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EFL Learning Style Preferences of Junior High School Students

Virna Alfiqa Sopwani[1], Lucky Rahayu Nurjamin[2], Eva Devi Sofyawati[3]

Institut Pendidikan Indonesia,
Garut, West Java, Indonesia[1,2,3]

Email:
alfiqavirna@gmail.com[1]
luckyrahayu@institutpendidikan.ac.id[2]
evadevi@institutpendidikan.ac.id [3]

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Abstract
This study explored the preferred language learning styles (Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic - VAK) among ninth-grade students in English class and examined gender-based differences in these preferences, as well as the preferred classroom activities aligned with each learning style. Using a mixed-method approach, quantitative data were collected through the 24-item Barsch Learning Styles Inventory (BLSI) from 189 students and analysed using SPSS. Qualitative data were gathered from semi-structured interviews with 10 students and analysed through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that visual learning was the most preferred style overall gender, chosen by 68% of participants, followed by auditory learning (17%) and kinaesthetic learning (15%). Gender differences were observed, with female students favouring auditory styles, male students preferring kinaesthetic methods, and both genders equally preferring visual learning. This study also found that students expressed a strong preference for activities that align with visual learning, including the use of visual materials, highlighting or color-coding text, and incorporating symbols and animations. Additionally, activities such as independent reading, note-taking, and using videos or films were highlighted for their effectiveness in fostering comprehension, retention, and engagement. The dominance of visual learning styles emphasizes the need for educators to prioritize visual materials in their teaching strategies. However, the presence of auditory and kinaesthetic learners highlights the importance of a multimodal teaching approach.

Keywords: *Language Learning Styles, Gender Differences, Visual learning, Classroom Activities*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of English language teaching, one of the most pressing challenges faced by teachers is understanding and accommodating the diverse learning style preferences of students (Alonso-Martín et al., 2021; Pashler et al., 2008), including differences based on gender. During the researcher's PLP teaching program at a junior high school, it was observed that while students expressed a strong interest in learning English, their motivation to participate in learning activities actively was often hindered. Many students admitted that they found English lessons monotonous and repetitive, which made it difficult for them to stay engaged. This issue became more evident when the researcher introduced varied teaching techniques, such as interactive discussions, PowerPoint presentations, and games. When asked about their previous learning experiences, students responded that such methods were rarely used in their English classes, highlighting a gap between their learning needs and the instructional approaches employed.

This issue is urgent because ineffective teaching methods can hinder the language learning process and reduce students' engagement and long-term success. Research indicates that learning style preferences significantly influence how students absorb and retain information. If lessons do not align with their preferences, students may struggle to stay motivated. Therefore, understanding their learning styles is essential for designing more effective and engaging teaching strategies.

Despite the emphasis on differentiated learning, many junior high school teachers often struggle to prepare lessons that effectively meet the varied needs of their students due to the wide range of learning styles present in the classroom (Rahmaniar et al., 2024). According to El-Emadi et al. (2019), in their study, they argue that without a clear understanding of these preferences, especially how they may differ by gender, teachers often feel uncertain about structuring their lessons and choosing the most effective instructional tools. Thus, by understanding and meeting students' varied learning styles, teachers can help students learn in ways that suit their unique preferences, ultimately enhancing their language skills and academic achievements.

This perspective is closely aligned with the principles of *Merdeka Belajar*. The concept of *Merdeka Belajar*, or independent learning, is a core part of Indonesia's current educational reform. It promotes a student-centered approach, allowing teachers more freedom to adapt lessons based on individual learning needs and preferences (Kementerian Pendidikan Kebudayaan Riset dan Teknologi, n.d.). This approach is embedded in the Merdeka Curriculum, guided by Permendikbudristek No. 262/M/2022, which regulates teaching, assessment, and the development of the Pancasila student profile. Differentiated learning, one of the main strategies within this curriculum, is being introduced at different levels to support the Merdeka Belajar goals.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive survey of language learning style preferences among grade 9 JHS students in English classes, focusing on gender differences. By examining how these preferences vary by gender, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for educators to optimize teaching methods to students' individual preferences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning styles refer to the diverse approaches individuals take in acquiring, processing, and retaining information. This is in line with Nasution (2011); and Hermacki (2011) as cited in Silitonga et al. (2020), that a learning style is how students engage with and utilize stimuli during the learning process, as well as how they combine, organize, and process information through various methods such as seeing, hearing, writing, and speaking. Thus, language learning styles refer to the distinct preferences and approaches that learners adopt in acquiring a second or foreign language. In conclusion, learning style is the best way for students to absorb learning naturally. As this is particularly relevant in the context of English language acquisition, thus it refers to their preferences in absorbing English as a foreign language learning.

