

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PERCEPTUAL LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCE AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to find out whether or not there is a significant correlation between perceptual learning style preference and listening comprehension of students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University. The population of this study was the first, third, fifth and seventh semester students of English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University in academic year 2017/2018. However, only the fifth and seventh semester students were taken as the sample by using purposive sampling. A descriptive method was used in this study. Specifically, this study was a correlation study. The data were obtained by means of questionnaire and listening comprehension test. The questionnaire showed that the students mostly were in medium level of learning style level and most of them had four major learning styles. Meanwhile, the listening test showed that most students were in Average category. The data obtained were analyzed by using correlation analysis and the result showed that there was no correlation between perceptual learning style preference and listening comprehension of students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University since the value of r -obtained (-.156) was lower than the critical value of r -table (0.197) at the significance level 0.05.

Keywords: *perceptual learning style preference, listening comprehension*

As an international language, English has become one of the languages that should be mastered in Indonesia. The current status of English as an international or global language is underpinned by its wide use in a range of fields such as politics, diplomacy, international trade and industry, commerce, science and technology, education, media, information

technology, and popular culture (Crystal, 2003; Huda, 2000; Jenkins, 2003).

English as a compulsory subject requires students to study four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening as the most basic skill has a very important role in learning a language. Conaway (1982) states that

listening has been considered as the widest-used language skill in the classroom and plays an important role in one's academic success than reading skill or academic aptitude. Somehow, listening comprehension is seen as an unimportant skill. This leads to the thought that listening is something that does not have to be learned.

Lack of awareness about the importance of listening skill may lead to the lateness of students' language skills development. There are some factors that affect not just the students' listening level, but their English mastery generally. According to Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita (2012), the factors are the view of English as a subject instead of means of communication, the support to use English outside the classroom, the willingness and motivation to learn English from the students themselves and the exposure of English to the students. Therefore, it should be emphasized that students need to maintain these factors throughout the learning process.

One of the factors that affects the students' English mastery is their own learning styles or in this case their perceptual learning style preference. "... People learn in many different ways: people who learn primarily with their eyes are called visual learners; or with the ears - auditory learners; whereas some people prefer to learn by experience and/or by "hands-on" tasks - kinesthetic or tactile learners; some people learn better when they work alone while others prefer to learn in groups" (Obralić & Akbarov, 2012, p. 31). This shows that every student has their own style in terms of learning and understanding the lesson. They tend to learn by depending on the dominated aspect that they find comfortable to use in learning process.

That is why every student is considered as unique, as stated by Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2013), "Since the learning style is one of the predominant factors which influence the students' success and play a crucial role in the learning process, teachers and educators should not ignore the identification of their students learning styles." (p. 134)

Oxford (2003) explains that learning style is one of the main factors that decide how well the students learn a second language or foreign language which can influence their comprehension in reading, writing, listening and speaking. It means that the learning styles have a contribution in determining the students' learning achievement. The research conducted by Jhaish (2010) showed that there was a significant correlation between students' learning style and the academic achievement. There was a statistically significant correlation between the academic achievement and auditory learners.

Listening comprehension is one of the English language skills that every student of English Education Study Program should have, especially in Sriwijaya University, since there are mandatory courses of listening that every student must take. The courses are available from the first until the fourth semesters, namely IEC (Intensive English Course) Listening, Listening 1, Listening II, and Listening III. Each course respectively has 4 credits, 3 credits, 3 credits, and 2 credits. The success of students' listening comprehension will not only boost their classroom performance, but also enrich their understanding of the importance of listening skill in language learning.

Based on the description above, this study investigated the

correlation between the students' perceptual learning style preference and their listening comprehension. Specifically, the research questions are as follows: (1) Was there any significant correlation between perceptual learning style preference and listening comprehension of the students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University?, (2) To what extent did perceptual learning style preference contribute significantly to listening comprehension of the students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University.

METODOLOGY

The research method of the study was a correlational study. This study focused on explanatory design because the writer would like to find out the correlation between perceptual learning style preference and listening comprehension of students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University.

