

Learning Styles and Attitude toward Achievement among English Second Language Students

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ABSTRACT

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a mandatory class for international students when they come to study abroad, particularly those who come from unspoken English country. This study aims to identify the correlation between learning styles and attitude of AIIAS ESL students and their academic achievement. The respondents of this study were thirty-two students. Using Pearson r correlation, this study showed that no correlation in the respondents' achievement among the six types of Reid's learning style (the highest r-value is $\leq 0,209$ while the lowest is $\geq -0,263$). However, in contrast, the attitude and achievement in this study showed a positive correlation. Among the three aspects of attitude, the emotion and achievement are significantly correlated (r value: 0.487; *p* value: 0.005). Meanwhile, the cognitive and attitude is significantly correlated with the r value: 0,427 (*p* value: = 0.05). The weakest correlation with their attitude is behaviour where the r value is only 0.201 (*p* value = 0.269). Thus, students are aware of their own learning styles in learning new language. In terms of attitude, students maintain a positive attitude toward learning English to achieve good grades in their learning process.

Keywords: *ESL, learning Style, Attitude, Achievement, Correlation.*

INTRODUCTION

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a class where foreign students should attend before regularly accepted in foreign university. One of the institutions where many students study is AIIAS (Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies), located in Silang, Philippines. As an international institution, this school utilizes English as medium of teaching and learning. Before attending regular classes, students coming from countries where English is not their mother tongue should take an English proficiency test. However, only a few can directly pass this test; most of them who fail to pass the test should take class in ESL until they are proven ready to study regularly, either in seminary or in graduate school. As the students attend the ESL class, most of them are not able to reach the passing score that allows them to be regular students, and so they have to spend more time and money in studying in the program of ESL. They should pass the course where students learning English must be able to communicate effectively in order to overcome linguistic barriers (Katemba & Buli, 2018) . Further the ESL students or the English as a Foreign Language learner students find it more difficult to read and comprehend reading in English (Siagian & Katemba, 2016).

Studies show that there are various factors commonly found related to the learning process of ESL students. Kendal Hanus (2016) demonstrated that international students in ESL class mostly face challenges in academic achievement and their effort to survive in a foreign country and adjust to new social life, culture, and behaviour. Further, Katemba (2022) stated that learning a language is impossible without comprehending the words, and not knowing the words limits proper expression of thoughts and intentions to others. In terms of learning a new language, Sham (cited in Eshghinejad 2016), found out that the ability of the learners to study foreign language mostly related to their anxiety, attitude, learning style, motivation, personality, etc. El-Omari (2016) studied four factors, namely, attitudinal factor, socioeconomic factor, social factor, and extracurricular factor, which affecting the achievement among ESL students in Jordan and Arab countries. In the context of AIIAS ESL class, Solomon (2004) identified that another factor which affected students' performance in AIIAS ESL class was understanding the instruction from the teachers.

Among all the factors related to the learning process of ESL students mentioned above, learning style and attitude of AIIAS ESL class and their correlation to their achievement were the focus of this study. The rationale for choosing this topic was because the researcher wanted to inquire whether or not these two factors, learning styles and attitude, contributed to the students' achievement. It was hoped that this study could help the students maximize their ESL performance and, in turn, by understanding their learning styles and attitude toward learning English, minimize the number of failures. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, very few studies found a correlation between learning styles and attitude to the achievement with the implication to the students' performance in ESL, particularly in AIIAS ESL class.

Learning Styles

Vaughn and Baker (2007) explained that learning style is "learning variation between individuals in the way they approach learning tasks." Pashler et al. (2008) demonstrated that learning style is the technique in which each learner starts to "concentrate, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information." Pashler et al. also describe that learning styles can be seen as "a description of the attitude and behaviors which determine an individual's "preferred way of learning." Yasin (2012) demonstrated that by knowing their own learning process, students will be motivated to study and to engage in class's learning activity. In turn, it can help to simplify the learning and teaching process. He also pointed out a conflict when teachers enforce a certain learning style to their ESL students. Students who insisted to learn in such conditions "may not interact in class which causes a lack of participation, lack of comprehension, and lack of attention and consequently low-test scores." Seeing this importance, therefore, most current research shifts from language learning methodology to learning style (Tuan, n.d).

According to Reid (1995), there are six learning styles: visual, tactile, auditory, group, kinaesthetic, and individual learning style. An individual with visual learning styles learns efficiently from seeing words in written material, whiteboard, chalkboard, workbooks, and understands and memorizes when reading the reading material directly. Learning styles are pointers to help an individual in order to find his or her own best way of acquiring

knowledge. Keefe (cited in Reid, 1995) stated that “learning styles are stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interest with, and response to the required learning environment.”

