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## The Correlation between Learning Style and Listening Achievement of English Education Study Program Students of Sriwijaya University

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**Abstract:** The objective of this study is to find out whether or not there is a significant correlation between learning style and listening achievement of English Education Study Program Students of Sriwijaya University. The population of this study was the first semester, the third semester, the fifth semester, and the seventh semester students of English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University in academic year 2009/2010. However, only the third and the fifth semester students were taken as the sample by using convenience sampling. A descriptive method was used in this study. Specifically, this study was a correlational study. The data were obtained by means of questionnaire and TOEFL listening test. The questionnaire showed that visual learning style was the most preferred learning style, followed by auditory learning style and kinesthetic learning style respectively. Meanwhile, the TOEFL listening test showed that most students were in Fair category (grade C). The data obtained were analyzed by using Chi-Square analysis. From the data analysis, it was found that there was no correlation between learning style and listening achievement of English Education Study Program Students of Sriwijaya University since the Chi-Square obtained (11.706) was smaller than the table value (15.507) at the significance level 0.05 and degrees of freedom of 8.

**Keywords:** *Learning style, listening achievement*

### INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the importance of listening skill to the students of English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University. It is very important for them to have good listening skill because their classes are conducted in English. They may have difficulty to comprehend the material if they have weak listening skill. Furthermore, they will be left behind if they do not get the whole information that the lecturers give them. Having a good listening skill is also very important for the students since it is the foundation for other language skills. Jalongo (1990) says that because listening precedes the other language arts, it is the foundation for speaking, reading, and writing. Nunan (1998) cited in Sadighi & Zare (2006:1) believes that "listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively."

Because listening is very important for the English Education Study Program students of Sriwijaya University, they are supposed to master listening. That is why listening is taught since they are in the first semester until the fourth semester. In each semester, they have one course consisting of different credit hours. In the first semester, they have Intensive English Course (IEC) Listening which consists of four credits hours. Then, in the second semester, they have Listening Comprehension 1 which consists of three credits hours. Next, in the third semester, they have Listening Comprehension 2 which consists of three credits hours. And last, in the fourth semester, they have Listening Comprehension 3 which consists of two credits hours. Although they have

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studied listening for four semesters, they still have difficulty in it. It is reflected in their listening scores. Some students still get low scores. The writers believe it is caused by their learning style. Learning style is the way a person prefers to learn and process the information. Some students tend to learn through reading, other students tend to learn through listening and the others tend to learn through experiencing.

According to Hilliard (2001), learning styles are the characteristic ways in which an individual acquires, perceives, and processes information. Some people are best in processing information through seeing or reading a chart, diagram, or written text. Other people are best in processing information through listening to the explanation. And the others are best in processing information through experiencing or touching, working, and movement. In addition, learning style, different to approaches to learning, is a term used to describe the attitudes and behaviors, which determine an individual's preferred way of learning. Most people are not aware of their learning style preferences (Honey & Mumford, 1992). There are three kinds of learning style, visual learning style, auditory learning style, and kinesthetic learning style. Visual students tend to learn through seeing or reading, auditory students tend to learn through listening, and kinesthetic students tend to learn through experiencing or touching, working, and movement. Learning style has nothing to do with intelligence or skills. It has to do with the way a person's brain works to learn and store information efficiently.

The writers believe that the way students absorb and process information affects their listening skill. The students who prefer to absorb and process information through listening might have a better listening skill than those who do not. It is because they are more accustomed to listening activity. They can absorb and process information well.

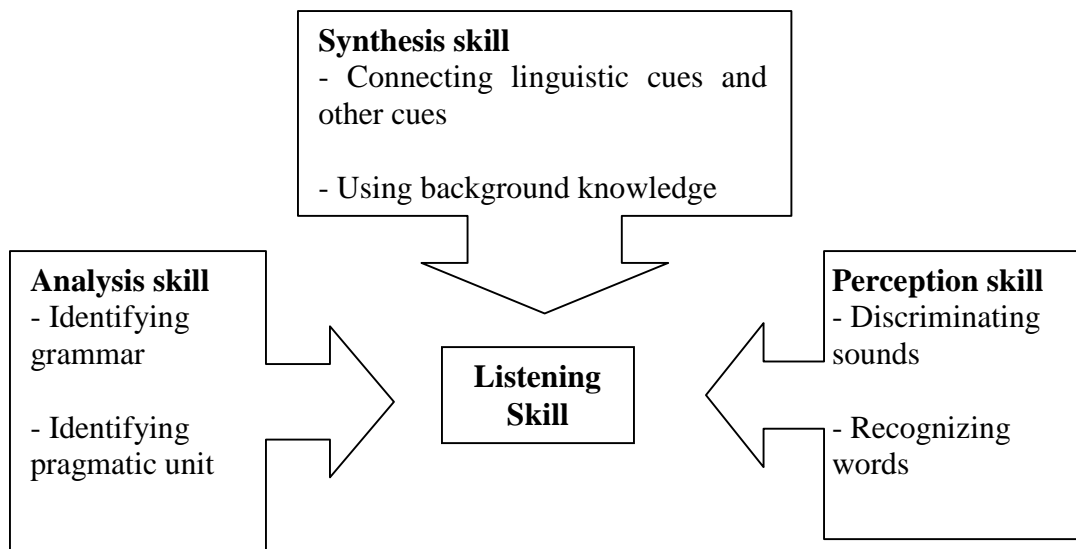
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Concept of Listening**

