

THE EFFECT OF LEARNING STYLES ON STUDENTS' SENTENCE STRUCTURE ACHIEVEMENT

Marisi Debora
Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni
Universitas Negeri Medan

ABSTRACT

This article presents the research findings of the effect of the students' learning styles on their students' sentence structure achievement. The study analyzed the students' learning styles questionnaires and their sentence structure test. It was found that students' learning styles do not significantly affect their sentence structure achievement. It is concluded that although each student has his / her own characteristics that lead them into their own learning styles, they also have their own learning strategies, which facilitate learning task that help them to be a better language learner.

INTRODUCTION

In learning English as a foreign language, most of the students still face difficulties in practicing English, especially those who have lack of competence in sentence structure. When they are studying English, students sometimes have problems and difficulties in constructing sentences and frequently making errors. As James (1998: 15) says that the most common errors in English are made by foreign learner.

The problems and difficulties that the students face are realized in their poor achievement for *Structure* subject. The research done by Dirgayasa, et. all (2003: 1) shows that the percentage of students' difficulty in making English sentences is 53.1%. It means that their mistakes in making English sentences reach the point of 53.1.% of the sentences they made. Moreover, Nasution (1999:1) also mentions the same thing that the level of difficulty in making sentences is quite high that is 46.5 % from the English sentences they made.

Since sentence structure is closely related to the four skills, it affects other subjects as well. If the students are not optimal in understanding and using sentence structure, it will affect other skill as well. As Pane (2009:1) says in her research that the low ability of using structure can also be seen in their everyday ability in speaking, reading, listening, writing, and translation. Other data that are taken from everyday observation, such as daily and weekly assignments, tests, research proposals and theses show that the structure achievement is still low. The low achievement of structures indirectly affects to their low Grade Point Average (GPA) that is 2.86 and their low English Proficiency (TOEFL) that is 465 (The data are taken from Evaluasi Diri-Program Hibah Kompetensi Institusi-PHKI- English Department, 2006).

In addition, many studies about the most appropriate learning techniques that can be applied for all situations have failed to answer. It happened because every learning technique depends on the learning style, personality and ability of the

students themselves. The changing of the teaching method, teaching technique, and teaching material have been developed to meet the changing needs of the people who use English especially in education and job markets. An awareness of individual differences in learning has made educators more sensitive to their roles in teaching and learning and has permitted them to match their teaching and learning styles to develop students' potentials in learning.

Generally schools have not applied the grouping of students based on their characteristics or their type. In the class, the students are consisting of different characteristics. This sometimes made the teacher overwhelmed in choosing effective and efficient method or strategies. Whereas Simarmata (2009) reviews Dick and Carey and suggests that a teacher need to consider students' characteristics that he/she will be taught. It is important because by knowing students' characteristics, a teacher can adjust his teaching to achieve the purpose. One way to know the characteristics is by grouping people based on their type, developing the scale to measure the people's quality based on their characteristics.

Hence, to find out the effect of learning styles on the students' sentence structure achievement was the objective of the study.

LEARNING STYLE

Students' characteristics in this research are the learning style itself. According to Wikipedia, Learning styles are, simply put, various approaches or ways of learning. They involve educating methods, particular to an individual that are presumed to allow that individual to learn best. It is commonly believed that most people favor some particular method of interacting with, taking in, and processing stimuli or information.

Siregar (2000:5) restates the study of Hargrove and Pocket (1984) and states that one of the aspects of teaching mostly ignored is determining students' unique individual learning styles. Next, Davis (1989) in Siregar (2000:5) believes that only if the teachers' and lecturer's teaching styles are adjusted with the students' learning styles, the productive and conducive learning environment will be created. In conclusion, there will be more that can be obtained both of the students and the lecturers. However, if the students' learning styles are not appropriate to the teachers' and lecturers', there will be problems and frustrations in both sides.