The population used for this study was the undergraduate students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University in the academic year of 2017/2018. The sample taken for this study was the students who have taken the listening comprehension courses (IEC Listening, Listening I, Listening II and Listening III). Therefore, the writer selected 157 students of the fifth and seventh semester as the sample. The ninth semester students were omitted due to the difficulty of gathering the students.

In order to measure the students' listening comprehension, the writer used the listening test taken from Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test, Preparation for the Computer and Paper Tests written by

Phillips (2001). To find out the perceptual learning styles, the writer used the ready-made questionnaire named Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) which was created and developed by Reid (1987). The validity of the questionnaire and listening comprehension test weren't checked since they were ready-made instruments. Meanwhile, Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2013) reported that the reliability of PLSP questionnaire was high ($r = 0.72$), means that the questionnaire was reliable. As for the listening comprehension test, no reliability test was done since it was ready-made instrument.

In the analysis of PLSP questionnaire, the writer used the scoring sheet to determine the students' major, minor and negligible learning style preference. To analyze the listening comprehension test that consists of 50 items, the writer used raw scores. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was applied in order to find out whether there was any significant correlation between variable X and Y. After that, linear regression analysis would be applied in order to find out the contribution of variable X to variable Y if there was any significant correlation.

FINDINGS

Based on the test results, the listening score ranged from a minimum score of 14 to a maximum score of 50 with the mean of 36.13 and a standard deviation of 8.22.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of the Listening Comprehension Test

<i>Listening Comprehension Test</i>	
Mean	36,13

Standard Error	0,78	Count	112
Median	36		
Mode	33		
Standard Deviation	8,22		
Sample Variance	67,49		
Kurtosis	-0,26		
Skewness	-0,49		
Range	36		
Minimum	14		
Maximum	50		
Sum	4047		

It was also shown in Table 2 that the majority of the students (34.8%) got the score between 28-35 in doing the listening comprehension test. While 25.9% were between 43-50, 25% were between 36-42, 9% were between 21-27 and 5.3% were between 0-20.

Table 2
Percentage of Students' Listening Comprehension

Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very good	43-50	29	25.9
Good	36-42	28	25
Average	28-35	39	34.8
Poor	21-27	10	9
Very poor	0-20	6	5.3
Total		112	100

The result of the questionnaire showed that each student had all the learning styles, but there were only one dominant style that represents the student's learning style preference. The distribution of students learning

style can be seen in Table 3. Based on the results of the questionnaire, 60.7% students were in medium level, 39.3% of the students were in high level and none of them were in low level.

Table 3
The Distribution of Students' Learning Style Level

Total Score	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
226-300	High	44	39.3
121-225	Medium	68	60.7
60-120	Low	0	0
Total		112	100

Table 4 presents the result of the students' perceptual learning style preferences. As shown in Table 4, there were 107 students who had major learning style. Respectively, 5.3% had 6 learning styles, 3.6% had 5 learning styles, 34% had 4 learning styles, 23.2% had 3 learning styles, 19.6% had 2 learning styles and 9.8% had 1 learning style. Meanwhile, there were only 4.5% of the students who

had minor learning style and none of them had negligible learning style.

Table 4
Distribution of Students' Perceptual Learning Style Preference

Category of learning style	Number of learning style	N	%
Major	6	6	5.3
	5	4	3.6
	4	38	34

	3	26	23.2
	2	22	19.6
	1	11	9.8
Minor		5	4.5
Negligible		0	0.0
Total		112	100

Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Normality test was conducted to find out whether the data in this study were distributed normally or not. The

normality test was done by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-SZ) test.

Based on the normality test result, it was found that the coefficient of KS-Z for PLSP was 0.105 and p-value was 0.059, while the coefficient of KS-Z for listening was 0.084 and p-value was 0.051. Since the p-value (0.059 and 0.051) is higher than 0.05, it means the data follows the normal distribution.

