

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN LEARNING STYLE AND STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: This research is entitled the correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension. The purpose of conducting this research was to examine whether there is a significant correlation or not between learning style and students' reading comprehension on the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP UNTAN Pontianak in academic year 2011/2012. This research used correlation study. There were 45 students from two classes as the population of this research. The sample was taken from class B which consists of 23 students. In this case, the researcher collected the data by using learning style questionnaire and reading comprehension test. The result showed that t-value (0.14) was lower than t-table (2.080), it can be concluded that the Null Hypothesis (Ho) "there is no significant correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension on the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP UNTAN Pontianak in academic year 2011/2012 was accepted.

Keywords: correlation, learning style, reading comprehension

Abstrak: Penelitian ini berjudul hubungan antara gaya belajar dan pemahaman membaca mahasiswa. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji apakah ada hubungan yang signifikan atau tidak antara gaya belajar dan pemahaman membaca mahasiswa semester 4 program studi pendidikan bahasa inggris di FKIP UNTAN tahun ajaran 2011/2012. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode korelasi. Ada 45 mahasiswa dari dua kelas yang digunakan sebagai populasi penelitian. Sampel penelitian diambil dari kelas B yang berjumlah 23 mahasiswa. Dalam hal ini, peneliti mengumpulkan data dengan menggunakan kuesioner gaya belajar dan tes pemahaman membaca. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa t-hitung adalah 0.14 lebih rendah dari t-tabel (2.080), maka dapat disimpulkan bahwa tidak ada hubungan yang signifikan antara gaya belajar dan pemahaman membaca mahasiswa semester 4 program studi pendidikan bahasa inggris di FKIP UNTAN tahun ajaran 2011/2012.

Kata Kunci: hubungan, gaya belajar, pemahaman membaca

Language is a communication of thoughts and feelings through a system of arbitrary signals such as sounds, gestures, or written symbols. According to Ellis (1985: 99) “language learners vary on a number of dimensions to do with personality, learning style, motivation, aptitude and also age”. These dimensions are assumed to be significant contributors that determine the success or failure in acquiring English language learning. In this research, the writer focuses on learning style of the students as one of the some dimensions to be considered as determinant to the students’ reading comprehension.

Wang (2007: 409) defines “learning style as an individual’s preferred or habitual ways of processing the knowledge and transforming the knowledge into personal knowledge”. It is an educational condition under which a student is most likely to learn. Thus, learning style is not really concerned with what the learners learn, but rather how they prefer to learn the materials. Furthermore, each person has his or her own best way to learn, governing how they prefer to receive and process the knowledge. Some learners may rely on visual image or presentation, others prefer listening to the music while learning; still others may respond better to hands-on activities.

Learning styles are found to affect the students’ learning behaviors. Students who have different learning style preferences would behave differently in the way they perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Since the learners differ in their preferences to the certain learning styles, it will be important for an educator to know the variations of students on the features of their learning styles because the information about students’ learning style preference can help the teachers or lecturers become aware to the students’ differences bring to the classroom Wang (2007: 410).

According to Yong (2010: 481), there are two types of learning style such as: (1) Visual learning style refers to a preference for learning through vision and visual learners rely on their sight to take the information. They organize the knowledge in terms of spatial interrelationships among ideas and store it graphically. There are some characteristics of the students’ visual learning style; they can memorize the material better when it is presented by using visual media such as: power point presentations, videos, pictures, diagrams and graphs. They tend to prefer sitting in front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions. Furthermore, computer programs and other types of visual teaching aid can enhance their comprehension very well. Visual learners typically like to be able to read the textbook, journal, article, or newspaper on their own to increase their understanding. Visual students learn best from seeing words in books and on the whiteboard. They assimilate information better by reading, requiring little oral explanation. Additionally, they often learn alone with reading materials. However, they should take notes of lectures and oral directions for better recall. (2) Individual learning style is someone who learns more effectively through working or studying alone. There are some characteristics of individual learning style; more productive when studying alone, they retain more by mastering concepts by themselves. In brief, they master new material best when left

in their own private corner. These learners will be more successful in doing an assignment when they work independently. Individual learners prefer this way because they feel better when they can do something without any help. They can more concentrate and focus on their own studies. It is the best way for them to acquire and process the knowledge. Such students learn new material best when reading it themselves. Progress and achievement is best visible when they learn individually.

