



HOW STUDENTS PERCEIVE TRUE-FALSE AND MULTIPLE-CHOICE READING TEST ITEMS WITH LOCAL LECTURE

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Diterima: 01/09/2026; Direvisi: 03/09/2026; Diterbitkan: 18/09/2026

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif-komparatif untuk menganalisis persepsi mahasiswa terhadap format soal *True-False* (TF) dan *Multiple-Choice Questions* (MCQ) dalam tes membaca berbasis teks budaya lokal. Penelitian dilaksanakan di Universitas Muhammadiyah Bulukumba, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia, pada [bulan-bulan, tahun]. Partisipan penelitian berjumlah 43 mahasiswa EFL yang mengerjakan kedua format tes membaca. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner persepsi dan wawancara lanjutan untuk memperoleh informasi mengenai pengalaman dan kesulitan mahasiswa dalam mengerjakan kedua format tes. Instrumen penelitian terdiri atas soal membaca TF dan MCQ, kuesioner persepsi, dan pedoman wawancara semi-terstruktur. Soal tes dan kuesioner ditinjau oleh ahli dalam bidang asesmen bahasa Inggris untuk menilai relevansi isi, kejelasan bahasa, dan kesesuaian dengan tujuan penelitian. Berdasarkan hasil penilaian ahli, instrumen dinyatakan layak digunakan dan termasuk dalam kategori baik. Kuesioner menggunakan skala Likert lima tingkat, kemudian skor dikonversi ke skala 0–100 dengan kategori: >80,0 = Sangat Positif, 50,1–80,0 = Positif, dan ≤50,0 = Negatif. Penelitian dilaksanakan melalui lima tahap: (1) persiapan dan perancangan instrumen, (2) pengembangan dan validasi instrumen oleh ahli, (3) pengumpulan data melalui pelaksanaan tes, penyebaran kuesioner, dan wawancara, (4) analisis data, dan (5) interpretasi serta pelaporan hasil. Data kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dengan menghitung skor rata-rata dan persentase pada setiap indikator. Data wawancara dianalisis secara tematik dengan mengidentifikasi respons yang berulang terkait pemahaman, tingkat kesulitan, minat, preferensi, dan pengalaman mahasiswa terhadap kedua format tes.

Kata kunci: *Tes, Membaca, Benar-Salah, Pilihan Ganda*

ABSTRAK

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to analyze students' perceptions of True-False (TF) and Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) reading test formats incorporating local culture passages. The research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, during [month-month, year]. The participants were 43 EFL students who completed both reading test formats. Data were collected through a perception questionnaire and follow-up interviews to obtain information about students' experiences and difficulties with both test formats. The research instruments consisted of TF and MCQ reading test items, a perception questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview guide. The test items and questionnaire were reviewed by experts in English language assessment to evaluate their content relevance, language clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. Based on the expert evaluation, the instruments were considered suitable and categorized as good. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, with the scores



converted to a 0–100 scale for interpretation: >80.0 = Very Positive, $50.1–80.0$ = Positive, and ≤ 50.0 = Negative. The research was conducted in five stages: (1) preparation and instrument design, (2) instrument development and expert validation, (3) data collection through test administration, questionnaire distribution, and interviews, (4) data analysis, and (5) interpretation and reporting. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by calculating mean and percentage scores for each indicator. Interview data were analyzed thematically by identifying recurring responses related to students' understanding, perceived difficulty, interest, preferences, and experiences with the two test formats.

Keywords: *Test, Reading, True-False, Multiple Choice*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills in learning English because it enables students to obtain information, understand messages, and develop their overall language proficiency. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading ability involves not only understanding explicit information in a text but also interpreting meaning and connecting new information with prior knowledge. Therefore, reading instruction needs to be supported by assessment activities that can provide an accurate picture of students' reading comprehension. Purnami et al. (2024) emphasized that reading literacy assessment needs to be systematically designed so that students' reading abilities can be measured according to the specific competencies being assessed. In addition, students need to develop awareness of their own learning abilities because assessment can help them recognize their progress and difficulties throughout the learning process. Thus, reading assessment should not merely function as a means of producing scores but also as an integral part of learning that provides meaningful information about students' abilities and learning experiences.

