

Revealing The Students' VAK Learning Styles and Their Problems and Strategies in Speaking Class: A Qualitative Study among Indonesian Vocational Students

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Abstract

This study was conducted to identify students' learning styles, the problems they face, their strategies, and their perceptions of speaking English based on their respective learning styles. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The tenth-grade Culinary A students of SMKN 2 Gowa were selected as the research subjects. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The results revealed that: (1) The most dominant learning styles employed by the students in the classroom is visual learning style, followed by auditory learning style and kinesthetic learning style (2) The problems experienced by students in English speaking activities based on their learning styles, such as visual learners faced issues such as lack of confidence, difficulty understanding instructions without visual aids, pronunciation challenges, and noisy classroom environments. Auditory learners encountered problems such as fear of making mistakes, confusion, discomfort, grammar issues, and hesitation, while kinesthetic learners struggled with boredom, panic, nervousness, lack of self-confidence, and fear of being laughed at. (3) The strategies identified by visual learners included planning, memorizing, taking notes, and preparing visual aids. Auditory learners resolved their difficulties by speaking loudly, watching video podcasts, memorizing, and using audio tools such as voice recordings, and kinesthetic learners addressed their challenges by asking for permission to move, using body movements, and employing physical tools such as pens or markers.

Keywords: Learning style, speaking, problem, strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex process influenced by various individual factors, including learning styles (Jannah et al., 2024). The learning styles affect how to understand, store, and apply the information received. There are three types of learning styles, namely visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles (Reid, 1998).

Learning style in the learning process is one of the internal factors that significantly impact students' performance in speaking English. It confirms that the importance of students' learning styles in learning English significantly impacts their speaking ability in the classroom (Cahyani et

al., 2017). In addition, Elawati et al. (2022) also stated that beliefs, talents, learning styles, motivation, and personality can affect students' language abilities.

In the context of English language learning, English has become an important language to learn and a necessity for people in this globalization era, especially the younger generation, because English is used in various sectors such as: education, economy, social, and technology (Sakir et al., 2022). Furthermore, Miranda & Wahyudin (2023) argue that in today's modern era and within the global community, mastering English, especially speaking, is crucial. Effective communication is necessary for an individual to meet their needs in life. People communicate verbally using language to interact and exchange ideas in their daily activities. Muzri & Sunra (2024) supported it, stating that speaking is an interaction similar to what we are used to, which is "talking", and it is an interaction that has a social function. When individuals meet, they greet each other and engage in small talk in the hope of becoming friendly and finding a comfort zone to relate to others.

However, not all students have the same speaking ability. Various obstacles often arise in speaking activities in the classroom, such as understanding the learning concepts, self-confidence, different learning styles, and the choice of methods used by the teacher because sometimes teachers do not adjust the material taught to students' learning styles and the students need to think and practice more often to speak English than when they speak their first language (Wahyuni & Dewi, 2024).

This phenomenon becomes more complex in vocational schools, where students are required to be able to communicate actively. Unfortunately, the learning system is often homogeneous, not accommodating individual learning styles that can optimally improve students' speaking competence. Research shows that learning style approaches can increase students' participation and motivation in learning English (Fitria, 2023).

From a pedagogical perspective, teachers must understand the students' learning preferences and identify the strategies they naturally develop to adjust to teaching materials that do not always match their learning styles (Sopwani et al., 2025). These strategies can include memorization techniques, group work, the use of additional visual media, and speaking practice outside the classroom.

The development of technology and learning methods, such as flipped classrooms and video podcasting with a modern approach, can also facilitate certain learning styles (Chairunnisa et al., 2025). It suggests the need for a qualitative approach to understanding the dynamics of students' VAK learning styles in daily classroom practice.

Assessment and adjustment of students' learning styles can be used to absorb, organize, and process information received by students (Wahab & Nuraeni, 2020). It can be indicated that learning style is a process of learning by students that is appropriate for what they like during the learning process and can also involve the process of students' speaking ability.

The relationship between design problem-solving and learning styles started to capture the attention of scholars specializing in design education, and some researchers conducted previous studies about learning styles.

