Looking at the Link between Thinking Style and Reading Comprehension: A Case of Indonesian EFL Students at One *Madrasah* in Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study was aimed at describing the relationship between thinking style and reading comprehension of students at one *Madrasah* in Palembang, South Sumatera. The method used in this study was correlational research. The population of the research was eleventh grade students. There were 452 students from eleventh grade classes as the population in this study. The sample was taken by using purposive sampling which consisted of 147 students. Furthermore, there were two variables in this research. The first one was students' thinking style (variable X) and the second one was the students' reading comprehension skill (variable Y). The students' thinking style score was taken from the questionnaire, while the students' reading comprehension score was taken from a test. Based on the data analysis, it was found that the r -obtained (-.008) was lower than r -table (0.162). Then the level of probability (p) significance (sig.2-tailed) was .928. It indicated that p (.928) was higher than 0.05. It implied that null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected. From the finding, it could be concluded that there was no significant relationship between the students' thinking style and their reading comprehension skill. It showed that the students' thinking style was not a dominant factor that affected the reading comprehension.

Keywords: reading comprehension, thinking style

Introduction

Among four language aspects, reading is one of the important one. According to Marliasari (2006), reading is one of the important aspects which can influence the students' success in learning English as a foreign language. Amalia (2017) states that one of the four skills of English is reading that is defined as a constructing process of meaning interacted among reader's prior knowledge, information, and context. Reading is a cognitive process which includes transferring the written symbols by the reader through the eyes, so these symbols need understanding of meaning and then integrating this meaning into personal experiences. The language mechanism causes human beings to exchange their idea at all of shape that led to develop whole aspects of life.

Reading is the most important academic skill. It means that reading is a crucial skill to be mastered in learning English. Rahmawati (2017) concluded that reading plays very important role for the process to achieve a proficiency in English. Therefore, the students must have ability in reading comprehension. According to Memis (2013), reading comprehension skill stands out

in every field including in a successful academic life. Reading comprehension is the interaction between a reader and a writer which the reader tries to reconstruct the writer's message closely related to all major languages arts (listening, speaking, and writing). Holandiyah and Utami (2015) explain the students can learn much about their language while being taught reading skills. According to Nofitarina (2017), reading comprehension requires the reader to actually know and understand what they are reading. Nurnajati (2017) states that by learning reading, students are able to comprehend and Attaprechakul (2013) added that learning reading is to get much information from the text and can convey information, know world development, and gain new knowledge that will guide deep thinking. Duke and Pearson (2005) explored reading factors contributing to text difficulty may arise from some elements within the text, the knowledge base of the individual reader, or the context of interaction between the writer and the reader. Romainah (2018) adds that within the text lie the unknown vocabulary, but also the complicated sentence structure as well as the organizational pattern and the emotion involves students' feeling when reading.

A study conducted by UNESCO in 2012 indicated that Indonesians' reading habit is lower than other countries in Asian, only one from 1000 Indonesia people who has seriously reading habit. The goal of teaching reading for Indonesian students is to understand or comprehend the material of the test, because reading is a bridge to understanding about the texts they read. UNESCO and also revealed that Indonesian read one book in a year rather than Japanese who read 10-15 books, and American who read 20-30 books in a year. Reading is thinking process to construct meaning. It is an active process of identifying important ideas and comparing, evaluating and applying them. It is hoped that students can get good understanding to be creative readers. That's why in reading activities, they need some strategies to help them. Besides that Sternberg and Wagner (1992) mentioned that goal, purpose, engagement, creativity, mood maker, critical which is essential aspects in reading are included in thinking style.

The basic characteristic of human being is the ability of thinking. Everyone has different way or style in thinking. Fouladi and Shahidi (2016) argue that thinking styles are the mental frameworks that describe how process of information and ability to solve the problem in the special situations. Garcia (2010) argues that thinking style plays a role in many important aspects of wellbeing and life success. According to Navan and Mehdi (2015), understanding diversity of their thinking and learning styles are indicators that can help poor students to be successful from their failure. He adds that understanding various thinking styles help people to adjust their thoughts with different thinking styles and simultaneously succeed in communications. Further, Negahi and Alireza (2015) describes some studies that thinking styles have relationship with problem-solving, decision-making, and academic achievement. Thus, Alhamuddin and Bukhori (2016) explain that thinking as activities that involve mental processes requires the ability to remember and understand, on the contrary to be able to remember and understand the necessary mental process called thinking.

