



Students' Learning Styles in English Classes in Inclusive Schools

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ABSTRACT

Learning in an inclusive environment has numerous advantages. Still, it also presents several challenges that must be addressed, such as accommodating the diverse learning styles of both regular students and those with special needs. This study aims to determine the learning styles of students learning English in an inclusive learning environment and to explore the match between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles within this environment. The sample was Champions Community Homeschooling students who completed the form and responded to the questionnaire. They were divided into ten regular students and five students with special needs. This study was conducted at Champions Community Homeschooling, which is an inclusive school. This Champions Community Homeschooling inclusive school is located in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia. The study took place from March to September 2024. This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study method. Data were collected using observations of the teaching and learning process and questionnaires. Data analysis techniques included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The study found that the learning style that dominated special needs students in English classes was the aural learning style, followed by the reading/writing learning style. However, regular students had a reading and writing learning style, followed by a visual learning style. The results of this study also have implications for educators to design more flexible and inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles.

Keywords: students' learning style, English classes, inclusive school

Gaya Belajar Siswa dalam Kelas Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Inklusif

ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran dalam lingkungan inklusif memiliki banyak keuntungan, namun memiliki beberapa tantangan atau tantangan yang harus diatasi, seperti gaya belajar siswa reguler dan siswa berkebutuhan khusus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui gaya belajar siswa belajar bahasa Inggris dalam lingkungan pembelajaran inklusif dan menelusuri kecocokan antara gaya belajar siswa dan gaya mengajar guru dalam lingkungan pembelajaran inklusif. Sampel adalah para siswa Champions Community Homeschooling yang melengkapi formulir dan menanggapi kuesioner. Mereka terbagi dari sepuluh siswa reguler dan lima siswa khusus berkebutuhan khusus. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di Champions Community Homeschooling yang merupakan sekolah inklusif. Sekolah inklusif Champions Community Homeschooling ini berlokasi Bogor, Jawa Barat, Indonesia. Penelitian berlangsung pada bulan Maret sampai dengan September 2024. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan observasi proses belajar mengajar dan kuesioner. Teknik analisis data terdiri dari reduksi data, penyajian data dan penarikan simpulan. Penelitian menemukan bahwa gaya belajar yang mendominasi siswa berkebutuhan khusus di kelas bahasa Inggris adalah gaya belajar aural, diikuti oleh gaya belajar membaca/menulis. Namun demikian, siswa reguler memiliki gaya belajar membaca/menulis dan diikuti oleh gaya belajar visual. Hasil penelitian ini juga berimplikasi pada para pendidik untuk merancang strategi pengajaran yang lebih fleksibel dan inklusif yang mengakomodasi beragam gaya belajar.

Keywords: gaya belajar, kelas bahasa Inggris, inklusif

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INTRODUCTION

Some schools implement inclusive education as a government effort to build students' character in respecting differences. Inclusive learning and teaching recognises all students' entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences (Majid et al., 2022; Maknun et al., 2024; Meliani & Sati, 2023; Nuraeni et al., 2016). One of the key characteristics of inclusive educational environments is the opportunity to have rich and diverse learning interactions among heterogeneous students (Molina Roldán et al., 2021). In Indonesia, inclusive education has been quite successful by law No. 20 of 2003 in article 5, paragraph 1 that every citizen has the same right to get a quality education. Based on Regulations Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 70, 2009, article 7; inclusive education,

The education unit that organises inclusive education uses an education unit level curriculum that accommodates the needs and abilities of learners, should be appropriate with their talents, interests and passions (Baharuddin & Saidang, 2020; Novrizal & Manaf, 2024). It means that by paying attention to these three dimensions, educational units can create a more holistic and adaptive approach to education that meets diverse needs and then becomes a supportive learning environment for both students to maximise their learning ability, which could start with recognising what the student's learning styles in the classroom. From the results of discussions with the Champions Community Homeschooling (CCHS) educational institution, several problems were found in the English teaching and learning process related to this research:

- 1) In Homeschooling, the unification of all classes based on their level (Elementary, Junior and Senior) is a bit of an obstacle for teachers in teaching each student's English material, which is different.

- 2) Despite adopting an inclusive learning environment, the application of student group work is difficult to implement because each student is accustomed to doing their work.
- 3) Online and offline learning are carried out at the same thus, thus making students' English learning styles generalised.

