

Artículo de Investigación

Didactic games for the English Language Teaching (ELT) according to the learning styles of the students

Juegos didácticos para la enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa según estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes

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Abstract – This paper offers a brief reference on learning styles, specifically the NLP Neurolinguistic Programming or better known as VAK (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) of Bandler and Grinder. The results of the diagnosis applied to a group of high school students to determine the learning styles of the students in the teaching of the English language are offered. For this purpose, didactic games were elaborated taking into account the students' learning styles with the methodological procedure to be used in the classroom by the teacher. An analysis of the students' learning behavior after their participation in the elaborated didactic games was carried out through the application of instruments such as the teacher interview, student surveys and the observation of the classroom environment using the triangulation method. As a sample, a teacher and a group of 60 students in the tenth grade of the pre-university "Julio Antonio Mella" Senior High School in the city of Baracoa in Guantánamo, Cuba, during the academic period 2018-2019 were taken into consideration. As conclusions of the study, it is evident that the proposed didactic games can be adapted and applied in other subjects and grades of different educational levels.

Keywords: learning styles, didactic games, English learning, students, professor.

Resumen – En el trabajo se ofrece una breve referencia sobre los estilos de aprendizaje, específicamente el de Programación Neurolingüística PNL o más conocido como VAK (visual, auditivo, kinestésico) de Bandler y Grinder. Se ofrecen los resultados del diagnóstico aplicado a un grupo de estudiantes de secundaria básica para determinar los estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes en la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa. Para ello se elaboraron juegos didácticos teniendo en cuenta los estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes con el proceder metodológico a ser utilizado en el aula por parte del profesor. Se realizó un análisis del comportamiento del aprendizaje de los estudiantes después de su participación en los juegos didácticos elaborados, a través de la aplicación de instrumentos

como la entrevista al profesor, encuestas a los estudiantes y la observación del ambiente de clases utilizando el método de triangulación. Como muestra se tomó en consideración un profesor y un grupo de 60 estudiantes cursantes del décimo grado del preuniversitario “Julio Antonio Mella” de la ciudad de Baracoa en Guantánamo, Cuba, durante el período académico 2018-2019. Como conclusiones del estudio se evidencia que los juegos didácticos propuestos se pueden adaptar y ser aplicados en otras asignaturas y grados de diferentes niveles educativos.

Palabras clave: estilos de aprendizaje, juegos didácticos, enseñanza del inglés, estudiantes, profesor.

Introduction

In the last ten years, linguistics has been worried about learning strategies in second or foreign language acquisition. Many researches have been carried out on this topic, and their results have demonstrated that students do apply learning strategies while learning a new language.

As learning strategies, it is understood all the procedures students use to learn something to reach an objective. They are also planned behaviours that select and organize cognitive, affective and motor mechanisms with the aim of facing problem situations, (global or specific) of learning. These strategies facilitate the assimilation of information by the cognitive system of the students. The term “learning styles” deals with the understanding that every student learns differently. Technically, an individual’s learning style refers to the preferential way in which the student absorbs processes, comprehends and retains information.

According to Rosales-Romero et al. (2022), in recent years learning styles have been one of the most researched areas in the world, and there are many studies that agree on the fact that “people perceive, acquire knowledge, have ideas, think and act differently from one another” (Estrada García, 2018, p. 219), encompassing all the ways in which each student learns a subject (Alanya et al., 2021; García-Mogollón & Mogollón-Rodríguez, 2020; Fong-Silva et al., 2021; Gómez & Gil, 2018; Ruiz & López, 2018; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Laffita-Azpiázú & Guerrero-Seide, 2017; Rosales, 2018; Alumran, 2008).

For example, when learning how to build a clock, some students understand the process by following verbal instructions, while others have to physically manipulate the clock themselves. This notion of individualized learning styles has gained widespread recognition in education theory and classroom management strategy. Individual learning styles depend on cognitive, emotional and environmental factors, as well as one’s prior experience. In other words: everyone is different. It is important for educators to understand the differences in their students’ learning styles, so that they can implement best practice strategies into their daily activities, curriculum and assessments.

