

# EXPLORING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLE IN READING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT: A STUDY ON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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**Abstract.** The objective of this research was to identify the preferred learning styles of junior high school students when reading descriptive texts. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing a descriptive research design. To gather data, research instruments such as an observation checklist and interviews were used, with participants selected through random sampling. The findings revealed that students demonstrated a preference for different learning styles—Auditory, Visual, and Kin-esthetic—when engaging with descriptive texts. Among these, Auditory learning emerged as the most dominant learning style among junior high school students.

**Keywords:** Learning Style. Auditory, Visual, Kinesthetic, Descriptive text, Reading

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a crucial role in language acquisition, particularly when students can comprehend what they read. The more they read, the better their reading skills become (Harmer, 2007, p. 99). In today's society, the ability to read is essential for functioning effectively. Reading is important as it broadens the mind, fosters imagination, and enables self-education in any area of interest. Those who struggle with reading or avoid it often develop low self-esteem and experience feelings of isolation, which can lead to behavioral issues. In an information-rich era, reading is the primary way to stay informed. Therefore, students should actively engage in reading English to continuously absorb new ideas and perspectives. Reading not only provides knowledge but also helps students solve various problems they encounter in daily life.

Reading difficulties are a common issue among students. Many students face challenges when it comes to reading (Saadi, 2012). One significant reason for reading difficulties is that individuals have different learning paces. Low reading achievement can be attributed to varying learning preferences, as each person has a unique way of processing and understanding information (Miles, 2014). In fact, many people wish to read for research, information, or personal interest, but often encounter problems that hinder their comprehension. As a result, knowledge acquisition depends largely on the student's effort. To truly gain knowledge from texts, students must be dedicated to their studies and read more books, magazines, newspapers, and other materials.

Based on interviews with English teachers, several internal factors influence junior high school students' English learning, one of which is a lack of reading comprehension. Many students still find reading boring and are reluctant to engage, particularly during English lessons. This is evident from the low participation rates in class, where only a few students fully understand the English texts they read. Moreover, teachers often struggle to identify students' learning styles, as many students are unsure of how to recognize their own learning preferences. According to research conducted by Syam (2020), which examined the influence of visual learning styles on the reading ability of Grade 9 students at SMPN 2 Sidrap Panca Lautang District, students must actively use their learning style and read more frequently to gain knowledge.

Learning styles play a crucial role in the educational process. When teachers understand their students' learning styles, they can tailor their teaching methods more effectively, making it easier for students to grasp the material. Teachers should also employ a variety of instructional methods to cater to different learning styles, which can help improve students' reading abilities. In this study, the researcher focuses on one of the three main learning styles: Visual, Auditory, and Kin-esthetic. According to Hadi, Izzah, and Hidayat (2021) in their study "Comparative Study of Student Learning Styles on Second Grade Reading Skills Achievement," learning styles significantly affect students' academic performance, especially in reading.

Given these insights, individual skills and learning styles have the most substantial influence on students' reading abilities. This research is vital in helping students gain awareness of their learning styles, which can enhance both their reading skills and overall learning process. Therefore, based on the problems identified above, the research question formulated for this study is: "What are the learning styles of students when learning descriptive text at junior high school?"

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## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **a. Learning style**

According to Nasution (2013, p. 93), learning style is the attitude of students toward using impulses or encouragement in the learning process and student reactions to the learning process. This opinion is in line with the opinion of learning styles according to DePorter and Hernacki in Dirman&Juarsih (2014, p. 99), which is a combination of ways or attitudes of students in receiving, understanding, organizing, and processing the information they receive. The learning style here is more directed at the way or attitude of students in responding to the impulses given in learning.

Yaumi (2013, p. 126) defines learning style, namely a person's way of learning by using the usual and preferred or best tools or strategies for thinking, acquiring knowledge and skills, processing information and knowledge, and demonstrating learning. In line with the opinion according to Honey and Mumford (1992) cited by Yusof, Othman, and Karim (2005, p. 116) that learning style is the tendency of a person's learning method that is determined by the learning style that is used as a guide to his attitude and behavior in learning, Learning style can be defined as a person's habit of learning with appropriate attitudes and behaviors.