Nasution (2008: 93) defines learning style as how students react and use the stimulus that he/she accepted in the learning process. The researchers find out that the various learning styles in students can be categorized into some categories. They conclude that:

- 1) Every student learns on his own way, that is called learning style. The teacher also has his own teaching style.
- 2) The type of learning style can be found out by certain instruments.
- 3) The suitability of teaching style with learning style increases learning effectively.

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that there are similarities in defining learning style. Learning style is the consistent way done by a student to get

the stimulus or information, way to remember, think, and solve the problem. People show different styles of learning. Learning style is really affected by the personality of someone, educational background, and developmental background.

Every researcher develops the classification of learning style based on certain theory that becomes the basic of the classification. Each classification has its own differences and similarities. One of the learning style types is “Field Dependence” and “Field Independence”. This type is developed by **Herman A. Witkin**. He was an American psychologist who specialized in the spheres of cognitive psychology and learning psychology. He was a pioneer of the theory of Cognitive Styles and Learning Styles (developed in cooperation with Solomon Asch, Donald Goodenough etc.). He was the author of the concept of field-dependency vs. field-independency. A longitudinal study on learning style by H. Witkin on 1600 students since 1954 – 1970 discovers a test to differentiate students’ learning style types. The learning style types are Field Dependence (FD) and Field Independence (FI). FD/FI refers to how people perceive and memorize information.

Field Dependence (FD)

Field dependence is the tendency to be “dependent” on the total field so that the parts embedded within the field are not easily perceived, though that total field is perceived most clearly as a unified whole. The “field” may be perceptual or it may be abstract, such as a set of ideas, thoughts, or feelings from which the task is to perceive specific subsets.

Field dependent learners are more socially oriented than field independent learners. They pay more attention to social cues, they like to be with others and they seek learning and vocational experiences that put them in contact with people. Field dependent children perform less well on formal operations tasks than do field independent children. The field dependent learner is also one who processes information globally. This learner is less analytical, not attentive to detail, and sees the perceptual field as a whole. This whole resists analysis or decomposition. Dependent learners rely more on the teacher and peer support.

Field Independence (FI)

Field independent persons spend more on self and seem readily to learn material that has a social context. Field independent students appear to be more adept to the unstructured classroom than their field dependent counterparts. Field independence appears to result in a greater development of cognitive restructuring skills.

Unlike the field dependent learners, the field independent learners can easily break the field down into its component parts. He/she is typically not influenced by the existing structure and can make choices independent of the perceptual field. Field independence requires a restructuring of the perceptual or psychological field and therefore is a more differentiated process.

In order to understand the characteristics of the two learning style, Garger and Guild (1987) in Joe (2002:1) have summarized the characteristics of field independent and field dependent learners.

Table 2.2. Characteristics of Field Dependent/Independent Learners

Learning Styles	
FIELD-DEPENDENT	FIELD-INDEPENDENT
Perceives globally	Perceives analytically
Experiences in a global fashion, adheres to structures as given	Experiences in an articulate fashion, imposes structures of restrictions
Makes broad general distinctions among concepts, sees relationships	Makes specific concept distinctions, little overlap
Social orientation	Impersonal orientation
Learns material with social content best	Learns social material only as an intentional task
Attends best to material relevant to own experience	Interested in new concepts for their own sake
Requires externally defined goals and reinforcements	Has self-defined goals and reinforcements
Needs organization provided	Can self-structure situations
More affected by criticism	Less affected by criticism
Uses spectator approach for concept attainment	Uses hypothesis-testing approach to attain concepts

METHODOLOGY

The design used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Field Dependent and Field Independent are the moderator variable. Therefore they cannot be treated. There were 120 students over 250 students of English Department UNIMED became the sample.

