



Different Learning Style, Different Performance in TOEFL Reading: Is That Right?

Elisa Ratih

English Language Education, Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia

Correponding Author: elisaratih16@gmail.com

Khilda Husnia Abidah

English Language Education, Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This present study has aim to answer a question “is there any relationship between students’ learning styles in TOEFL reading comprehension test?”. Therefore, this study was done for knowing whether there is a significant relationship between students’ learning styles in reading comprehension performance on the TOEFL test or not. The University of Islam Malang was chosen as the place to conduct this study with 37 students in the fourth semester of English Department. A questionnaire and TOEFL reading test were used as the instruments in this study to find the result. Both of the instruments were done in 45 minutes. Based on the results that were counted statistically using SPSS, the findings showed that the score of visual ($M = 43,22$), kinesthetic ($M = 38,70$), and auditory ($M = 35,00$) for reading achievement. Moreover, it also showed that $df = 2$, $F = 1.102$, $P = .344$. The results informed that there is no significant difference between students’ learning style in TOEFL reading comprehension performance. Due to limitations that exist in this quantitative study, future researchers are suggested to do research which broader population involvement and include reading strategies to give more insightful results regarding reading comprehension that might be useful for the learning process.

Keywords: *learning styles, reading performance, TOEFL reading test*

ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari studi ini untuk menjawab pertanyaan “apakah ada hubungan antara gaya belajar siswa dalam memahami bacaan di tes TOEFL?”. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui apakah ada perbedaan yang signifikan antara gaya belajar siswa dalam fvv kemampuan membaca pemahaman soal dalam tes TOEFL atau tidak. Universitas Islam Malang dipilih sebagai tempat untuk melakukan penelitian ini dengan partisipan berjumlah 37 mahasiswa semester IV Jurusan Bahasa Inggris. Kuesioner dan tes membaca TOEFL digunakan sebagai instrumen dalam penelitian ini untuk mengetahui hasilnya. Kedua instrumen dilakukan dalam waktu 45 menit. Berdasarkan hasil penghitungan statistik dengan menggunakan SPSS, diperoleh hasil bahwa skor visual ($M = 43,22$), kinestetik ($M = 38,70$) dan auditory ($M = 35,00$) untuk hasil kemampuan membaca dari partisipan. Selain itu, studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa $df = 2$, $F = 1.102$, $P = .344$. Dari hasil penelitian diketahui bahwa tidak terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan

antara gaya belajar siswa dengan kemampuan membaca pemahaman soal. Karena keterbatasan yang ada dalam penelitian kuantitatif ini, peneliti selanjutnya disarankan untuk melakukan penelitian yang melibatkan populasi yang lebih luas dan memasukkan strategi membaca untuk memberikan hasil yang lebih mendalam tentang pemahaman bacaan yang mungkin berguna untuk proses pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: *gaya belajar, kemampuan membaca, tes reading TOEFL*

Received: July 26, 2022

Accepted: August 19, 2022

Published: August 22, 2022

How to cite:

Ratih, E., & Abidah, K. H. (2022). Different learning style, different performance in TOEFL reading: Is that right?. *English Learning Innovation*, 3(2). 132-141

<https://doi.org/10.22219/englie.v3i2.21956>

INTRODUCTION

A lot of people have wondered why reading is important, especially in the 21st century. There seem so many reasons to answer since reading is a vital skill that provides the foundation for other skills, such as speaking, writing, and listening. The ability in reading comprehension plays an important role in the 21st century since it is one of the skills that included in literacy and it is the basis for students to comprehend the broad sciences (Ningsih, Winarni, and Roemintoyo, 2019). As a reader, moving eyes from word to word is not enough because we have to understand the information provided in the text (Nigari, Rajabi, & Khalaji, 2016). Indeed, as a reader, we are not only reading the texts, but also, we have to comprehend what the text tells about. Understanding what we read is not easy, sometimes people only read the written words without understanding the information conducted in the text. As the main part of language learning, unquestionably, it is not a simple process. Understanding the text is mostly a problem faced by the readers, consequently, they can't answer the reading question correctly. Therefore, there are some techniques used to help readers in understanding the information stated in the passage, namely scanning and skimming.

