Efl Students' Learning Styles Preference And Problems Encountered In Critical Reading Course

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ABSTRAK

Beberapa teori dalam dunia pendidikan menyebutkan bahwa gaya belajar siswa harus diketahui baik oleh guru maupun siswa karena gaya belajar memegang peranan penting dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi gaya belajar yang disukai dan permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh siswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang mengikuti Kursus Membaca Kritis. Penelitian ini berbentuk studi kasus deskriptif dengan subjek penelitian adalah siswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket, observasi, dan wawancara. Metode analisis data yang digunakan adalah analisis deskriptif. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gaya belajar yang paling disukai oleh siswa adalah gaya belajar visual, diikuti oleh gaya belajar kinestetik dan auditori. Beberapa siswa juga lebih menyukai gaya belajar multimodal, seperti visual-kinestetik dan visual-auditori. Siswa dengan gaya belajar visual-kinestetik cenderung melakukan intertekstualitas teks untuk memahami makna dalam teks bacaan kritis. Hambatan utama yang dihadapi siswa dalam membaca adalah kurangnya fokus. Topik yang dianggap menantang oleh siswa meliputi gagasan utama yang tersirat, rincian pendukung, argumen, dan kekeliruan logika. Penelitian ini memberikan informasi berharga tentang gaya belajar siswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris berdasarkan dimensi persepsi sensorik. Penelitian ini menyarankan agar guru menciptakan lingkungan kelas yang inklusif dengan menerapkan berbagai strategi pengajaran, media, dan kegiatan untuk mengakomodasi beragam gaya belajar siswa. Selain itu, siswa diharapkan menyadari gaya belajar masing-masing untuk memperoleh materi secara efisien dan menyenangkan.

ABSTRACT

Several theories in the world of education state that student learning styles must be known by both teachers and students because learning styles play an important role in the learning process. This study aims to identify the preferred learning styles and problems faced by English Language Education students who take the Critical Reading Course. This research is in the form of a descriptive case study with the subject of the study being English Language Education students. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The data analysis method used is descriptive analysis. The findings of the study show that the most preferred learning style by students is the visual learning style, followed by kinesthetic and auditory learning styles. Some students also prefer multimodal learning styles, such as visual-kinesthetic and visual-auditory. Students with visual-kinesthetic learning styles tend to intertextualize texts to understand the meaning in critical reading texts. The main obstacle students face in reading is lack of focus. Topics that students consider challenging include the main idea implied, supporting details, arguments, and logical fallacies. This study provides valuable information about the learning style of English Language Education students based on the sensory perception dimension. This research suggests that teachers create an inclusive classroom environment by implementing various teaching strategies, media, and activities to accommodate different learning styles of students. In addition, students are expected to be aware of their respective learning styles to acquire material efficiently and enjoyably.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Both teachers and students play a prominent role in the education quality of Indonesia. Teachers need to provide a good learning environment for the students and adjust the teaching methods according to student preferences in order to get better graduates and students can enjoy the language learning process (Fahim et al., 2021; Rafiq et al., 2023). Similarly, students need to be aware of their best way to learn which is called learning styles. Learning styles is the habit of different individuals in obtaining and processing information in learning (Arni et al., 2024; Khoirunnisa & Iba, 2022). Many studies have shown that learning styles contribute significantly to students' academic success, students' satisfaction and student's process of learning (Ariani et al., 2021; Awla, 2014; Chetty et al., 2019; Ha, 2021; Sartika et al., 2023). Selecting appropriate learning materials suitable to the student's learning style can contribute to students' engagement. Some students learn best when they are provided with lots of visual exposure, like: pictures, charts, diagrams, etc. Some students learn best when they listen to any lectures and discussions, while some other students will be motivated when the learning process involves any physical activities or applied to real object and some students with visual-auditory learn best when the teacher use audio-visual presentations (Malacapay, 2019; Rahmatika & Fajriawan, 2023; Wahab & Nuraeni, 2020). These learning styles are based on the sensory perception which is known as the VAK (Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetics) developed by Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (Dunn et al., 1981). Every student surely has at least one learning style that works best for them, but some students may have multimodal learning styles (Setiowati, 2019; Zulianti & Asari, 2022). When they are aware of their own learning styles, they will learn in an enjoyable way and the process of understanding the materials is even faster and more effective.

