



English Learning Styles and Students' Interest in Learning English: A Correlational Study among Eighth-Grade Students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda

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[Click to the content](#) 

Abstract

English language learning plays an important role in global communication, academic development, and access to various international knowledge resources. However, various factors influence students' engagement and interest in learning English, including individual and environmental factors and students' learning preferences. This study aims to investigate the relationship between English learning styles and students' interest in learning English among eighth-grade students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda in the 2025/2026 academic year. This research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. The research subjects consisted of 33 eighth-grade students selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected through two instruments: a learning style questionnaire based on Fleming's VARK model and a learning interest questionnaire based on Hidi and Renninger's Four-Phase Model of Interest Development. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27 through validity testing, reliability testing, normality testing, and Spearman Rank correlation analysis. The results showed that visual learning was the most dominant learning style among students, while most students demonstrated high to very high levels of interest in learning English. However, the correlation analysis showed a coefficient of -0.265 and a significance value of 0.136 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no significant relationship between students' learning styles and their interest in learning English. These findings suggest that learning style preferences do not solely determine students' interest in learning English; other factors, such as teaching strategies, classroom environment, motivation, and learning experiences, also influence it. Future research should investigate other factors affecting students' learning interest using larger sample sizes and broader educational contexts.



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A. Introduction

English has become one of the most influential global languages in the contemporary era because of its essential role in international communication, academic exchange, technological development, economic activity, and cross-cultural interaction (Achmad et al., 2024; Amin et al., 2026; Ubaidillah et al., 2026). Globalization and digital transformation have increased the demand for English competence, particularly among students expected to access broader sources of knowledge and participate in global communities (Aulia et al., 2024; Fajrianur et al., 2025). In Indonesia, English remains a compulsory foreign language subject at the secondary school level; however, achieving effective English learning outcomes remains a persistent challenge (Juliana et al., 2026; Suriyanti et al., 2022). Although English instruction has been implemented for many years, Indonesian students continue to struggle to develop sufficient language proficiency, particularly in mastering productive and receptive skills. relatively moderate compared with other countries in Southeast Asia, suggesting the need for continuous improvement in English teaching and learning practices (First, 2024). This situation highlights that successful English learning is not solely determined by linguistic ability but is also influenced by various internal and external factors, including cognitive characteristics, psychological conditions, motivation, classroom experiences, and students' individual approaches to learning (Brown & Lee, 2025; Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, investigating factors related to students' engagement in English learning is important to support more effective educational practices.

One important factor that has received considerable attention in educational research is students' learning styles. Learning style refers to individual preferences regarding how learners receive, process, organize, and retain information during learning activities. The concept suggests that students may show different preferences in how they interact with learning materials, classroom activities, and instructional approaches. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, understanding students' learning preferences matters because language learning involves skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which require different forms of cognitive processing and classroom engagement. The VARK model proposed by Fleming categorizes learning preferences into four major types: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic (N D Fleming, 2001). Visual learners tend to prefer graphical representations, pictures, and diagrams; auditory learners benefit from verbal explanations and discussions; read/write learners prefer written information and textual materials; while kinesthetic learners learn more effectively through direct experience and practical activities. Recent studies in EFL education suggest that identifying students' learning preferences may help teachers design more inclusive instructional environments by incorporating a range of learning activities rather than relying on a single teaching approach (Pratiwi et al., 2024). However, the educational relevance of learning styles remains debated, particularly regarding whether learning preferences directly influence students' psychological engagement and learning attitudes.

Beyond learning styles, students' interest is another crucial psychological factor that influences the quality of learning processes (Laufs & Kempert, 2021; Pembargi et al., 2024). Interest is generally understood as a psychological state involving focused attention, positive emotional experiences, and active involvement toward a particular object, activity, or academic subject (Babanova et

al., 2024; Harackiewicz et al., 2016). Students with higher interest levels are more likely to show curiosity, persistence, participation, and a willingness to invest effort in learning activities. In contrast, students with limited interest may display reduced engagement, passive participation, and lower involvement during classroom interactions (Qian & Saidin, 2025; Verdeflor et al., 2024). In language learning contexts, interest matters because acquiring a foreign language requires continuous exposure, practice, and sustained effort over time. The present study adopts the Four-Phase Model of Interest Development proposed by Hidi & Renninger (2006), which explains that interest develops progressively through four stages: triggered situational interest, maintained situational interest, emerging individual interest, and well-developed individual interest. This theoretical perspective emphasizes that students' interest is not merely a temporary emotional reaction but can develop into a stable motivational orientation through meaningful learning experiences and supportive educational environments. Recent studies have further demonstrated that students' interest is strongly associated with motivation, engagement, academic persistence, and positive learning behaviors in foreign language classrooms (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017; Xu, 2022).

