

INVENTORY OF LEARNING STYLES (ILS)

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Jan D. Vermunt

Preface

The Inventory of Learning Styles in higher education is one of the outcomes of a research project on the learning styles of students in higher education. The project was carried out by the Department of Educational Psychology of the Tilburg University. The project team would like to thank in particular the many students who participated in the various phases of the project.

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Author's current address: Utrecht University, IVLOS – Institute of Education, P.O. Box 80.127, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands. Email: j.d.vermunt@ivlos.uu.nl

INTRODUCTION

The Inventory of Learning Styles

The Inventory of Learning Styles (ILS) was developed to gain clearer insight into how students go about their studies and how they perceive their own learning. The ILS consists of a list of statements on study strategies, motives and attitudes.

How to complete the inventory?

The ILS is comprised of two parts: A and B. Each part consists of a list of statements concerning higher education studies and studying. The statements are taken from interviews with students. You are requested to indicate to what extent each statement applies to you. You can express your view by circling a number on a scale from 1 to 5.

Bear in mind that this list has nothing to do with right or wrong answers. Every person has his own ideas, opinions and study habits. The aim is to gain an insight into your *own* study habits and your personal view of studying and education. This means that an honest answer is automatically a correct answer. The purpose of the ILS is to identify *individual* views, motives and learning activities.

Important

Read each statement carefully and then indicate to what extent it applies to you by circling the relevant number.

The meaning of the numbers

The numbers after the statements have the following meaning:

In part A	In part B
1 = I do this seldom or never	1 = disagree entirely
2 = I do this sometimes	2 = disagree for the most part
3 = I do this regularly	3 = undecided
4 = I do this often	4 = agree for the most part
5 = I do this almost always	5 = agree entirely

Example

If you disagree entirely with a statement, you circle number 1.

Statement	Opinion
121. To me, education means the transfer of information and I fail to see what else it could be.	1 2 3 4 5

PART A: STUDY ACTIVITIES

Knowledge and insight do not develop on their own: it takes effort to master a particular piece of subject matter. This part of the inventory is concerned with the activities students undertake in the context of their studies. Read each statement carefully and then indicate to what extent you yourself engage in the activity concerned while studying. Terms such as "course" and "subject matter" refer to the courses and subjects you are taking. The meaning of the numbers after each statement is:

1	2	3	4	5
I do this seldom or never	I do this sometimes	I do this regularly	I do this often	I do this almost always

