

SHORT CUTS³

Joy M. Reid, ed. Learning Styles in the ESL / EFL Classroom. Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1995. 264 pp.

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This is apparently the first book which is dedicated entirely to learning styles. As defined in the book, a learning style

refers to an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills. (p. x)

In general, learning styles are divided into, among others, cognitive learning styles (such as field-independent vs. field-dependent, analytic vs. global learning, reflective vs. impulsive) and sensory learning styles based on the sense that the student prefers to use in class and when practicing alone (i.e., auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic styles). Some of the main points made by the book are that every person (student or teacher) has a learning styles and that even though styles are often described as opposites, they really exist on a continuum, few people are ever completely field-independent or entirely auditory. It is also important to remember that no one style is better than others and that students (and teachers) should be encouraged to recognize their learning styles and how to use them efficiently.

The book is designed not only to provide teachers with insights into learning styles, but also to give them instruments that can be used with their students to help them identify their learning styles and learn how to best take advantage of them in class and at studying home.

The book is a compilation of relevant articles which were written by various experts in the field. These chapters are separated into four sections.. The first section of the book (*Learning Styles: Issues and Answers*) includes chapters by Gayle L. Nelson, Patricia A. Eliason and Rebecca L. Oxford related to cultural and gender differences and their possible effect on learning styles. Section Two (*Learning Styles, Curriculum Development, and Classroom Activities*) has seven chapters relating to less theoretical problems;

³ **cut** (kut)...n....7. a short passage. (*The Pocket Webster School & Office Dictionary*, 1990.)

learning styles are examined in the classroom. For example, Chapter 5 by Sharron Bassano and Mary Ann Christison presents a technique for using student-created visuals to promote adult ESL language development and Chapter 8 by the same authors promotes the use of poetry to expand students learning styles. The third section (*Learning Styles Research and Classroom Implications*) is made up of four chapters which examine the relationship of learning styles to elementary school ESL, ITA (international teaching assistant) training, composition and field dependence / field independence in the L2 classroom. The final section (*Overview of Learning Styles in the ESL / EFL Classroom*) consists of only one chapter written by Kate Kinsella ("Understanding and Empowering Diverse Learners in the ESL classroom).

There are also three wonderful Appendices which include some instruments that can be used to determine learning styles. Appendix A includes five different surveys devised to determine normed learning styles (including the editor's Perceptual learning Style Preference survey (PLSP) and Rebecca L. Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (SAS). Appendix B has two informal surveys / materials and Appendix C includes seven of Kate Kinsella's learning style materials. After the Appendices there is a amazingly complete 17-page bibliography related to learning styles.

This book, although the first in the field, is quite complete and is a good beginning for teachers, student-teachers or researchers who are interested in becoming involved in the field. It is also interesting to take the tests in the Appendices to discover what your learning and teaching styles are.