Several studies have tried to explore students' learning styles and their influence on learning outcomes in Indonesia. For example, research by Sedik (2023) showed that the majority of students in junior high school have auditory learning style tendencies, but teachers still dominantly use

visual approaches. This mismatch causes less than optimal achievement of learning outcomes, especially in the speaking aspect.

Furthermore, there is still a gap in research regarding the relationship between VAK learning styles and the strategies students use to overcome challenges in the speaking classroom. Previous studies tend to focus on the quantification of learning styles rather than an in-depth exploration of how students deal with and work around problems in classroom speaking activities, particularly in vocational settings (Bakri et al., 2019; Rustan, 2022; Hediyanah et al., 2024)

Some previous studies only focused on the impact of VAK learning styles on speaking skills in English language learning and highlighted differences in student performance based on these styles. However, it does not specifically address challenges and strategies in speaking classroom activities among Indonesian vocational students (Kumala et al., 2022; Nida et al., 2023; Zahirah et al., 2024)

In the international context, Yotta (2023) indicated that based on the data through the questionnaire, most EFL teachers at Chamo Secondary School in Arba Minch, Ethiopia, were not accommodating the differences in learning styles within the classroom. Furthermore, the instructional aids and classroom activities did not align with these learning style differences. EFL teachers also failed to address or adjust their teaching to accommodate these variations. However, this research only relies on questionnaires, which may still be limited in describing the results of students' actual learning styles.

Another international study by Carranza (2019) found that effective teaching strategies enhanced communicative competence in speaking skills. It was concluded that implementing strategies tailored to the students' learning styles played a crucial role in helping them improve their oral abilities.

Additionally, some previous studies did not specifically address VAK learning styles or challenges in speaking classroom activities among Indonesian vocational students. It focuses on a multimodal model for blended learning, emphasizing diverse approaches to meet various learners' needs (Malvigie et al., 2023; Picciano, 2019; Zhang, 2023).

Based on the synthesis of several previous studies above, this study aims to explore in depth how Indonesian vocational students with VAK learning styles identify their problems in speaking classes and the strategies they use to overcome them. A qualitative approach was chosen so that the researcher could explore students' personal experiences of learning to speak according to their learning styles.

Furthermore, the researcher found the urgency related to this study is identifying students' specific learning styles, whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. Educators or teachers can better design speaking activities that align with individual needs, and exploring these learning styles can address the challenges that students face in the speaking classroom.

Following the above studies and considering Reid's learning styles theory (Reid, 1998) as a main research framework, the present study continues exploring the deeper research about VAK learning styles. The primary aim is to identify the most learning style employed by the students, exploring the problems faced by students based on their learning style and how they overcome their problems and to gain more specific information. The researcher also identifies students' perceptions of learning styles. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to make a real contribution to developing more adaptive and flexible method in the vocational education environment based on the students' learning styles. In addition, this study also enriches the

literature on the relationship between VAK learning styles, learning problems, learning strategies, and students' perceptions in the EFL context.

METHOD

Research Design

The researcher in this study used a descriptive qualitative research design. The descriptive method in qualitative research is an analytical approach that focuses on data collection. Qualitative research is an inquiry that explores a social or human problem. In other words, qualitative research is the investigation of individual or collective perspectives on a social issue. This involves categorizing the information into distinct themes or groups to better understand the research phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Descriptive qualitative design is particularly suitable for uncovering patterns of thought and behavior related to language learning that emerge naturally in a specific educational context.

Participants of the Research

The participants of this research that the researcher chose were the tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri 2 Gowa majoring in Culinary A with 36 students in the class. The school has a total of 8 majors, namely Visual Communication Design (DKV), Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ), Karawitan Art, Music Art, Dance Art, Culinary, Fashion, and Beauty, with a total of around 900 students. The researcher determined the research participants using a purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique involves people or information that have specific knowledge regarding the chosen research topic, and this technique is also a standard procedure that is usually used in qualitative research (Lodico et al., 2006). Demographic information, such as gender distribution and age range, was also collected to provide context. The majority of participants were aged 15–16 years, with a balanced representation of male and female students.

