

An Analysis Of Learning Style Preferences And Student Participation In General English Courses At The Management Study Program Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu

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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze students' learning style preferences and to describe the level of student participation in the General English course of the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. This research also aimed to identify how students' learning styles were reflected in their classroom participation. This research used a descriptive quantitative method. The population of this research was the first semester 2025/2026 student of the management study program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The sample consisted of 50 students who were selected using total sampling. The data were collected through a questionnaire based on the VARK learning style model and student participation indicators. In addition, interviews were conducted to support and strengthen the data obtained from the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using mean scores, while the interview data were analyzed descriptively. The results showed that students had diverse learning style preferences. The auditory learning style was the most dominant (mean = 3.94), followed by read/write (3.83), kinesthetic (3.77), and visual (3.69). In terms of participation, the results indicated that students' classroom participation was generally at a high level. Students showed the highest participation in practicing English (mean = 4.42) and completing tasks (mean = 4.36), while answering questions had the lowest mean score (3.30) which was categorized as moderate. The interview results supported the questionnaire findings by showing that students with dominant auditory learning styles tended to participate actively in listening, discussions, and classroom activities. In conclusion, the findings indicate that students have different learning style preferences, with auditory learning style being the most dominant, and that students generally demonstrate a high level of participation in the classroom.

Keywords: *learning style preferences, student participation, General English, VARK model*

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has become an essential competency for university students in the era of globalization, particularly for those in economics and business. As the international language of communication, English enables students to access academic resources, participate in global professional environments, and improve their competitiveness in the labor market (Erkir et al., 2025; Kurniawan, 2023; Putra, 2023). Consequently, General English courses are offered in many non-English study programs to equip students with fundamental language skills that support both their

academic and professional development.

Effective English learning is influenced by various factors, including teaching methods, learning materials, classroom environment, and individual learner characteristics. Among these factors, learning style preferences have received considerable attention because they describe how students prefer to receive, process, and understand information (Wang & Han, 2021). According to the VARK learning style model, students may prefer visual, auditory, read/write, or kinesthetic learning approaches (Fleming & Mills, 1992). These preferences may influence how students interact with instructional activities and how actively they engage in classroom learning.

Student participation is widely recognized as an important indicator of successful language learning. Active participation, such as asking questions, responding to lecturers, contributing to discussions, and completing classroom tasks, provides opportunities for students to practice language skills and develop confidence in using English (Pradestina & Agustin, 2013; Erdem, 2023). Previous studies have shown that active classroom engagement enhances students' motivation, understanding, and overall learning experience (Peng et al., 2022). However, students often demonstrate different levels of participation during English classes, suggesting that individual learning preferences may influence their classroom engagement.

In the Management Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, General English is a compulsory course designed to develop students' basic English competence. Preliminary classroom observations indicated noticeable differences in students' participation. Some students actively engaged in classroom discussions and responded to lecturers' questions, whereas others tended to remain passive during learning activities. Lecturers also observed that students appeared to respond differently to various instructional approaches, including visual presentations, discussions, and practice-based activities. These observations suggest that differences in learning style preferences may be reflected in students' classroom participation.

Although numerous studies have examined learning styles and classroom participation separately, limited research has described how students' learning style preferences are reflected in classroom participation among non-English major students, particularly in General English courses within Indonesian higher education. Furthermore, most previous studies have focused on examining relationships or correlations between variables, whereas descriptive evidence regarding participation patterns across different learning style preferences remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the learning style preferences of Management students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, identify their level of classroom participation in General English courses, and describe participation patterns based on their learning style preferences. By providing a descriptive overview of these aspects, the findings are expected to contribute to English language teaching practices by providing lecturers with insights for designing more inclusive and engaging learning activities that accommodate students' diverse learning preferences and encourage greater classroom participation.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to describe students' learning style preferences and their classroom participation in General English courses. Rather than examining causal relationships or statistical correlations between variables, the study focused on providing a descriptive overview of students' preferred learning styles, their levels of classroom participation, and the patterns of participation observed across

different learning style preferences.

A quantitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to summarize and interpret numerical data collected from a defined population. In this study, quantitative data were obtained through structured questionnaires measuring students' learning style preferences and classroom participation. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to describe the distribution and characteristics of the variables. The findings were then interpreted to provide a comprehensive description of students' learning style preferences and their classroom participation in General English classes.