A study conducted by Rezaei, Rahimi, & Talepaskan (2012) found that there was no problem encountered by ESP students in looking for the words' meaning even understanding their meaning. However, their study found that the main problems faced by the students were in connecting between these words and communicating the sentences and the concept of the text. From the statements above, it can be concluded that understanding the text is not easy.

On the other hand, in learning or comprehending new information, the students use their own learning style. It is one of the methods in learning process where some of the students have the same learning style and some are definitely different. The model of students' learning style preferences was divided into Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK), then it was developed into the preferences of (Visual) modality with (Read/Write)

modality (Fleming, 2014). While most of us may have some general idea about what is our dominant learning style. Some people are visual learners, so they learn through seeing. Pictures, diagrams and symbols are kinds of media to support the visual learners to take new information. It is different from auditory learners. They learn through listening. Lecturing, tutorial, and group discussion are surely essential for the auditory learner. On the other hand, kinesthetic learners learn while doing. Some previous studies mentioned that “generally effective learners use both audio and visual input, yet modest tendencies one way or the next might differentiate each student upon another, which is an essential issue in classroom education” (Brown, 2000, p. 130). From the statements above, it can be concluded that the teacher should know how to bring the material in a variant way in order for all learners can take the new information with their style as mentioned.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized test which is used as a requirement of not only admission, recruitment, but also for some purposes (Gunadi, 2009). Furthermore, it is commonly used by some institutions in EFL countries to measure test takers’ English proficiency and it is different from a curriculum which was learnt in the classroom (Netta & Trisnawati, 2019). Besides, Pratiwi, Atmaja, and Prasetya (2021) also mentioned that TOEFL is used to quantify the test takers’ English proficiency that their native language is not English. Therefore, TOEFL has an important role to measure people’s English ability by making it one of the standardized tests that should be conducted before applying for a job or graduating from university. It can be supported by Alek, Farkhan, Nurlia, and Haucsa (2019) stated that TOEFL test is used by some universities in Indonesia as one of the graduation requirements.

Despite the myriad of literature on the relationship between learning style of students and their language proficiency, little concern was paid to the relationship between students’ learning styles in comprehending TOEFL reading test. In the previous study, Fithrotunnisa (2015) analyzed a study entitled “The Comparative Analysis Students’ Learning Style on Their Achievement in Reading Skill”. The study aimed to know the difference between students’ learning style in their English learning achievement in reading skill. It was done in Junior High School with 30 students as the participants. The research design used a causal comparative with the findings obtained that the learning styles significantly influenced with r value = 0.549 and gave a contribution about 54,9% to the students’ reading achievement. Moreover, the study by Marzulina, Pitaloka, and Yolanda (2019) found that the learning styles affected differently to the students’ English proficiency. Conversely, another comparative study done by Jaya (2019) found that between the students’ learning styles and

their English proficiency did not correlate significantly. From several previous studies above, it can be concluded that the correlation between students' learning styles and students' English proficiency is still debatable.

Meanwhile, other previous studies that investigated students' ability in comprehending the TOEFL reading test showed that the ability of EFL students was not good in finding main ideas, references, and vocabulary (Jaelani, Wathoni, Purnama, Harianto, and Wadi, 2022). Furthermore, Fajri (2019) mentioned that students faced difficulties with some types of questions on the TOEFL reading test, such as 33% for inference, 40% for vocabulary, and 50% for unstated details. It occurred because the students were unmotivated in reading the passage, had less practice as well as the words meanings. Moreover, the study conducted by Zalha, Alfiatunnur, and Kamil (2020) revealed five strategies for doing the TOEFL reading test, such as skimming and scanning, using the context in finding the meaning of words, using prior information, rereading the questions, and doing questions from the easier one as the priority in finishing TOEFL reading test. From the previous scholars above, it can be seen that little concern was paid to the relationship between students' learning styles in the TOEFL reading test performance. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the gap. Based on the problem, the specific research question is formulated as follows: *Is there any relationship between students' learning style and their reading comprehension in TOEFL test?*

METHOD

Research design

The research of this study was quantitative with ex-post facto as a research design. It was used to know whether there is a relationship between the students' learning style and their reading skill achievement on the TOEFL test or not. To determine the students' learning style whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic dominant, the data was gotten from the questionnaire and also a TOEFL reading test was used to know their reading skill score.