Unfortunately, the students' learning styles are often neglected by both teachers and students. The environmental factors on style preferences are rarely considered by teachers even the way the teachers taught did not match with students' unique learning styles (El-Bishouty et al., 2019; Troussas et al., 2021). The ignorance of the learning styles also comes from the students' side which leads to their low score in language learning and their low motivation in the classroom.Furthermore, reading is an essential skill for pupils to acquire information (Pratiwi, 2020). The importance of reading literacy is demonstrated by the inclusion of reading as a subject in schools and university curricula, but unluckily the reading comprehension of Indonesian students is relatively weak (Prasetia & Adlan, 2022; Supriyadi et al., 2022). It is seen from the PISA results in 2022 that Indonesian students' performance in reading is 359 and rated in 71st place, which is far below the OECD average. Reading is a complex process that involves several steps, such as: making predictions of the text, summarizing main ideas, questioning predictions, and clarifying unclear concepts. In order to be able to read properly, the students need to understand not only about the vocabulary, grammar and meaning of the text, but also, they need to have motivation and willingness to read. Students with reading difficulties have been observed to have short-term memory problems, inability to concentrate their attention, emotional weakness, reading without thinking, a lack of eye-motor coordination.

Novelty in this study lies in the identification and exploration of students' learning style preferences in English classes, as well as the analysis of problems faced in teaching reading. Apart from the issues stated above, the researcher also found similar cases in the English Language Department where most of the learners did not recognize their own learning style. The learners also admitted that reading is a difficult subject especially if they deal with unfamiliar vocabularies, they will feel unmotivated to read further. Their motivation and understanding to study are very much influenced by the way the teacher teaches. The importance of learning style and the complexity in reading inspire the researcher to have an exploration in the students' learning style preference and problems encountered in reading class. The findings are essential for having initial identification about learning style and problem in reading class. The study has practical contribution as well as pedagogical implication in English Language Teaching, particularly in teaching reading.

2. METHOD

This research was designed in the form of a descriptive case study research. A case study is a form of qualitative research that involves careful observation of a social unit. The aim of a descriptive case study is to exactly describe a phenomenon as what it is. The subjects of this research were 44 English Language Education students. The object of this research was the learning styles and reading problem of the second semester students in the critical reading course. The data collection method is by using questionnaires, observation and interviews. Data were obtained by considering the researcher himself as the main instrument and assisted by several devices, such as: interview guide and audio video recorder to

collect data. Initially, researchers collected data by distributing questionnaires to English Language Education students. The data produced from this questionnaire is in the form of respondents' answer sheets regarding their learning styles in the Reading course. The instrument validity grid can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Instrument Validity Grid

No	Aspects	Indicators
1	Visual Learning Style	1. I understand the materials better through picture 2. I observe visual details that might be missed by other people 3. I can better remember things that I see than things that I hear 4. I love to learn by seeing demonstrations 5. I tend to see gesture and lips movement of my teacher when explaining 6. I pay attention to visual aesthetic either in dressing up or presenting 7. I would rather be reading than listening 8. I remember command better when it is written down 9. I write down neatly
2	Auditory Learning Style	1. I can explain my ideas fluently 2. I can remember the explanation or discussion very well 3. I can understand the materials even though it is only explained spontaneously 4. I always participate in a discussion in the class 5. I easily distracted with any noise in class 6. I read a text by reading out loud 7. I don't really like reading because I tend to forget what I just read 8. I would rather present something instead of writing it down 9. I speak with regular rhythm and love to explain something
3	Kinesthetic Learning Style	1. I love to learn through action, i.e. games 2. It is hard for me to just sit down on my desk 3. I tend to tap the pen/pencil when learning 4. I learn best when I am involved in the learning process 5. I love a class with physical activity 6. I touch everything that I found during learning 7. It is hard for me to learn about something 8. abstract 9. I always touch people when I am talking to them 10. I read by pointing to the text

