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The Effect of Metaphorming Teaching Method on Field-Independent/Dependent Learners in Writing Essay

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Abstract

English writing skill is important for learners' academic performance. However, it is challenged to teach as a second language since several factors possibly affect it. Teaching methods and learners' cognitive styles are among them. The compliance of the teaching method with the learners' cognitive style encourages the learners to develop a well-written essay. This

present study explores the effect of the metaphorming method and cognitive styles on learners' performance in writing an essay. It involved two classes randomly chosen as an experimental group received metaphorming teaching and a control group received discovery teaching. The GEFT test was used to identify the participants' cognitive styles (field-independent or field-dependent), and a five-paragraph essay writing test to measure their writing performance. The data were analyzed using two-way ANOVA with t-test. The findings suggested that the metaphorming teaching method and cognitive style significantly affect the learners' writing performance. Furthermore, the Scheffe test was carried out to investigate which cognitive type learners performed better. The result suggested that field-independent (FI) learners performed better than field-dependent (FD) ones. This study recommends the lecturers to align the teaching method with learners' cognitive styles in promoting the performance in writing an essay.

Keywords: *Metaphorming; Essay Writing Skill; GEFT; Cognitive Style; Field-independent/dependent*

Introduction

Writing skill facilitates the academic performance of the students (Zhang, 2013) either as a medium of learning and/or a tool to express and communicate their ideas about what they experienced and develop knowledge and academic field (Coffin et al., 2005). It implies that writing skills not only useful for the academic field but also for social lives. Writing also involves the cognitive process (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015) requiring one to be creative (Nosratinia & Adibifar, 2014) and critical (Smirnov, 2015; Zhang, 2013).

Learners experienced some problems in learning writing English as a foreign language. It is a complex process (Hajan, Castillo-Hajan, & Marasigan, 2019) and the most difficult among the language skills (Flynn & Stainthorp, 2006; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Zhang, 2013). The difficulty involves the content and the target of the information. In addition, it should align with rules applied in the language learned.

It is challenging to teach writing as a foreign language since several factors possibly affect it. The teaching method (Ka-kan-dee & Kaur, 2015; McMullen, 2009) is one of them. Commonly, the writing classes implement a conventional approach, teacher-centered learning, that hampering the students in exploring their idea and knowledge. This practice brings less advantage for students to freely develop their writing based on what they want and understand.

The learning process success involves matching the method the lecturers use and the way the students learn. This association will facilitate students to participate actively and make them interested to learn. As Gojkov, Stojanović, & Babić (2013) found in their study that the students' satisfaction with the method was significantly influenced by the students' cognitive style.

Some scholars have tried to investigate the effective teaching methods encouraging the students to maximally be active and activate their cognitive skills which can promote them to think creatively and critically (Tinajero & Páramo, 1998) and addressed on how to improve the learners' performance in writing by considering the two mentioned factors (McMullen, 2009; Rusyaidi, 2018).

To engage students dominantly participate in the learning process, the student-centered learning approach is possibly suitable to apply. This approach, rooted in the constructivism approach, views students as the central actors and should be provided with plenty opportunities to experience the learning process and explore their knowledge on one hand. On the other hand, lecturers act as facilitators and mentors during learning activities for the class.

Cognitive style is another issue in the writing performance. Some scholars have studied that cognitive style has implications for academic performance. Witkin and other scholars have studied FI-FD as cognitive styles and their implications for educational activities. Their studies reported that FI-FD affects the academic matters (Rayner, 2015; Rezaee & Farahian, 2012; Witkin & Goodenough, 1977). Researches into cognitive styles' effect on academic performance have been also reported by Khodadady & Zeynali (2012) which confirmed that field-independent learners benefit from taking IELTS listening comprehension.

Field-independent (FI) learners are capable to identify and analyze a specific and separated object effortless and are less influenced by the environment surrounding (Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Slavin, 2006). Besides, they have the competence to solve problems related to counting and scientific issues. Contrary, field-dependent learners view an object as a whole and are much influenced by the surrounding.

Based on the discussion above, this study implemented metaphorming method (Siler, 1999) by considering the learners' field-independent/dependent cognitive styles. Considering the above discussion, this present study aims at analyzing and the following research questions:

- 1) Do teaching methods significantly affect the students' essay writing?
- 2) Which type of cognitive styles has a greater effect on students' performance in writing an English essay?

