



Hi graduate friends,

Let's talk about learning styles and dual coding. Years ago, learning styles got very popular. Even now, we often have students who say things like "my learning style is X or Y" or "how can I figure out what my learning style is?". The thought behind the learning styles hypothesis is that everyone has a particular learning style (e.g., auditory) and that if the content you want to learn is presented in your preferred mode of processing (e.g., podcasts, audiobooks, etc.), then you'll learn better. Unfortunately, despite the popularity of this concept, there is not a lot of research that can back it up (Pashler et al., 2009). Students certainly have preferences from time to time, and yes, we're all different in many ways. But, up to now, there isn't much consensus on the existence of learning styles as a general rule. So, if you have your own ways of learning that work well for you... great! Keep up the good work! If not, don't worry at all! Try *dual coding* instead; because research does back this one up!



So, what is dual coding? Dual coding (Paivio, 2013) suggests that because we all learn through some level of language processing, a great way to learn and increase retention is to combine both linguistic and visual processing. Visuals in addition to words allow our memories to store information in a different way, while also helping our brains take breaks and prevent cognitive overload from all the verbal processing (Cuevas, 2016). Research shows that even when students identified a certain style as their learning style, they didn't necessarily exhibit better retention of material if it was presented to them that way. Cuevas & Dawson's (2018) study showed that students who also visualized the verbal information, outperformed students who focused only on auditory learning, and it didn't make a difference whether those students had previously identified as being a visual learner or an auditory learner. So, it's highly possible that even if you feel you know your preferences, you may still benefit from trying to combine both verbal and nonverbal learning.



What now? Well, here are a few ideas: For important concepts you read about, try to also visualize them. This could mean mapping something out, taking visual notes, creating a flowchart, drawing a diagram, watching relevant multimedia resources like videos or documentaries, imagining the situation or a story you constructed from the contents, etc.

You can also do the opposite. E.g., if you are looking to analyze a diagram or video, write down your thoughts or explain it out loud. This may all be easier said than done, especially with conceptual information. But the more you do it, the more comfortable you'll get with it.

Best,



Najmeh Keyhani (she/her/hers), PhD, from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!

Reference:

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