Based on the opinions above, it can be concluded that style is the way or attitude carried out by students while learning is a process of acquiring knowledge. Learning style is the attitude or way of learning done by students so that the information or knowledge obtained can be well received by understanding, processing, and conveying this information or knowledge to others so that this knowledge can be useful.

### **b. Types of Learning Style**

#### **1. Visual Learning Style**

Visual learning style is one that involves seeing, observing, looking, etc. The strength of this learning style lies in the sense of sight. For people who have this style, the eye is the most sensitive tool for capturing every learning symptom or stimulus. Sukadi (2008, p.95) People with a visual learning style like to follow illustrations, read instructions, observe pictures, review events directly, and so on. This is very influential in the selection of learning methods and media that dominantly use the sense of sight (the eyes).

Subini (2012, p. 118) A visual learning style is one that learns by seeing, so the eyes play a very important role. Visual learning styles are carried out by someone to obtain information, such as seeing pictures, diagrams, maps, posters, graphs, and so on. You can also view text data, such as writing and letters. A visual learner will quickly learn materials presented in writing, charts, graphs, and pictures. It's easier to learn study material that can be seen with his eyesight.

Conversely, they find it difficult to learn when confronted with sound or movement. From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that people who use the visual learning style gain information by using their senses. People with visual learning styles enjoy following illustrations, reading instructions, observing pictures, reviewing events in person, etc.

## **2. Auditory Learning Style**

Sukadi (2008, p.98) Auditory learning style is a learning style in a way. People with this learning style are more likely to use their sense of hearing to carry out learning activities. In other words, it is easy to learn, and it is easy to catch stimuli when they are through the auditory sensory apparatus (ears). A person with an auditory learning style has strength in their ability to hear. Therefore, they rely heavily on their ears to achieve learning success, for example, by listening to lectures, radio, dialogue, and discussion. In addition, you can also listen to the tone (singing or song). Auditory-type children easily learn material presented in sound form (lecture); once the teacher explains it, they quickly grasp the lesson material. Lessons presented in the form of writing, touching, or movements will make children experience difficulties. From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that people who use the Auditory learning style acquire information by using the senses of the ear. To achieve learning success, people who use the auditory learning style can learn by listening to lectures, radio, dialogue, and discussions.

## **3. Kinesthetic learning styles**

Kin-esthetic learning style is one that involves movement, work, and touch. The point is to learn by prioritizing the senses of taste and physical movement. For a person with this learning style, it is easier to catch the lesson when they move, feel, or take action. For example, he is learning to understand the subtle meaning when the senses have felt a delicate thing. Individuals of this type easily learn material in the form of writing or movements and find it difficult to learn material in the form of sounds or sights. In addition, kin-esthetic learning is related to practice or direct learning experience.

From the understanding above, it can be concluded that people who use the kin-esthetic learning style obtain information by prioritizing the senses of taste and physical movements. Individuals who have a kin-esthetic learning style are easy to catch when they move, feel, or take action. In addition to practice or direct learning experience

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## RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative research with descriptive design and pedagogical approach. The research location chosen by the researcher was Junior high school, Bone, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Based on the results of pre-observation, the researcher chose this location because complies with the research title criteria. 24 students would be selected as participants because the researcher wanted to know how learning styles affect students' reading skills. This research used observation and interview

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Observation result

#### a. Auditory

During the learning process in reading descriptive texts, the most commonly used learning style among junior high school students is auditory. These students frequently engage with auditory methods, such as listening to teachers read aloud or using audio recordings of descriptive passages. This approach helps them better visualize the content and grasp the nuances of the language. By emphasizing tone, rhythm, and emotional elements, the auditory method not only enhances students' comprehension and recall but also enriches their reading experience by making the imagery more vivid and engaging.

#### b. Visual

The second most commonly used learning style is visual. While not as prevalent as the auditory method, visual learning is still frequently employed by students in reading classes. In descriptive text lessons, students use visual learning techniques to improve their understanding and engagement. This often includes the use of graphic organizers, such as flashcards or mind maps, which help students break down and organize the key elements of descriptive texts.