Regardless, the implementation of inclusive classes in homeschooling is still being pursued to be fully successful. Teachers need to understand the situation and prepare various strategies to build interactive learning in the class. After all the discussion, it turns out that teachers don't have any clear guidelines for knowing each student's learning style. So, from what homeschooling needed, it was decided that observations related to students' learning styles, which the study decided to focus on in the English course, will be the object of this research. This point is what they want to emphasise, and later it could be a reference for teachers in preparing for a new year of teaching. Champions Community Homeschooling as an inclusive school in Bogor is one of the educational institutions that creates a learning environment with diversity because students who learn are not only children with special needs but also regular (normal) students. Therefore, the novelty of this study is related to students' learning styles in English classes with an inclusive environment and how they can learn together, but students can still build collaboration.

Learning in an inclusive environment has many advantages, but like anything else, this collaborative learning although highly supportive for all parties involved, still has some challenges or issues to overcome and it is known that with collaborative learning, then there will be a difference in behaviour towards the learning style of ordinary students and students with special needs.



There are two research problems in this study. First, how does the learning style of students without special needs impact the learning style of students with special needs? Second, how is the teacher's teaching style and the student's learning style appropriate?

This study aims to investigate how students learn English in an inclusive learning environment and identify the matches between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles within this context.

The study offers a valuable reference for teachers and parents in identifying the child's interests and needs. In addition, the discussion on inclusive learning environments can serve as an alternative solution for determining where the academic growth of children should be entrusted, especially for those with special needs. Therefore, inclusive schools must have a learning environment that can provide comfort for students.

A comfortable learning setting is underpinned by a set of values which prioritise inclusion, these are: Respect, Empathy, Openness, Curiosity, Trust, Fairness and Accountability (Moore et al., 2022). Creating an inclusive learning environment involves designing and implementing educational practices that accommodate and value diverse student backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. Teachers play an important role because they are required to understand well what kind of classroom management and learning strategies are effective to be applied (Safitri et al., 2020). There was a positive relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' teaching thinking practices, whereas there was a negative relationship between personal model teaching style and teaching thinking skills (Dilekli & Tezci, 2016). Moreover, the analysis based on previous research revealed that special education teachers had more positive attitudes towards the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion and professional issues of inclusion (e.g., training and ability) than general education teachers had (Hernandez et al., 2016). It concludes

that not only students but also teachers' thinking skill attitude in the inclusion class is affected.

There is no teaching method that is suitable for all students. Some are more compatible with self-study, and some prefer to listen to explanations and information from the teacher through the lecture method (Angrasari, 2018).

The expectations from teachers and their attitudes toward children with special needs are some of the most influential elements (Firman et al., 2020; Kristiana & Widayanti, 2017a, 2017b). Other research has also found that teachers can have an important influence on the social acceptance of peers with special needs (Schwab et al., 2018), which is important because the social exclusion of children can affect their learning difficulties and behavioural problems directly. How the child develops depends on the quality of the teacher (Barth & Grütter, 2024; Krull et al., 2014, 2018; Weiss et al., 2021).

Teachers must identify learners' distinct learning style preferences and attempt to address these varied styles through the use of a multi-style teaching strategy to achieve the desired academic achievement that benefits both parties: the teacher and the learner (Al-Deeb, 2016; Beck, 2001; Brown, 2023; Hidalgo-Cabrillana & Lopez-Mayan, 2018; Tulbure, 2012). Besides, some experts have agreed that though a perfect match between students' learning styles and a teacher's teaching style may not be expected, the teacher's endeavour to use diverse teaching styles that can meet the varied learning type preferences should be something worth considering (Yassin & Almasri, 2015; Tomlinson, 2013, 2016). As a result, the primary focus of this study was on the latter worry, specifically how English foreign language (EFL) teachers adapt these various learning styles when teaching English. It can be concluded that effective teachers should have a variety of teaching approaches and activities at their disposal to maximise learning opportunities (Dorgu, 2015).



METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. The case study design is preferred as a research strategy when “how,” “why,” and “what” questions are of interest to the researcher (Coombs, 2022; Crowe et al., 2011). A case study is one of the most widely used and accepted means of qualitative research methods in the social sciences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The intent of the case analysis typically defines case studies. The study was conducted at Champions Community Homeschooling an Inclusive school in Bogor from March until September 2024. Data was collected using:

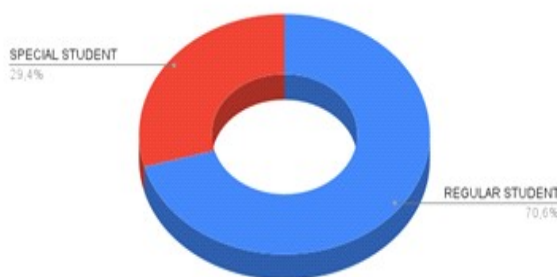
- 1) Observation of the teaching and learning process.
- 2) Questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers. Refers to the concept that individuals differ regarding what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them (Pashler et al., 2008). The grids of the questionnaire have four items, namely
 - 1) visual style,
 - 2) aural style,
 - 3) read/writing style, and
 - 4) kinesthetic style.

The following analysis uses the dominant answer-gathering technique. The score for answer choice:

- a. Visual (V): Most responses are “a” or 1.
- b. Aural (A): Most responses are “b” or 2.
- c. Reading/Writing (R): Most responses are “c” or 3.
- d. Kinesthetic (K): Most responses are “d” or 4.

The questionnaire was distributed through a Google form. The following is a data output from a questionnaire distributed to identify the English language learning style of students in an inclusive learning environment.

TYPES OF STUDENT



Graph 1
The Number of Student Participants

Graph 1 illustrates the total percentage of students who participated and completed the questionnaire. Fifteen students completed a form and responded to a questionnaire comprising 10 regular students and five special students. The diagram indicates that students with special needs comprise almost 30% of the total student population.

Table 1
 Components and Questions for the Questionnaire

Component of Learning Styles Identify	Questionnaire
1. Visual style	Q1. When you are learning something new, you prefer to:
2. Aural style	a. Look at charts, diagrams, and maps.
3. Reading/writing style	b. Listen to a lecture or audio recording.
4. Kinesthetic style	c. Read about it or write notes.
	d. Engage in hands-on activities or experiments.
	Q2. When trying to remember information, you:
	a. Visualise pictures or diagrams in your mind.
	b. Repeat the information out loud.
	c. Write down the information repeatedly.
	d. The experience of doing something related to the information
	Q3. In a classroom setting, you find it easiest to:
	a. Follow along with visual aids like slides or diagrams.
	b. Listen attentively to the lecture and participate in discussions.
	c. Read the textbook and take detailed notes.
	d. Participate in lab work or practical exercises
	Q4. When you have to give directions, you:
	a. Draw a map or use visual cues.
	b. Explain the directions verbally.
	c. Write down the directions step-by-step.
	d. Physically show someone the way.
	Q5. When studying for an exam, you prefer to:
	a. Use charts, diagrams, and mind maps.
	b. Discuss the material with classmates or listen to recordings.
	c. Read textbooks and write summaries.
	d. Use flashcards or practice with hands-on examples
	Q6. When solving a problem, you are most likely to:
	a. Sketch out the problem and its solution.
	b. Talk through the problem and possible solutions.
	c. Write out the steps to the solution.
	d. Use physical objects or act out the solution
	Q7. When learning a new skill, you prefer to:
	a. Watch someone demonstrate the skill
	b. Listen to detailed instructions.
	c. Read instructions or a manual.
	d. Try it out yourself and practice