Reading is one of the language skills that cannot be separated from other language skills because the students' ability in one aspect will support their ability in mastering the others. It is an important educational goal, as without reading, one's language would not improve. The ability of students in reading is important because by having the ability to read, they will be able to improve general language skills in English; reading can enlarge the students' English vocabulary and it can help to improve the students' writing or speaking abilities. So, it can be concluded that reading is one of the keys to success for everyone who wants to be an educated person.

According to Nation (2009: 49), "reading is a source of learning and a source of enjoyment". Reading enlarges the students' knowledge. It can be a goal in its own right and a way of reaching other goals. As a source of learning, reading can establish previously learned vocabulary and grammar, it can help the learners learn new vocabulary and grammar, and through success in language use it can encourage learners to learn more and continue with their language study. As a goal in its own right, reading can be a source of enjoyment and a way of gaining knowledge of the world. As learners gain skill and fluency in reading, their enjoyment can increase. By reading, the readers can go around the world although they just stay at home. They can broaden their knowledge of economy, science, technology, culture, or reading to get the pleasure. Not only that, the readers also get the message that the writer had expressed. It can be said that reading is a bridge which connects between the writer and the readers.

Pang (2003: 6) states that "reading is about understanding written text. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought". Reading consists of two related processes such as word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension refers to the understanding what is being said or read. When it comes to reading, it is an active process that should be developed if a learner to become a proficient reader.

Furthermore, Smith (in Westwood, 2001: 21) divides four levels of comprehension such as: (1) The first level of comprehension can be called literal level. At this level the basic facts and details are understood. Literal level of comprehension involves what the author is actually saying. The readers need to understand the ideas or information that is explicitly stated in the reading text. Basic questions on literal comprehension involve who, what, when and where. Dates, names and descriptions are all literal information easily understandable from a text. (2) The second level of comprehension is called inferential level. At the inferential

level the readers are able to go beyond what is written on the page and add meaning or drawing a conclusion. In addition, in this level, the readers are attempting to read between the lines. A reader is demanded to understand what the author means (implied) not just what author says in the written words. (3) The third level of comprehension is called critical level. At the critical level the readers assess the good sense of what they are reading, its clarity, accuracy and truthfulness. (4) The fourth level of comprehension can be called creative level. At this level the readers can take the information or ideas from what has been read. The creative level stimulates the readers to new and original thinking. It involves making personal responses based on full of understanding of the expressed messages.

Reading comprehension for academic reading is important to be considered. Additionally, the reading objectives invite the readers to understand what being presented by the writer. Understanding will not only know what being delivered by focusing only on intended meaning delivered, but also the deep inference of specific meaning and message. Inference or decoding what being read is important in reading while bringing our knowledge to the text to concern with message from the text. Academic reading may cover some reading to discuss. These academic reading can be classified as follows:

a. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is typically concerned with the short text of not more than 500 words in length. The readers study it line by line in order to get specific information from the text. According to Nation (2009: 25), intensive study of reading texts can be a means of increasing learners' knowledge of language features and their control of reading strategies. It can also improve their comprehension skill. Intensive reading focuses on comprehension of a particular text with no thought being given to whether the features studied in the text will be useful when reading other texts. Such intensive reading usually involves translation and comprehension of the text. So, one goal of intensive reading is comprehension of the text.

Moreover, Nation (2009: 27) states some aspects focused on intensive reading, they can be stated as follows: (1) Comprehension. Intensive reading can aim at understanding a particular text. (2) Regular and irregular sound-spelling relations. This can be done through the teaching of phonics, through teaching spelling rules, and through reading aloud. (3) Vocabulary. Learners' attention can be drawn to useful words, and the underlying meaning and use of these words can be explained. (4) Grammar. Difficult grammatical features can be explained and analyzed. (5) Cohesion. Learners can practice interpreting what pronouns refer to in the text, what the conjunction relationships between sentences are, and how different words are used to refer to the same idea. (6) Strategies. Intensive reading can be used to help learners develop useful reading strategies. By working intensively on a text, learners can practice the steps in guessing from context, using a dictionary, simplifying difficult sentences and taking notes.

