



Capítulo 1

Learning Styles and English Teaching Strategies in the Eighth Grade of High School

Estilos de aprendizaje y Estrategias de enseñanza de Inglés en el octavo año de colegio

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Resumen

El presente estudio explora la relación entre los estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes y las estrategias de enseñanza empleadas por profesores. Para ello, se llevó a cabo un diseño de investigación cuantitativa y de tipo transversal, donde participaron 154 alumnos y 8 profesores de inglés de un colegio público. Los datos se recopilaron mediante un cuestionario aplicado a ambos grupos, con el objetivo de identificar el estilo de aprendizaje más predominante de los estudiantes y las estrategias de los docentes más frecuentes. Los resultados indicaron que el aprendizaje visual predominaba entre los alumnos, seguido por el auditivo. Del mismo modo, las estrategias visuales eran las más utilizadas por los profesores, mientras que las auditivas y cinestésicas fueron menos frecuentes. En conclusión, el estudio reveló que existe una marcada preferencia de los profesores por las herramientas que favorecen el estilo de aprendizaje visual. Sin embargo, la presencia de estrategias auditivas y cinestésicas fueron en menor proporción.

Palabras clave: Estilos de aprendizaje; estrategias de enseñanza, inglés, modelo VAK.

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between students' learning styles and the teaching strategies used by the teachers. To do this a quantitative method with a cross-sectional design was used, in which 154 students and 8 English teachers for a public institution participated. Data were collected by using a questionnaire administered in both groups, with the aim of identifying the most predominant learning style among students and the most frequently used teaching strategies. The results showed that visual learning was the most dominant style among students, followed by auditory learning. Similarly, visual strategies were the most frequently used by the teachers. While auditory and kinesthetic strategies were less frequent. In conclusion, the study revealed that teachers have a marked preference for strategies that support visual learning styles. Moreover, the presence of auditory and kinesthetic strategies was in lower proportion.

Keywords: Learning styles; teaching strategies, English, VAK model.

1. INTRODUCTION

When talking about learning English, understanding how students gain knowledge is fundamental for enhancing teaching strategies. Therefore, recognizing and considering the ways in which individuals learn, can be helpful because a personalized, dynamic, and enriching teaching process is created (Zúñiga & Alvarado, 2023, p. 12). Learning styles which are preferred by students are useful for creating quality educational experiences and developing better learning outcomes.

Despite the importance of recognizing and incorporating learning styles in English language teaching, classrooms still continue using traditional strategies that do not meet the student's diverse learning styles. Delgado et al. (2023) shows the reality of implementing learning styles in the English language teaching process. Their research reported that a large number of teachers are unaware of their students' learning preferences and fail to incorporate them in their teaching strategies. Zúñiga and Alvarado (2023) in their study done in Costa Rica reported that learning styles have been used for years in education; many teachers do not respond to the student's needs regarding the teaching strategies to the student's learning styles.

In Ecuador, Castro et al. (2024) emphasized the need of developing teaching strategies that align the students' learning preference, particularly in teaching English as a Foreign Language in which students face many challenges. Therefore, based on the context of previous studies and preprofessional teaching experience of the researcher, it is clear that there is still a gap between the students' learning references and the strategies that teachers use to teach the English language.

In order to address this problem, the present research has as main aim to examine the relationship between the learning styles and the strategies used in teaching English as a foreign language among eight-grade students at a public high school. Consequently, it explores two main questions: what are the most predominant students' learning styles? and what are the strategies that teachers use in the English language teaching process? In line with these, the objectives of

this study include to describe the most predominant learning styles among students and to identify the teaching strategies that are aligned with these styles.

Although existing research provides valuable information, there is still a need for further research to explore learning styles and determine whether these are related to the teaching strategies that teachers apply when teaching English, as well as to explore strategies based on students' learning preferences. Therefore, to address this gap, this study aims to provide descriptive data on the predominant learning styles of students and the English language teaching strategies currently employed by teachers.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Learning Styles

Every student in a classroom learns differently, receiving and processing information in a unique way that makes every student distinct. Over years, psychologists have worked to spell out the features of different types of learners and categorize them into different learning styles (Alqunayeer & Zamir, 2015). The term of learning styles refers to the preferences and strategies students use to perceive, process, comprehend, and respond to the environment (Sood & Sarin, 2021). In other words, each individual has a unique way of approaching learning, influenced by personal desires, previous experiences, and cognitive abilities.

