



Analysis of Learning Styles among Grade VII Students in Learning English at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa (*Analisis Gaya Belajar Siswa Kelas VII dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di SMP Negeri 1 Tapa*)

Jihan D. Pasisingi¹, Helena Badu², Fahria Malabar³

^{1,2,3}English Language Education Department, Faculty of Letters and Cultures, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo
jihanpasisingi512000@gmail.com¹, helenabadu@ung.ac.id², fahria@ung.ac.id³

Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: 4 August 2025 Revised: 15 August 2025 Accepted: 19 August 2025 Keywords: Learning Styles English learning VAK model Kata Kunci: Gaya Belajar Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Model VAK	This research aims to analyze the types of learning styles used by Grade VII students of SMP Negeri 1 Tapa in learning English and to determine which learning style is most dominantly used. The study applies the VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) learning style model as the theoretical framework. A quantitative descriptive method. The instrument used in this research was a structured questionnaire consisting of 30 statements, with each 10 items representing one learning style category. The results showed that all three learning styles were present among the students. The visual learning style was identified as the most dominant, followed by auditory and kinesthetic. Students with visual preference tended to understand English better when exposed to images, texts, and visual aids. These findings suggest that English teaching should consider students' learning preferences to support more effective and differentiated instruction. This research highlights the importance of understanding student learning styles to improve engagement and learning outcomes. Abstrak Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis gaya belajar yang digunakan oleh siswa kelas VII SMP Negeri 1 Tapa dalam belajar bahasa Inggris dan untuk mengetahui gaya belajar mana yang paling dominan digunakan. Penelitian ini menggunakan model gaya belajar VAK (Visual, Auditori, Kinestetik) sebagai kerangka teori. Metode deskriptif kuantitatif digunakan. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kuesioner terstruktur yang terdiri dari 30 pernyataan, dengan masing-masing 10 butir pernyataan mewakili satu kategori gaya belajar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga gaya belajar tersebut ada di antara para siswa. Gaya belajar visual diidentifikasi sebagai yang paling dominan, diikuti oleh gaya belajar auditori dan kinestetik. Siswa dengan preferensi visual cenderung memahami bahasa Inggris dengan lebih baik ketika terpapar dengan gambar, teks, dan alat bantu visual. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengajaran bahasa Inggris harus mempertimbangkan preferensi belajar siswa untuk mendukung pengajaran yang lebih efektif dan berbeda. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya memahami gaya belajar siswa untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan dan hasil belajar.

Corresponding Author:

Jihan D. Pasisingi
Faculty of Letters of Cultures
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo
jihanpasisingi512000@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning effectiveness in education is not solely determined by curriculum content or teaching strategies, but also by the extent to which these approaches align with students' individual characteristics, particularly their learning styles. Learning styles are internal preferences individuals use to absorb, process, and retain information, often categorized under the VAK model: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (Fleming & Mills, 1992). Each student exhibits different patterns in perceiving learning stimuli—some understand better through visual images, others through auditory input, and some through physical interaction. The recognition of these styles is essential in improving student engagement and performance, especially in subjects perceived as difficult, such as English (Oxford, 2003; Brown, 2000).

In English language learning, which often presents challenges for Indonesian junior high school students due to differences in linguistic structure and exposure (Brumfit, 2001), matching teaching strategies with students' learning preferences can enhance outcomes. Visual learners benefit from diagrams and charts, auditory learners from listening tasks and discussions, while kinesthetic learners excel through movement-based activities like role plays and simulations. Therefore, incorporating differentiated instruction aligned with learning styles is necessary to cater to these diverse needs (Tomlinson, 2014; Gibbs & McKay, 2021).

Recent studies have explored the impact of learning styles on language acquisition. Gilakjani (2012) found that Iranian EFL learners predominantly preferred visual learning, emphasizing the need for educators to adapt strategies accordingly. Putri (2019), in her study among Indonesian high school students, identified auditory learning as the dominant style, although she reported a weak correlation ($r = 0.334$) between learning styles and academic achievement. Similarly, Adistya (2016) examined the relationship between learning styles and students' speaking strategies, highlighting how specific preferences influence language skills development. However, these studies primarily focused on university and senior high school students. Research targeting junior secondary school students—especially in semi-urban or rural Indonesian settings—remains scarce.

