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**Indonesian EFL students' views on their explicit and implicit language aptitude profiles, TOEFL scores and language proficiency**

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**Abstract**

This study is designed to find out students' views on their explicit and implicit language aptitude profiles, TOEFL scores and language proficiency. Based on purposive sampling scheme, the data were collected from sixty-five students in the end of their eighth semester at the English department in faculty of teacher training in UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The students were asked to respond to the five points Likert scale questionnaire which consists of four parts: Part A elicits the participants' demographic information, Part B on language experience, Part C on language aptitude, and Part D especially on TOEFL and language proficiency. The findings revealed that language learning success is attributed to a number of individual factors. The individual factors related to foreign language learning can be divided into affective factors (e.g., motivation, attitude, and personality) and cognitive factors (e.g., intelligence, aptitude). The cognitive factors interact with affective factors for learning a particular language which may explain why a person is better able to learn a language over another language. Thus, a full model of language learning that considers the impact of language aptitude on learning should also investigate the combined mediating role of individual differences such as motivation, anxiety, and learner's beliefs.

**Keywords: Explicit language aptitude, implicit language aptitude, language proficiency, TOEFL scores**

**Introduction**

The ultimate attainment and the rate in learning new languages depend on each individual's differences (Granena, 2015). Some people learn new language quickly while some others make do very slowly with or without any improvement. As the case of children in our own society where some are able to speak at age of nine months while

some others are not able to do so. We can ask ourselves of what the characteristics the good language learners have. This is a good question that needs urgent answer. The aspects of good language learner are indefinite so research on it must be done to clear our erroneous belief by all accounts.

The individual factors related to second language learning can be divided into various categories: affective factors (e.g., motivation, attitude, and personality) and cognitive factors (e.g., intelligence, aptitude). A considerable volume of IDs research has examined the impact of affective factors. Less research has investigated the impact of cognitive variables on second language acquisition than of affective factors.

Interaction among affective variables such as personality, attitude, motivation, gender, anxiety, self-efficacy, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and foreign language learner attributions can facilitate the progression to a success in foreign language learning. These mentioned factors, on the other hand, are often blamed as reasons of failure in learning a foreign language. Take for instance, the anxiety of a student could be a consequence of instructional context in a speaking class instead of in a listening class; the performance situation such as speaking before large number of audience instead of a private one-on-one conversation; being inferior as a student who is just about to start learning the language as opposed to experienced language learners. Additionally, the expectations learners set for themselves and what teacher set for their learner definitely constitute a problem in learning of new language.

Cognitive factors include aptitude, intelligence, and ability. Since conceptual issues are included, the difference among intelligence ability, and aptitude should be noted. These terms are commonly used interchangeably in everyday jargon, and the scientific definition is lost because of the popular use (Dörnyei, 2005). Psychology often uses the term ability for different quality which deals with thinking, reasoning and the processing of information. Scholars have distinguished a difference between ability and aptitude but in practical terms, and for the purpose of language learning, these terms are synonymous in meaning and pedagogical application (Dörnyei, 2005; Skehan, 2002). While aptitude is usually used in referring to a precise area of academic performance, intelligence bears wider meaning; it is not directed to a particular discipline or area, but encompasses all aspects of learning. The meaning is also synonymous, to a degree, with abilities. Noticeably, the differences in meaning are minor in detail (Dörnyei, 2005).

However, Granena (2013) indicated that because of the larger quantity of input that the learner has to put into practice and the demands to find out patterns and make generalizations merely from L2 exposure, the aptitude could be even more right and proper in implicit than in explicit second language acquisition.

Hwu & Sun (2012) indicate that aptitude profiles based on different aptitude components information is not only desirable but also have wide-ranging pedagogical implications for different L2 learning conditions. And, one aptitude component is moderately self-regulating from another. So, since aptitude components are not correlated, an idea of relating each component to explicit and implicit aptitude can be applied (Granena, 2012). Granena (2016) proposed that the aptitude profiles are as follows: high explicit language aptitude low implicit language aptitude; low explicit language aptitude, high implicit language aptitude; high explicit language aptitude, high implicit language aptitude; and/or low explicit language aptitude, low implicit language aptitude.

## **Research Methodology**

To address the study research questions, the quantitative method using cross-sectional correlation design will generate insightful information on the relationship between cognitive aptitude profiles and TOEFL scores. Creswell (2009) stated that non-experimental quantitative correlation design is the most effective method for this research study as it offers a non-obtrusive approach to the inquiry and will result in identification of significant correlation between variables of this study.

Neither an outcome nor a predictor is the main variable on which participant selection is based on, therefore sampling is based on neither exposure nor outcome (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the use of the correlation research design will provide information that will address the research questions and objectives of the study. The correlation study design is a valid method to use to explore the variables.

A questionnaire was administered in English department in faculty of teacher training UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia in September 2018. The sample, selected through a non-random sampling method called purposive sampling, consists of 65 students who were in their eighth semester, aged between 19 to 21 years old at the time of the study.

