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LINKING STUDENTS' THINKING STYLES WITH LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara gaya berpikir siswa dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris dan metode pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh guru. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMPN 01 Sakra Barat. Subjek dari penelitian ini adalah 25 siswa kelas delapan dan seorang guru Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Untuk mengumpulkan data, peneliti menggunakan observasi, kuesioner, dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa menikmati pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah. Mereka merasa bahwa pelajaran tersebut menarik dan tidak membosankan. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti beberapa strategi yang diterapkan oleh guru untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang menyenangkan, seperti memahami karakteristik dan gaya belajar siswa, mengenali gaya berpikir mereka, melakukan pemanasan sebelum pelajaran dimulai, menggunakan metode dan lokasi pembelajaran yang bervariasi, memberikan apresiasi terhadap partisipasi siswa, dan menghindari menyalahkan siswa ketika mereka membuat kesalahan saat mencoba belajar.

Kata Kunci : Gaya Berfikir Siswa, Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa.

Abstract

This research aims to examine the relationship between students' thinking styles in learning English and the teaching methods used by the teacher. The study was conducted at SMPN 01 Sakra Barat. The subjects of the research were 25 eighth-grade students and one English teacher. This study employed a qualitative method. To collect data, the researcher used observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The results indicated that the students enjoyed learning English at school. They found the lesson engaging and weren't boring. The study also highlighted several strategies employed by the teacher to create an enjoyable learning environment, such as understanding students' characteristics and learning styles, recognizing their thinking styles, conducting warm-up activities before lessons, using varied teaching methods and locations, providing appreciation for student participation, and avoiding blame when students make mistakes while trying to learn.

Keywords: Student's Thinking Styles, Language Learning Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

English has a crucial role in the modern education world. As a global language, English serves not only as a universal communication tool among people from diverse cultural backgrounds but also grants access to knowledge, technology, and educational resources. Studying foreign languages, including English, is very beneficial for communicating with foreigners (Andika, 2023). English is the primary international language and a common language across all countries in the world, so if we want to enter the international arena, we must master this language (Chairina, 2019). Proficiency in English enables people to access literature, research, and the latest information across various disciplines, enhancing cross-cultural communication skills and preparing them to face global challenges in the future. By mastering English, we can explore more international journals, which are certainly useful for

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expanding our knowledge. English also allows us to go further because it is used by many countries around the world. Additionally, English is the language most commonly used in the latest technologies. This makes it essential to master English in order to adapt to technological advancements and the changing times. Therefore, to remain relevant and survive in the fast-paced world, mastering English is something that every individual needs.

In the current era of globalization, people need for English is increasingly crucial. This is because English is widely used in everyday communication, digital technology, and various information disseminated through mass media. Nowadays, we can witness various technologies that can only be accessed using English. To develop and expand global knowledge and technology, Indonesian society must learn foreign languages (Santoso, 2014). Furthermore, global information is also widely spread using the international language that covers various disciplines to be studied, thus mastering English can be considered a necessity for everyone to adapt to the development of the times. Because of science and technology now require everyone to understand English (Kamlasi, 2019).

Based on the need for English, the government has mandated English as a compulsory language for every student in Indonesia. This is evidenced by the inclusion of English lessons in the educational curriculum. Currently, English education has even begun at the elementary school level. English has become a compulsory subject in some schools, even in elementary schools, and one of its local content subjects is English (Sya, 2020). This demonstrates the importance of early English proficiency among the community, especially students.

However, it can be observed that education in schools is still ineffective in teaching English to students. Students studying English continue to encounter difficulties in speaking or writing the language (Ratnasari, 2020). This can be seen from the large number of students who cannot speak English, especially in schools located in remote areas. The twelve years English education curriculum seems insufficient to teach English to students. What's worse, many students find learning English difficult, causing them to be reluctant and uninterested in learning the language.

The perception among students that learning English is difficult has been passed down naturally from generation to generation. This is highly detrimental to shaping students' learning attitudes. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective teaching strategies by teachers to eliminate this perception and enhance English learning outcomes. It is recognized that emotional factors in second or foreign language learning encompass concepts such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety, self-efficacy, self-perceptions, emotions, beliefs, tolerance for uncertainty, and self-confidence (Dornyei, 2005; Ehrman, 1996; Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003; Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997; Garrett & Young, 2009; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 2000) as discussed in Coskun and Tasgin (2018).