Visual Learner. An individual with visual learning style usually learn better alone with book without any oral explanations. Ernest (2008) supported the above idea by saying that “visual learners need to see the teacher’s body language and facial expression to understand the content of a lesson fully. They tend to prefer sitting in the front row of the classroom and learn best from visual displays including; diagrams, illustrated textbooks, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts, and handouts.” Moreover, he stated that visual learners tend to take notes to get and understand the information during the lecture.

Tactile learners. According to Reid (1995), tactile learners learn intensively through experiencing the materials and doing things related to the lesson. Activities such as doing experiments in a laboratory, using and construction models, touching, and working with materials will present a successful learning situation for tactile learners. According to Etleen (2001), tactile and kinaesthetic learning styles are similar. Tactile and kinaesthetic learners acquire the lesson material well when their physical activities such as hands-on activity. Ernest (2008) pointed out that tactile learners “learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.”

Auditory Learners. Those who are auditory learners learn best by hearing words spoken and oral explanations. An individual with auditory learning styles remembers information well by reading aloud or moving lips, especially when learning new material. Etleen (2001) said that auditory learners ideally learn by listening to a lecture and participating in group discussions. Oral presentations and group discussions will be the best way for auditory learners to learn and acquire the lesson material.

Group Learners. In terms of group learners, Reid (1995) explained that students with this style learn best when studying together with others. An individual with a group learning style usually gets information better when working with at least two classmates. Jigsaw (2005) supported this idea by saying, “not only do learning groups provide students with content information, but they provide ‘hands-on practice’ in areas of teamwork, responsibility, cooperation, and tolerance.” Group learners always learn effectively through verbal language (verbalization), where the situation is never quiet for a significant length of time.

Kinaesthetic Learners. Reid (1995) stated that kinaesthetic learners typically use hand gestures and other body language on their way to communicate. By being active and participating in all learning activities, those with kinaesthetic learning styles will get all the information. In his website about perceptual learning styles, Reid explained that kinaesthetic learners learn by doing and direct involvement such as gestures in speaking, often poor in listening, response to music, tries things out and likes to manipulate objects and uses movement to help in concentrate.

Individual Learners. Reid (1995) stated that individual learners usually learn effectively when working alone. The individual learner will be more private, introspective and

independent in learning. Sprenger (cited in Rangigisan, 2010) said that “it is true that many students, especially adult age students, prefer to work alone because that is the way they have operated over since they started going to school”.

Learning style has been found to influence ESL students in studying English (Wong, 2015). Using the Learning Style Survey instrument based on Reid's questionnaire, Abidin, Rezaee, Abdullah, & Singh (2011) reveal that, in general, there is a significant relationship between learning styles and academic achievement. They have found that high, moderate, and low achievers at all achievement levels show a similar preference pattern. Chermahini, Ghanbari, & Talab (2013), using Kolb's Learning Style Inventory, indicated that there was a significant relationship between learning styles and students' performance in studying English. According to this result, the students' performance differently resulted in four categories with different learning style preferences. This study encourages educators to improve students' performance based on their learning styles preference. In contrast to the result above, Johari and Ahmad (2016) and Gohar and Sadeghi (2016) revealed in their study that there is no significant difference between students' learning styles to their achievement. Moreover, Wilkinson, Boohanand Stevenson (2014), and Ishak and Awang (2017) found no correlation between learning style and achievement.

Attitude

Attitude can be influenced by and can influence beliefs, affect, and behavior concerning the attitude. Allport (cited in Alhmali 2007) stated that attitude is “a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.” In relation to learning a second language, Gardner (1985) pointed out that attitude, together with motivation, are “influential in second language acquisition.” Gardner found out that the students who have a positive attitude “would take an assessment more seriously, would find it more rewarding to simply experience the language, and thus achieve more.” Fakeye (2010) elucidated that attitude was one of the most important factors in language learning. In the initial part of their study, Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor suggest that students can learn better a second language if they have a positive attitude toward the language they are studying (Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005). Attitude relates to “what they think and how they evaluate the target language, the target language speakers, culture and of course, the learning setting” (Gheitasy, Azizifar, & Habib, 2014).

In general, there are three aspects of attitude that have become the subjects of this study, namely: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. These three components are called “pedagogical component.” (Santilan, Garcia, Castro, Abdala, & Trejo, 2012).