Problems in reading assessment may arise when the instruments used do not adequately represent students' abilities and experiences when completing a test. Ideally, assessment instruments should correspond to the purpose of measurement, students' proficiency levels, and the competencies intended to be assessed. However, different question formats may impose different cognitive demands and provide different experiences for students. Najahah and Pujianto (2026) demonstrated that the difficulty level of test items needs to be considered because the characteristics of questions can determine the cognitive demands placed on learners. This indicates that selecting a test format is not merely a technical issue in test construction but is also related to how students understand questions and respond to the demands contained in an assessment instrument. Nuryanti (2025) further demonstrated that a structured multiple-choice format can be used to identify students' understanding and conceptual misconceptions in a more systematic manner. Therefore, the selection of question formats in reading assessment needs to be carefully considered so that the resulting assessment can provide meaningful information about students' comprehension.

One of the commonly used formats in assessment is Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ), in which students are provided with several alternatives and are required to select the answer they consider most appropriate. This format enables teachers to assess various aspects of comprehension systematically and provides relatively consistent scoring procedures. In reading instruction, MCQs can be used to assess students' understanding of factual information, main ideas, vocabulary meaning, relationships between ideas, and interpretations of textual content. Karisma and Azizah (2023) demonstrated that the use of multiple-choice items in reading instruction can serve as a practical assessment technique for measuring students' ability to



comprehend an exposition text. Nevertheless, the availability of several answer alternatives may require students to examine the information in the text more carefully before selecting an answer. Consequently, MCQs may provide a different test-taking experience from formats that offer only two possible responses. Understanding students' perceptions of MCQs is therefore important for determining how learners experience and respond to this type of assessment.

In addition to MCQs, True-False (TF) questions can also be used to assess students' comprehension of information presented in a text. TF questions have a relatively simple structure because students are required to determine whether a statement is consistent with the information contained in the text. This simple structure may help students understand the task more quickly, particularly when the statements are clearly formulated and appropriate to their proficiency level. However, TF questions can also present challenges when students need to distinguish between correct and incorrect information based on their understanding of textual details. Therefore, the simple structure of TF questions does not necessarily mean that they are always easy to answer because their difficulty can also be influenced by the content of the text and the construction of the statements. The different characteristics of TF and MCQ formats suggest that the two formats may provide different experiences for students even when they are used to assess reading comprehension. Comparing students' perceptions of these two formats is consequently important for obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the use of different test formats in reading assessment.

Another important aspect of reading assessment is the context of the texts used as the basis for constructing test items. Texts that are closely related to students' lives can create more meaningful learning situations because students can use their previous experiences and knowledge to understand the content of the reading. In EFL learning, cultural context is an important element that can strengthen the relationship between the language being learned and students' social environments. Charmilasari and Juni (2024) showed that EFL textbooks can contain multicultural values that contribute to the representation of culture in language learning materials. This finding indicates that language materials cannot be completely separated from the cultural contexts in which they are presented. Falah et al. (2025) also identified challenges associated with the use of English as a language of instruction in EFL learning in Indonesia, suggesting that the relevance of learning contexts to students' experiences should receive greater attention. Therefore, the use of texts representing local culture in reading assessment may help students understand reading content through contexts that are more familiar and relevant to their everyday lives.

The relevance of learning contexts to students' experiences is also closely related to the perceptions they develop during learning and assessment. Students' perceptions are important because learners are not merely recipients of assessment instruments but are also individuals who directly experience the clarity, difficulty, interest, and convenience of completing test items. Positive perceptions may indicate that an assessment instrument is considered relevant and understandable, whereas less positive perceptions may provide information about aspects of the instrument that need improvement. Dari et al. (2024) demonstrated that students' perceptions can provide insights into how learners interpret particular values and contexts presented during the learning process. This finding highlights the importance of considering students' perspectives when evaluating a learning or assessment approach. In reading instruction, Khairunnisa and Nurmalasari (2023) found that students' perceptions can provide information about their experiences with learning approaches intended to support reading



comprehension. Therefore, examining students' perceptions of reading test formats can provide information that cannot be obtained solely from students' test scores.

Students' interest is another important component of their experience when completing reading assessments. Learners are more likely to engage with reading activities when the materials are connected to their experiences or needs, allowing reading to be perceived as relevant to their everyday lives. Relevant contexts can create more engaging learning experiences while enabling students to connect prior knowledge with new information. Aprianti et al. (2023) found that the use of engaging instructional media can influence students' learning interest, indicating that learners' interest should be considered when designing learning experiences. In language learning, such interest can be encouraged through materials that correspond to students' characteristics, experiences, and surrounding environments. Mubarak and Santoso (2023) showed that students' perceptions of technology-based approaches in language learning can provide insights into how particular learning tools or approaches are received by learners. In addition, Khoirunnisa et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of appropriate reading assessment instruments in identifying students' reading difficulties, further emphasizing the need to consider learners' experiences when designing reading assessment. Rahmadani et al. (2026) also highlighted the relationship between reading fluency and self-assessment in extensive reading, suggesting that students' awareness and evaluation of their own reading experiences are relevant components of reading development.