The questionnaire was employed to examine the participants' perceptions, personalities, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, towards their own language aptitude and proficiency in their learning experience leaning English. The questionnaire is designed based on the instruments that are already available and often used by other researchers such as LEAP-Q. As the researcher places an emphasis of individual differences theory in second language acquisition theory, the concept of language aptitude as a cognitive aspect cannot stand on its own without the other factors of individual differences which are the affective factors as the bigger picture. Since LEAP-Q is a valid and widely used instrument to measure language experience and aptitude, it is adapted as one research instrument that was used in this study.

The questionnaire consists of four parts: Part A elicits the participants' demographic information, Part B on language experience, Part C on language aptitude, and Part D especially on TOEFL and language proficiency. The Likert Scale was used with the primary concern of making sure that all these items would be measuring the same thing. The system of scoring employed was 1 to 5; the high scale 5 (Strongly Agree) for the favorable attitude and the low scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) for the unfavorable attitude.

## **Findings**

The finding on the students' language experience, language aptitude, and language proficiency is presented. From the total number of 68 questionnaires distributed, not all were returned. In the end, only 65 responses are qualified to be analyzed. Scales used in the questionnaire have been tested for Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha$ ). Result for the analysis of reliability for the questionnaire is 0.78 which indicates a very good degree of reliability.

## **Demographic information**

In this section, students were asked to identify their name (to be classified), gender and age in the questionnaires. In their responses, it was found that, out of the 65 students, there were 52 female students (80%) and the remaining 13 students (20%) were male. The composition of the students according to gender was not evenly distributed. This

was reflecting a common trend in the enrolment of students in Bachelor of Education in TEFL programs throughout the teaching field in Indonesia.

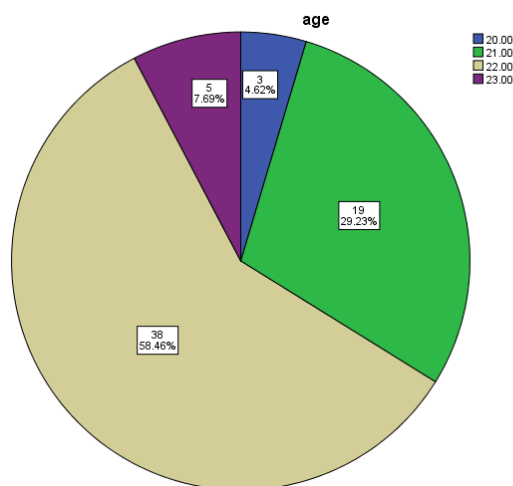


Figure 1 Age of the respondents

As shown in figure 1, the majority (58.46%) of the respondents (38 students) are 22 years old. There are 19 students (29.2%) aged 21. 4.6% and 7.7% of the students are 20 years old and 23 years old, respectively.

### Language Experience

In this section of the questionnaire, the students were asked to list all the languages they know in order of dominance and acquisition and also when they were first introduced to English, began speaking and reading in English.

This part is adapted from LEAP-Q (Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire) published in 2007. From the original version, five questions were selected to suit the samples for this current study. Firstly, the respondents were instructed to list all the languages that they have come to be familiar with in order of dominance. A scale of 1 to 5 was used to indicate the dominance. The most dominant was rated 1 and the least dominant was rated 5. Second, students were asked to list all the languages they know in order of acquisition. Third, students should state the age when they were first introduced to English. Fourth, students were to state the age when they began speaking in English. Fifth, and lastly, students were asked to state the age when they began reading in English.

From the responses of the questionnaire, each of the students' first language in order of dominance varies, mostly depending on where they are from. For the first language in dominant use, many ranges of language from many local dialects in South Sumatera are mentioned. But for the most part, respondents state the Palembang (capital city of South Sumatera) dialect as the first language in order of dominance, which accounts for more than 50% of the respondents (37 students). The rest are other local dialects/accents such as Enim, Komerling, Sekayu, Javanese, etc.

The second language/dialect they come to familiarize with is the national language, which is Indonesian language (the national language of Republic of Indonesia), which almost 90% (52 students) of the respondents had stated.

English, as an international language, ranks mostly the third and fourth, and so forth in the order of the language dominance. 37 respondents (56.9%) stated English as the third language in order of dominance. A rare case is observed from 6 respondents (9.2%) who identify that English is their second language. This is mainly because some families may not use regional dialects at all in the household because of some reasons.

The other languages with smaller percentages, which is 7%, that the respondents mentioned are Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, and Turkish. The exposure to these other languages comes from various resources and reasons. Some students took language lessons in their senior high school years, such as Arabic and Mandarin and retain the interest to later years. The other languages basically are of personal choices, interests, hobbies, or obligations from different parties. These students enjoy watching or listening to Japanese, Korean, or Turkish movies or songs for entertainment, also.

The case of languages in order of acquisition is not very much different from the languages in order of dominance. Most students stated the regional dialects as their first language (91%), Indonesian national language as the second language (92%), and English ranks as their third, fourth, or fifth language (82%, 17%, and 1%, respectively).

