ANALYSING LEARNING STYLES USED BY THE SEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT MTsN 2 BULUKUMBA

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the students' learning style in learning English. The purposes of this research are to find out the students' learning style preferences in learning English. The researcher uses qualitative method. The population of this research is the seventh-grade students at MTsN 2 Bulukumba. The sample of this research are 50 students from two classes. The researcher uses questionnaire and interview to collect the data and Microsoft excel to analyze the data. The findings shows that students preferred authority-oriented style the most and analytical style as the least preferred when they were studying English. Students approach in learning English most likely affected by teacher's influence. Moreover, students did not have a strong preference towards individual learning in studying English. In conclusion, among the four learning styles analyzed, the one student preferred the most was the authority-oriented learning style. That suggest students preferred teacher to give them lots of examples, show them how to do thing or demonstrate ways of thinking, and apply language concepts in different situations directly.

Keywords: learning styles, EFL learners, learning preferences, English language learning.

1) INTRODUCTION

Due to the fact that English has become an international language and the most widely spoken in the world, the government accordingly requires citizens to learn it in all secondary schools. Therefore, English should be taught to students at any level of education in this country. It is stated in "*The Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia no. 35 in 2018 about amandement to the Regulation of MINISTER OF National Education and Culture no. 58 in 2014 about 2013 curriculum junior high school/Madrasah Tsanawiyah.*" As a compulsory subject, the students are required to understand at least the basics of English.

Learning English for non-native speakers is not easy. Differences in grammar and the necessity to memorize new vocabulary usually become common barriers in learning. Some students may acquire a new language more quickly and effectively, while others make slow

progress and struggle due to individual differences in learning English (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2008). There are increasing studies about applying learning styles that show positive results in elementary, secondary, and higher education. Some research shows that recognising students' styles and giving guidance that match that style provides more effective learning (Claxon & Murrell, 1987, p. iii). Willing (1988, p. 2) stated that research explains an effort to provide learning styles by selecting suitable teaching styles.

The teaching of English most likely focuses on understanding vocabulary, patterns and formulas. This approach makes learners feel less motivated since there are many patterns and vocabulary they have to memorize. The seventh-grade students of MTsN 2 Bulukumba already consider English as a confusing subject; consequently, their class participation is relatively low. It makes teacher, rather than help students achieve standards that have been set in the syllabus, lower the level of the difficulty of their subject to reach the average score of their competency standards. Hence, some students fail to master English thoroughly because, in their understanding, English only focuses on memorizing grammar. To overcome this problem, learners tend to have their learning styles to understand English comprehensively. Identifying students learning styles can help the teachers to design tasks that can facilitate students' learning process. Some students want more chances in free conversation, expressing their opinions towards a more communicatively oriented approach. On the other hand, some would prefer more emphasis on listening to teachers' speech or grammar teaching.

Furthermore, according to Hilliard (2001, in M.W et al., 2019, p. 3), learning styles are distinctive ways an individual gains, understands and treats information. Learning styles is the term used to explain the attitudes and behaviors, which define an individual's preferred way of learning. Oxford (1990) stated that learning style is considered as one of the main factors that will help students in the process of second or foreign language acquisition. Ideal learning styles employed by students will help them regulate their efforts to learn English. Teachers also can improve their performance by paying more attention to students' styles of learning.

From the above cases, it is undeniable that English is a compulsory subject that students need to learn. This research is expected to describe the most preferable learning styles used by the seventh-grade students at MTsN 2 Bulukumba in learning English and to determine the students' reason for applying the most preferable learning styles in learning English. Hence, the researcher feels it is necessary to conduct this research to analyze students' learning styles in learning English.

2) METHODS

Research Subject
This research was qualitative research with descriptive approaach. This research conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 2 Bulukumba. The subjects of this research were 50 (fifty) seventh-grade students of MTsN 2 Bulukumba from two classes (25 students from each class). The researcher intentionally selected people who could support to understand the phenomenon. The respondents were chosen according to their daily average score and middle examination score.

Research Instruments
In collecting data, the researcher used two types of instruments. Questionnaires is a written collection of survey questions to be answered by a selected group of research participants (Gay et al., 2011, p. 186). This research adapted Willing's Learning Styles Inventory (LSI) that translated into *Bahasa Indonesia*. The questionnaire consists of 30 questions related to students' preferred styles in learning English. The type of questionnaire was structured items or close-ended questions that requires the participants to choose among the provided response options. According to Gay (2011, p. 386), an interview is a purposeful communication in which one person gets information from another. This research's type of interview was an unstructured interview,

with open-ended questions. Consider the current situation; the interview was conducted online via voice call.

