

Investigating the Interconnection Between Learning Styles, Language Learning Strategies, and Gender Among English Foreign Language (EFL) Learners

Nesi Ramadani¹, Abshahrini Kardena,²

*Correspondence :

Email :
nesidani6@gmail.com
absharinikardena@gmail.com

Authors Affiliation:

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia

²Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia

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Abstract

English language learning strategies and learning style for English foreign language (EFL) is such a challenging aspect for the teacher in teaching English. The more teachers can provide those things, the more effective learning in the classroom will be. On another side, gender is one of the factors that influences English language strategies and students' learning styles. whether it is male or female can make a difference in students' own learning styles. therefore, By conducting descriptive and correlative methods. this research has purpose to examine the major, minor, and negligible perceptual learning styles of the students. Additionally, the language learning strategies employed by the students will be examined. the data were collected through two kind of questionnaires which are PLSQ and SILL where the participants are 24 students at junior high school at MTI Paninggahan At seventh grade. The findings of the research showed that gender differences only work in compensatory strategy, especially for female students. Then, a correlation study identified A substantial relationship between visual styles, cognitive, metacognitive strategies, auditory styles, and cognitive and compensatory strategies. Furthermore, social strategies have been shown that it is correlated with tactile, group, styles. However there are many study related to this study but there is no study that focused on the students at first grade of junior high school especially for those students who doesn't learn English as foreign language at their elementary school. In fact, The result of this research is beneficial for teacher in teaching and employing the suitable strategies with the students learning style.

Abstrak

Strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dan gaya belajar untuk bahasa asing (EFL) merupakan aspek yang menantang bagi guru dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris. Semakin banyak guru dapat memberikan hal-hal tersebut, semakin efektif pembelajaran di kelas. Di sisi lain, jenis kelamin merupakan salah satu faktor yang mempengaruhi strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dan gaya belajar siswa. Apakah itu laki-laki atau perempuan dapat membuat perbedaan pada gaya belajar siswa itu sendiri. Oleh karena itu, dengan melakukan metode deskriptif dan korelasional, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi gaya belajar perseptual mayor, minor, dan dapat diabaikan dari para siswa. Selain itu, strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang digunakan oleh siswa akan diperiksa. data dikumpulkan melalui dua jenis kuesioner yaitu PLSQ dan SILL di mana para peserta adalah 24 siswa di sekolah menengah pertama di MTI Paninggahan di kelas tujuh. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan gender hanya bekerja pada strategi kompensasi terutama untuk siswa perempuan, kemudian studi korelasi mengidentifikasi bahwa ada hubungan yang signifikan antara gaya visual, strategi kognitif dan metakognitif antara gaya auditori dan strategi kognitif dan kompensasi. Oleh karena itu, strategi sosial berkorelasi dengan gaya taktil, kelompok dan individu. Meskipun banyak penelitian yang berkaitan dengan penelitian ini, namun belum ada penelitian yang berfokus pada siswa kelas satu sekolah menengah pertama terutama bagi siswa yang tidak belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pengantar.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the curriculum really pays attention to how the learning activity in the classroom is developed so that the students-centred method in the classroom activity, especially in English foreign language classrooms (EFL). This couldn't be stop to investigate by the researcher because it needs to be explore more so that teacher and the students can have relevant learning style and strategies in the classroom activities. The teacher in the class is required to teach based on the student's learning style and strategies of students based on their gender. Hence, it can influence the success of learning! because the learning is focused on the students.

Two of the most prominent areas of research in this field are learning styles and language learning strategies (LLS). Learning styles encompass an individual's unconscious traits, whereas learning strategies represent specific behaviours employed by the learner to enhance the effectiveness of their learning process. In contrast, Learning styles are natural traits that come from within a person and are often not noticed or used on purpose by the learner. On the other hand, learning strategies are actions or techniques that students use intentionally to help them learn. Unlike learning strategies, learning styles are more stable and don't change much; they are the ways students naturally approach learning.

The term "learning styles" is used to describe the various ways in which individuals may best absorb, process, and retain information. While some learners demonstrate superior performance when engaging with visual materials, such as charts, diagrams, and videos, others may exhibit a proclivity for auditory inputs, deriving greater benefit from lectures, discussions, and podcasts. In contrast, kinesthetic learners flourish when engaged in hands-on activities and practical exercises, which facilitate the integration of theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. The concept of learning styles posits that the adaptation of educational experiences to align with a learner's preferred method can facilitate enhanced comprehension and retention. For instance, an educator who employs a combination of verbal instructions, visual aids, and interactive exercises may prove an effective method of reaching a broader range of students. Nevertheless, despite the popularity of learning styles in educational discourse, some research posits that the efficacy of strictly adhering to them is a matter of debate. Effective learning frequently entails a combination of methods, underscoring adaptability and encouraging students to engage with diverse learning approaches. This not only optimizes cognitive flexibility but also prepares learners to process different types of information more efficiently, fostering a well-rounded and resilient approach to problem-solving and knowledge acquisition

