

# Preference of English Language Education Students of Learning Styles

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## Abstract

*Students bring their own unique characteristics during the learning process in the class. They have different ways of following the learning process itself. This way can be called preference or style. They will use the style that matches and help them in comprehending the learning material during the learning process. There is known that students' learning styles are divided into many kinds according to some experts. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the prominent styles of EFL students using VARK Model by Neil Fleming. To gather the data, the study used a descriptive study with a survey. The participant in this study come from 20 English Language Education of Ganesha University students from the 7th semester. This study revealed that the prominent of students' learning preferences came from Multimodal style which were the combination between reading/write (R) and kinesthetic (K) style learners. Students who are learning with a read/write style like to demand information in the form of words or text. They like to read and taking notes while learning. Some visual-real aids like graphs, diagrams, etc., helped them a lot while learning. Meanwhile, for students with kinesthetic learning style, they tend to have a hands-on interaction for it is essential to them. The greatest ways for kinesthetic learners to learn is they like to directly do a physical touch while learning and like doing some authentic activity like practical exercises, trial and error activities, and solving some case studies.*

**Keywords:** ELE, Learning Styles, VARK Model

## Introduction

As we know that students come from different characteristics which are influenced and formed by their personality and surrounding environment. In line with it, Gholami (2014) also says that students obtain and cultivate information in a variety of ways as it might occur because they came from different backgrounds which are influenced by different genetic, culture, or even learning exposures. In this case, students' characteristics will influence the way they follow the learning process itself (Ramaniya, 2021). The varieties of students' characteristic in the learning process can be called learning style. Learning style, in other words, is a set of typical learning of students (Alqunayeer & Zamir, 2015). Every student may have a mix of learning styles since they favor different strategies and learning styles. In some cases, there are some students who may only have one learning style, in the opposite, others may have many styles all at once (Prithishkumar & Michael, 2014).

Students may respond in a variety of ways when involved in the learning process. It is based on how the students' ways to assimilate acquire information (Brown, 2004; Ramaniya, 2021). They will follow the way that helps them easier in receiving and comprehending the learning material in the learning process. In other words, it can be said that students' learning styles may be defined as the manner in which they process and comprehend knowledge itself. In this case, the teacher's role is to help students when they have difficulties in understanding the material through facilitating appropriate teaching methods to fulfill students' language learning style during the English class. In line with it, there are several experts who state the learning styles into some definitions. It is started by Ph'ng et al. (2015), who define the learning style as the chosen style of gathering and organizing thoughts and information. Another definition came from Pashler et al. (2008), who say that the perceptive, emotional, social, and psychological manners of a person are all intimately linked to learning styles. Hilyatun (2017); Isda et al. (2016), also states that learning style refers to not just how students get or acquire knowledge, but also how they communicate what they have learned during the lesson processes. In addition, learning style is characterized as a set of intellectual, emotional, social, and physiological acts that serve as reasonably consistent markers of how students acquire, engage with, and react to their learning climate (Gilakjani, 2012).

Unfortunately, it is found that learning styles of students have been overlooked and dismissed as a minor factor in the learning process (Gholami, 2014). Since students have a variety of learning styles, hence, lecturers or particularly language lecturers, must always recognize, respect, and work with the diversity of the learners' peculiarities (Isda et al., 2016). Therefore, teachers must understand their students' learning styles in order to select the best teaching technique (Awang et al., 2017). As we know that the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process is influenced not only by how the teachers teach, but also by how the students learn. If the students' learning style has been well-recognized, students' learning motivation will grow as a result of utilizing a method that is suited for their learning style, which will, in turn, impact student accomplishment (Gohar & Sadeghi, 2015). In line with it, the chosen learning method of students has been investigated as a motivating and influencing element in English excellence (Tabatabaei & Mashayekhi, 2013).