This gap is critical, considering that junior high school (Grade VII) students are in the early stages of formal English learning and often demonstrate varied readiness levels and engagement patterns. At SMP Negeri 1 Tapa, located in Gorontalo, Indonesia, teachers observe heterogeneous student behaviors during English classes—some respond best to visual materials, others are more attentive to spoken instructions, while several are more involved in interactive, physical learning tasks. These observations support the urgency of identifying dominant learning styles in this context to inform more effective instructional planning.

Moreover, existing literature lacks specific pedagogical recommendations based on the learning styles of junior-level EFL students. While the VAK model is frequently referenced for its practicality and accessibility, its application in differentiated instruction at the lower secondary level remains underexplored in Indonesian education research. This study addresses that need by examining the learning style preferences of Grade VII students in English learning and determining the most frequently used learning style, based on validated questionnaire data.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the types and dominance of learning styles among Grade VII students of SMP Negeri 1 Tapa using the VAK model. The findings are expected to enrich both theoretical understanding and practical teaching frameworks by promoting differentiated instruction that accommodates individual learner profiles. Specifically, this research aims to answer: (1) What types of learning styles are used by Grade VII students of SMP Negeri 1 Tapa in learning English? and (2) Which learning style is most commonly used among them?

This article is structured as follows: The next section outlines the theoretical framework that underpins learning styles and English language education. It is followed by a review of previous studies related to learning preferences in EFL contexts. The methodology section describes the descriptive quantitative approach used in the study. The results and discussion section presents findings on the dominant learning styles among students and their implications for teaching practice. The article concludes with recommendations for educators and suggestions for further research in this field.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design to systematically investigate the learning styles of Grade VII students in learning English at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa. A descriptive quantitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to portray a phenomenon as it exists in the population using numerical data, without manipulation of variables (Creswell, 2014). The method allows for objective measurement and statistical analysis of student preferences, providing a clear and structured description of learning style tendencies. The theoretical basis for learning style categorization in this study was the VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) model, which classifies learners based on their preferred sensory modalities for processing information (Fleming, 1995; Barbe et al., 1979; Dunn & Dunn, 1993).

2.2 Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of all Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa, located in Gorontalo. The school was selected based on its diverse student learning characteristics and the researcher's accessibility to the site. From this population, a sample of 32 students was selected using simple random sampling to ensure representativeness and minimize selection bias (Cohen et al., 2002). In this method, every student had an equal chance of being chosen, increasing the generalizability of findings to the entire Grade VII cohort.

2.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument used was a structured questionnaire designed to measure learning style preferences based on the VAK model. This questionnaire was adapted from previously validated tools, including Fleming's (1995) VAK questionnaire, Barbe et al.'s (1979) learning style inventory, and the Dunn and Dunn (1993) Learning Style Model. The adaptation process involved modifying the wording of certain items to suit the comprehension level of junior high school students while retaining the original meaning.

The questionnaire comprised 30 closed-ended statements, with 10 items for each learning style category: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale was selected for its effectiveness in quantifying attitudes, opinions, and preferences in educational research (Sugiyono, 2013).

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out through direct distribution of questionnaires during class hours to ensure consistent administration. This procedure minimized the risk of misunderstanding instructions and reduced the possibility of incomplete responses. Students completed the questionnaires under the direct supervision of the researcher, enabling immediate clarification of any ambiguities. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), such direct administration in educational research increases response rates and improves data accuracy by reducing non-response bias.

2.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the total score for each learning style category was calculated for each student. The dominant learning style was determined by identifying which category had the highest score for each respondent. Two main formulas were used:

Percentage Formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

P = percentage of students per learning style category

F = frequency of students in that category

N = total number of respondents (32)

Mean Score Formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

X = mean score

$\sum x$ = total score for a learning style category

N = number of respondents

The results were then presented in tables showing frequency, percentage, and mean score for each category. These were interpreted descriptively to provide an overall picture of the students' learning preferences.