The relationship between learning styles and students' interest in learning English is an important area of investigation because both variables relate to students' experiences during the learning process (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020). Theoretically, students who encounter instructional methods aligned with their preferred ways of processing information may feel more comfortable, confident, and engaged, which could increase their interest in learning. This assumption has contributed to the popularity of learning-style-based instruction among educators (Nicholson et al., 2021). Nevertheless, empirical findings regarding this relationship remain inconsistent. Several previous studies have linked learning styles to academic achievement, language performance, learning strategies, and motivation, suggesting that individual learning preferences may influence how students engage with educational tasks (Nurhayati & Penna, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). However, other researchers have questioned the strength of these relationships, arguing that insufficient empirical evidence supports the idea that matching teaching methods with preferred learning styles automatically improves learning outcomes or engagement (Newton, 2015; Pashler et al., 2008). These contrasting perspectives indicate that further investigation is needed, especially on affective learning variables such as students' interest, which have received less attention than cognitive outcomes.

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, differences in students' participation, enthusiasm, and responses to English learning activities suggest that students may have different psychological characteristics and learning preferences (Daflizar, 2022; Melvina & Julia, 2021). At MTs Al Mubajhidin 1 Samarinda, English is taught as a compulsory subject, and classroom observations underlying this research context indicate variations in students' engagement and enthusiasm during English lessons. Some students actively participate in learning activities, while others may demonstrate different levels of involvement despite receiving similar instructional experiences. Such differences raise important questions regarding whether students' preferred learning styles contribute to variations in their interest in learning English. Previous research in Indonesia has mainly examined the relationship between learning styles and academic achievement, English

proficiency, motivation, or specific language skills, while studies linking learning styles to students' interest as an affective construct remain limited (Muhtadi'in, 2025; Nurhayati & Penna, 2023). This limitation represents a research gap because students' interest plays a fundamental role in determining sustained engagement and willingness to participate in language learning activities. Therefore, examining the correlation between English learning styles and students' interest may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how individual differences relate to English learning experiences.

The limited evidence on the relationship between learning styles and students' interest in learning English creates an important opportunity for further investigation. Most previous studies have concentrated on measurable academic outcomes, such as examination scores, language achievement, vocabulary development, speaking ability, or learning strategy preferences. In contrast, fewer studies have examined whether students' preferred learning modalities are associated with their affective involvement in English learning. This distinction matters because academic success and learning interest reflect different dimensions of educational processes. A student may make academic progress for various reasons, while interest reflects internal psychological engagement that shapes willingness to participate and continue learning. Recent research in educational psychology emphasizes that affective factors, including interest, motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional engagement, significantly contribute to successful learning experiences, particularly in foreign language contexts (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017). Consequently, investigating learning styles in relation to students' interest may provide a broader perspective regarding individual differences in English learning. Rather than assuming that learning preferences directly determine students' engagement, this research examines whether an empirical relationship exists between these two variables within a specific educational context.

This study's theoretical foundation draws on several perspectives on individual differences and learning processes. From a cognitive learning theory perspective, students differ in how they perceive, organize, and interpret information, which may influence their interaction with learning environments. The VARK framework provides a practical model for identifying such differences by describing students' preferred modes of learning representation (Neil D Fleming & Mills, 1992). However, contemporary educational research suggests that learning preferences should not be viewed as fixed categories that determine students' success or engagement. Instead, learning occurs through complex interactions among personal characteristics, instructional environments, social contexts, and psychological factors. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory explains that students' behaviors and attitudes develop through reciprocal interactions between personal factors, environmental influences, and learning experiences (Bandura, 1991). Similarly, Self-Determination Theory, proposed by Ryan & Deci (2017), emphasizes that students' intrinsic interest is shaped by autonomy, competence, and relatedness rather than learning preferences alone. These perspectives suggest that students' interest in English learning may emerge from broader educational experiences, while learning styles represent only one component of individual differences. Therefore, this study examines whether learning styles meaningfully relate to students' interest without assuming a predetermined effect.