Howatt and Dakin (1974) cited in Saricoban (1999) state that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and vocabulary and grasping his meaning. Lunsteen (1979) cited in Jalongo (1990) defines listening as the process of by which spoken language is converted to meaning in mind. In addition, Jalongo (1992) cited in Eka (2006) concludes that listening involves three things: (1) hearing, (2) listening, and (3) auditing.

Kitao (1999:1) states that listening skill is an active process of receiving, interpreting and responding the messages. Students of English call on different listening skills depending on whether their goal is to understand information, analyze and evaluative messages, or show sympathy for the feeling expressed by others in appreciating a performance.

Rost (1991:3-4) states that listening can be broken down into three skills: perception, analysis and synthesis skills. These skills make up a person's listening ability and they are presented on the following figure.



Willis (1981) cited in Yagang (1999) states that listening consists of some micro skills: (a) predicting what people are going to talk about, (b) guessing at unknown words or phrases without panicking, (c) using one's knowledge of the subject to help one understand, (d) identifying relevant points and rejecting irrelevant information, (e) retaining relevant points (note taking, summarizing), (f) recognizing discourse makers e.g. *now*, *finally* etc, (g) recognizing cohesive devices such as *which*, *who* etc, (h) understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, which give clues to meaning and social setting, and (i) understanding inferred information.

### Factors Affecting Listening Skill

There are eight factors that affect student's listening skill (Smith, 2002): (1) problems in hearing sounds or phonemes of English, (2) problems in stress and intonation, (3) attempts to understand everything, (4) inability to predict what will be said, (5) colloquial language and fast speech, (6) the pace of listening that can cause fatigue, (7) different accents, and (8) receptive system that help them to understand contextual and environmental clues.

### The Concept of Listening Achievement

According to Hornby (1998:10), achievement is something achieved, something done successfully with effort and skill. Arikunto (1994) states that achievement is an ability or vivid capability which has been owned by individual after going through a certain experience or when it is applied by individual in certain condition. In this study, students' listening achievements are identified by using TOEFL listening test.

## **The Concept of Learning Style**

Learning style is the way a person prefers to learn. Sometimes, this person enjoys with her or his way in learning. She or he feels comfortable in absorbing the information with her or his own way. According to Hilliard (2001), learning styles are the characteristic ways in which an individual acquires, perceives, and processes information. Learning style is the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information (Dunn and Dunn, 1999) .

Although the students have the combination of learning styles, they usually have a dominant learning style or their own preference style. Others usually find that they use different styles in different circumstances. It does not matter if we sometimes use different styles in different circumstances. It is just the matter of preference of the way in learning or absorbing the information. Hilliard (2001) states that there are no right or wrong, or good or bad learning styles, just preferred styles.

## **The Types of Learning Style**

There are three main types of learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Most students learn best through a combination of the three types of learning styles, but everybody is different. Other students may enjoy learning with their dominant learning style. Here are the types of learning style according to Shepherd (1999) and Farewell (2000).

### **Visual Learning Style**

In visual style, someone typically excels at using images, pictures, colors, video, diagram, overhead transparencies, handouts, and maps to structure information and communicate with others. They can easily visualize objects, plans, and outcomes in their mind's eye. They also have a good spatial sense, which gives them a good sense of direction. They can easily find their way around using maps, and rarely get lost. The whiteboard is a best friend for them. They love drawing, scribbling, and doodling, especially with colors.

The students need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid obstruction (e.g. people's head). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

### **Auditory Learning Style**

If the students use auditory style, they like to work with sound and music. They have a good sense of pitch and rhythm, and typically can sing, play a musical instrument, or identify the sounds of different instruments. Certain music invokes strong emotion. They also notice the music playing in the background movies, TV shows and other media. They often find themselves humming or tapping a song, a theme, or jingle pops into their head without prompting. Beside that, the auditory students will learn well in

lecture settings, discussion, talking things through listening to what others have to say. Auditory students interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed, and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These students often benefit from reading text aloud using tape recorder.