Teachers also incorporate visual aids, such as images, videos, or drawing activities, to complement the reading material. This multi modal approach helps students connect words with images, making abstract descriptions more tangible and easier to visualize.

#### c. Kinesthetic

Kin-esthetic learning is the least preferred method among students when engaging with descriptive texts, as it garners significantly less interest compared to auditory and visual methods. However, for the students who do favor this approach, kin-esthetic learning involves hands-on activities that make the text more interactive and immersive. In descriptive text classes, kin-esthetic learners benefit from physically engaging with the material through activities like role-playing or dramatization. By acting out scenes or embodying characters, students can experience the physical aspects of the descriptions, which helps deepen their understanding of the setting, emotions, and actions portrayed in the text.

## 2. Interview result

Quoting from the student interview results, the researcher found findings consistent with the observations previously conducted. The interviews revealed a similar preference for learning methods, with the auditory method being the most frequently used. However, there were slight differences in the ranking of the other two methods. These findings can be summarized as follows:

### a. Auditory

#### Extract 1

*'Jadi dek apakah disuka mendengarkan guru menjelaskan materi didepan kelas?'*

(Do you prefer to listen to the teacher explain the lesson material?)

*'Iye kak, lebih nyaman kalau menyimak penjelasan guru saja'*

(yes, it is way more comfortable when we just have to listen to the teacher explanation)

#### Extract 2

*'Bagaimana dengan cara menghafalta dek? Apakah saat menghafalkan materi deskriptif text diulang-ulang kayak bicara dengan diri sendiri dek?'*

(When memorizing descriptive text material, do you repeat your voice as if you are talking to yourself?)

*'Iye kak, susah kalau nda diulang begitu'*

(yes, it is hard to memorize if I do not repeat the material)

Auditory learning emerged as the most preferred method among junior high school students, according to the researcher's findings. Both the interview and observation results indicated that students frequently used auditory techniques when reading descriptive texts. During interviews, most students agreed that auditory learning significantly improved their comprehension of the material through listening to audio media, such as teacher explanations or recordings.

However, students also noted that they struggled to grasp the material in noisy classroom environments or when other sounds interfered with the teacher's explanation. Despite this, they found that auditory learning encouraged them to think more critically, as it often involved active discussions that helped achieve the learning objectives more effectively.

**b. Kinesthetic**

**Extract 5**

*‘Gampang ki paham materi kalau dijelaskan pake praktik atau alat peraga dek?’*

(Do you easily understand the lesson material which is explained using demonstrations and props?)

*‘Bah kak, kalau pakai alat peraga sama kalau dipraktikkan langsung’*

(Yes, when we use props and demonstration)

Regarding kin-esthetic techniques, some students mentioned during the interview that hands-on practice helped them better understand the material. The researcher also found that incorporating kin-esthetic techniques in the classroom stimulated students’ interest by introducing new, more engaging learning practices, making the learning atmosphere more enjoyable.

However, it is important to note that the researcher also identified certain drawbacks. Some students expressed difficulty focusing when learning through kin-esthetic methods, which often involve physical practice. They found it challenging to simultaneously perform activities and comprehend the material. Additionally, students accustomed to learning by sitting quietly and listening struggled to adapt to this active approach. As a result, the application of kin-esthetic methods can sometimes present an obstacle for students who are not used to this type of learning.

**c. Visual**

**Extract 3**

*‘Lebih dipilih membaca materi sendiri atau mendengar penjelasan nya guru dek kalau belajar?’*

(Do you prefer to read the lesson material yourself rather than listening to the teacher's explanation?)

*‘Membaca sendiri kak, karena lebih lama diingat’*

(Reading all by myself because it makes me able to memorize it longer)

**Extract 4**

*‘kalau belajar reading ki dek baru menjelaskan guru ta dikelas apakah dibayangkan itu materinya? Kayak digambarkan pake imajinasi ta?’*

(When you learn about reading, did you imagine the material? Like describe it through your imagination?)