There are several types of learning styles, and this research specifically focuses on those related to human physical senses, as Reid's (1998) theory, the well-known model of language acquisition, divides learning modes into three primary groups including Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK).

Visual learners tend to have active imaginations, rely on visual cues for learning, and are often naturally quiet. They may struggle with verbal instructions, as they favor the use of sight to comprehend information (Vincent & Ross, 2001). These individuals learn most effectively through reading and observing images (Kanar, 1995, as cited in Vincent & Ross, 2001). According to De Porter & Hernack (2011, as noted in Yulisda, 2021), students with visual learning styles typically exhibit several distinctive traits. They are neat and organized, often speaking quickly and prioritizing appearance and presentation. These students are usually not easily distracted by noise and prefer reading silently rather than reading aloud. Visual learners also retain visual information more effectively than auditory information. These traits highlight their preference for clear, visually presented information and their reliance on written or visual aids to process and recall instructions.

Following De Porter & Hernacki (2011, in Yulisda, 2021), students with auditory learning styles display different characteristics. They tend to talk to themselves while working and are easily distracted by noise. These students may move their lips and vocalize words while reading. While writing is challenging, they often excel at storytelling and prefer verbal jokes over comics. They speak with a rhythmic or patterned tone and learn best by listening and retaining information from discussions rather than visual aids. Auditory learners also enjoy talking, discussing, and explaining things in detail, and they can imitate sounds, tones, rhythms, and voices effectively. These traits reflect their strong reliance on auditory input for learning and processing information.

As described by De Porter and Hernacki (2011, as mentioned in Yulisda, 2021), students with kinaesthetic learning styles exhibit unique characteristics. They tend to speak at a slower pace and are highly responsive to physical contact. These students frequently touch others to capture their attention and prefer standing close to people during conversations. They are constantly in motion, physically oriented, and memorize information by moving and observing their surroundings. Kinaesthetic learners often use their fingers as a guide when reading and rely heavily on body language to communicate. These traits emphasize their preference for hands-on, movement-based learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed method. According to Ivankova & Creswell (2009), the explanatory sequential design involves a two-phase data collection process. In the first phase, quantitative data is gathered and analysed, and the findings from this analysis guide the planning of the second phase. The second phase focused on qualitative data collection, which is based on the quantitative results, helping to determine which participants to include and what key questions to ask during the qualitative stage. To comprehensively reach the goals of this study, the study employed two primary data collection techniques, including 24 items of questionnaires adapted from the Barsch Learning Styles Inventory (BLSI) developed by Jeffrey Barsch (1996) and semi-structured interviews.

The research was conducted at one of the junior high schools in Garut. This site was chosen due to its accessibility for the researcher and its relevance to the context. The participants consisted of 189 students in the 9th grade. In analysing the data, the questionnaire data were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Descriptive statistics and an independent-sample T-test were performed. The qualitative analysis was performed by using thematic analysis to interpret and report patterns (themes) of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were categorized into three key themes: Students' Preferred Language Learning Styles, Gender-Based Differences in Language Learning Style Preferences, and Students' Preferred Classroom Activities.