Subject

The place for conducting this paper was at the University of Islam Malang with 37 students in the fourth semester of English Language and Teaching as the sample. Gender is not required of the subject. To gain the data, the participants were asked to fill in a learning style questionnaire for 15 minutes. As the result, the researchers found that 18 students were

visual dominant, 9 students were auditory dominant, and 10 students were tactile dominant. There was also no random and special treatment in this study.

Instrument

For collecting the data, this study utilized two instruments. First, the questionnaire on the learning style that was adopted from the University of Texas Learning Center, 2006. The questionnaire consists of 24 questions that should be chosen by the students by giving points like 5 points for often, 3 points for sometimes, and 1 point for seldom in every question number. The students filled in the questionnaire and answered it based on their perspectives on how they learn. In addition, the researchers gained the students reading scores by giving a TOEFL prediction reading test which contains of five passages and 30 multiple choices.

Procedure

After preparing the instruments, the distribution of questionnaire was done in which the participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire consisting of 24 questions which determine their style in learning in 15 minutes. After that, the data from questionnaire were collected to identify whether they were visual, auditory or tactile based on their total number of answers. Furthermore, the TOEFL reading test was distributed to the participants. They should answer the TOEFL reading test which consisted of five passages and 30 multiple choices in 30 minutes. Moreover, the students' answer was collected to identify the students' score based on the students' right answer multiplied by two and plus ten. After all the data were gotten, the researchers counted the data in SPSS using One-Way ANOVA. The results of One-Way ANOVA had given information about means score, and standard deviation of three students who have difference learning style and significant difference which compare three groups: visual students, auditory students and kinesthetic students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The One-Way ANOVA was employed for analyzing the obtained information in this study. The data from the questionnaire and score documentation on reading achievement were gathered and measured statistically using SPSS 20 to get the results of this study. The statistical description as shown in Table 1 visual dominant students scored higher ($M = 43,22$), tactile dominant students ($M = 38,70$) and auditory dominant students ($M = 35,00$) for reading achievement. The data in detail was shown as follows:

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviation for Reading Achievement

Types of learning style		N	M	SD	SEM
Group 1	Visual	18	43.22	14.161	3.338
Group 2	Auditory	9	35.00	13.583	4.528
Group 3	Tactile	10	38.70	13.865	4.384
Total		37	40.00	13.988	2.300

Note. *N*: Number of subjects; *SD*: Standard Deviation; *M*: Mean; *SEM*: Standard Error Mean.

Table 2. ANOVA for Reading Achievement

	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	428,789	2	214.394	1.102	.344
Within Groups	6615,211	34	194.565		
Total	7044,000	36			

Note. *SS*: sum of squares; *df*: degree of freedom; *MS*: mean square; *F*: statistic value; *P*: probability value.

From the Table 2, it can be seen that there is no significant difference among the performance of the three groups ($df = 2, F = 1.102, P = .344$). It means that even though the students had different in learning style which is auditory, kinesthetic, and visual, their reading performance was similar. In other words, the findings here revealed that the learning styles whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic did not correlated to students' performance in reading comprehension.

It is in line with the findings of Rahwanda, Yufrizal, and Sinaga's study (2019) which showed similar results that there is no effect of learning styles on reading performance after being taught using some reading activities based on the students' learning style preference. Even though the learning styles did not affect students' performance, it should be needed by the students since it can help the students in improving reading skills or recognizing the meaning of the text. Moreover, it is possible that there is no interdependence between the three different styles of learning such as visual, auditory or kinesthetic which help students to get a better reading comprehension. This study is also in line with the findings of Rujani's study (2019) which mentioned that the correlation between students' learning style and the students' reading ability was low. Then, it can be concluded that there was a minor effect on their reading achievement although the students had been taught based on their learning style preferences.

