

Learning Style Preferences among Second-Semester EFL Students in Speaking Class

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ABSTRACT

While learning styles significantly influence language acquisition, limited research explores how they shape student perceptions in Indonesian EFL speaking classes. This study identified the dominant learning styles of second-semester EFL students using the VARK model and investigated how students with different modalities perceive speaking activities. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, a VARK questionnaire was distributed to 21 English Education students at Universitas Riau Kepulauan, followed by interviews with three students representing each dominant style. The quantitative results showed that the auditory modality accumulated the highest number of choices across the 16 questionnaire items (117 choices in total, not 117 individual students), followed by visual (78 choices) and read/write (75 choices). Interview findings revealed that learning preferences were highly task-dependent. Auditory learners preferred interactive discussions and immediate oral feedback. In contrast, visual learners favored multimedia and delayed written feedback to reduce anxiety, while read/write learners relied on text support, like scripts, to build speaking confidence. These findings suggest that because auditory learning dominates this context, speaking instructors should move away from uniform teaching methods. Instead, they should incorporate multimodal activities and differentiated feedback to create a more inclusive, student-centered classroom.

Keywords: *auditory learning, EFL speaking, learning styles, multimodal activities, VARK model*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most essential skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners because it enables students to communicate effectively in academic, professional, and social contexts. As English proficiency becomes an increasingly important competence in higher education, students are expected not only to understand the language but also to express their ideas fluently and confidently. However, developing speaking proficiency requires more than classroom attendance or exposure to language input; it also depends on the use of effective learning strategies that accommodate learners' individual needs and characteristics (Atmowardoyo et al., 2023). Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging language skills for many EFL learners. Previous studies have reported that students

frequently experience linguistic difficulties, including limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, and pronunciation problems, which hinder their ability to communicate effectively. In addition, affective factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence often reduce students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. These challenges are further compounded by limited opportunities for authentic communicative practice and the continued use of teacher-centered instructional approaches that do not fully engage learners in meaningful interaction (Ikhsan, 2026). Such findings suggest that improving speaking instruction requires not only strengthening students' linguistic competence but also creating learning environments that accommodate the diverse characteristics and learning needs of EFL learners.

Since learners differ in the ways they acquire and process information, understanding their learning preferences has become an essential aspect of effective English language teaching. Learners bring diverse individual characteristics, including cognitive abilities, personality traits, motivation, prior knowledge, and learning styles, all of which influence how they perceive, process, and retain language input. Recognizing these differences enables teachers to design more adaptive, inclusive, and learner-centered instructional practices that accommodate students' varying learning needs (Teymurzada & Yusubova, 2026). Among these individual characteristics, learning styles have received considerable attention because they describe learners' preferred ways of receiving, organizing, and remembering information during the learning process. Reid (1996, as cited in Manipuspika, 2020) defines learning styles as individuals' natural preferences for learning most effectively, while Fleming (2001, as cited in Moayyeri, 2015) describes them as different ways in which learners receive and respond to information. One of the most widely adopted frameworks for identifying learning styles is the VARK model, developed by Neil Fleming, which categorizes learning preferences into four modalities: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. This model has been widely applied in educational settings because it provides a practical framework for understanding how students engage with learning activities and instructional materials. Recent studies in EFL contexts have also demonstrated the importance of considering learners' learning style preferences when designing classroom instruction. For instance, a study published in *EEAL Journal* reported that visual learning was the dominant preference among EFL students, followed by auditory and kinesthetic styles, suggesting that integrating various instructional media and multimodal learning activities can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and learning effectiveness (Sopwani et al., 2025). Likewise, differentiated instruction based on the VARK model encourages teachers to employ a variety of teaching strategies that accommodate students with different learning preferences, thereby creating more effective, inclusive, and student-centered learning environments (Noviska & Anastasia, 2023).

Recent studies applying the VARK framework have consistently shown that EFL learners exhibit diverse learning preferences, indicating that a single instructional approach may not accommodate the needs of all students (Noviska & Anastasia, 2023). However, findings regarding dominant learning styles remain inconsistent across educational contexts. Several studies conducted in Indonesian EFL classrooms reported that visual learning was the most dominant preference, followed by auditory and kinesthetic learning, and recommended incorporating visual media, multimedia resources, and varied classroom activities to improve students' engagement and comprehension (Sopwani et al., 2025). In contrast, another study

involving English Language Education students found that multimodal learning was the most frequently observed preference, with many students combining two or more modalities rather than relying on a single style, suggesting that EFL learners often require flexible instructional approaches that integrate multiple forms of learning activities.

