GENDER DIFFERENCES IN STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY LEARNING STYLES

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY LEARNING STYLES

Pricilia Linfanny Shandu

Abstract

Vocabulary learning is one of the most important challenges that learners will face throughout the language learning process. However, individuals preferentially process information and learn in different ways, which is known as learning styles. Recently, there has been a major concern that gender is considered as an important factor which influences and differentiates how people learn (Zokaee, 2012). To address this issue, this study aimed to investigate whether there are gender differences in learning style preferences in the first-year students (2015) majoring in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) of the Faculty of Language and Literature at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga. In this study, there are three learning styles which are discussed: visual learning style, auditory learning style, and kinesthetic learning style. Furthermore, Coffield (2006) stated that the learners can be called unimodal if they prefer single learning style and multimodal if they prefer a variety of learning styles. The latter can further be classified into bimodal (prefer two learning styles) and trimodal (prefer three learning styles). A total of 23 female students and 8 male students responded to a closed-ended questionnaire that consists of 19 items, which was designed based on the theory proposed by Oxford (1990, as cited in Zokaee, 2012), Wong (2006) and Pyke (2010). The result revealed that all of female and male students (100%) stated that learning English vocabulary is important. It was also found that female students preferred single mode of learning style with preference toward visual, whereas male students were multimodal.

Keywords: gender, vocabulary learning, learning styles
Introduction

Vocabulary is central to language and of critical typical importance to the language learner, so it has always been an indispensable part of language teaching and learning (Zimmerman, 1998) as cited in Zokaee (2012). For first-year college students, learning English vocabulary may not be easy since they have different abilities and learning style preferences in order to improve their vocabulary repertoire. According to Gardner (1995) as cited in Wehrwein (2007), learning style preferences are “the manner in which, and the conditions under which learners most efficiently and effectively perceive, process, store, and recall what they are attempting to learn” (p.4).

As the first-year college students in which English is a second/foreign language, it needs some efforts to increase their vocabulary repertoire. However, a problem starts to appear when their teacher uses monotonous English vocabulary teaching approaches. From my experience in my first-year of college, the teachers mostly taught English vocabulary to the students by having the students memorize words, guess words’ meaning, or translate English words into Indonesian. Then, there were not enough variations of activities in each meeting which did not really support and facilitate the students’ vocabulary learning style preferences, especially among female and male students. According to Miller (2011), one way to improve student motivation and performance is to adapt teaching approaches to accommodate the different learning style preferences of the students. For that
reason, this case needs more attention since female and male students have their own learning style preferences in learning English vocabulary (Wehrwein, 2007).

Basically, the study focuses on three learning styles, which are visual (V), auditory (A), and kinesthetic (K). A study that was done by Wehrwein (2007) classified that visual students learn best by seeing or observing (drawings, pictures, diagrams, and demonstrations). However, auditory learners are best suited to learn by listening to or recording lectures, discussing material, and talking through material with themselves or others. Meanwhile, those who are kinesthetic perform best by using physical experiences: touching, performing an activity, moving, lessons that emphasize doing, and manipulation of objects. Furthermore, in Wehrwein’ (2007) study, he also investigated about R (read-write) learners which are mixed type of visual and kinesthetic learning style. Those who are R learners are best suited to learn with textual materials, especially through reading and writing.

Two research studies that investigated about gender differences on students’ learning style preferences resulted in different findings. One study was conducted by Wehrwein (2007) at Michigan State University entitled “Undergraduate Psychology Students’ Learning Style” and the other entitled “Does Gender Influence Learning Style Preferences of First-Year Medical Students?” was accomplished by Slater (2007) at Wayne State University School of Medicine. For psychology students, the result from 86 participants showed that a majority of male students preferred multimodal instruction, specifically, four
modes (VARK), whereas a majority of female students preferred single-mode instruction with a preference toward K. In reverse, 97 participants (53 females 41 males, and 3 unspecified) in medical students have resulted that both male (56.1%) and female (56.7%) students preferred multiple modes of information presentation, and the numbers and types of modality combinations were not significantly different between genders. Although not significantly different, the female student population tended to be more diverse than the male population.

The result of those articles increased my curiosity to discover whether gender affects vocabulary learning style preferences of the first-year students majoring in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) of the Faculty of Language and Literature at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga. This study attempts to answer this research question: Does gender affect vocabulary learning style preferences of the first-year students majoring in the English Language Education Program of the Faculty of Language and Literature in the 2015/2016 Academic Year?

Conducting this research is important since knowing gender differences in students’ vocabulary learning styles will help the teachers to develop the most effective teaching approaches toward learning styles differences. It will also maximize the students’ motivation to learn by accommodating them with various activities which are suitable with their learning style preferences.
Literature Review

This section will mainly discuss about three keywords of the study which are vocabulary learning, learning styles, and gender. In vocabulary learning section, it will discuss about the definition of vocabulary, the importance of learning vocabulary, and how language students usually learn vocabulary. Furthermore, in learning styles section, it will discuss about learning style definition, the importance of knowing students’ learning styles, learning styles fundamental characteristics, and the further explanation about visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning style. The last section which is about gender will mainly discuss about how boys and girls are different biologically which leads to their different preferences of learning styles.

The Definition and the Importance of Learning Vocabulary

In learning English or any other language as a second/foreign language, learning vocabulary plays an important role since it is a part of a language and the basic step of learning a language. Vocabulary is defined by Brekelet (2003) as cited in Dahana (2013), as a “list of words like the one found in dictionary of glossary or lexicon which includes all the words of a language and known or used by a person or group” (p.6). To be a successful English learner, it needs some efforts in increasing vocabularies. A research on the importance of vocabulary conducted by Tuan (2011) to Vietnamese students at National University at Ho Chi Minh City showed that all of the participants agree that learning vocabulary is important. There are plenty of importance in learning vocabulary. Mullen (1963) as cited in Dahana (2013) emphasized that learners would not be engaged to ideas
or people if they are not able to use words and understand it. It means the more
the learners acquire the large number of vocabularies, the better they develop their
that learning vocabulary is more than just “knowing that” (declarative knowledge)
which means the learners do not just able to recognize or know the word and the
meaning in L1, but it is about “knowing how” (procedural knowledge) which
means the learners are able to use the L2 words communicatively in any of the
four main language skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing).