- Q8. In what environment do you find it easiest to concentrate?
- A quiet place with minimal distractions
 - Listening to music or some background noise
 - Watching visual presentations
 - Moving around or using physical activities
- Q9. How do you prefer to take notes during a lecture or presentation?
- Writing down key points
 - in the lecture to listen to later
 - Drawing diagrams or charts
 - Using interactive note-taking methods like flashcards or apps
- Q10. How do you prefer to get feedback on your work?
- Written comments
 - Verbal feedback
 - Visual aids showing what to improve
 - Hands-on demonstrations or corrections
- Q11. When learning new vocabulary, what method helps you remember words best?
- Seeing pictures or diagrams of the words
 - Hearing the words and their meanings spoken
 - Reading definitions and writing the words down
 - Using the words in activities or role-plays
- Q12. When trying to remember information, you:
- Visualize pictures or diagrams in your mind
 - Repeat the information out loud.
 - Write down the information repeatedly.
 - Recall the experience of doing something related to the information.
- Q13. Classroom setting, you find it easiest to:
- Follow along with visual aids like slides or diagrams.
 - Listen attentively to the lecture and participate in discussions
 - Read the textbook and take detailed notes
 - Participate in lab work or practical exercises
- Q14. When you have to give directions, you:
- Draw a map or use visual cues.
 - Explain the directions verbally.
 - Write down the directions step-by-step.
 - Physically show someone the way.
- Q15. When studying for an exam, you prefer to:
- Use charts, diagrams, and mind maps.
 - Discuss the material with classmates or listen to recordings.
 - Read textbooks and write summaries.
 - Use flashcards or practice with hands-on examples

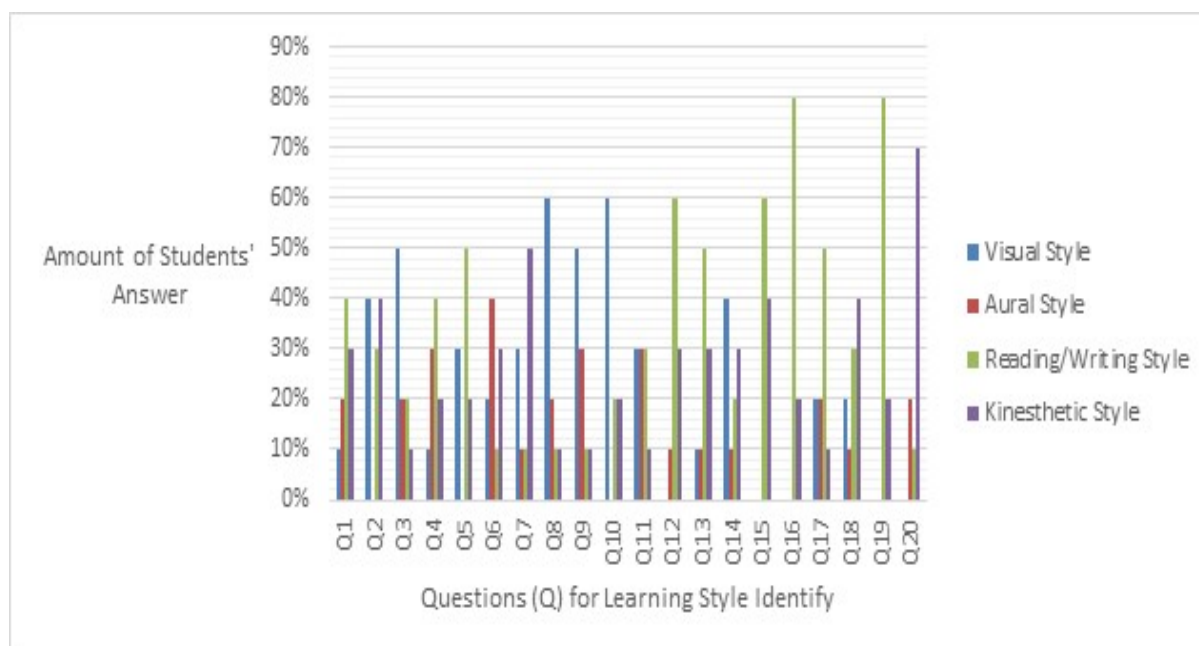
- Q16. When solving a problem, you are most likely to:
- Sketch out the problem and its solution.
 - Talk through the problem and possible solutions
 - Write out the steps to the solution.
 - Use physical objects or act out the solution
- Q17. When learning a new skill, you prefer to:
- Watch someone demonstrate the skill.
 - Listen to detailed instructions.
 - Read instructions or a manual.
 - Try it out yourself and practice.
- Q18. In what environment do you find it easiest to concentrate?
- A quiet place with minimal distractions
 - Listening to music or some background noise
 - Watching visual presentations
 - Moving around or using physical activities
- Q19. How do you prefer to take notes during a lecture or presentation?
- Drawing diagrams or charts
 - Writing down key points
 - Recording the lecture to listen to later
 - Using interactive note-taking methods like flashcards or apps
- Q20. How do you prefer to get feedback on your work?
- Visual aids showing what to improve
 - Verbal feedback
 - Written comments
 - Hands-on demonstrations or corrections