In contrast, Triananda (2022) reported that English Language Education students predominantly demonstrated multimodal learning preferences, particularly combinations of read/write and kinesthetic modalities, suggesting that many learners rely on more than one learning style depending on learning tasks and classroom situations. Likewise, Hardiyanto (2023) highlighted that implementing VARK-based instruction assisted lecturers in presenting language materials through multiple instructional techniques, although the study mainly examined teachers' classroom practices rather than students' own learning style preferences. Furthermore, Manipuspika (2020) found that although visual learning remained the dominant preference among Indonesian EFL students, auditory, bimodal, and kinesthetic preferences were also evident, indicating that English classrooms should provide varied instructional strategies to accommodate diverse learner characteristics. Meanwhile, a recent study conducted among English Language Education students at a private university in Indonesia revealed that students exhibited both single-modal and multimodal learning preferences, reinforcing the view that learner diversity should become an important consideration in designing English language instruction (V. W. Saputra & Hardianti, 2026).

Collectively, these studies suggest that learning style preferences vary across educational contexts and learner populations. Despite consistently highlighting the pedagogical value of understanding students' learning preferences, previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding dominant learning styles and have largely focused on English learning in general or on instructional implementation. Consequently, further investigation is needed to examine learning style preferences within more specific learning contexts, particularly speaking classes involving Indonesian university EFL students.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the importance of learning style preferences in EFL learning, most of them have primarily focused on identifying students' learning styles in general English learning contexts, investigating the implementation of VARK-based instruction, or examining the relationship between learning styles and learning outcomes, such as speaking proficiency and vocabulary acquisition (Sopwani et al., 2025; Noviska & Anastasia, 2023; V. W. Saputra & Hardianti, 2026; B. E. Saputra & Dewi, 2024). However, speaking is a productive skill that requires learners to process ideas, organize information, and communicate meaning simultaneously (Ikhsan, 2026), which makes it a more demanding context for examining learning style preferences than receptive or general language skills. Despite the growing body of research on learning styles, limited attention has been given to how students with different dominant VARK learning styles perceive their preferred speaking learning activities specifically. This gap is particularly pressing among second-semester Indonesian EFL university students, who are still building the foundational speaking confidence and strategies that shape their later academic performance, yet remain underrepresented in existing VARK-based speaking research. Understanding their learning style preferences at this early stage may therefore help lecturers design speaking activities that better accommodate learners' preferences and encourage more active classroom participation from the outset of their academic journey.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the dominant learning style preferences among second-semester EFL students in speaking classes using the VARK model and to explore how students with different dominant VARK learning styles perceive their preferred speaking learning activities. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning style preferences and their perceptions of speaking learning activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature on learning styles in EFL contexts and to provide practical insights for English lecturers in designing more learner-centered and inclusive speaking instruction that accommodates students' diverse learning preferences. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. Which learning style is most preferred by second-semester EFL students in speaking classes?
2. How do second-semester EFL students with different dominant VARK learning styles perceive their preferred speaking learning activities?

METHOD

This section outlines the methodology used to investigate EFL students' learning style preferences in speaking classes. A clear, objective, and systematic description of the research process is highly essential to allow other researchers to understand, evaluate, and replicate the study in similar educational contexts. By explaining what was done and why specific procedures were selected, this section ensures that the study is conducted with high transparency and academic reliability.

To provide a comprehensive yet easy-to-follow explanation, this section is organized into several essential subsections. It begins with the research design, which justifies the use of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, followed by a description of the research participants from the English Education study program. Furthermore, it details the two research instruments used namely the adapted VARK questionnaire and semi-structured interviews—as well as the step-by-step procedures for collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically an explanatory sequential design, to investigate students' learning style preferences in speaking classes. In this design, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explain and strengthen the quantitative findings. This approach allows researchers to obtain a broader understanding of the research problem by combining numerical data with participants' personal experiences (Kalbarczyk et al., 2021).