1. Students' Preferred Language Learning Styles

In this section, the researcher presented the results of questionnaires, addressing the first research question: *"Which language learning styles are preferred among junior high school students in English class?"*. In this study, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, with a focus on mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage, to better understand students' preferred learning styles. The results are presented in **Table 4.1** below:

Table 4.1 *Descriptive Statistics of Students' Preferred Language Learning Styles*

Learning Style	Mean	Std. Deviation
Visual	3.15146	.364837
Auditory	2.79828	.460256
Kinesthetic	2.78505	.449229

Based on the descriptive statistical results above, the data showed that the visual learning style has the highest average among the three learning styles, which is 3.15 with a standard deviation of 0.36. This showed that both male and female students prefer visual learning styles to auditory and kinesthetic learning styles. The auditory learning style has an average of 2.79 with a standard deviation of 0.46. The kinesthetic learning style has an average of 2.78 with a standard deviation of 0.44. Overall, the result showed that 9th-grade junior high school students at a junior high school in Garut preferred visual learning styles.

Based on the data, this study found that students prefer visual learning styles, with an average mean score of 3.15. The preference for visual learning may be linked to its well-documented advantages in language education. For instance, Chambers (2017, as cited in Dang Thi Kim Chung, 2023) highlights that visual aids enhance comprehension and retention by engaging learners through imagery, which facilitates deeper cognitive processing. Similarly, Alabi (2024) points out that tools like diagrams, charts, and videos allow learners to organize and recall information more effectively. The dominance of visual learning

preferences could indicate that students are drawn to this style due to its perceived or experienced effectiveness.

The strong preference toward visual learning styles suggested that integrating more visual elements in English language instruction could significantly improve engagement and academic outcomes. These results have important implications for instructional design. English teachers might consider adopting strategies such as using infographics, visual storytelling, and digital tools like PowerPoint or Canva to accommodate the visual learning preferences of the majority. Additionally, research by (Waang, 2023) indicates that Multimedia instruction, which integrates visuals and text, is particularly effective in promoting learning for visually oriented students.

2. Gender-Based Differences in Language Learning Style Preferences

To address the second research question: *"Do language learning style preferences differ between male and female junior high school students in English class?"*, the group statistics were employed. The data provided in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.2 *Group Statistics of Gender-Based Differences in Learning Style Preferences*

Learning Style	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Visual	1	92	3.14402	.425789
	2	97	3.15851	.297841
Auditory	1	92	2.58560	.475690
	2	97	3.00000	.340419
Kinesthetic	1	92	3.00543	.447027
	2	97	2.57603	.339249

Based on the descriptive statistics results of the groups above, the data showed that the average value in visual for male students (code 1) is 3.14 with SD = 0.42, while for female students (code 2) the average is slightly higher, which is 3.15 with SD = 0.29. The larger SD in the male group indicates a higher variation in visual preferences than in females. This means that within the male group, there are greater differences between individuals, where some students may really like the visual learning style, while others like it less, and some are in the middle. In contrast, the visual learning style preferences in the female group tend to be more consistent. Therefore, it can be concluded that although there is a slight difference in the average preferences between male and female students, the difference is not statistically significant.

For auditory learning styles, the mean score for male students was recorded at 2.58 with SD = 0.47, while the mean for female students was higher, at 3.00 with SD = 0.34. This difference in means indicates that female students are more likely to choose an auditory learning style than male students. Meanwhile, in the kinesthetic learning style, male students have higher preference, with an average score of 3.00 with SD = 0.44, and female students have an average of 2.57 with a standard deviation of 0.33.

To further explore the gender-based differences in language learning style preferences, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Here is Table 4.4, the t-test, adds a layer of inferential analysis (Guetterman, 2019).

Table 4.3 *Independent Samples t-Test Results for Learning Style Preferences by Gender*

Learning Style	Levene's Test		t-test	Interpretation
	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	

Visual	.004	.786	-.014483	No significant difference
Auditory	.023	.000	-.414402	A significant difference
Kinesthetic	.004	.000	.429404	A significant difference

From the results of the t-test, it is known that the Sig. (2-tailed) value for visual learning style is 0.78 (> 0.05), which indicates no significant difference in visual learning style preferences between male and female students. However, for the auditory learning style, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00 (< 0.05) indicates a significant difference, with female students more likely to choose this style than male students, as seen from the average difference of -0.42. Likewise, for kinesthetic learning style, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00 (< 0.05) indicates a significant difference, where male students prefer this style with an average difference of -0.43.