The data collection technique employs data triangulation methods to ensure the validity and credibility of the data results. There are three steps in data analysis techniques, as explained by the explanation of Miles and Huberman (Flick, 2022; Miles et al., 2014), namely;

- 1) Data reduction is carried out during the data collection process to simplify and focus on data relevant to the research problem.
- 2) Data presentation is the process of analyzing data and presenting it in a form that meets the needs of the research problem, such as descriptions, tables, or graphs.
- 3) Inference drawing and verification are carried out through the activity of summarising data patterns, relationships, and main findings.

RESULT

The distribution of questionnaire data is presented in the form of a percentage graph, with two graphs: Graph 1 for regular students and Graph 2 for students with special needs. Thus, the learning style in English classes differs between regular students and students with special needs.



Graph 2
Percentage of Regular Students' Learning Style According to Question Items

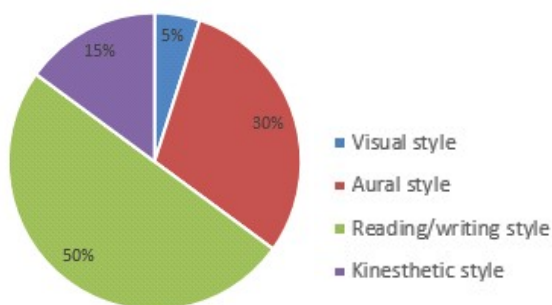
Graph 2 presents the results of analyzing learning style data for regular (normal) students. There are several findings related to the learning style of regular (normal) students, namely:

- 1) Students prefer to use the reading/writing learning style when learning new material, as it makes it easier for them to remember the material taught by the teacher.
- 2) Students find it easier to remember learning material when it is presented visually and involves movement (kinesthetic learning). Therefore, in this finding, teachers should utilize visual learning media and provide students with the freedom to move. Thus, students find it easier to understand the teacher's directions when they are presented visually, such as through maps, pictures, or other visible media. Additionally, when the teacher provides directions during the learning process, students tend to prefer learning activities that involve reading or writing.
- 3) Students also prefer to use a visual learning style through various learning aids when classroom learning activities are in progress.
- 4) In preparing for exams, students like reading/writing learning activities
- 5) In dealing with learning problems, students prefer the aural learning style, and they work together to solve the problems.
- 6) In the process of learning new English language skills, students like independent learning activities and practicing on their own. They use a kinesthetic learning style.
- 7) Students prefer quiet classroom situations during the learning process, particularly

those with a visual learning style. However, some students prefer a busy learning environment and engage in physical movements or activities during class.

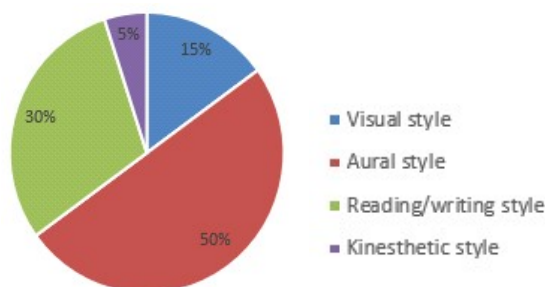
- 8) When the teacher explains the material in class, students enjoy the activity of making notes or summarizing important points visually, and they participate in reading and writing activities.
- 9) Students prefer feedback from teachers on exercises and exams, which is often visually presented in detail on their exercises or exam worksheets.
- 10) In learning new English vocabulary, students appreciate the use of images and diagrams, listening to information, pronouncing or memorizing words, reading texts or dictionaries, and writing words. So, in new vocabulary learning activities, students combine visual, aural, and reading learning styles.

The findings of the data for regular students (without special needs) show that the learning style that dominates English learning activities at the inclusive school Champions Community Homeschooling Bogor is the reading/writing learning style, followed by the visual learning style, as depicted in Graph 3. The following is the percentage of each learning style studied in English classes for regular students that have been found in the inclusive learning environment.



