

## TKT: Module 1 – Aspects of the learner

**Overview:** These practice materials by Russell Whitehead are designed to help with the Module 1 exam, in particular with the 'Background to language learning' section. These materials focus on learner characteristics in terms of common learning styles, preferences and strategies, learner maturity, past language learning experiences and how learner characteristics affect learning.

**Part of Exam:** Module 1 (Language and background to language learning and teaching): Background to language learning

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student

**Time:** 30–60 mins



### Think about:

Look at any two people doing the same thing – two commuters on the train reading newspapers, for example. Do you think they do this activity in exactly the same way, or do they seem to have different styles and strategies for reading a newspaper?



### Think about:

Some people find it difficult to share a house, if, for example, one person is very tidy and the other is very messy. What about the students in your classes? Do they sometimes find their differences difficult?

### Notes for teacher trainers

Build on the *Think about* point about reading newspapers. Have the trainees discuss the ways they set about various tasks – for example, preparing a meal, planning a holiday, doing something on a computer, etc.

Get trainees to define themselves in relation to the learning styles listed in these materials, plus any others that you think of. A quick search on the internet can bring up many different quizzes to help trainees work out their own learning styles. Inform them that someone who has more than one dominant learning style is said to have a 'spiky profile'. This refers to most people!

Put trainees into 'learning style' groups and get them to plan the same teaching point according to their appointed learning style.

Discuss with your trainees whether they agree that people generally have one dominant learning style. You could also talk about other ways of categorizing people that often don't hold true – for example, categorizing by nationality, zodiac sign, gender, etc.

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### Stage 1: Considering

- a) 1. c)  
2. a)  
3. g)  
4. b)  
5. f)  
6. d)  
7. e)
- b) Trainee's own answers
- c) Trainee's own answers
- d) Suggested answers:
- class sizes – students may have previously learnt in larger, rather than smaller, classes (or vice versa)
  - class arrangement – students may have had most of their previous learning experiences in traditional classrooms with desks in rows facing the front
  - teaching styles – learners may have been taught by teachers who take a more traditional approach, i.e. they have a more formal attitude and most learning tasks are more teacher-focused
  - learners may have had negative learning experiences (from either other teachers or learners) and this may affect their confidence in the classroom
  - learners may or may not be familiar with learning with technology
  - learners may or may not be used to learning in an environment where there are learners of different ages/genders/backgrounds to themselves

### Stage 2: Experimenting

- e) 1. Trying  
2. Repeating  
3. Asking  
4. Spending  
5. Paying  
6. Using
- f) Trainee's own answers
- g) 1. d)  
2. b)  
3. f)  
4. c)  
5. e)  
6. a)
- h) 1. C: A notebook is one kind of 'learning aid', and using it like this is effective and thus can be said to be 'exploiting'.  
2. C: The language native speakers use on TV or films is real or 'in use'.  
3. A: The 'rest of the sentence' is the 'context' of the word and may provide helpful clues about what the word means.

### Stage 3: Reflecting

- i) Trainee's own answers

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### Stage 1: Considering

**a) Match the learning styles to the definitions.**

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|------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>individual</i>   | <b>a)</b> <i>prefers to learn from looking at or watching things</i>             |
| 2. <i>visual</i>       | <b>b)</b> <i>prefers to learn by working on tasks with other people</i>          |
| 3. <i>reflective</i>   | <b>c)</b> <i>prefers to learn by working alone</i>                               |
| 4. <i>group</i>        | <b>d)</b> <i>prefers to learn by responding and acting immediately</i>           |
| 5. <i>kinaesthetic</i> | <b>e)</b> <i>prefers to learn by hearing or listening to things</i>              |
| 6. <i>impulsive</i>    | <b>f)</b> <i>prefers to learn from physical activity or tasks</i>                |
| 7. <i>auditory</i>     | <b>g)</b> <i>prefers to learn while having plenty of time to think carefully</i> |

**b) Which of the above learning styles do you ...**

- ... use for learning languages? \_\_\_\_\_
- ... use for learning other things? \_\_\_\_\_