As can be seen in the above brief explanation, learning style can be a crucial thing that can affect students' learning acquisition. Therefore, in this case, teachers should be able to create learning materials that meet the learning styles of their students (El-Bishouty et al., 2019). This is also confirmed by Bhattacharyya and Shariff (2014), who claim that educators' understanding of students' learning styles helps in better learning and achievement of learning objectives. It is also supported by Isda et al. (2016), who says that one of the most important variables in determining how students learned a second or foreign language is their learning styles. Unfortunately, Muluk et al. (2020) mention that students, in truth, are unaware of their own learning styles. Therefore, it is a need to highlight the importance of recognizing students' learning styles. To recognize those styles, there are some theories that can help to classify them. Based on Gholami (2014), there are some theory to measure about students' learning style, such as a theory called Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) developed by Reid. Also there is a theory named Index of Learning Style (ILS) by Felder and Spurlin who develop a model to present the result of validity and reliability of students' learning style. In addition, The VARK model, introduced by Neil

Fleming, is one of the most popular and extensively utilized models (Gholami, 2014). Therefore, this study will use the VARK model to be the guideline in finding EFL students' learning styles.

Person's qualities and preferred methods of acquiring, organizing, and thinking about knowledge are called learning styles (Fleming, 2001; Gholami, 2014). Since it deals with perceptual modes, VARK falls under the topic of instructional preferences. There are several terms known in VARK model, namely: (a) Maps, charts, graphs, diagrams, photographs, highlighters, and various colors appeal to Visual learners (V); (b) Like to learn by discussing issues with their professors and peers, explaining new concepts to others, and recording their thoughts on tape appeal to Aural learners (A); (c) Essays, textbooks, definitions, readings, and taking notes are some of the ways that are appealed to read/write learners (R) which help them to learn; (d) Field excursions, doing things to understand them, laboratories, and hands-on techniques are preferred by kinesthetic learners (K); (e) Lastly, Individuals with a multimodal preference have more than one learning style preference. The VARK itself, according to Fleming and Baume (2006), is a model that recognizes students for absorbing information in multiple ways, which are referred to as preferred learning modes.

There is some research in ASEAN that has been carried out to determine the preferred learning method of EFL students. One of the research conducted by Manipuspika (2020), declares that visual learning styles are quite dominant in EFL students. She claims that this occurred because visual media such as LCD projectors assist students in the classroom. Students like to learn through visual channels such as photos, movies, presentations, and periodicals, according to her research. As a result, visual learners like taking detailed notes as their teacher discusses concepts. It is because they have trouble following spoken instructions and prefer to take notes so they may read whenever they want. Students, on the other hand, are interested in following written instructions and prefer to spend their time reading as much as they require. They also enjoy spending time reading books. Therefore, this study also wants to prove the dominant learning preference of EFL students in Indonesia as the foreign language. In addition, to investigate what is the dominant learning styles' used by ELE students. This study is taken a sample from some participants of English Language Education at Undiksha University in 7th semester. The researcher use classmate as the participant involved in this current study. Hopefully, the result of this study will be in line with previous related studies that can help for enriching information regarding students' learning preferences.

## **Method**

The important thing to be considered when conducting research is being able to understand any type of evidence to support the argument with a credible answer regarding the research questions. In line with it, there is a need to consider the strategy on how to collect and compile those related components, such as evidence, etc., in conducting research (Sinaga & Hutahaean, 2020). In this case, research design plays an important role because it will be guidance referring to the subject and object of the research, the answer to the research question, and for determining the final results or the finding of the research.

This recent study used a descriptive method using a survey to investigate the ELE students' learning styles. Descriptive method is one that investigates a current occurrence and delivers the findings as precisely as possible in a descriptive manner (Williams, 2007; Atmowardoyo, 2018). The VARK questionnaire that is taken from web tools in an 8.01 version has been used as a tool to collect the data consisting of 16 multiple-choice questions to help students recognize their learning styles preference. Each question can be answered with more than one answer where a single answer does not match with the students' perceptions. There are some participants of ELE students of Ganesha University at 7th semester as volunteers who have been involved to answer the questions provided. There is a theory from Neil Fleming in the form of the VARK Model where it is classified the learning styles into several parts, namely Visual learners (V), Aural learners (A), Read/write learners (R), Kinesthetic learners (K), and multimodal learning style preference.