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.I work through a chapter in a textbook item by item and I study each part separately. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.I repeat the main parts of the subject matter until I know them by heart. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.I use what I learn from a course in my activities outside my studies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.If a textbook contains questions or assignments, I work them out completely as soon as I come across them while studying. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.I study all the subject matter in the same way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.I try to combine the subjects that are dealt with separately in a course into one whole. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.I memorize lists of characteristics of a certain phenomenon. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.I realize that it is not clear to me what I have to remember and what I do not have to remember. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.I make a list of the most important facts and learn them by heart. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10.I try to discover the similarities and differences between the theories that are dealt with in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11.I experience the introductions, objectives, instructions, assignments and test items given by the teacher as indispensable guidelines for my studies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12.I test my learning progress solely by completing the questions, tasks and exercises provided by the teacher or the textbook. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13.I relate specific facts to the main issue in a chapter or article. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14.I try to interpret events in everyday reality with the help of the knowledge I have acquired in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15.I notice that I have trouble processing a large amount of subject matter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16.In addition to the syllabus, I study other literature related to the content of the course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17.I analyse the separate components of a theory step by step. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18.I learn everything exactly as I find it in the textbooks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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| 19.I try to relate new subject matter to knowledge I already have about the topic concerned. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20.I notice that it is difficult for me to determine whether I have mastered the subject matter sufficiently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21.To test my learning progress when I have studied a textbook, I try to formulate the main points in my own words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22.I pay particular attention to those parts of a course that have practical utility. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23.I do not proceed to a subsequent chapter until I have mastered the current chapter in detail. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24.When I start reading a new chapter or article, I first think about the best way to study it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25.I try to see the connection between the topics discussed in different chapters of a textbook. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26.I memorize definitions as literally as possible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27.I realize that the objectives of the course are too general for me to offer any support. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28.I do more than I am expected to do in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29.I compare my view of a course topic with the views of the authors of the textbook used in that course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30.If I am able to give a good answer to the questions posed in the textbook or by the teacher, I decide that I have a good command of the subject matter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31.When I have difficulty grasping a particular piece of subject matter, I try to analyse why it is difficult for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32.I study according to the instructions given in the study materials or provided by the teacher. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33.I memorize the meaning of every concept that is unfamiliar to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34.I try to construct an overall picture of a course for myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35.I compare the conclusions drawn in different chapters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36.To test my learning progress, I try to answer questions about the subject matter which I make up myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37.I notice that the study instructions that are given are not very clear to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38.I study the subject matter in the same sequence as it is dealt with in the course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39.I check whether the conclusions drawn by the authors of a textbook follow the facts on which they are based logically. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40.I study details thoroughly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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| 41.I realize that I miss someone to fall back on in case of difficulties. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42.I add something to the subject matter from other sources. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43.I draw my own conclusions on the basis of the data that are presented in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44.When doing assignments, I train myself thoroughly in applying the methods dealt with in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45.I analyse the successive steps in an argumentation one by one. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46.To test whether I have mastered the subject matter, I try to think up other examples and problems besides the ones given in the study materials or by the teacher. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47.I use the instructions and the course objectives given by the teacher to know exactly what to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48.With the help of the theories presented in a course, I devise solutions to practical problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49.I try to be critical of the interpretations of experts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50.To test my own progress, I try to describe the content of a paragraph in my own words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51.When I am studying, I also pursue learning goals that have not been set by the teacher but by myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52.When I am studying a topic, I think of cases I know from my own experience that are connected to that topic. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53.I pay particular attention to facts, concepts and problem solving methods in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54.If I do not understand a study text well, I try to find other literature about the subject concerned. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55.If I am able to complete all the assignments given in the study materials or by the teacher, I decide that I have a good command of the subject matter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

PART B: STUDY MOTIVES AND VIEWS ON STUDYING**B1. Study motives**

There can be many reasons for someone to take up a course of study. This part of the ILS is concerned with the motives, objectives and attitudes students may have with regard to their studies. Indicate for each statement to what extent it applies to you. Bear in mind that you are *not* asked to indicate whether you think a motive or objective is good, less good or bad; you are only asked to indicate to what extent you think a statement applies to you personally. This is the meaning of the numbers:

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree entirely	Disagree for the most part	Undecided	Agree for the most part	Agree entirely

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 56. When I have a choice, I opt for courses that seem useful to me for my present or future profession. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. I do these studies out of sheer interest in the topics that are dealt with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. I want to prove to myself that I am capable of doing studies in higher education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. I doubt whether this is the right subject area for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 60. I aim at attaining high levels of study achievements. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 61. I want to show others that I am capable of successfully doing a higher education programme. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 62. I have chosen this subject area, because it prepares me for the type of work I am highly interested in. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 63. The main goal I pursue in my studies is to pass exams. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 64. I view the choice I have made to enrol in higher education as a challenge. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 65. The only aim of my studies is to enrich myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 66. I have little confidence in my study capacities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 67. For the kind of work I would like to do, I need to have studied in higher education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 68. What I want in these studies is to earn credits for a diploma. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 69. I see these studies as sheer relaxation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 70. I study above all to pass the exam. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 71. The main goal I pursue in my studies is to prepare myself for a profession. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 72. I want to discover my own qualities, the things I am capable and incapable of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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	1	2	3	4	5
	I do this seldom or never	I do this sometimes	I do this regularly	I do this often	I do this almost always
73. What I want to acquire above all through my studies is professional skill.	1	2	3	4	5
74. When I have a choice, I opt for courses that suit my personal interests.	1	2	3	4	5
75. I wonder whether these studies are worth all the effort.	1	2	3	4	5
76. I doubt whether this type of education is the right type of education for me.	1	2	3	4	5
77. I want to test myself to see whether I am capable of doing studies in higher education.	1	2	3	4	5
78. I do these studies because I like to learn and to study.	1	2	3	4	5
79. I am afraid these studies are too demanding for me.	1	2	3	4	5
80. To me, written proof of having passed an exam represents something of value in itself.	1	2	3	4	5