Language Students’ Vocabulary Learning Strategies

According to Oxford (1990) as cited in Crookal (2008), language students
actually have some similar ways in learning vocabulary. The first common way is
by working with their dictionary to expand their vocabulary. For beginner or
intermediate level learners, especially college students, bilingual dictionary is
dictionaries maintain the conscious linkage between the L1 and the L2. There is
also an alternative to the bilingual dictionary which is monolingual (L2-L2)
dictionary. The research also found that monolingual dictionary is typically
designed for native language users and they are usually too difficult for beginner
and intermediate college learners.

Second, the learners usually associate the words with gestures or concept
in their memory. One advantage of associating the word is that the learners are
able to reflect more divergent thinking by creating new associations between a
new word and any personally meaningful concepts or gestures.

Then, the learners usually learn vocabulary by reading and listening
practice can involve a vast variety of material: comics, letters, stories, books, and
so on. The listening practice itself also covered material, such as listening to songs
and recording and listening to a speech. Through listening and reading practice,
the learners will retain and absorb more vocabulary.

Furthermore, Stepanova (2012) stated that it is common for the language
students to stick the notes in places where they spend most time such as near their
table, the wall in their bedroom, or even on the mirror. It is one of the effective
ways to learn vocabulary since they are unconsciously always sees the words and
the meaning.

The Definition and the Importance of Knowing Students’ Learning Styles

From some of the most common ways of students’ learning vocabulary,
their learning style can be seen quite clearly. According to Gardner (1995) as cited
in Wehrwein (2007), learning style itself is defined as “the manner in which, and
under which conditions learners most efficiently and most effectively perceive,
process, store, and recall what they are attempting to learn”(p.4). Determining
students’ learning style is important for the teacher in order to facilitate students in
identifying the most effective way for them to gain a deeper understanding on
certain subjects and make the learning process easier for them. Felder and
Silverman (1988) as cited in Shuib (2015) pointed out the importance of knowing the learning style is that learners with strong preference for a specific learning style may have difficulties in learning if the teaching style does not match with their learning style. Wehrwein (2007) added that knowing students' preferred learning style could help to overcome the predisposition of many educators to treat all students in a similar way.

**Learning Styles Fundamental Characteristics**

Basically, as cited in Tabanhoglu (2010), Reid (1995) asserted that learning styles have fundamental characteristics. The first is every person, student and teacher alike, has a learning style and learning strengths and weaknesses. It has also become the teacher’s job to allow their students to become aware of their learning strengths and weaknesses. Next, learning styles are value-neutral; that is, no one style is better than others. We should not judge a person with visual learning style is better than others who have kinesthetic learning style. Then, students must be encouraged to “stretch” their learning styles so that they will be more empowered in a variety of learning situations. Often, students’ strategies are linked to their learning styles. For example, if they are audio learners, usually their strategy in learning is listening to music or hearing other people who are talking in order to improve their vocabulary repertoire.

**Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic Learners**

In this research, the study focuses more on three kinds of students learning styles, which are visual (V), auditory (A), and kinesthetic (K). According to
visual learners are learners who prefer to learn via the visual channel. Therefore they like to read a lot, which requires concentration and time spent alone. Wong (2006) stated that visual learners respond well to information on the whiteboard, colorful pictures, watching videos or movies, story books with pictures, computer graphics, maps and charts, cartoons, posters, worksheets, and puzzles.

Then, auditory learners are the students who enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus they want to engage themselves in discussions, conversations, and group work which typically require only oral directions (Oxford, 1995 as cited in Zokaee, 2012). In addition, Wong (2006) stated that auditory learners respond well to songs, poems and riddles, verbal instructions and explanations, listening activities, and participating in oral activities.

Meanwhile, kinesthetic learners are those who imply total physical involvement with a learning environment such as taking a field trip, dramatizing, pantomiming, or interviewing (Oxford, 1995 as cited in Zokaee, 2012). Next, Wong (2006) also stated that kinesthetic learners respond well to songs with gestures, playing games in which they need to use their whole body, movement activities, making models, setting up experiments, and following instructions to make something.

However, the fact that sometimes the learners are capable of using all of these sensory modes of learning should also be considered. According to Coffield (2006), the learners with a single learning style preference are referred to as unimodal or single mode and those who prefer a variety of learning styles are
referred to as multimodal. The latter can be classified into bimodal (prefer two learning styles) and trimodal (prefer three learning styles).

**Gender Differences in Learning Styles**

Recently, there has been a lot of debate about factors that influence learning styles. Gender has been regarded as an important affective factor that plays a specific role and influences second language acquisition (Zokaee, 2012).

A research conducted by Pyke (2010) about girls and boys differences and preferences in learning vocabulary showed that girls use their left brain more than their right brain. This condition means that girls were born as talkers: they tend to be brought up to have relationships with people with a strong emphasis on communication, such as discussion, conversation, group work or any other activities involving with other people. The tendency makes girls grow up more socially than boys. This situation causes girls to have advantages in several learning activities such as answering open-ended questions, showing audience awareness, writing (reflectively, empathetically, imaginatively), discussing with others, doing conversation, writing about poems, literary prose, preparing for assignments and discussing it with teachers, and listening. Girls also prefer activities such as listening, discussion, writing, and lengthy assignment learning activities.