The last item on the language experience is on the age they were first introduced to English, began speaking English, and began reading in English. The responses to the item instructing them to state the age introduced to English, began speaking English, and began reading in English, also vary. Most students mentioned that they were introduced to English after the first year of elementary school, starting from the age of 6 years old up to 12 years old. Eight students (12%) were introduced to English prior to elementary school years, as young as three to five years old. The

respondents mostly state that they began speaking English after they were introduced to English. However, a total of 17 students (26%) stated that during the middle school years, (starting from age 13) they started speaking in English. Almost 98% students began reading in English mostly after they are introduced to English, and before they started speaking in English, which means when they are in elementary school, with ages ranging from 6 to 12.

### Language Aptitude

With the purpose of gauging the students' language aptitude from their own perspectives, Part C in the survey questionnaire asks about language aptitude which consists of a list of 24 items. The students were asked to answer this part by choosing 1 out of the 5-point provided in the Likert scale, where the scale ranged from totally disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to totally agree. The questionnaire results are presented in Table 1

Table 1  
Questionnaire results of the students' perception of their own language aptitude

No		Mean	Level of aptitude				
			5	4	3	2	1
1	I have the ability to analyze incoming new English sounds in a way that can be recalled later.	3.4853	1 (1.5%)	33 (50.8%)	27 (41.5%)	4 (6.2%)	-
2	I have the ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences.	3.5882	5 (7.7%)	33 (50.8%)	23 (35.4%)	4 (6.2%)	-
3	I have the ability to identify patterns of correspondence.	3.2794	1 (1.5%)	24 (36.9%)	32 (49.2%)	7 (10.8%)	1 (1.5%)
4	I have the ability to identify relationships involving form and meaning.	3.6324	1 (1.5%)	41 (63.1%)	20 (30.8%)	3 (4.6%)	-
5	I have the ability to store verbal information in memory and recall it later	3.6618	4 (6.2%)	38 (58.5%)	20 (30.8%)	3 (4.6%)	-

6	I think about the learning process.	4.0441	16 (24.6%)	38 (58.5%)	9 (13.8%)	2 (3.1%)	-
7	I plan for learning.	3.7941	10 (15.4%)	37 (56.9%)	14 (21.5%)	4 (6.2%)	-
8	I monitor learning while it is taking place.	3.4265	3 (4.6%)	28 (43.1%)	29 (44.6%)	5 (7.7%)	-
9	I self-evaluate my learning after the task has been completed.	3.3235	2 (3.1%)	31 (47.7%)	21 (32.3%)	9 (13.8%)	2 (3.1%)
10	I enhance comprehension on materials by forming it in a different way in my brain (e.g. image, table, graphs, charts, etc.).	3.8382	11 (16.9%)	37 (56.9%)	14 (21.5%)	3 (4.6%)	-
11	I enhance comprehension on tasks by understanding it in a different way in my brain (e.g. image, table, graphs, charts, etc.).	3.8235	9 (13.8%)	41 (63.1%)	13 (20.0%)	2 (3.1%)	-
12	I make connections between new and already known information.	3.7941	7 (10.8%)	39 (60.0%)	18 (27.7%)	1 (1.5%)	-
13	I regulate my emotions toward learning English.	3.6912	6 (9.2%)	34 (52.3%)	22 (33.8%)	3 (4.6%)	-
14	I regulate my motivation toward learning English.	3.9559	11 (16.9%)	42 (64.6%)	12 (18.5%)	-	-
15	I regulate my attitude toward learning English.	3.9118	7 (10.8%)	45 (69.2%)	12 (18.5%)	1 (1.5%)	-
16	I interact with others to improve language learning	4.0588	15 (23.1%)	39 (60.0%)	10 (15.4%)	1 (1.5%)	-
17	I interact with others to improve cultural understanding in learning English.	3.9265	16 (24.6%)	31 (47.7%)	17 (26.2%)	1 (1.5%)	-



18	I maintain a phonological record that can be consulted during offline language processing.	3.0441	2 (3.1%)	16 (24.6%)	31 (47.7%)	14 (21.5%)	2 (3.1%)
19	I process syntactic and semantic information.	3.1912	1 (1.5%)	21 (32.3%)	33 (50.8%)	8 (12.3%)	2 (3.1%)
20	I maintain the products of processing.	3.7647	8 (12.3%)	35 (53.8%)	21 (32.3%)	1 (1.5%)	-
21	I learn phonological forms of new words.	3.5441	6 (9.2%)	26 (40.0%)	30 (46.2%)	3 (4.6%)	-
22	I interpret the semantic characteristics of new words.	3.5147	5 (7.7%)	27 (41.5%)	28 (43.1%)	5 (7.7%)	-
23	I develop a phonological recoding strategy.	3.0147	2 (3.1%)	10 (15.4%)	42 (64.6%)	9 (13.8%)	2 (3.1%)
24	I plan the conceptual content of speech.	3.7500	7 (10.8%)	40 (61.5%)	13 (20.0%)	5 (7.7%)	-

The questionnaire results indicated that there were some items that students mostly agree (Likert scale 4). From the 65 students, more than fifty-percent of the students agree that they have ability to analyze incoming new English sounds in a way that can be recalled later, to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences, to identify relationships involving form and meaning, to store verbal information in memory and recall it later, to think about the learning process, to plan for learning, enhance comprehension on materials by forming and understanding it in a different way in my brain (e.g. image, table, graphs, charts, etc.), to make connections between new and already known information, to regulate their emotions, motivation, and attitude toward learning English, and finally, to interact with other to improve language learning.