On the other hand, according to Gutiérrez Tapias (2018), learning styles are not limited only to the educational model, and are described as those learning abilities that stand out above others as a result of the hereditary apparatus, one's own life experiences and the demands of the current environment (Kolb, 1971; Alonso, Gallego & Honey, 2007; Manzano Díaz, 2007; Ojeda & Herrera, 2013; Alducin-Ochoa & Vázquez-Martínez, 2016; Fong-Silva et al., 2017; Torres-Silva & Díaz-Ferrer, 2021).

One of the most accepted understandings of learning styles is that student learning styles fall into three “categories”: Visual Learners, Auditory Learners and Kinesthetic Learners. These learning styles are found within educational theorist Neil Fleming’s VAK model of Student Learning (Fleming & Baume, 2006). VAK is an acronym that refers to the three types of learning styles: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. The VAK model acknowledges that students have different approaches to how they process information, referred to as “preferred learning modes”. The main ideas of this model are:

- Students’ preferred learning modes have significant influence on their behavior and learning.
- Students’ preferred learning modes should be matched with appropriate learning strategies.
- Information that is accessed through students’ use of their modality preferences shows an increase in their levels of comprehension, motivation, and metacognition.

Identifying the students as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners, and aligning your overall curriculum with these learning styles, will prove to be beneficial for your entire classroom. Allowing students to access information in terms they are comfortable with will increase their academic confidence.

By understanding what kind of learner you and/or your students are, you can now gain a better perspective on how to implement these learning styles into your lesson plans and study techniques. It is difficult when in a room of lessons; it is worked in only one way when all the students do not learn in the same way. It is there when all the differences begin at the time of learning. That is why, that teachers should help and teach in different ways to those students that are not adapted to the way of teaching, because all of us have different methods of learning.

Materials and Methods

To the application of this proposal, it was selected from a universe of 1 English teacher and 160 students, 1 one English teacher (100 %) and 60 students, which represents (37, 5%) of the 10th grade at “Julio Antonio Mella” Senior High School” during the academic period 2018-2019. There were applied interview and inquiry to the students and the teacher, and some English classes were observed. The results were analyzed using the triangulation method.

The following aspects were taken into account for the elaboration of the research (Rosales-Romero et al., 2022):

- Teacher's level of preparation for the treatment of learning styles in teaching English.
- Students' level of preparation for learning English.

Through the application of these instruments it could be observed some negative issues; it was found that the teachers do not develop their classes taking into account the learning styles of the students, and when they were asked about this topic they were unable to express themselves orally.

Results and Discussion

Diagnosis of the current state situation of the development of oral expression in students from tenth grade, through the English lessons

For the application of the instruments it was selected 60 students from 10th grade at “Julio Antonio Mella” Senior High School and one teacher of English. There were applied some instruments such as questionnaire and inquiry to the students, interview to the teachers and observation of lessons.

The questionnaire was applied to 60 students of 10th grade to determine the predominant learning styles of them according to VAK model. The 36 (60%) of the students uses the visual style to process the information. The 15 (25 %) uses the kinesthesia style; three of them combine this style with visual style, and two of them with auditive style. The rest of the students 9 for a 15% have auditive style.

As can be seen the predominant learning style of the students is visual. So the majority of the students in this group learn more and better through the eye than through the ear or emotions. The inquiry permitted to know the real situation of the teaching-learning process of English. It was corroborated that the teacher does not know how the students learn, as well as that he/she does not prepare the lesson according to the students’ way of learning. The teacher does not use enough teaching means in the development of the teaching activities in order to improve students’ participation and students’ motivation towards the English lessons.

Another aspect detected was that not all the students feel motivated towards the English lesson because they do not understand the teacher most of the time. When the authors analyse this part it was detected that the students that do not understand their learning styles do not coincide with the teacher one. In reference to the activities assigned by teachers, it was corroborated that the students were not interesting and diversified. In addition to this, they were not prepared to treat the students according to their levels of learning.

In the interview to the teacher, it can be said that she needs to receive methodological training in relation to the object of investigation, as well as to master herself in this theme, because she did not apply the methods and procedures which improves the learning of English taking into account the different ways of learning of her students. The teacher didn’t take into account the different levels of assimilation at the time of elaborating the activities planned in her lesson because most of them were just reproductive, and in the same way for all the students. In this sense, they must plan different activities using many and different teaching means based on the different levels of assimilation which would improve the learning of English in the students.