Research Design

In distributing the questionnaire, the researcher made the questionnaire in digital form that would be easy to access. Distributing the questionnaire with Google Form has become a popular alternative. The researcher created a small group via WhatsApp with all the respondents for follow-up activities, so the percentage of returned questionnaires will be higher. There were three basics choices for researcher to collect the data with the interview; taking notes duting the interview, writing notes after the interview, and audio or videotaping to collect the data.

Data Analysis

The data consist of students' questionnaire and interview transcripts. The analysis procedure includes reading/memoing, describing, and classifying/coding (Gay et al., 2011, p. 468). Questionnaire administration done by setting up data files including coding the data, numbering the questionnaire, and inputting the data. The questionnaire has four categories, with six to nine questions for each category. Each item has a numerical value, as shown in the table 1.

Table 1: The Likert Scale of the Learning Style Questionnaire

I like it very much	I like it	I like it a little	I do not like it
4	3	2	1

For interview data analysis, the first step was reading and writing memos about the transcript to get an overall outline of the data and identify potential data themes. Notes will be written next to transcript. The next is to analyze the data, which require developing thorough and comprehensive descriptions of the participants and the phenomenon studied. The data then categorized, coded and grouped according to Willing's two-dimensional learning styles (classifying) and data coded well organized and integrated. Last, conclusions are drawn regarding the prior literature on learning styles.

3) RESULTS

Students' Most Preferable Learning Style in Learning English

There were 50 respondents for this research. The data was gathered through a questionnaire that has administrated via Google Form with four alternative answers. The researcher examined the data with descriptive analysis by using Microsoft Excel.

Table 2: Seventh-Grade Students' Learning Style Preferences

Learning Styles	Results			Percentage
	Positive	Negative	Total	
Concrete	7	2	9	18%
Analytical	2	2	5	8%
Communicative	11	1	12	24%
Authority-Oriented	188	7	25	50%
Total Respondents		50		100%

The results show the percentage of students' learning style preferences in learning English. On the closer examination, it is necessary that the researcher explain students' learning style preferences in detail through the following discussion successively from the most preferable to the least preferable learning style.

a. Authority-Oriented

Table 3: Typology of Authority-Oriented Learning Style

Authority-Oriented Characteristic	Respond		Percentage
	Positive	Negative	
Memorising word lists by silent repitition	5 (20%)	0	20%
Doing exercise from textbook	4 (16%)	3 (12%)	28%
Teacher correction	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	12%
Pronunciation drill with the teacher	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	24%
Learning the meaning of the words from dictionary	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	16%
Total Respondents	25		100%

Authority-oriented students are responsible and learn best in the conventional classroom. They perceive the teacher as the source o auhtority —students like explicit direction and explain everything for them. There were 25 students (50%) out of 50 respondents detected as authority-oriented learners. The aspects of language that authority-oriented students like the most were reading and listening.

b. Communicative

Table 4: Typology of Communicative Learning Style

Communicative Characteristics	Respond		Percentage
	Positive	Negative	
Speaking English in the class in pairs and group	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	25%
Speaking English to foreigner	3 (25%)	0	25%

Asking and answering question in the class	1 (8%)	0	8%
Guessing the meaning of the words from the context	3 (25%)	0	25%
Putting new words into conversation	2 (17%)	0	17%
Total Respondents	**12**		**100%**

There are 12 students (24%) categorized as communicative learners. Naturally talkative and extroverted students made them like to talk with many people and gather beneficial information. Another respondent shared that playing video games or watching videos on YouTube helped increase students' vocabulary and learning English.

c. Concrete

Table 5: Typology of Concrete Learning Style

Concrete Characteristics	Responds		Percentage
	Positive	**Negative**	
Reading books with picture	2 (22%)		22%
Watching English program in TV	2 (22%)		22%
Seeing the words		1 (11%)	11%
Listening to English on cassette	2 (22%)	1 (11%)	33%
Putting words into sentences	1 (11%)		11%
Total Respondents	**9**		**100%**

The typical of concrete learners are curious, spontaneous, contextualized and risk-taking. Students try to avoid written works. Nevertheless, they enjoy verbal and visual activities like reading books with pictures or watching English programs on YouTube or TV. Respondents identified as concrete learners were 9 students (18%).

d. Analytical

Table 6: Typology of Analytical Learning Style

Analytical Characteristics	Responds		Percentage
	Positive	Negative	
Self-correction		1 (25%)	25%
Studying grammar	1 (25%)		25%
Problem solving	1 (25%)		25%
Learning the function of different expression		1 (25%)	25%
Reading English newspaper	-	-	0%
Total Respondents		**4**	**100%**

Only 4 students (8%) from total respondents were considered analytical learners. In almost every task given, analytical learners will do it carefully. Learning the rules and structure of language draws these students more than other aspects. They avoid speaking class the most and prefer reading.