In this case, it would mean that the way students preferred to learn is not the determinant factor of their reading comprehension. Although visual students prefer to see something real and generally will receive more opportunities in reading rather than auditory and kinesthetic students, it does not mean that visual students are familiar with what is read

and will be more successful readers. There may be other factors possible that can affect the students' ability of reading. One of the factors may be the reading strategy used by the students. Richards and Renandya (2002) revealed that reading strategies help to improve reading comprehension as well as efficiency in reading. Another possible factor that can dominate reading comprehension is intelligence or cognitive competence. That's why it can be discussed further beyond learning style that some other possibilities that can affect the reading achievement that can be investigated by the researchers in the next study.

CONCLUSION

This present research highlighted that there was no relationship between students' learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic students in comprehending reading TOEFL test. Thus, it could not be said that one of the learning styles whether auditory, visual, or kinesthetic was more effective than the others because the finding showed the p value based on ANOVA analysis was not significant. It could be summarized that the learning style of every student did not affect to their reading comprehension since other factors might affect comprehension skills when they faced reading text. Then, the other results on this current study showed that there were no difference scores on reading performance.

Since this study is conducted within two weeks to gain all data needed, it is of course insufficient time to conduct this study. And also, this present was conducted on a relatively small scale of population and observed learning styles without getting to know their learning strategies. Therefore, for further researcher that is interested in investigating about correlation between learning style and reading comprehension, the researchers hope that the future research use a better instrument to conduct research. Moreover, the next researcher may add one or more variables such as reading strategy, metacognitive, cognitive side, etc. and also give more specific information which is probably forgotten by the researchers.

REFERENCES

- Alek, Farkhan, M., Nurlia, V., & Haucsa, G. M. (2019). University Students' Perception on TOEFL as a Graduation Requirement: A Case in UIN Syarif as a Graduation Requirement: A Case in UIN Syarif. *ELITE JOURNAL: Journal of English Linguistics, Literature, and Education*, 51-63.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language teaching and learning* (Fourth Edition). New York: Longman.
- Fajri, D. R. (2019). An Analysis of Student Strategy in Completing TOEFL Reading Comprehension Test. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature (JELTL)*, 84-91.

- Fithrotunnisa, E. D. (2015). The comparative analysis of students' learning style on their achievement in reading skill. (Skripsi). Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teachers' Training: Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. Jakarta.
- Fleming, N. D. (2014, October 1). The nature of preference. <https://vark-learn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/THE-NATURE-OF-PREFERENCE.pdf>
- Jaelani, S. R., Wathoni, H., Purnama, B., Harianto, H., & Wadi, A. S. (2022). The Students' Ability in Reading Comprehension of TOEFL for EFL Learners. *JSHP*, 60-66.
- Jaya, H. P. (2019). Learning Styles Used and English Proficiency of the Students of English Education Study Program Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Sriwijaya University. *HOLISTICS JOURNAL*, 17-22.
- Marzulina, L., Pitaloka, N. L., & Yolanda, A. D. (2019). Learning Styles and English Proficiency of Undergraduate EFL Students at One State Islamic University in Sumatera, Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 214-228.
- Netta, A., & Trisnawati, I. K. (2019). Acehese Undergraduate Students' Strategies in Preparing for Toefl Prediction: a Preliminary Study. *Englisia Journal*, 7(1), 41-52. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v7i1.5779>
- Nigari, H. N. M., Rajabi, P., Khalaji, H. R. (2016). The effect of jigsaw task on Iranian EFL learners' reading skills improvement. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(1), 10-19.
- Ningsih, I. H., Winarni, R., & Roemintoyo. (2019). The Importance of Early Reading Learning in the Face of 21st Century Education. *AL-ASASIYYA: Journal Basic Of Education*, 196-205.
- Pratiwi, D. I., Atmaja, D. S., & Prasetya, H. W. (2021). Multiple E-Learning Technologies on Practicing TOEFL Structure and Written Expression. *JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)*, 6(1), 105-115.
- Rahwanda, D., Yufrizal, H., & Sinaga, T. (2019). The Effect of Learning Style Based Activities on Reading Achievement of Nursing Students. *U-JET: Unila Journal of English Teaching*.
- Rezaei, A., Rahimi, M. A., & Talepaskan, S. (2012). Exploring EFL learners reading comprehension problems in reading ESP text. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 9(3), 982-987.
- Richards, J. C. & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rujani, M. R. (2019). Correlational Study Between Learning Style and Reading Comprehension at University Level Students. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 45-50.
- Sulistyo, G.H. (2009). TOEFL in a Brief Historical Overview from PBT to IBT. *Bahasa dan Seni*, 116-127
- Zalha, F. B., Alfiatunnur, & Kamil, C. A. (2020). Strategies in dealing with the Reading Section of 'TOEFL Prediction': a Case of Aceh EFL Learners. *IJEE : Indonesian Journal of English Education*, 159-171.