Ten lessons were observed, 6 (60%) of presentation of new content, 4 (40%) of consolidation. The authoress realized that the teacher does not know how the students learn because the lessons were not prepared taking into account the learning styles of them. The teaching style of the teacher is related to his/her learning style and not to the students’ ones. The predominant learning style of the professor is auditive. This has an influence in the learning process of the students

because the communication channels are different, and the communication between the students and the teacher cannot be fulfilled in a correct way.

Bearing in mind the information given before, the authoress considers that most of the students are not learning English efficiently. After analysing the result obtained from the application of the instruments, it could be said that the main difficulties existing in 10th grade teaching – learning process of English were the following:

- Teachers do not take into consideration the learning styles of the students in the diagnostic test to prepare activities taking into account them.
- The teachers do not have knowledge enough about learning styles.
- The teachers do not develop the activities taking into account the learning styles of the students.
- The students do not understand the content taught most of the time.
- Teacher does not use enough teaching means to motivate the students to learn a foreign language.

A set of didactic games taking into account the learning styles of the students

Many researchers share the opinion that games as learning tools are important for educators, as well as to realize the learning opportunities which games provide and to start adjusting them to their personal teaching. All learners have a different learning style and even the ones that do not respond to the classic classroom-teaching should be given an alternative to this.

Using games as a teaching tool is a way of catching these students and giving them their own personal learning style while developing their knowledge in that specific subject. In addition to this, the learners are given a way to learn while having fun. This shows them that learning and having fun can be combined and do not always be separated.

According to Erev & Roth (1998) playing is a child's natural way of learning. "This is something that is often forgotten and not utilized enough. During many years, playing has actually been the natural learning strategy for children and it has been indicated that the games have contributed to a mental development in a more sufficient way than if not playing at all. Games should be used as a tool to turn subjects that are mostly seen as "boring" by learners (such as grammar perhaps) into something enjoyable and fun without the fear of ridicule. Furthermore, games in teaching have been proven to be beneficial for learners in many ways" (Erev & Roth, 1998).

Activities

The activities were developed to teach English taking into account the learning styles of the students to increase the quality of learning in the teaching – learning process of this subject. They were prepared following this structure:

- Number of the activity
- Title of the activity
- Objective

- Teaching means
- Instructions
- Procedures
- Evaluation

Didactic Game # 1: The Lion

Objective: to reproduce the contents studied in the unit related to grammar, communicative functions and vocabulary through a didactic game in order to develop the students' English language.

Teaching means: cardboard with a lion drawn in it with numbers in its body. Small elongated cardboard with a tack in its end (Tail). Numbered cards with the activities to make. Board and chalks.

Instructions: a selected student should go to the cardboard with his/her eyes blindfolded and to put the tail in a number for answering the task.

Procedures: divide the class into three teams, blindfold the eyes of a student for the its team, who should walk to the lion to put the tail in a number, according to the number is the card the student is going to answer. The student will read the question or task in the card and he/she should answer.

Evaluation: if the student answered the card correctly his/her team will get a point. If the answer is not correct a student from another team continuous with the game. The team that gets more points at the end of the game will be the winner.

Cards:

1. Mention the family members that do you live with.

2. Underline the correct pronoun:

- a) Look at they / them.
- b) I / Me am swimming.
- c) Do you know she / her?

3. Read the following paragraph and answer the questions:

This is my friend Megan. She is 25 years old. She is from Canada. She lives in Toronto. She is a doctor. Megan is married and she has a son whose name is John.

- ✓ How old is Megan?
- ✓ Where does she live?
- ✓ What is her occupation?

4. From your point of view, compare Havana city and Baracoa city according to: nature, development and population.

5. Talk about your future plans.

6. Imagine that your best friend is sick. Give to her/ him an advice.

7. Write the simple past of the following verbs:

Study_____	Help_____	Cry_____
Walk_____	Love_____	Close_____

8. Complete the sentences. Use the words in parenthesis. Use has/ has to:

A: (Kate/ stay) _____home tonight.

B: Why?

A: Because she _____ (study) for a test.

9. Complete the sentences. Use you should. Use one expression in the list.

List: -go to the post office. - See a dentist - go on a diet

a)A: I want to mail a letter for my friend.

B: _____.

b)A: I have a toothache.

B: _____.