Overall, this study indicated there is no significant difference in visual learning style preferences between genders; however, significant differences were observed in auditory and kinaesthetic learning preferences. Female students showed a stronger preference for auditory learning styles, while male students displayed a preference for kinaesthetic learning styles. These findings show how gender can influence learning preferences, giving educators valuable insights to create inclusive and effective teaching strategies.

Building on the insights from visual learning styles, a significant gender difference was found in auditory learning styles, with females scoring a higher mean than males. This finding highlights that female students are more likely to benefit from auditory learning. This finding is in line with McCarter (2008), who stated that female learners often exhibit stronger verbal and auditory processing abilities, which may explain their preference for auditory learning styles. In correlation to that, according to Sax (2006) in Bonomo Ed. D. (2017), females tend to have better neural connectors, which enhance listening skills and memory storage.

Following the observed gender difference in auditory learning preferences, males preferred kinaesthetic learning styles. This finding suggests that male students are more likely to benefit from hands-on, experiential learning activities such as role-playing, physical engagement, and interactive tasks. This aligns with Sax (2006), in Bonomo Ed. D. (2017) found that boys often prefer tasks involving action and physical engagement over abstract or complex thinking. They tend to use more primitive brain areas while completing tasks. These gender-based differences in learning preferences are consistent with Sax (2006) in Bonomo Ed. D. (2017), “gender influences how children learn,”.

To conclude, these findings underscore the importance of recognizing both shared and unique gendered learning preferences. While visual learning serves as a foundation, gender-specific needs through auditory and kinaesthetic methods should be considered as well.

3. Students' Preferred Classroom Activities

This section discusses the findings from interviews conducted with 10 students, consisting of 5 females and 5 males, who were identified as having a preference for visual learning styles, which emerged as the dominant learning style in the study. The interviews aimed to answer the research question: *“What activities do junior high school students prefer in English class?”*. The data were analyzed and grouped into six themes.

1) Visual Materials (Images, Diagrams, Charts, Videos, PowerPoint)

The findings reveal that activities involving visual materials such as images, diagrams, videos, and PowerPoint presentations are well-received by students. Their responses indicate that these materials support their learning in four key ways: (1) improving comprehension, (2) aiding memory retention, (3) providing detailed information, and (4) enhancing engagement and enjoyment.

For instance, P1 shared, *"When I see it directly, I understand it immediately. With pictures, videos, diagrams, things like that, it helps me grasp the material faster."* Similarly, P2 noted the simplicity and accessibility of visual aids, saying, *"It's easy on the eyes and also easy to understand. Posters help me a lot, too. We also did an activity where we described animals, and I thought that was interesting."* P3 added, *"It's simple, Miss. I can understand right away when it's visual. I can understand from the pictures."*, P5 explained, *"If it's in a picture or visual form, it's easier to remember. For example, if something is just explained, you hear it once, but if it's in a video or image, you can see it multiple times and understand it better."*

This study indicated that students emphasized the importance of integrating images, diagrams, videos, and PowerPoint presentations into their lessons. These activities enhance comprehension, support memory retention, provide detailed information, and foster engagement and enjoyment. The ability of visual materials to enhance comprehension is closely aligned with Clark & Paivio's (1991) Dual-Coding Theory, which suggests that information is processed through two separate cognitive channels: verbal (words, text) and visual (images, diagrams). According to this theory, presenting information through both channels simultaneously improves understanding and retention, as each channel complements the other. Students also highlighted the role of visual materials in strengthening memory retention. This is consistent with Bresciani & Eppler (2015); Verdi & Kulhavy's (2002) research, which shows that visuals leave a lasting impression by providing concrete representations of otherwise abstract concepts. Engagement and enjoyment emerged as essential factors in students' preference for visual aids. This aligns with Alrashidi et al. (2016), Kpolovie et al. (2014), Kahu et al. (2017), and Singh et al.'s (2002) argument that aligning educational activities with students' interests enhances both engagement and academic achievement.