Behavior. The behavioral aspect refers to how one responds to a particular situation (Abidin, et al, 2012). Kara (2009) demonstrated that students with a positive attitude could absorb the subject and learn more. They are also proved to handle or solve a problem, get what is essential for their daily life, and have a good emotional in their relationship.

Cognitive. The cognitive aspect deals with language learners’ beliefs about the knowledge they study and understand in the process of learning (Abidin, et al, 2012). Moreover, they stated that there are four steps of cognitive aspect: “connecting the previous knowledge

and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the latest knowledge in many situations.

Emotion. The emotional aspect is about the emotion involved in language learning. Feng and Chen (2009) stated that a learning process is a process involving emotion. Both teachers and students are affected by various elements of emotion; as a result, the various fruits of emotion bear. According to them, emotion deals with “a series of psychological phenomena, such as feeling, inner experience, need, desire, value pursuit, and so on.”

METHODS

This study is descriptive correlation in nature. In terms of descriptive analysis, Thomas, Nelson, and Silverman (2010) defined that descriptive research is “concerned with status”. In other words, the purpose of descriptive research is to describe and make interpretations about the current status of individuals, objects, settings, conditions, or events (Mertler, 2005). Therefore, information of the learning styles preference, attitude, their gender, length of study, and achievement of the ESL learners were recorded. Then, the researcher analysed the correlation of learning styles and attitude toward the attitude was tested with the proper statistical analysis.

Instruments

To inquire about the learning style preference of the respondents, the researcher utilized the Likert scale of Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). The researcher had tried to contact Prof. Reid to ask her permission to use her questionnaire in this study, including contacting the English Department of University of Wyoming where she was last informed that she used to work. However, as far as the researcher had tried, the result was null. Examining that this questionnaire is publicly and commonly used by researchers as found on the internet, the researcher considered that this questionnaire is public domain. A questionnaire developed by Eshghinejad (2016) was used by permission to inquire about the respondents' attitudes toward English. In terms of achievement, the respondents were asked to inform their final grade. Subsequently, based on the result of the questionnaire, the correlation between the learning style preference and attitude to the academic achievement of was measured by the Pearson r test.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study was the students who are studying in Adventist International Institute Advance Studies and have attended ESL class for the Academic year 2015-2017. All in all, there are thirty-two respondents in this study with different nationalities. During the study, some of them had passed ESL, and some were still taking the class. In this study, the researcher utilized convenience sampling. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) explained that convenience sampling is a way of choosing respondents which “involve people whom the researcher knows or people who live close to the research site.” Therefore, the usage of this sampling method in this study is based on two considerations. First, it is based on the availability of the respondents during the time of this study. Some international ESL

students who failed in ESL moved to other institutions or went back to their respective countries. Therefore, the target respondents were only those who are still staying in and around AIIAS. Second, this related to the fact that the researcher lived near the respondents.

Data Collection

The data was collected by distributing the questionnaire to the participants. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked questions to indicate their learning styles, attitudes and achievement. Regarding the achievement, the respondents were asked to inform their last grade in the ESL class. To inquire the respondents' learning styles and attitude, all the questionnaires were composed in Likert scale for its question. However, for the negative question in the questionnaire inquiring the attitude of the respondent, a different treatment was applied as follows:

For the positive items:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

For the negative items:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	4	3	2	1

Ethical Consideration

Before distributing the questionnaire, all respondents were made aware of the purpose of this research as a part of ethical consideration. They were also informed about their privacy and anonymity. Moreover, participants in this study had no financial cost or expense except for the time required in completing the questionnaires.

RESULTS

The following part presents the finding and analysis of the data of the study based on the questionnaires taken from former AIIAS ESL students. A total of thirty-two respondents from different nationalities. Out of 32 respondents, fifteen respondents were from Indonesia, seven from Myanmar, three from Korea, three from China, one from Argentina, one from Colombia, and two from Mexico (see table 1).

Table 1. The profile of Respondents' Nationality

Nationality	Respondents	Percentage
Indonesia	15	47%
Myanmar	7	22%
Korea	3	9%
China	3	9%

Argentina	1	3%
Colombia	1	3%
Mexico	2	6%
	32	100%

In term of gender, there were 20 males (63%) and 12 females (38%) (See table 2)

Table 2. The Respondents' gender

Participants	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
ESL Students	20	12	32

The Profile of Respondent' Learning Styles

The following sections present a brief description of the students' learning style (see table 3).

Table 3. The Respondents' Learning Styles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Visual	3	5.8	9.4	9.4
	Tactile	6	11.5	18.8	28.1
	Auditory	3	5.8	9.4	37.5
	Group	8	15.4	25.0	62.5
	Kinaesthetic	7	13.5	21.9	84.4
	Individual	5	9.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	32	61.5	100.0	
Missing	System	20	38.5		
Total		52	100.0		

Table 4 indicates the classification of learning styles based on gender.

