The Correlation among Learning Styles, Learning Motivation, and Writing Performance of Undergraduate EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT :
In an increasingly globalized world, proficiency in English is no longer a luxury but a necessity, with millions of learners worldwide striving to master the language for personal, academic, and professional purposes. However, despite its importance, many learners continue to struggle with writing performance, influenced by factors such as learning styles, motivation, and gender. This study investigates whether there is a correlation between undergraduate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' writing performance and their learning styles and motivation. Using a correlational research design and quantitative methods, the study examined 158 fifth-semester undergraduate students at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. Data on learning styles and motivation were gathered through a Google Forms questionnaire, while students' writing performance was assessed through written tasks stored on Google Drive. Statistical analysis, employing F-test and Multinomial Logistic Regression in SPSS, revealed a significant correlation ($p = 0.034$) between writing performance and both learning style and motivation. These findings suggest that tailored instructional strategies, which account for individual learning preferences and motivational factors, could enhance writing outcomes. Therefore, it is recommended that English educators incorporate regular writing tasks into their curricula to foster improved writing performance among learners.

Key words: *learning style (s), learning motivation (s), writing performance (s), undergraduate EFL learner (s).*

INTRODUCTION

The field of English language instruction is currently confronted with a significant challenge: approximately 85% of global learners struggle with writing, primarily due to a mismatch between their learning styles and diminishing motivation (Kormos & Smith, 2019). This issue has wide-reaching consequences, obstructing not only academic achievement but also career progression and socioeconomic mobility. Learning styles are individual preferences for processing, understanding, and retaining information during the learning process (Felder & Henriques, 1995). According to Pritchard (2009), people often choose learning strategies based on what feels most comfortable for them. These preferences shape how learners acquire, understand, and retain knowledge, and they may be influenced by psychological factors or personality traits. In addition to learning styles, motivation plays a critical role in language acquisition. It is defined as the conscious or unconscious drive to engage in purposeful behaviour (Santrock, 2006). Motivation is often described as the "driving force" behind language learning, as it determines the learner's engagement and ability to communicate effectively. Motivation encompasses perseverance, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude toward mastering a new language. It is an essential element not only for academic success but also for personal and professional development in language learning.

Despite its importance, motivation remains a challenge for over two-thirds of students (Graham & Sandmel, 2011). Compounding this issue is the failure to align learning styles with instructional methods, which results in writing difficulties for nearly 60% of learners (Cohen, 2017). As a consequence, millions of students face reduced educational opportunities. Therefore, exploring the complex relationship between learning styles, motivation, and writing performance is essential. Learning styles and motivation are among the most significant factors influencing language learning outcomes, alongside other variables such as age, gender, personality, aptitude, and learning strategies (Saville & Troike, 2006). The success of English language learning is often evaluated through various skills—writing, speaking, listening, and reading—and by components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Recent studies by Srichanyachon (2012), Sulistyowati (2018), Kamiluddin (2019), Syafrizal et al. (2020), Subagio (2020), Catingub (2020), Saswandi et al. (2023), and Maming et al. (2023) have shown significant correlations between learning styles, motivation, and English language achievement. Among these language skills, writing is a particularly important area that can be cultivated through practice. Morris (1999) highlights that writing serves as an expression of ideas, emotions, and experiences, conveying these through written symbols to evoke similar feelings in others. Writing, therefore, is an act of communication that demands the organization of thoughts into clear, coherent structures.

