



EXPLORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING STYLE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM

Melani Dwi Ariastuti¹, Achmad Yudi Wahyudin²

Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia^{1,2}

melani@teknokrat.ac.id, achmad.yudi@teknokrat.ac.id

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Abstract

Exploring students' learning style has drawn attention of practitioners and teachers. Previous reported studies have noted that learning styles have been one of successful factor in promoting learning and achievement for students. This study aimed to explore the students' academic performance and its relation to different learning style preference at undergraduate level. Survey has been conducted to capture the students' learning style preferences (visual, auditori, and kinaesthetic) and their learning achievement (GPA and EPT Score). A small group of respondents consisting of 39 students majoring in English Education participated in this study. The result shows that 49% of students preferred visual learning style, 31% of students preferred in Kinesthetic learning style and 20% of students preferred Auditory learning style. The Correlation was 0,697, and the t-table was less than the T-test. So, it is entirely feasible to determine that learning style has a statistically significant effect on students' performance.

Keywords: Learning Style Preferences, EFL, Students, English

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INTRODUCTION

Successful teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) is determined by many factors. Among factors that have largely contributed to the success of the attainment of foreign language mastery students' learning style preference was considered important. (Brown, 2006). The students' learning style preferences can be the insight for the teachers in managing the classroom practice. The students with certain learning styles might prefer different way of learning. Acknowledging these preferences can be very useful for teachers in the occasion when they prepare a lesson, manage the classroom task, and conduct the assessment to achieve the learning goals. On the same line, Csapo and Hayen (2006) also stated that to achieve the learning goals, teachers must be aware of the students' learning style to conduct an effective teaching and learning.

Learning style in this study refers to the students' natural way of knowledge acquisition. Learning style is also associated with the individual's cognitive and psychological capacity to respond the interaction and learning environment. A student may have a different characteristic of how they prefer to get, process, and grant information. According to Arin (2013), Easiness in processing new information is either easy or difficult. The learning style can influence the first step that students use. In addition, Haar (2002) stated that processing, submission, and perceptions in getting information individually differ depending on their learning style tendency, which they often use in the learning process. In short, from the explanation above, learning style is how students learn to get information in the learning process attractively and efficiently.

Some students may have dominant learning styles that they use in various situations. Students have their ways of learning. Some students are visual learners, while others are auditory or kinesthetic learners. Visual learners learn visually using charts, graphs, and pictures. Auditory learners learn by listening to lectures and reading (Haggart, 2011). Kinesthetic learners learn by doing physical activity. Students can prefer one, two, or three learning styles (Gilakjani, 2012).

Because learning style becomes the most necessary component that influences students' success and plays an essential role in gaining knowledge, teachers should have much more concerned about classifying the students learning styles (Khaki et al., 2015). Teachers need to incorporate their curriculum activities related to each learning

style to succeed in their classes. To retrieve information and select the best learning, it is necessary to teach as many preferences as possible.

Language proficiency (EPT) is the language ability in language use. Wong (2010) defines language proficiency as learners' communication of information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of social studies. Proficiency refers to the degree of skill a person can use in a language. Proficiency may be measured through a proficiency test organized into listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. Proficiency goals include general competence, mastery of the four skills, or mastery of specific language behaviors. The four basic skills are related by two parameters: the mode of communication: oral or written and the direction of communication: receiving or producing the message.

A Grade Point Average (GPA) is the average of all final grades for courses within a program, weighted by the unit value of each of those courses. As the Grade Point Average (GPA) has been used as a unit of measure to assess the academic performance of the students it is important to identify and understand the factors that influence the Grade Point Average of students. The GPA is calculated by taking the number of grade points a student earned in a given period of time. GPA are also calculated for undergraduate and postgraduate students in most universities. The GPA can be used by potential employers or educational institutions to assess and compare applicants.

Marzulina (2019) stated that "the student's ability in any skill is determined by their learning style". The finding was a significant correlation (18%) between visual learning style students on their English proficiency. It could be confirmed that learning style positively influenced learning instruction. On the other hand, Yufriзал (2011) stated that no significant difference in their English proficiency whatever students' learning styles.

