CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the background of the study, formulation of research question, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

The English language has evolved into the most widely used global lingua franca, enabling communication across cultures and nations. Its significance transcends geographical boundaries, making it the primary medium of international discourse in fields such as business, science, education, and technology. The importance of learning English should not be ignored, without English, we can still live, but this life has developed rapidly and requires us as parties in the circle of globalization to participate in increasingly advanced life order.[1] Consequently, mastering English has become a priority for individuals seeking to participate in a globally interconnected world. In non-native English-speaking regions, English is often taught as a foreign language (EFL) within formal education systems. This distinction between English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language underscores the unique challenges faced by EFL learners, who often have limited exposure to the language outside classroom settings. In this context, the effectiveness of English language education is heavily influenced by the methods employed in learning and the compatibility of these methods with learners' individual needs.

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[1] Nurhayati, D. A.W. (2020). *Teaching Components and Types of Syllable using Video towards EFL Students: Implementing an E.S.A. Approach*. 104–114.

Effective speaking skills are foundational to communication and essential for students in the modern globalized world. Proficiency in speaking is crucial for success in academic, professional, and personal contexts, enabling individuals to express ideas clearly and engage in meaningful interactions. Speaking helps language learners increase their fluency and apply their knowledge in real-world situations. However, speaking, as one of the core language competencies, presents unique challenges for learners, especially in EFL contexts where opportunities for authentic communication may be limited.[2] Many students encounter challenges in mastering speaking skills, often due to a mismatch between learning methods and their individual learning styles. Understanding students' awareness of their learning styles and preferred methods for developing speaking skills is crucial, as it can provide insights into how learners process information and how teaching strategies can be optimized to enhance speaking proficiency.[3]

Learning styles have been a central topic in educational research for decades. Learning styles refer to the various ways individuals process, comprehend, and retain new information. Learning styles are influenced by factors such as culture, environment, age and experience.[4] According to Reid (1995), learning styles are individual, natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (cited in Al-Seghayer, 2021).[5] These preferences are shaped by cognitive, sensory, and

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[2] Richards, J. C. (2008). Teaching Listening and Speaking from Theory to Practice.

[3] Ellis, R. (2019). Understanding second language acquisition (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

[4] Anderson. (2002). The Role of Metacognition in Second Language Teaching and Learning. ERIC Digest.

[5] Al-Seghayer, K. (2021). Characteristics of Saudi EFL Learners' Learning Styles. English Language Teaching, 14(7), 82. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n7p82

emotional factors, and they play a pivotal role in determining how learners engage with instructional materials. Defined as the preferred way individuals perceive, process, and retain information, learning styles have been categorized into various models, including VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic). VAK learners use three main sensory receivers to find out the dominant or preferred learning style of an individual.[6] Learning styles theories are varied, but each of these theories holds that people learn in different ways and that learning can be optimized for an individual by tailoring instruction to his or her style.[7] For instance, visual learners may benefit from using video-based resources to observe facial expressions and lip movements, while auditory learners thrive in conversational exercises and listening activities.

A form of metacognition that helps students make wise decisions regarding their learning methods is being aware of their learning style. In the context of EFL speaking, this awareness can empower students to identify activities and methods that enhance their oral communication skills. Metacognitive awareness has been linked to greater autonomy in learning and improved academic performance, particularly in language learning.[8] A recent review (Howard-Jones, 2014) showed that over 90% of teachers in five countries (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Turkey, Greece, and China) agreed that individuals learn better when they receive information tailored to their preferred learning

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[6] Resmi, C. B. (2022). International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews Learning Styles: An Introspection into the major influential aspects on the learning process. International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, 3(5), 45–48. www.ijrpr.com

[7] Willingham, D. T., Hughes, E. M., & Dobolyi, D. G. (2015). The Scientific Status of Learning Styles Theories. Teaching of Psychology, 42(3), 266–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628315589505

[8] Rahimi, M., & Katal, M. (2012). Metacognitive strategies awareness and success in learning english as a foreign language: An overview. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 31, 73–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.12.019

styles.[9] Students who understand their learning preferences are more likely to adopt strategies that align with their strengths, thereby maximizing their learning potential. Jannah and Kasyulita (2023) found that auditory learners demonstrated a higher proficiency in speaking skills compared to visual and kinesthetic learners. [10]

In the context of EFL, the role of learning styles becomes even more significant due to the multifaceted nature of language acquisition. Learning a foreign language involves mastering various skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. Speaking in foreign language is inherently complex due to its interactive and spontaneous nature. In EFL settings, students often face anxiety and lack confidence in their speaking abilities.[11] According to Nurhayati (2015), the first students' problem is pronunciation, because English is foreign language so they get difficulties to pronounce English words.[12] EFL learners often encounter unique challenges that are absent in first-language acquisition. Limited exposure to English in everyday life, differences between the native language and English, and cultural barriers can complicate the learning process. Awareness of learning styles can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by enabling students to engage in activities that build their confidence and reduce anxiety.[13] For instance,

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[9] Howard-Jones, P. A. (2014). Neuroscience and education: Myths and messages. In Nature Reviews Neuroscience (Vol. 15, Issue 12, pp. 817–824). Nature Publishing Group. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3817

[10] Jannatul Jannah, W., & Kasyulita, E. (2023). Students' Learning Style in Speaking Skill. Journal of Applied Linguistics, 3(1), 27–32. https://doi.org/10.52622/joal.v3i1.147

[11] Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (2016). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety.