Previous empirical studies have produced diverse findings regarding the contribution of learning styles to educational variables. Some researchers have reported positive associations between learning preferences and learning outcomes, suggesting that awareness of students' preferred approaches may help teachers develop more responsive instructional strategies. For example, research in EFL settings has shown that recognizing variations in learners' preferences can support classroom diversity and encourage student participation through varied learning activities (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, other studies have found that learning styles do not consistently predict students' academic or psychological outcomes. Research by Pashler et al. (2008) and Newton (2015) highlighted the lack of strong scientific evidence for the "meshing hypothesis," which proposes that students learn more effectively when instructional methods match their preferred learning styles. More recent studies also emphasize that multiple factors influence effective English learning, including teacher support, classroom climate, motivation, emotional experiences, and students' beliefs about learning (Wang et al., 2021; Xu, 2022). These inconsistent findings show the need for context-specific research to clarify whether learning styles are associated with students' interest in learning English, particularly among Indonesian junior secondary school students.

Based on the theoretical discussion and prior empirical evidence, this study addresses a research gap by focusing on the correlation between English learning styles and eighth-grade students' interest in learning English at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda. This research is novel in its focus on interest as an affective learning variable rather than academic achievement or language performance, which have dominated previous investigations. By examining learning styles and interest simultaneously, this study offers insight into whether students' preferred ways of learning relate to their psychological engagement with English lessons. Furthermore, the study contributes empirical evidence from an Indonesian Islamic junior secondary school context, where research regarding the interaction between cognitive preferences and affective engagement remains relatively limited. Based on theoretical assumptions about learning differences and interest development, the study hypothesizes a relationship between students' English learning styles and their interest in learning English. However, considering the ongoing debate regarding the predictive power of learning styles, this relationship requires empirical verification through statistical analysis rather than theoretical assumptions alone.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the correlation between English learning styles and eighth-grade students' interest in learning English at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda in the academic year 2025/2026. Specifically, this research aims to identify students' dominant English learning styles based on the VARK model, describe students' levels of interest in learning English based on the Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, and determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between learning styles and students' interest in English learning. This study's findings are expected to contribute theoretically by expanding understanding of the relationship between individual learning preferences and affective engagement in foreign language learning. Practically, the findings may help English teachers design more effective and inclusive instructional strategies by considering students' characteristics while also recognizing the importance of broader motivational and environmental factors. Furthermore, this research may provide valuable information for educators and

researchers regarding whether learning styles should be considered a significant factor in developing students' interest in English learning or whether other factors require greater attention in educational practice.

B. Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between English learning styles and eighth-grade students' interest in learning English at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda in the academic year 2025/2026. A quantitative approach was selected because this research aimed to measure variables numerically and examine the statistical relationship between variables through objective procedures. According to Creswell J. W. & D. (2023), quantitative research tests theories by examining relationships among measurable variables through statistical analysis. The correlational design was appropriate because the study did not involve experimental treatment or manipulation of variables; instead, it focused on determining whether a relationship existed between students' learning styles and their interest in learning English. The research locus was MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda, where English is taught as a compulsory subject. This methodological design aligned with the study's objective: to determine the strength, direction, and significance of the correlation between English learning styles (independent variable) and students' interest in learning English (dependent variable).

The study population consisted of all eighth-grade students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda during the academic year 2025/2026. Because the population was relatively small, the researcher used a total sampling technique, in which all population members were included as research participants. The final sample consisted of 33 eighth-grade students. According to Sugiono (2023), total sampling is a sampling technique in which the entire population is selected as the sample when the population size allows the researcher to investigate all available members. This technique was considered suitable because including the entire population minimized sampling bias and allowed the researcher to obtain a complete representation of eighth-grade students in the research setting. Furthermore, the selection of eighth-grade students aligned with the research objective, which focused on examining English learning characteristics and interest among junior secondary school learners. Clearly defining participants and the research location strengthened the study's contextual validity and ensured the findings accurately represented the characteristics of the investigated group.

Data collection used two structured questionnaires designed to measure the two research variables. The first questionnaire was developed based on Fleming's VARK learning style model, which categorizes students' learning preferences into four dimensions: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic (N D Fleming, 2001). The second questionnaire measured students' interest in learning English based on Hidi and Renninger's Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, which conceptualizes interest as a psychological construct involving attention, positive feelings, and involvement in learning activities (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Both instruments used a Likert-scale format to collect quantitative responses. Before distributing the instruments, the researcher obtained permission from the school and administered the questionnaires directly to students. The questionnaire approach was appropriate because the research variables involved students' perceptions, preferences, and psychological characteristics, which self-report

instruments measure effectively. According to Cohen et al. (2009), questionnaires are widely used in quantitative educational research because they enable researchers to collect standardized data from participants efficiently and systematically.