Furthermore, Pyke’s (2010) also found that boys are more on right-hemisphere brain in which the structure of male brain (right-hemisphere) is associated with spatial-mechanical function, which makes boys like to play a game, movement, and gestures. Then, boys also prefer learning activities such as
brainstorming, role-playing, visiting or field trip, doing some practical investigation, learning using information technology, and learning using audio-visual aids. In addition, boys scored better only in writing (argumentatively and factually), interpreting visual material (pictures), and doing multiple-choice tests.

**Previous Studies on Gender Differences in Students’ Learning Styles**

Wehrwein (2007) conducted a study that investigated 86 psychology students’ learning style preferences based on gender at Michigan State University. The results showed that a majority of male students preferred multimodal instruction, specifically, four modes (visual, auditory, reading, kinesthetic), whereas a majority of female students preferred single-mode instruction with a preference toward kinesthetic. The result also showed that in female single mode, there were 4.2% of the students preferred visual, 0% of the students preferred auditory, 16.7% of the students preferred reading, and 33.3% of the students preferred kinesthetic. In contrast, 4.2% of male students preferred auditory, reading or kinesthetic, whereas 0% of the students preferred visual. Then, in bimodal data, there were 4.2% of the female students preferred visual kinesthetic, auditory kinesthetic and reading kinesthetic. Of the male students who were bimodal, 8.3% preferred visual kinesthetic while equal percentages (4.2%) preferred auditory reading and reading kinesthetic. Moreover, there were 4.2% of trimodal female and male students who preferred each learning style (visual reading kinesthetic, visual auditory kinesthetic, auditory reading kinesthetic.)
Another research on gender differences in students’ vocabulary learning styles was done by Slater (2007) at Wayne State University School of Medicine. The result showed that from 97 participants (53 females, 41 males, and 3 unspecified), both male and female medical students preferred multiple modes of learning styles, and the numbers and types of modality combinations were not significantly different between genders. Although not significantly different, the female student population tended to be more diverse than the male population. The result also showed that in female single mode, there were 7.5% preferred visual, 5.6% preferred auditory, 11.3% preferred reading, and 18.9% preferred kinesthetic. In contrast, male students preferred visual (2.4%), auditory (4.9%), reading (9.8%), and kinesthetic (26.8%). Then, female who were bimodal showed that 6.7% preferred visual kinesthetic, 3.3% preferred visual reading, and 0% preferred visual auditory. However, male students showed that 8.7% preferred visual kinesthetic, 0% preferred visual reading, and 4.3% preferred visual auditory. Furthermore, the data in trimodal female students showed there were 3.3% preferred visual auditory kinesthetic, 6.7% preferred visual auditory reading and visual reading kinesthetic, and 10% preferred auditory reading kinesthetic. However, the data of trimodal male students showed that there were 4.3% preferred visual auditory kinesthetic and visual auditory reading, 21.7% preferred visual reading kinesthetic, and 0% preferred auditory reading kinesthetic. Meanwhile, in quadmodal (visual auditory reading kinesthetic), there were 40% of female and 56.6% of male students preferred quadmodal.
From all the explanation above, it is clearly stated that vocabulary learning is important. However, each learner has their own way of learning vocabulary, which is known as learning styles, which may be visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or the combination of two or three of them. Meanwhile, gender can lead to vocabulary learning style differences since boys and girls are cognitively different. In short, boys and girls may have differences in vocabulary learning styles.

The Study

Research Design

The method of this research was descriptive. It aimed to discover whether gender affects vocabulary learning style preferences of the first-year students majoring in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) of the Faculty of Language and Literature at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga by describing the nature or conditions of the present situation (Landman, 2008). The study tried to answer a research question:

- Does gender affect vocabulary learning style preferences of the first-year students majoring in the English Language Education Program of the Faculty of Language and Literature in the 2015/2016 Academic Year?

Context of the Study

The study was conducted in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) of the Faculty of Language and Literature at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga. In this program, the majority of students is female.
In general, there are three terms in one year, each consisting of 14 weeks. In each term, students are required to take several courses in order to improve their ability and knowledge in enriching their vocabulary repertoire through four main skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading). In the first term of their first year in college, they are required to take several courses such as Creative Writing, Extensive Reading, Choral Reading, Pronunciation Practice and Basic Grammar. In the Creative Writing course, the students practice to write creatively in different topics. In Extensive Reading, the students are allowed to choose their own genres or levels of books to be read extensively as a pleasure reading activity along the first semester in order to understand different genres of English texts. Then, in the Choral Reading course, the students are divided into several groups to read aloud a jazz chant, a short story, and a play script with different themes. Meanwhile, the Pronunciation Practice course trains the students’ pronunciation of the English words. They will learn about stressing, long and short vowels, how to differentiate words with similar pronunciation, and so on. Their knowledge will also be enriched in the Basic Grammar course, in which the students are expected to be able to develop constructions using basic English grammatical structures correctly at the level of sentences and short texts.

In the following term, they are required to take Procedural Writing, Public Speaking, Extensive Listening and Intermediate Grammar. In the Procedural Writing course, the students practice to write pieces of writing (directional and informational type) which shows series of procedural essays. They are provided with vocabulary enrichment, imperatives language focus, coherence and
transitions, and the differences between directional type and information type in procedural writing. As a follow-up action for the Pronunciation Practice course in the previous term, the students can apply their ability in pronunciation in the Public Speaking course. This course prepares students to talk with people in various situations in English in a clear and acceptable way without trepidation. It means that the main point of this course is to hone students’ spoken language skills through doing conversations (questioning and answering, small talk, telephoning, making and declining suggestions, agreeing and disagreeing, complaining, interviewing, etc), giving a speech, role-playing, and doing presentations. Then, in the Extensive Listening course, the students are provided by a lot of meaningful, enjoyable comprehensible listening input to help them understand spoken English texts of different genres. The course is also divided into three major parts of learning which is about news (health, entertainment, economy, education, science, culture), children story, and short story. Interestingly, the students are given options of topics every week and they can choose one for themselves.