Similarly, Yulisda (2021) refers to that learning style as "the preferential way in which the student absorbs, processes, comprehends and retains information in a specific manner" (p. 11).

Visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) Learning style

Different learning styles models have been developed through years. Fleming's VAK model is one of the most widely recognized classifications of learning styles, offering learners a detailed profile of their personal characteristics and preferred methods for acquiring and organizing information (Sreenidhi & Tay, 2017). This model builds on earlier concepts from Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which focuses on how communication influences learning. According to Pritchard (2009)

NLP identifies the Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic as the three main learning styles. Likewise, Yuliani and Najmiah (2019) mention that the VAK learning model categorizes learning styles into three principal types, each based on cognitive sensory means.

Visual Learning Style. As Pritchard (2009) states, visual learners appeal to the sense of sight. The students have strong visual memory and prefer visual information such as diagrams, graphs, maps or posters. These learners often use hand gestures when explaining or recalling events and tend to look upward while thinking or retrieving information.

Moreover Marzulina et al. (2019) explain that visual students “learn and remember best by seeing and visualizing information” (p. 216). Therefore, the visual learner performs best when they entirely utilize their visual skills to process and retain information.

Auditory Learning Style. These types of students learn through listening. They possess strong auditory memory and gain from activities such as discussions, lectures, interviews, storytelling, among others. “They discover information through listening and interpreting information through listening to the tone of pitch, voice, emphasis, and speed” (Manipuspika, 2020, p. 93), but have a weakness in written information. These students typically require only oral lectures.

Kinesthetic Learning Style. According to Manipuspika (2020) kinesthetic learners are “the best learning through a hands-on approach” (p. 94). This implies total physical involvement and the use of all five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Students prefer to learn by doing and interacting with learning materials and resources.

English Language Teaching Strategies

A teaching strategy focuses on teaching as an art, it means that the teacher needs to combine some methods to create the best way that adapts to their students (Roy, 2022). According to Kuamr (2022), a teaching strategy encompasses an entire plan for teaching which includes presentation, objectives, tactics, and

organizing materials that are necessary to implement the strategies. In other words, a teaching strategy is a systematic process applied by the teacher to effectively achieve the objective of learning.

Visual Teaching Strategies

Visual teaching relies on presenting information in a visual way to help students grasp new concepts, connect previous ideas, and practice critical thinking (Abulhul, 2021).

Tools such as charts, diagrams, illustrations, handouts, and videos are invaluable resources for supporting their learning process (Dmitrichenkova & Dolzhich, 2020). The advent of digital and online mind mapping now allows teachers to store more comprehensive information, including notes and links.

Auditory Teaching Strategies

As the name suggests, teachers use audio aids in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Audio aids serve as instructional tools that help to grasp concepts by listening and encourage learning. It makes easier for students to develop communication skills (Waad & Younus, 2022).

According to Ahmad (2013), there are many ways in which a teacher can implement strategies to auditory learners: Discussion and Debate, Storytelling, Audio recordings, Verbal Feedback and Peer Teaching, Music and Rhythmic Strategies

Kinesthetic Teaching Strategies

Kinesthetic learning is based on the premise that physical movement and hands-on activities significantly enhance the learning experience. This strategy fosters opportunities for social contact and collaboration among students through the movement (Culp et al., 2020).

There are several kinesthetic strategies that are commonly used to enhance learning in the classroom: Role-Playing and Simulations, Movement-Based Activities, Dance and Music Activities. Kinesthetic instructors use various tools and

other resources such as books, activity trackers and graphic organizers to promote active learning and enhance student learning (Culp et al., 2020).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study a quantitative approach was considered appropriate. This provided opportunities to analyze numbered data about learning styles and teaching strategies using statistical procedure. On the other hand, this study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which is often described as a “snapshot” of a population at a certain point in time.

Regarding the data, it was collected through a survey administered to 154 students and 8 English teachers from a public educational institution located in Loja, Ecuador. The participants, selected using cluster sampling, were aged between thirteen and fifteen years old and had an A1.1. English level.

The survey consisted of two separate questionnaires, each designed to gather relevant data on the key variables of the study. First a student’s questionnaire, which was based on Reid (1995), was applied to identify the most predominant learning style and students’ perceptions of the teaching strategies. The second questionnaire, namely, teachers’ questionnaire strategies, aimed to gather insights about the strategies teachers use during classes.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Objective 1: To describe the most predominant students' learning styles for learning English.