The quantitative phase evaluated students' preferences across all four VARK modalities (Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic), while the subsequent qualitative phase focused only on the dominant styles found in the cohort. After the questionnaire results were analyzed, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants who represented each dominant learning style. Specifically, the three interview participants were purposively selected as the students whose individual VARK questionnaire scores showed the

clearest single-modality dominance within each of the three represented categories (Visual, Auditory, and Read/Write), so that each interviewee's profile closely matched the modality they were chosen to represent; no participant was selected for Kinesthetic because none of the 21 students obtained a dominant Kinesthetic score. Similar approaches have been applied in previous studies on learning styles in English language learning, which combined questionnaire data with participants' responses to gain a deeper understanding of students' learning preferences (Moayyeri, 2015; B. E. Saputra & Dewi, 2024; Zumrudiana & Alejandro, 2025). Therefore, this research design was considered appropriate for answering the research question comprehensively.

Participants or Data Sources

The participants of this study were 21 second-semester students from the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau Kepulauan, Indonesia. All students participated in the quantitative phase by completing the learning style questionnaire. Total sampling was used because the number of students in the class was relatively small, allowing all students to participate in the study.

After the questionnaire data were analyzed, three students were selected using purposive sampling to participate in the qualitative phase. Because the quantitative results revealed that no students in the class possessed a dominant Kinesthetic (K) learning style, the qualitative phase focused exclusively on the remaining three dominant modalities. Each participant represented one dominant learning style category: Visual, Auditory, and Reading/Writing, based on the questionnaire results. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the participants' learning experiences, preferences, and opinions regarding speaking activities. The interview data were used to support and explain the findings obtained from the questionnaire. Participation in both phases of the study was voluntary. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided informed consent. Participants' identities were kept confidential throughout the study, and pseudonymous codes were used to report their responses in the questionnaire and interview findings.

Instruments

This study employed two research instruments to collect quantitative and qualitative data: an adapted VARK questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Each instrument was used to answer a different research question in accordance with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design.

The first instrument was an adapted VARK questionnaire developed by Fleming (2006, as cited in Hardiyanto, 2023), consisting of 16 items covering all four learning style categories: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. The questionnaire was used to identify the dominant learning style preferences of second-semester EFL students in speaking classes, addressing the first research question. For each item, participants selected the single response option that best reflected their learning preference during speaking class activities; responses were scored by tallying the frequency with which each modality was selected across all 16 items, as presented in Table 1. Prior to distribution, the adapted items were reviewed for clarity and contextual relevance to the speaking class setting. Although the questionnaire evaluated all four VARK modalities, the subsequent qualitative phase involved only the Visual, Auditory,

and Read/Write categories, because no participant obtained a dominant Kinesthetic score; this distinction is described further in the Participants or Data Sources and Results sections. The VARK questionnaire has been widely used to identify learning style preferences in EFL contexts (Moayyeri, 2015; B. E. Saputra & Dewi, 2024).

The second instrument was a semi-structured interview conducted with three participants selected based on the questionnaire results. Since no students demonstrated a dominant Kinesthetic style, each interviewed participant represented one of the active dominant categories found in the cohort: Visual, Auditory, or Read/Write. The interview was designed to answer the second research question by exploring students' perceptions of their preferred learning activities in speaking classes. The interview guide included questions about students' learning experiences, preferred classroom activities, and the reasons for their preferences. Follow-up questions were asked when necessary to obtain more detailed responses.

Using these two instruments allowed the researcher to collect complementary quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire identified students' dominant learning style preferences, while the interview provided deeper explanations of how students with different dominant learning styles perceived learning activities in speaking classes. This combination of instruments is consistent with previous mixed-methods studies in EFL contexts that used questionnaires and interviews to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning preferences (B. E. Saputra & Dewi, 2024; Zumrudiana & Alejandro, 2025).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved distributing the VARK-based questionnaire to second-semester EFL students who participated in the speaking class. Before completing the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the procedures for answering the questionnaire. The participants were asked to provide responses based on their own learning experiences and preferences in learning speaking skills.

After the questionnaire responses were collected, the researcher analyzed the results to identify students' dominant learning style preferences based on the VARK categories. The questionnaire data were then used as a reference for selecting participants for the interview. As no students exhibited a dominant Kinesthetic preference, three participants representing the dominant Visual, Auditory, and Read/Write styles were selected to provide deeper information about their experiences and perceptions of learning activities in the speaking classroom.