The data analysis procedure used IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 across several statistical stages. First, descriptive statistics described the distribution of students' learning styles and levels of interest in learning English. Second, the researchers tested instrument validity and reliability to ensure the questionnaires accurately measured the intended constructs and produced consistent results. The validity test used Pearson Product-Moment Correlation by comparing each item's correlation coefficient with the critical value, while reliability testing used Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. According to Field (2024), validity and reliability analysis are essential procedures in quantitative research because they determine whether research instruments produce trustworthy measurements. After instrument testing, the researcher conducted a normality test using the Shapiro–Wilk procedure to determine whether the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis. Because the data did not fully meet the normality assumption, the researcher used the Spearman Rank Correlation test to examine the relationship between learning styles and students' interest in learning English. The researcher selected Spearman correlation because it is appropriate for analyzing relationships between variables when data are not normally distributed (Field, 2024).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, the researchers implemented several methodological procedures throughout the research process. Instrument validity testing demonstrated that all questionnaire items met the validity criteria, while reliability testing indicated that both instruments had acceptable internal consistency. The learning styles questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.837, while the students' interest questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.860, indicating that both instruments were reliable for data collection. The collected data were then analyzed objectively through statistical procedures to determine the correlation between the two variables. The significance level was set at 0.05; a value below 0.05 indicates a statistically significant relationship, while a value above 0.05 indicates no significant correlation. Through this systematic methodological procedure, the study was designed to produce valid and dependable findings regarding the relationship between English learning styles and students' interest in learning English among eighth-grade students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda.

C. Findings and Discussion

This study examined the correlation between English learning styles and eighth-grade students' interest in learning English at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda in the academic year 2025/2026. The data were collected from 33 students through two research instruments: a learning styles questionnaire based on Fleming's VARK model and a students' interest questionnaire based on Hidi and Renninger's Four-Phase Model of Interest Development. Before hypothesis testing, the collected data were analyzed using several statistical procedures, including descriptive analysis, validity testing, reliability testing, and normality testing, to ensure the data were appropriate for further analysis. The findings section presents the results objectively by describing students' learning style preferences, students' interest levels in learning English, and the quality of the research

instruments. The descriptive analysis provides an overview of participants' characteristics, while the inferential statistical analysis determines whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables investigated.

Students' English Learning Styles

This study first examined students' English learning styles. The measurement used Fleming's VARK model, which categorizes learning preferences into four main categories: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. In addition, students who preferred more than one learning mode were categorized as multimodal learners. The descriptive analysis revealed that students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda demonstrated diverse learning preferences. Among the five categories identified, visual learning style was the most dominant preference, followed by multimodal, kinesthetic, auditory, and read/write learning styles. Table 1 presents the distribution of students' learning styles.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Students' Learning Styles

Learning Styles	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Visual	11	33.3%	16.15	16	17	2.09
Auditory	4	12.1%	15.45	15	15	2.62
Read/Write	2	6.1%	15.27	15	15 & 16	2.44
Kinesthetic	6	18.2%	15.72	16	17	2.45
Multimodal	10	30.3%	-	-	-	-
Total	33	100%				

Source: Research data analysis

The results indicate that the visual learning style was the dominant preference, with 11 students (33.3%) classified as visual learners. Meanwhile, 10 students (30.3%) were identified as multimodal learners, indicating that many students preferred combining several learning approaches rather than relying on a single learning mode. Kinesthetic learners represented 18.2% of participants, followed by auditory learners at 12.1%, while read/write learners represented the smallest proportion at 6.1%. These findings indicate that most students preferred learning activities involving visual representations such as pictures, diagrams, charts, and other visual materials. The relatively high proportion of multimodal learners also suggests that students may benefit from instructional strategies that combine various learning activities, including visual presentation, classroom discussion, written materials, and practical learning experiences.