In the last term of their academic year, the students are required to take Narrative Writing, Critical Reading, and Intensive Listening. In the Narrative Writing course, the students are taught to narratively tell their stories which can be from their own experience (personal narratives) or other people stories (autobiographies). Furthermore, in the Critical Reading course, the main purpose of the course is to develop students’ critical thinking ability through analyzing and evaluating English texts. The last course is Intensive Listening which expects the
students to use many kinds of strategies to improve their listening skill ability. In this course, the students are expected to be actively involved in discussions about social context recording material.

In general, the first-year students of English Language Education Program (ELEP) learned four important skills which were speaking, reading, writing, and listening with grammar included. In each course, they learned about vocabulary through different activities and exercises both in groups and individually.

**Participants**

In this research, the participants were the first-year students of the Faculty of Language and Literature majoring in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) in the 2015/2016 academic year. The basic reason of choosing the first-year students was because it was important for beginners or intermediate students in college to learn vocabulary since they need it to apply vocabulary in many skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Oxford, 1990) as cited in Crookal (2008).

The population of the first-year students in 2015/2016 academic year was 124 students in total, with 89 female and 35 male students. The sample participants were 30% of the population, following the suggestion from McKay (2006). The number of the sample participants was obtained from Comparison of Gender Ratio based on Heilbrunn (2013). Total population of each gender was divided by 100 and multiplied by total population. The result of the calculation from each gender was then divided and the result was the gender ratio. For this
research, the gender ratio was 1:3 (male : female). Therefore, the final number of the sample participants was 31 students, consisting of 23 female and 8 male students.

For this study, stratified random sampling was used on 23 female and 8 male of the first-year students majoring in the English Language Education Program of the Faculty of Language and Literature, Satya Wacana Christian University in the 2015/2016 academic year. The purpose of applying random sampling was because the topic of the study was about gender preferences in students’ vocabulary learning styles. Therefore, there was no certain criterion in order to choose the participants since it was only decided by their gender.

Data Collection Instrument

Addressing the preceding research question, a closed-ended questionnaire about vocabulary learning style was used as the data collection instrument. The closed-ended questionnaire was used to help the researcher to get the data more easily in a short time. It was because the participants were requested to give their honest views in a 4-Likert scale questionnaire which was comprised as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. In addition, the participants were also required to fill in one of the gender provided (M for male and F for female) so that it would be easier to separate the students based on their gender.

The questionnaire consisted of 19 items which was created based on the theory about visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning style proposed by Hansen
(2005) and Wong (2006). The theory was used as a tool to figure out the first-year students’ vocabulary learning style preferences of the Faculty of Language and Literature majoring in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga.

The questionnaire was also divided into four parts, including:

1. The importance of learning English vocabulary (item 1)
2. Visual learning style (item 2-7)
3. Auditory learning style (item 8-13)
4. Kinesthetic learning style (item 14-19)

Data Collection Procedures

The first step of collecting the data was to pilot the questionnaire. According to McKay (2006), the purpose of piloting itself was to explore what potential problems might exist (clarity, confusing questionnaire item, etc). McKay also added that the piloting was given to \(1/4\) of the total participants (female= 23, male=8). So, the piloting participants were 6 female and 2 male students who were chosen randomly. The final questionnaire was distributed to the 23 female and 8 male participants excluding the piloting participants.

Data Analysis Procedure

The first step in analyzing the data was to separate the questionnaire result into two parts based on the students’ gender. The data were reported as percentages of students in each category of learning style preferences which were visual, auditory, and kinesthetic of male and female students. Following Slater
(2007), the number of participants from each gender (female= 23, male= 8) who preferred each mode of learning style was obtained from calculating the total of “Strongly Agree and Agree” answer from each female and male participant. Then, it was divided by the total number of responses from each gender and multiplied by 100%. The participants would be considered single mode if there was the highest percentage on a certain learning style. Moreover, they were also said bimodal or trimodal if the percentage of each learning style showed similar percentage.

The data also reported as percentages of students’ responses to each questionnaire item in order to know what activity that each gender mostly like to do in learning vocabulary. The percentage of students responses to each questionnaire item was obtained from calculating the total of “Strongly Agree and Agree” answer from all female and male participants in each item of learning styles, divided by the total population of each gender and multiplied by 100%. The highest percentage indicated that the item was the most frequently used by the participants from each gender. However, the item was considered as the least frequently used if it was in the lowest percentage.

In analyzing the data, Microsoft office excel for Windows was employed to calculate the percentages of each learning style applied. There were also data description and data interpretation which followed the data percentage. Since the purpose of the study was to investigate whether gender affected students’ vocabulary learning style preferences or not, the result from male and female would be compared.
Discussion

The aim of this chapter was to analyze the data gathered to answer the research question. The discussion of this chapter would be based on the importance of learning English vocabulary and the three learning styles, which are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic of first year female and male students in Faculty of Language and Literature, Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga in the 2015/2016 academic year.

Students’ Vocabulary Learning Style Preferences in General

This section will discuss about the result of female and male participants’ learning styles preferences result. There are also four figures which present the discussion of female and male participants’ preferences, discussion on single mode, bimodal, and trimodal of female and male participants. Following Slater (2007), the number of participants from each gender (female= 23, male= 8) who preferred each mode of learning style was obtained from calculating the total of “Strongly Agree and Agree” answer from each female and male participant. Then, the result was divided by the total number of responses from each gender and multiplied by 100%. The highest percentage of the learning style would be considered as the learning style preferred by the students. The students’ learning style preferences were also said multimodal (bi- or tri-) if the percentage of each learning style showed similar percentage.
General Findings of Learning Style Preferences

Figure 1 shows the general result of female and male participants’ learning styles preferences in general. The discussion in this figure is the general report and the most notable findings of the result.