For most of people, thinking is a lazy activity especially for students. According to Navan and Mehdi (2015), negligence of thinking styles in different situations may lead to negligence or elimination of the most important valuable talents as well as big potential to achieve successfully. Sharma and Neetu (2011) proposed if teachers are failing in caring the students' thinking style, it will arises the serious consequences, because the teachers may tend to confuse styles of students mind. On the other hand, Fouladi and Shahidi (2016) explains various research

show that thinking style is associated to creativity process, problem solution, making-decision, and education progress. It can be judged that students who have poor thinking style will difficult in solving the problem, lack of creativity, confuse about the choice, awful in relationship and fail in learning achievement especially English language learning. Students with poor thinking style will suffer from learning achievement, relationship and self-management; it was exist in many countries including Indonesia.

Furthermore, after having informal interview with the English teachers of the school, it was found that the teachers did not really aware of their students' thinking style because every student has different thinking style and they do not have idea how to measure it. According to Yulia and Devi (2017), the education of many Indonesian teachers is still lower than what is required by law. The thinking styles of the teachers were not used effectively because the teachers did not really realize the importance of them in classroom teaching and learning. Afriani (2017), in her study added how the students learn and how the teachers teach, and how the two interact with each other are influenced by different learning styles. Students argue that of the laziest activities in learning English is reading, because it is as complicated subject and they must realize or comprehend what they read, when they are reading, they do not have a real aim, just focus how to read well, and they are hard to think about the meaning. Other ways, Ghazali, Rabi, Wahab, and Rohaizad (2017) explained that teachers need to be able to assess the acquisition of thinking skills by their student.

Some researchers have previously explored those related variables. Ahmadi, Gorjian, and Pazhakh (2016) found significant relationship between EFL learners' thinking style on reading comprehension. On the contrary, the relationship between thinking styles and academic achievement related to reading is negatively correlated. Fatemi and Heideri (2016) found no significant correlation among global, local, external, internal, liberal, and conservative thinking styles and academic achievement related to reading. The objectives of this study were (1) to find out whether or not there was a significant correlation between students' thinking styles and their reading comprehension, and (2) to know if students' thinking styles gave significant influence their reading comprehension of the eleventh grade students of one *Madrasah* in Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia.

Literature Review

The concept of thinking style

Thinking style is the path that an individual prefers on processing the information and dealing with the given task is a fundamental and deciding working area. They claimed the theory of thinking style was called "Mental Self-Government (MSG) theory in analogy of government. According to Bulus (2006), the theory of mental self-government is a general theory of styles not only because this theory is designed to be used with different populations, but also because it embraces all three approaches to the study of styles. Sternberg (1997) defines the thinking styles as different techniques used by the people in processing the data. Thinking style does not denote the ability, it shows the way people use their abilities Thinking styles are different from the intelligence; intelligence refers to the individual potentials and abilities; however, thinking styles

refers to the individual preferences (Heiderie, 2012) define thinking styles correspond to the preferred manner of utilizing one's own abilities.

Dimensions of thinking style

Sternberg (1997) and Zhang (2004) proposed a theory of thinking styles termed *the theory of mental self-government*. Using the word "government" metaphorically, contended that just as there are many ways of governing a society, there are many ways of governing or managing our activities. These different ways can be construed as our *thinking styles*. The theory of mental self-government describes 13 thinking styles that fall along 5 dimensions. There are three functions (legislative, executive, and judicial styles), four forms (hierarchical, oligarchic, monarchic, and anarchic styles), two levels (global and local styles), two scopes (internal and external styles), and two leanings (liberal and conservative styles) of the mental self-government.

The ways of thinking in terms of the form

Monarchic style, according to Ahmadi et al. (2016), individual with a monarchic style prefers to focus on one goal at the time and address the next goal when the first goal is completed. Individuals are characterized by going towards a single goal all the time, they are flexible, and able to analyze and think logically is low. They prefer works that highlight their individuality.

Hierarchical style, Ahmadi et al. (2016) explain that individuals with an oligarchic or hierarchic style like to deal with multiple goals. They describe the former individuals have difficulty in assigning priorities to the various goals, thus creating conflict and tension. The owners of this method tend to do many things at one time.

Anarchic style, Fouladi and Shahidi (2016) explain anarchic thinker has ability to apply random methods to solve problems and dislike systems, rules, guidelines and generally any restrictions. Also, individuals with an anarchic thinking style tend to be motivated by a wide range of needs and goals and are flexible in their approach (Ahmadi et al., 2016).