Intensive reading activity is likely more to emphasize the accuracy involving reading for details. It is contrasted with extensive reading, which involves reading

large amounts of text with the purpose of pleasure, not focusing on every single detail in the text. In this reading, the readers do not only read and understand the subject being read but are able to make judgment for the text. They are supposed to conclude which part of the text is important and which one is not important. Intensive reading lets the readers to read intensively in order to get used to have deep understanding of what they are reading.

b. Extensive Reading

Extensive reading covers the reading of general, broad, and wide context to understand. It also emphasizes on the students' reading habit on the large quantity of reading materials. This will encourage the students to enrich their vocabulary and create an atmosphere of loving reading. Day and Bamford (1998: 6) explain that extensive reading is learned to build an atmosphere of interest in reading, raise the intensity of good reading habit and maximize the number of vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, Nation (2009: 50) defines extensive reading is a form of learning from meaning-focused input. During extensive reading, the learners should be interested in what they are reading and should be reading with their attention on the meaning of the text rather than on learning the language features of text.

In order to understand the concept of extensive reading, the students should know the characteristics of extensive reading. According to Day and Bamford (1998: 7 - 8) there are some characteristics of extensive reading such as: (1) Students read as much as possible, perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom. (2) A variety of materials of a wide range of topics is available so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways. (3) Students select what they want to read and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them. (4) The purposes of reading are usually related to the pleasure, information, and general understanding. These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and interests of the students. (5) Reading is its own reward. There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading. (6) Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult. (7) Reading is an individual and silent, at the student's own pace, and, outside class, done when and where the student chooses. (8) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower as students read books and other materials they find easily understandable.

In brief, an extensive reading is generally associated with reading large amounts with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the materials. Extensive reading applies to the text more than a page up to and including professional articles, essays, novels, newspapers, magazines or textbooks. It involves reading texts for enjoyment, it means that the readers can choose their own materials and they are also encouraged to stop reading if the material is not interesting or too difficult. It is undeniable that the primary goal of comprehension on extensive reading is to gain and infer the meaning of reading materials.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In accordance with the problem of the research, the appropriate form used in this research is correlation study. It is a way to find out the answer of the correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension by describing the subjects of research on the fact and condition. According to Urdan (2005: 79), correlation study simply means that variation in the scores on one variable correspond with variation in the scores on the second variable. It refers to a study in which the purpose is to discover the relationship between two or more variables.

Correlation study is one of the subcategories of descriptive research besides case study, causal comparative study, and also developmental study. The strength and direction of this relationship is described by the correlation coefficient range in strength from -1.00 to +1.00. A negative correlation indicates that the values on the two variables being analyzed move in the opposite direction. A positive correlation indicates that the values on the two variables being analyzed move in the same direction. A correlation coefficient of 0.00 indicates that there is no relationship between the two variables being examined (Urdan, 2005: 75 - 76).

A population can be defined as the total number of possible units or elements that are included in the study (Gray, 2004: 146). It is known as a well-defined group of individuals or things discussed in the research. The population may consists of human beings, things, events, or plants which have certain characteristics as the source of data. The population of this research was the students in the year 2010 of English Department of Tanjungpura University Pontianak in academic year 2011/2012 who were taking Intensive Reading subject which consists of 45 students. In this case, the researcher took the students from class A as the class which was given try out of reading comprehension test. The purpose of implementating try out test in order to check the level of difficulty, discriminating power and reliability of test items. The researcher took class B as a sample of this research which consists of 23 students.

The appropriate technique of data collecting is very important to gain the objective outcome of this research. The researcher chose an indirect communication technique through questionnaire in order to get the data of students' learning style preferences. Beside that, she also used measurement technique in order to measure the students' achievement in reading comprehension.

There are two tools of data collecting in this research such as a questionnaire assessing the students' learning style and reading comprehension test. Learning style questionnaire can be defined as a research instrument consisting of some questions or statements in which the purpose to measure the students' range and degree of learning style. Learning style questionnaire consists of 7 statements. The subjects were expected to indicate how much the students agree with each items on the scale from 1 to 5. The students gave the respond on

the basis of a five point likert scale. The students' answers were scored based on likert scale type as follows: strongly agree (5), agree (4), uncertain (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

Reading achievement can be measured by using a test. The reading comprehension test was taken from TOEFL exercises book. Generally, there are two basic kinds of the test used to measure four language skills of the students, namely objective test and essay test. The researcher used an objective test in her research, in this case, multiple choice test type. The test consisted of 30 items with four options: A, B, C, and D.