All students gave their informed agreement to participate voluntarily, and if necessary, extra parental approval was also acquired. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring the students' privacy and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher determined the tenth-grade Culinary A students and used documents from the teacher who had conducted an initial assessment of the students and categorized them using the “wordwall” application. Based on discussions with an English teacher at the school, it was found that the students in this grade have different ways in learning process and heterogeneous abilities in English. Some students were active in English class, while others hesitated when speaking the language. As a result, the researcher decided to select this class for this study.

Research Instrument

Instruments in research were used in various forms depending on the design of the research. There were three kinds of instruments to obtain data in this research, namely observation, interviews and documentation. The aim of the classroom observation was to obtain the classifications of students' learning styles and most dominant learning style employed by the students. Then, the interview guide was to obtain the information about students' problems and their strategies to overcome their problems based on their learning styles and the documentation was in the form of an initial assessment that the teacher carried out at the beginning of the semester. The document contains a classification of students' learning styles based on the assessment carried out by the teacher using wordwall application which contains several contents that used by the

teacher to assessed the students, these contents such as find the match, speaking cards, and open the box.

Data Analysis Technique

In analyzing the data, the researcher analyzed the interview and documentation data using the data analysis technique from (Miles et al., 2014) model. It was divided into three steps as follows:

1. Data Condensation

Data condensation refers to a series of steps to select, focus, simplify, abstract, and transform field data, such as written notes, interview transcripts, and empirical documents, to approximate the totality of the information contained. This process involves selecting key elements, focusing on essential aspects, and transforming data to suit research needs. In conclusion, the results of this data condensation were obtained after researchers carried out and collected various written information in the field. Once the researcher has determined the desired research subject, the data is carefully sorted to identify and extract the core of the relevant data.

2. Data Display

Data display is the process of arranging, combining and conveying information. In this context, data presentation not only organizes the data in a structured manner but also contributes to understanding the research context by conducting a more in-depth analysis. Thus, data presentation is not only about the layout of information but also plays a role in explaining the meaning and implications of the data that has been collected, providing deeper insight into the aspects of the research being discussed.

3. Conclusion Drawing

Conclusion drawing in research begins with the researcher collecting data, focusing on the understanding that does not have a particular pattern, noting the regularity of the explanation, and analyzing the cause-and-effect flow. In the last stage, the researcher draws comprehensive conclusions based on the data obtained

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

1. The Most Dominant Learning Styles Employed by The Students

In obtaining data on the most dominant learning styles employed by students, the researcher conducted observations to see students' different learning style preferences and which one was the most dominant. The results of the observation can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Result of Observation Sheet

No	Indicators	Observed Aspects	Observer's Notes
		1. Students seem to remember information more quickly after seeing pictures, graphs, or other visuals, rather than just hearing them or reading them.	Some students seem enthusiastic when presented with material with pictures or tabs, they noted important points after seeing them.

1	Visual	2. Students are more likely to read books or written materials rather than listen to verbal explanations during learning process.	When given the choice, some students chose to read instructions on their cell phones or books rather than listening to the teacher's explanation.
		3. Students often keep their notes and study tools neat and organized, making sure everything is well organized and easily accessible.	Most students have well-organized desks, and they are very organized in setting up themselves and the stationery or books needed.
		4. Students do not distract by the noise around them and are still able to focus on their learning activities despite the noise.	The noise is not too distracting for students who are focused on seeing the visual material on the projector screen.
		5. Students show better understanding of a concept when explanations are accompanied by pictures, diagrams or other visuals.	Comprehension improves when teachers include pictures or concept maps when explaining the material. They were seen nodding their heads which meant they understood.
		6. Students seem to recall information more quickly after hearing it than seeing pictures or text. They tend to remember better what is explained orally.	Some students can repeat the information well after listening to the teacher's explanation, even though they have not seen the written text.
2	Auditory	7. Students are more easily distracted by noises around them and struggle to focus on tasks or learning when the class is noisy.	There are students who appear to be distracted by sounds outside the classroom and show a decrease in focus. It can be seen from their expressions as if they are distracted.
		8. Students seem happy to engage in discussions or conversations to understand a topic, often asking questions or talking about learning materials with friends.	Some students involved in group discussions were active. Students asked and responded to each other to clarify they understanding.
		9. Students tend to speak out loud when learning or explaining things, feeling more comfortable when they can express their ideas verbally.	Certain students seemed to be more fluent in explaining the material aloud rather than writing it down.
		10. Students prefer to use audio-based learning aids, such as voice	Some students like the use of audio learning such as recorded