The data revealed that the highest means of the responses are indicated for affective factors (Q13-Q15) and social factors (Q16 and Q17). The students are aware of the importance of interaction with others and showed their interest in doing that. However, interaction with other students or peers may be not achieving what is supposed to be achieved because sometimes the interaction is full of errors when it comes to foreign language learning. It has been proven that when the foreign

language learners reach the stage of inter-language, then they can understand each other but unfortunately the conversation is full of errors.

It also appears clearly from the students' views that they are using their cognitive abilities in active way by stating they agree with the items in the questions related to cognitive ability. This shows that the students somehow are aware of the role of cognitive ability in foreign language learning. Their views also can show that the students know the strategies or techniques to activate their cognitive ability when they agree that they transfer language knowledge into images, tables, graphs, charts, etc during which the process of learning in its peak. Some psycholinguistics researches have shown human brain deals with the information in a better way once it's coded in images. In addition, the students also implied that they are creating mind maps to process the information by agreeing that they make connections between new and already known information. This technique is also proven to promote and foster learning process. In the same manner, the students are aware of debilitating factors such as motivation, they agree dealing with it will lead to better learning.

The lowest means of the responses are indicated for Q18 (I maintain a phonological record that can be consulted during offline language processing), Q23 (I develop a phonological recording strategy), and Q19 (I process syntactic and semantic information).

The data also revealed that the lowest means of the responses are indicated for Q18 until Q24 in which the statements are assessing their opinion on their working memory. It can be argued that the students did not show a high degree of agreement regarding these items because may be they are not fully aware of the technical terms in language such as phonology or syntax.

### **TOEFL and Self-assessed language Proficiency**

This section presents the result of the questionnaire part D on TOEFL classes and TOEFL tests, and their self-assessment on their own language proficiency. In this section, the findings presented as the two parts. First, the responses on the questionnaire on TOEFL classes and TOEFL test will be presented. Then, their self-assessed language proficiency also will be presented.

#### **TOEFL classes and TOEFL tests**

This part of the questionnaire uses Likert scale where students respond from item number 25 to item number 55. Table 2 presents the result of the questionnaire for items 25 to 55.

Table 2  
TOEFL Classes and TOEFL tests

No	Items	Mean	TOEFL class and TOEFL skills				
			5	4	3	2	1
25	I study TOEFL because I have the impression that it is expected of me.	4.22	22 (33.8%)	34 (52.3%)	8 (12.3%)	1 (1.5%)	-
26	I study TOEFL because I'd feel guilty if I don't have fulfilling TOEFL score.	4.12	18 (27.7%)	36 (55.4%)	8 (12.3%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (3.1%)
27	I study TOEFL because I think it is for my personal development.	4.2	20 (30.8%)	39 (60.0%)	5 (7.7%)	-	1 (1.5%)
28	I study TOEFL for the satisfied feeling I get in finding out new things.	3.81	12 (18.5%)	35 (53.8%)	13 (20.0%)	3 (4.6%)	2 (3.1%)
29	I study TOEFL in order to get a more prestigious job later.	4.03	21 (32.3%)	30 (46.2%)	10 (15.4%)	3 (4.6%)	1 (1.5%)
30	I worry about the consequences of failing my TOEFL score	3.9	15 (23.1%)	31 (47.7%)	16 (24.6%)	2 (3.1%)	1 (1.5%)
31	I often feel like not going to my TOEFL class.	1.95	-	5 (7.7%)	7 (10.8%)	31 (47.7%)	22 (33.8%)
32	During TOEFL class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.29	2 (3.1%)	8 (12.3%)	11 (16.9%)	29 (44.6%)	15 (23.1%)
33	The TOEFL skills I am trying to learn are difficult.	3.19	3 (4.6%)	20 (30.8%)	27 (41.5%)	15 (23.1%)	-
34	I feel overwhelmed by the number of strategies I have to learn in TOEFL class.	3.22	6 (9.2%)	19 (29.2%)	24 (36.9%)	13 (20.0%)	3 (4.6%)
35	The more I study for TOEFL test, the more confused I get.	2.61	4 (6.2%)	8 (12.3%)	16 (24.6%)	32 (49.2%)	5 (7.7%)