The correlation between the students' learning style and their abilities in reading comprehension was measured by using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})(Y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum (X - \bar{X})^2 \sum (Y - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

(Arikunto, 2002: 146)

Note :

- r_{xy} = The correlation coefficient between variable X and Y
- $\sum xy$ = The sum of the products of X and Y scores for each students
- $\sum X$ = The sum of X scores
- $\sum Y$ = The sum of Y scores
- $\sum X^2$ = The sum of squares of each X scores
- $\sum Y^2$ = The sum of squares of each Y scores
- $(\sum X)^2$ = The sum of the squares of $\sum X$ score
- $(\sum Y)^2$ = The sum of the squares of $\sum Y$ score
- N = The number of paired X and Y scores

The t-value formula was used to know the significance of correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension (Urdan, 2005 : 82).

$$t = (r) \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - r^2}}$$

Note :

- t = Significant value
- r = Correlation coefficient
- n = Number of students
- r^2 = The squares of correlation score

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

In order to answer the problem of this research, the researcher was going to analyze the data of fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP UNTAN Pontianak in academic year 2011/2012. The data was taken from the students' score of learning style questionnaire and also reading comprehension test.

The Correlation Between Learning Style and Students' Reading Comprehension

No	Students' Code	Questionnaire Score		Reading Comprehension Score		XY
		X	X ²	Y	Y ²	
1	TD	29	841	93.33	8710.49	2706.57
2	NN	26	676	60	3600	1560
3	YN	22	484	83.33	6943.89	1833.26
4	YG	23	529	86.67	7511.69	1993.41
5	FK	29	841	93.33	8710.49	2706.57
6	SF	28	784	90	8100	2520
7	RR	26	676	90	8100	2340
8	CH	28	784	96.67	9345.09	2706.76
9	RM	26	676	100	10000	2600
10	MD	28	784	100	10000	2800
11	TR	24	576	93.33	8710.49	2239.92
12	DH	27	729	100	10000	2700
13	ND	29	841	90	8100	2610
14	DN	31	961	90	8100	2790
15	AR	28	784	90	8100	2520
16	RT	31	961	86.67	7511.69	2686.77
17	EG	30	900	86.67	7511.69	2600.10
18	IS	29	841	86.67	7511.69	2513.43
19	PK	26	676	73.33	5377.29	1906.58
20	ST	24	576	60	3600	1440
21	PT	22	484	96.67	9345.09	2126.74
22	UT	28	784	70	4900	1960
23	HR	31	961	63.33	4010.69	1963.23
	23	625	17149	1980	173800.28	53823.34

The mean score of students' learning style of Class B "Intensive Reading Subject" was 27.17. The mean score of students' reading comprehension of Class B "Intensive Reading Subject" was 86.09 and based on the criteria of score qualification, it was categorized as "Good to Excellent".

Based on the criteria of correlation coefficient, if $r > 0$, it means that there was a positive correlation. The (r) score showed that the correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension was 0.03, it was categorized as "Negligible". After obtaining the correlation coefficient score (r), the t-value was applied to find out whether the correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension is significant or not.

$$t = (r) \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - r^2}}$$

$$t = (0.03) \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - 0.03^2}}$$

$$t = (0.03) \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - 0.0009}}$$

$$t = (0.03) \frac{1}{\sqrt{0.9991}}$$

$$t = (0.03) \sqrt{21.21}$$

$$t = (0.03) (4.60)$$

$$t = 0.14$$

Based on the result of data computation, it showed that the t-value (0.14) was lower than t-table (2.080). Therefore, the Null Hypothesis (Ho) "There is no significant correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension on the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP UNTAN Pontianak in academic year 2011/2012" was accepted.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The value of correlation coefficient was 0.03. This finding indicates that the correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension was positive and based on the criteria of correlation coefficient, it was categorized as "Negligible". The testing of significance correlation showed the t-value (0.14) was lower than t-table (2.080). Therefore, there was no significant correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension on the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP UNTAN Pontianak in academic year 2011/2012.

Suggestion

Based on the facts found, the researcher would like to give some suggestions; it is suggested to the lecturer to explain the materials by using visual teaching media. It is a good way in order to create an optimal learning environment in the classroom. It is suggested to the lecturer to encourage the students to read the books as frequently as possible, so that the students can increase their knowledge.

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