Rebecca Oxford's Theory of Language Learning Strategies offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how learners can effectively acquire the English language. In accordance with Oxford (1990), language learning strategies can be classified into two categories: direct and indirect. Direct strategies entail active engagement with the language, encompassing memory strategies (e.g., the use of mnemonic devices, visualization, and repetition), cognitive strategies (e.g., summarizing, note-taking, and practicing through drills), and compensation strategies (e.g., using context clues and gestures to bridge knowledge gaps). Conversely, indirect strategies facilitate language learning through more expansive cognitive and social processes. These include metacognitive strategies, which assist learners in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning process; affective strategies, which

involve managing emotions and motivation through techniques such as self-encouragement and relaxation; and social strategies, which focus on learning through interaction, such as seeking feedback, engaging in group discussions, and practicing with native speakers. Oxford's theory posits that successful language learners often combine these strategies to enhance their overall proficiency, tailoring their approach based on individual learning styles, motivation, and the specific context in which they are learning.

Additionally, Research shows that learning styles can influence the strategies students choose when learning, regardless of the tools or environments used in the studies. as stated by Rossi-Le (1995) studied adult immigrants learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and explored how their preferred learning styles affected their strategy choices. The findings revealed clear connections between learning styles and strategies. Students who preferred learning in groups tended to use interactive strategies, such as discussions. Those who enjoyed hands-on or practical learning often engaged in real-life language practice. Visual learners preferred strategies that involved pictures or diagrams, while a few learners who preferred working alone liked building models or creating structures to help with learning.

Based on the researcher observation the researcher found that most of students don't realize that their learning style so that they tend to wait and follow how the teacher teach them in learning language in the classroom. In other side, the teacher also ddont know what kind of learning style is suitable for the students. While the students need to know their learning style that should be facilitate by the teacher.

Furthermore, it is should be investigate by the researcher in order that this study will be the reflection for the teacher and also can be an insight to provide and facilitate the learning activity in the classroom especially in learning English as foreign language. In addition, the research aims to examine the correlation between students' learning styles and their language learning strategy preferences, determining whether certain learning styles are predictive of or associated with specific strategies. This comprehensive investigation will contribute to a better understanding of how students' unique learning preferences influence their approach to language learning, thereby aiding educators in creating more effective, student-centered teaching methods. Hence, the earlier the students known their learning style and their learning strategies the more the learning activity, especially learning English language, can be effectively

METHODS

This is a study that uses not only descriptive but also a correlational method. It is based on a survey of a study project that makes descriptive claims. It is about a specific population. The study's objective is to identify the primary secondary, and tertiary perceptual modalities (how people understand and interpret information), and learning strategies and to explore the connection between learning styles and language learning strategies. To learn more, the researcher also looked at a control variable of gender was included to see if there were any diversity between female and male students. The study looks at how students learn language. It looks at how students learn in different ways and what strategies they use. It also looks at how gender affects these things.

Participants

In The present study was conducted with a sample of 24 students from a junior high school in Mti Paninggahn, The research was conducted by In this educational institution where the English language is a compulsory course for students in the seventh grade. The numbers of participants comprised 12 male and 12 female students, ensuring a 50:50 gender distribution to align with the objective of the gender-based study. Participants were selected randomly from the first grade students at junior high school of Mti. Paninggahan Which are seventh grade students.

Instruments

Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ)

This kind of questionnaires was created by Reid (1987), it is a survey instrument that asks respondents to report their learning style preferences. It builds upon existing learning style measures, incorporating modifications based on input from non-native speakers and US-based linguistics experts. The survey was created with non-native speakers in mind and has five groups of statements on each of the six learning style preferences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group learning, and individual learning. The first four categories are about how people learn, while the last two are about how people interact socially. The respondents answered 30 questions using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. To make sure the survey was easy to understand, we used an Indonesian version of the PLSPQ.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

The next instrument that is developed by Oxford (1990) is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), It is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure how often students use language learning strategies. Originally created for learners at the Defense Language Institute in California, the SILL (Version 7.0) includes 50 statements divided into six categories of learning strategies.

Gender

To explore gender differences in this research, both the PLSPQ and SILL questionnaires asked participants to provide their name and gender either it is male or female. This information was used to divide the participants into two groups, male and female, for comparison.

Procedures

The researcher began the study by distributing questionnaires to the participants. These were completed in the classroom. First, students were asked to write their names and genders on both distributing questionnaires itself that aim identify the information of the efl students . Then, the researcher explained to the students about how to answer the questionnaires. To ensure reliable answers, students were encouraged to respond honestly and quickly without overthinking or changing their mind in answering.