### **Kinesthetic Learning Style**

If the students prefer in physical, it is likely that they use their body and sense of touch to learn and understand the world around them. It is pretty likely that they like sports and exercise, and other physical activities such as gardening or woodworking.

They like to think out issues, ideas, and problems while the teachers are giving exercises. They would rather go for a run or walk if something is bothering in them, rather than sitting at home. These students are more sensitive to the physical world around them. They notice and appreciate textures, for example in clothes or furniture. They also like “getting their hands dirty” or making models, or working out jigsaws.

These learners typically use larger hand gestures and other body language to communicate. When they are learning a new skill or topic, they would prefer to “jump in” and play with the physical parts as soon as possible rather than reading or looking at diagrams about how it works. They learn best through a hands-on approach and may find it is hard to sit still for a long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration. They want to get up and move around.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The method of the study was a descriptive one. Specifically, this study was a correlational study. A correlational study is a scientific study in which a researcher investigates associations between variables. The goal of correlation research is to find out whether one or more variables can predict other variables. Arikunto (1998:251) states that the objective of the correlation research is to find out whether or not relationship exists between the variables, to calculate the strength of the relationship, and to determine the significance of relationship.

The population of this study were the first, the third, the fifth, and the seventh semester students of English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University in academic year 2009/2010. The sample was taken by using convenience sampling. Since the first semester students were not accustomed yet to dealing with TOEFL listening material and it was difficult to meet and gather the seventh semester students in a room because they were having teaching practice, there were only the third and the fifth semester students available. That was why only the third and the fifth semester students were taken as the sample. There were 79 students. However, only 66 students took the test.

To collect the data, two techniques were used. They were questionnaire and test. The questionnaire was used to find out the students' learning style and the TOEFL listening test was used to find out the students' listening achievement.

The questionnaire used was a ready-made questionnaire taken from the internet (<http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.html>). It was written in English

since the sample of this study was the students of English Education Study Program. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items. Each item had three choices (A, B, and C). Each choice described one learning style. Choice A described visual learning style, choice B described auditory learning style, and choice C described kinesthetic learning style. To identify the students' learning style, the writer counted choices answered by the students. If they mostly answered A, it meant they had Visual Learning Style. If they mostly answered B, they had Auditory Learning Style. And if they mostly answered C, they had Kinesthetic Learning Style.

For the test, TOEFL listening test material was applied. TOEFL test was used with a consideration that it is an appropriate test to measure EFL students' English achievement. According to Kiefer (2000), TOEFL is a standardized test in which the reliability and validity information is extensive. The TOEFL material was taken from Barron's Practice Exercises for the TOEFL written by Pamela J Sharpe. It consisted of 50 questions divided into three parts and in the form of multiple choices.

**Table 1**  
**The Indicator of Listening Scores**

Category	Listening Score
Very good / A	86 - 100
Good / B	71 - 85
Fair / C	56 - 70
Poor / D	41 - 55
Fail / E	40

*Source: Sriwijaya University Guidebook (2005)*

**Technique for Analyzing the Data**

In analyzing the data, the writer used a chi-square statistic. A chi-square can be used to compare one frequency distribution with another frequency distribution (Reaves, 1992). Meanwhile, a frequency distribution is a description of a variable measured on a nominal level, which lists the number of observation that fall into each of the possible categories. Mueller (1992) adds that chi-square is related to categorical variables. This analysis was used to find out whether independent variable (learning styles) related to dependent variable (listening achievement).

The formula of Chi-square test

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

Where:

F<sub>o</sub> = the observed frequency in any cell

F<sub>e</sub> = the expected frequency in any cell

$\chi^2$  = computed value of chi square

## FINDINGS

The questionnaire results showed that each student had the three learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), but they had only one style, which was the most dominant. In order to know which style was the most dominant, the writers counted choices answered by the students. If they mostly answered choice A, it meant that they had visual learning style, if they mostly answered choice B, they had auditory learning style, and if they mostly answered C, they had kinesthetic learning style. From the three styles, visual was the most preferred, followed by auditory and kinesthetic with total number 27(40.9%), 26(39.4%), and 13(19.7%), out of 66 students.

The students' listening achievement refers to the students' listening TOEFL test scores. It had 50 items which were divided into three parts and in the form of multiple choices. The highest score of the test was 100 and the lowest score was 0. Based on the test result, the students were categorized into five categories (Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, and Fail).