In conclusion, this study highlights the fundamental role of the use of visual materials in determining students' educational experiences. By thoughtfully integrating visual materials, teachers can create an inclusive and impactful learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of their students.

2) Highlighting or Color-Coding Text

Highlighting and color-coding text emerged as a part of an activity that found beneficial for enhancing focus and making learning materials more engaging. This activity was frequently mentioned during interviews, with students emphasizing its ability to improve memorization, foster creativity, and prevent boredom. The responses revealed four key aspects of its effectiveness: (1) enhancing memorization and focus, (2) making learning visually appealing, (3) preventing boredom, and (4) aiding understanding.

For instance, P1 stated, *"It should have some colours. Not too many, Miss. Maybe around 4 colours. So, it helps us focus on the key points when memorizing... it makes it easier to memorize."*, P2 explained, *"It should be colourful, probably three colours, Miss. … Because it enhances our creativity and makes us more excited to learn since it's pleasing to look at."*,

P9 observed, "*I think it's better to use colours because if no colours are used, it's not attractive and makes it easy to get bored. I think using three colours would be enough."*, P4 noted, *"… It makes it much easier to understand."*

The findings reveal that these techniques play a crucial role in improving memorization, fostering creativity, preventing boredom, and aiding understanding. Colours act as visual cues that enable the brain to process and retrieve essential information more efficiently. This phenomenon is well-supported by researchers, for example, Diachenko et al. (2022) and Ladd (1887) emphasized the importance of clear sensory experiences (like visual details) in forming stronger and more retrievable memories. In addition, a principle that can be directly linked to is the von Restorff effect. This cognitive phenomenon, discovered by Hedwig von Restorff (1933, in Hunt, 1995), states that items that stand out from their surroundings are more likely to be remembered than those that blend in. Thus, the von Restorff effect demonstrates that distinctiveness enhances memory recall. For instance, when a single item in a list is presented differently, such as a red word among black words, it is more memorable because of its contrast. Furthermore, Dzulkifli & Mustafar (2013) also studied whether adding colour could improve memory. They determined that "colour has the potential to increase chances of environmental stimuli to be encoded, stored, and retrieved successfully" because it vividly displays relationships between ideas.

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that highlighting and color-coding are not just aesthetic tools, they are integral to cognitive engagement and learning efficiency. These techniques transform learning materials into resources that capture and sustain student interest while also improving understanding. By aligning educational practices with the preferences of visual learners, educators can create more inclusive and effective teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles.

3) Symbols and Animation

Symbols and animations, like colours used in learning materials, serve as an important part of visual activity that helps the learner. The findings are also grouped into four key benefits: (1) better understanding, (2) engaging learning experience, (3) visual appeal, and (4) stimulating creativity and interest. For instance, P1 noted, *"Hmm, yes, it's important. Well, because it helps the teacher be clearer to the students. Yes, it helps us understand better."*, P2 highlighted, *"They're important, Miss because they make learning less monotonous…"*, P8, described them as *"cute,"* while P10 stated that *"It can stimulate interest in learning English, help develop our creativity, and encourage the process of learning English."*, P10 emphasized, *"It is very important because it stimulates interest in learning English, helps develop the creativity, and encourages the process of learning English."* This points to the potential of visual tools to inspire students to think creatively, sparking their enthusiasm for learning.

This finding reveals how symbols and animations reform students' learning experiences. They significantly deepen understanding, engage learning experience, enhance visual appeal, and stimulate creativity and interest. Symbols and animations are found to be influential tools to clarify complex ideas and promote better understanding. This aligns with the research by Khalidiyah (2015), which declared that "animation has an advantage which it can help establish students' understanding of abstract concepts.", moreover symbols have proven to be beneficial for many children and young people in school who face challenges with reading or comprehension (Widgit Education, 2014). Furthermore, P9's observation that symbols *"aid in memory"* further supports this claim. Animations, with their ability to visually

demonstrate processes, reflect Mayer (2017); Mayer & Pilegard (2014), Multimedia Learning Principles, advocate for the integration of dynamic visuals to enhance understanding. However, researchers like Sweller (1988) warn that excessive animations can overwhelm students, potentially hindering learning. These findings highlight the importance of using symbols and animations carefully, ensuring they clarify rather than complicate the material.