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*'Iye dibayangkan biar lebih bisa dipahami kak'*

(Yes, I imagine it so I can understand)

Regarding the visual technique, the researcher observed that limited facilities posed a challenge to its effective implementation. While some aspects of the learning process incorporated visual aids to enhance students' understanding, the interviews revealed that not all materials are suited for visualization, particularly in the context of reading descriptive texts.

Students found reading comprehension challenging when using the visual method, as it often confused them, especially if they lacked a strong vocabulary base in English. In contrast, auditory learning was preferred by many students, as it allowed them to learn pronunciation and grasp material more effectively in a single lesson. This discrepancy highlights that while visual aids can be beneficial, they may not always be the most effective for every aspect of reading instruction.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **a. Auditory Learning Method**

In descriptive text classes at junior high school, auditory learning is the most frequently utilized method. Students who prefer this approach engage with the material by listening to texts read aloud by teachers, peers, or through audio recordings. This method helps them concentrate on rhythm, tone, and pronunciation, bringing the descriptions to life in ways that silent reading may not.

Additionally, discussions and debates allow auditory learners to hear various interpretations of the text, enhancing their comprehension. The auditory learning style has proven effective in improving reading comprehension, as supported by significant improvements observed in research (Astri & Wahab, 2018). Auditory learning methods are prevalent for several reasons:

**Teaching Styles:** Observations revealed that teachers often use lecture-based methods, which align well with auditory learning. Students absorb information by listening to explanations, stories, or discussions.

**Resource Availability:** Auditory methods, such as lectures and discussions, require fewer resources compared to visual or kin-esthetic approaches. In schools with limited access to visual aids or hands-on materials, auditory methods are more practical.

**Language Learning:** In language subjects, auditory exercises are crucial for developing pronunciation, listening comprehension, and verbal fluency. Interviews showed that students prefer listening to material presented verbally by their teachers.

**Social Interaction:** Group discussions and peer interactions promote auditory learning, as students learn by listening to and engaging with each other.

Retention and Comprehension: Students often retain information better when they hear it. Interviews indicated that students at junior high school find it easier to remember and understand material delivered verbally, particularly in reading descriptive texts.

### **b. Visual Learning Method**

The visual learning method is the second most common at junior high school and is highly favored by students. Visual aids, such as graphic organizers, flashcards, and images, are frequently used to enhance understanding and retention. Research by Zarei, Roohani, & Jafarpour (2015) indicates that visual learners benefit significantly from visual materials.

Students are encouraged to create visual representations, such as drawings or flashcards, to organize and understand descriptive texts. This approach not only makes learning more engaging but also helps students connect words with images, improving comprehension and recall.

By visualizing descriptions, students can better grasp complex content and retain information more effectively. The use of visual methods bridges the gap between language and imagery, fostering a deeper connection with the material.

### **c. Kinesthetic Learning Method**

Kin-esthetic learning is the least favored method among students, as observed and confirmed through interviews. The need for physical movement and hands-on tasks can seem distracting or unrelated to traditional reading, where focus is primarily on the text itself. Students often find it challenging to integrate physical activities with understanding descriptive language, especially if they prefer more direct methods like silent reading or listening.

Kin-esthetic activities can also be time-consuming and may not appeal to introverted students or those who prefer independent work. The social aspect of kin-esthetic learning, such as group work or role-playing, can be intimidating for shy or less confident students. Despite these challenges, kin-esthetic methods are occasionally used to make learning more dynamic and engaging. Activities like role-playing or constructing models help anchor abstract concepts in concrete experiences, enhancing comprehension and retention. However, many students prefer non-performance-based activities, such as written assignments or visual projects, to demonstrate their understanding of descriptive texts without the stress of public presentations.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, junior high school students demonstrate a variety of learning styles, with a clear preference for visual and auditory methods over kin-esthetic ones. Auditory learners benefit from listening to explanations and discussions, which helps them process and retain information effectively. Visual learners find abstract concepts more accessible when they can utilize diagrams, images, and other visual aids to organize and understand the material.

Conversely, kin-esthetic methods, which involve physical activities and social interactions, may be less appealing to students when it comes to reading descriptive texts. The physical demands and social aspects of kin-esthetic learning can make it less attractive for students who prefer more traditional, direct approaches to reading comprehension.

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