

In the last decade two major revolutions in the learning have occurred. First of all, more than any other time in the history of education instructors and students are aware of the diversity of learning styles and understand where they lie in the spectrum of learning preferences. Secondly, and perhaps more universally, there has been a dramatic change in the modes and methods of teaching. Specifically, we are moving to a more technologically integrated classroom model, thus a classroom that is distinctly rooted in what is processed visually and textually.

There can be no denying that this move to hybrid (which means a blend between virtual and traditional classroom structures) means great change for students and instructors alike, but a vast majority of the research from education studies suggests that this is a much-liked and effective mode of learning. The internet in the classroom can be seen as a “supportive tool for the learning process, provides students with new learning experiences, aggregates learning resources, facilitates students’ lifestyle in terms of flexibility and effectiveness, and provides more resources for educational access” (Olapiriyakul 2006). However, learning styles can be an overlooked aspect of this transition and visual learners are particularly at risk of being overlooked.

One of the reasons why visual learning styles may not be taken into account when constructing online or virtual classes is because many course developers might already see the classes as catering to visual learners simply by having the medium. In other words, since the screen is something the student is looking at, they may see it as being a visual experience. This is not true since what the student is looking at may be text versus visual illustrations or enhancements. The most important element to consider for students with visual learning styles is that they are going to need to have their technology taken to the “next level” by implementing graphics within the text and learning materials, just as visual aids would accompany more traditional classes.

The internet and subsequent e-classes, which are online courses or courses that are driven by material gathered from the web are becoming far more accepted and some schools have entire subjects that are hybrid or online-only classes. However, course developers must understand that the need to cater to those with visual learning styles is not “built in” to the class simply because the students are seeing a screen and taking in all materials visually.

The move to online classes can be an educational panacea to many issues that plague traditional classrooms, but without sufficient regard to all learning styles and not considering some of the styles like visual learning preferences built in, the progress this move to online classes cannot be fully realized.