Population and Sample

In this research, the researcher described the population and sample in order to collect data that were representative and relevant to the research aims. This section describes who is included in the research population, the reasons for selecting the sample, and the sampling technique used. The population of this research consisted of all Management students from one cohort in the Faculty of Economics and Business, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The total population includes 90 students, divided into two classes in the 2025/2026 academic year. From the total population of 90 students, the researcher selected 50 students as the research sample using a simple random sampling technique. This technique is applied to give every student an equal opportunity to be chosen as a respondent, ensuring that the sample fairly represents the entire population. The selection is carried out by randomly choosing names from the student list of both Management classes. This method helps to minimize sampling bias and provides a representative overview of students' learning style preferences and participation in General English classes.

The use of 50 randomly selected respondents are also considered sufficient to provide reliable and valid data for statistical analysis while maintaining practicality in data collection.

Research Instrument

Four instruments were used to collect the data: a learning style questionnaire, a student participation questionnaire, a classroom observation sheet, and semi-structured interviews.

The learning style questionnaire was developed based on the VARK learning style model proposed by Fleming and Mills (1992). It was designed to identify students' preferred learning styles, including visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic. The questionnaire consisted of eight items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The student participation questionnaire was adapted from the concept of behavioral engagement developed by Fredricks et al. (2004) and supported by Paris and Blumenthal (2004). It measured students' participation in General English classes through observable classroom behaviors, such as responding to lecturers' questions, participating in discussions, completing classroom tasks, and engaging in learning activities. The instrument consisted of eight items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

agree).

To complement the questionnaire data, a classroom observation sheet was used to record students' actual participation during classroom activities. The observation focused on behavioral indicators of participation, including asking and answering questions, participating in discussions, following instructions, cooperating with peers, maintaining attention, and completing assigned tasks. The observation sheet consisted of ten checklist items (Yes/No), enabling the researcher to document students' participation objectively during the learning process.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five students to obtain deeper insights into their learning style preferences and classroom participation. The interviews explored students' perceptions of the learning activities that best supported their understanding and encouraged their participation in General English classes. The interview data were used as supporting evidence to enrich and confirm the findings obtained from the questionnaires and classroom observations.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis with the assistance of Microsoft Excel. The analysis aimed to describe students' learning style preferences, their level of classroom participation, and the patterns of participation observed across different learning style preferences in General English classes. As this study adopted a descriptive design, no inferential statistical tests or correlation analyses were performed.

Data obtained from the learning style questionnaire and the student participation questionnaire were scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the data. The mean scores were then classified into five categories: very low (1.00–1.79), low (1.80–2.59), moderate (2.60–3.39), high (3.40–4.19), and very high (4.20–5.00). These categories were used to describe students' dominant learning style preferences and their levels of classroom participation.

The classroom observation data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the frequency of each observed participation behavior recorded on the observation checklist. The observation findings were compared with the questionnaire results to provide data triangulation and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Finally, the interview data were analyzed through descriptive interpretation to support and clarify the quantitative findings. The interview responses were used to explain students' perceptions of their preferred learning styles and classroom participation, thereby enriching the interpretation of the questionnaire and observation results.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDING

The results of this study provide a descriptive overview of students' learning style preferences and classroom participation in General English courses at the

Management Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The findings indicate that students demonstrated diverse learning style preferences, with auditory learning emerging as the most dominant preference. In addition, students showed a high level of classroom participation, as reflected in both the questionnaire and classroom observation results. The detailed findings are presented in the following sections, including respondent characteristics, learning style preferences, and student participation.

Respondent Characteristics

This research involved 50 students from the Management Study Program as respondents. Among them, 30 students (60%) were female and 20 students (40%) were male, indicating that the sample was dominated by female students. This gender composition might have influenced classroom interactions, particularly in group discussions or collaborative activities, as female students tended to demonstrate higher levels of communication and cooperation.

All respondents were first-semester students, with ages ranging from 18 to 20 years. This indicated that the students were still new to the Management Study Program and were in the process of adjusting to a more formal learning environment compared to their previous education. As first-year students, they tended to show high enthusiasm for learning, although their academic experience was still limited.