As illustrated in Table 1. there are nine indicators for each learning style that have been validated by two experts. These indicators are formulated from the theory of VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) learning style as proposed by Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn. After distributing the questionnaire, the researcher conducted classroom observations to confirm the data obtained from the questionnaire. Observation data are in the form of: images, videos and field notes that were analyzed by describing findings related to learning styles. Then the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to confirm the data obtained through questionnaires and observations. The data generated from interview activities is in the form of interview transcripts containing answers regarding student learning styles and problems in the reading class.The research data was analyzed using data analysis which included data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion. To avoid bias in research results, methodological triangulation was used which included: questionnaires, observations and interviews to check the validity and reliability of the data.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The learning style instrument in this study uses questionnaires, observations and interviews. The questionnaire itself uses a Likert scale where there were five answer's choices, namely: strongly agree, agree, doubtful, disagree, and strongly disagree with a score interval of 1-5 with 27 positive statement items. The score for the positive statements is as follows: strongly agree: 5; agree: 4; doubtful:3; disagree:2 and strongly disagree:1. Based on students' answers when filling out the questionnaire, the learning styles can be classified. The learning styles of the students are determined from each student's

highest score on each sub-variable. For example, student A is classified as getting a result of 39 on visual, 37 on auditory and 30 on kinesthetics; then it can be classified that the student is a visual learner. There are 21 students who are classified as using a visual learning style, 6 students belong to auditory learning style, 14 students belong to kinesthetics learning style, 1 student belongs to a visual and auditory learning style, and 2 students belong to visual and kinesthetics learning styles. The data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the Students Learning Styles

Learning Styles	Number of Students
Visual	21
Kinesthetic	14
Auditory	6
Visual & Kinesthetic	2
Visual & Auditory	1
Total	**44**

Table 2 revealed that the majority of EFL students in the Reading Course are visual learners. The second most common learning mode is kinesthetic, followed by auditory, visual-kinesthetic, and visual-auditory. Data on the percentage of student learning styles will be presented in Figure 1.
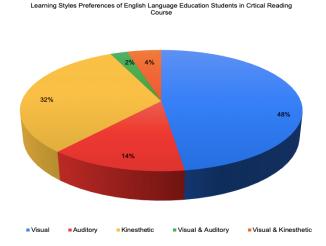

Figure 1. Learning Style Preferences of English Language Education Students

Figure 1 showed that 48% of the students tend to have a visual learning style, 32% of students tend to have a kinesthetics learning style, 14% of students tend to have an auditory learning style, 4% of students tend to have a visual & kinesthetics learning style and 2% tend to have a visual and auditory learning styles. Through interviews, it was found that most students have a visual learning style. The findings regarding the characteristics of visual learners are: students learn to understand material more easily when facilitated with pictures, diagrams and illustrations. They also admitted that in order to remember the material they had learned, they usually imagined situations that occurred in class. Apart from the visual learning style, kinesthetics learning style was also found at 32%. Through interviews with students who have a kinesthetics learning style, they admitted that they can learn better if they are involved in hands-on activities. Kinesthetics learners don't like to just sit still and observe for a long time.

Another learning style of English language education students found at 14% was auditory learning style. Based on the results of interviews with students who have an auditory learning style, they admitted that they could remember information longer if they listened carefully to the teacher's explanation, in fact they would not miss a single word because it would make them unfocused and end up not understanding the material being studied. Students who have an auditory learning style also get benefit from class discussions and small group discussions and they also usually read aloud any text to better understand the content of the text. Furthermore, it was also found that English Language Education students have multimodal learning styles, a combination of Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic learning styles. As many as 4% of students have visual-kinesthetics learning styles, where these students will be happier if they learn directly by involving the sense of sight and are directly involved in carrying out

exercises related to the reading material provided. Through the results of interviews, these students also carry out intertextuality when understanding a reading text. Intertextuality aims to explore ideas related to reading text more deeply by reading other texts that have similar topics so that students can have a deeper understanding and clarify unclear ideas. The last learning style found at 2% was the multimodal visual and auditory learning style. Students with visual and auditory learning styles tend to learn better by combining visual viewing of the material and hearing explanations of the material. Students who have a visual and auditory learning style usually find it easier to understand the material through videos.