	recordings, or learning materials that involve hearing to understand information.	explanations or educational-themed songs.
	11. Students tend to be more physically active when learning, often moving, standing or even walking when they are processing information or thinking.	Students look more active and enthusiastic when given practical tasks, such as experiments or simulations.
	12. Students speak at a slower pace and tend to give more time to think and compose words before expressing their opinions.	Some students seemed to think for a moment before speaking, suggesting they needed time to process the information.
3 Kinesthetic	13. Students seem to understand concepts or subject matter more easily after doing it directly in practice, for example, by trying out or practicing related tasks.	Comprehension improved after students did hands-on practice rather than just reading the theory. Some of them look excited when asked to practice directly in front of the class.
	14. Students seem to have difficulty concentrating and digesting information simply by listening or reading without engaging in related physical activities, such as discussion or practice.	Students seem to enjoy the lesson less if they only listen to lectures without any physical or interactive activities. Many of them talk or discuss with each other.
	15. Students are often seen to use touch or gestures to help remember or understand information, for example by touching objects or making certain movements while learning.	Some students move their hands or bodies when explaining concepts, showing physical engagement in learning.

Based on the results of observations conducted by the researcher by looking at various aspects observed, the most dominant learning style is visual. There are several factors that indicate this, the first is that more students showed enthusiasm and a strong response when the teacher explained or provided material visually, which less dominant in other learning styles. The second is that the level of understanding and focus of students was higher when using visual media in the classroom and the last was when the teacher gave homework, most students asked that the collection of assignments is in the form of making videos, then only a few students asked that the assignments be collected through audio recording and few students asked to practice directly in class. Therefore, the most dominant learning style employed by the students is visual.

In addition, the researcher also used documentation in the form of initial assessments conducted by teachers using the wordwall application where the application has several contents that can be used to assess students. The results of the teacher initial assessment also showed that

the most dominant learning style in the classroom was visual, with the distribution from total 36 students, 16 were classified as visual learners, 12 as auditory learners, and 8 as kinesthetic learners. From the results, the researcher selected two students who had higher scores as the respondents to be interviewed, which can be seen in the table below:

Table 2. Students' Learning Styles

Students	Respondents	Learning Style
BAP	Respondent 1	Visual
SNH	Respondent 2	Visual
NIA	Respondent 3	Auditory
NAI	Respondent 4	Auditory
VYG	Respondent 5	Kinesthetic
MJ	Respondent 6	Kinesthetic

Table 2 shows that based on the results of the initial assessment by the teacher, the researcher chose two students to represent each learning style.

2. Problems of Students in Speaking Activities Based on Their Learning Styles

To find out the problems experienced by students in speaking activities in class based on their learning styles, the researcher conducted interviews with several students. The researcher conducted two interview sessions because the interview had to be adjusted to the respondent's schedule. The first session was conducted on Monday, March 10, 2025, from 13.30 to 16.00, with 2 respondents interviewed, while the remaining 4 were conducted on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, from 09.00 to 11.00. The interviews were given to six students observed as representatives of each learning style. Two of them each represented one learning style. The table below shows some of the students' problems in speaking activities based on their learning styles:

Table 3. The Problems of Students in Speaking Activities Based on Their Learning Styles

Learning Style	Respondent	Students' Problems
Visual Learner	Respondent 1	Hard to keep focus
		Lack of confident
		Hard-to-understand instructions
		Noisy
	Respondent 2	Pronunciation
		Lack of confident
Auditory Learner	Respondent 3	Forget the instructions
		Confused
		Need specific instructions
	Respondent 4	Afraid being wrong
		Lack of grammar
		Hesitate
		Feel uncomfortable
		Feel bored

Kinesthetic Learner	Respondent 5	Panic
		Nervous
	Respondent 6	Lack of confident
		Hard to keep concentrate
		Being laughed

Referring to the table above, the full interview transcripts can be seen in the appendix. The results of the interviews regarding students' problems in speaking activities based on their learning styles can be explained as follows, and it should be noted that words, phrases, and sentences typed in bold in the extract indicate students' problems:

2.1. Visual Learning Style

Concerning the data obtained from the interviews, the researcher found that students with a visual learning style in learning activities experience several problems in speaking based on their learning style. This can be identified from extracts of the interview recording as follows.