Moreover, the students came from diverse educational backgrounds, including senior high school majors in science, social studies, and language. These differences might have influenced their learning preferences and the way they adapted to teaching methods at the university level. Understanding these characteristics was important to properly interpret the results regarding students' learning styles and participation.

Overall, the respondent characteristics showed that first-semester students in the Management Study Program were a group of learners who were relatively new, highly motivated, and ready to adapt to the learning process. This profile provided a clear context for interpreting the findings in the following sub-sections on learning styles and student participation.

Learning Style Preferences of Results Research Question 1

Learning Style Preferences

The mean score categories used to interpret students' learning style preferences were as follows: very low (1.00–1.79), low (1.80–2.59), moderate (2.60–3.39), high (3.40–4.19), and very high (4.20–5.00).

As shown in Figure 3, the mean scores for all four learning styles ranged from 3.69 to 3.94, indicating that all learning style preferences were categorized as ****high***. Among the four dimensions, the auditory learning style obtained the highest mean score ($M = 3.94$), followed by read/write ($M = 3.83$), kinesthetic ($M = 3.77$), and visual ($M = 3.69$). These findings indicate that although students demonstrated strong preferences across all learning styles, auditory learning was the most dominant preference.

The relatively small differences among the mean scores suggest that students tended to use multiple learning approaches rather than relying on a single learning style.

The interview findings supported the questionnaire results. Most participants reported that they understood the learning materials more effectively by listening to the lecturer's explanations and participating in classroom discussions. Several students also mentioned that visual materials, such as slides and pictures, helped them understand the content more easily, while one participant preferred a multimodal approach by combining visual and auditory learning. Overall, the interview data confirmed that auditory learning was the most preferred learning style, although students also benefited from other learning modalities.

Student Participation of Results Research Question 2

Student Participation

Figure 4 presents the mean scores of students' participation in General English classes. Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrated moderate to very high levels of participation across the measured indicators.

Among the participation indicators, practice activities obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.42$), followed by submitting assignments on time ($M = 4.36$). Other indicators, including contribution to group work ($M = 4.14$), learning motivation ($M = 3.82$), participation in group discussions ($M = 3.78$), use of English during classroom interaction ($M = 3.50$), and asking questions ($M = 3.48$), were categorized as high. In contrast, answering questions received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.30$), which was categorized as moderate.

Overall, these findings indicate that students participated more actively in structured classroom activities, such as practice tasks, assignments, and group work, than in spontaneous verbal interactions.

The interview findings supported the quantitative results. Most participants reported that they were more confident participating in group discussions and presentations than asking or answering questions directly during class. Several students also stated that they participated more actively when the learning activities matched their preferred learning styles, suggesting that learning preferences may influence classroom engagement.

Descriptive Reflection of Learning Styles in Students' Participation Result of Research Question 3

Summarizes how students' learning style preferences were reflected in their classroom participation during General English lessons. The classroom observations revealed distinct participation patterns across the four learning style preferences.

Students with a visual learning preference were observed to pay greater attention to slides, images, diagrams, and written examples presented during the lesson. Those with an auditory learning preference participated more actively in listening activities, classroom discussions, and verbal interactions. Students with a read/write learning preference demonstrated their participation through reading learning materials, taking notes, and completing written tasks. Meanwhile, students with a kinesthetic learning preference

showed higher engagement during practice-based activities, role plays, and collaborative group work.

Overall, the observation findings indicate that students' classroom participation was reflected in different forms of engagement according to their preferred learning styles. Students tended to participate more actively when classroom activities aligned with their preferred ways of learning.

Discussion

The findings indicate that auditory learning was the most dominant learning style among the Management students. This suggests that students tended to understand learning materials more effectively through listening activities, such as lecturers' explanations, classroom discussions, and verbal interactions. Although all four learning styles were categorized as high, the higher mean score for auditory learning reflects students' preference for learning through spoken communication.

This finding is consistent with previous studies. Muhibbah et al. (2023) reported that students with auditory learning preferences demonstrate better understanding when learning involves verbal explanations and listening activities. Similarly, Rosmi and Nurmalia (2024) found that auditory learners participate more actively in discussions and question-and-answer sessions because they process information more effectively through listening. In addition, Telaumbanua and Harefa (2024) emphasized that learning styles are associated with students' ability to understand learning materials, particularly when instructional strategies align with their preferred learning styles.