However, statistical analysis proves that there was no significant influence of learning styles on students' scores on EPT. However, there is a proper place for learning styles in the second and foreign languages. For example, it could help teachers prepare to learn top topics suited to students' learning style preferences. It could guide teachers in deciding what kind of teaching approach they must use to teach students whose different learning styles.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of learning style on student performance: how learning style influences academic performance (GPA) and students' EPT. The research was conducted on an English Education major in one of a university in Lampung.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design. Agarwal (2008) defined "descriptive research as gathering information about prevailing conditions or situations for description and interpretation". The research was conducted in March 2021 involving 39 students of English Education major in one of a university in Lampung.

The researcher adopted O'Brien's (1985) questionnaire, consisting of a 15-item survey questionnaire. The researcher used a closed-questionnaire with a rating scale in this study. The Likert scale is used to assess how subjects agree with each item. The degree of agreement was graded on a five-point scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp to the participants to collect the information related to the use of Visual, Auditory, or Kinesthetic learning styles. Additionally, the participants are required to fill out the biodata and attach the proof score of their EPT before responding to the questionnaire. SPSS 18 was used to calculate the correlation between Learning Style Preferences and Students' Achievement to analyze the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to reveal students' tertiary learning styles. The following data and table show the final result. The characteristics of respondents based on their gender are included in this report (See Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristic of respondents based on gender

Gender	N	%
Male	12	30,8%
Female	27	69,2%
Total	39	100%

Tabel 1.2 The Reliability of Instrument.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,697	15

The reliability of the questionnaire is indicated by the value of Cronbach’s Alpha 0,697, which means highly reliable, as shown in table 1.2. This report includes assessing the students' achievement and proficiency in this report. Students’ scores were measured using the Grade Point Accumulative (GPA), and language skills were measured using the English Proficiency Test (EPT) score.

Tabel 1.3 The Result of Students’ GPA and EPT

Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
GPA	39	1.94	2.00	3.94	3.42	.076	.48036	.231
EPT	39	240.00	313.00	553.00	445.61	9.05	56.52	3195.29
Valid N (listwise)	39							

Table 1.3 points out that the result of students’ achievement indicated by GPA has a minimum score of 2,00, and the maximum score is 3,94 with a mean score of 3,42. Meanwhile, the minimum grade is 313, while the maximum is 553.

Tabel 1.4 Percentage of Learning Style Preferences

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Visual	19	49%
Auditory	8	20%
Kinesthetic	12	31%
Total	39	100%

Table 1.4 shows the Percentage of Learning Style Preferences (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). The students (visual learning style) had the highest percentage with 49%. And then followed with the students at (kinesthetic learning style) with the percentage 31%. Afterward, it followed with the lower percentage (auditory learning style) with 20%. It demonstrates that students prefer visual learning style preferences to kinesthetic or auditory.

Tabel 1.5 Reports of visual learning style used by students

No.	Statement	N		
			Mean	SD
Q1	I remember something better if I write down	39	3,94	0,72

Q2	When trying to remember someone's telephone number or something new like that, it helps me to get a picture of it in my mind	39	3,5	0,71
Q3	Using flashcards helps me to retain material for tests.	39	3,58	0,54
Q4	It's hard for me to understand a joke when someone tells me	39	2,7	0,88
Q5	I should get work done in a quiet place	39	4,3	0,73
Mean			3,58	0,54

The report on students' visual learning styles is shown in the table above; from this data, we can see that the highest score for the respondents is in Q5, with a mean score of 4,3. According to the data, students prefer to complete work in a quiet place. Next, Q1 was also the most common among students with a score of 3,94. It demonstrates that the students agree to use pictures, graphics, colors, and maps to express ideas and thoughts would aid them in improving their academic performance. In contrast, the lowest was for Q4, "It's hard for me to understand a joke when someone tells me". This is the lowest. This shows that students do not like it to improve academic performance. The mean visual learning style report was 3,58. It shows that students like visual learning to maximize academic performance.

Tabel 1.6 Reports of **auditory learning style** used by students

No.	Statement	N		
			Mean	SD
Q6	I understand how to do something if someone tells me, rather than having to read the same thing to myself	39	3,55	0,94
Q7	I remember things that I hear rather than things that I see or read	39	3,30	1,00
Q8	It helps to use my finger as a pointer when reading to keep my place	39	3,48	0,91
Q9	It's hard for me to read other people's handwriting	39	2,92	0,83
Q10	If I had the choice to learn new information through a lecture or textbook, I would choose to hear it rather than read it	39	3,61	0,78
Mean			3,48	0,91

If the first table shows students' visual learning styles, the table above indicates students' auditory learning styles. The researcher provides students with five statements for this auditory learning style. The data shows that students have the highest score, with 3,61 in the Q6 statement. "I understand how to do something if someone tells me, rather than reading the same thing to myself". It means that the students agree that a person learns best by listening to music, video clips, and conversations are their ideal way of learning. While the lowest score of the students is 2,92, in Q9 with the statement, "It's hard for me to read other people's handwriting", which means that male students rarely like auditory learning style.