[12] Nurhayati, D.A.W. (2015). Improving Students' English Pronunciation Ability through Go Fish Game and Maze Game. *Dinamika Ilmu*, *15*(2).

[13] Macintyre, P., & Gregersen, T. (2016). Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching Emotions that facilitate language learning: The positive-broadening power of the imagination 1 (Issue 2). http://www.ssllt.amu.edu.pl

kinesthetic learners benefit from role-plays and simulations that allow them to practice speaking in a dynamic and interactive environment.

The concept of preferred learning strategies encompasses the specific techniques and activities students choose to employ based on their learning styles. For EFL learners, these strategies often include a combination of traditional and technology-driven approaches. For example, auditory learners may prefer listening to podcasts or participating in group discussions, while visual earners may engage with interactive apps that feature videos and visual cues. Recently, the role of technology in supporting EFL learners' speaking development is significance. For instance, virtual reality (VR) environments allow kinesthetic learners to engage in immersive simulations that mimic real-life communication scenarios.

Despite the growing recognition of learning styles in education, much of the research in this area has focused on teacher-centered approaches. There has been little effort to discuss such learner individual differences in depth and to apply knowledge gained in practical areas such as curriculum development, teaching methodology, and materials selection. Previous studies primarily examine how educators can adapt their teaching methods to accommodate different learning preferences. This is in line with what Nurhayati (2018) stated that college teachers need to know the pupils' attainment habit preferences and improvise teaching strategies or modify teaching material to generate pupils more interesting in the materials.[14] However, there is a lack of research

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[14] Nurhayati, D. A. W. (2018). Investigating Self Professional Development in Teaching English: The Case of English College Teachers' Role as Models. *Dinamika Ilmu*, *18*(1), 91–108. https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v18i1.1034

exploring students' own awareness of their learning styles and how learning styles' preferences influence the choice of their learning strategies in learning speaking. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a more balanced approach that considers the learner's voice. Understanding students' own awareness and preferences of their learning styles can provide valuable insights into their strengths, challenges, and preferences in choosing the most effective learning strategies.

Self-awareness of learning styles significantly impacts students' educational outcomes. Marzuki (2023) said that students who understand their learning preferences can take ownership of their learning process, selecting strategies that align with their strengths, which is particularly valuable in practicing speaking skills.[15] When students recognize their preferred learning styles, they can adopt strategies that enhance their engagement and comprehension. Marzuki (2023) emphasized that students who understand their learning styles, particularly in speaking subjects, perceive this awareness as crucial for their learning process, leading to improved performance. For students, understanding their personal learning style and the factors that influence it can help to enhance their learning, self-awareness and cognition. The student is also responsible for their learning, and should use their strengths to transform learning into a meaningful experience. Learning styles are very advantageous for students in order to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in learning.[16] In this

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[15] Marzuki, Z. (2020). Students' Learning Style and Their Perception in Speaking Subjects at English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare. Journal of Language Teaching and Pedagogy, 2, 2615–3629.

[16] Afriani, EP. (2017). The Relationship between Learning Style and Listening Comprehension Achievement of Twelfth Grade Students of SMA Pusri Palembang.

case, it is so important for the students to know and understand their own learning style to make an ideal learning experience.

In the context of speaking, different learning styles influence how students practice and refine their skills. Auditory learners may benefit from listening to native speakers and engaging in discussions, while kinesthetic learners might excel through role-playing and interactive activities. Jannah and Kasyulita (2023) reported that a majority of students preferred auditory learning styles in speaking activities, suggesting the effectiveness of auditory methods in enhancing speaking skills. Aligning teaching methods with students' learning preferences can lead to more effective learning process. Marzuki (2023) found that recognizing and accommodating students' learning styles in speaking subjects resulted in higher levels of student engagement and motivation. This alignment supports individual learners and contributes to more inclusive classroom environment.

Integrating learning styles into pedagogy can enhance speaking proficiency. Jannah and Kasyulita (2023) said that students who engaged in learning activities aligned with their preferred styles, particularly auditory methods, showed improvements in speaking skills. This underscores the importance of personalized learning methods that consider individual preferences. However, challenges remain in ensuring all students benefit from personalized learning methods. Marzuki (2023) noted that while awareness of learning styles is beneficial, its practical application in classroom settings is often inconsistent. This calls for professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills to identify and address diverse learning needs effectively. Reflective

practices, such as engaging in peer feedback sessions, can help students develop a deeper understanding of their preferences and how these influence their learning outcomes. Encouraging self-reflection enables students to adapt theory learning strategies to improve speaking skills.