Figure 1:

Female and Male Participants’ Learning Styles Preferences Result

The result shows that female participants preferred single mode learning style with preference toward single mode of visual learning style. It is because 7 female participants (30.43%) showed the highest percentage on single mode of visual compared with other combination of learning style preferences (bimodal or trimodal). On the other hand, male students are multimodal since they are more diverse. The percentage showed that 2 male participants (25%) are categorized in each combination of single mode of visual, bimodal of visual kinesthetic, and trimodal of visual auditory kinesthetic.

The result was similar to the findings in Wehrwein’s (2007) study about gender differences in psychology students’ learning styles preferences at Michigan State University. He found that majority of female students preferred
single-mode of kinesthetic whereas male students are multimodal since they are more diverse compared to female students. These gender differences may happen because he also found that male students may adjust easily to different teaching styles. It made male students were more diversified in their learning styles preferences compared to female students who are rarely able to maximize all of their sensory modes in one time to receive information.

**Single Mode Learning Style**

Figure 2 presents the data result about female and male participants who preferred single mode of learning style. According to Coffield (2006), the learners with a single learning style preference are referred to as unimodal or single mode. This part provides the data result of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles preferences.

![Figure 2: Single Mode of Female and Male Participants (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic)](image)

First, the data shows that single mode of visual learning got the highest preference percentage, supported by 7 female participants (30.43%) and 2 male participants (25%). In the second highest percentage was the single mode of
kinesthetic learning style, which was preferred by 4 female participants (17.40%) and 1 male participant (12.50%). Then, the lowest percentage of learning style preference was in the single mode of auditory learning style. The data showed that there were only 1 female participant (4.34%) and none of male participants (0%) who preferred single mode of auditory learning style.

The result was different from the findings in Slater’s (2007) study which investigated gender differences in students’ learning styles preferences at Wayne State University School of Medicine. In his study, the highest percentage showed that both female (18.9%) and male (26.8%) students preferred single mode of kinesthetic learning style. It was followed by 7.5% of female who preferred visual and 4.9% of male who preferred auditory. The lowest percentage for female was 5.6% for auditory and 2.4% for visual male. According to Coffield (2006), the result on gender differences may happen because there is a difference in the context and the background of participants. Slater (2007) explained that first-year medical students need to maximize and use all of their senses to receive information and material (kinesthetic) instead of only visualizing something (visual). It was one of the reasons that in his study, the result shows that the highest percentage was in single mode of kinesthetic learning style. However, in English Language Education Program (ELEP) first-year students, they are provided with Extensive Reading course, Choral Reading course, Basic Grammar course, Intermediate Grammar course, and Critical Reading course in their first-year of college. In these courses, they need to be visual learners since they will read books a lot and read written explanations from their teachers.
Bimodal Mode Learning Style

The data in Figure 3 provides the data result of bimodal female and male participants. According to Coffield (2006), the learners who prefer two learning styles can be classified into bimodal. This part discusses the data which shows the combination of visual auditory, visual kinesthetic, and auditory kinesthetic learning styles preferences.

Figure 3:
Bimodal Mode of Female and Male Participants (Visual Auditory, Visual Kinesthetic, Auditory Kinesthetic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Auditory</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Kinesthetic</td>
<td>17.40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory Kinesthetic</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result shows that there were 4 female participants (17.40%) and 2 male participants (25%) who preferred bimodal mode of visual kinesthetic as the highest percentage. Then, there were only 2 female participants (8.70%) and 1 male participant (12.50%) who preferred bimodal learning style of visual auditory. The lowest percentage was in the bimodal mode of auditory kinesthetic since there was none of female and male participants who preferred auditory kinesthetic.
The result was similar to the research done by Slater (2007) because the highest percentage of female (6.7%) and male (8.7%) bimodal students were in visual kinesthetic. The second highest percentage was supported by both female (0%) and male (4.3%) who was in visual auditory. The findings also stated that none of female and male participants who preferred auditory kinesthetic. In order to support Slater’s (2007) findings, it was necessary to take a look at the context and the background of participants as a consideration. In the 2015-2016 Academic Year which contained of three terms, the first-year students of English Language Education Program (ELEP) were required to take several courses to develop their English vocabulary repertoire. In these courses, the students also learned English vocabulary through different kinds of activities. For example, they were required to be actively participated in giving written feedback toward their friends’ writing in writing courses (Creative Writing, Procedural Writing, and Narrative Writing). It meant that they should read their friends’ writing in order to be able to write their opinions, comments, suggestions, and feedbacks. Furthermore, in speaking courses (Pronunciation Practice and Public Speaking), their teachers also usually asked the students to watch a short video which contained an example about the topic of the lesson (how to make and decline suggestion or how to pronounce correctly). After that, what the teachers mostly did is to make a game or ask the students to do a role-play based on the topic of the lesson. In short, the background of the participants showed a strong relationship with both female and male participants who mostly preferred visual kinesthetic instead of visual auditory or auditory kinesthetic learning style preferences.
Trimodal Mode Learning Style

Figure 4 consists of the data description about trimodal female and male participants. According to Coffield (2006), trimodal learners are those who prefer three learning styles. In this study, trimodal is the last combination of learning styles preferences which will be discussed (Visual Auditory Kinesthetic learning style preferences).

![Trimodal Mode of Female and Male Participants](Visual Auditory Kinesthetic)

From the data, there were 21.73% or 5 female participants belong to trimodal mode of visual auditory kinesthetic. Furthermore, there were 25% or 2 male participants who were in trimodal mode of visual auditory kinesthetic.