An instrument is very useful in research because the instrument was used as facilitation in the research. In this research, the data are the students' learning styles collected by using questionnaire and the students' test result.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the tests had been conducted, it was found that 60 students have Field Dependent (FD) learning style and another 60 students have Field Independent (FI) Learning Style. To test whether students' learning style affect their sentence structure achievement, the ANOVA technique was used. The testing was done on the statistical hypothesis:

$$\mathbf{H_0: \mu_{B1} = \mu_{B2}}$$

$$\mathbf{H_a: \mu_{B1} \neq \mu_{B2}}$$

Or the hypothesis that said:

- a. Students' learning styles do not affect their sentence structure achievement
- b. Students' learning styles affect their sentence structure achievement

From the result of the calculation with ANOVA, the Significance (Sig.) value shows that 0.983 is bigger than $\alpha = 0.05$. So, H_a is rejected and H_o is accepted. It means that students' learning style do not significantly affect students' sentence structure achievement. In other words, either students who have field dependent or field independent learning style do not significantly affect students' sentence structure achievement.

Learners are using different kinds of language learning strategies, or specific actions and behaviors to help them learn. Learners have their own preferences in choosing language learning strategies. Their strategies differ greatly, at least in part because their general learning styles are so varied. Fry et.al (2004) reviews Wolf and Kolb (1984) study who suggested that learners develop different learning styles that emphasize preference for some modes of learning over others, leading to particular characteristics. The findings implied that there were no relationships between learning styles and among learners in this study. The learners chose learning strategies, which facilitate learning task that help them to be a better language learner. Moreover, the preference of using some modes of learning over others has already inside the learners so it cannot be treated as other independent variable.

The giving of the suitable technique will make the students better in their sentence structure achievement. Learning styles and preferences vary for each of the students and in different situations. By understanding this, and developing the skills that help the students to learn in a variety of ways, will make the most of their learning potential and because they're better able to learn and gather information, they'll make better decisions and choose better courses of action. This finding support Oxford (1989) statement that says Language learning styles and strategies appear to be among the most important variables influencing performance in a second language.

It is important to pay attention on learners' characteristics because each student has his/her own characteristics. These characteristics build the way the students learn something. Teachers can choose the technique that they think will enhance the students' achievement. Sometimes the techniques works but there are other times when they do not work. It is happened because each technique or method in teaching depends on students' learning style, personality, and ability. It is important to have the adjustment between students' learning styles with the teaching techniques so that the effective learning output can be achieved.



REFERENCES

- Arikunto, S. 2003. *Prosedur Penelitian*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta
- Ary, D. Chesar, L. J and Rajaviah. A. 1979. *Introduction to Research in Education*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wiston
- Boyles, N .2004. *Teaching Written Response to Text*. Retrieved Monday, July 17, 2009 from <http://www.olg.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr?strats>
- Brown, D. H. 2004. *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Brown, D. H. 2007. *Prinsip Pembelajaran dan Pengajaran Bahasa*. Jakarta: Pearson Education Inc.
- Casey. 1993. *Assessment of field dependence and field independence*. Retrieved Monday 15, 2010 from <http://psychology.wikia.com>
- Dirgayasa, et.al. 2003. *Analisis tingkat Kesulitan Mahasiswa dalam Tata Bahasa Bahasa Inggris Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris FBS Unimed Medan*. Laporan Penelitian
- Evaluasi Diri-Program Hibah Kompetensi Institusi-PHKI- English Department, 2006
- Finkbeiner, C. 1998. *EESE 10/1998: The Promotion of explicit and implicit learning strategies in English instruction: a necessary aim?* Retrieved Monday, May 25, 2009 from http://webdoc.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic98/finkb/10_98.html
- Fry et.al .2004. *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Understanding Student Learning*. New York: Routledge Palmer
- Gerot and Wignel. 1994. *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*. Sydney: Gerd Stabler Antipodean Stabler
- Harmer, J. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. England: Pearson Education
- James, C. 1998. *Error in Language Learning and Use*. London: Longman
- Joe. 2002. *Field Dependence/Independence*. Retrieved Thrusday, October 1, 2009 from http://www.faculty.mdc.edu/jmcair/Joe13pages/field_dependence.htm
- Kihlstrom, F. 2007. *Implicit and Explicit Memory and Learning*. Retrieved Wednesday, July 23, 2008 from <http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~kihlstrm/IandMLandM.htm>