This study seeks to explore the relationship between students' own awareness of their learning styles and their preferred strategies in learning speaking. By examining how students perceive their learning styles and adapt their strategies, they can choose the best method for learning speaking. Wahyuni (2021) noted that while students may have inherent learning styles, there is often a lack of emphasis on developing self-awareness and applying this knowledge to improve speaking skills.[17] Addressing this gap requires intentional efforts from educators to guide students in recognizing and leveraging their learning styles Furthermore, the study intends to contribute to the development of learning methods that align with diverse learning preferences, thereby addressing the challenges students face in acquiring speaking skills. Teachers' and materials developers' knowledge of their learners' style orientation can facilitate the development of appropriate teaching methods and instructional materials. Students can achieve greater proficiency and confidence in their speaking abilities by understanding their own learning styles and learning methods.

In conclusion, the ability to speak confidently and effectively is a vital skill for students, particularly in the context of language learning. Recognizing the role of individual learning styles and fostering self-awareness among students

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[17] Wahyuni, T. (2021). A Relationship Between Students' Learning Style and Their English Speaking Skill.

are essential steps toward improving the teaching and learning process. By investigating students' own awareness and preferences regarding their learning styles, this study aims to bridge the gap between learning methods and learners' needs, ultimately contributing to more effective and meaningful learning experiences. The researcher conducted the research to explore EFL students' own awareness of learning styles and their preferred methods for learning speaking. The research was conducted on English Education Department of State Islamic University of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

B. Formulation of Research Question

Based on the topic of this study, the researcher has identified the problems, which include:

1. How aware are EFL students of their own learning styles?

2. What learning strategies do EFL students prefer based on their learning styles in learning speaking?

C. Purpose of the Study

1. To investigate EFL students' awareness of their own learning styles;

2. To identify preferred learning strategies in learning speaking among EFL students.

D. Significance of the Study

This study has significances as written in the background, including:

1. For teachers

   The findings of this study can provide EFL teachers with valuable insights into the diverse learning style preferences and strategy choices

of their students. With this knowledge, teacher can design and implement more personalized and differentiated speaking activities that match to various learning styles. Moreover, teachers can use the results to reflect on their own instructional practices, ensuring that they offer a balanced mix of activities that meet the needs of learners in their speaking classes.

2. For students

This study will help EFL students become more aware of their own learning styles and how this awareness can guide them in selecting effective strategies for improving their speaking skills. By understanding whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners, students can adopt learning strategies that align with their preferences, leading to greater motivation and better performance. Increased self-awareness fosters independence, allowing students to take control of their language learning journey and address their weaknesses in speaking with more targeted strategies.

3. For researchers

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on learning styles and strategy use in the context of EFL speaking skill development. It opens avenues for future research by providing baseline data on students' learning styles self-awareness and preferences of their learning strategies in learning speaking, which can be further explored through experiment designs, or qualitative inquiries such as interviews and classroom observations. Researchers can also expand this study to other

language skills or compare findings across different educational levels and cultural contexts.

E.   Scope and Limitation

This study focuses specifically on EFL students at State Islamic University of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, particularly the B class of 8th semester students. The scope is limited to speaking skills only and does not cover other language skills such as reading, writing, or listening. Furthermore, the study is descriptive and quantitative in nature, relying on self-reported data collected through questionnaires. Additionally, the findings are limited to the sample population and may not be generalizable to all EFL learners.

F.   Definition of Key Terms

1. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Students

EFL refers to the learners in a non-English speaking country where English is not the primary means of daily communication. Typically, EFL students study English in formal classroom settings for academic, professional, or personal development purposes rather than for everyday communication.

2. Students' Awareness

In this study, awareness refers to the learner's conscious recognition of their learning styles and strategy preferences. Awareness is key in facilitating effective language learning. Recent research continues to

emphasize that both explicit and implicit awareness influence language skill development.[18]

3. Learning Styles

Learning styles are individual preferences in processing and understanding information. The VAK model categorizes learners into three primary types, visual (prefer using images, diagrams, and spatial understanding), auditory (learn best through listening to lectures and discussions), kinesthetic (prefer hands-on experiences and real-life examples).

4. Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are deliberate actions or techniques that learners employ to enhance their language acquisition. In this study, there are six strategies including memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

5. Speaking Skills

Speaking skills in EFL involve the ability to communicate ideas fluently, accurately, and appropriately in spoken English. It encompasses pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, grammar, and discourse competence.

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[18] Saito, K., Sun, H., & Tierney Birkbeck, A. (2018). Explicit and Implicit Aptitude Effects on Second Language Speech Learning: Scrutinizing Segmental and Suprasegmental Sensitivity and Performance via Behavioural and Neurophysiological Measures 1.