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## Color Vowel Approach: Coping with Students' Learning Styles in Teaching Pronunciation

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Prisna Aswarita Putri<sup>1\*</sup>, Rabiatul Adawiah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Datokrama, Palu, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

(prisnaaswaritaputri@uindatokrama.ac.id; rabiatuladawiah@monash.edu)

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\*Corresponding Author: prisnaaswaritaputri@uindatokrama.ac.id

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana menyediakan metode pengajaran yang mengakomodasi gaya belajar yang disukai siswa dan meningkatkan prestasi belajar mereka dalam mata kuliah Latihan Pengucapan dengan menggunakan pendekatan Vokal Warna. Penelitian kualitatif ini dilakukan di program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Islam Negeri Datokrama Palu dimana mahasiswa semester dua diambil sebagai partisipan. Data yang dikumpulkan dari survei pra-penelitian, catatan lapangan, angket, dan analisis hasil tes tengah semester menunjukkan bahwa tidak dapat disangkal bahwa terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara penggunaan pendekatan Vokal Warna dengan prestasi belajar siswa pada mata kuliah Praktik Pengucapan. Hal ini membantu siswa untuk dengan mudah memahami materi yang diajarkan serta menghasilkan lingkungan belajar yang santai di mana siswa dapat belajar dengan baik.

**Kata Kunci:** Bahasa Inggris; Gaya belajar; Pelafalan

**Abstract:** The objective of this study was to probe how to provide a teaching method which accommodate learning styles preferred by students and boost their learning achievement in Pronunciation Practice course by using Color Vowel approach. This qualitative research was conducted at English Education study program of Islamic State University Datokrama Palu where second semester students were taken as participants. Data gathered from pre-research survey, field notes, questionnaire, and mid-term test result analysis showed that a significant correlation between the use of Color Vowel approach and students' learning achievement in Pronunciation Practice course was undeniable. It helped the students to easily comprehend material being taught as well as yielded a relaxed learning environment where students could learn best.

**Keywords:** English; Learning style; Pronunciation

### INTRODUCTION

Oral communication relies consequently on how sounds perceived by the ears of the listeners. The sounds then bring soul to the grammatical structure a set of vocabularies is tied to (Darcy, 2018). Having said that, a certain information carried within an utterance would ineffectively transferred without producing correct sounds. Thus, pronunciation as one of the branches of Phonology plays a crucial part in mastering language, including a foreign one.

Despite being widely taught in EFL class around the globe, pronunciation course depicted as a classic, underprepared, and immediate correction. This needs to change in order to evoke students' motivation in achieving more in pronunciation practice. To do so, teachers carry responsibility to scaffold their students' learning

performance by showcasing three related pedagogical actions; yielding a learning environment that empowered needed activities and skills to thrive, executing those activities, and encouraging students to burgeon in real life interaction (Walqui in Sardegna and McGregor, 2013).

For the sake of showcasing the three aforementioned related pedagogical actions, whatever teaching methodologies and strategies teacher employs should take student's learning styles into account. No student should be left behind, neither does learning style left unaccommodated. Therefore, this research investigated learning styles students prefer, how Color Vowel Approach covers various student's learning styles and its correlation with learning achievement in Pronunciation Practice Course of English Tadris Study Program of State Islamic University Datokarama Palu.

Every student is unique. One student may be a visual learner and other is a kinesthetic. This uniqueness does not stop here but goes beyond their learning styles diversity, be it their level of learning motivation or learning abilities. Yet, only few teachers conduct a pre-class survey or observation to gain a background knowledge of their students. Hence, this study began with a survey to obtain information about student's learning style, how long they have studied English, and sources of their English learning. This aimed to take what learning styles students prefer into consideration when employing certain teaching strategies or approach.

Learning English pronunciation for EFL students is reasonably challenging. One of the most evident reasons is a monstrous challenge for most students related to vowel sounds which are absent in their native language (Ngunyen et. al., 2021). Color Vowel Approach claimed to be an effective approach for teaching English vowel sounds without the distraction of IPA. Another problem this research drew its attention to was how Color Vowel Approach covers various student's learning styles and its correlation with their learning achievement in Pronunciation Practice course.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning style is the way learner analyses certain input in learning process or how one executes things (Willingham, 2015). Three most common learning styles are audio, visual, and kinesthetic. Those of audio learners gain information the most by receiving input they can listen to. Others who are visual learners do it with what their eyes can see. And the rest who are kinesthetic internalize any input by activating their bodies while reciting it. A student may apply various learning styles which lead to none of the styles dominate the whole process.

In order to achieve Pronunciation teaching goals, teachers as facilitator are expected to meet students' needs, including the awareness of teachers to employ a certain approach which enable whatever learning style students prefer to thrive. One such approach is Color Vowel.