The second stage involved conducting semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. The interviews aimed to explore students' opinions, learning strategies, and experiences related to their preferred learning styles. The questions focused on the types of activities that helped them learn speaking skills, their preferred ways of receiving learning materials, and how their learning preferences affected their participation in classroom activities.

The combination of questionnaire and interview data allowed the researcher to obtain both numerical and descriptive information about students' learning style preferences. This data collection procedure was consistent with previous studies that investigated learning styles in EFL contexts, such as Saputra and Dewi (2024) and Zumrudiana and Alejandro (2025), which examined students' learning preferences and their relationship with English language learning.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process involved both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews. The quantitative data from the VARK questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The researcher calculated the frequency and percentage of each learning style category to identify the dominant learning style preferences of second-semester EFL students in speaking classes. The results of this analysis were used to answer the first research question and to select participants for the interview.

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, the interview recordings were transcribed into written form. The researcher then read the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data and identified meaningful responses related to students' learning experiences, preferred speaking activities, and the reasons for their preferences. Similar responses were grouped into themes, and each theme was interpreted to answer the second research question.

Finally, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' learning style preferences in speaking classes. The questionnaire identified the students' dominant learning styles, while the interview findings explained how students with different dominant learning styles perceived their preferred learning activities. This integration of data was consistent with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design used in this study (Kalbarczyk et al., 2021).

RESULTS

Learning Style Preferences of Second-Semester EFL Students

This section presents the findings obtained from the descriptive statistical analysis of the questionnaire data distributed to 21 students. The questionnaire evaluates the students' preferences across four core learning modalities: Visual (Option 1), Auditory (Option 2), Read/Write (Option 3), and Kinesthetic (Option 4) within the context of Speaking class activities. Because each of the 21 students responded to all 16 questionnaire items, the values reported in Table 1 represent the accumulated number of choices for each modality across items, not the number of individual students who identified with that modality. The complete distribution of the students' responses for each questionnaire item is systematically detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of Students' Dominant Learning Styles

No.	Questionnaire Item / Learning Scenario	Visual (1)	Auditory (2)	Read/Write (3)	Kinesthetic (4)
1.	Understanding instructions or new topics for speaking practice.	4	11	5	1
2.	Learning from a public speaking tutorial website/video features.	7	7	4	3
3.	Finding out details about a group storytelling project assignment.	3	6	6	6

4.	Choosing a topic for an English speech or Speaking assignment.	5	5	6	5
5.	Practicing or studying independently for the Speaking exam.	5	10	2	4
6.	Saving time and energy by choosing effective exam preparation methods.	4	8	3	6
7.	Learning new debate techniques or language games in class.	7	8	5	1
8.	Preference for instructor support when experiencing speech difficulties.	3	9	5	4
9.	Discovering apps/features to record and check speaking fluency.	4	4	8	5
10.	Enjoyment of online materials for additional Speaking practice.	2	8	8	3
11.	Preferred medium for presenting group discussion results.	9	6	5	1
12.	Most helpful type of instructor feedback after a speech presentation.	4	9	5	3
13.	Behavioral tendency when reading a draft of a play or dialogue script.	5	4	7	5
14.	Ideal Speaking class environment setup to support learning.	5	8	3	5
15.	Strategy used to memorize new vocabulary for an oral exam.	3	9	2	7
16.	Preferred role when designing a group project for final assessment.	8	5	1	7
Total	Frequencies Across All Questionnaire Items	78	117	75	66

As shown in Table 1, the descriptive analysis reveals that the auditory modality is the most dominant learning style preference among the participants, accumulating a total frequency of 117 choices across the 16 items. Visual preferences ranked second with 78 choices, closely followed by Read/Write with 75 choices. Kinesthetic preferences obtained the lowest frequency, totaling 66 choices. Although kinesthetic responses were still selected for specific items, no individual student's accumulated scores across all 16 items resulted in an overall dominant Kinesthetic profile, which is why Kinesthetic remains represented in Table 1 but was not represented among the interview participants (see Participants or Data Sources).

A closer inspection of specific items highlights distinctive preference distribution patterns across different scenarios. In Item 1, regarding the understanding of initial instructions, the auditory delivery gathered a substantial majority of 11 choices, whereas the kinesthetic approach received only 1 choice. Similarly, for Item 5, which focuses on independent study for a speaking exam, auditory methods accumulated 10 choices. Visual modes showed higher frequency during presentation contexts, with 9 choices recorded for using visual media to present group discussion results (Item 11). For independent tasks, discovering technical apps (Item 9) and reviewing dialogue scripts (Item 13) generated higher read/write engagement, yielding 8 and 7 choices respectively.