Methods

Respondents

This research involved two classes consisting of 44 students as participants. One class was an experimental group consisting of 21 learners and another one was a control group consisting of 23 learners. Both classes were selected using a purposive sampling method. Before the treatment, the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) instrument (Witkin, Oltman, Raskin, & Karp, 1971) was administered to the respondents aiming at identifying their cognitive style type.

Design

This quantitative research implemented an experimental method by a 2 x 2 factorial design. It aimed to analyze the effect of the teaching methods taught to two classes. One received a metaphorming method as the experimental group and one received a discovery method as the control group. Each group consisted of field-independent and field-dependent students and were treated for eight meetings. Upon completing the experiment, a five-paragraph essay writing test was administered with the students.

Instruments

This research used two instruments, the GEFT and writing essay in English tests. The former is purposed to identify the learners' cognitive styles, whether they were field-independent learners or field-dependent learners. The test challenged the learners to recognize a simple graph embedded in the complex figure. It consists of three sections within 20 minutes. Section one consisted of 7 questions intended for training and adapting the respondents to the test. Section two and three each consisted of 9 questions. One score for the right answer and zero for the false answer. Thus, the participants can gain score ranging from 0-18. The higher the score, the more likely the students identified as FI learners. On the contrary, the lower the score, the more likely the students recognized as FD learners. The latter is used to ask the respondents to write a five-paragraph essay consisting of 250 – 400 words in 100 minutes. The test aims to measure their writing performance. The scoring was based on 5 aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics ranging from 1 to 5.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the essay score performed by the experimental group treating by the metaphorming method in the learning process. The details are as follows.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Essay Score				
Method	Cognitive Style	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Metaphorming	Field-Independent	20.64	3.722	11
	Field-Dependent	15.17	4.469	12
	Total	17.78	4,908	23

Table 1 shows that there are 23 respondents consisting of 11 FI students and 12 FD students. FI students' mean score is 20.64 with SD 3.722 and FD students' mean score is 15.17 with SD 4.469. The data suggest that FI students performed higher in writing an essay than FD students.

The assumption of normality and homogeneity were examined since ANOVA analysis requiring the distribution of data to be normal and the variance of data to be homogeny.

Normality testing

Normality testing used Kolmogorov-Smirnov using *SPSS Ver. 22 for Windows*. The output in Table 2 confirmed that the significance values (Sig) for the four groups of essay scores (0.200) which was higher $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, it is concluded that the data of the research are normally distributed. It implies that the parametric statistical analysis can be carried out.

Table 2. Tests of Normality

Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Essay scores A1B1	.192	11	.200*	.900	11	.185
A1B2	.154	12	.200*	.961	12	.793
A2B1	.131	10	.200*	.974	10	.927
A2B2	.151	14	.200*	.967	14	.838

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Homogeneity testing

Test of homogeneity was conducted for four groups of data using the Bartlett test. The requirement is the data variance is homogeny if the value is based on mean significance > 0.05 and the data variance is not homogeny if the value is based on mean significance < 0.05 .

Table 3 suggests that the significance value 0.153 was higher than 0.05. Thus, it can be determined that the variance of the data across the groups is homogeny.

Table 3. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^a

Dependent Variable: Essay Scores

F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.849	3	43	.153

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of.

a. Design: Intercept + A + B + A * B

The assumption testing of normality and homogeneity of the data suggested that the data were normally distributed and supported by the homogenous variance. Consequently, the hypothesis testing using ANOVA can be conducted.

Testing of ANOVA

The hypothesis testing was carried out by using a two-way ANOVA for the main effect and continued with the Scheffe test for the simple effect. ANOVA testing was used to assess the main and interaction effects between teaching methods and cognitive styles on writing essay scores. The test results were presented in Table 4.

Question one: *Do teaching methods significantly affect the students' essay writing?*

Table 4 presents that the variance of the columns group (F_o) 4.740 is higher than (F_i) 4.067 at a level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. It suggested that the null hypothesis (H_o) was rejected and the alternative (H_a) one was accepted. It means that there was a significant difference between the column groups. The mean of students received metaphorming was 17.78 higher than the ones received discovery 15.58.