The steps for gaining the data were as follows:

- 1) ELE students in 7th semester, in this case, come from the researcher's classmates, were asked if they wanted to participate in the study to answer several questions to recognize their learning style preference;
- 2) Students were given the link of Google Form: in the Google Form, there are provided instructions and a link that will directly lead them to a web tool VARK questionnaire (<https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>);
- 3) Students need to pay attention to the instruction given in the Google Form;
- 4) Students would directly see the result of the questionnaires;
- 5) Students back to Google Form to fill their learning preferences based on the result on the VARK questionnaire.

## **Findings & Discussions**

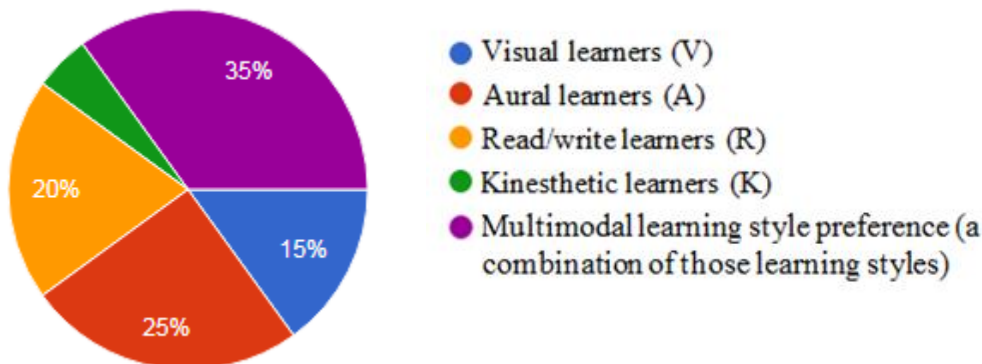
The Data of ELE students' learning styles preference is presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. ELE students' learning styles preference*

No.	ELE Students Initial Name	Visual (V)	Aural (A)	Read/write (R)	Kinesthetic (K)	Multimodal
1.	NM	V	-	R	-	✓
2.	BP	V	-	-	-	-
3.	YT	V	-	R	K	✓
4.	YI	-	A	-	-	-
5.	SW	-	-	R	-	-
6.	BB	V	-	-	-	-
7.	SD	-	A	-	K	✓
8.	JH	-	A	-	-	-
9.	YR	V	-	-	-	-
10.	TG	-	-	R	-	-
11.	CK	-	-	R	K	✓
12.	FD	-	A	R	K	✓
13.	JP	V	-	R	-	✓
14.	CR	-	-	R	K	✓
15.	JU	-	A	-	-	-
16.	SA	-	-	R	-	-
17.	DF	-	-	R	-	-
18.	AS	-	-	-	K	-
19.	RH	-	A	-	-	-
20.	PL	-	A	-	-	-

To obtain a clearer interpretation, the frequency of ELE students' learning styles preference can be seen in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. The frequency of ELE students' learning styles preference (%)*



To interpret the frequency's result of ELE students' learning styles preference in the Figure 1, it can be seen that ELE students at 7th semester are preferred Visual (15%), Aural (25%), Read (20%), Kinesthetic (5%), and Multimodal (35%). In other words, it can be concluded that the domination of learning styles used by ELE students of 7th semester is the Multimodal Learning style. Based on the data showed above, it can be said that most ELE students of 7th semester is the multimodal learning which came from the combination between both Reading and Kinesthetic styles. According to Widiyanti (2020), a good teaching method for students with reading learning is to make a list of essential terms. In addition, R.A & Indriani (2020) say that students who are learning to read and write like to demand information in the form of words or text and they can read or write do well in lectures since they need to take detailed notes on what the teacher says.