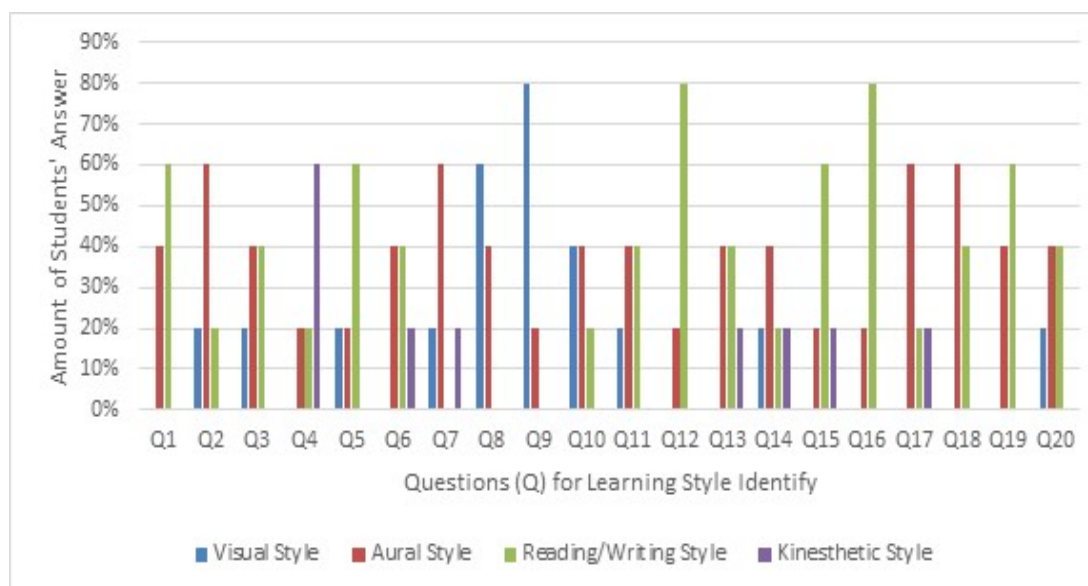
Graph 3
Percentage of Regular Students' Learning Style

For exceptional students, learning styles exhibit significant differences compared to those of regular students. The learning style that dominates special students in English classes is the aural learning style, followed by the reading/writing learning style (graph 4). This is because special needs students require clear oral learning instructions, as well as opportunities for discussion with regular students or a learning environment supported by sound learning aids.



Graph 4
Percentage of Special Students' Learning Style

The findings of the data in Graph 4 explain that the learning style of students in English classes with special conditions has a different influence on learning activities. Graph 5 presents the findings for each learning style about learning activities in English classes.



Graph 5
Percentage of Special Students' Learning Styles According to Question Items

In Graph 5, several items are identified that reveal the learning styles of exceptional students in English classes within inclusive school environments.

- 1) When learning something new, students with special needs prefer learning styles that involve reading or writing activities. In addition, students also find it easier to understand the material through the process of discussion, group work, reading textbooks, making summaries, and listening to teacher explanations. Therefore, the learning instructions given by the teacher must be clear and easy to understand.
- 2) When trying to remember information or material taught by the teacher, students often find the activity of repeating the material aloud helpful. In class, students find it easiest to understand the material by attending lectures attentively and participating in discussions.
- 3) Students prefer learning instructions related to movement.
- 4) When approaching the exam, students learn by using note cards or practicing with direct examples, reading textbooks, and writing summaries.
- 5) Special students find it easier to find solutions to learning problems through the process of solving problems with friends and determining problem-solving steps in a structured manner.
- 6) For exceptional students, a quiet learning environment supports conducive English learning activities in class.
- 7) Students easily understand the content of feedback from teachers, whether it is written or oral. This combination of feedback has a significant impact on the understanding of English classes.
- 8) Learning new vocabulary is easier through activities such as listening to new English vocabulary spoken correctly, reading definitions, and writing words.
- 9) Students easily remember information given by teachers through repetition of the same learning activities.