2.6 Instrument Validity and Reliability

The validity of the instrument was supported by its prior use and validation in previous academic studies (Fleming, 1995; Barbe et al., 1979; Dunn & Dunn, 1993). Although the questionnaire was adapted for a younger audience, the core structure and content were preserved. Minor language modifications ensured age-appropriate comprehension without altering the construct being measured. Based on this, no additional validity or reliability testing was deemed necessary.

2.7 Data Verification

Verification of the analysis results was conducted by cross-checking findings with the research questions. Preliminary interpretations were considered provisional until consistent patterns were established across data sets. In cases where inconsistencies emerged, interpretations were revised accordingly, following the principle of iterative verification described by Miles and Huberman (1994). While the study's primary focus was quantitative, the verification process also drew from qualitative data analysis principles to strengthen the accuracy of conclusions.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Although this research did not involve sensitive or personal data, ethical considerations were maintained by informing participants about the study's purpose and ensuring voluntary participation. Students' responses were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Learning Styles in English Language Learning

The primary objective of this study was to identify the types of learning styles used by Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa in learning English, as well as to determine the most dominant learning style. Data were obtained through a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 30 statements based on the VAK model (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic). Each learning style dimension was represented by 10 statements, and responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5).

From the 32 respondents, the distribution of dominant learning styles is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Learning Styles among Grade VII Students

Learning Style	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Visual	16	50.00
Auditory	10	31.25
Kinesthetic	6	18.75

The data in Table 1 reveal a clear distribution pattern in the learning style preferences of Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa. Out of the total 32 respondents, 16 students, or exactly 50%, identified with a visual learning style as their dominant mode of learning. This indicates that half of the class prefers receiving and processing information through visual formats such as diagrams, charts, images, and written text. The relatively high percentage suggests that visual-based instructional strategies could have the most widespread impact on student comprehension and retention in this context.

The auditory learning style, preferred by 10 students or 31.25% of the sample, emerged as the second most common. This group benefits more from verbal instructions, spoken explanations, discussions, and audio-based materials. While smaller in proportion compared to visual learners, auditory learners still constitute nearly one-third of the class, making it important for English teachers to integrate listening and speaking activities into lessons to maintain engagement and effectiveness.

The kinesthetic learning style is the least represented, with only 6 students (18.75%) identifying this as their primary preference. Although they form a minority, kinesthetic learners require active, hands-on engagement to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Neglecting this group could lead to decreased participation and motivation, underscoring the need for incorporating physical activities and experiential tasks into the curriculum.

Overall, the table highlights that while visual learning dominates, the classroom is heterogeneous in learning preferences, requiring a balanced and differentiated instructional approach. By addressing all three styles—though in proportion to their representation—teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment that caters to the strengths of each student group.

3.2 Preferred Learning Style Distribution in English Language Learning

The mean score analysis for each learning style category provides further insight into general tendencies.

Table 2. Mean Scores of Learning Styles

Learning Style	Mean Score (%)
----------------	----------------

Visual	50.00
Auditory	31.25
Kinesthetic	18.75

The mean score analysis in Table 2 highlights the general tendencies of students' learning preferences. The visual learning style recorded the highest mean score (50.00%), indicating that half of the respondents favor learning English through visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, written text, and color-coded materials. This preference suggests that visual elements not only help learners process information more efficiently but also enhance engagement and retention.

The auditory learning style ranked second with a mean score of 31.25%, showing that nearly one-third of the students benefit most from listening activities, such as lectures, discussions, and audio materials. While not as dominant as the visual preference, auditory strategies still play a significant role in supporting comprehension, particularly for learners who excel at processing spoken language.

The kinesthetic learning style, with a mean score of 18.75%, was the least preferred, indicating that fewer students rely primarily on hands-on activities, role-plays, or physical movement to learn English. Nevertheless, its presence reflects the diversity of learning preferences within the group, suggesting that incorporating kinesthetic elements can still benefit certain learners, especially in tasks that require active participation and experiential learning.