A good teaching method should deliver lessons in a way that is easy for students to understand. It should spark students' interest in learning and avoid putting pressure on them. To effectively convey the learning material, it is essential for teachers to have a deep understanding of their students' characteristics. According to Sparks, Ganschow, and Javorsky as cited in Bain et al., in Coskun and Tasgin (2018), achievement in learning a foreign language is affected by emotional and cognitive factors. Good teaching allows space for students to grasp the material according to their learning styles. However, in reality, many teachers teach using methods they prefer without first analyzing their students' learning styles.

Every student certainly has different thinking styles and learning methods. Some students may prefer learning through auditory means, some through visual methods, and others through audio-visual approaches. Educators must understand these learning styles so that the teaching material can be easily comprehended by students. This research aimed to explore students' thinking styles in learning English and their correlation with appropriate English learning strategies at 8th grade students of SMPN 01 Sakra Barat.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Mohajan (2018), qualitative research methods typically include interviews and observations, but can also involve

case studies, surveys, and analyses of historical documents. Creswell and Hancock (as cited in Mohajan and Haradhan, 2018) classify research designs into several categories, including narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, action research, case study, ethnography, historical research, and content analysis.

The researcher carried out this study emphasizing the thinking styles employed by students at SMPN 01 Sakra Barat. Jl. Raya No.16, Gn. Rajak, Kecamatan Sakra Barat., Kabupaten Lombok Timur, Nusa Tenggara Barat. This research was conducted on July 2024. In this research, the data sourced from the 8th grade students of SMPN 01 Sakra Barat. Data collection conducted through observation, questionnaires, and interview. Observations have been conducted during the ongoing learning sessions to observe the teaching process implement by the teacher. Questionnaires have been posed to the students regarding their thinking styles in learning English. To verify the results from the observations and questionnaires, the researcher conducted interviews with both teachers and students.

In this study, data collection conducted through direct observation, questionnaires, and interview. Observation was conducted during the ongoing learning sessions. The researcher observed the teaching and learning processes carried out by the teachers and students. Next, a questionnaire have been given to the students to determine their thinking styles in learning English. Following that, interviews have been conducted with both teachers and students to examine the correlation between the students' thinking styles and the teaching strategies implemented by the teachers at the beginning of the learning process.

In the data collection process, the researcher utilized several instruments such as observation forms, a voice recorder, interview guide, and list of questions. The observation form is a note that the researcher should fill while doing observation. The voice recorder use was a smartphone which is used to record conversations from the researcher with the participants while conduct interview. The interview guide contains several questions that have been prepared based on the observation. Meanwhile, the list of questions is used to know the thinking styles of the students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Observation Result

The observation was conducted on the teaching and learning process between the teacher and students. The purpose of this observation was to observe the ongoing teaching and learning process. In this observation activity, the researcher used an observation guide as a reference. This observation activity focused on how the teacher teaches English in the classroom. The result of the observation was shown in the following table.

Table 1. Result of observation

No.	Sentences	Do	Don't
1.	Teacher open the class with prayer.	✓	
2.	Teacher starts the class with brain storming.	✓	
3.	Teacher reviews the last material.	✓	
4.	Teacher stimulates the students about the material now.	✓	
5.	Teacher explains the material to the students.	✓	
6.	Teacher uses media.	✓	
7.	Teacher does interaction with the students.	✓	
8.	Teacher groups the students into groups.		✓
9.	Teacher gives the students individual task.	✓	
10.	Teacher gives the students a group task.		✓
11.	Teacher asks the students' understanding.	✓	
12.	Teacher gives recognition or praise to the students.	✓	
13.	Teacher gives the students conclusion of the material.	✓	
14.	Teacher gives the students home work.		✓
15.	The class is running in a relaxed manner.	✓	

Based on the table above, the learning process conducted in the eighth grade at SMPN 01 Sakra Barat aligns with the researcher's expectations outlined in the observation guide. Generally, it can be concluded that the teaching and learning process is conducted in a very relaxed manner. The teacher begun the class by instructing the students to pray together. After that, the teacher engaged the students in a brainstorming activity involving movements performed while singing. The teacher then revisited the material covered in the previous session and stimulated the students to think about the new material to be presented. Following this, the teacher provided a detailed explanation of the current material, aided by a monitor as a teaching media. Throughout the lesson, the interaction between the teacher and students appeared to be well-established. This interaction was evident in several aspects, such as the teacher was ensuring that the students understand the material being taught, assigning individual tasks, and appreciating the students' learning outcomes. Overall, it can be concluded that the teaching and learning process is conducted in a very relaxed manner.