The result was congruent with the findings in a research conducted by Slater (2007) because female (3.3%) trimodal participants had lower percentage compared with male (4.3%) trimodal participants. In his study, he found that male students may adjust easily to different teaching styles. It made male students were more diverse in their learning styles preferences compared to female students who are rarely able to maximize all of their sensory modes in one time to receive information.
Mostly, female students were only able to combine two of their sensory modes instead of combining all of their sensory modes in learning something. For this reason, it may be one of the factors why female students had lower percentage compared to male students in trimodal learning style preferences. Based on the previous finding in this study (Figure 1), the result showed that 7 female participants (30.43%) preferred single mode of visual learning style whereas 2 male participants (25%) were more diverse in single mode of visual learning style, bimodal mode of visual kinesthetic learning style, and trimodal mode of visual auditory kinesthetic learning style. The result explicitly stated that it was quite difficult for the first-year female students of English Language Education Program (ELEP) in the Faculty of Language and Literature to combine all of the learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) at the same time of learning English vocabulary. It could be one of the reasons why female participants showed lower percentage (21.73%) compared to male participants (25%) in trimodal mode of learning style preference.

**Discussion on Students Responses to Each Questionnaire Item**

This section of the research will discuss about the students responses to each questionnaire item. The purpose of this discussion is to know what kind of activities or preferences from each gender (female and male) which are more frequently and less frequently used in learning vocabulary. The percentage of students’ responses to each questionnaire item was obtained from calculating the total of “Strongly Agree and Agree” answer from all female and male participants.
in each item of learning styles, divided by the total population of each gender and multiplied by 100%. The highest percentage indicated that the item was the most frequently used by the participants from each gender. However, the item was considered as the least frequently used if it was in the lowest percentage.

The data was collected using closed-ended questionnaire that consisted of 19 items about vocabulary learning style which was created based on the theory about visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning style proposed by Hansen (2005) and Wong (2006). The questionnaire was also divided into four parts, including:

1. The importance of learning English vocabulary (item 1)
2. Visual learning style (item 2-7)
3. Auditory learning style (item 8-13)
4. Kinesthetic learning style (item 14-19)

**Female and Male Participants Responses on the Importance of Learning English Vocabulary**

Figure 5 is the first part of discussing the students responses on each questionnaire item. It shows the data result about the importance of learning English vocabulary of female and male participants.
The data shows that all participants from both gender (100%) believed that learning English vocabulary is important (Item 1). The result was consistent with the findings in Tuan’s (2011) study which investigated the importance of vocabulary to Vietnamese students at National University at Ho Chi Minh City. His result showed that all of the participants agreed that learning vocabulary is important. The reason was because the participants, who were the first-year students, should master more vocabulary in order to be able to apply the vocabulary in speaking, reading, writing and listening. The purpose is to create good communication, so the learners should combine those four skills in learning the language. It is set as one of the goals of language learning and plays an active part of a language (Nation, 2001 as cited in Dahana, 2013). The theory proposed by Nation (2001 as cited in Dahana, 2013) was congruent with the context of the study. As the first-year students of Faculty of Language and Literature who were majoring in the English Language Education Program, they were required to take several courses in writing (creative and procedural writing), reading (choral and
extensive reading), speaking (pronunciation practice and public speaking), 
listening (extensive listening), and grammar to enrich their vocabulary since the 
beginning of the college.

**Female and Male Participants Preferences on Visual Learning Style**

Figure 6 provides descriptive statistics about visual learning style of 
(2012), visual learners are learners who prefer to learn via the visual channel. 
Therefore they like to read a lot, which requires concentration and time spent 
alone. Wong (2006) stated that visual learners respond well to information on the 
whiteboard, colorful pictures, watching videos or movies, story books with 
pictures, computer graphics, maps and charts, cartoons, posters, worksheets, and 
puzzles.

**Figure 6:**
Visual Female and Male Participants’ Preferences (Item 2-7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 2</th>
<th>Item 3</th>
<th>Item 4</th>
<th>Item 5</th>
<th>Item 6</th>
<th>Item 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>95.65%</td>
<td>82.60%</td>
<td>86.95%</td>
<td>69.56%</td>
<td>91.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87.50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the total 6 items of statement which were in visual part, there were 
three most frequently used preferences in vocabulary visual learning style of
female and male. First, all of visual female and male participants (100%) showed that they learned English vocabulary by watching videos or movies (Item 7). Then, the second highest preference from both visual female and male were in Item 2. There were 95.65% of visual female participants and 100% of visual male participants who said that they learned English vocabulary by reading English books.

This result was congruent with Oxford (1990) as cited in Crookal (2008) findings which stated that the learners usually learn vocabulary by reading and listening practice. L2 reading practice can involve a vast variety of material: comics, letters, stories, books, and so on (Watson, 1985 as cited in Crookal, 2008). The findings were also similar with the context of the study. As the first-year students of Faculty of Language and Literature who were majoring in the English Language Education Program, they were required to take several reading courses (choral reading, extensive reading, and critical reading) to enrich their vocabulary repertoire. Those reading courses also involved a lot of different genres and topics of books, texts, and stories as the learning material.

Then, all of visual male participants (100%) mentioned that they prefer to learn English vocabulary by using bilingual dictionaries (Item 4). This result was consistent with Oxford (1990) as cited in Crookal (2008) which found that the first common way for language students to learn vocabulary is by working with their dictionary to expand their vocabulary. For beginner or intermediate level learners, especially college students, bilingual dictionary is typically used. Baxter (1980) as cited in Crookal (2008) added that bilingual dictionaries are beneficial
to maintain the conscious linkage between the L1 and the L2. In addition, the learning background of the first-year students of English Language Education Program (ELEP) in the Faculty of Language and Literature also supported the result. In their context, in which they are still in the beginner level of college students, English is considered as second/foreign language (L2). Mostly, the easiest way to know a word they do not know in their L1 is to use bilingual dictionary (Baxter, 1980 as cited in Crookal, 2008). For example, in the Extensive Reading course, their teachers allowed them to use bilingual dictionary since they were able to choose their own topics and levels of books which they wanted to read.