BAP voiced his reflection when following a long oral explanation without the support of pictures or diagrams:

"Hm sometimes **it's hard for me to keep focusing.**"
(*Hm biasa susahka fokus...*)

Other problems faced by visual learners based on SNH who stated:

"In terms of **pronunciation**, it is difficult to pronounce if there is no picture."
(*Dari segi pengucapan, sulit dibilang kalau tidak ada gambar dilihat*)

Based on the interview results, it was found that students with visual learning styles have difficulties in speaking skills, especially when learning is not supported with visual elements such as pictures or diagrams. This finding indicates that the need for visual stimulus is crucial for visual learners in supporting the English-speaking process.

2.2. Auditory Learning Style

Two respondents with visual learning styles expressed some problems in English language activities. In addition, two respondents have an auditory learning style who revealed what are the problems they face in the speaking activities according to their learning style.

NIA stated her feelings if asked to engage in a discussion without verbal clarity, stated:

"I'm usually **confused** because sometimes I don't know what to do anymore."
(*Biasa bingung ka kak karena biasa nda di tauki mau diapai, mau dikasih bagaimana*)

In addition, NAI also explained:

“It's like it's difficult if **there is no instruction** from the teacher, so I'm confused about what to do.”

*(Itu kayak memang susah ki kalau **nda ada instruksi** dari guru jadi bingung ki mau diapai)*

Based on the interview data, students with auditory learning styles tend to experience difficulties in speaking activities when there is no clear verbal direction from the teacher. This finding suggests that auditory learners rely heavily on the clarity of oral instructions in supporting their understanding of speaking tasks.

2.3. Kinesthetic Learning Style

Compared to students with visual and auditory learning styles, students with kinesthetic learning styles also have their problems in speaking English in the classroom. Two respondents were interviewed by the researcher to find out the issues faced by each respondent.

VYG explained his problem when asked to speak without physical activity in the classroom by stated:

“Eh sometimes **I don't feel confident** when I'm asked suddenly. Then, if I'm asked to go up, **what I've memorized is suddenly lost.**”

*(Eh itu kalau dadakan ki disuruh kadang **nda pede ki juga**. Terus kalau misalnya disuruh ki naik kadang **yang sudah dihafal tiba tiba hilang**)*

MJ also stated the barrier that he experienced if he asked to speak in front of the classroom:

“There is also what I usually fear, which is **being laughed at by my friends.**”

*(Ada juga yang biasa kita takuti yang itu kalau **diketawai sama teman**)*

The interview results show that students with kinesthetic learning styles face challenges in English speaking, especially when physical activity is not involved. This finding indicates that kinesthetic learners need an approach that involves physical activity and the support of an emotionally safe environment to build confidence in speaking.

3. Students' Strategies to Overcome Their Problems in Speaking Activities Based on Their Learning Styles

The researcher also elaborated on students' strategies to overcome the problems that students have previously expressed. The following table shows the results of some students' strategies to overcome their problems in speaking activities based on their learning styles. The students gave some responses in the following table:

Table 4. The Strategies of Students to Overcome Their Problems Based on Their Learning Styles

Learning Style	Respondent	Students' Strategies
		Take notes
	Respondent 1	Make a plan

Visual Learner	Respondent 2	Memorize
		Take notes
		Prepare own aids
		Quiet and remember
Auditory Learner	Respondent 3	Be silent
		Repetition
		Aids (Voice recording)
		Memorize
Kinesthetic Learner	Respondent 4	Make some loud voice
		Watch podcasts
	Respondent 5	Asking permission
		Make body movement
	Respondent 6	Using pen/marker
		Asking permission
		Practice in real situation
		Using pen/marker