Their note-taking contributes to their quality because it aids in their learning and afterwards functions as a useful study tool. Meanwhile, according to R.A & Indriani (2020), touching and doing are the greatest ways for kinesthetic learners to learn. For kinesthetic learners, hands-on interaction is essential. Touching is a metaphor for enquiring about anything and it is early formed by large muscle, memorizing information by moving and seeing, using body gestures, and being unable to sit comfortably for a long time.

The result of this study are not in line with the previous study which conducted by Manipuspika (2020) where the result of her study found that visual learners are the most dominant learning style in EFL students, instead, the result show in this study that the combination between Reading and Kinesthetic styles are shown the most dominant: Multimodal learning style preference is the most dominant. Meanwhile, there are some research that are in line with the result of this study, which are a study conducted at the Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Ranken Technical College which were contributed by 298 students from there has shown that the most dominant learning styles that is found used by the students came from Kinesthetic styles (Trinidad, 2008; Gholami, 2014). The percentage shown up to (76.6%). In addition, there is a study involving adult learners aged 19 to 23 years old which is conducted by R.A and Indriani (2020), in which the researcher focuses on determining the frequency of learning styles that are frequently employed in online speaking classes. In compared to other learning styles, it has been discovered from the result of the study that kinesthetic learning styles are the most widely employed learning style in online classrooms. Kinesthetic learning techniques aid students in online speaking lessons by allowing them to capture material by moving their hands or by practicing physically (R.A & Indriani, 2020).

In addition, in line with the multimodal learning style preference, there is a study which found a quite similar result where it is shown that students were indicated has multimodal learning preference that came from both of kinesthetic and auditory or aural are the most preferred learning style after being tested using VARK Model (Balasubramaniam & Indhu, 2016). Yet, their study compared to this study, there can be seen regarding the difference that is came between them. Those are actually came from the learning course and the other result of the learning styles: In Balasubramaniam and Indhu (2016), it is related to a medical course, not a language course. Meanwhile, in the result from them, it is found that the multimodal learning preference consists of kinesthetic and auditory or aural which is appeared as the most learning style among the students, on the other hand, this study found that the multimodal learning preference are both came from kinesthetic and read learning style. Therefore, the limitation of this study is to dig more about students with read (R) learning style deeper, since a study from Manipuspika (2020), which is found that visual learning styles are quite dominant in EFL students where the result indicates that EFL students are interested in following written instructions and prefer to spend their time reading as much as they require: They also enjoy spending time reading books.

## **Conclusion and Suggestions**

The current study investigated ELE students of Ganesha University from 7th semester. The participant of the students was about 20 people who were willing to answer some questions to help



them in recognizing their learning styles. From the result of the study, it was found that some of ELE students are mostly have Multimodal learning style which were the combination between Read and Kinesthetic styles. In this case, the researcher give a suggestion to facilitate the most dominant style appeared in the result, such as, the Read style learners need to be supported with some related visual-real aid like graphs, diagrams, interesting layouts, maps, handouts, etc. Meanwhile for the Kinesthetic style learners need to be supported by some practical exercises, experiences, case studies, trial and error activities, and even things that are sound more authentic that actually refer to students' need. Therefore, teacher need to put a serious consideration in identifying students' learning style in order to serve and facilitate an appropriate teaching methods and teaching material since it will help a lot to meet the learning goals during the teaching-learning process. Meanwhile as stated in the discussion session above, there is a need to dig more about students with a read learning style in the language learning class, since there is a quite relevant style between visual learners with the read learners where the visual learner itself is one of the prominent style appeared in this matter. Hopefully, further study may use another ways or methods in reaching and recognizing students learning styles, like using Kolb's Learning Style Instrument (LSI), Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ), the Canfield Learning Style Inventory (CLSI), Index of Learning Survey (ILS), Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), Cognitive Styles Analysis (CSA), etc., with more massive participant which came from certain grades in the language learning classes, especially in the English language as a foreign language for Indonesian's students.

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