Interestingly, 62.50% of visual male participants showed that they less frequently learned English vocabulary by seeing colorful pictures, diagrams, or posters (Item 6). Meanwhile, what was stated in Item 6 was in the third highest percentage of visual female preference (91.30%). This result was not congruent with the findings in Pyke’s (2010) study about girls and boys differences and preferences in learning vocabulary. He found that boys scored better only in writing (argumentatively and factually), interpreting visual material (pictures), and doing multiple-choice test. For example, in the background of participants, the students were required to take Extensive Reading course in the first term of 2015-2016 Academic Year. In this course, the students were able to choose the topics or levels of the books they wanted to read. Usually, the books they red were books with pictures. The function of these pictures was just as a completion to attract the readers’ attention. However, Pyke’ (2010) study found that boys scored
better in interpreting visual material including pictures. It might caused boys had critical thinking and liked a lot of challenges material or lesson. In short, only seeing colorful pictures, diagrams, or posters did not really attract their attention to learn further about it. For this reason, male participants were considered better in interpreting pictures as a visual material instead of just seeing pictures which was functioned as completion in a book or material.

Female and Male Participants Preferences on Auditory Learning Style

Figure 7 presents the data result of auditory female and male participants. Auditory learners are the students who enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus they want to engage themselves in discussions, conversations, and group work which typically require only oral directions (Oxford, 1995 as cited in Zokaee, 2012). In addition, Wong (2006) stated that auditory learners respond well to songs, poems and riddles, verbal instructions and explanations, listening activities, and participating in oral activities.

**Figure 7:**
Auditory Female and Male Participants’ Preferences (Item 8-13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Female (%</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>91.30</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>91.30</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>82.60</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>34.78</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>52.17</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the data above, the highest auditory preference percentage was in Item 8. All of auditory female and male participants (100%) strongly agreed and agreed that they prefer to learn English vocabulary by listening to music or songs. This result was congruent with the result of Oxford (1990) as cited in Crookal (2008). It was found that the learners usually learn vocabulary by reading and listening practice. The listening practice itself also covered material, such as listening to songs and recording and listening to a speech. Through listening and reading practice itself, the learners will retain and absorb more vocabulary.

The findings were also similar with the context of the study. As the first-year students of Faculty of Language and Literature who were majoring in the English Language Education Program, they were required to take several listening courses (extensive listening and intensive listening) in order to improve their vocabulary repertoire. For example, in the Extensive Listening course, the students were provided by a lot of meaningful and enjoyable comprehensible listening input. The course was also divided into three major parts of learning which was about news, short story, and children story. Interestingly, the students were given options of topics every week and they could choose one for themselves. Both of listening courses (extensive and intensive listening) also covered material such as songs, recordings, speeches, etc.

The second highest preference of auditory female and male participants was quite different. While all of auditory male participants (100%) stated that they preferred listening to verbal instructions or explanations from their teacher about English vocabulary (Item 11), 91.30% of auditory female participants mentioned
that they learned English vocabulary by having conversation with other people (Item 9), and discussing difficult words and the meaning with their friends (Item 10).

The result was congruent with findings in Pyke’s (2010) study since his study showed that girls had advantages in several learning activities such as answering open-ended questions, showing audience awareness, writing (reflectively, empathetically, imaginatively), discussing with others, doing conversation, writing about poems, literary prose, preparing for assignments and discuss it with teachers, and listening. He also added that it could happen because girls were left-hemisphere brain. It meant that girls were born as talkers which means that they tended to be brought up to have relationships with people with a strong emphasis on communication such as discussion, conversation, group work or any other activities involving with other people. Those made girls grow up more socially than boys. The number of students in the Faculty of Language and Literature was 80% dominated by female students instead of male students. This condition can be a strong factor in supporting the result in Figure 7 which states that 91.30% of auditory female participants mentioned that they learned English vocabulary by having conversation with other people (Item 9), and discussing difficult words and the meaning with their friends (Item 10). Under a condition where female students more dominated the total number of students in the Faculty of Language and Literature at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga brought female students to have more friends to talk, discuss, and learn together with their friends.
Female and Male Participants Preferences on Kinesthetic Learning Style

Figure 8 shows the percentage of kinesthetic female and male participants’ preferences. Kinesthetic learners are those who imply total physical involvement with a learning environment such as taking a field trip, dramatizing, pantomiming, or interviewing (Oxford, 1995 as cited in Zokaee, 2012). Next, Wong (2006) also stated that kinesthetic learners respond well to songs with gestures, playing games in which they need to use their whole body, movement activities, making models, setting up experiments, and following instructions to make something.

Figure 8:

Kinesthetic Female and Male Participants’ Preferences (Item 14-19)

Based on the result above, the most frequently used preference by kinesthetic female participants (91.30%) was in Item 16 which stated that they preferred to learn English vocabulary through role-plays or dramas. Meanwhile, 62.5% of kinesthetic male participants chose Item 16 (doing role-play) and Item 17 (taking a field trip) as less frequently used preferences in learning English vocabulary. The result was incongruent with Pyke’s (2010) study which found
that boys preferred activities such as brainstorming, role-playing, taking field trip, and learning through audio-visual aids.

