

For the visual learner, “thoughts become movies, images, and symbols. Language becomes multidimensional scenarios of concepts and ideas instead of audible resonance of language” (Gangwer, 2009). In other words, each thought or idea is internalized and captured in the form of images that are tied to the words but the images themselves are far more important than the auditory cues. As instructors, it is critical that we recognize this trait in those with a visual learning style and use language carefully and with great purpose.

Visual learners literally do “see” what you are saying, so make sure that you are descriptive and use a large number of adjectives. For instance, when you are describing a concept or an event, make sure to search through your own notes and sources on the topic to make sure you’ll be ready with some of the richer details about the subject. For instance, if you’re teaching a class about roman history and are discussing the roman army, help your students “see” what roman soldiers looked like. Details about uniforms, for instance, which might seem superfluous, might actually help students better visualize and thus retain the material.

In addition to making sure that you’re using descriptive language with many adjectives to help your students build a better mental picture of what you’re discussing, also make sure that grant them time and space to visualize what you’re teaching through prompting them to just that—to sit back and try to image and literally see what is being discussed. Many students have been trained to think that when they get distracted and are not listening because they’re busy visualizing what is being said they are “not paying attention” when in fact, (of course, not all of the time) they are absolutely concentrating on the course material—just in a different way.

We all know that language itself is an incredibly complex social and cognitive matter, therefore it is naturally follows that throwing in other complicated issues, such as learning styles, can change the way we think about language. By using strong language that invokes images and actually asking students to visualize or try to “see” the concept you’re laying forth, chances are that they will have a greater capacity for learning material that might have otherwise proven difficult to teach effectively.