**Table 5
Results of Normality Test**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
plsp_total	,105	112	,059	,967	112	,008
listening_total	,084	112	,051	,964	112	,004

Homogeneity test was used to find out whether the variance of population data from two or more groups are similar or not. The homogeneity test was done by using Levene test. The result of the homogeneity test showed that the p-value was 0.56. Since the p-value (0.56) was higher than 0.05 (0,56>0,05), it could be concluded that the distribution of the two samples is the same.

Based on the results of the calculation, the correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) was -.156 at the significance level p < 0.05 in two-tailed testing with N=112 and the critical value of r-table is 0.197. Since the value of r-obtained was lower than the critical value of r-table (-.156<0.197), it means that there was no significant correlation between perceptual learning style preference and listening comprehension of students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University.

**Table 6
Result of Homogeneity Test**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.191	23	78	.056

Correlation Analysis

To find out the correlation coefficient between the two variables, the data were conducted statistically by applying Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis.

**Table 7
Correlation between Students' Perceptual Learning Style Preference and Listening Comprehension**

		Listening Comp
Perceptual Learning Style	Pearson Correlation	-.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.100
	N	112

Regression Analysis

To answer the last research problem about the contribution of perceptual learning style preference to listening comprehension, linear regression analysis was conducted.

As presented in table 8, the results of regression analysis showed

that $F_{\text{obtained}} = 2.754$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.100$. Because $p\text{-value} (0.100)$ was higher than 0.05 , it means that there was no significant influence of perceptual learning style preference on listening comprehension.

Table 8
Regression Analysis: Perceptual Learning Style Preference
Contribution to Listening Comprehension

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	731.813	1	731.813	2.754	.100
	Residual	29232.151	110	265.747		
	Total	29963.964	111			

a. Dependent Variable: listening

b. Predictors: (Constant), plspq

DISCUSSION

The results of statistical analysis showed that there was no significant correlation between perceptual learning style preference and listening comprehension of students of English Education Study Program, Sriwijaya University. The result of the correlation coefficient was $-0,156$, which showed that the correlation between two variables was weak. The correlation coefficient number was given the minus (-) symbol which indicated that the correlation direction was negative. A negative correlation means that if one variable increases, another variable decreases and vice versa. In other words, it can be concluded that when students' perceptual learning style preference was high, their listening comprehension might be low.

The result of the study probably happened because the students were unaware of their own perceptual learning style. In other words, they did

not learn by using learning style that they felt comfortable with. The result of the questionnaire showed that the students tended to have more than one major learning styles, means that they still did not recognize their own learning style preference. Besides, the students' perception of learning as a duty made them feel depressed and constrained to understand the lesson because they found that the learning process was boring, so they had no thought to find or create better atmosphere for themselves to learn comfortably. Moreover, Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that there are other factors that can affect students' language learning aside from their learning style, namely intelligence, aptitude, personality, motivation, attitude, learner beliefs and age of acquisition. From that point, it can be concluded that perceptual learning style preference is not the only factor that can affect students' listening comprehension

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that there was no significant correlation between the two categories of the variables, meaning that students' perceptual learning style preference did not have a significant correlation with their listening comprehension.

Furthermore, since the students had strict schedules and the research held after the students had their subject, there are many unexplained factors, such as the situation and condition of the students when they did the test, the limited time for answering the test, etc that may have influenced the results of this study due to the weaknesses of the writer in conducting it. It is expected that other researchers will conduct a more intensive study to get better results.

Based on the conclusion described in the previous paragraph three suggestions are offered. First, since there was no significant correlation between students' perceptual learning style preference and their listening comprehension, it is suggested that future researchers do not have to fully focus on students' learning style because it has no correlation with the listening comprehension. Second, since this study only got 112 out of 157 expected participants, it is suggested to the other researcher to make the research schedule for each class, so the expected participants will be fulfilled. Third, since the research was conducted after the students had their certain subject in class, it is suggested that for next research, the data should be taken before they begin the class or during their free time.

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