Students' Perceptions of Preferred Speaking Activities Based on Dominant VARK Learning Styles

To address the research question regarding how second-semester EFL students with different dominant VARK learning styles perceive their preferred speaking learning activities, a thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative interview transcripts. Based on the initial learning style assessment of the cohort, no students demonstrated a dominant Kinesthetic (K) learning style. Therefore, the findings focus exclusively on the remaining three modalities: Visual, Auditory, and Read/Write. Table 2 summarizes the participants' preferred speaking activities, learning media, coping mechanisms for mismatched instruction, and feedback preferences.

Table 2
Summary of EFL Students' Perceptions of Speaking Learning Activities Based on Dominant VARK Learning Styles

Dominant Learning Style	Preferred Speaking Activities	Preferred Learning Media	Coping Strategy When Teaching Does Not Match Their Preference	Feedback Preference
Visual	Speaking activities supported by videos, demonstrations, and visual examples	Videos, PowerPoint slides with images, visual illustrations	Looking for visual references or reading written materials to reinforce understanding	Written feedback after speaking performance
Auditory	Oral presentations, discussions, question-and-answer sessions	Lecturer's verbal explanation, classmates' discussions, spoken examples	Asking questions, listening carefully to peers, relying on verbal repetition	Immediate oral feedback from the lecturer
Read/Write	Reading texts before speaking, preparing notes or scripts	PowerPoint containing text, handouts, written instructions	Preparing written notes independently and reviewing materials before class	Written feedback or a combination of written and oral feedback

Visual Students' Perceptions

The visual participant (V1) emphasizes the role of video-based multimedia in facilitating speaking preparation, explaining that videos allow them to observe articulation and pronunciation more concretely: "Videos let me see how the lips move and how words are pronounced, so I can visualize it more clearly." For instructional support, this learner prefers brief, clearly structured PowerPoint slides over dense text, noting, "Clear instructions really help because they're not long-winded, so I can grasp the material quickly just by looking at the PowerPoint." Regarding evaluation, the visual learner expresses a strong preference for receiving feedback after completing the presentation rather than being corrected mid-speech, stating, "The lecturer's feedback usually comes as a sudden correction while we are presenting, and that makes us nervous and less confident... I hope the lecturer gives feedback after we finish presenting, so our confidence remains intact until the end."

Auditory Students' Perceptions

Auditory learners (A1) prioritize interactive verbal environments, such as presentations and question-and-answer sessions. The participant highlights that active classroom discussion is a primary motivator for improving fluency, noting, "I want to discuss the material more deeply... especially to improve my fluency." This learner prefers simple presentation slides accompanied by interactive verbal explanations from the lecturer. Unlike the visual learner, the auditory participant welcomes immediate oral feedback from the lecturer, noting that direct corrections regarding grammar and fluency enhance their motivation to improve.

Read/Write Students' Perceptions

The Read/Write participant (R1) demonstrates a consistent reliance on textual scaffolding. The student relies on reading scripts and PPT text to build pronunciation confidence, noting that speaking without prior reading leads to anxiety, explaining, "I usually prepare by reading the text first and memorizing it, so when I'm in front of the class, I'm no longer nervous or stumbling." This learner performs best when slide presentations are paired with handwritten notes on the whiteboard. When faced with visual-only materials, the student suggests the inclusion of subtitles to match their preference for text-based learning. Finally, this participant advocates for a blended approach that integrates reading, audio, and visual materials to accommodate diverse learning needs.

DISCUSSION

The descriptive results of this study indicate that the auditory modality is the most dominant learning style preference among second-semester EFL students in the Speaking class, accumulating 117 of the total choices across the 16 questionnaire items, followed by visual (78), read/write (75), and kinesthetic (66) modalities (see Table 1). This dominance suggests that most learners rely on listening, verbal explanation, and oral interaction as their primary channel for processing Speaking input, which reflects the teacher-fronted nature of Indonesian EFL classrooms (Zein et al., 2020). This modality is deeply ingrained in students' early tertiary experiences, where oral delivery remains the primary input channel (Hadizadeh, 2025). The particularly high auditory scores for understanding instructions (Item 1: 11 of 21 choices) and independent exam preparation (Item 5: 10 of 21 choices) reinforce the view that oral communication is central to learners' understanding and answers the research questions regarding how students navigate classroom activities (Oubni, 2025). This tendency also clarifies that the target language functions as the principal medium of language learning to foster meaningful engagement (Najeeb, 2013).