Table 4 Learning Style * Gender Crosstabulation

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Learning Style	Visual	3	0	3
	Tactile	4	2	6
	Auditory	0	3	3
	Group	6	2	8
	Kinaesthetic	4	3	7
	Individual	3	2	5

Total	20	12	32
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As seen on the table, out of thirty-two students, the dominant learning style of the students was the Group (25%). The second rank was the Kinaesthetic (21.9%). The tactile was the third (18,8%), followed by the individual (15.6%). The Visual and the Group have the same portion (9,4% and 9,4%, respectively). Based on gender, the distribution of the learning styles is not the same between males and females. Among six learning styles, only auditory is not used by all males, while visual was the only learning style not used by females.

The profile of students' attitude

The following result indicates the attitude of the respondents.

Table 5. The profile of the respondents' attitude

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Behavior	6	11.5	18.8	18.8
	Cognitive	18	34.6	56.3	75.0
	Emotion	8	15.4	25.0	100.0
	Total	32	61.5	100.0	
Missing	System	20	38.5		
Total		52	100.0		

Among the thirty-two students, six students are dominance in behaviour attitude. This indicated 18.8 percent of the respondents' tendencies had better reaction, hope and confident in learning English (See Table 5). In regard to the cognitive aspect, there are 18 of 32 students who had a cognitive attitude. This indicated 56.3 percent of the respondents are more knowledgeable in learning English. They have good mental action in decision making and problem solving (see Table 5). Out of thirty-two respondents, eight students are dominant in emotion. This indicated that 25.0% of the respondents have a better mood in receiving the learning information (See Table 5).

The Profile of Respondents' Achievement

Of the students' achievement, from 6.50 - 7.00 is declared as "pass", while below 6.50 is considered as "not yet pass." Based on the students' achievement, none of the students got 5.50. In terms of gender, none among females got 5.60, but two males got this grade. As indicated in the table, the majority of the students could achieve a passing score (53.15%). While 21.9% of the students got 6.50 above, 24.9% of the participants got the lower score (See table 6).

Table 6. Profile of Respondents' Achievement

Score	Gender			Percentage
	Male	Female	Total	
5.50	-	-	-	
5.60	2	-	2	6.3
5.70	-	1	1	3.1
5.80	-	1	1	3.1
5.90	-	-	-	0
6.00	1	-	1	3.1
6.10	-	-	-	0
6.20	1	-	1	3.1
6.30	1	-	1	3.1
6.40	1	-	1	3.1
6.50	12	5	17	53.1
6.60	3	3	6	18.8
6.70	-	-	-	0
6.80	1	-	1	3.1
Total	24	8	32	100

The Correlation of Learning Styles and The Achievement

The data in the table 7 was gathered to answer the question "Is there any correlation of the learning style preference to the achievement?" As indicated in the table, six types of learning styles were inquired in the questionnaire, namely Visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, group, and individual. Using the Pearson correlation test, the result of data shows no correlation between each aspect of learning styles to the achievement. The data shows that the correlation coefficient ranges from 0.209 to - 0.263, lower than table 0.349 (where n=32). In specific, the individual and kinaesthetic learning styles have a positive result. However, these two learning styles (0.209 and 0.183, respectively) indicate a very weak correlation.

On the other hand, Audio and Group learning styles tend to negatively correlate because the correlation coefficients are -0.262 and -0.189. Although the correlation is weak, the visual and tactile correlation coefficient tends to move to 0 (0.46 and -0.23, respectively). Moreover, all the significant values of the relation between each learning style and achievement are higher than the significance level (<0.05). This signifies the tendency of the absence of correlation between these styles and the achievement. Therefore, the test of the hypothesis would be that Ho is accepted and Ha is rejected.