This research aims to address gaps identified in earlier studies by considering a variety of cultural perspectives. While previous research has explored a wide range of learning styles—such as auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, analytical, and communicative—further examination is needed to understand other forms of learning preferences. Oxford (2003) emphasizes personality as an important component of learning styles, distinguishing between closure-oriented and open-oriented learners. Creative writing, often regarded as a complex skill within language acquisition, also requires additional investigation. The primary research question driving this study is: *Is there a relationship between learning styles, motivation, and writing performance among undergraduate EFL learners?* The null hypothesis posits that no such relationship exists, while the alternative hypothesis asserts that a significant correlation is present.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach and a correlational research design. The population consisted of undergraduate students from the English Department at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, representing various academic semesters. A sample of 158 students from the fifth semester was selected using purposive sampling. To collect data on students' learning styles and motivation, an online questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms. The learning styles questionnaire, based on the framework developed by Cohen and Oxford (2001), distinguished between closure-oriented and open-oriented learners. The learning motivation questionnaire, adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), assessed integrative and instrumental motivation. Both questionnaires utilized a Likert scale with five response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Data on students' writing performance were obtained from their creative writing final projects, specifically short stories. The writing documentation was analyzed for both content and construct validity, based on the progress of students' writing and the genre of the assignment. The learning styles questionnaire was validated for both content and construct through a pilot test, while the learning motivation questionnaire's validity was confirmed by Gardner's previous research. In terms of reliability, both questionnaires demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.858 for the learning styles questionnaire and 0.7 for the learning motivation questionnaire. To analyze the correlation between the two predictor variables (learning styles and motivation) and the criterion variable (writing performance), the study employed the SPSS software and conducted a Multinomial Logistic Regression analysis.

Result
Summary of students' learning styles
The following table shows the summary of students' learning styles.

Table 1. This is a table of students' learning styles summary

Closure-oriented	Open-oriented	Balance
55.1%	14.5%	30.4%

Out of all the 87 students, closure-oriented learners were ranked highest in terms of learning styles. There were 48 students overall who were open-oriented learners in the second rank. The final category of learners consisted of 23 balance learners in total. The next chart deals with the summary of students' learning motivation.

Summary of students' learning motivation
The following table shows the summary of students' learning motivation.

Table 2. This is a table of students' learning motivation summary

High motivation	Average motivation
81.6%	18.4%

From 158 students, 82 % of them or equal with 129 students have high level of learning motivation. While the rest there are 29 students in average level of learning motivation. Moreover, the following last chart describes the summary of students writing performance.

Summary of students' writing performances
The following table shows the summary of students' writing performances.

Table 3. This is a table of students' writing performances summary

High	Average
39.9%	60.1%

The short story writing documentation was evaluated using a scoring rubric, focusing on content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic. The students' writing performances was categorized into average and high levels, with a mean score of 15.9, with the majority falling into high level categories, accounting for 60.1% of overall students.

The correlation among learning styles, learning motivation, and writing performance

The next table is the analysis result. of students' learning styles, learning motivation, and writing performance were correlated through SPSS Program using Multinomial Logistic Regression analysis.

Table 4. This is a table of F-Test

Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Intercept Only	30.477			
Final	21.790	8.688	3	**.034**

As demonstrated in the table above, the significant value is 0.034 or less than $\alpha = 0.05$, as the table above demonstrated. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a relationship between writing performance, learning style, and learning motivation.

Table 5. This is a table of goodness-of-it Test

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	2.348	2	.309
Deviance	2.394	2	.302

In light of p-value for Pearson is $0.309 > \alpha = 0.05$. It suggests that the Multinomial Logistic Regression model is either suitable or feasible for the given data.

Table 6. This is a table of coefficient determination

Cox and Snell	.054
Nagelkerke	.072
McFadden	.041

It signifies that 0.72 is the value of Nagelkerke coefficient of determination. It shows that the criterion variable (writing performance) can be explained or predicted by the predictor factors (learning style and learning motivation) to the extent of 7.2%.

Discussion

This study investigated the learning styles and motivation of 158 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Language Education program, particularly those in their fifth semester. The results revealed that closure-oriented learners, who tend to work near deadlines for heightened energy and efficiency, were the most prevalent among the participants. These learners generally excel when under time pressure, leveraging the urgency to enhance their performance. In contrast, open-oriented learners, who prefer completing tasks promptly to move on to other responsibilities, made up the second-largest group. Furthermore, 23 students exhibited a balanced approach, demonstrating a combination of both closure-oriented and open-oriented styles. This diversity highlights the varied preferences in how students approach their learning tasks.