Oligarchic style, Fouladi and Shahidi (2016) explain individual with oligarchic style Prefer to do many things at the same time but he/she has the problem to prioritize them. It can be claimed that oligarchic thinker have many planning but difficulty in doing the action.

The ways of thinking in terms of function

Legislative style, Ahmadi et al. (2016) define legislative style means individuals prefer to obey rules and existing methods. They prefer the problems which require them to devise new strategies and to create their own laws and they enjoy giving commands (Zhang, 2004). Fouladi and Shahidi (2006) also define people with legislative style in thinking means individual who have their own create thinking, invent, design and they always do everything by own self.

Executive style, the advocators of this style prefer to use the ways that already exists to solve problems, and the application and implementation of laws. Also, Ahmadi et al. (2016) indicate that executive style is the ability of individual to enjoy creating and formulating their own rules.

Judicial style, Ahmadi et al. (2016) argued that judicial style is the ability of individual to like to judge and evaluate rules, ways, ideas, and procedures. The advocators of this method care about the assessment of the stages of the work and the results.

Methods of thinking in terms of level

Global style, according to Ahmadi et al. (2016) in analogy, individual with a *global thinking style* prefer general, abstract reasoning, pondering in the world of ideas. They prefer to deal with broad, abstract and relatively large and. high-level concepts. They prefer changes and innovations, and vague positions. They often ignore the details.

Local style, Ahmadi et al. (2016) describe individuals with a *local thinking style* are more down to earth and oriented towards the pragmatics of the situation. The people with this style are attracted by the practical situations.

The ways of thinking in terms of the trend

Liberal style, those with a *liberal thinking style* give preference to tasks and projects and allow them to cover unexplored ground. They are seeking through the tasks undertaken by them to by pass laws that imposed upon them, whether at work or in school in order to bring the biggest possible change (Sternberg, 1997).

Conservative style

Fouladi and Shahidi (2016) explain the conservative person prefer to do things in before experienced and right ways and follow the customs. Ahmadi et al. (2016) expressed the contrast, individuals with a *conservative thinking style* prefer familiar, non-threatening situations.

The ways of thinking in terms of scope

External style, the External individual has predilection for tasks, projects, and situations that allow working with other in a group or interacting with others at different stages of progress. Individual of this method tend to work, interact and collaborate with other within the team, and they have a sense of social contact with others comfortably and easily (Zhang (2002); Sternberg & Wagner (1992).

Internal style, according to Heiderie (2012), internal thinkers perform different activities independently. Fouladi and Shahidi (2016) argue this style tend to work alone, rely on their own world. The followers of this style prefer to work individually; they are introvert and tend to be lonely.

The concept of reading comprehension

Meniado (2016) argues reading comprehension is one of the most essential study skills in higher education. He claims Academic and even technical courses demand substantial readings, so there is a need for students to be able to comprehend what they read in order to succeed in their academic life and beyond. Besides, Brown (2004) arguably reading is the most essential

skill in achieving the success in all educational contexts, remain an ability of paramount importance as create assessments of general language ability. Reading process encompasses many activities that begin with the first apprehension of paper features by the reader's eye to the production of textual comprehension.

In short, Marzulina and Ariesca (2016) explain that reading comprehension relates to the students understanding about the text given by the teachers that they read and they try to analyze the texts and meaning inside.

Methods

Research design

In conducting this study, correlational research was used to find out the correlation between variables and explain and interpret the appeared results. The procedures were, first; the student's thinking style was measured by using Thinking Style Inventory (TSI) from Sternberg, Wagner and Zhang (2003). The questionnaire consisted of 65 items. It used Likert scale as the scoring system and students' thinking style were categorized. Second, reading comprehension test taken from TOEFL Junior section was used to measure students reading Comprehension. Statistical analyses were then done. Prerequisite analysis for normality and linearity were administered to know if the data were normal and linear or not. Then, the correlation was administered by having Pearson Product Moment analysis. Since there was a significant correlation, the influence and percentage between variables were analyzed by having regression analysis through Statistical Package for Social and Science (SPSS) version 23.00. Last, explanation and interpretation of the results were discussed.

Research site and participants

According to Creswell (2005), population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic. In line with Frankel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), the larger group to which one hopes to apply the results is called the population. The population of this study was all the active students of the Eleventh Grade students of a *Madrasah* in Palembang in academic year 2016-2017, which consisted of four classes. The total population of this study was 147 students. The sample of this study was taken by using purposive sampling method. Creswell (2005) adds in this method, the researchers select individuals and sites to learn and understand about the topic whether they are information rich. Moreover, I specified the characteristics of a population of interest and then tries to locate individuals who have those characteristics.