36	I don't worry about making mistakes in TOEFL class.	3.19	4 (6.2%)	25 (38.5%)	15 (23.1%)	18 (27.7%)	3 (4.6%)
37	I get upset when I don't understand what the TOEFL teacher is teaching.	3.8	12 (18.5%)	34 (52.3%)	14 (21.5%)	4 (6.2%)	1 (1.5%)
38	I get nervous when the TOEFL teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.3	4 (6.2%)	23 (35.4%)	24 (36.9%)	11 (16.9%)	3 (4.6%)
39	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my TOEFL class.	2.9	5 (7.7%)	13 (20.0%)	18 (27.7%)	23 (35.4%)	6 (9.2%)
40	I am afraid that my TOEFL teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	2.3	1 (1.5%)	10 (15.4%)	8 (12.3%)	35 (53.8%)	11 (17.9%)
41	TOEFL class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	3.2	1 (1.5%)	23 (35.4%)	28 (43.1%)	9 (13.8%)	4 (6.2%)
42	I feel that other students understand TOEFL skills better than I do.	3.5	3 (4.6%)	32 (49.2%)	26 (40.0%)	4 (6.2%)	-
43	I feel more tense and nervous in my TOEFL class than in other classes.	2.7	3 (4.6%)	12 (18.5%)	23 (35.4%)	19 (29.2%)	8 (12.3%)
44	I don't feel pressure to prepare for TOEFL test.	3.5	6 (9.2%)	28 (43.1%)	23 (35.4%)	7 (10.8%)	1 (1.5%)
45	Even if I am well prepared for TOEFL test, I feel anxious about it.	3.3	6 (9.2%)	21 (32.3%)	23 (35.4%)	14 (21.5%)	1 (1.5%)
46	I doubt my own skills before the TOEFL test.	3	4 (6.2%)	22 (33.8%)	16 (24.6%)	15 (23.1%)	8 (12.3%)
47	I am usually at ease during TOEFL tests.	3.6	8 (12.2%)	28 (43.1%)	24 (36.9%)	4 (6.2%)	1 (1.5%)
48	I feel confident when I sit for TOEFL test.	3.5	8 (12.3%)	22 (33.8%)	28 (43.1%)	6 (9.2%)	1 (1.5%)
49	In TOEFL exams, I can get so nervous that I forget the things I	2.7	1 (1.5%)	13 (20.0%)	20 (30.8%)	25 (38.8%)	6 (9.2%)

	know.						
50	I start to panic when the proctor reminds the time.	3.1	7 (10.8%)	21 (32.3%)	13 (20.0%)	18 (27.7%)	6 (9.2%)
51	During the test I ever forget the material I have studied and learned, maybe only to remember it again after the test is over.	3.5	5 (7.7%)	32 (49.2%)	20 (30.8%)	7 (10.8%)	1 (1.5%)
52	I "overanalyze" questions, see too many possibilities, and choose the complex answer, overlook, and miss the simpler correct one.	3.4	7 (10.8%)	21 (32.3%)	24 (36.9%)	13 (20.0%)	-
53	I don't understand why some people get so upset over their TOEFL scores	2.8	3 (4.6%)	6 (9.2%)	32 (49.2%)	21 (32.3%)	3 (4.6%)
54	Everyone can learn TOEFL skills/strategies.	4.4	27 (41.5%)	33 (50.8%)	5 (7.7%)	-	-
55	I believe that I will ultimately be able to master TOEFL skills well.	4.5	36 (55.4%)	26 (40.0%)	5 (7.7%)	-	-

More than 50% of the students agree with Q25 (I study TOEFL because I have the impression that it is expected of me), Q26 (I study TOEFL because I'd feel guilty if I don't have fulfilling TOEFL score), Q27 (I study TOEFL because I think it is for my personal development), and Q28 (I study TOEFL for the satisfied feeling I get in finding out new things). These previous items belong to statements related to motivation.

For an item related to anxiety, 53.8% of students disagree that they are afraid that their TOEFL teachers is ready to correct every mistake they made. More than 50% also consider that they get upset when they don't understand what the TOEFL teacher is teaching (Q37).

It can be seen that 36 students (55.4%) totally agree and 26 students (40%) agree that they believe that they will ultimately be able to master TOEFL skills well. Also, more than 50% believe that everyone can learn TOEFL skills/strategies. With connection to the previous two sections in this survey questionnaire, motivation and anxiety, the students

do believe that finally they will be able to master TOEFL and achieve the required TOEFL score.

### Language Proficiency

In the last part of questionnaire, which is part D, on language proficiency, students are asked to answer the five questions posed by the researcher. For question number 1, respondents were asked to rate their own level of proficiency in listening, structure and written expression, and reading section in a TOEFL test. Then, for questions number two to question number 5, respondents are asked to state their opinions on each of TOEFL section (listening, structure & written, and reading).

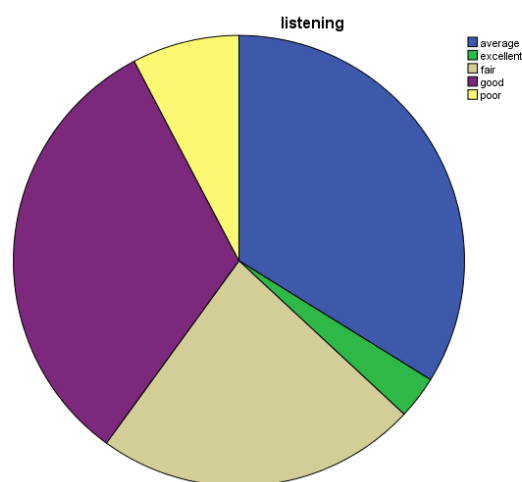


Figure 2 Self assessments on listening section

On the listening section of the TOEFL test, as shown in figure 2, 22% and 21% of the students are of the opinion that they are average and good, respectively. Only 2 respondents (3.1%) suggested that they are excellent. 5 respondents consider that they are poor in this section, while 15 respondents decided that they are just fair.

