these words?



Learning strategy: definitions

- „specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations” (Oxford 1990, cit. after Griffith 2008)
- „activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning” (Griffith 2008)

Learning styles: Definition

(Leaver et al. 2005)

Learning styles are habitual patterns of perceiving, processing, or reacting to information.

- **Sensory preferences** refer to the channels through which we perceive information [...]
- **Cognitive styles** refer to individualized ways of processing of information.
- **Personality types** [...] involve affective (emotional) factors

Why learn about learning styles?

As a learner:

- to take advantage of your preferences, find the right strategies
- to enhance motivation
- to know your weaknesses and how to deal with them

As a teacher:

- to be aware of differences among students
- to care about variation in teaching methods
- not to impose your own preferences on others

BUT...

- There is no real evidence (scientific proof) of the importance of learning styles for the success of language learning.
- Learners may have wrong ideas about their own learning preferences. Preferences may change with the progress of learning or with age or environment.
- It is good to use several, also opposite styles in learning.
- It is good at least sometimes to get out of your comfort zone!

Your learning style(s)

Homework for today:

- Go through the ***Learning Style Survey*** prepared by Cohen, Oxford & Shi (2002)

[Today\Learning_Style_Survey_Assessing_Your_Own_Learning_.pdf](#)

Typology of learning styles

How I use my body and my senses for learning

How and what I notice

How I understand, discover and apply patterns

How I like to behave in a learning environment

How I use my body and my senses: Sensory preferences (after Leaver et al. 2005)

visual learning (learning through seeing)

- **imagists** make an image (see a picture) of what they hear or read
- **verbalists** see words spelled; associate words with letters

auditory learning (learning through sound)

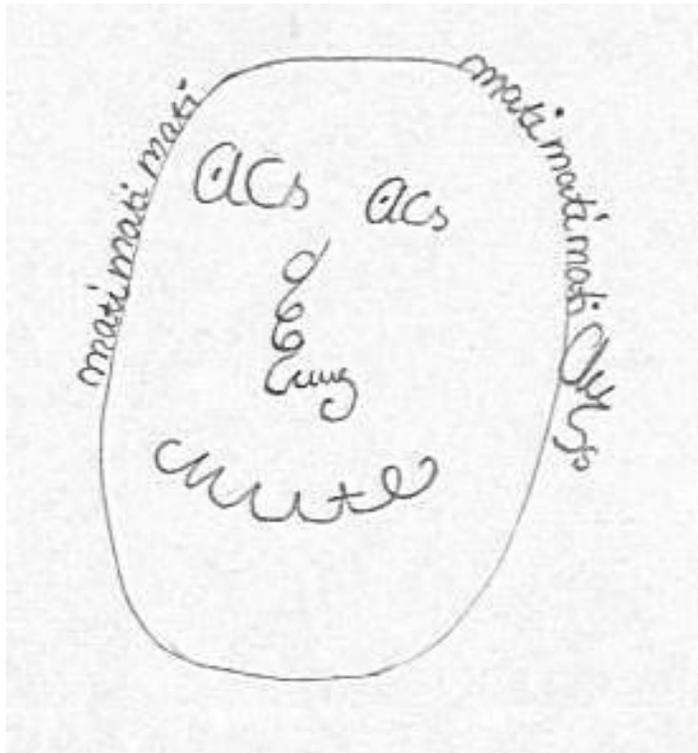
- **aural learners** learn by listening to others; need "auditory input"
- **oral learners** learn by talking and listening to themselves; need "auditory output"

motor learning (learning through movement)

- **kinesthetic learners** use their entire body for learning
- **mechanical learners** like to do something with their hands (write, draw)

For each of the six types, name at least one learning strategy that will be beneficial for a learner with such a preference!

A learning strategy
of a “verbalist” (and
mechanical learner)



Styles in noticing information

- **Global**: see the forest before the trees; top-down approach; focus on the whole
- opposite: **Particular**: see the trees before the forest; bottom-up approach; focus on details
- ? **Field-independent**: automatically select what is important, abstract from the context (opposite: **field-dependent**)

What kinds of task would learners with each of the styles like to do and what strategies may they use, for example, in listening comprehension?