B2. Study views

What do learning, good education and cooperation with others mean to you? What, according to you, are the tasks of your teachers? What do you regard as your own tasks, as a student? What could be the role of your fellow students in your studies? Questions such as these are addressed in this part of the ILS. The statements reflect students' views concerning matters related to learning, being educated, the division of tasks between the student and the educational institution, and the contacts with other students. This part is not so much concerned with the activities you actually undertake in your studies, as with what you consider to be important in general with regard to studying and teaching. Indicate for each statement to what extent it corresponds to your own view. This is the meaning of the numbers:

	1	2	3	4	5
	Disagree entirely	Disagree for the most part	Undecided	Agree for the most part	Agree entirely
81. The things I learn have to be useful for solving practical problems.	1	2	3	4	5
82. I like to be given precise instructions as to how to go about solving a task or doing an assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
83. The teacher should motivate and encourage me.	1	2	3	4	5
84. When I prepare myself for an exam, I prefer to do so together with other students.	1	2	3	4	5

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| 85. To me, learning means trying to approach a problem from many different angles, including aspects that were previously unknown to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 86. To me, learning is making sure that I can reproduce the facts presented in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 87. The teacher should inspire me to work out how the course material relates to reality. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 88. I should look for relationships within the subject matter of my own accord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 89. I like to be encouraged by other students to process the study materials at a particular pace. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 90. I should try myself to apply the theories dealt with in a course to practical situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 91. The teacher should encourage me to combine the separate components of a course into a whole. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 92. If I have difficulty understanding a particular topic, I should consult other books of my own accord. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 93. I prefer to do assignments together with other students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 94. The teacher should explain clearly what is important and what is less important for me to know. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 95. I have a preference for courses in which a lot of practical applications of the theoretical parts are given. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 96. In order to learn, I have to summarize in my own words what the subject matter means. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 97. When I have difficulty understanding something, the teacher should encourage me to find a solution by myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 98. I think I can not just rely on the books recommended by the syllabus, so I have to try to discover myself what else has been written about a particular course topic. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 99. I think it is important to check with other students to see whether I have sufficiently understood the subject matter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 100. I should memorize definitions and other facts on my own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 101. When I have difficulties, the teacher should encourage me to find out for myself what causes them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 102. To me, learning means acquiring knowledge that I can use in everyday life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 103. Good teaching includes giving a lot of questions and exercises to test whether I have mastered the subject matter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 104. To test my own learning progress, I should try to answer questions about the subject matter which I make up myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 105. The teacher should encourage me to compare the various theories that are dealt with in a course. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

	1	2	3	4	5
	Disagree entirely	Disagree for the most part	Undecided	Agree for the most part	Agree entirely
106.I should repeat the subject matter on my own until I know it sufficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
107.I prefer a type of instruction in which I am told exactly what I need to know for an exam.	1	2	3	4	5
108.To me, learning is providing myself with information that I can use immediately or in the longer term.	1	2	3	4	5
109.I consider it important to be advised by other students as to how to approach my studies.	1	2	3	4	5
110.The teacher should encourage me to check myself whether I have mastered the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5
111.When I have difficulty understanding particular topics, I prefer to ask other students for help.	1	2	3	4	5
112.To me, learning means: trying to remember the subject matter I am given.	1	2	3	4	5
113.The teacher should give trial tests to enable me to check whether I have mastered all of the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5
114.To me, learning means acquiring knowledge and skills that I can later apply in practice.	1	2	3	4	5
115.I consider it important to discuss the subject matter with other students.	1	2	3	4	5
116.I think good teaching is teaching that includes some preparation on my own part.	1	2	3	4	5
117.I should try to think up examples with the study materials of my own accord.	1	2	3	4	5
118.The teacher should encourage me to reflect on the way I study and how to develop my way of studying.	1	2	3	4	5
119.In order to check whether I have mastered the subject matter, I should try to describe the main points in my own words.	1	2	3	4	5
120.I have a need to work together with other students in my studies.	1	2	3	4	5

Please check whether you have circled a number with each item.

End