Based on the table above, the researcher extracted the information and it should also be noted that the bolded words, phrases, and sentences in the extracts signify the strategies used by the students as below:

3.1. Visual Learning Style

After knowing some of the problems faced by visual learners in the previous findings, the researcher then tried to find out what strategies they have when facing these problems based on their learning styles. Two respondents who represent students with visual learning styles have given their own strategies for the problems they experience. Their statements can be seen in the quotes below:

BAP explained the strategy that he did when preparing or delivering material in front of the classroom:

“...I usually **make small notes** so that I can read them once while talking so that I can explain them easily.”

(... biasa ku **bikin kayak catatan catatan kecil** supaya bisa kuliat ta satu kali kalau sementara bicara ma supaya gampangka jelaskanki)

SNH also stated his strategies that she used to overcome her problem:

“Make my own, uh I mean **I prepare my own pictures**”

(Buat sendiri, eh maksudnya **siapkan gambar sendiri**)

These strategies show that visual learners tend to utilize visual elements that they create themselves to facilitate their thinking and speaking processes, thus helping them overcome challenges in speaking activities.

3.2. Auditory Learning Style

Students with visual learning styles have talked about some strategies they considered of solving problems in English-speaking activities based on their learning styles. In addition, students with auditory learning styles also have their own ways of solving problems in English-speaking activities according to their auditory learning styles. The complete statement can be seen in some of the extracts below:

NIA voiced his strategy when practicing speaking with friends or in small groups:

“I’m more confident when my **voice is loud**”
 (*Lebih yakin sama percaya diri ka kak kalau **besar suara ku***)

NAI also stated the media that supported her in understanding the topic:

“**I usually watch podcasts**, a lot of it on YouTube, so I can learn a lot from there, especially English.”
 (***Podcast biasa saya nonton** kak, biasa banyak sekali di youtube itu na dari situ bisama belajar banyak apalagi bahasa inggris bisaki belajar banyak*)

The strategies employed by the students above reflect that auditory learners tend to rely on sound, either from themselves or from audio media, to reinforce understanding and confidence in speaking activities.

3.3. Kinesthetic Learning Style

Students with kinesthetic learning styles also had their own ways of solving problems they experienced based on their learning styles. This method is of definitely different from the problem-solving used by visual students and auditorial learning students. This can be seen in the extracts below:

VYG stated the aid that he used when he was require to speak in front of the classroom:

“Uh, if it's not **a pen, it's a marker**. The important thing is that there is something to hold, usually there are people like uh holding something, then they can concentrate”
 (*Eh, **kalau bukan pulpen ya spidol**. Yang penting ada sesuatu yang dipegang, kan biasanya ada itu orang kayak eh pegang-pegang pi sesuatu baru bisa konsentrasi*)

MJ also stated:

“I would like to **ask the teacher's permission** first, can we explain while there are additional movements or not”
 (*Saya **minta izin dulu kak sama gurunya** bisakah kita jelaskan sambil ada gerakan tambahan atau tidak*)

This finding confirms that kinesthetic learners need physical involvement in the speaking process as a form of adaptation to their learning style.

Discussion

1. The Most Dominant Learning Styles Used by the Students

The present study found that the visual learning style emerged as the most dominant among students in Class X Culinary A at SMK Negeri 2 Gowa, as evidenced by both classroom observation and the results of the Wordwall diagnostic tool. This finding corroborates Pritchard's (2009) theory, which highlights the preference of visual learners for pictorial and spatial representations that enhance memory retention and conceptual understanding. Students' enthusiastic responses to visual stimuli such as diagrams and mind maps and their tendency to submit video-based assignments indicate a strong inclination toward visual cognitive processing.

This result is in alignment with existing literature. For instance, Felder and Silverman (1988) emphasized that learners with a visual preference perform better when instructional methods incorporate visual aids, affirming the findings of this study. Moreover, students' well-organized notes and structured materials suggest their reliance on external visual organizers to process complex content, which is a hallmark of visual learning as noted by Dunn & Dunn (1992). However, it is important to note that while visual learners were predominant, auditory and kinesthetic learners were also present in significant proportions.