This study also revealed that symbols and animations play a vital role in fostering students' creativity and curiosity. In animated learning, just like how symbols and animations stimulate curiosity and creativity, events that are hard to observe in real time can be shown in a way that's easier to understand. Students can pause and rewind the animation to focus on parts they find confusing, helping them learn better, think differently, and explore ideas in imaginative ways (Baglama et al., 2018).

Overall, the findings suggest that symbols and animations are crucial components in enhancing the presentation of learning materials, particularly in language learning. They enrich the learning process by developing understanding, enhancing interest, the visual appeal of materials, and fostering creativity. When used wisely, symbols and animations can create a richer, more meaningful learning experience for everyone.

4) Videos and Films

Students identified several benefits of using videos and films for learning English, such as (1) improving comprehension, (2) providing clear visual context, (3) introducing diverse pronunciation styles, and (4) maintaining focus. For instance, P1 commented, *"It's better to watch because it's clearer. When you just listen, you only hear the language, but when you watch, you can also see the images, which make it clearer."*, P2 shared, *"I can understand it from the images, movements, and postures, stuff like that, Miss."* This indicates that videos can bridge the gap between abstract explanations and practical applications, making lessons more relatable and engaging. P5 noted, *"Every film has a different way of pronouncing English, so we can learn that English pronunciation varies, not always the same as what we learn in class."* This variety prepares students for real-life communication by familiarizing them with different speaking styles.

One key finding of this theme is that students feel videos and or films contribute to a better understanding of English by providing a clear visual context. This is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the effectiveness of the Multimedia Principle, where both visual and auditory stimuli facilitate deeper comprehension and retention (Mayer, 2002). The other finding is that the students' preference for videos that showcase different pronunciation styles and accents aligns with the growing recognition that language learners benefit from exposure to diverse linguistic features. Bajrami & Ismaili (2016) also declared that video materials are excellent by providing original and authentic exposure, as they are produced originally for native speakers, such as films, TV programs, and songs.

In short, the findings reveal a clear gap between students' recognition of the benefits of videos and films in language learning and their limited classroom use. Videos and films potentially enhance comprehension, provide exposure to various or native pronunciations/ dialects/ accents, and provide helpful subtitles. The variety, authenticity, and cultural richness of video materials offer high opportunities for students to explore real-world language use and cultural nuances in a very engaging way of learning. Thus, integrating more interactive, context-based video content into teaching potentially leads to advanced engagement and improves overall language proficiency.

5) Note-Taking

Students demonstrated various approaches to note-taking that align with their efforts to understand, retain, and later review the material. Many students also expressed the tangible benefits they experienced, such as (1) strengthening memory, (2) improving their comprehension, and (3) boosting confidence during classroom activities. For instance, P2 explained how notes are used to revisit lessons at home: *"It can be used to study again at home, Miss. I can read it over and understand it again at home. So, if I don't understand something, I can look at it again. It also strengthens my memory."* Similarly, P6 described how writing helps them engage with challenging material, *"I write while the teacher is explaining… It will be useful for reviewing later, so I can read it anytime and remember."* This indicates that note-taking supports not only short-term understanding but also long-term retention; it shows that note-taking can act as a resource for continuous learning and reinforcement. P10 offered a unique perspective, stating: *"The benefit is more about increasing self-confidence when being asked or speaking later, because, indirectly, it gives us something to talk about, Miss, and helps us remember."* This shows that note-taking not only supports students academically but also empowers them socially by preparing them to engage actively in discussions and answer questions with assurance.