Although previous studies have addressed reading assessment, test formats, cultural contexts, and students' perceptions, studies integrating these aspects within a single reading assessment context remain limited. Existing research has generally focused on reading ability, assessment techniques, learning materials, or students' perceptions separately, leaving the relationship between test format and cultural context in students' experiences of reading assessment insufficiently explored. In particular, empirical evidence comparing students' perceptions of TF and MCQ formats when the reading passages represent students' local culture remains limited, especially in the Indonesian EFL context. This situation indicates a gap between the need for reading assessments that are relevant to students' characteristics and the availability of empirical evidence concerning how learners perceive different test formats when the reading context reflects their own cultural background. The novelty of the present study lies in integrating TF and MCQ test formats, local culture-based reading passages, and students' perceptions within a single reading assessment study. Therefore, this study aims to describe and compare students' perceptions of TF and MCQ questions in reading tests using local culture passages, with particular attention to students' views of each test format and the differences in their experiences when completing the two types of assessment.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to analyze students' perceptions of True-False (TF) and Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) reading test formats incorporating local culture passages. The research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, during [month-month, year]. The participants were 43 EFL students who completed both reading test formats. Data were collected through questionnaires to measure students' perceptions and follow-up interviews to obtain deeper information about their experiences and difficulties. The research instruments consisted of TF and MCQ reading test items, a perception questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview guide. The TF and MCQ items were reviewed by experts in English language



assessment to evaluate their content, language, clarity, and alignment with the reading comprehension objectives. The questionnaire was also reviewed to ensure that its items were relevant and understandable. Based on the instrument evaluation, the test and questionnaire items were considered suitable for data collection, with the quality of the instruments categorized as good. The perception questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, with the resulting scores converted to a 0–100 scale for interpretation: >80.0 = Very Positive, $50.1–80.0$ = Positive, and ≤ 50.0 = Negative.

The research was conducted through five stages: (1) preparation and research instrument design, (2) development and expert validation of the TF and MCQ items, (3) data collection through test administration, questionnaire distribution, and interviews, (4) data analysis using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis, and (5) interpretation and reporting of the research findings. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively by calculating mean and percentage scores for each indicator, while interview data were analyzed by identifying recurring responses related to students' understanding, perceived difficulty, interest, preferences, and experiences with the two test formats.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study are presented to describe students' perceptions of the two reading test formats, namely True–False (TF) and Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ), when local culture passages were used. Quantitative data were obtained from 43 participants through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The responses were converted into scores ranging from 0 to 100 to facilitate the interpretation of students' perceptions. The perception scores were classified into three categories: Very Positive, Positive, and Negative. Scores above 80.0 were categorized as Very Positive, scores from 50.1 to 80.0 as Positive, and scores of 50.0 or below as Negative. The qualification rubric used to interpret the questionnaire results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Qualification Rubric for Students' Perceptions

Final Score Range	Perception Qualification	Interpretive Description
>80.0	Very Positive	Students hold a highly favorable perception and strongly support the tested aspect.
$50.1–80.0$	Positive	Students hold a favorable perception and accept the tested aspect.
≤ 50.0	Negative	Students hold an unfavorable perception or reject the tested aspect.

Table 1 provides the basis for interpreting the students' responses obtained from the questionnaire. This classification was subsequently applied to the overall test-format results and the individual evaluation dimensions. The results indicate that students generally responded favorably to both TF and MCQ reading tests. The findings also show that the use of local culture passages was positively received by the participants. A more detailed recapitulation of the quantitative results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions



Evaluation Dimension	Total Actual Score	Mean Score	Final Score (0–100)	Perception Qualification
True–False Test Format	1,314	3.82	76.4	Positive
Multiple-Choice Test Format	1,296	3.77	75.4	Positive
Easiness of Understanding	652	3.79	75.8	Positive
Students’ Interest	664	3.86	77.2	Positive
Overall Score	9,150	3.795	75.9	Positive

As shown in Table 2, all measured dimensions fell within the Positive perception category. The TF format obtained a perception score of 76.4, while the MCQ format obtained a score of 75.4. The difference between the two scores was 1.0 point; however, because no inferential statistical analysis was conducted, this difference should be interpreted descriptively and cannot be considered statistically significant. Students’ interest obtained the highest score among the measured indicators, with a score of 77.2, indicating a positive response to the reading passages and assessment context. Overall, the findings show that students had positive perceptions of both TF and MCQ reading tests using local culture passages.