To confirm the findings using questionnaires and interviews, researchers also conducted classroom observations. It was found that every student has his/her own way of learning. Some of them took notes very neatly on their notebook to be read later at home, some of them only focus on listening to the discussions and some of them try to read other sources related to the material explained. It was also found that the teacher used the debate method to teach the topic of 'Text Evaluation'. Students were asked to read a written text first, then understand the contents of the text, then students were asked to assess or evaluate the text and convey their ideas in the form of a debate. In order to be able to assess a text, students must understand the contents of the text first. Regarding the reading problem, the students admitted that sometimes it is hard for them to focus in the classroom. In terms of the materials, the students find that the following topics are challenging, such as: finding out implied main ideas, separating major and minor supporting details, analyzing deductive/inductive argument, and identifying logical fallacies. The students reflected that the reading technique that they find helpful is Context Clues. It has helped them to understand the unfamiliar vocabulary in a text without looking them up in the dictionary.

Discussion

This research is aimed at finding out the learning style and problem of the English Language Education students in the Reading Course. The results indicate that there are five learning styles preferences, namely: 48% students with visual learning styles, 32% students with kinesthetics learning styles, 14% students with auditory learning styles, 4% students with visual-kinesthetics learning styles and 2% students with visual-auditory learning styles. The way the students absorb learning material is different from one another (Putri et al., 2018; Toofaninejad & Alahkarami, 2017). Through interviews, it was found that most students have a visual learning style. The findings regarding the characteristics of visual learners are: students learn to understand material more easily when facilitated with pictures, diagrams and illustrations (Glaser & Schwan, 2015; Tippett, 2016). They also admitted that in order to remember the material they had learned, they usually imagined situations that occurred in class. Since visual learners learn best with visual aids, it is suggested that teachers can effectively promote students' learning by providing clear, visual explanations and activities that can be understood both verbally and visually (Khoirunnisa & Iba, 2022; Solihatin & Syahrial, 2019). To improve reading comprehension, the use of anchor charts, illustrations, diagrams, and reference materials into teaching methods and activities (Gallardo et al., 2023; Wakweya & Tegegne, 2022).

The result of the interview is also relevant with the result of the questionnaire where most English Language Education students have a tendency to choose visual learning styles. These findings fit with the existing theory where visual learners tend to be benefited with visualization of the materials, like: pictures, diagrams and illustrations. These findings also provide a new insight where visual learners also tend to imagine or visualize the situation in the classroom when they want to recall the materials at home. This helps them to memorize the materials better. Apart from the visual learning style, kinesthetics learning style was also found at 32%. Through interviews with students who have a kinesthetics learning style, they admitted that they can learn better if they are involved in hands-on activities. Kinesthetics learners don't like to just sit still and observe for a long time. These findings also fit with the existing theory, where kinesthetic learners tend to be active in the classroom by moving the body and doing activities, rather than listening to the teacher's explanation for a long time (Glaser & Schwan, 2015; Tippett, 2016). Since kinesthetic learners learn effectively by doing hands-on activities, it is suggested that the teacher involves several activities, like: role plays, drama, creative games and handling objects that are learnt (Kayalar & Kayalar, 2017; Tran & Ngo, 2024). In addition, 14% of English language education students have an auditory learning style. Based on the results of interviews with students who have an auditory learning style, they admitted that they could remember information longer if they listened carefully to the teacher's explanation, in fact they would not miss a single word because it would make them unfocused and end up not understanding the material being studied. Students who have an auditory learning style also get benefit from class discussions and small group discussions and they also usually read aloud any text to better understand the content of the text (Glaser & Schwan, 2015; Tippett, 2016). These findings provide a new insight where auditory learners who learn best through listening to teacher's explanations will not miss any single words from the explanation or from the class discussion,

otherwise they will end up not understanding the topic. Students with an auditory learning style also usually read text by reading aloud. Since auditory learners learn best through listening, it is suggested that teacher involves several activities, like: discussions, debate, podcasts, dictations, jigsaw reading, reading aloud, storytelling, chain games and lectures (Kayalar & Kayalar, 2017; Tran & Ngo, 2024). Aside from that, it was also found that English Language Education students have multimodal learning styles, a combination of Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic learning styles. As many as 4% of students have a visual and kinesthetics learning styles, where these students will be happier if they learn directly by involving the sense of sight and are directly involved in carrying out exercises related to the reading material provided. Visual and kinesthetic learners will be happier to read or see details visually and kinesthetics learners will be happier to directly do exercises related to the reading material (Glaser & Schwan, 2015; Tippett, 2016).