Auditory learners showed strengths in oral participation and memory recall through verbal interaction. This confirms Sedik's (2023) findings, who argued that auditory learners absorb information best through discussion and oral input. Similarly, Daiek and Anter (2004) explained that reading aloud and repetition are core strategies for auditory learners, which were observed in the current study. However, in a slight departure from the literature, some auditory students in this study exhibited difficulty in noisy environments, a problem typically associated with visual or kinesthetic learners. This contradiction may reflect contextual factors such as classroom acoustics or teacher delivery style.

Kinesthetic learners, while least represented, demonstrated a clear preference for physical involvement in tasks, supporting the claims of Hediyanah et al. (2024) that tactile engagement enhances comprehension for this group. Their excitement during simulations and preference for movement-based activities align with Cassidy's (2004) description of kinesthetic learners. However, their lower numbers and disengagement during traditional instruction reinforce existing critiques of conventional classroom models that neglect embodied learning.

Thus, while the current findings are broadly consistent with established theories of learning styles, subtle deviations were observed, particularly in cross-over challenges such as auditory learners being sensitive to noise and kinesthetic learners exhibiting social inhibition. These nuanced observations add complexity to the dominant models and highlight the influence of context and individual variation.

2. Problems of Students in Speaking Activities Based on Their Learning Styles

The second major finding concerns the speaking difficulties experienced by students, which varied by learning style. Visual learners reported difficulty concentrating and comprehending verbal-only instructions without accompanying visual materials. This confirms Linksman's (2004) assertion that visual learners need graphical input to internalize content. Interestingly, pronunciation issues were also reported among visual learners, though these may stem from general language proficiency challenges rather than learning style per se. This illustrates

that while learning styles influence certain preferences, they do not account for all linguistic difficulties.

Auditory learners, consistent with DePorter & Hernacki (2005), showed signs of confusion and uncertainty when instructions were presented without verbal clarification. These learners required clear models and verbal repetition to feel confident in their responses. A novel finding here is the reported difficulty auditory learners faced with grammar—an issue typically emphasized for visual or analytical learners. This deviation suggests that auditory preference does not necessarily guarantee syntactic accuracy in spoken language, a nuance not highlighted in existing literature.

For kinesthetic learners, speaking difficulties were primarily linked to physical constraints and performance anxiety. Cassidy (2004) and Linksman (2004) both explain that kinesthetic learners thrive through movement and hands-on engagement, and their frustration in stationary classroom contexts reflects this dissonance. The fear of being laughed at by peers—particularly when their bodily expression is constrained—represents an emotional barrier to oral performance, one that has not been adequately addressed in prior studies. The inclusion of this emotional-psychological dimension adds depth to our understanding of kinesthetic learners' challenges.

Overall, while the general alignment with past studies is evident, several contradictions emerged, enriching the current discourse. For instance, visual learners cited distractions from class noise—more typical for auditory learners—and kinesthetic learners reported social anxiety typically absent in literature focused on their active dispositions. These findings suggest the necessity of viewing learning styles not as fixed typologies but as dynamic and overlapping tendencies shaped by classroom interaction and individual affective factors.

3. Students' Strategies to Overcome Their Problems in Speaking Activities Based on Their Learning Styles

A particularly compelling contribution of this study lies in the exploration of student-generated strategies to overcome their speaking challenges. Visual learners addressed their issues by preparing structured notes and personalized visual tools, like mind maps, to guide their speech. This strategy resonates with Allen et al. (2011), who found that visually oriented learners often externalize knowledge through drawing or written outlines to support performance. Moreover, the initiative to create self-made visual aids suggests a high level of metacognitive awareness in these learners, a trait that should be encouraged in instructional design.

Auditory learners reported overcoming fear and uncertainty by recalling previous auditory input and listening to podcasts or recorded models. This aligns with DePorter & Hernacki (2005), who emphasized the value of auditory stimuli in reinforcing memory and understanding. The new insight here is the use of podcasts as a self-regulated learning tool, offering both content familiarity and fluency modeling, which could be formally integrated into classroom practice.