Table 7. Correlation of learning styles and achievement

		Correlations						Achievement
		Total Visual	Total Tactile	Total Audio	Total Group	Total Kinest	Total Individual	
Total Visual	Pearson Correlation	1	.484**	.214	.373*	.627**	.401*	.046

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005	.241	.036	.000	.023	.804
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Total Tactile	Pearson Correlation	.484**	1	-.092	.253	.478**	-.076	-.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005		.617	.162	.006	.679	.900
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Total Audio	Pearson Correlation	.214	-.092	1	.164	-.129	-.181	-.263
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.241	.617		.369	.482	.323	.145
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Total Group	Pearson Correlation	.373*	.253	.164	1	.121	-.328	-.189
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.162	.369		.508	.067	.301
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Total Kinest	Pearson Correlation	.627**	.478**	-.129	.121	1	-.006	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006	.482	.508		.973	.317
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Total Individual	Pearson Correlation	.401*	-.076	-.181	-.328	-.006	1	.209
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.679	.323	.067	.973		.252
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.046	-.023	-.263	-.189	.183	.209	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.804	.900	.145	.301	.317	.252	
	N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation of Attitude and the achievement

Table 8 is intended to answer the research question, 'Is there any correlation between English's attitude toward achievement?' The data in the table shows that among three aspects of the attitude, the emotion aspect has a positive correlation to achievement. It is shown by the point of correlation coefficient in 0.487. Meanwhile, the significant value is 0.005 which is lower than the level of significance (0.05). It means that the correlation is strong. The result shows that the correlation of cognitive aspect and achievement is almost as strong as emotion aspect where the correlation coefficient is 0.427 and the significant value is still lower than the significant level (p value = $0.015 < 0,05$). In contrast, in terms of behaviour aspect, the data show that the correlation with this aspect is not as strong as the previous two. Although the result test shows that this correlation is still in the positive area, the correlation coefficients showed that the relation between behaviour and achievement is weak, as seen in the table that the correlation coefficient is only 0.201 and the level of significance is higher than 0.05 (p value = 0.269). From the overall result, the hypothesis testing revealed that H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected.

Table 8. Correlation of attitude and achievement

		Total Behavior	Total Cognition	Total Emotion	Achievement
Total Behavior	Pearson Correlation	1	.447*	.225	.201
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	.217	.269
	N	32	32	32	32
Total Cognition	Pearson Correlation	.447*	1	.597**	.427*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010		.000	.015
	N	32	32	32	32
Total Emotion	Pearson Correlation	.225	.597**	1	.487**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.217	.000		.005
	N	32	32	32	32
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.201	.427*	.487**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.269	.015	.005	
	N	32	32	32	32

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify the correlation of AIIAS ESL students' learning styles and attitude toward achievement. The result of the study revealed that learning style did not significantly correlate with the achievement of the targeted respondents. This result was confirmed by the finding of Al-Zayed (2017). In her study, she suggested that this condition can be explained by many teachers failing to accommodate the students' learning styles in teaching and learning. On the part of the students, it is possible that they are not aware of their learning styles that make them study only according to their teacher's teaching style.

Meanwhile, the correlation of attitude of the respondents toward their achievement is positive even though the level of significance is not more than 50%. This result was confirmed by a study done by Faaz and Khan (2019). It cannot be denied that the respondents mostly had a good attitude toward English because most of them wanted to study abroad. Although some of them should be in the ESL for several terms and not all of them obtained good grades, they likely enjoy learning English because they wanted to improve their English. This was a good indicator to be considered by English instructors that they should evoke a good attitude toward English in their students' minds. As this study revealed, by having a good attitude toward English, the students can improve their achievement in their learning process of English.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to analyse the correlation between learning style preferences and the attitude to English achievement of ESL students. This study revealed that the respondents had their preference of learning styles when they study English. In terms of attitude, all the respondents showed a positive attitude toward English. 76% of students got passing grades, while 24% got lower grades in terms of achievement. However, the test result shown that the correlation coefficient was very low between each learning style toward the achievement of AIIAS ESL students. This means that the learning style preferences of the respondents did not have any significant correlation with their achievement. The level of significance affirms this result. In contrast, the test of the correlation between attitude and achievement shown different results. On average, all three

aspects of attitude, namely, cognitive, behaviour, and emotion, indicated a positive correlation toward the achievement. Of these three aspects, emotion was the champion in terms of having a positive attitude toward the achievement. Cognitive, on the other hand, was the second, and behaviour was the least.

Recommendation

It is recommended to conduct more research with the emphasis on the factors that affects the students' performance and achievement in ESL class. Some factors that need to be studied further are, for example, social, socio-economy, anxiety, and motivation of the study. This condition can create several low learning motivation and anxiety. Conducting another research emphasizing on these aspects is important due to the fact that most of Asian, specifically Indonesian students who fail in English centre are self-sponsored students. Moreover, it is recommended to conduct another study to examine the factor of failure from the perspective of the teacher's role in teaching. The last, it is recommended that in the further studies, the number of respondents should be higher in order to get a more valid a reliable result. In the context of AIIAS ESL class, this should be done by adding the range of years or by contacting more respondents. The latter option needs a special effort because most probably many of the respondent had gone back to their respective country.

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