It is indicated that the speakers are speaking 'too fast' (S39) for them, and using 'vocabularies and expressions that are unfamiliar' (S56). The respondents are expecting that the conversations are 'shorter and not complicated' (S3). They agree that part 1 is still the easiest for the reason that it is where the test starts therefore they are 'still feeling fresh' (S33). Part 3 of the listening comprehension test, however, is the 'most difficult' (S31) for them because of the longer talks with 'more incomprehensible vocabularies' (S56) make it very hard for them to understand, even just to start 'identifying the topic'

(S48). Also, it is stated by the respondents that there are just 'so many questions with so little time' (S12), therefore 'losing focus' (S32). Last but not least, comments are found about the "unsatisfying quality of the sound system" (S24) such as the 'audio speaker' (S21) and also the 'condition of the room' (S20). In short, respondents think that they need to be more focused so they can concentrate more, especially with the many questions and very little time.

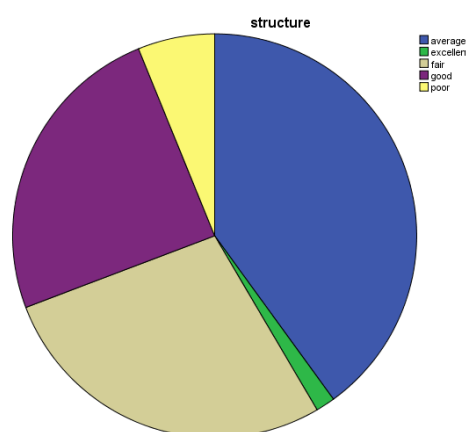


Figure 3 Self-assessment on structure and written section

Figure 3 shows that 26 students (40%) suggest that their ability the questions on the structure and written expression of the TOEFL test is on the average. This result is found to be similar to the listening section, Also, only 1 student considered oneself as excellent, and 4 as poor. 18 students (27.7%) and 16 students (24.6%) are of the opinion that they are fair and good, respectively.

In general, the comments are divided into a group of students who find this section as still difficult and other group who finds this section as less difficult compared to listening and reading sections of the test. Some rather positive comments were found regarding this section. They are quoted writing "this is the easier part than other two sections" (S26), "...the most favorite part of all TOEFL sections" (S38), "it is nice" (S31), "it is quite easy." (S3), or "at least it is easy in the beginning" (S12). Also are stated by the students that they would suggest that to excel in this part "they only need to practice more" (S37). This is also due to in fact that there are many more strategies to learn compared to listening and reading section.

However, still, the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the many unfamiliar vocabularies and lack of time are the main problems that make this section difficult. Respondents commented that "they need to be more focused" (S46),

sometimes “the answer choices are very confusing” (S53), thus they are “unsure about the answers” (S13). Although it is difficult to analyze the grammatical functions, it is stated that “it is somehow fine if they are already good in grammar” (S41).

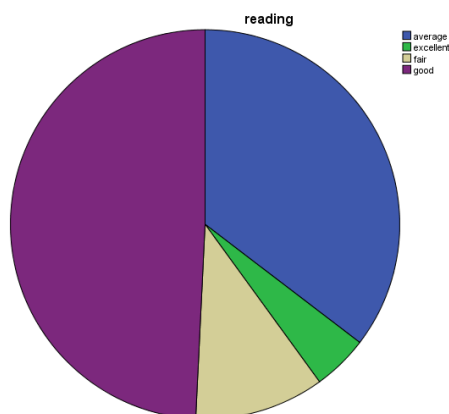


Figure 4 Self-assessment on reading section

Figure 4 shows that 23 students (35.4%) consider that they are average on responding to questions in reading section. However, almost half of the students (49.2%) of the students believe that they are good in this section. Almost the same as the previous two TOEFL skills, only 3% of the students think that they are excellent. Lastly, 10.8% of the students think that they are fair in reading section.

Students are of different opinions on this last section of the TOEFL test. The respondents claiming that the reading part is easy are cited saying this section has the fewest and easiest strategies to learn, even independently. What makes it easier is also the fact that some answers can be found in the text. Also, comments are found citing that that they have always enjoyed reading, so it makes it easier for them to choose the answer. The problems with unfamiliar vocabulary words are also present, like in the previous two sections. They still find it difficult to find meaning of some vocabularies, even though they have tried guessing techniques.

That this section takes the longest time compared to the previous two sections so that good time management is required, is also highlighted in the comments. Comments such as ‘I have started becoming tired, lazy and bored to work on this section since I have started two previous sections earlier’ (S33), ‘the reading passages are too lengthy, especially when the topics are something I am not familiar with such as science and politics’ (S35) are found. They stated that since “some of the topics are not of a common knowledge” (S25), somehow “very much different from their field” (S43), it



is difficult to comprehend the passages. One is cited that "I don't like finding main ideas or topics, especially" (S12). However, two respondents are quoted commenting that 'this is the easiest part' (S9), still interesting though confusing (S37)'.