However, these outcomes should not be interpreted as evidence that individual students carry a single, fixed learning-style label. Rather, the interpretation of these outcomes demonstrates that preference distribution is task-dependent, with students shifting toward different modalities depending on the specific speaking activity or classroom situation involved (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). While auditory stimuli dominate general instruction and exam preparation (Muluk et al., 2025), learners shift to visual modalities for public performance, such as presenting group results. This reflects learners' reliance on visually engaging materials to attract interest and enhance participation when producing structured oral output (Hasibuan et

al., 2022). Furthermore, learners shift to read/write modalities for technical tasks like script preparation (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024) and utilizing digital recording apps to strengthen accuracy prior to speaking (Wahab et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the low frequency of kinesthetic responses and the lack of kinesthetic-dominant participants suggest that movement-based and experiential instruction is currently underutilized in the local pedagogical landscape (Muluk et al., 2025; Oubni, 2025; Zein et al., 2020).

The qualitative findings provide a deeper explanation of the outcomes by revealing how each modality group actively tailors their engagement and employs coping strategies when instruction is misaligned with their preferences (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). Auditory learners prefer speaking activities that emphasize verbal interaction, including oral presentations, classroom discussions, and question-and-answer sessions. They rely on spoken input and direct communication to build confidence, thriving on interactive verbal environments (Oubni, 2025). Furthermore, they welcome immediate oral feedback from the lecturer as an integral part of their improvement cycle to regulate fluency (Muluk et al., 2025). Immediate feedback helps them identify pronunciation, grammar, and fluency errors while still actively engaged in practice, proving highly motivating (Iqbal et al., 2024).

In contrast, visual learners prioritize videos, demonstrations, and image-rich slides, which substantially enhance engagement and vocabulary retention (Hasibuan et al., 2022). The integration of visual-dominant tools, specifically YouTube and student-generated video tasks, allows these learners to process language through dual-sensory channels, observing authentic mouth movements and gestures crucial for natural phonetic mimicry (Menggo et al., 2022; Saed et al., 2021; Truong & Le, 2022). In terms of evaluation, they prefer delayed written feedback rather than immediate oral correction to avoid disruption, reflecting the autonomous learner's tendency to self-reflect (Hadizadeh, 2025; Muluk et al., 2025; Najeeb, 2013).

Meanwhile, read/write learners rely heavily on textual scaffolding, such as scripts, PPT text, and written notes, to mitigate anxiety before speaking. They often employ cross-modal compensation such as requesting subtitles to optimize comprehension when instruction does not match their preference (Hadizadeh, 2025; Najeeb, 2013; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). Moreover, combining digital media with collaborative writing tasks helps these learners identify grammar mistakes earlier, expand their vocabulary, and correct each other in real-time, demonstrating that interactive text-based tasks prompt closer attention to language forms (Al-Ahdal & Suliman, 2025; Janah et al., 2022).

To position the current study within the broader academic literature, the findings were compared with previous studies to determine whether the results confirm, extend, or contradict existing research. The dominance of the auditory modality in this study confirms findings emphasizing the central role of spoken instruction in shaping learners' comprehension in language-mediated classrooms (Oubni, 2025). This similarity serves as empirical evidence that supports earlier theories, aligning with Annamalai and Sazan (2025) and (Sulfitriani et al., 2025), who found that auditory learners benefit most from verbal explanations. However, the present study extends prior research by demonstrating that auditory dominance coexists with substantial visual and read/write preferences within the same cohort, indicating a heterogeneous rather than uniform modality profile (Wahab et al., 2025).

The visual learners' preference for multimedia also supports previous literature highlighting the importance of engaging materials (Hasibuan et al., 2022) and the vast benefits

of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in lowering psychological barriers (Menggo et al., 2022; Saed et al., 2021; Truong & Le, 2022). While previous investigations universally endorse visual media for rapid phonetic accuracy, this study notes a nuanced difference: syntactic complexity develops at a slower rate, indicating visual media must still be paired with structured pedagogical guidance (Saed et al., 2021).