The Color Vowel approach is employed in teaching and learning American-English vowel sounds' pronunciation with the absence of phonetic symbols and exploits colors and key words to represent the English vowel sounds instead (Taylor, et al, 2016). Along with its originators, Karen Taylor and Shirley Thompson, Robin Barr transformed a simple, homemade teaching tool into visual representation of sound which is not only pedagogically procurable, but also phonologically solid in 2003. Nowadays, it became an approach and utilized in numerous TESOL, ESL and literacy programs across the USA. Not only that, The U.S. Department of State's

Office of English Language Programs distributes the Color Vowel Chart to English teachers outside the U.S. through Regional English Language Officers.

1 A couple of researches centered to this issue have been previously conducted. First, Kone et al. (2019) on their research entitled “*The Implementation of Color Vowel Chart to Enhance the EFL Students’ Pronunciation at SMPN 1 Majauleng*” strove to figure out whether there was a crucial difference in the pronunciation ability between the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Majauleng in the academic year of 2017/2018 who were taught by using the Color Vowel Chart and those who were not. The results showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test where the mean score of the pre-test was 78 and the mean score of the post-test was 85. It proves that the Color Vowel Charts crucially elevates the students’ pronunciation ability, which is essential for improving students’ speaking skills and communicative competence. Second, Syaifullah et al. (2022) in their research entitled “*Using Color Vowel Chart in Teaching Speaking*” aimed to explore information about the Color Vowel Chart including the techniques/strategies, the ways/procedures, and the assessment used in implementing the Color Vowel Chart in teaching speaking. Moreover, they investigated students’ speaking achievement. This qualitative research found that the speaking skill of students were enhanced by using the Color Vowel Chart.

## 2 METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative research design that narrates learning styles preferred by second semester students of English Tadris Study Program in Islamic State University Datokarama Palu academic year 2021/2022 and how it was taken into account to come up with a teaching approach to level up their learning achievement in Pronunciation Practice course. The participants of this research amounted to 51 students from 3 different classes. During the research time frame, 7 meetings and 1 test were taken place. Instruments employed were pre-research survey, field notes, questionnaire, and mid-term test result analysis.

Data of this research was gathered through several rungs, namely (1) collecting brief introduction of students’ Pronunciation learning history through pre-research survey; (2) collecting information about students’ learning styles through questionnaire; (3) carrying out a seven-meeting teaching and observation as field notes; and (4) conducting a mid-term test by meeting.

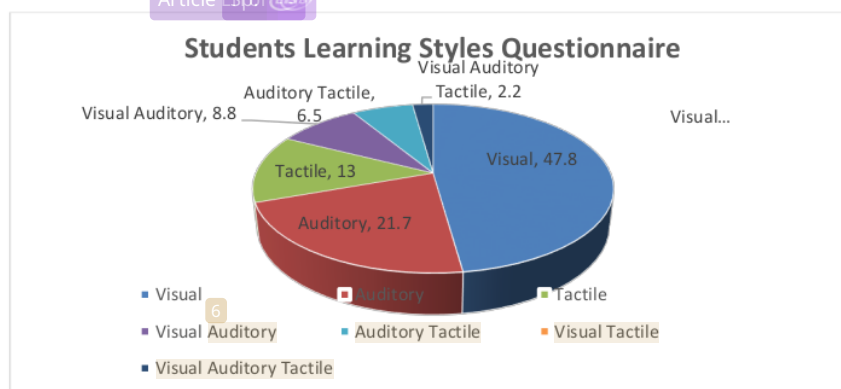
Data analysis was carried out through several steps. They were (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, as a process of selecting, focusing, and transforming rough data, (3) data presentation, including descriptions of data extract exposure, and (4) conclusion drawing, where the researcher concluded and found answer to the addressed problem formulation by considering the results of the instruments and process during the research and connecting them with related theories which are envisaged as references.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION



*Chart 1. Students Pronunciation Learning History*

At the first meeting of the course, the researcher conducted a survey to gain information on students' pronunciation learning history. From the survey, it was known that 39% or 20 students had been learning English pronunciation less than 3 years, 37% or 19 students had been doing it for 3 years, and 24% or 12 students said it was more than 3 years. Most of them learned English pronunciation leisurely by listening to English songs or watching English-speaking movies during their high school period and started doing it purposively and more seriously when being students of English Tadris study program.



*Chart 2. Students Learning Styles Questionnaire*

Students were also asked to fill a questionnaire about their learning style. The questionnaire was designed by University of California, Merced. It consists of 24 statements about how students perceive input and what learning style is best to maximize their learning output.