Students' Interest in Learning English

The second variable this study investigated was students' interest in learning English. The questionnaire was developed based on Hidi and Renninger's Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, which views interest as a psychological condition involving attention, positive feelings, and engagement in learning activities. The results showed that students generally demonstrated positive attitudes toward English learning. No participants were categorized as having low or very low interest. Table 2 presents the distribution of students' interest levels.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Students' Interest in Learning English

Interest Category	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Very High	10	30.30%	85	69	69	3.12
High	19	57.58%	72	58	62	6.16
Medium	4	12.12%	50	39.5	38	2.58
Low	0	0%	-	-	-	-
Very Low	0	0%	-	-	-	-
Total	33	100%				

Source: Research data analysis

The findings show that most students had a high level of interest in learning English. A total of 19 students (57.58%) were categorized as having high interest, while 10 students (30.30%) demonstrated very high interest. Only four students (12.12%) were categorized as medium. The absence of students in the low and very low categories indicates that participants generally perceived English learning positively. The descriptive findings suggest that students showed positive psychological engagement toward English learning activities. They demonstrated willingness to participate, attention during learning activities, and positive feelings toward English lessons. These findings provide an important foundation for examining whether students' positive interest is associated with their preferred learning styles.

Instrument Validity Testing

Before conducting the correlation analysis, the research instruments were tested for validity. The validity test used Pearson product-moment correlation in IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The analysis involved 33 respondents, and the critical value of the correlation coefficient (r -table) at a significance level of 0.05 was 0.344. The results showed that all questionnaire items fulfilled the validity requirements. The learning styles questionnaire consisted of 20 items, and the corrected item-total correlation values ranged from 0.348 to 0.646. Meanwhile, the students' interest questionnaire also consisted of 20 items, with correlation values ranging from 0.406 to 0.696. Since all correlation values exceeded the required r -table value, all questionnaire items were considered valid and retained for further analysis. The validity results indicate that the instruments successfully represented the theoretical constructs being measured. Therefore, the questionnaires were appropriate tools for collecting data on students' learning preferences and interest in learning English.

Instrument Reliability Testing

After the validity test, reliability testing was conducted to examine the internal consistency of the research instruments. Reliability testing is an essential procedure in quantitative research because it determines whether an instrument can consistently measure the intended variables. In this study, reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient through IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. According to Field (2024), Cronbach's Alpha is one of the most widely used statistical indicators for assessing the consistency of questionnaire items, where higher alpha values indicate stronger internal reliability. Table 3 presents the reliability test results for both instruments.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Learning Styles	20	0.837	Reliable
Students' Interest	20	0.860	Reliable

Source: Research data analysis

The results indicate that the learning styles questionnaire had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.837, while the students' interest questionnaire had a value of 0.860. Both values exceeded the minimum acceptable reliability criterion of 0.60. Therefore, both instruments were categorized as reliable and demonstrated a high level of internal consistency. These findings confirm that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended constructs. The learning styles instrument measured students' preferences based on the VARK model, while the interest instrument accurately reflected students' psychological engagement in English learning. Therefore, the collected data could be considered dependable for subsequent statistical analysis.

Normality Testing

Before hypothesis testing, we conducted a normality test to determine whether the data distribution met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. Because the sample size was relatively small ($N = 33$), the Shapiro-Wilk test was selected as an appropriate procedure for assessing data normality. The normality test results are summarized below.

Table 4. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Variable	Significance Value	Interpretation
Learning Styles	0.365	Normally distributed
Students' Interest	0.030	Not normally distributed

Source: Research data analysis

The findings show that the learning styles variable had a significance value of 0.365, which was higher than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that the learning styles data were normally distributed. However, the students' interest variable obtained a significance value of 0.030, which was lower than 0.05, indicating that the data did not satisfy the assumption of normal distribution. Because one variable violated the normality assumption, the researcher selected a non-parametric statistical technique for hypothesis testing. Therefore, the researcher applied the Spearman Rank Correlation test to examine the relationship between students' learning styles and their interest in learning English. According to Field (2024), Spearman Rank Correlation is appropriate when researchers analyze relationships between variables that do not meet parametric assumptions, particularly when data distribution is not normal.

Hypothesis Testing: Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis

This study aimed to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between students' English learning styles and their interest in learning English. Because the normality assumption was not fully met, the Spearman Rank Correlation test was used. Table 5 presents the correlation analysis results.