Through the results of interviews, these students also carry out intertextuality when understanding a reading text. Intertextuality aims to explore ideas related to reading text more deeply by reading other texts that have similar topics so that students can have a deeper understanding and clarify unclear ideas. Reading is a complex process that involves several steps, such as: making predictions of the text, summarizing main ideas, questioning predictions, and clarifying unclear concepts (Kendeou et al., 2016; Kočiský et al., 2018). Intertextuality analysis examines the relation of each text to the text surrounding. The purpose of intertextuality is to compare a certain aspect of the text with the text that has appeared before (Al-Zarikat & Damour, 2020; Bagheri, 2015). These findings also provide a new insight where students who have visual-kinesthetic learning style tend to involve themselves in an active process where they try to understand a text. They are not satisfied just by reading one text, they will try to look up another text that has a relationship so they can confirm the unclear ideas by doing intertextuality. The last learning style found at 2% was the multimodal visual and auditory learning style. Students with visual and auditory learning styles tend to learn better by combining visual viewing of the material and hearing explanations of the material. Students who have a visual and auditory learning style usually find it easier to understand the material through videos. Visual learners will be more benefited in understanding the material by looking at pictures, graphs and illustrations while auditory learners will be more benefited by listening to verbal explanations of the material (Glaser & Schwan, 2015; Tippett, 2016). To confirm the findings using questionnaires and interviews, researchers also conducted classroom observations. During class observations, it was found that the teacher used the debate method to teach the topic of 'Text Evaluation'. Students are asked to read a written text first, then understand the contents of the text, then students are asked to assess or evaluate the text and convey their ideas in the form of a debate. In order to be able to assess a text, students must understand the contents of the text first. Reading critically means analyzing and evaluating what we read; working out what is good and what is not, and why (Alexander, 2015; Wilson, 2014).

As stated on the findings that students sometimes lose their focus in the classroom. This can be prevented by designing interesting activities in the classroom by considering various learning styles of the students. In addition, losing focus in the classroom can hinder students from fluent reading skills. This research contributed to English Language Education's students and teachers in reading courses. The teachers can plan the lesson accordingly by involving various teaching media, teaching strategies and teaching activities to students so all students with various learning styles can be benefited and facilitated. It is also expected that the teachers can implement it in the classroom. For students, by knowing their own learning styles, they will know the best and the easiest way to acquire the knowledge without feeling stressed. However, this research also has limitations, this learning style research is based on sensory perception dimensions, other learning style dimensions can also be considered in researching learning styles. This research also involved limited research subjects. It is recommended for future researchers to involve a wider research subject.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this research, it was found that there are five learning styles preferences of the English Language Education students in the Reading Course from the most dominant to the least dominant respectively, namely: visual learning style, kinesthetic learning style, auditory learning style, visual-auditory learning style and visual-kinesthetic learning style. The visual-kinesthetics students tend to do text intertextuality when it comes to understanding a critical reading text. Students encountered obstacles in reading class, where they felt difficult to focus and issues relating to the topic itself, i.e. implied main idea, major and minor supporting details, argument and logical fallacies. However, the students felt that their reading skill also improved at some point, i.e. context clues. Although the current study gives valuable information about learning styles in English Language Education Study Program

students based on sensory perception dimensions, other learning style dimensions can also be included when researching learning styles. Understanding learning styles is expected to enable students to identify learning strategies to improve their ability to read English. It is hoped that teachers would understand more about their students' learning styles so that they can create varied strategies, instructional material, and teaching activities to accommodate students with different learning styles in the classroom, making them feel comfortable and motivated to study.

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