- 10) Exceptional students can easily concentrate when they have the option to listen to music

DISCUSSION

Champion Community Homeschooling (CCHS) is one of the educational institutions that combines children with special needs (special) with regular students. This study provides an understanding that the general curriculum can still be adjusted to the needs of regular and special students. Inclusion is a concept that has existed for years and is applied in schools in Indonesia (Bakken, 2016). The findings show that the most common learning style in Champion Community Homeschooling (CCHS) is reading. Read/Write learners prefer information presented in text form. In the Read/Write learning style, it was found that when they learn new words or grammar in English, they will read the details of the interpretation then write them down in notes and practice using them in writing. And when they prepare for an exam that requires memorization, they will reread the notes they have. To understand the assignment instructions, they will read them over and over again if necessary until they understand them correctly. The types of class activities they like are reading articles or stories. They usually enjoy homework when answering written questions or making free papers, while for group projects, they do not mind being asked to be data presenters. In addition, to get feedback from teachers, they prefer to get written comments.

Then followed by aural, where aural learners learn best through listening. In the aural learning style, they hear the words and meanings spoken which is their best technique when learning new vocabulary. Therefore, to prepare for exams that require memorization, they usually listen to recordings or explain the material to others. To understand the instructions of the assignment, they will listen carefully to how the teacher explains. They also like to be part of a discussion room where

they can be good listeners and speakers. In terms of individual assignments, they like to do something verbal such as a presentation or making a video to talk about something, while for group projects, they like to be influential in the discussion room. Finally, in terms of getting feedback, they prefer they get an assessment verbally or directly from the teacher.

On the other hand, the relationship between the learning styles of students without special needs and students with special needs can have an impact, but the nature of the impact depends greatly on several factors, including the type of special needs involved, the educational environment, and the student's specific learning style. For example: in the second meeting, a role play was carried out where students were paired and a conversation simulation was carried out where they asked each other questions and provided information about their identities. I brought together a regular student named Alsen and a special needs student named Rafa, and they would ask each other about each other's identities in turn through the available dialogue. In this case, Alsen's dominant learning style is reading and Rafa's is aural/auditory. The understanding they gain through different methods will influence each other if the tasks are given using group or pair assignments. As in previous research, learning styles affect student performance (Ariastuti & Wahyudin, 2022).

Thus, educators must understand the concept of each student's abilities and learning styles. The importance of adopting a learning style approach and understanding students' learning styles can affect the adjustment of teaching strategies (Ma, 2024). Previous studies have found that to improve the quality of teaching and increase its effectiveness, attention should be paid to the compatibility of the instructor's teaching style with the student's learning style, which plays an important role in how much knowledge students can gain from the material presented in class (Aldajah et al., 2014). Learning style is related to



how students can feel comfortable with a learning method, so learning style can be a good indication in influencing learning concentration (Daly Miqdad Daly Ahmad & Putri Andini, 2024).

The results of this study also have implications for educators to design more flexible and inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles. In addition, the results of this study can also be used as a guide on how to support students to become more adaptive and resilient learners. By exploring learning style adaptation, this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of how students can thrive in diverse educational environments, which ultimately leads to more effective teaching and better learning outcomes. The process of implementing inclusive education has developed a lot in Indonesia and many factors must support the successful implementation of inclusive education (Sari et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the first finding of this study is that the most common English learning styles of Champion Community Homeschooling students are reading/writing and aural learning styles. Learners who prefer these styles excel when engaging with text-based input and output. However, the learning style of each student can always be able to be developed more effectively depending on the surrounding environment. In addition, teachers are never separated from the process. Teachers not only need to be able to adapt and understand the various learning styles of students with varying strategies, but students must also be able to commit to upholding their motivation to get better learning outcomes. This finding also answers the problem of the influence of the learning styles of ordinary students on students with special needs. Every student has their dominant learning style so that to can gain understanding from different ways. The relationship between the learning styles of students

without special needs and those with special needs can have an impact, and the nature of this impact is very dependent on the type of special needs involved, the educational environment, and the student's specific learning style.

This study can direct teachers to discuss the assumption of strategic learning strategies in an inclusive environment with differences in the learning styles of regular and special students. The results of the study also recommend that school institutions use it as a guide for teachers on how to prepare classes before the new school year about learning styles, personalities and learning goal needs. For further researchers, this study can be further developed to see to what extent this learning style affects English learning outcomes. In addition, further research can also explain the process of student adaptation because the explanation is limited only to student learning styles in an inclusive environment. Investigating how adaptive students are to various teaching methods that do not match their preferred learning styles. This will provide actionable recommendations for educators on how to foster adaptation in a diverse learning environment.

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