From the listening test results, it was found that the highest score was 86 and the lowest score was 24. Most students' scores were in Fair category 30(45.5%), followed by Poor 25(37.9%), Good 8(12.1%), Fail 2(3.0%), and Very Good 1(1.5%), out of 66 students.

**Table 2**  
**The distribution of learning styles and listening achievement**

		Learning styles			Total
		Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	
<b>Students' Listening Achievement</b>	Very Good	1(1.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(1.5%)
	Good	2(3.0%)	5(7.6%)	1(1.5%)	8(12.1%)
	Fair	13(19.7%)	12(18.2%)	5(7.6%)	30(45.5%)
	Poor	11(16.7%)	9(13.6%)	5(7.6%)	25(37.9%)
	Fail	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(3.0%)	2(3.0%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>27(40.9%)</b>	<b>26(39.4%)</b>	<b>13(19.7%)</b>	<b>66(100%)</b>

### The Chi-Square analysis

Chi-square analysis was used to find out the relationship between variables (students' learning style and their listening achievement). It was also used to test the null hypothesis of the study, whether it was accepted or rejected. If the value of table distribution of probabilities > (greater than) the value of chi square analysis, the null hypothesis is accepted and the research hypothesis is rejected. The obtained chi -square

( $\chi^2$ ) was 11.706 using 0.05 probability and degrees of freedom of 8, while the value of distribution  $\chi^2$  was 15.507. The table value was > (greater than) the value of chi -square analysis. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted and the research hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3**  
**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Students' Listening Achievement * Learning styles	66	100.0%	0	.0%	66	100.0%

**Students' Listening Achievement \* Learning styles Cross tabulation**

			Learning styles			Total
			Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	
Students' Listening Achievement	Very Good	Count	1	0	0	1
		Expected	.4	.4	.2	1.0
	Good	Count	2	5	1	8
		Expected	3.3	3.2	1.6	8.0
	Enough	Count	13	12	5	30
		Expected	12.3	11.8	5.9	30.0
	Less	Count	11	9	5	25
		Expected	10.2	9.8	4.9	25.0
	Fail	Count	0	0	2	2
Expected		.8	.8	.4	2.0	
Total		Count	27	26	13	66
		Expected	27.0	26.0	13.0	66.0



**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.706(a)	8	.165
Likelihood Ratio	10.349	8	.241
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.124	1	.289
N of Valid Cases	66		

a 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .20.

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	.388	.165
N of Valid Cases		66	

a Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

**DISCUSSION**

Having analyzed the results of the questionnaire and students' listening test, it was found that the students' learning styles were not related to their listening achievement. The statistical analysis showed that the table value ( 15.507) was greater than the obtained chi-square (11.706) at the significance level 0.05 and degrees of freedom of 8. It meant that there was no correlation between the variables.

The insignificant result probably occurred since learning style was not the only one factor that affected the students' listening achievement. Some other factors have already been discussed in the previous chapter. The experience time of learning could also be one of the factors affecting the students' listening achievement. In other words, the longer the experience, the more knowledge they got. As well, another factor that should not be neglected was the condition of the students when joining the test.

The insignificant result not only occurred because learning style was not the only one factor affecting the students listening achievement, but also since it was not the most dominant factor affecting the students listening achievement. The writer assumed the difference experience time of learning was the most dominant one. It can cause the students to have difference experiences and knowledge. The difference knowledge, of course, causes them to have difference listening achievement. It is in line with Rost (1991:3-4) in which she includes synthesis skill consisting of using background knowledge as one of the skills making up a person's listening ability.

Considering the insignificant correlation between the students' learning styles and their listening achievement, the lecturers and the students do not have to pay much attention to them in affecting the students' listening achievement.

However, it should not be simply ignored. As already stated earlier, there were some characteristics of each learning style. Some of them can benefit students in facing listening course. If they can empower those characteristics, it will be helpful for them.

## CONCLUSIONS

Three conclusions are drawn in this study. First, the results of the questionnaire showed that visual learning style was the most preferred, followed by auditory learning style and kinesthetic learning style respectively. Meanwhile, the results of the listening TOEFL test showed that most students were in Fair (grade C) category.

Second, the higher semester the students were in, the higher listening achievement they demonstrated. The mean score of the fifth semester students was higher than that of the third semester. This all could be caused by the differences of experiences and knowledge. In other words, it is caused by the fact that the fifth semester students have learned more than the third semester students.

Finally, there was no correlation between the learning styles of the English Education Study Program Students of Sriwijaya University and their listening achievement. The table value (15.507) was found greater than the obtained chi-square (11.706) at the significance level 0.05 and degrees of freedom of 8.

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