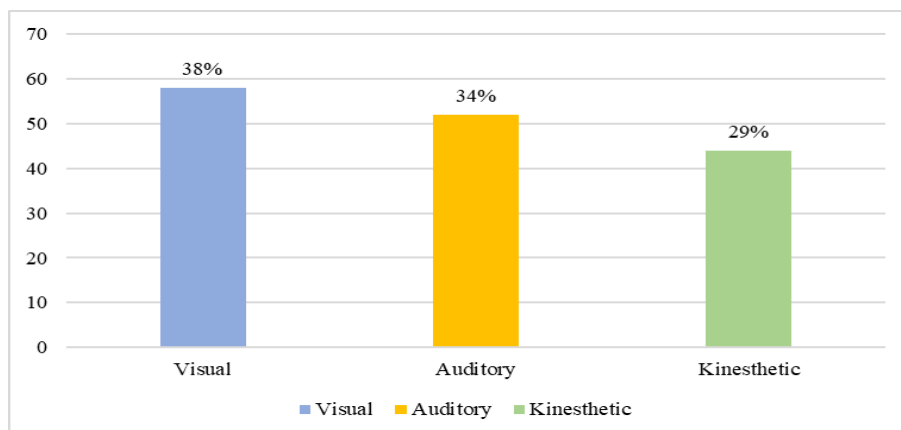


Figure 1. Results of students' learning styles

According to the results presented in figure 1, 38% of students are visual learners, making this the most predominant style. Auditory learners represent 34%, while 29% prefer the kinesthetic style.

Based on the results, it suggests that the majority of the students tend to process and remember information better through visual aids such as images, flashcards, diagrams, graphic organizers, written materials, etc. These tools are useful because they make the content more accessible to students and support vocabulary retention and comprehension of grammatical structures.

On the other hand, the high percentage of auditory learners also remarks the importance of integrating oral language tasks in the classroom, so students can build listening comprehension and improve pronunciation skills. Lastly, kinesthetic learners, although this is the smallest group, still represents nearly one-third of the students, indicating that there is a diversity of learning styles in the classroom and teachers need to take this into account.

4.2 Objective 2: To identify the English language teaching strategies associated with students' learning styles

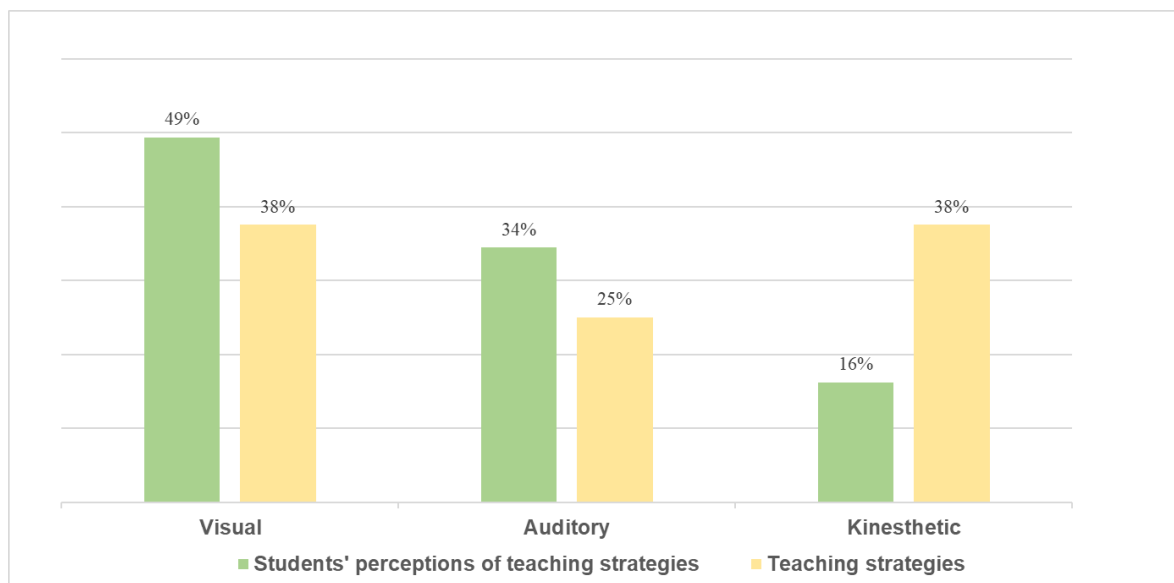


Figure 2. Results of students' perceptions of teaching strategies and teaching strategies

According to the students' answers, visual strategies are the most frequently perceived in their English classes, with 49% recognizing the use of visual aids. This suggests that English teaching is heavily oriented toward supporting mainly visual learners. Similarly, teachers report a high use of visual strategies, indicating a general alignment with the students' perceptions, although students recognize their use even more than teachers claim.