Table 4 also confirmed that the variance of the row group (F_o) 8.292 was higher than (F_t) 4.067 at a level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ which means that the null hypothesis (H_o) was rejected and the alternative (H_a) one was accepted. It can be concluded that there was a significant difference between field-independent (FI) learners and field-dependent (FD) learners' mean scores. The mean of FI students was higher than FD students.

Table 4. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Essay Score

Source	Type III Sum	df	Mean	F	Sig.
	of Squares		Square		
Corrected Model	230.227 ^a	3	76.742	6.085	.002
Intercept	13009.674	1	13009.674	1031.512	.000

Method	59.783	1	59.783	4.740*	.035
Cognitive	104.582	1	104.582	8.292*	.006
Method * Cognitive	70.222	1	70.222	5.568*	.023
Error	542.326	43	12.612		
Total	13817.000	47			
Corrected Total	772.553	46			

a. R Squared = .298 (Adjusted R Squared = .249)

* = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

In addition, the interaction effect result suggests that the value of (F_o) 4.568 was higher than (F_i) 4.067 at a level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ which means that the null hypothesis (H_o) was rejected and the alternative (H_a) one was accepted. It confirms that the teaching method and cognitive style significantly have an interacting effect on students' writing performance. Therefore, the post hoc test using Scheffe (number of samples in each group not equal) was conducted to examine which students perform better in writing an essay whether FI students or FD students for the experimental group treated with metaphorming teaching.

Hypothesis testing

Question two: *Which type of cognitive styles has a greater effect on students' essay writing?*

The result of the Scheffe test proved that (t_o) 5.470 is higher than (t_i) 4.067 with a significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ (Table 5). It means that in the group receiving metaphorming teaching FI students performed better in writing an essay than FD students.

Table 5. Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Essay Scores

Scheffe

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)	Std. Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
A1B1	A1B2	5.470*	1.482	.008	1.16	9.78
	A2B1	4.736*	1.552	.036	.22	9.25
	A2B2	5.279*	1.431	.008	1.12	9.44

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Field-independent students tend to easily study separate information (Witkin et al., 1977; Zhang, 2004). They can identify small parts in a complex pattern. In addition, they are not easily affected by the environment and tend to have high independence. So that they can

solve the problem independently without much help from others, pay less attention to social relations.

On the other hand, FD students are strongly influenced by the environment. They look at things as a whole. They are reliable to work in groups. They also like to establish social relationships so that help from others is needed by them. A thorough explanation of the lecturers will help them understand the subject matter.

Since metaphorming teaching emphasizes how one part is associated with another part requiring the students to activate their cognitive processes, they are freely encouraged to think rationally and creatively. Regarding the ability to write an English essay, FI students get more opportunities to put their ideas and thoughts into writing. With independence characteristics, they benefit more from and easily put their idea into paragraphs when taught by metaphorming learning methods. It also provides the students with more chances to explore their experiences and knowledge as well as practicing their cognitive skills (Siler, 1999; Sutino et al., 2013).

Consequently, the field-independent students scored higher than field-dependent students did. This finding confirms the previous research reports (Limbong, 2018; Lin & Davidson-Shivers, 1996; Luck, 1998; Nosratinia & Adibifar, 2014).

Conclusion

The teaching writing skills aims to develop the students' communicative competence, the metaphorming teaching method is reasonable to apply by the lecturers to promote the students' performance in writing an English essay as well as to develop the students' cognitive competence playing a crucial role in the writing process. The findings confirm that students' performance in writing essay relates to the teaching method and learners' way of receiving, processing, and responding to information. The findings also reveal that the field-independent students benefit more than the field-dependent students when they are taught using metaphorming method. Besides, the ANOVA test showed that the metaphorming method significantly affects the students' writing performance.

Pedagogical Implication

In addition, the current study has pedagogical implications. It contributes to providing one of the effective methods in the teaching writing class. It also encourages the lecturers to engage the students to be more active in the teaching-learning process and the lecturers put the students as the central actors in the classroom. Providing students with more chances to practice

their cognitive competence contributes to developing their skills to organize ideas into a reasonable essay.

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