

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The success of English teaching and learning process depends on many things. One of them is the compatibility of the teaching method, teaching and learning process, and the characteristics of the students. One of the students' characteristics is learning styles when learning English. This study aims at investigating learning styles of students at two state junior high schools in Jambi city. This study employed descriptive and quantitative research design, using a questionnaire as the instrument. The result of the study shows that of the sixth learning styles, the learning styles mostly used by the students are kinesthetic, tactile, and learning in group. Besides, the students appear to exhibit multiple minor learning styles.

Keywords: *Junior high school students, English learning, learning style*

INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian education curriculum English is one of compulsory subjects that must be learnt by all high school students and university students. Besides being a compulsory subject, English is also a subject which is included in the national examination. The status of English as a compulsory subject is because considering that it is an international language that must be mastered by all students in this globalization era. All students are expected to be able to master English to help them cope with the need of the global world.

However, even though the students have learnt English for years at school and university, the objective of the teaching and learning English process is still often not achieved well. There are many factors that contribute to the failure of the teaching and learning English process. One of them might be because of the incompatibility of teaching method with students' learning style. Therefore, knowing the students' learning styles is important.

Every student might have different styles in learning English. The difference can be caused by different characteristics of each individual. This is in line what has been stated by Gagner (1985) that every human was born with his/her own learning style. Some students like to learn individually (*Intrapersonal*), and some others like to learn in groups (*Interpersonal*). On the

other hand, there are also students who like to learn using visual media, some others like to use audio media, and there are also some students who like to study kinesthetically.

There are many definitions of learning styles. According to Fleming and Mills (1992), learning style is students' preference to adapt certain strategy during learning as means of their responsibility to get appropriate learning approach accordingly with learning needs in the classroom/school or with the needs of the certain course. Drummond (1998, pp.186) defines the learning style as an individual's preferred mode and desired conditions of learning. Willing (1988) states that learning style is the preferred student's habit in learning. In addition, gri (1979) sees learning styles as someone's views in accepting, interacting, and looking at the environment. Next, Dunn and Griggs (1988) view learning style as one's biological character. Finally, Oxford in Ardi (2007) states that learning style is approaches used by students in learning new language or learn other subjects at school.

Some researchers have constructed various learning style models and instruments to assess individuals' learning style. David Kolb's Learning Style model categorizes four types of students: divergers, assimilators, convergers and accommodators (Kolb, 1984). His instrument and approach focus primarily on adult students.

Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Model proposed by Dunn and Dunn (1978) is one of learning style models commonly used. They observed how students respond the lessons by using different teaching instruments. Dunn and Dunn stated "if children cannot learn the way we teach them than we must teach them the way they learn". This means that a teacher should know the learning style used by students when they are studying. In other words, in order to be able to maximize the process and result of teaching and learning at school teachers' teaching style should be compatible with students' learning style.

Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Model focus on five domains i.e. environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological and psychological. Another expert, Reid, (1995), also has developed learning style model based on how students learn by using their perception i.e. visual, auditory, and kinesthetics, and also, two social aspects of learning, i.e. in group and individual. In this research, the researcher adapted Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Model to identify students' learning style preferences in learning English as a foreign language.

Reid (1995) has developed learning style model and instrument called Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) particularly for learners of foreign languages based on how students learn best using their perceptions: visual, auditory and kinesthetic preferences and also two social aspects of learning: group and individual preferences.

1. Perceptual Learning Styles

a. Visual : Visual students like to read and obtain information from visual stimulation. These learners prefer using pictures, imageries, and spatial perceptions.

b. Auditory : Auditory students are comfortable without visual input and learn from unembellished lectures, conversations, and oral directions.

c. Kinesthetic: Kinesthetic students like lots of hands on movement and enjoy working. They favor using body, hands, and tactile sense.

2. Social Learning Styles

a. Group (interpersonal): They favor learning in groups or with other people.

b. Individual (intrapersonal): They prefer working alone and being a self reader.

Reid (1995) also classified learning styles as Major, Minor or Negligible. Major is a preferred leaning style, Minor is one in which students can still function it well, and Negligible is a learning style in which a learner find difficulties in learning. In this research the researchers used this classification to determine the junior high students' learning style when learning English.

The compatibility of teachers' teaching style and students' learning style is one of factors that can influence the success of teachers in teaching and the success of students in learning English. In addition, Ebadi and Goodarzi (2023) emphasized that learners' style preferences potentially played an important role in reporting learners' performance. Hence, the researchers think that it is important to conduct research aimed to find out students' learning style in learning English. Specifically, this research was conducted to find out English learning styles used by junior high school students in two state junior high schools in Jambi city.