In this research, the eleventh grade students were chosen as population because the classes described the characteristics which researcher needed to study. Students' listening strategies among three classes are varied and the ability of their listening comprehension was different from each other and they had experienced a lot in learning listening skill based on schools' curriculum According to Creswell (2005), at least 30 participants for a correlational study that relates variables. Meanwhile, according to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), for correlational studies, a sample of at least 50 is deemed necessary to establish the existence of a

relationship. So the sample of this research was all active students in the academic year 2016 - 2017 which consisted of 147 students from 4 classes.

Data collection and analysis

There were two instruments used in this study. The procedures were that, first; the students' thinking style was measured by using Thinking Style Inventory (TSI) from Sternberg, Wagner and Zhang (2003). The questionnaire consisted of 65 items. It used Likert scale as the scoring system and students' thinking style were categorized; second, reading comprehension test taken from TOEFL Junior section was used to measure students reading Comprehension. Statistical analyses were done. Prerequisite analysis for normality and linearity were administered to know if the data were normal and linear or not. Then, the correlational analysis was administered by having Pearson Product Moment analysis. Since there was a significant correlation, the influence and percentage between variables were analyzed by having regression analysis through Statistical Package for Social and Science (SPSS) 23.00. Last, explanation and interpretation of the results were discussed.

Findings

From the result of Thinking Style Inventory, it was found that the maximum score was 275, and the lowest score was 171. The mean score of the thinking style was 2.388. The standard deviation was 17.48. The detail could be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistic of thinking style

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Thinking Style	147	171.00	275.00	2.3884E2	17.48099
Valid N (listwise)	147				

Furthermore, it revealed that from the questionnaire, all of thinking styles of were all perceived by the students with different numbers. The details were as follows:

Table 2. Distribution of students' thinking style

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Legislative Style	19	11.9%
Executive Style	15	9.4%
Judicial Style	15	9.4%
Hierarchical Style	7	4.4%
Monarchic Style	9	5.7%
Oligarchic Style	8	5.1%
Anarchic Style	12	7.5%

Global Style	10	6.2%
Local style	6	3.8%
Liberal style	18	11.3%
Conservative style	7	4.4%
Internal style	9	5.7%
External style	24	15.1%
Total	159	100%

Beside thinking style, the result of students' reading comprehension was obtained. The descriptive statistics analysis of speaking for the participants is shown below. The maximum score was 91.00, and the lowest score was 47.00. The mean of the reading scores for the participants was 67.56 and the standard deviation was 8.20. This mean score indicated that the level of reading comprehension test of participants was good.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of students' reading comprehension

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading Comprehension	147	47.00	91.00	67.5646	8.20046
Valid N (list wise)	147				

Furthermore, the level of students' reading comprehension was obtained. For each category, 8 students had excellent comprehension, 40 students had very good reading comprehension, 65 students had good reading comprehension, 32 students had fair reading comprehension, and 2 students had poor reading comprehension. The distribution was presented in the following table:

Table 4. Distribution of students' reading comprehension

<u>Interval</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
100 – 81	8	Excellent	5.4%
71 – 80	40	Very Good	27.4%
61 - 70	65	Good	44.2%
51 – 60	32	Fair	21.7%
<50	2	Poor	1.3 %
Total	147		100%

Statistical analysis

Normality test and linearity test were conducted prior to data analysis through SPSS 23rd version for windows. As parametric statistics, in term of correlation and regression, and purposive sampling technique were used in this research, it was fundamental to see if the

distribution of data were normal for each variable and linear between variables. The data are interpreted normal if $p > 0.05$. If $p < 0.05$, it means that the data are not normal. Kolmogorov-Simonov was used to see the normality. The result of normality test was shown in table 11 which indicated that the data from each variable were all normal and appropriate for data analysis with coefficients .787 for thinking style and .124 for reading comprehension.

Table 5. Normality test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		Thinking Style	Reading Comprehension
N		147	147
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	238.8435	67.5646
	Std. Deviation	17.48099	8.20046
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.054	.097
	Positive	.037	.097
	Negative	-.054	-.078
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.654	1.178
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.787	.124

For linearity test, deviation of linearity was obtained. If probability is more than .05, the two variables are linear. The results showed that, the deviation from linearity between thinking style and reading comprehension was .451. To sum up, all the data were linear for each correlation and regression (see test of linearity on appendix).