The Reason Students Apply the Most Preferable Learning Style in Learning English (Factors Influencing Students' Learning Style Preferences)

In discussing about students learning styles, it was necessary to recognise the casual factors influencing students in learning as well. These factors were main cause of students' learning style preferences. In finding out the factors, the respondents were asked to answer several questions related to the questionnaire about learning style preferences. The result exposed that there were 5 main factors found from the interview.

Table 7: Factors Influencing Students' Learning Style Preferences

The Casual Factors	Type of Learning Style Associated	Responds	Total Percentage (%)
Gender	Concrete, Authority-Oriented	11	**22%**
Environment	Communicative	8	**16%**
Intellectual	Analytical	4	**8%**

Personality	Communicative, Authority-Oriented	12	24%
Teacher's Influence	Authority-Oriented	15	30%
Total Respondents		**50**	**100%**

4) DISCUSSION

From the observation exposed that MTsN 2 Bulukumba held a hybrid learning system that allowed students to study both home and at school. The system itself is divided each class into two groups (A and B). When group A studies at school, students from group B will study from home and vice versa. The rotation occurs every week, and the teacher would give guidance and assignments via WhatsApp and Google Classroom. After identify the data, this part will provide the classification, explanation, and conclusion of the data findings.

The findings above showed that from all 50 respondents from two classes of seventh-grade students at MTsN 2 Bulukumba, there were associated with four primary learning styles. Half of the respondents (25 students) were authority-oriented learners then considered the students' preferred learning styles. Besides, analytical (4 students) is considered as the least preferable learning style.

Authority-oriented learners most likely prefer if their teacher is assisting in finding errors in language learning. students who belonged in this group presented an inclination to work in pairs rather than individually. Students like tp work in pairs because they feel comfortable, and the teacher can correct their errors at all once. Students associated with this style also preferred to exercise on the textbook but had low interest in using the conventional dictionary. Instead, students would like to use Google Translate or dictionary app on their phones. Again, however, they tend to rely on teacher to tell them the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Communicative students are usually interactive, self-directed, and socially oriented. They like to practice their English in class with friends or groups. Students like personal interaction, group discussion and appreciate personal feedback. Communicative students are more engaged in social interaction rather than in the analysis of language. The communicative methods are based on the idea that learning a language successfully comes through when students are included in actual communication. Consequently, in the classroom activities guided by communicative methods, teachers tend to design meaningful and communication with students at all levels. In conclusion, the teacher could help students emphasize their skills, and lessons can be more learner-centered.

Students who register as concrete learners learn through games, pictures, and videos and enjoy working in pairs. Studies showed that concrete learners are usually engaged in language use and language as communication rather than language system.

Analytical learners manage to be more reflective, structured, focused, independent and enjoy developing principles. Students who prefer an analytical style in learning English enjoy studying grammar and problem-solving. They are perfectionists and think seriously before speaking. This type of learner avoids working with other people.

However, the researcher always opens up for any possibility that students apply more than one learning style. Students should be given opportunities to try different learning styles in a stress-free environment. Students are not confident with discovering English language patterns as this

is the first time, they learn about them. Students may feel stressed and anxious if the teaching method does not fit their style of learning. On the other hand, the teacher must provide enough support by demonstrating examples and giving students achievable practice in the classroom to help them develop an interest in learning English and be more confident with their type of learning. Furthermore, students should be given enough time to adapt to the new learning atmosphere. Students may be more ready to adapt new style when they are given enough time.

To deeply examine students' learning style preferences, the researcher had interviewed some students that considered would represent the students who apply the most preferable learning style in learning English. The researcher interviewed total 8 respondents, 4 from each class. 8 respondents were chosen according to their total score from the questionnaire that determine students' most preferred learning style.

The type of interview was an unstructured interview with open-ended questions that permitted respondents to answer the questions in free form. The researcher interviewed the respondents via WhatsApp voice call. The researcher recorded the interviews with participants to prevent any errors in transcribing.

Since this was an open interview, the following questions would depend on respondents' answers. Nevertheless, to guide this interview, the researcher has planned six essential questions that all respondents must answer. Here were the questions:
a. Did you aware of your learning style?
b. Why did you prefer the teacher to help you find your mistake instead of discovering it yourself?
c. Do you usually get a book from the library or purchase it on your own?
d. From 1 to 10, what score would you give to describe the teacher's influence in learning English?
e. Are you feel confidence practicing your English outside the classroom?
f. How do you prepare yourself for examination?

After conducting the interview, the researcher then summaries all the answers from respondents. Every respondent would represent each item of the question.

The first question revealed that students never heard about learning style before and did not know it. Most respondents feel comfortable if they study with their teacher rather than study by themselves.