Overall, these findings imply that while visual methods should be prioritized in instructional design, a balanced approach that integrates auditory and kinesthetic elements could cater to varied learning needs and promote a more inclusive English learning environment.

3.3 Visual Learning Style Dominance

The findings reveal that the visual learning style is the dominant preference among Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa. This supports Gilakjani's (2012) argument that many EFL learners rely heavily on visual aids, especially in contexts where opportunities for direct verbal interaction are limited. Visual learners in this study expressed a greater sense of comfort and deeper comprehension when learning materials were presented through illustrated flashcards, grammar diagrams, color-coded notes, videos, and mind maps. This observation aligns with Fleming's (2001) assertion that visual learners tend to process and retain information more effectively when it is represented through images, diagrams, and other visual symbols.

In practical English instruction, addressing the needs of visual learners can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Strategies may include integrating PowerPoint presentations enriched with images, infographics, and animations to clarify concepts; providing illustrated dictionaries or visual vocabulary lists to facilitate faster word recognition; and encouraging students to take color-coded notes, which help them categorize and remember information systematically. Teachers might also incorporate visual timelines to explain historical or sequential events, use storyboards for creative writing exercises, and assign tasks that involve creating concept maps or graphic organizers. Such practices not only cater to the dominant learning style of these students but also make lessons more engaging, memorable, and accessible.

3.4 Auditory Learning Style Characteristics

The auditory learning style was found in 31.25% of respondents, making it the second most common preference among the students surveyed. Learners with this style process and retain information more effectively through listening, discussion, and verbal explanation rather than visual or hands-on methods. They tend to be highly responsive to teacher explanations, peer discussions, and audio-based activities, often demonstrating strong recall of information presented orally. Oxford (2003) emphasizes that auditory learners benefit most from activities such as listening exercises, speaking practice, and group discussions, as these strategies allow them to engage actively with the spoken language. For example, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, instruction can be enhanced through storytelling activities that stimulate imagination and contextual understanding, listening to audio recordings or songs that expose students to authentic pronunciation and intonation, and conducting oral quizzes or debates that encourage spontaneous speaking. Such activities not only cater to their preferred mode of learning but also promote critical listening skills, improve oral fluency, and build confidence in using English in interactive settings. By consistently integrating these auditory-oriented strategies, teachers can create a more engaging and effective learning environment, enabling auditory learners to maximize their potential in mastering the language.

3.5 Kinesthetic Learning Style Characteristics

The kinesthetic learning style was the least common in the sample, representing only 18.75% of the students. Despite their smaller proportion, kinesthetic learners have distinct characteristics that set them apart from auditory and visual learners. They learn best through hands-on experiences, physical movement, and active participation in the learning process. Instead of absorbing information solely through reading, listening, or watching, these learners prefer to interact directly with the materials, tools, and environment.

This style often aligns with a strong sense of touch and body awareness, making them more engaged when learning involves manipulation, experimentation, or real-life application.

Brown (2000) emphasized that kinesthetic learners grasp concepts more effectively when actively involved in tasks such as role-play, project-based learning, or games that require movement. In the context of English language learning, this can translate into activities where students physically act out conversations, perform short dramas, or engage in interactive simulations of real-life situations. Language games that require moving around the classroom, such as vocabulary scavenger hunts or team-based competitions, also stimulate engagement. Furthermore, using realia—real objects like menus, tickets, or household items—can make vocabulary lessons more tangible and meaningful, allowing learners to connect words directly to physical experiences.

Although kinesthetic learners form the smallest group in this study, accommodating their learning preferences remains crucial to ensuring an inclusive and engaging classroom environment. Ignoring their needs could lead to reduced participation, disengagement, or slower progress compared to peers. Incorporating even small kinesthetic elements into lessons, such as having students physically rearrange word cards to form sentences or using gestures to represent grammar rules, can make a significant difference. By integrating movement and physical interaction into the learning process, teachers not only support kinesthetic learners but also enhance overall class dynamics, benefiting students across different learning styles.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Learning styles play a crucial role in shaping students' success in the learning process, particularly in English language learning. This study revealed that Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Tapa exhibit diverse learning styles, with a dominance of the visual type, followed by auditory and kinesthetic. The findings demonstrate that every learning style category is represented in the classroom, confirming the need for teaching approaches that recognize and address these differences. The dominance of visual learning suggests that visual media—such as images, graphs, mind maps, and videos—should be integrated more frequently into lesson plans to enhance comprehension and retention.

