The Influence of Vark Learning Style Towards Reading Comprehension of Third Year Students at SMAN 3 Kotabumi

Bagus Sugeng Riyadi[1], Ag. Bambang Setiyadi, Basturi Hasan
English Department, University of Lampung

bagussugeng96@gmail.com

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis gaya belajar VARK yang mana yang terbaik dalam membaca. Subjek dari penelitian ini adalah lima puluh delapan siswa kelas 3 di SMAN 3 Kotabumi. Data diambil dengan menggunakan kuisioner VARK dan tes membaca komprehensif. Mereka dikelompokkan sesuai gaya belajar mereka menggunakan kuisioner VARK kemudian nilai rata-rata tes membaca komprehensif mereka dibandingkan. Aspek-aspek membaca kompehensif juga di analisis untuk mengetahui aspek mana yang terbaik di masing-masing gaya belajar. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukan bahwa nilai rata-rata membaca dari kelompok dengan gaya belajar *read/write* adalah yang tertinggi diantara yang lain. Ini menunjukkan bahwa gaya belajar *read/write* adalah yang terbaik dalam membaca komprehensif.

Abstract. The objective of this research was to find out the best style of VARK in reading comprehension. Subjects of this research were fifty eight third-year students of SMAN 3 Kotabumi. The data were collected through VARK questionnaires and the reading comprehension test. They were categorized according to their learning style by using VARK questionnaires and then their mean score of the reading comprehension test were compared. The aspects of reading comprehension were also analyzed to find out the best aspect of reading comprehension of each learning style group. The result showed that the mean score of read/write group was the highest among the others. This indicates that read/write style is the best in reading comprehension.

Keyword: VARK learning style, reading comprehension, reading aspects

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the language skills which should be mastered by students. Generally, reading is not only important for language learners but it is also important for all learners because most of the learners get information and also knowledge mostly from reading. Therefore, Nation (2009: 49) says, "Reading is a source of learning and a source of enjoyment". From that statement, it can be inferred that reading is important. This also means that it cannot be separated from other language skills because as a source of learning, reading can support other skills and subjects. For example, if someone intends to learn how to write well then he learns it by reading books consisting of writing theories. Another example, if someone intends to master biology than he can learn it by reading the book of biology. Those illustrations show that reading can help someone to learn something. So, it can be assumed that reading is one of the keys to be succesful for everyone who wants to be an educated person. However, in reality, it was found that SMA students were still not able to read well in English. This is reasonable because reading comprehension has complex components such as (1) main idea, (2) specific information, (3) reference, (4) inference, and (5) vocabulary.

Furthermore, reading is comprehending message conveyed in certain text. Comprehension means relating what we do not know or new information, to what we already know (Eskey, 1988). In other words, to comprehend the text, the reader should be able to connect the written information to his current knowledge or what is usually called as background knowledge i.e. a person's collection of knowledge or information that has been formed from all of his life's experience. This is basically the purpose of reading comprehension.

At the same time, there must be some problems in reading comprehension faced by the students, especially in its aspects. In order to know the real situation faced by SMA students, pre-observation was conducted at SMAN 3 Kotabumi. It was done by doing an interview with an English teacher there. The results indicate that the problem faced by many students of SMAN 3 Kotabumi, especially in terms of the aspects, is making inference.

Furthermore, Saadi (2012) states that reading is a common problem of students. Another study by Hafiz (2000) indicates that approximately 20% of students in Saudi Arabian Schools have reading difficulties. From those two statements, it can be said that many students face many problems in reading and even the reading ilself is the problem for them.

It is believed that every person has different ability in reading comprehension. This stands to reason for some people are good while the others are not too good or even bad. For this reason, there are some factors that make different in reading ability; and learning style was assumed as one of the factors. In this case, Wang (2007: 409) defines learning style as an individual's preferred or habitual way of processing the knowledge and transforming the knowledge into personal knowledge.

In other words, it is an educational condition under which a student is most likely to learn. Thus, learning style is not really concerned with what the learners learn, but rather how they prefer to learn the materials. More specifically, each person has his or her own best way to learn, governing how they prefer to receive and proceed the knowledge. Some learners may thereby rely on visual image or presentation, others prefer listening to the music while learning, some others prefer reading or writing the materials to learn, still others may respond better to hands-on activities.

In line with description illustrated above, there are some theories of learning style and one of them is VARK (visual, aural, read/write, kinesthetic) learning style model. Naturally, it is learning style that has been modified from VAK (visual, aural, kinesthetic) model to VARK learning style by Fleming in 2006. Actually, this learning style is modified by classifying students into four different modes. The modes are based on different senses, namely (1) visual: learners prefer learning through interpreting charts, graph figures, and pictures; (2) aural: learners attain information by discussion and listening; (3) read/write: learners learn through printed word and text as a method to gain information; and (4) kinesthetic: learners tend to learn by experiencing or practicing.