Table 5. Spearman Rank Correlation Test Results

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r_s)	Significance Value (p)	Interpretation
Learning Styles – Students' Interest	-0.265	0.136	Not Significant

Source: Research data analysis

The analysis produced a Spearman correlation coefficient of -0.265 with a significance value of 0.136. The negative coefficient indicates an inverse relationship between students' learning styles and their interest in learning English. However, the relationship was categorized as weak. Furthermore, because the significance value ($p = 0.136$) exceeded the predetermined significance level of 0.05, the correlation was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that no significant relationship existed between English learning styles and students' interest in learning English, was accepted. Meanwhile, the alternative hypothesis (H_1), which proposed that a significant relationship existed between the two variables, was rejected. The result indicates that differences in students' preferred learning styles were not associated with meaningful differences in their levels of interest in learning English. Students with visual, auditory, read/write, kinesthetic, or multimodal learning preferences could still demonstrate similar levels of interest in English learning activities.

Summary of Main Findings

The statistical analysis revealed several important findings. First, students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda demonstrated diverse English learning styles. Visual learning was the most dominant preference (33.3%), followed by multimodal learning styles (30.3%). This finding indicates that many students preferred learning through visual representation and combinations of different learning approaches. Second, students generally showed positive attitudes toward learning English. Most participants were categorized as having high interest (57.58%), followed by very high interest (30.30%). No students were categorized as having low or very low interest, indicating that participants perceived English learning positively. Third, although students showed different learning style preferences and relatively high interest, the statistical analysis showed that these variables were not significantly related. The Spearman rank correlation ($r_s = -0.265$; $p = 0.136$) indicates that learning style preferences alone could not explain variation in students' interest in learning English. This finding makes an important empirical contribution because it shows that students' affective engagement in English learning may not depend on their preferred learning modes. Instead, broader educational factors may influence students' interest, including classroom environment, teacher support, motivation, learning experiences, and social interaction.

This study's findings provide important evidence on the relationship between English learning styles and eighth-grade students' interest in learning English at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda. The most significant finding is that although students showed diverse learning style preferences and generally high interest in learning English, the statistical analysis showed no significant correlation between the two variables. The Spearman Rank Correlation test produced a coefficient of $r_s = -0.265$ with a significance value of $p = 0.136$ ($p > 0.05$). This result indicates that students' preferred learning styles were not significantly associated with their

interest in learning English. Therefore, the findings suggest that learning style preference alone cannot be considered a determining factor in students' interest in learning English within this research context.

The finding that visual learning style dominates provides an important description of students' learning characteristics. In this study, visual learners represented the largest group (33.3%), followed by multimodal learners (30.3%). This result indicates that many students preferred learning activities involving visual materials, such as pictures, diagrams, written illustrations, and other visual representations. This finding aligns with Fleming's VARK framework, which explains that learners may prefer specific modes of receiving and processing information (N D Fleming, 2001). However, the dominance of a particular learning style does not necessarily indicate that students with that style will have higher motivation or stronger interest in learning. Learning preferences describe how students may prefer to interact with information, but they do not automatically explain why students become interested or engaged in a particular subject.

The relatively high proportion of multimodal learners also has important implications for English teaching practices. The presence of multimodal learners suggests that many students do not rely on a single learning mode but combine different approaches when learning. This finding supports contemporary perspectives in education that emphasize providing diverse instructional experiences rather than strictly matching teaching methods to individual learning styles. Pratiwi et al. (2024) argued that incorporating various learning activities in EFL classrooms can create more inclusive learning environments because students may benefit from different forms of instructional exposure. Therefore, although learning styles were not significantly related to students' interest in this study, recognizing students' learning preferences may still help teachers design varied classroom activities.

The second important finding concerns students' interest in learning English. The descriptive results showed that most participants demonstrated high (57.58%) and very high (30.30%) levels of interest. This finding indicates that students generally possessed positive attitudes toward English learning activities. According to Hidi & Renninger (2006) Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, sustained interest develops through meaningful experiences, attention, positive emotions, and continuous involvement. The high level of interest found in this study suggests that students may have developed positive psychological engagement toward English learning. This condition is beneficial because interest has been widely recognized as an important factor influencing students' persistence, participation, and willingness to invest effort in learning activities.

However, the lack of a significant correlation between learning styles and interest challenges the assumption that students' preferred learning modes directly influence their enthusiasm for learning English. The result supports previous criticisms regarding the educational application of learning styles. Pashler et al. (2008) argued that empirical evidence supporting the "meshing hypothesis"—the assumption that students learn better when instruction matches their preferred learning styles—is insufficient. Similarly, Newton (2015) emphasized that although learning styles remain popular among educators, their predictive power in explaining learning outcomes and psychological variables remains questionable. This study extends this discussion by showing that learning

styles may also have limited explanatory power for students' interest in learning English.