In addition to learning styles, this study also explored students' learning motivation, using a 30-item questionnaire that assessed two key types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. Adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), the survey found that 129 students reported high motivation, while the remaining participants displayed average motivation levels. The primary purpose of this questionnaire was to gauge students' attitudes toward learning English and to understand the factors that drive their motivation. These findings align with the general understanding that motivation plays a crucial role in language learning, influencing students' engagement and persistence in acquiring English skills.

Writing performance was another critical aspect evaluated in this study. Students were asked to compose short stories as part of their final project, and their writing was assessed using Brown's (2007) narrative scoring rubric. This rubric focused on five key elements: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The overall score, ranging from 5 to 20 points, showed an average score of 15.9. Out of the 158 students, 95 were classified as high performers, while 63 students fell into the average-performance category. These results suggest that, overall, students demonstrated a strong grasp of writing skills, although there was variation in individual performance.

The findings from this study are consistent with several recent studies that highlight the significant relationship between learning styles, motivation, and language achievement (Srichanyachon, 2012; Sulistyowati, 2018; Kamiluddin, 2019; Syafrizal et al., 2020; Subagio, 2020; Catingub, 2020; Saswandi et al., 2023; Maming et al., 2023). These studies confirm that students' motivation and preferred learning styles can significantly influence their language learning outcomes. However, some earlier studies presented conflicting findings, showing no significant link between learning styles, motivation, and language achievement. For instance, studies by Yufrizal et al. (2015), Sunaidah et al. (2021), and others reported no substantial relationship between these factors and English proficiency. The discrepancies in these findings may be due to differences in how "English achievement" is defined and measured, as various studies assess different aspects of language proficiency, such as speaking, reading, or writing skills.

Learning styles are often viewed as reflections of individual preferences in how people approach learning. Some learners may have a dominant learning style, while others may adapt their strategies depending on the task at hand. Moreover, learning styles are not static and can evolve over time, influenced by factors such as academic year, gender, or personal experiences (Khairy, 2018). This fluidity is evident in the varying learning preferences observed in this study. These findings support the notion that learning styles can shift in response to changing academic or personal contexts. For example, Saville and Troike (2006) suggest that the brain's neural connections may adapt over time, especially in multilingual individuals, potentially altering their learning preferences and strategies.

The process of language acquisition is complex and multifaceted, influenced by various factors including cognitive abilities, age, motivation, and teaching methods. While cognitive factors such as memory and attention are difficult to measure precisely, they play a significant role in language learning. Furthermore, external factors such as home environment, peer influence, and social settings also contribute to students' academic success. These environments shape learners'

psychological and emotional development, which is crucial for both cognitive growth and academic achievement. Motivation—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—often depends on personal factors, social support, and encouragement from family or teachers. In particular, students who exhibit task-driven or open-oriented learning styles tend to benefit from collaborative learning activities, which are prevalent in many writing courses. Such activities not only foster a deeper understanding of the language but also improve writing performance by allowing students to share ideas and receive feedback from peers.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of understanding learning styles and motivation in enhancing students' academic outcomes, particularly in language learning. It also underscores the need for a more nuanced approach to teaching, one that recognizes and accommodates diverse learning preferences. Future research could benefit from exploring how specific interventions, such as tailored instructional methods or motivational strategies, might further support students in overcoming writing challenges and improving their language proficiency.

Conclusion

The Multinomial Logistic Regression output discovered that the significance value of simultaneous test or F-Test is 0.034 (lower than $\alpha = 0.05$). It refers that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Thus, there is a low correlation among learning style, learning motivation toward writing performance of undergraduate EFL learners. English lecturers should assign writing tasks to their students regularly to improve their writing performance. Instead of writing performance, English Language components (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and so on) are better to be further observed in the future study. Moreover, the next study is welcomed to observe the other types of learning styles in order to be a benchmark of ELT development.

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