Regarding with reading comprehension, students with the tendency of reading prefer printed word and text as a method to gain information. This is because they like reading (1) list: a record of short pieces of information, such as people's names, which are usually written or printed with a single thing on each line and often ordered in a way that makes a particular thing easy to find, (2) glossary: an alphabetical list with meanings of the words or phrases in a text that are difficult to understand, (3) textbook: a book that contains detailed information about a subject for people who are studying that subject, or (4) lecture notes: notes that are taken by someone attending a lecture. These students like to arrange lecture notes into sketch form, paraphrase classroom notes, and study multiple choice exam questions (Murphy et al. 2004). Furthermore, according to Drago and Wagner

(2004) in Othman (2010), these students are note takers. That is, they study better through notes taken from lecture or from difficult reading materials.

Thus, it can be assumed that students with read/write learning style are the best than the others. But is it true that students with reading learning style is the best of the others? How are about the other learning styles? Are they also effective in achieving reading objectives? Which is the worst learning style in reading? In order to be able to logically find reliable answer, this research was objectively conducted to answer those questions.

The descriptions above, leads this study to analyze the influence of each learning style from VARK model to know which learning style—visual, aural, read or write and kinesthetic—is good in reading comprehension. Hence, to answer those questions the research aimed at investigating the influence of VARK learning styles towards reading comprehension.

METHODS

This quantitative research used ex-post facto criterion group design which was aimed to measure which the best learning style of VARK towards reading comprehension and also to find the best aspect of reading comprehension of each learning style. One Way Anova formula was used to analyze the data since there were more than two data that should be measured. There were fifty eight third-year students of SMAN 3 Kotabumi as the samples of this research. The data were collected by using VARK questionnaire and a reading comprehension test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

After the researcher analyzed the data, the results of this research are briefly presented as the followings. Firstly, the hypothesis which was tested in this research is:

H_0 indicates that learners with read/write learners are not the best in reading comprehension.

H_1 means that learners with read/write style are the best in reading comprehension

The working hypothesis is accepted if the mean score of read/write learners are the highest among the others. Thus, the following table is the result of the hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Descriptive statistic table

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
V	11	79,391	4,1731	1,2582	73,3	86,7
A	14	67,379	6,1618	1,6468	56,7	76,7
R	15	84,893	4,5177	1,1665	76,7	90,0
K	18	75,739	4,3989	1,0368	66,7	83,3
Total	58	76,781	7,9491	1,0438	56,7	90,0

According to the table above, the mean score of read/write learners are the highest among the others. It means that the working hypothesis is accepted. Likewise, it can be said that read/write learning style is the best among the other learning styles of VARK.

Furthermore, in order to investigate which aspect of reading comprehension is the best in each learning style, the results of reading comprehension test in terms of the aspects of reading comprehension are showed below.

Table 2. Score in Aspects of Reading Comprehension

No.	Learning Style	Aspects of Reading Comprehension				
		Main Idea	Specific Information	Reference	Inference	Vocabulary
1.	Visual	4,45	5,27	4,54	4,18	5
2.	Aural	3,93	4,07	3,93	3,5	4,5
3.	Read/Write	5,47	5,6	5,2	4,53	4,60
4.	Kinesthetic	5	4,67	4,67	4,11	4,28

It can be seen from the table above that, first, the best aspect in visual group was finding specific information with mean score 5,3 of 6 as maximum score. While aural learners got mean score only 4,5 for vocabulary as the best aspect. On the other hand, the best aspect in read/write group was finding specific information with mean score 5,6. The last group, kinesthetic, got mean score 5 for determining main idea as the best aspect. However, no matter they obtain high or low score, still each style has their best aspect in reading comprehension.

Discussion

From the data analysis, it can be seen that that read/write learners did the best in reading comprehension among the other learners. according to Murphy et al (2004), students with read/write learning style like list, glossary, textbooks, lecture

notes, or circulation. These students like to arrange lecture notes into sketch form, paraphrase classroom notes, and study multiple choice exam questions. From the statement, it can be seen that these students got used to do reading activities. Moreover, reading test was surely one of their preference way of learning. This stands to reason that read/write learners are the best in reading comprehension.

Moving ahead, it was found that the lowest aspect in each group of VARK was making inference. It can be said that the most difficult aspect in reading comprehension faced by students was making inference. It might happen because in making inference, students need to think more. Students have to conclude what the inference is based on the available clues in the text by themselves. It can be said that making inference could be the most difficult aspect of reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

By elaborating the results of the finding above, the researcher concluded that read/write learners were the best among the others in reading comprehension. Also, it was found that finding specific information was the best aspect of reading comprehension of visual and read/write learners, while aural learners had understanding vocabulary as their best aspect of reading comprehension. The last group, kinesthetic learners, had determining main idea as the best aspect of reading comprehension. In the final analysis, the researcher made a conclusion that learning style affects students' learning habbit so as their results of learning especially reading comprehension are also affected.

Suggestions

After doing this research, the researcher found some things that need to be considered, (1) In conducting a learning process, it is better to understand students' learning style as a consideration of creating a successful learning process. it is very important to decide the best way in giving the materials especially in reading. (2) Regarding with aspects of reading comprehension, it is better for teacher to train the students developing their thinking process such as by brain storming activities and meaningful questioning in order to improve their inference aspect.

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