The findings reveal that note-taking is a preferred and effective learning activity among junior high school students in English classes. This study revealed that students assumed that this activity enhances memory, comprehension, and confidence. The data underscores the students' thoughtful engagement with this activity, highlighting its relevance and value in their academic process.

One of the most significant insights is how students approach note-taking strategically, balancing listening and writing to optimize their understanding of the material. This is consistent with Piolat et al. (2005), who argue that effective note-taking requires cognitive processing that integrates listening and writing. In addition to its procedural benefits, students consistently emphasized the long-term advantages of note-taking, particularly in strengthening memory and enabling effective review. To support that, anticipating and organizing relevant information is essential, as seen in activities like evaluation (Middendorf & Macan, 2002), problem-solving (Cary & Carlson, 1999), and decision-making (Castelló & Monereo, 2005), especially when tasks involve collaboration.

In conclusion, note-taking emerges as a preferred and multifaceted activity that aligns with students' academic and psychological needs in English classes. Its benefits extend beyond simple information recording to include enhanced memory, improved comprehension, and increased self-confidence. By supporting students in their note-taking practices and integrating explicit strategies into teaching, teachers can further empower students to control this activity as a foundation of their learning experience.

6) Independent Reading

Based on the interviews, students expressed a variety of opinions regarding independent reading. Students emphasized various aspects of independent reading that contribute to their overall learning experience. These include (1) processing information at their own pace for better focus and understanding, (2) flexibly repeating material, and (3) gaining confidence. For instance, P2 stated, *"I prefer reading it myself, Miss. Silently, Miss, to stay focused."* Participants P5, P7, and P8 emphasized the importance of repetition in reading to mastery. For example, P7 shared, *"I prefer reading it on my own because I can understand it multiple*

times, and it's easier to comprehend by myself.". These findings reveal that independent reading is widely appreciated and crucial for some students to overcome challenges in understanding the material.

The findings indicate that independent reading is a highly valued activity among junior high school students in English classes. The students believe independent reading offers them autonomy to process information at their own pace for better focus and understanding, flexibly repeating material, and strengthening their confidence. These benefits not only reflect students' personal learning needs but also underscore the importance of fostering self-directed learning strategies in classroom practices. This finding is supported by Krashen (1982), who suggests that learners acquire language more effectively when they are exposed to comprehensible input in a low-stress and anxiety-free environment. By the autonomy to process information individually, students can construct their meanings and internalize the content, a process that aligns with Bransford (2004), who emphasizes the role of active engagement in learning, where students interpret and make sense of information based on their existing knowledge.

Another key benefit of independent reading is its flexibility. This finding is in line with Brown et al. (2014); Rishard E. (2002), which demonstrates that repeated exposure to information over time strengthens memory and deepens understanding.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the centrality of independent reading in fostering autonomy, comprehension, and confidence among junior high school students. However, its integration into classroom practices could be further optimized to maximize its benefits. Teachers could support independent reading by providing structured guidance, such as setting clear objectives, and encouraging reflective practices like summarizing or annotating.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this mixed-methods study revealed a significant preference for visual learning styles among junior high school English learners, highlighting the potential benefits of incorporating visual aids into classroom instruction to improve comprehension and engagement. While visual learning dominated overall, notable gender-based differences emerged in auditory and kinaesthetic preferences, suggesting the need for differentiated instruction that acknowledges these variations to foster a more inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, students' favoured classroom activities strongly aligned with their visual learning preferences, underscoring the effectiveness of visual materials, independent reading, note-taking, and video utilization. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of a multimodal teaching approach in English language classrooms, strategically blending visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic activities, and tailoring instruction to address gender-specific learning style preferences to maximize student engagement, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes.

In brief, the study's conclusion signifies the paramount importance of visual learning strategies for junior high English learners, evidenced by their strong preference and alignment with favored activities. Crucially, it also highlights significant gender-based differences favoring auditory learning for females and kinesthetic learning for males, underscoring the necessity for differentiated, multimodal instruction that strategically incorporates visual,

auditory, and kinesthetic elements to create a more engaging, inclusive, and ultimately more effective English language learning environment for all students.

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