The questionnaire findings regarding the clarity of test directions were further supported by the interview data. The interview responses indicated that clear instructions were perceived as helpful in understanding the tasks, although this finding is illustrated by the available response from one participant. Alin explained, “I felt comfortable while completing the reading test because the instructions were clear and the passage was easy to follow.” This response suggests that clear directions may contribute to students’ comfort when completing the reading assessment by reducing uncertainty about the required tasks. Thus, the interview data provide supporting evidence for the quantitative finding that clarity was an important aspect of students’ perceptions of the TF format.

The qualitative findings also revealed differences in students’ experiences of difficulty between the two test formats. Several participants perceived TF questions as more straightforward because the information needed to answer the items could be identified directly in the passage. Respondent AU stated, “I felt more confident answering False questions because they were simpler and the answers could be directly located in the passage.” In contrast, MCQ items were perceived as requiring greater attention because some alternatives appeared similar and functioned as potential distractors. One participant (P1) described this experience by stating: “I think the multiple-choice question is kinda easy.... Distractors made it more difficult because some answer choices were very similar.” These responses suggest that the presence of competing alternatives influenced how students approached MCQ items and encouraged them to examine the text more carefully before making a choice.

Students’ confidence in answering the questions was also reflected in their comments about the cognitive demands of the two formats. Participants indicated that MCQ items required more careful reading and comprehension when they were uncertain about the available alternatives. Respondent N explained, “With the multiple-choice format we might choose the answer so we need to read carefully using our comprehension.” This response suggests that students did not simply regard the MCQ format as difficult but recognized that it required more deliberate processing of the reading passage. The interview findings therefore provide



additional evidence that students experienced differences in the way they approached TF and MCQ questions. While TF items were generally associated with direct identification of information, MCQ items required students to compare alternatives and evaluate which option was most appropriate.

The findings concerning students' interest further demonstrate the role of local cultural content in their reading-test experience. Participants responded positively to passages that discussed cultural topics with which they were already familiar. Respondent AU stated, "My first impression was that the reading was interesting because it discussed local culture... It helped me understand the passage." Similarly, Respondent ASA explained, "It increased my motivation and comprehension because I was familiar with the culture." These responses indicate that familiarity with the cultural context helped students establish connections between the reading content and their prior experiences. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings show that students generally perceived both TF and MCQ formats positively, while local cultural content contributed to their interest, familiarity, and engagement with the reading passages.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students had positive perceptions of both True–False (TF) and Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) in reading tests using local culture passages. This positive response suggests that both formats were generally acceptable to students, although they provided different experiences during the assessment process. The finding emphasizes the importance of developing reading assessment instruments that are appropriate for measuring students' comprehension and literacy abilities. Sutarman (2026) explains that reading literacy assessment needs to be systematically developed to identify students' abilities and difficulties accurately. The quality of individual test items is also important because appropriate items should correspond to learning objectives and provide meaningful information about students' understanding (Izzah et al., 2025). Therefore, the positive perceptions found in this study suggest that both test formats can be appropriately implemented when their construction is aligned with the intended assessment objectives.

The TF format was perceived as easier to understand because students could determine whether statements corresponded with information presented in the reading passages. The interview findings showed that clear instructions and the possibility of locating relevant information directly in the text contributed to students' confidence when answering the questions. This finding can be interpreted from a cognitive perspective because comprehension involves mental processes through which learners receive, organize, process, and interpret information. Sari et al. (2026) explain that cognitive learning emphasizes active information processing and the construction of understanding through learners' mental activities. From another cognitive perspective, learning involves the active organization and interpretation of information rather than passive reception of information (Sihombing & Apsari, 2025). Thus, the relatively straightforward response structure of TF questions may reduce the complexity of decision making and allow students to concentrate on confirming information from the passage.

The MCQ format was perceived as more challenging because students had to consider several alternatives before selecting the most appropriate answer. Students particularly reported that similar answer choices and distractors made the decision-making process more demanding. This finding suggests that the perceived difficulty of MCQ items is influenced not only by the reading passage but also by the construction and quality of the answer alternatives. Assessment



instruments therefore need to be carefully developed so that item difficulty reflects the intended comprehension skill rather than unnecessary ambiguity. Lasito and Pujiati (2024) emphasize the importance of developing appropriate English reading literacy assessment instruments because teachers require assessment tools that can provide useful information about students' reading abilities. Consequently, the greater challenge associated with MCQ items may be educationally valuable when the alternatives are carefully constructed to encourage students to examine and compare information in the text.