METHOD(S)

This research employed a descriptive research design. A descriptive research design includes data collection to test the hypotheses or to answer questions related to the subject of the research (Gay, 1992). In this research, the researchers described learning style preferences of the students of junior high schools in learning English. The population of this research was all of second graders of two state junior high schools in Jambi city. In this research, the researcher took all the population as the sample. In other words, this research used total sampling technique. The instrument of this research was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) developed by Reid (1987). This questionnaire subjected to the students who are learning foreign languages. The questionnaire consisted of 30

statements. The statements use a 5-point scale of Likert Scale i.e. Strongly agree (5), agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

Table 1. The specification of the questionnaire

Learning Style	Items' number
Visual	6, 10, 12, 24, 29
Auditory	1, 7, 9, 17, 20
Individual	13, 18, 27, 28, 30
Group	3, 4, 5, 21, 23
Tactile	11, 14, 16, 22, 25
Kinesthetic	2, 8, 15, 19, 26

Before the questionnaire was distributed to the real sample, we did a pilot test for the questionnaire. Based on the reliability test, which has been carried before conducting the real research to those who did not belong to the real sample of the research, the reliability score of the questionnaire was 0,777. Based on the result, it can be said that the instrument was reliable to be used as the instrument for this research.

Furthermore, the researchers analyzed the data obtained from the questionnaire by calculating the whole scores of the questionnaire. When the numerical value was assigned to the corresponding learning style, the numbers were added to obtain a total score and then it was multiplied by two to determine the major, minor or negligible learning styles. After that, all the results were analyzed by categorizing them into kinds of learning style preferences proposed by Reid (1995).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the data, the researchers found out some English learning styles used by students of the two state junior high schools in Jambi city. The learning styles are divided into some categories as shown in the following table.

1. Table of English learning styles used by students at two state junior high schools in Jambi city

Learning Style	Average
Visual	28,38 (minor)

Individual	35.96 (minor)
Auditory	36.88 (minor)
Group	37.92 (major)
Tactile	38.74 (major)
Kinesthetic	40.5 (major)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the learning style mostly used by the participants in this research is kinesthetics. The average score for this learning style preference is 40.5. Most of the participants in this research prefer learning by doing practice, and/ or experiments in the classrooms, participating in role plays, and making something for English assignment. Besides that, other learning style preferences that are also used by many participants in this research are tactile and learning in groups. The scores for these preferences are 38.74 and 37.92 respectively.

Other learning style preferences, although not really preferred, are still used by some of the participants. They are visual, auditory, and individual learning styles. From the table above, it can be seen that there is no learning style considered difficult or negligible to be used by the participants. All learning styles in the table are possible for the participants to use in learning English.

In the table, it can be seen that the score of visual learning style is lower than other scores of learning styles. Even though the visual learning style is not categorized as **negligible**, this learning style seems to be rarely used by the participants when learning English. Activities included in visual learning style stated in the questionnaire are reading English texts, reading English sentences on whiteboards, and reading instructions in English books.

From the data analysis, the researchers found out that the preferred learning styles of students in two junior high school in Jambi city in learning English are kinesthetic, tactile, and group. These three learning styles are categorized **major** in the classification of learning style preference levels proposed by Reid (1995).

Kinesthetic learning style relates to learning style in which students mostly use physical activities when learning. Regarding to learning English, most participants in this research preferred learning English by doing practice or demonstrating something being learnt in the classroom. This is in line with group learning style that is also preferred by many participants in this research. The result of this research is the same as that of the research conducted by Obralic dan Akbarov (2012) who investigated students' learning style preferences in Sarajevo international university, level 2. In their research, they found that almost half of the participants preferred kinesthetic style in learning English.

In the researchers' point of view, the learning style preferences (kinesthetic, tactile, and group) used by the students are in line with the status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. When learning English, it makes sense that a student will be easy to learn if he or she practices directly what he or she is learning. For example, when learning how to pronounce English words, he or she is considered able to pronounce the English words if he or she has pronounced the words. To be able to pronounce the words well of course he or she needs to practice. The same as learning English speaking, commonly a person will be able to speak if there is at least one interlocutor because to have an oral communication there must be a speaker and a hearer. Besides, English is also considered difficult by many students so by learning in group they will be easier finish their task.

The use of the three learning styles do not mean that the participants do not like to use auditory, individual, and visual learning styles. Based on the result of the research, the participants are still able to use those learning styles. Some of the participants like to listen explanation of the lessons directly from the teachers, or learn by listening from cassettes, read English materials or instructions written by teachers on whiteboards, read English books, use pictures when learning English and learn individually. This finding corroborates the evidence reported by Faisal (2019), who investigated the influence of students' personality and learning styles in Bangladesh, that some participants of his research prefer multiple learning styles.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result of the research, there are two aspects that can be concluded. Firstly, the favorite learning styles used by students of two state junior high schools in Jambi city in learning English are kinesthetic, tactile, and group. Secondly, other learning styles (i.e. auditory, visual, and individual learning styles), although they are not dominant, are still used by the students. No learning styles are considered impossible to use by the students.

By knowing the favorite learning styles used by the students in this research, there are two things that can be suggested. The first is for students. For students who are learning English, it is suggested that they should recognize the learning styles that they like to use in order that they can learn more effectively and enjoyably. The second is for the teachers. For English teachers, this research result is expected can be used as guidance for them in choosing and applying effective teaching and learning activities that fit the English need of the students and their learning styles when learning English.

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