- Macedo, A.R. 1999. *Pedagogic grammar and Second Language Acquisition*. Retrieved July,23, 2009 from <http://cels.bahm.ac.uk/./Macedo2.pdf>
- McKeachie, J. W. 1995. *Learning Styles can be Learning Strategies*. Retrieved Monday 15, 2010 from <http://www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9511/article1.htm>
- Nasution, A.K. 1999. *Error Analysis in Asking and Giving Information Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris FBS Unimed*, Laporan Hasil Penelitian
- Nasution, S. 2008. *Berbagai Pendekatan dalam Proses Belajar and Mengajar*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara
- Oxford, Rebecca. 1989. *The Role of Styles and Strategies in Second Language Learning*. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved Thursday, 8 October 2009 from <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9214/styles.htm>.
- Pane, I. I. I, 2009. *Pengaruh Self- Grammar Correction Strategy (SGCS) terhadap Kemampuan Penguasaan mata kuliah Structure 1 mahasiswa prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*. Laporan hasil Penelitian: UNIMED
- Simarmata, V.W. 2009. *Pengaruh Metode Pembelajaran dan Gaya Belajar terhadap hasil Belajar Bahasa Perancis Siswa SMA Negeri 1 Salak Kabupaten Pakpak Bharat*: A thesis. Unpublished: UNIMED. Pascasarjana
- Siregar, M. et.al. 2000. *Gaya Belajar Mahasiswa Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FBS IKIP Medan*. Laporan Penelitian. Unpublished: UNIMED
- Yule, G. 2006. *The Study of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Yunos.et.al. 2007. *Field Dependence – Independence Students and Animation Graphics Coursewear Based Instruction*. MEDC Volume 1, December 2007

Sekilas tentang penulis :Marisi Debora, S.Pd., M.Hum. adalah dosen pada Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris FBS Unimed.



PENGANTAR

Pada edisi ini terbitan Bahas dimulai dengan bahasan *Morfosintaksis Bahasa Melayu Batubara (kajian pada verba persepsi: Tenok (lihat) dan doŋo (dengar))* dibahas oleh **Basyaruddin**, *Analisis Kontrastif Prefiks Ter- Bahasa Karo Dan Bahasa Indonesia (Suatu Sumbangan Untuk Pembelajaran Bahasa)* oleh **Sanggup Barus**, *Mengajar Membaca Bahasa Inggris* dibahas oleh **Johan Sinulingga**, *A Reflection On Language Acquisition Theory Dealing With The Critical Period Issues And Its Implication For English Study In Indonesia* oleh **Willem Saragih**.

Selanjutnya, **Mesra** membahas tentang *Pengaruh beberapa mata kuliah Dasar-dasar menggambar Terhadap menggambar model*. Diikuti oleh **Pengadilen Sembiring** *Analisis teks narasi cerita rakyat "asal mula danau toba"* dilanjutkan oleh **Marisi Debora**, *The Effect Of Learning Styles On Students' Sentence Structure Achievement. Kesulitan Membedakan Bunyi Vokal Bahasa Prancis* dibahas oleh **Rabiah Adawi**.

Kemudian Bahas pada periode ini ditutup oleh tulisan **Herna Hirza** *Berbagai Ragam Kebudayaan Nias*, **M. Eko Isdianto**, *Bahasa Dan Teknologi*. Dilanjutkan dengan *Framework For Articulating Beliefs: Reflections on Teaching and Learning Experiences* oleh **Ariatna**. Diikuti oleh **Nurilam Harianja**, *Medan makna aktivitas memasak (membakar) Dalam bahasa Prancis*.

Medan, Desember 2014

I/Zul
Redaktur

THE
Character Building
UNIVERSITY