In the case of auditory strategies, 34% of students identify the presence of these strategies, in other words more than a third perceive methods such as oral instructions, listening exercises, songs and verbal repetition. In contrast, only 25% of teachers report implementing auditory strategies in the classroom, which may reflect a gap between what students consider as oral instructions and why they determine this, and whether teachers clearly plan and implement the auditory activities.

A similar situation exists for kinesthetic strategies, but the gap is even wider. While 38% of teachers say they implement movement-based activities, only 16% of students recognize the presence of this strategy in class. This suggests that students may have difficulty clearly recognizing kinesthetics strategies and also that teachers may not be applying them clearly enough.

5. DISCUSSION

Regarding the first research question, it explored the most frequent learning style among students when learning English. According to the results, the visual learning style was the most dominant, closely followed by the auditory style. This finding aligns with Yulisda(2021), who found visual learning as the most widely present in students, although kinesthetic and auditory were present but it was minor. Similarly, Manipuspika(2020) reported visual learning as the most preferred style, attributing this tendency to students' habits of sitting and listening rather than participating in physical activities. However, Hardiyanto(2023) showed a big preference among students for kinesthetic style, which suggests that students mainly rely on movement and physical participation to process and retain information.

Furthermore, Soo and Sarin(2021) emphasized that having knowledge about the learning styles, serve as a guide to the teachers and encourage them to diversify their teaching strategies rather than restrict them. Overall, these suggest that although visual learning predominates, incorporating auditory and kinesthetic activities are essential to address the needs of learners.

Regarding the second question which focuses on the relationship between teaching strategies and learning styles, the findings showed that visual strategies are the most frequently used in the English classes. Students commonly recognize the use of pictures, printed materials and visual tools in their classrooms. Auditory strategies were also identified, though to a lesser extent. However, a discrepancy emerged between teachers and students' perceptions on how often these auditory strategies were actually used. Finally, kinesthetic strategies were the least used. Although teachers reported incorporating movement-activities into their lesson,

students were unable to identify them. This suggests either a limited use of such strategies or a lack of clarity in how they are implemented in the classroom.

These findings align with Rachman (2019) emphasis on the importance of matching teaching strategies with the students' learning styles to support language development. Similarly, studies conducted by Yulisda (2021) and Manupuspika (2020) reported that visual strategies are the most frequently used, suggesting a strong reliance on visual techniques in the English language learning. Additionally, the results are supported by Sood and Sari (2021) who argue that focusing on a single language preference may limit opportunities for students with different needs. Therefore, although visual strategies are highly useful, the findings highlight the necessity for teachers to also incorporate auditory and kinesthetic strategies that address the diverse learning preferences of their students.

Regarding the methodology used, the quantitative and descriptive approach was effective in providing a snapshot of the frequency of learning styles and teaching strategies. However, considering that the study relied exclusively on quantitative data and did not include a correlational analysis, it was not possible to determine why students perceive certain learning styles more strongly or why visual strategies emerged as the most prominent. This evidence is a limitation of the research.

Furthermore, the purely nature of the study restricted the exploration of potential relationships between learning styles and teaching strategies, preventing the identification of possible correlations. For this reason, future research should consider incorporating correlational designs to gain a deeper understanding of how students' learning preferences relate to the teaching strategies used in the classroom.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The results reveal that teachers largely rely on visual strategies, demonstrating that there is a strong inclination towards the use of visual means for teaching. Following the tendency auditory and kinesthetic methods were less used due to only few students noticed them and as well as few teachers reported to have utilized them. This shows that teaching practices do not focus on diversity of strategies. These results highlight the necessity of requiring a multimodal approach that incorporates a variety of strategies that address students' learning styles.

Visual emerged as the most common learning style identified in the study, closely followed by auditory learning. This means that most students learn more effectively through visual resources such as, mind maps, visual organizer, images and charts.

Both teachers and students agreed that visual strategies were the most frequently used teaching strategy. However, a clear inconsistency was observed regarding kinesthetic strategies: although teachers claimed to implement them, only a small number of students recognized their presence in the classroom. This inconsistency highlights that kinesthetic instruction is not clear enough for students. Overall, these findings show that effective teaching requires not only the use of varied instructional strategies but also ensuring that students clearly perceive and benefit from them.

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