Similarly, the read/write learners' reliance on collaborative text tasks aligns with Al-Ahdal & Suliman (2025), who observed that peer interactions in text-based tasks reduce syntax errors. The use of digital platforms also echoes Janah et al. (2022) regarding how digital extensive reading boosts motivation. By contrast, the absence of dominant kinesthetic learners contradicts expectations in experiential EFL environments. This difference is analyzed by considering the research context and participants, heavily attributing the outcome to the largely verbal and text-oriented culture of Indonesian classrooms (Oubni, 2025).

In accordance with the scholarly requirements, this section addresses both theoretical and practical implications derived from the study. Theoretically, these findings contribute to the refinement and validation of existing learning style theories in EFL Speaking instruction by demonstrating that a single cohort may exhibit multiple dominant modalities, extending the interpretation of modality dominance as a multidimensional construct (Najeeb, 2013; Wahab et al., 2025). The study strengthens the theoretical position that the language of instruction and teachers' verbal competence operate as the primary mediators of speaking development (Oubni, 2025). Furthermore, the success of multi-sensory visual media validates the Dual-Coding Theory by illustrating how simultaneous inputs minimize cognitive load, while student-generated videos reinforce constructivist learning frameworks and metacognition (Menggo et al., 2022; Saed et al., 2021; Truong & Le, 2022). The results also enrich the theoretical discourse on digital multimodal literacies (Rosyada & Wahyuni, 2025), while the underrepresentation of kinesthetic learners theoretically reinforces the argument that experiential modes must be intentionally designed rather than assumed to emerge naturally (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024; Simamora et al., 2025; Zein et al., 2020).

Practically, the results describe how the outcomes can be applied in real situations, particularly in teaching practices and curriculum development. For teaching practices, EFL Speaking instructors should adopt differentiated instructional designs that simultaneously accommodate auditory, visual, and read/write learners (Najeeb, 2013). Speaking pedagogy should embrace intentional redundancy across modalities by combining oral explanation with concise visual slides and supplementary written handouts (Hasibuan et al., 2022; Muluk et al., 2025; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). Instructors must move away from traditional text-based drills and embed authentic video channels and active video-based assignments into their lessons (Menggo et al., 2022; Saed et al., 2021; Truong & Le, 2022). Feedback practices must also be modality-sensitive: immediate oral feedback for auditory learners, written feedback for visual learners, and blended written–oral feedback for read/write learners (Muluk et al., 2025; Najeeb, 2013). At the curriculum development level, EFL programs should formalize digital literacy and introduce hybrid lessons where digital reading platforms are linked directly with shared online writing tasks to build consistent English habits among heterogeneous VARK profiles (Oubni, 2025; Rosyada & Wahyuni, 2025; Wahab et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Learning style preferences play an important role in helping students participate more effectively in EFL Speaking classes. This study aimed to identify the learning style preferences of second-semester EFL students and to explore how students with different dominant learning styles perceive their preferred speaking learning activities. The results showed that auditory was the most dominant learning style, followed by visual and read/write, while no participant demonstrated a dominant kinesthetic learning style; the interview findings further showed that each learning style preferred different speaking activities, learning media, coping strategies, and feedback, indicating that students' learning preferences are flexible and may change depending on the learning tasks and classroom situations.

Implications

Theoretically, these findings support the idea that students have different learning preferences that should be considered in EFL Speaking instruction (Yotta, 2023); rather than using a single teaching approach, lecturers are encouraged to combine different teaching strategies so that students with different learning styles can participate more actively in classroom learning. Practically, students' speaking practice can be improved by providing learning activities that match their learning preferences and encourage active classroom interaction (Beyene et al., 2024), while the integration of digital and mobile-assisted learning activities can provide students with more opportunities to practice speaking both inside and outside the classroom, making learning more meaningful and engaging (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024).

Limitations

Like other studies, this research also has several limitations: the participants were limited to second-semester EFL students from one university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings, and no participant demonstrated a dominant kinesthetic learning style, so this study only explored the perceptions of visual, auditory, and read/write learners.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies are recommended to involve participants from different universities and educational levels to obtain more comprehensive findings. Further research may also examine the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and technology-supported speaking activities for students with different VARK learning style preferences.

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