The results can also be interpreted through Self-Determination Theory proposed by Ryan & Deci (2017). According to this theory, students' intrinsic interest is primarily influenced by the fulfillment of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Students are more likely to develop interest when they feel capable of completing learning tasks, experience meaningful relationships with teachers and peers, and have opportunities to participate actively in the learning process. From this perspective, students' interest in English learning may be shaped more strongly by classroom experiences, teacher support, learning confidence, and social interaction than by their preferred learning styles. Therefore, the finding that learning styles were not significantly correlated with interest is theoretically reasonable because interest represents a complex psychological construct influenced by multiple factors.

Furthermore, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides another explanation for the findings. Bandura (1991) stated that human behavior develops through reciprocal interactions among personal characteristics, environmental influences, and behavioral experiences. In the context of English learning, students' interest may emerge from interactions between their beliefs about English ability, classroom atmosphere, teacher encouragement, peer relationships, and previous learning experiences. Learning style preference is only one personal characteristic and may not strongly influence students' affective responses to English learning. This theoretical interpretation explains why students with different learning styles in this study could demonstrate similar levels of interest.

The findings are partly consistent with Muhtadi'in (2025) research, which reported that learning styles did not significantly determine English-related outcomes. However, the findings differ from several previous studies that identified significant relationships between learning styles and academic achievement or language performance (Nurhayati & Penna, 2023). This difference may be explained by the different dependent variables examined. Previous studies generally focused on cognitive outcomes, such as achievement scores or language proficiency, whereas this study examined an affective variable, namely students' interest. Therefore, learning styles may potentially influence how students process information or perform academic tasks, but they may not directly influence their psychological engagement with English learning.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research involved only 33 eighth-grade students from one school, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the study relied on questionnaire data, meaning that students' responses reflected self-reported perceptions that may be influenced by personal interpretation. Third, the research examined only the relationship between learning styles and interest and did not include other potentially influential variables, such as motivation, teacher teaching strategies, classroom environment, self-efficacy, or family support. Future research should therefore involve larger samples from different educational contexts and incorporate additional variables to provide a more comprehensive explanation of students' interest in learning English.

Overall, this study contributes to understanding individual differences in EFL learning by showing that students' learning styles are not necessarily associated with their interest in learning English. The findings suggest that teachers should

not rely exclusively on learning-style-based instruction to increase students' engagement. Instead, English teachers are encouraged to develop supportive, interactive, and meaningful learning environments that strengthen students' motivation and interest. Theoretically, this study contributes evidence to the ongoing discussion of the role of learning styles in education; practically, it offers insights for teachers and educational practitioners in designing learning experiences that consider students' broader psychological and contextual needs.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that English learning styles and students' interest in learning English among eighth-grade students at MTs Al Mujahidin 1 Samarinda in the academic year 2025/2026 are not statistically related. The findings revealed that students possessed diverse learning style preferences based on the VARK model, with visual learning style identified as the most dominant preference, followed by multimodal, kinesthetic, auditory, and read/write learning styles. Furthermore, most students showed high and very high levels of interest in learning English, indicating positive engagement and attitudes toward English learning activities. However, the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis produced a coefficient of $r = -0.265$ with a significance value of $p = 0.136$ ($p > 0.05$), confirming that students' learning style preferences were not significantly associated with their level of interest in English learning. These findings show that students' interest in learning English is a complex affective construct that individual learning preferences alone cannot explain and may be influenced by broader factors, such as teaching strategies, classroom environment, motivation, learning experiences, and social interactions. The results contribute to previous discussions on learning styles by providing empirical evidence that supports the argument that learning styles should not be considered the primary determinant of students' engagement or interest. In practical contexts, this study suggests that English teachers should develop diverse, meaningful, and interactive learning environments rather than relying exclusively on learning-style-based instruction to enhance students' interest. Although this research provides valuable insights within the context of an Indonesian junior secondary school, its findings are limited by the small sample size and the involvement of participants from only one educational institution. Therefore, future studies should involve larger, more diverse populations and explore additional variables, such as motivation, self-efficacy, classroom climate, and teaching approaches, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' interest in learning English.

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