Tabel 1.7 Reports of **Kinesthetic learning style** used by students

No.	Statement	N		
			Mean	SD
Q11	I learn best when I am shown how to do something, and I have the opportunity to do it	39	3,89	0,78
Q12	I find myself needing frequent breaks while studying.	39	3,58	0,81
Q13	I am not skilled in giving verbal explanations or directions	39	3,23	0,90
Q14	I think better when I have the freedom to move around	39	3,79	0,73
Q15	I don't like to read directions; I'd instead start doing	39	3,17	0,88

Mean	3,23	0,90
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The result from 39 respondents' answers for kinesthetic learning style in Q15 is 3,17, which means the respondent is rarely skilled read directions and prefers to start doing the activities. It demonstrates that respondents like to use this learning style in which learning takes place by the students carrying out physical activities, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations.

Table 1.8 The Result of Correlations Analysis between GPA and Students' Learning Style

		GPA	LEARNING STYLE
GPA	Pearson Correlation	1	.248
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.128
	N	39	39
LEARNING STYLE	Pearson Correlation	.248	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.128	
	N	39	39

Based on table 1.8, we can see that the value of Pearson Correlation is .248. It indicates that the GPA has a positive correlation with Learning Style. It means that the higher the student's GPA, the higher the need for using a learning style to improve academic performance.

Table 1.9 The Result of Correlations Analysis between EPT and Students' Learning Style

		EPT	LEARNING STYLE
EPT	Pearson Correlation	1	.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.867
	N	39	39
LEARNING STYLE	Pearson Correlation	.028	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.867	
	N	39	39

Based on table 1.9, we can see that the value of Pearson Correlation is .028. It indicates that the EPT has a positive correlation with Learning Style. It means that the higher the students' EPT Score, the higher the need for using a learning style to improve students' academic performance.

Students' Performance with Different Learning Style Preferences

Categories	GPA	EPT
Visual	3,36	446
Auditory	3,42	430
Kinesthetic	3,44	456

Based on the table above, we can see that the highest mean score of Learning Style Preferences that can improve Students' Performance was Kinesthetic with a GPA of 3,44 and EPT 456. And then Auditory with GPA 3,42 and EPT 430. And the last is Visual with a GPA of 3,36 and EPT 446. It demonstrates that the Kinesthetic Learning Style is more effective in improving students' performance than visual or auditory.

Learning style refers to students' propensity to adapt such techniques in their learning as a level of obligation to develop a learning strategy and understanding consistent with the demands of learning in class/school and the subjects' needs. This paper tries to determine the type of learning style that students use to improve students academic performance through the questionnaire.

Many sections of the data listed in the previous section need to be addressed. First, it is assumed that most of the students responded that they are visual learners / and that they emphasized the sharpness of their eyes/eyesight. They enjoy learning to communicate ideas and feelings using images, graphics, colors, and charts.

The following most students are also considered to be kinesthetic learners. They like to learn by doing and practicing actions in authentic contexts. From this, it can also interpret that most students prefer to do something meaningful in their real life. In contrast, few students like to learn from written and printed expressions. It means that reading is probably too boring for most students.

Another learning style used to improve academic performance is the auditory learning style. Auditory learning styles can process information through the ear/hearing. Students with an auditory learning style can learn more quickly by engaging in verbal conversation and listening to what the instructor says. Auditorial students have strong musical sensitivity and excel in oral activities; they talk in a rhythm and typically speak fluently, and describe things in depth. The noise quickly distracts students with this learning style, struggling with visual activities.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings and discussion above, the writer concludes that there is an impact on the use of different learning styles on student academic performance. The writers found that 39 respondents' responses were 49% visual, 20% auditory, and 31% kinesthetic. It could mean that learning styles enhancing students' academic performance are visual learning styles. On the other hand, the Kinesthetic Learning Style is more effective in improving students' performance than visual or auditory. It indicates that students prefer visual learning to other types of knowledge but the most that can be improved is Kinesthetic. It demonstrates that learners use specific learning styles in their studies.

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