Furthermore, the results emphasize that learning styles are not merely individual preferences but have a tangible impact on learning effectiveness. When instructional methods fail to accommodate these styles, students may face challenges in understanding the material, lose interest in lessons, and experience a decline in academic performance. By integrating differentiated instruction, teachers can create an inclusive classroom environment that respects students' learning needs, fosters engagement, and optimizes learning outcomes.

This study contributes to the literature on learning styles in the EFL context, particularly within the junior high school level and in rural Indonesian settings, an area that has received limited attention in previous research. By highlighting the relationship between learning style awareness and instructional effectiveness, this study reinforces the importance of tailoring teaching strategies to meet diverse learner needs.

4.2 Suggestions/Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for teachers, schools, policymakers, and future researchers.

First, teachers should prioritize early identification of students' learning styles through diagnostic tools, classroom observations, and student self-reflections. Once identified, lesson plans should be adjusted to incorporate elements that cater to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. For example, English lessons could integrate visual aids for visual learners, storytelling and discussions for auditory learners, and hands-on role-play activities for kinesthetic learners.

Second, schools should provide systemic support by offering professional development opportunities for teachers in differentiated instruction techniques. Infrastructure such as projectors, audio systems, and flexible classroom layouts should also be made available to facilitate varied learning activities. Collaboration among teachers in designing inclusive teaching materials should be encouraged to ensure a consistent school-wide approach.

Third, from a policy perspective, education authorities should incorporate learning style assessment and awareness into the curriculum and teacher training programs. This will enable a stronger emphasis on student-centered learning, ensuring that instructional methods align with diverse learning preferences. Policymakers could also encourage reflective practices among teachers to continuously evaluate and refine their teaching approaches.

Lastly, future research should adopt a mixed-method approach by combining quantitative data with qualitative insights from classroom observations, interviews, and student work analysis. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how learning styles influence learning outcomes. Additionally,

researchers could explore connections between learning styles and other variables such as academic achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy, thereby expanding the scope and depth of the discussion on learning styles in the Indonesian EFL context.

REFERENCES

- Adistya, I., Marbun, R., & Bunau, E. (2016). The Students' Styles and Strategies In Learning Relationship To Their Speaking Skills. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa (JPPK)*, 5(7).
- Barbe, W.B., Swassing, R.H. & Milone, M.N. (1979). *Teaching through modality strengths: concepts and practices*. Columbus, Ohio: Zaner-Bloser.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Brumfit, C. (2001). *Individual freedom in language teaching: Language education and applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Dunn, R., & Dunn, K. (1993). *Teaching Secondary Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Fleming, N. D. (1995, July). I'm different; not dumb. Modes of presentation (VARK) in the tertiary classroom. In *Research and development in higher education, Proceedings of the 1995 Annual Conference of the Higher Education and Research Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA)*, HERDSA (Vol. 18, pp. 308-313).
- Fleming, N. D. (2001). *Teaching and Learning Styles: VARK Strategies*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Neil Fleming.
- Fleming, N. D., & Mills, C. (1992). Not another inventory, rather a catalyst for reflection. *To improve the academy*, 11(1), 137-155.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (7th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill Higher Education.
- Gibbs, K., & McKay, L. (2021). Differentiated teaching practices of Australian mainstream classroom teachers: A systematic review and thematic analysis. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 109, 101799.
- Gilakjani, A. P. (2012). Visual, auditory, kinaesthetic learning styles and their impacts on English language teaching. *Journal of studies in education*, 2(1), 104-113.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. sage.
- Oxford, R. L. (2003). *Language Learning Styles and Strategies: An Overview*. *GALA*, 1(1), 1–25.
- Putri, I. T. (2019). Students' Learning Style toward Their Achievement in Learning English. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 52(2), 83–90.
- Sugiyono. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.