APPENDIX

Learning Style Questionnaire
University of California, Merced Student
Advising and Learning Center

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
1. I can remember best by listening to a lecture that includes information, explanations and discussions.			
2. I prefer to see information written on the board and supplemented by visual aids and assigned readings			
3. I like to write things down or take notes for visual review.			
4. I prefer to use posters, models, or actual practice and other activities in class.			
5. I require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions			
6. I enjoy working with my hands or making things.			
7. I am skillful with and enjoy developing making graphs and charts			
8. I can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.			
9. I can remember best by writing things down several times.			
10. I can easily understand and follow directions on a map.			
11. I do best in academic subjects by listening to lectures and tapes.			
12. I play with coins or keys in my pocket.			
13. I learn to spell better by repeating words out loud than by writing the words on paper.			
14. I can understand a news article better by reading about it in the newspaper or online rather than by listening to areport about it on the radio or internet.			
15. I chew gum, smoke or snack while studying.			
16. I think the best way to remember something is to picture it in my mind			
17. I learn the spelling of words by “finger spelling” them.			
18. I would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material.			
19. I am good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.			
20. I grip objects in my hands during learning periods.			
21. I prefer listening to the news on the radio or online rather than reading about it in a newspaper or on the internet.			
22. I prefer obtaining information about an interesting subject by reading about it.			
23. I feel very comfortable touching others hugging, handshaking, etc.			
24. I follow oral directions better than written ones.			

Learning Style Questionnaire
University of California, Merced
Student Advising and Learning Center

Scoring:

Complete the table below by assigning the following point values for each question:

Often = 5 points

Sometimes = 3 points

Seldom = 1 point

Then, add the points in each column to obtain your learning preference score under each heading.

Visual		Auditory		Kinesthetic	
No.	Pts.	No.	Pts.	No.	Pts.
2		1		4	
3		5		6	
7		8		9	
10		11		12	
14		13		15	
16		18		17	
19		21		20	
22		24		23	
Visual Preference Score:		Auditory Preference Score:		Kinesthetic Preference Score:	

If you are a VISUAL learner: Make use of all available study materials such as charts, maps, filmstrips, notes, and videos. Write out everything for frequent and efficient review. Practice visualizing or pictures words and concepts in your mind. Adding meaningful symbols, colors, and graphics to notes also provide visual cues. Try to visualize how information appears on a page. In study groups or discussions, focus on how people look when they speak.

If you are an AUDITORY learner: Try using tapes to supplement other study materials. For example, tape lectures to help fill in gaps in your notes or convert lecture notes to auditory tapes—but do listen and take notes, and review your notes frequently. Sit in the lecture hall or classroom where you can hear well (most often this is near the front). After you have read something, summarize it and recite it aloud. Talk to other students about class material. You may also benefit from group study sessions where members review class material.

If you are a KINESTHETIC learner: Try tracing words as you say them. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper on hand for this purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes is very important. It may also help you to make study sheets, and to associate class material with real-world applications and occurrences. For some classes, practice role-playing. Highlighting, underlining, labeling information, and writing add movement to learning. Participation in study groups or tutoring others provide additional ways to become an active learner. Science courses also offer manipulative aids to demonstrate chemical reactions. The more you do, the more you learn.

Learning Questionnaire adapted from University of Texas Learning Center, 2006