Questionnaires Result

In this study, the researcher provided fifteen questions directed at the students. These questions focused on understanding the students' perspectives and thinking styles in learning English. In this section, 25 eighth-grade students from SMPN 01 Sakra Barat answered the questions provided by the researcher. Their answers were quite diverse, as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Result of Questionnaire

No	Questions	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree
1.	Do you like learning English at school?	21	4	0
2.	Do you find it difficult to learn English?	10	15	0
3.	Do you find learning English at school is boring?	1	5	19
4.	Do you think the concept of learning at school is too serious, making it difficult for you to understand the material?	3	13	19
5.	Do you like a learning environment that is too serious?	8	2	15
6.	Do you feel that the seriousness of the learning environment makes you feel stressed, making it difficult to understand the lessons?	2	5	18
7.	Do you feel that learning while playing helps you understand the material better?	17	5	3
8.	Do you think that educational media can make the classroom environment more relaxed?	12	11	2
9.	Do you think that brainstorming is important to do before starting a lesson?	25	0	0
10.	Do you think that brainstorming can make you more excited about learning?	22	3	
11.	Do you think using technology media is important for enhancing the effectiveness of learning?	23	0	2
12.	Do you think audio media can improve your understanding when learning English?	14	10	1
13.	Do you think audiovisual media can enhance your understanding of English lesson material?	21	3	1
14.	Do you think creating groups or teams for learning is important for increasing motivation and making the learning process less boring?	22	3	0

15.	Do you think receiving recognition or praise can boost your motivation to learn?	25	0	0
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Based on the results of the questions shown in the table above, it can be seen that, in general, they enjoy learning English at school, with 21 students (84%) expressing this sentiment. However, some of them still find learning English challenging, with 10 students (40%) indicating difficulty. Additionally, 4% of the students (1 person) find learning English at school boring. Furthermore, 3 students (12%) mentioned that the learning environment at school is too serious, while 8 of them (32%) prefer a very serious learning environment.

Additionally, 2 students (8%) feel stressed by a learning environment that is too serious, and 17 students (68%) find it easier to understand the material through a learning approach that incorporates play. A total of 12 students (48%) reported that teaching media can make the learning environment more relaxed, while 25 students (100%) said that brainstorming is a crucial activity to perform before starting lessons. Additionally, 22 (88%) students admitted that brainstorming helps them feel more enthusiastic about learning. In the use of technology as a teaching media, 23 (92%) students said that learning becomes more effective. Among them, 14 (56%) students prefer audio media, 21(84%) students prefer audiovisual media, 21 (84%) students like group learning, and all of them appreciate being given recognition as motivation in their learning.

Interviews Result

The interviews were conducted with two individuals: a teacher and a student. The purpose was to understand the learning process between the teacher and students. Additionally, the interviews aimed to identify the ideal teaching methods provided by the teacher in relation to the students' thinking styles in learning English. There were several questions prepared by the researcher that were asked to the participants. The questions for the teacher focused on the teaching methods applied when teaching English, while the questions for the students were directed towards their thinking styles and the learning methods they prefer.

The first interview was conducted with an eighth-grade students from SMPN 01 Sakra Barat. During this interview, the researcher learned that she enjoys studying English at school. This is because the English teaching method used by the teacher is very enjoyable. One of the things the teacher does is always provide a warm-up before the lesson starts. However, the use of media in learning is still limited. The media used is only in the form of textbooks, which is considered less effective for explaining the material in a more accessible and engaging way. Additionally, she mentioned that she likes visual media. She said that learning in a structured manner, from the beginning to the end of the lesson, helps her understand the material more easily.

Next, the researcher interviewed the teacher. Through this interview, several teaching strategies used by the teacher were revealed. Some of these strategies include the teacher admitting to using methods that align with the students' characteristics, meaning there is no specific method used. In this regard, the teacher first needs to analyze the learning styles preferred by the students. The teacher also mentioned that she always does a warm-up before starting the lesson. Additionally, warm-ups are also performed even during the lesson if necessary. This aims to provide enthusiasm to the students in their learning.

Regarding the limitations of teaching media, there are several strategies the teacher uses to keep the learning process engaging and not boring. One of these strategies is learning outside the classroom. To maintain students' motivation and mindset in learning, the teacher never insists on students being right. In other words, the teacher never blames students who are brave enough to try. This aims to build students' confidence and reduce their fear of trying in learning.