**For the styles that you don't identify with yourself, can you think of colleagues, friends, family members or students you know who seem to work within those styles?**

**c) Another important aspect is the age and maturity of the learners. We change in many ways during our lives, and the way we learn changes significantly.**

**For example, children are often unafraid of experimenting and they are not concerned about embarrassing themselves in any way, but people become more image-conscious as teenagers and, by the time adulthood is reached, are often very embarrassed to do things they used to as children. This, of course, has important implications for activities in the classroom.**

**Adults know quite a lot about the world, and new learning can be related to this experience. Children, however, know very little, and so teachers cannot depend on using their world knowledge when teaching them new things.**

**What other differences can you think of?**

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**Think about:**

How have you changed as a learner? Do you learn English differently now from the way you learnt it as a child at school?

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- d) **We know what we know. If we are familiar with learning in a certain way, then we may feel much more confident learning in that way rather than others.**

If a student's teacher at school always used to translate new words into L1, then it will be harder for that student to feel at home in a class where the teacher always teaches the whole lesson in English.

Can you think of other ways that our past learning experiences can affect how we learn today?

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Now check the suggested answers.

### Stage 2: Experimenting

- e) **There are many strategies – ways of going about or trying to achieve something – that we all use when learning. Not all strategies are fully effective. A successful learner is someone who uses more effective than ineffective strategies.**

The following sentences are strategies that most people believe are effective. Fill in the gaps with words from the box below.

repeating    using    spending    asking    paying    trying

1. \_\_\_\_\_ to use as much English as possible by talking to tourists and other foreign visitors.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ new words to yourself many times until you can remember them.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ people to repeat what they say if you don't understand.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ time reviewing the content of every lesson.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ attention to your language use to see if it is correct.
  6. \_\_\_\_\_ an English dictionary to check the meaning and grammar of new words.
- f) • **Which of these strategies do you use? Mark them 'T' on the list above.**
- **Which do you never use? Why not? Would you like to?**

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- **Which strategies do want your learners to use? Make them 'L' on the list above.**
- **Which do they not use?**

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- **Which strategies do you want your learners to use?**

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g) The following are all different types of learning strategies. Match the name of the learning strategy on the left, with its example or definition on the right.

1. Learning aids	a) Noticing, practicing and remembering how words can change
2. Predicting content from clues	b) An unfamiliar newspaper article in a students' L2; people speaking about an unknown topic on TV; listening to a radio programme on an unknown topic
3. Noticing language in use	c) Repeating what someone has said, in a shorter form; writing a short summary
4. Paraphrasing	d) Dictionary, coursebook, iPad with a language-learning app
5. Experimenting with meaning	e) Trying out words to see if they 'fit'
6. Experimenting with form	f) Colloquialism, slang, abbreviations

h) Now try this part of a sample TKT exam task. For questions 1–3, read the examples of what learners do and three possible learner strategies. Choose the correct strategy, A, B or C.

- 1** I have a notebook for new vocabulary and I use this to test myself in my spare time.
- A experimenting with meaning
  - B focusing on collocations
  - C exploiting learning aids
- 2** When I'm watching TV or DVDs, I make notes of expressions and words that native speakers use.
- A predicting content from clues
  - B experimenting with form
  - C noticing language in use
- 3** I try to understand the meaning of new words by looking at the rest of the sentence.
- A focusing on context
  - B paraphrasing
  - C translating into L1

**Now check your answers.**

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### Stage 3: Reflecting

i) **Make notes about what you have learnt.**

#### Learning styles

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#### Maturity

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#### Experience

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#### Strategies

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### Set yourself a target

Concentrate on really noticing the styles and strategies of learners that you work with or observe have. Make notes to help you remember and compare.

### Come back to this later

Go through these materials again in a few weeks' time, and see if you have more detailed ideas from having observed more.

### Suggestion for independent learning

Monitor yourself carefully. Notice what strategies you use at different points for different things.



#### Don't forget:

In most classrooms, most of the time, there is only one teacher, but lots of learners. And they are all different!