> "I have never heard about it. It is my first time heard about the term. In learning English, it depends on my mood because for me English is a difficult subject. Regularly teacher needs to repeat the material over again so I could understand it. I prefer to study with the teacher. If I study by myself, sometimes I get confused and cannot understand the material completely."
> (R3)

In the following question, students rely on the teacher to help them find their mistakes in learning English rather than find them by themselves. English is not their first language. Therefore, they found it challenging to discover any errors in learning English.

> "It is better if the teacher showed us our mistakes, hence we know which part that had to be improved. I do not understand English at all, that is why I only count on my teacher". (R8)

Students also feel anxious when they have to study alone and manage to have a preference for group learning. Many students showed that learning with others can improve their language proficiency. Furthermore, they felt more confident when doing a task with peers before submitting their work.

> "In the classroom, I like working with my friends. I am not good at English, and I cannot trust my language ability. Therefore, I believe it is better if my friends and I help each other in learning. So, if there is any error, my teacher could correct us at all once." (R2)

> "For instance, if the teacher asked us to translate a sentence to English. Even if I spent time looking up in the dictionary, I still have difficulty guessing the right order of the words. With the teacher guidance, I can make sure I am on the right track. Whenever the teacher gave us assigment in Google Classroom, I cannot understand the theory entirely even if there is any example, especially when I have to study at home. Asking for teacher's guidance is the only option I have to overcome this problem." (R1)

For the third question, respondents exposed that they tend to have their textbook or dictionary than borrow it from the library. Some students are aware of the advantages of having a textbook or dictionary to enhance their ability in English.

> "Apparently, my mother is an English teacher in the middle school. Therefore sometimes, I used her book to study. Honestly, I feel more convenient having my textbook since I can write a note on it. If I borrow a book from the library, obviously I have to take care of it. There is also a due time when we borrow something from the library." (R7)

Respondents have various answers for the fourth question, however most of them gave points 10 out of 10. Based on the interview findings, the teacher helps students adjust to the new circumstances in this pandemic.

> "For me it is 10 out of 10. Teacher helps me a lot in learning English because this subject is really difficult." (R5)

> "It is 8 for me. Of course, teacher's guidance is incredibly helpful, but sometimes I am too shy if teacher asked us to practice our English in front of the classmates." (R4)

Furthermore, for question number five, some respondents revealed that they would likely practice their English proficiency outside the classroom. The others said they were not confident enough to show their ability.

> "If the teacher asked me to practice my English outside the classroom, I would do that only in one condition that only seventh-grade students would watch me. I am kind of shy to do it in front of my seniors at school." (R8)

> "I definitely would not practice my English outside the classroom. I am too afraid to practice my English in front of people expect my classmates." (R6)

Lastly, for the seventh question, respondents expected teachers to help in preparing learning materials for them. Due to limited time of studies, students could only rely on the teacher to highlight the important points before the examination.

"Usually, before the exam, the teacher gives 'chicken essence' handouts because it could be challenging if we have to study all the learning materials that our teacher has given." (R4)

In conclusion, students suggested that the teachers' role is essential and may related to their learning style preferences. students see the teachers as the source of knowledge and rely on them to help students achieve success in learning English.

Findings from this study indicate two things i.e First; students' most preferable learning style in learning English. Second; the reason why students apply the preferable learning style in learning English. This research used qualitative method to determine the results of this study by questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire administrated in September 2021 to the seventh-grade students at MTsN 2 Bulukumba. The total of all respondents were 50 students; 15 male students and 35 female students.

Findings from the questionnaire indicated that students preferred authority-oriented style the most and analytical learning style as the least preferred when they were studying English. As there are limited research studies on learning styles of EFL students using Willing' two dimentional theory, the researcher could only compare the findings with the previous research on Indonesian students in general.

Most of learning style study (Lewis, 1996; Suherman & Centre, 2018) demonstrated that Indonesian EFL students had major preferences for some learning styles, such as communicative and concrete learning. However, in this study, large number of students choose authority-oriented learning style. At school, students learn English using the authorized textbook which is embraces a semi-communicative teaching methodology and emphasizing on spoken proficiency. But the implementation is the most teaching activity still more akin to the traditional Grammar-translation method, with the main focus being reading comprehension and teacher-centered. The methodological orientation at any secondary school depends on various factors, such as the teacher' proficiency, their training background, class sizes and the availability of teaching resources (i.e. textbooks, multimedia lab). Based on the interview, students' approach to learn English in MTsN 2 Bulukumba most likely affected by teacher's influence. In addition, students did not have a strong preference towards individual learning in studying English.

Interestingly, the researcher also analyzed the possible factors that might affect students' learning style preferences. According to the result, students might employ various learning styles depend on the factor that affect them the most.

To sum up, among the four learning styles analyzed, the one students preferred the most was the authority-oriented learning style. That suggests students preferred teacher to give them lots of examples, show them how to do thing or demonstrate ways of thinking, and apply language concepts in different situations directly.

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