Styles in understanding and applying patterns

- **synthesizing** (using given pieces to build new wholes) vs. **analytic** (breaks down wholes into pieces) (6)
- **inductive** (from example to rule) vs. **deductive** (apply rule to example) (8)
- ? **metaphorical** vs. **literal** understanding (11)

How may these differences show, for example, when learning grammar? What do learners with each preference expect from the teacher and/or the teaching material?

Learning environment and behavior

- **Field-sensitive:** use the full language environment for comprehension and learning, vs. field-insensitive
- **Random-intuitive** learners like to develop their own approach and to use varied material in various ways; **Concrete-sequential** learners prefer systematic material and step-by-step procedure
- **Introverted** learners like to study on their own vs. **extraverted:** like social, group activities
- **Impulsive:** immediate reaction to tasks; vs. **reflective:** think before acting

From a review of Duolingo

«Duolingo is ideal for **sequential learners** who want to build a base understanding of a language and practice vocabulary. It works especially well for people who like structure, sequential learning, and gamification.»

<https://toomanyadapters.com/best-language-apps/>

Bonus track: Learning and teaching strategies and styles

- Watch a short video that teaches a Korean word:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWJmMKPJHr0>
- Name strategies that are used in teaching the word.
- What kinds of learning styles would most benefit from this video?
- What features of the video could be beneficial for motivation?

- What would/could YOU DO to learn the expressions of the video? (which learning strategies would you use? Why?)

Some ideas for your presentations

- Web- and mobile-based language courses, for example by **duolingu.com**, **babble.com**, **smigin.com**, **fluent-forewer.com**
- Tools and applications for learning (mainly) vocabulary: **memrise.com**, **quizlet.com**, **anki** (<https://apps.ankiweb.net/>), **language drops.com** (app “drops”)
- YouTube channels teaching languages
- Learning through reading: **readlang.com**, **beelinguapp**
- Learning through listening: language learning podcasts, or with songs: <https://lyricstraining.com/>
- Learning with Internet content, for example, with **flowlingo**, **instreamia**, **fleextv**
- Language for specific purposes, for ex., **English for Academic Purposes**

Language (learning) aptitude: 4 components (introduced by Carroll in the 1950s)

Phonemic coding ability	The ability to identify and memorize new sounds
Grammatical Sensitivity	The ability to understand the function of particular words in sentences
Inductive language learning ability	The ability to figure out grammatical rules from language samples
Associative memory	Memory for new words

(Definitions from Lightbown & Spada 1999)

Language aptitude: some questions and tentative answers

(after Dörnyei & Skehan 2003: 590-591)

Can such a talent be measured effectively?

- Tests such as MLAT can predict success in language classes.
- Critique: they may measure only success with (a certain kind of) instruction, not real language talent.

MLAT Modern Language Aptitude Test, to be found on the Internet, for example at: <https://l1tf.net/aptitude-tests/language-aptitude-tests/>

Is such a talent undifferentiated, or does it have sub-components?

- There seem to be at least two components: memory and analytic skills.
- Possible third component: sensitivity for sound distinctions.
- The components seem to be independent: some people have good memory, others good analytic skills, others both (or neither 😞)

Is foreign language aptitude a distinct ability, or does it relate to more general abilities, such as intelligence?

- ? (A good memory and/or analytic skills also lead to good results in IQ tests - but is this intelligence?)

Is such a talent innate? Is it relatively fixed or is it amenable to training?

- ?

References and further reading

- Dörnyei, Zoltán & Skehan, Peter. 2003. *Individual differences in second language learning*. In: Doughty & Long (eds.) *The handbook of second language acquisition*, 589-621.
- Ellis, Rod. 2006. Individual differences in second language learning. In: Davies & Elder (eds.) *The handbook of applied linguistics*, 525-551
- Leaver, Betty Lou / Ehrman, Madeline Elizabeth / Shekman, Boris. 2005. *Achieving success in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [chapter 3 Learning styles and learning strategies]
- Lightbown, Patsy & Nina Spada. 1999. *How languages are learned*. Oxford: OUP.