The difference between TF and MCQ suggests that the two formats can serve complementary purposes in reading assessment. TF questions can be used to determine whether students are able to recognize and confirm factual information from a passage, whereas MCQ questions can encourage students to compare alternatives and identify the response that best represents the information or meaning of the text. This distinction is important because reading comprehension involves different forms of processing and cannot always be represented through a single assessment format. The selection of assessment activities should also consider students' engagement because an assessment task can influence their willingness to interact with reading materials. Malabar (2026) demonstrates that enjoyable reading activities can contribute to strengthening English reading literacy among junior high school students. Therefore, the present findings support the complementary use of TF and MCQ according to the specific comprehension objectives and characteristics of the reading task.

The positive response to the local culture passages demonstrates the potential importance of cultural relevance in reading assessment. Students reported that familiarity with the cultural topics helped them understand the passages because they could connect the information with knowledge and experiences that they already possessed. This familiarity can provide a meaningful contextual framework that supports students when interpreting information presented in English. Yuli and Mulyono (2025) found that a digital learning model based on local wisdom can improve students' reading comprehension, suggesting that culturally relevant contexts can support the development of reading abilities. Hatima (2026) similarly found that children's literature based on local wisdom can strengthen students' reading comprehension by connecting reading content with their cultural environment. These findings support the interpretation that local culture can function as a meaningful contextual resource that facilitates students' engagement with and understanding of English reading materials.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of examining students' perceptions when evaluating reading assessment formats. Students' responses concerning clarity, difficulty, confidence, and interest indicate that their experiences with assessment involve both cognitive and affective dimensions. Perception can provide information about how learners interpret and respond to educational activities, including aspects that may not be fully represented by numerical scores. Zabidi et al. (2023) demonstrate that students' perceptions can be systematically examined to understand how learners respond to educational experiences. In language learning contexts, students' perceptions can also provide valuable information about their understanding and experiences during learning activities (Riyanti et al., 2025). Thus, examining students' perceptions alongside quantitative assessment results can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths and limitations of different reading test formats.

The findings concerning students' interest further indicate that culturally familiar passages can contribute to students' motivation and engagement with reading assessment. Students described the passages as interesting because the cultural topics were familiar and could be connected with their previous knowledge and experiences. Such familiarity may help



students approach the reading task with greater confidence and encourage them to devote more attention to understanding the passage. Yurni and Hariati (2022) found that task stimulation can influence students' motivation and reading comprehension, demonstrating that characteristics of reading tasks can shape students' engagement with reading activities. Efforts to strengthen literacy should likewise consider activities that support students' motivation to read, particularly because motivation can encourage sustained engagement with reading tasks (Dakhi et al., 2025). Therefore, the positive interest found in this study suggests that local culture passages can support the affective dimension of reading assessment while providing students with a familiar context for engaging with English texts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that EFL students generally perceive both True-False (TF) and Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) positively when they are used to assess reading comprehension through local culture-based texts. The findings indicate that the two formats provide different but complementary assessment functions rather than suggesting that one format is universally superior to the other. TF questions are more suitable for assessing students' ability to identify and verify factual information efficiently, while MCQ questions provide greater opportunities to examine students' ability to process information, compare alternatives, and develop deeper comprehension of a text. The findings also demonstrate that the relevance of reading content is an important consideration in assessment because local cultural contexts can make reading materials more familiar and meaningful to students. Thus, effective reading assessment should consider not only the format of the questions but also the cultural relevance of the texts and the experiences of the learners who complete the assessment.

The findings have practical implications for EFL teachers and reading assessment developers. Rather than relying exclusively on one question format, teachers can combine TF and MCQ items according to the specific comprehension skills and assessment objectives they intend to measure. TF items can be incorporated when rapid identification of factual information is required, whereas carefully constructed MCQ items can be used to assess more complex interpretation and inferential comprehension. At the same time, local culture-based passages can be incorporated to provide students with contexts that are familiar and relevant to their experiences. Future research should examine the quality and effectiveness of MCQ distractors to minimize unnecessary ambiguity while maintaining appropriate cognitive demands. Further studies could also investigate the effectiveness of culture-based reading assessment across larger and more diverse groups of learners and examine its potential contribution to students' long-term reading development and academic achievement.

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