10. Select the correct answer:

How_____ students are in the classroom?
(many / much)

How_____ is the cost?
(many / much)

11. Write a sentence using the past continuous tense.

12. Select a classmate to performance a dialogue about how to give address in English.

13. Classify the following nouns in countable or uncountable:

-chair -student -water -light

14. Complete the sentences using (A) or (AN):

The Atlantic It's _____ Ocean.

Havana It's _____ city.

Harvard It's _____ university.

15. Say the structure for forming sentences in future tense. Put an example.

Didactic game # 2: Guessing the word

Objective: practice the vocabulary studied in the unit through a game entitled Guessing the word in order to increase the vocabulary in the students.

Teaching means: box, cards, pictures, real objects, board and chalks.

Instructions: the student should walk to the box and select from the box what he / she needs to make the students from his / her team guess the word that appears in the card.

Procedures: the teacher will divide the class into five teams and will bring a box with pictures and real objects in it. One member of a team is going to select a card with a word and he / she is going to select from the box what he / she needs to make the students guess the word that appears in the card. The student will guess 15 words in 3 rounds. The teacher will prepare 5 words in each round.

Evaluation: if the student answered the word correctly his/her team will get a point. If the answer is not correct a student from another team continuous with the game. The team that more words guess at the end of the 5th round will be the winner.

Didactic Game 3: Tic – Tac for

Objective: To practice the vocabulary studied in class forming words.

Teaching means: cardboard with crossbred lines, cards crosses and circles to place them into the squares.

Instructions: Answer the questions and try to mark your sign in the cardboard.

Procedures: the teacher should divide the group into two teams of 4 or 5 students. One team will be the circle and the other will be the cross. The teacher will ask a question or assign an exercise. A member of a team is going to answer the question or the exercise, if the answer is correct they mark a circle or a cross, according to the team, in the cardboard. The winner team will be the one that has marked three times in the horizontal, vertical diagonal lines. The question can be passed to the other in case of miss answered. The winning team will be the one whose members have completed the cardboard.

Didactic Game 4: The magic number

Objective: to practice the content studied in previous classes.

Teaching means: cardboard striped and marked in each space with numbers conveniently ordered. Cards numbered from 1 to 15, cards with activities.

Instructions: select a card and read the number in silence. Say the columns where the number appears in the cardboard. When the teacher guesses the number of your card, develop the activity that appears in the card with your number.

Procedures: the teacher will form 15 teams, and she/ he will deliver a card with a number to each student from each team. A student is going to try to say the number of the card given mentioning the columns where the number appears in the cardboard striped. The teacher should sum up mentally the numbers that are in the first horizontal row that matches with the columns where the selected number is found, and should say the number of the student's card.

Example: if the team selected number 5, this number is found in the first and third columns. The numbers heading these columns, in the first row are 1 and 4 which evidently sum up 5. This number will be said out loud by the teacher testing the effectiveness of the riddle. Then, the student will perform the task of the card that coincides with this number.

With these activities the teacher can work with the different learning styles of the students, encouraging them to participate in English lessons and to learn a foreign language.

Analysis of the results after applying the didactic games proposed

For the application of the instruments there were selected 60 students from 10th grade at “Julio Antonio Mella” Senior High School and one teacher of English. There were applied some instruments such as questionnaire and inquiry to the students, interview to the teachers and observation of lessons.

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Another aspect detected was that not all the students feel motivated towards the English lesson because they do not understand the teacher most of the time. When the authoress analyse this part it was detected that the students that do not understand their learning styles do not coincide with the teacher one. In reference to the activities assigned by teachers, it was corroborated that

the students were not interesting and diversified. In addition to this, they were not prepared to treat the students according to their levels of learning (Reid, 1995; Irizar Valdez, 1996).

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Conclusions

After analyzing the result obtained from the application of the instruments, it could be said that the main difficulties existing in teaching-learning process of English were the following:

- The teachers do not develop the activities taking into account the learning styles of the students in their classes.
- The students do not understand the content taught most of the time.

Taking into account the above information, the authors consider that most of the students do not learn English efficiently. That is why some activities were designed to teach English taking into account the learning styles of the 10th grade students of the Liceo "Julio Antonio Mella", in order to provide them with the necessary contents to achieve meaningful learning.

Likewise, the review of sources and research available in libraries related to learning styles is recommended as an orienting guide to improve their mastery of teaching.

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