Based on the finding, when the students were asked to rate themselves, the majority of them didn't rate themselves as high achievers in the TOEFL test. Most students state that some of the common problems they encounter while taking the TOEFL test is the too many unfamiliar vocabulary words, the time for the test is too long that by the end of the test they are very exhausted and cannot function effectively, especially in reading part, which is the last part of the TOEFL test.

To conclude this section of the test are met with mixed preferences. Some have commented that this is the easiest part, still interesting though confusing. From the students' own rating of their TOEFL skills, reading is the highest, while the lowest is structure and written. This can also be confirmed by the researcher herself that students state that they rely more on reading section because there are far fewer strategies to master, compared to the first and second section of the test.

## **Discussion**

### **Students' view on their language experience**

It is stated by the respondents that English is not their first language they acquire, also not the first language they know and use dominantly. Most students mentioned that English is their third or fourth language they acquire and use. The first languages they acquire are their mother tongues and the Indonesian national language. Few respondents stated other languages such as Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean as the other languages they can comprehend.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language. Unlike countries where English is their first or second language, the exposure and the use of English is not very much as expected. Although now with the much use of internet, students may have started to expose themselves earlier with more English where they play online games, for example, with other people from other countries. But this is the case where students have access to internet. In Indonesia, not all areas have internet coverage.

Also, they do not begin using English in speaking and reading at early age, even though very small percentage stated they started as early as three or four years old.

Many are introduced to English after the first year of elementary school, which starts from the age of six years old.

Aptitude development significantly correlates to language experience (Thompson, 2013). It may change over time. Also, it is not confirmed that bilinguals will outperform monolinguals as they are more aware of language. Even though bilinguals may outperform monolingual in language test, it is not significant. In this case, Indonesian students are not bilinguals, and again, English is their foreign language.

There are several different views on age and aptitude. For example, Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2008) argue that aptitude is only a relevant factor for learners over the age of 15. While, Grañena (2013) showed age-effects first influence L2 phonology, then lexis, collocation and morphosyntax.

Some researchers have done research on whether age affects aptitude, for example, as measured by LLAMA. A 2014 study on LLAMA B and LLAMA E found no significant differences but a different profile of results, this time looking at vocabulary and implicit learning (LLAMA D). It should be noted that LLAMA tests are not originally designed for use with children. Also, it is found that LLAMA B (vocabulary), 10-11 year olds performed significantly worse than both older groups ( $p < .05$ ), and no significant differences between 20-21s and 30-70s. It is concluded that younger participants performed worse. For LLAMA D (implicit), 10-11 years olds performed significantly worse than 20-21s ( $p < .05$ ) but not than 30-70s and no significant difference was found between older groups. So, younger group did not perform better than either of the two older groups.

### **Students' views on their language aptitude**

The questionnaire results indicated that there were some items that students mostly agree (Likert scale 4). From the 65 students, more than fifty-percent of the students agree that they have ability to analyze incoming new English sounds in a way that can be recalled later, to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences, to identify relationships involving form and meaning, to store verbal information in memory and recall it later, to think about the learning process, to plan for learning, enhance comprehension on materials by forming and understanding it in a different way in my brain (e.g. image, table, graphs, charts, etc.), to make connections between new and

already known information, to regulate their emotions, motivation, and attitude toward learning English, and finally, to interact with other to improve language learning.

The data revealed that the highest means of the responses are indicated for affective factors (Q13-Q15) and social factors (Q16 and Q17). The students are aware of the importance of interaction with others and showed their interest in doing that. However, interaction with other students or peers may be not achieving what is supposed to be achieved because sometimes the interaction is full of errors when it comes to foreign language learning. It has been proven that when the foreign language learners reach the stage of inter-language, then they can understand each other but unfortunately the conversation is full of errors. When opportunities to practice the language arise, they are usually between learners in the classroom and the interaction is often filled with errors" (Al-Nawrasy, 2012, p. 243). Unfortunately, the students also have very little authentic exposure to English beyond the classroom as revealed in previous studies (Khan, 2015; Al-Nawrasy, 2012; Bahrani & Tam, 2012; Bahrani & Tam, 2011; Li, 2009).

It also appears clearly from the students' views that they are using their cognitive abilities in active way by stating they agree with the items in the questions related to cognitive ability. This shows that the students somehow are aware of the role of cognitive ability in foreign language learning. Their views also can show that the students know the strategies or techniques to activate their cognitive ability when they agree that they transfer language knowledge into images, tables, graphs, charts, etc during which the process of learning in its peak. Some psycholinguistics researches have shown human brain deals with the information in a better way once it's coded in images. In addition, the students also implied that they are creating mind maps to process the information by agreeing that they make connections between new and already known information. This technique is also proven to promote and foster learning process. In the same manner, the students are aware of debilitating factors such as motivation, they agree dealing with it will lead to better learning.

The data revealed that the lowest means of the responses are indicated for Q18 until Q24 in which the statements are assessing their opinion on their working memory. It can be argued that the students did not show a high degree of agreement regarding these items because may be they are not fully aware of the technical terms in language such as phonology or syntax.