Kinesthetic learners adopted tactile coping mechanisms such as fidgeting with pens or seeking permission to move while speaking behavior supported by Allen et al. (2011). These behaviors suggest that even small physical engagements help regulate anxiety and maintain focus. What is noteworthy and novel here is the social-emotional negotiation of learning space: kinesthetic students needing explicit teacher approval to use movement tools during presentations.

This reveals a tension between learners' self-regulation strategies and institutional constraints, an area underexplored in previous literature.

In contrast to more standardized pedagogical models, this study shows that learning strategies are not only style-driven but also mediated by learner agency, emotional context, and classroom dynamics. These findings thus advocate for a more personalized, flexible, and empathetic teaching approach.

4. Implications

Theoretically, this study reaffirms the continued relevance of the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) model while highlighting its limitations in explaining nuanced learner behaviors, particularly in oral communication contexts. The findings support the idea that learning styles influence learners' engagement with speaking tasks but must be seen as flexible tendencies rather than rigid categories.

Practically, the research suggests that teachers should actively identify learning styles early and tailor speaking activities accordingly. For instance, visual learners might benefit from mind-mapping exercises before oral presentations, auditory learners from listening to example recordings, and kinesthetic learners from movement-integrated speaking tasks. Providing multiple entry points into learning not only improves performance but also reduces anxiety and increases classroom inclusivity.

From a policy perspective, curriculum developers should emphasize multimodal instruction and flexible assessment methods. Policies that support teacher training on learning diversity and the integration of digital tools (e.g., podcasts, video assignments, or simulation apps) can improve speaking performance, especially in vocational settings like culinary schools where practical communication is essential.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the dominant learning styles among vocational high school students and how these styles shape their experiences, challenges, and strategies in English-speaking activities. The findings demonstrate that the majority of students in Class X Culinary A at SMK Negeri 2 Gowa predominantly exhibit a visual learning style, followed by auditory and kinesthetic preferences. This distribution significantly influences how students engage with speaking tasks and the types of problems they encounter during classroom activities.

Visual learners tend to struggle with verbal instructions that lack visual aids and often experience reduced confidence when speaking without structured, image-based support. Auditory learners, in contrast, face difficulties when tasks lack oral explanations or when verbal models are absent, leading to confusion and anxiety. Kinesthetic learners, on the other hand, often exhibit unease in static learning environments and express discomfort when unable to incorporate movement or tactile engagement into their learning processes. Across all three groups, a lack of confidence in speaking activities emerged as a common challenge, although its underlying causes and expressions varied by learning style.

To navigate these challenges, students developed individualized strategies aligned with their dominant learning preferences. Visual learners created notes and visual aids, auditory learners relied on repetition and auditory media like podcasts, and kinesthetic learners employed movement, props, or requested permission for physical engagement during presentations. These

adaptive strategies reflect a high level of learner agency and underscore the importance of providing multimodal learning environments that allow students to engage with content in ways that resonate with their cognitive strengths.

Theoretically, this research reaffirms the relevance of the VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) model in understanding learner diversity, while also revealing its limitations. It emphasizes the need to move beyond rigid classifications and consider contextual and affective factors that influence student behavior. Practically, the study suggests that teachers in vocational settings should diagnose learning styles early on and integrate differentiated instructional strategies to accommodate students' diverse preferences, particularly in speaking-focused courses. Policy-wise, the findings advocate for curriculum development that includes training teachers to recognize and respond to varied learning styles, along with integrating flexible, technology-enhanced tools such as podcasts, video assignments, and performance-based tasks.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations, including its small sample size and the exclusive use of qualitative methods. Additionally, it did not address students with mixed learning styles, a group that may exhibit unique challenges and strategies. Therefore, future research should involve larger and more diverse populations, adopt mixed-methods approaches, and explore the flexibility and evolution of learning styles over time. Investigating how these styles intersect with broader factors such as digital literacy, socio-emotional development, and classroom climate may also yield valuable insights for enhancing English speaking competence in vocational education.

Overall, this study highlights that recognizing and responding to students' learning styles is not just a pedagogical preference, but a necessary strategy for empowering students to overcome speaking barriers, build confidence, and become more effective communicators in English.

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