The interview findings also support the quantitative results. Most participants reported that listening to lecturers' explanations helped them understand the material more easily, while several students preferred combining auditory and visual approaches. This suggests that although auditory learning was the dominant preference, students also benefited from multiple learning modalities.

These findings imply that General English lecturers should incorporate a variety of instructional strategies while emphasizing activities that promote verbal interaction, such as interactive lectures, discussions, presentations, and question-and-answer sessions. At the same time, integrating visual materials and practical activities may accommodate students with different learning preferences and create a more inclusive learning environment.

Discussion of Research Question 2 (Students' Participation)

The result show that students' participation in General English classes is generally categorized as fairly active, indicating that students are involved in various classroom activities such as asking and answering questions, participating in discussions, and completing learning tasks. This suggests that students demonstrate a reasonable level of engagement in the learning process.

This result is in line with Reeve (2021), who emphasized that active student participation enhances engagement and supports better understanding of learning materials. Similarly, Mercer (2022) highlighted that classroom interaction and a supportive learning environment play an important role in

encouraging students' active participation. In addition, Hiver (2023) found that interactive teaching strategies such as discussions, presentations, and question-and-answer sessions can increase students' engagement in classroom activities. Dörnyei (2021) also noted that a positive learning environment contributes significantly to students' motivation and participation in learning.

Overall, these findings suggest that student participation is influenced by interactive learning activities and classroom environment. Therefore, lecturers are encouraged to apply more student-centered and interactive teaching strategies to further enhance students' engagement in the learning process.

Discussion of Research Question 3 (Reflection of Learning Styles in Students' Participation)

Students' learning styles can reflect their level of participation in the learning process. Each student has a different way of receiving and processing information, so their learning style can influence how they participate in class. Students whose learning style aligns with the teaching methods used generally demonstrate more active participation, such as engaging in discussions, asking questions, or responding to the material presented. This aligns with the research conducted by Robert J. Sternberg (2021), which states that an individual's learning style affects their engagement and participation in the learning process.

Furthermore, learning styles also determine how students process information and interact with the learning environment. Students with specific learning styles tend to exhibit different forms of participation; for instance, some may be more active in discussions, others more reflective in understanding the material, and some more comfortable learning through visual activities or hands-on practice. This is consistent with the research conducted by Phil Hiver (2023), which states that differences in learning styles can influence the level of student engagement in various classroom learning activities.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that students' learning styles are closely related to their level of participation in the learning process. Learning styles that match the teaching methods applied by instructors can encourage students to be more active and involved in learning activities, thereby making the learning process more effective.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion presented in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn regarding students' learning styles and their classroom participation in the General English class.

First, the results of the research show that students have different learning style preferences based on the VARK model, which includes visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic learning styles. Among these learning styles, auditory learning style appears to be the most dominant preference among the students. This indicates that many students prefer learning through listening to explanations, participating in discussions, and engaging in verbal interaction during the learning process.

Second, the results also show that students demonstrate different levels

of classroom participation. Most students show a moderate level of participation in classroom activities. They tend to participate by listening to the lecturer's explanation, responding to questions, and engaging in group discussions. However, only some students actively participate by asking questions or expressing their opinions during the learning process.

Third, the results indicate that students' learning styles are reflected in their classroom participation. Students tend to participate more actively in learning activities that correspond to their preferred learning styles. For example, auditory learners tend to be more active in listening and discussion activities, while read/write learners participate through reading materials and writing tasks. Meanwhile, kinesthetic learners tend to be more engaged in activities that involve practice and active participation. Overall, the results indicate that understanding students' learning styles can help lecturers design more effective teaching strategies that encourage students' participation in the classroom.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions and implications, several recommendations are suggested:

1. For Lecturers. Lecturers are suggested to apply a variety of teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles. Combining visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic activities can improve student engagement. Lecturers should also encourage more active participation by creating a supportive and interactive classroom environment.
2. For Students. Students are encouraged to understand their own learning styles and use them to improve their learning effectiveness. They should also develop other learning approaches to become more flexible learners and increase their confidence in participating actively in class.
3. For Future Researchers. Future researchers are suggested to explore this topic further using different research designs and larger samples. They may also investigate other factors influencing student participation, such as motivation, teaching strategies, or classroom environment.

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