Furthermore, all of kinesthetic male participants (100%) stated that they prefer to learn English vocabulary by playing games (Item 14) and associating words with certain gestures (Item 15). Interestingly, 52.17% of kinesthetic female participants chose item 15 as less frequently used preference. Pyke’s (2010) study found that the structure of male brain (right-hemisphere) was associated with spatial-mechanical function, which made boys like to play a game, movement, and gestures.

**Conclusion**

This research aims to discover whether gender affect vocabulary learning style preferences of first-year students majoring in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) of the Faculty of Language and Literature at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga in the 2015/2016 academic year.

Based on the result, it is found that all female and male students (100%) agreed that learning English vocabulary is important. The result also revealed that female students preferred single mode of learning style with preference toward visual. It is because 7 female participants (30.43%) showed the highest percentage on single mode of visual compared with other combination of learning style preferences (bimodal or trimodal). On the other hand, male students are multimodal since they are more diverse. The percentage showed that 2 male participants (25%) are categorized in each combination of single mode of visual, bimodal of visual kinesthetic, and trimodal of visual auditory kinesthetic.
There are also several frequently used preferences in each learning style of female and male participants in order to know which preferences were used by female and male participants in each learning style. In visual female participants, they stated that they prefer to learn English vocabulary through watching videos or movies (100%), reading English books (95.65%), and seeing colorful pictures, diagrams, or posters (91.30). Then, all of visual male participants (100%) mentioned that they learn English vocabulary through watching videos or movies, using bilingual dictionaries, and reading English books. Furthermore, all of auditory female and male participants (100%) stated that they prefer to learn English vocabulary through listening to music or songs. Then, 91.30% of auditory female participants prefer learning English vocabulary by doing conversations and discussing difficult words with their friends. However, 100% of auditory male participants said that they learn English vocabulary through listening to verbal explanation from their teachers. In the last learning style which is kinesthetic, 91.30% of female participants prefer learning English vocabulary through doing role-plays or dramas. Meanwhile, 100% of male participants agree that they learn English vocabulary through playing games and associating words with gestures.

On this research there are some important keywords need to be noted. This research mainly discussed about gender differences in students’ vocabulary learning styles. According to Gardner (1995) as cited in Wehrwein (2007), learning style itself is defined as “the manner in which, and under which conditions learners most efficiently and most effectively perceive, process, store,
and recall what they are attempting to learn”(p.4). Furthermore, vocabulary is defined by Brekelet (2003) as cited in Dahana (2013), as a “list of words like the one found in dictionary of glossary or lexicon which includes all the words of a language and known or used by a person or group”(p.6).

From the result, it is clearly seen that each gender in each learning style mostly has their preferences in learning English vocabulary. In these situations, it is suggested for the teachers to raise their awareness toward students’ learning style preferences in learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, the teachers are also suggested to vary the classroom activities to accommodate the students’ learning style in order to improve their academic success. It should also be noted that if the teachers unconsciously use only a certain way of explaining material only for a certain learning style, the other students who have different learning styles may feel some difficulties in understanding the lesson. In addition, students are also suggested to be aware of their own learning style preferences in order to maximize their vocabulary learning.

Even though this study has reached its aim, there was a limitation of research which should become an attention. The result of the research cannot be generalized to other study programs because different background, context, program, and participants may result differently. It is because each study program has different kinds of courses and activities which cause the students to receive different material and learn in different ways. For further study, it might be wise to investigate about whether the students’ learning styles preferences are related to
their performances in academic success after the teacher accommodates the students based on their learning styles preferences.
Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to thank Jesus for His blessing on me to strengthen me in finishing this thesis. Then, I acknowledge with profound gratitude to Gita Hastuti, S.Pd., M.A, my supervisor for her patience, useful guidance and helpful assistance. Next to Neny Isharyanti, S.Pd., M.A, my examiner thanks for her favor in examining my thesis. I also realize that many people who have had constant supports to me to finish my study in Faculty of Language and Literature of Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga. I would like to present a deep love for my mom, dad and little brother for always being the only reason for me to be grateful every time in my life. It is also such an uncountable blessing to have a little family in youth 12 and 13 (Siska, Michelle, Tia, Poppy, and Eddo) of GMS Double K Salatiga. Then, a lot of love for Geng Anget (Mas Nandu, Ririn Kriwil, Mimin). All of you were such a great companion! A special thanks to Julian, Michelle, and Poppy who help me in distributing my questionnaire. The last one, I would like to send a lot of love to my beloved partner-in-crime, Rizky Tri Armanda who will pursue his degree soon. I love all of you to the moon and back!
References


APPENDIX

Dear participants,

I am a student of English Department who is doing research for my thesis. This research is to investigate whether gender influence the students’ vocabulary learning style preferences or not. Please spare a few minutes of your time to fulfill the questionnaire below. Thank you for your cooperation.

NIM : 
Gender : M/F

Important notes:
SA : Strongly Agree           SD : Strongly Disagree
A   : Agree                   D   : Disagree

Please read each of the following statements very carefully and tick the answer which best describes your degree of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I think learning English vocabulary is important.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by reading English books.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by reading written instructions/explanations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary using bilingual dictionaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary using monolingual dictionaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by seeing colorful pictures, diagrams, or posters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by watching videos or movies.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by listening to music/songs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by having a conversation with other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>In learning English vocabulary, I prefer to discuss difficult words and the meanings with my friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I prefer to listen to verbal instructions and explanations from my teacher in learning English vocabulary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>In learning English vocabulary, I like to record my teacher’s voice in class and then listen to it to review the lesson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary through poems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by playing games.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>In learning English vocabulary, I usually associate the words with certain gestures/movements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary through role-plays or dramas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I prefer to learn English vocabulary by taking a field trip.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>In learning English vocabulary, I like to write new words on sticky notes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
with translations, synonyms and examples, and then stick the notes on strategic places.

19 In learning English vocabulary, I like making projects with English words.