When one scores more on visual, that means he visualizes information and then processes it. When one scores more on auditory, that means he benefits from listening to information. When one scores more on tactile or kinesthetic, that means he learns by doing. There are cases when no single learning style is dominant, and that means one combines learning styles to achieve maximum learning output.

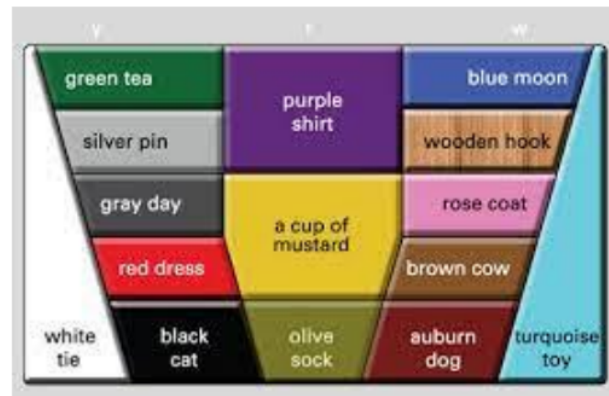
From the questionnaire calculation, data was obtained where it showed that (a) 47,8% of the participants were visual with the total amount 22 students; (b) 21,7% were auditory with 10 students; (c) 13% were tactile with 6 students; (d) 8,8% were



visual auditory with 4 students; (e) 6,5% were auditory tactile with 3 students; and (f) 2,2% were visual-auditory-tactile with 1 student. Based on this finding, the researcher who was also the lecturer of the course decided to apply Color Vowel approach to teach Pronunciation because it met all learning styles preferred by the students.

From the second to the seventh meeting, the researcher employed Color Vowel chart to introduce English vowels and how they are represented by the color. The sounds of the English vowels are grouped into 15 colors which resemble sounds of vowel and diphthongs in English. Green color represents [i] sound, that means everything in green color should be pronounced with long i sound or the other way around. Contrast to green, silver represents [ɪ] sound, which means anything colored in silver should be pronounced with short I sound. Red represents [ɛ], black represents [æ], purple represents [ɔ], mustard represents [ʌ], olive represents [ɑ], auburn represents [o], blue represents [u], and wooden represents [ʊ]. For diphthong sounds, rose represents [oʊ], turquoise represents [oɪ], grey represents [eɪ], white represents [aɪ], and brown represents [ʌʊ]. Note that the vowel sounds these colors represent are not necessarily the first vowel sound of the color, but rather those of stressed syllable one like in turquoise.

In each meeting, three phases of learning were carried out; introduction to English vowels, pronunciation practice, and a review to conclude the class. During the introduction session, color vowel chart was employed. Then in the second session, flashcards equipped with colorful images were employed to suit those who were visual learners. Videos and games were played to suit those who were audio and kinesthetic or tactile learners as well. At the end, the researcher concluded the class by asking students whether all topics discussed were well understood and how they felt during the process.



Picture 1. Color Vowel Chart

At the eighth meeting, mid-term test was taken place. Students were asked to read a passage where their pronunciation of English vowels were being assessed. English Consonant was not the focus of attention because it would later be taught after the mid-term test.

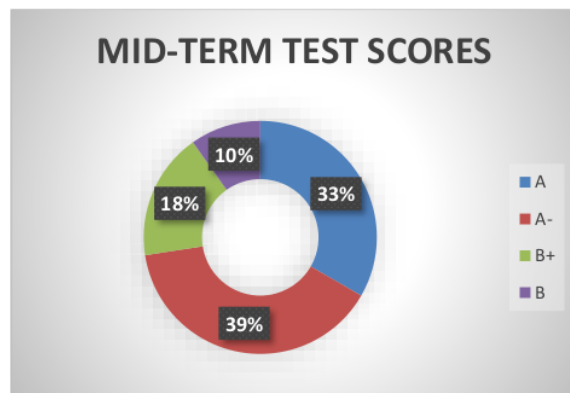


Chart 3. Students' Mid-Term Test Scores

From the mid-term test result, it was found that 20 students amounted to 39% of the total second semester students of English Tadris study program in Islamic State University Datokarama Palu academic year 2021/2022 scored A- (80-85). This number was followed by those who scored A (85-100) with 17 students or 33% of the total population. The third position was taken by those who scored B+ (75-80) with 9 students or 18% of the total population. And the rest earned B (70-75). From this data, it was safe to conclude that all the students pass the mid-term test and color vowel approach lived up its reputation in boosting English vowels pronunciation skill.

## CONCLUSION

From the research findings, it is evident that color vowel approach thrives to accommodate three different learning styles students prefer in learning English vowels pronunciation. Not only that, it helped the students to easily comprehend material being taught as well as yielded a relaxed learning environment where students could learn best. All students passed the mid-term test with 72,5 % earned A and A-.

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