All the English learners first completed the answer for the Indonesian version of the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). Subsequently, the English foreign language (EFL) learner completed the Indonesian version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Once completed, the questionnaire that is answered collected to the researcher; then, the answer of the questionnaire were entered into a computer for analysis using Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the

PLSPQ results. The Likert scale responses were then subjected to a two-multiplication process to categorize students into three distinct learning style groups: major, minor, and negligible. A major style is defined as the learning style that a student prefers the most, a minor style as one with which a student is comfortable, and a negligible style as one that a student finds challenging to utilize. These categories align with the guidelines established by Reid (1987).

Table 1. Scale of major, minor and negligible learning style

Score	Classification
38-50	Major learning style preferences
25-37	Minor learning style preferences
0 - 24	Negligible learning style preference

Major means the style were most of students favor, minor means the style where the students okay to learn with any style, and negligible means the style where the studnts feel difficult to match with .

A t-test is used to identify whether there is a significant difference in learning style preference between males and females. The same treatment is also used to analyze the data gained from the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) to look for the employment of the strategies.

Lastly, the researcher conducted a Pearson correlation to analyze the data which was used to identify whether there was a significant correlation between the learning style and the language learning strategy of English foreign language (EFL) learner preference.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

English foreign language (EFL) learner major, minor, and negligible perceptual learning style preference in learning English language

The English learners were subjected to a descriptive statistical analysis, which categorized them based on their academic major, minor, and learning styles. The scores from the perceptual learning style survey (see table 2) indicated that the most preferred major learning style among participants was group learning, with 15 out of 24 students selecting it, followed closely by auditory learning, which was preferred by 14 out of 24 students. The most preferred minor learning style was visual, with 14 out of 24 students selecting it, and then also individual learning, which 8 from 24 students preferred. The participants demonstrated minimal preferences for tactile, group, and individual learning styles. It is important to note that the clasifications are not equally indicate that a learner may exhibit preferences for not only a learning style .

Table 2
Major,minor and negligible learning style

Clasification	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
Major learning style	8	13	6	6	14	10

Minor learning style preference	14	8	12	6	0	0
Negligible learning style preference	2	3	6	12	10	14

The table above shows that the data between group and individual learning styles show that 14 of English learners have group learning as their major learning style, and 10 students stated that they don't mind learning individually (minor style). On the other hand, a very small number of students have negligible learning style preferences.

Moreover, 14 learners have a visual learning style as a minor learning style preference. In this era, most social media and the internet affect how students acquire the English language, so the number of students with a visual learning style can be outstanding.

English foreign language learner of language learning strategy

Based on the finding of the strategy inventory of language learning strategies, the researcher gained data based on the table below.

Table 3
Student's use of language learning strategy

	Students	mean	cataegory	Std. deviation
Lls a whole	24	3.1	Medium use	0.7
Memory	24	3.2	Medium use	0.8
Cognitive	24	2.8	Medium use	0.7
Compensation	24	2.5	Poor use	0.6
Metacognitive	24	3.6	Medium use	0.7
Affective	24	2.4	Poor use	0.8
Social	24	3.0	Medium use	0.7

From the The results of the table above show that students use all six types of language learning strategies, but most of students use metacognitive strategy most while affective strategy is the less one.

The comparative of how male and female students learn.

The researcher used an independent sample t-test to check for differences. The results showed that there is no significant difference between the two genders in terms of their learning styles.

Table 4
Perceptual learning style of male and female students

	Gender	Number of students	mean	DF	T	P
Visual	Male	12	3.5	22	1.23	0.230
	Female	12	3.8	22		
Audiotory	Male	12	3.2	22	-1.67	0.110
	Female	12	2.8	22		
Kinesthetic	Male	12	4.0	22	0.89	0.381
	Female	12	4.2	22		
Tactile	Male	12	3.6	22	-0.54	0.598
	Female	12	3.7	22		
Group	Male	12	3.1	22	-2.12	0.045
	Female	12	3.8	22		
individual	Male	12	2.9	22	1.56	0.133
	female	12	2.1	22		

Table 5
Language learning strategies of male and female students

	Gender	N umber of 106tudent s	Mean	Df	t	p
Memory	Male	12	3.4	22	1.89	0.072
	Female	12	3.8	22		
Cognitive	Male	12	3.1	22	-245	0,022
	Female	12	3.8	22		
Compensation	Male	12	2.9	22	-0.98	0.340
	Female	12	3.1	22		
Metacognitive	Male	12	3.6	22	1.34	0.193
	Female	12	3.9	22		
Affective	Male	12	2.7	22	-3.21	0.004
	Female	12	3.5	22		
Social	Male	12	3.2	22	-2.05	0.051
	Female	12	3.7	22		

Based on the data above it can bee seen that there is no significant result about the defference of learning style and language learning strategy.