**Students' view on their TOEFL and self-assessed language proficiency**

In this section, the findings presented as the two parts of section 5.4.3 on TOEFL will be discussed separately into two sections, as shown below. First, the responses on the questionnaire on TOEFL classes and TOEFL test will be discussed. Then, their self-assessed language proficiency also will be discussed.

**TOEFL classes and TOEFL test**

More than 50% of the students agree with Q25 (I study TOEFL because I have the impression that it is expected of me), Q26 (I study TOEFL because I'd feel guilty if I don't have fulfilling TOEFL score), Q27 (I study TOEFL because I think it is for my personal development), Q28 (I study TOEFL for the satisfied feeling I get in finding out new things). These previous items belong to statements related to motivation.

It can be seen that the percentage of the students who are motivated is very high. This can be interpreted from different points of views but a prominent one is that the students are fully aware of the importance of TOEFL in the current days. However, in spite of their motivation, they are not achieving the targeted TOEFL scores. Maybe one possible interpretation is that basic motivation alone is not enough to predict or achieve high TOEFL scores. Self-determination theory (SDT), a broad umbrella theory which includes sub theories about motivation and basic needs, suggests that individual needs the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs (relatedness, competence, and autonomy) which are universal and innate in order to be motivated (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). When these needs are satisfied, the individuals become more motivated to act and show greater positive outcomes in the education setting (Deci & Ryan, 2002). SDT also examines how individual differences and social contexts facilitate different types of motivation, especially controlled motivation and autonomous motivation, and in turn predict psychological health, performance, learning, and experience (Deci & Ryan, 2015).

For an item related to anxiety, 53.8% of students disagree that they are afraid that their TOEFL teachers is ready to correct every mistake they made. More than 50% also consider that they get upset when they don't understand what the TOEFL teacher is teaching (Q37).

It is a well known fact that there is inverse relationship between motivation and anxiety. This can be seen clearly in the students' response about anxiety. In the previous section of the survey questionnaire, the students stated that they are highly motivated and they have confirmed that by stating they are not anxious when it comes to activities related to TOEFL even when they are making mistakes. From the researcher's experience in teaching TOEFL, students appreciate when the teacher points out their mistakes and correct it. Also, they like it when the teacher reminds them about the previous strategies that they may have forgotten.

55.4% (36) students totally agree and 40% (26) agree that they believe that they will ultimately be able to master TOEFL skills well. Also, more than 50% believe that everyone can learn TOEFL skills/strategies. With connection to the previous two sections in this survey questionnaire, motivation and anxiety, the students do believe that finally they will be able to master TOEFL and achieve the required TOEFL score.

### **Language proficiency**

Based on the finding, when the students were asked to rate themselves, the majority of them didn't rate themselves as high achievers in the TOEFL test. Most students state that some of the common problems they encounter while taking the TOEFL test is the too many unfamiliar vocabulary words, the time for the test is too long that by the end of the test they are very exhausted and cannot function effectively, especially in reading part, which is the last part of the TOEFL test.

From the students' own rating of their TOEFL skills, reading is the highest, while the lowest is structure and written. This can also be confirmed by the researcher herself that students state that they rely more on reading section because there are far fewer strategies to master, compared to the first and second section of the test.

A possible way of looking at these findings is to link it up with the students' learning situation where English is only a foreign language. Several studies have been conducted to the factors that were responsible for the EFL learners' poor level of linguistic proficiency in EFL countries (Anwari, 2019; Al-Tamimi, 2019; Anwar, 2017; Khan, 2015; Akbari, 2015; Souriyavongsa et al., 2013; Al-Nawrasy, 2012). These studies have identified several factors behind EFL learners' poor level of language proficiency. These factors are related but not limited to cultural, psychological, teachers, students, teaching procedures, teaching and learning environment, syllabus and curriculum, and

situational factors inside the classroom and outside as well. Even the communicative approach in many EFL countries faces many challenges; insufficient number of qualified teachers, unsupportive school environment and negative feedback, clear assessment procedures, Lack of exposure, materials for teaching English are not communicative, home values and culture, and lack of interaction and creating the right way of it (Koosha &Yakhabi, 2013; Bahrani & Tam, 2012; Bahrani & Tam, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Data from questionnaire suggested that the LLAMA scores is reflected in the students' views about their explicit and implicit foreign language aptitude. Also, the students basically do not feel confident about their English proficiency, though deep inside they wish they get to the far greater accomplishment in language proficiency test.

Language learning success is attributed to a number of individual factors. The individual factors related to foreign language learning can be divided into affective factors (e.g., motivation, attitude, and personality) and cognitive factors (e.g., intelligence, aptitude). The cognitive factors interact with affective factors for learning a particular language which may explain why a person is better able to learn a language over another language. Thus, a full model of language learning that considers the impact of language aptitude on learning should also investigate the combined mediating role of individual differences such as motivation, anxiety, and learner's beliefs. .

Future studies are also needed to explore the validity of using other kinds of working memory tests and other measures of motivation, strategy use, and language learning. Only then will we come closer to understanding the construct of language aptitude and how it relates to the complex system of language learning. Moreover, the effects of language aptitude on advanced level learning are mediated by the affective variables of motivation and strategy use.

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