In conclusion, the most important thing for a teacher to do in the learning process is to instill interest and enjoyment in students. This can be achieved through various means, such as giving all students the opportunity to try without demanding maximum results or placing blame, providing appreciation to students who participate in learning, making the classroom as comfortable and non-restrictive as possible, etc.

Discussion

The aim of this research is to understand the perspectives and thinking styles of students in learning English, as well as the teaching methods employed by the teacher in teaching English at SMPN 01 Sakra Barat. The subjects of this study are 25 eighth-grade students of SMPN 01 Sakra Barat and the English teacher at the school. In this research, the researcher used observation, questionnaires, and interviews to collect data. The observation was conducted during the learning process. The researcher observed the ongoing learning process between the teacher and the students. The results of this observation indicate that the learning process was conducted in accordance with the observation guidelines prepared by the researcher.

The class begins with a prayer led by a student who has been appointed as the class leader. Next, before the lesson starts, the teacher encourages the students to do some warm-up exercises to help them feel energized and increase their interest in learning. In this context, Akther (2014) suggested that warm-up activities can effectively start a class with an engaging task, helping students to get into the proper mindset for learning and sustain their focus. Additionally, Kyaw and Htun (2019) stated that warm-up activities are a valuable tool for supporting learners. Before introducing the new material, the teacher briefly reviews the previous lesson and then stimulates the students' curiosity about today's topic. After that, the teacher begins to explain the material for this session.

In this lesson, many instructional media were not used. The only media employed were the textbook and the blackboard. Despite this, the interaction between the teacher and the students was quite good. This interaction was facilitated through various methods, including question-and-answer sessions, individual assignments, checks for understanding by the teacher, and recognition of students who participated in the learning process. Overall, the researcher observed that the teaching and learning process was conducted in a relaxed manner. To confirm the findings from the observation, the researcher then asked questions to the students.

The questions given to the students aimed to understand their perspectives and thinking styles in learning English. The results of these questions showed that most of them enjoyed learning English at school. Many of them stated that learning English at school was fun and not boring. Moreover, most of them preferred a learning approach that wasn't too serious and favored a learning concept that involved play. Based on the results of these questions, it was found that they greatly enjoyed the warm-up sessions before learning. Additionally, they appreciated the recognition given for their participation in the learning process, which boosted their enthusiasm for studying. (Syafriafdi, 2020) notes that when teachers show appreciation to students for answering questions, regardless of whether their answers are accurate or not, it can boost the students' motivation to learn. However, the learning process is not without its challenges. One of the difficulties they encountered was the limitation of available learning media.

One of the challenges they encountered in the learning process was the lack of engaging and varied media. Based on the interviews conducted, it was revealed that the availability of media provided by the school is indeed very limited. However, from the students' perspective, media plays a crucial role in enhancing focus and enthusiasm for learning. Despite this, the interviews also revealed that the teacher has found ways to overcome the issue of limited media. One approach is to conduct lessons outside the classroom. According to the interview results, learning outside the classroom can boost students' enthusiasm for learning, reduce boredom, and provide new learning experiences.

In conclusion, the most important thing a teacher can do is to create a comfortable learning environment for students. Making learning enjoyable can increase students' interest and prevent them from feeling shocked or fearful in the learning process. According to Handayani (2019), motivation in the learning process serves as a driving force that sustains the learning activities and provides direction to help achieve the desired goals. One way to achieve this is by not discouraging students, even when they make mistakes while trying. Teachers should avoid blaming students, as this can discourage them from attempting to learn. Instead, teachers should appreciate the efforts of students who participate in the learning process. By conducting observations before starting a lesson, teachers can deliver material using methods that align with the students' learning styles and thinking patterns, making the learning process more effective.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that the key to the success of a teaching and learning process depends on the connection between students' perceptions and their learning styles with the teaching methods employed by the teacher. The findings indicate that the teacher's strategies for addressing various challenges in the learning process contribute to making the teaching and learning process more effective. The results also show a positive perspective from students toward learning English, reflecting the teacher's success in creating an enjoyable learning environment. A pleasant learning environment helps students understand the material better and enhances their motivation to learn. Some strategies used by the teacher to create an enjoyable learning environment include conducting warm-up activities before starting the lesson, engaging in outdoor learning, providing appreciation to students who participate in the learning process, and not blaming students when they make mistakes while practicing the material.

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