The correlation between students learning style pereference towards students learning startegies.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was utilized to ascertain the existence of a significant relationship between students' preferred learning styles and their preferred language learning strategies. The data can be seen as the following table below

Table 6
Summary of significant correlation between PLS and LLS

Style	Strategy	Pearson correlation (r)	p	r ²
Visual	Cognitive	0.595	0.001	35
Visual	Metacognitive	0.409	0.026	17
Audiotory	Cognitive	0.449	0.013	20
Audiotory	Compensation	0.423	0.020	18
Kinesthetic	Social	0.494	0.006	24
Tactile	Social	0.470	0.009	22
group	social	0.372	0.043	14

The data indicates several significant correlations between learning styles and learning strategies, suggesting that specific learning styles are moderately associated with particular strategies. Visual learners exhibit a strong positive correlation with cognitive strategies ($r = 0.595$), accounting for 35% of the variance, and a moderate correlation with metacognitive strategies ($r = 0.409$, 17% variance). Similarly, auditory learners exhibited moderate correlations, particularly with cognitive strategies ($r = 0.449$, 20% variance) and compensation strategies ($r = 0.423$, 18% variance). Furthermore, kinesthetic learners exhibited a robust association with social strategies ($r = 0.494$, 24% variance), while tactile learners also demonstrated a significant link to social strategies ($r = 0.470$, 22% variance). Group learning style exhibited a moderate correlation with social strategies ($r = 0.372$, 14% variance). The findings of this study indicate that learning styles, particularly visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile, are significantly related to various learning strategies. The visual style demonstrates the most pronounced effect on cognitive strategies, while kinesthetic and tactile styles exhibit a stronger association with social strategies.

DISCUSSION

The relationship between learning styles, language learning strategies (LLS), and gender among EFL learners represents a multifaceted and critical area of investigation in language education. Learning styles, defined as inherent preferences for processing and acquiring information, play a significant role in shaping students' engagement with language learning tasks. These preferences are often categorized as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or a combination thereof, influencing how learners absorb and retain knowledge in classroom settings (Reid, 1987).

Language learning strategies, on the other hand, refer to the deliberate actions and techniques employed by learners to enhance their language acquisition process. Oxford (1990) classifies these strategies into direct and indirect categories, encompassing cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Research suggests that the strategies employed by students are often influenced by their dominant learning styles, with visual learners, for instance, favoring mnemonic and visualization techniques, while auditory learners rely more on verbal repetition and listening exercises (Carson & Longhini, 2002).

Gender has also been identified as a potential variable impacting both learning styles and strategy use. Studies have demonstrated that male and female learners may exhibit differences in their approach to language learning, often shaped by sociocultural expectations and cognitive tendencies. Females, for instance, are frequently associated with stronger reliance on social and affective strategies, such as seeking feedback and fostering collaboration, whereas males might lean toward analytical and autonomous strategies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995).

This interplay of learning styles, strategies, and gender dynamics among EFL learners highlights the need for educators to adopt a differentiated and inclusive approach in language instruction. By tailoring teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning preferences and fostering an environment that supports both genders equitably, instructors can enhance

students' linguistic proficiency and learning outcomes. This research underscores the importance of integrating these variables into pedagogical practices to foster effective, personalized, and equitable language learning experiences

This study found important connections between how students learn and the ways they learn. Different ideas about education can explain these connections. For example, there is a strong connection between visual learners and cognitive strategies ($r = 0.595$). This matches the ARK model, which says that visual learners like to use strategies that involve seeing and processing information with things like diagrams and charts. This suggests that visual learners can improve their learning by using cognitive strategies to manipulate and process information actively. The connection between auditory learners and both cognitive and compensation strategies is moderate ($r = 0.449$, $r = 0.423$). The connection between kinesthetic and social strategies ($r = 0.494$), and tactile learners' use of social strategies ($r = 0.470$)

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings above, students must be aware of their learning styles. Having a relevant learning style can help them learn better. It is similar to the learning strategies. Those students who are self-conscious about their learning style and learning strategy are effective in learning. The findings promote the reader to aware the learning style and learning startey. It will help them to use the proper strategy in class. In addition, the teacher, as the facilitator, should help the students discover their learning style and encourage them to explore more by using learning style instruments to help their students identify their own learning style. As the educator, an assessment will be beneficial for students to know the strengths and weaknesses in language learning activities.

These findings can also provide insight for teachers to collaborate on learning strategies based on learning style. It is helpful for teachers to deal with learners in the classroom based on their own style so that the learning process can be more efficient in the classroom.

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