Table 6. Linearity Test

		ANOVA Table					
			<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Df</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Thinking Style * Reading Compre	Between Groups	(Combined)	5914.711	20	295.736	.963	.511
		Linearity	2.511	1	2.511	.008	.928
		Deviation from Linearity	5912.200	19	311.168	1.013	.451
	Within Groups		38700.690	126	307.148		
	Total		44615.401	146			

Based on Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, the result indicated that no significant correlation between students' thinking style and reading comprehension. The correlation coefficient or the r -obtained (-.008) was lower than r -table (.162). Then the level of probability (p) significance (sig.2-tailed) was .928. It meant that p (.928) was higher than .05. Thus, there was no significant correlation between the students' thinking style and their reading comprehension.

Table 7. Correlation between thinking style and reading comprehension

		Thinking Style	Reading Comprehension
Thinking Style	Pearson Correlation	1	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.928
	N	147	147
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	-.008	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.928	
	N	147	147

Discussion

Someone must be able to use his/her rational thinking to create a well-organized reading comprehension, so it can be said that everyone has his/her styles in reading comprehension. They maybe have different perception on the same topic. The students' different perception may due to their ways of thinking. One of the theories that discuss the way of thinking is the theory of mental-self-government proposed by Sternberg (1997). According to Sternberg (1997), thinking styles refer to how people prefer think. Sternberg said that two or more people with some level of abilities might have very different styles of thinking.

Based on the findings in this study, the results of statistical analysis of two variables showed that there was no significant correlation between students' thinking styles and reading comprehension at one *Madrasah* in Palembang, South Sumatera. It meant that the students who had various types of thinking styles could not directly have higher reading comprehension. In other words, even the student used the thinking styles, it did not give much contribution to their reading comprehension. Even though there was no correlation between thinking styles and reading comprehension but when I analyzed the thinking styles in each subcategory, there was correlation between legislative styles and external styles and the students' reading comprehension.

The existence of the correlation found indicated that legislative and external thinking styles tended to significantly correlate to reading comprehension, while executive, conservative, internal, liberal and local thinking styles did not. However, as Sternberg (1997) believes that there was no good or bad style among those various thinking styles. Therefore, whatever thinking style students prefer to use, teachers should take into consideration the students' different styles of thinking when dealing with the students and planning activities for them

because behavioral engagement draws on the idea of participation and includes involvement in academic, social, or extracurricular activities; it is considered crucial for achieving academic outcomes.

The result probably could occur because of the students (wrong interpretation, laziness, the honesty in answering the questionnaire, unaware of their thinking styles, etc.). In addition, thinking styles were not the only one factor influencing students' reading comprehension. There were many factors (internal and external) affecting students' achievement in learning language. The internal factors consist of physiological factor such as five senses and psychological factors such as talent, motivation, ability/intelligence, interest, and cognitive styles. The external factors consist of learning facilities, the teachers, the parents and learning methods strategies. More importantly, according to Arip (2017), motivation in learning English was also shaped by a variety of factors like family inputs, teacher inputs, and school inputs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, there was no significant correlation between students' thinking style and reading comprehension was concluded by the researcher, meaning that students' thinking style did not have a relationship with their reading comprehension. The finding showed that the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was rejected.

The students' thinking style did not give dominant effect through reading comprehension. In this case, Pitaloka (2014) stated that the other factors were wrong interpretation, laziness, the honesty in answering the questionnaire, talent, ability/intelligence, interest, teachers, lack of motivation, lack of vocabulary knowledge, lack of pronunciation knowledge, lack of knowledge of types of text, lack of illustration of the text. Cognitive styles gave more dominant effect through it. It also indicated that the students with good understanding and good concentration will not guarantee that they would have a good score in reading and the students with bad understanding and using their thinking style ineffectively not guarantee will have bad score in reading. The way of the teachers taught was also dominant to make the student better in improving their reading skill such as changing the method of teaching using reading grub. According to Astrid, Rukmini, Sofwan, and Fitriati (2017), the teacher should also consider learner's variation that would influence the learning process. Wahyuni, Diem, and Ekawati (2016) state that reading groups are established in the classroom and Herizal (2018) adds the classroom environment plays an important role in the success of student education

The dominant thinking style based on the result was external style. Most of the students like to work with others, focus outward, and be inter-dependent. It meant that they more dominant prefers to do science or social studies project with other members of a group. However, the result of thinking Styles Inventory (TSI) showed that the legislative and external thinking styles gave positive contribution to students' reading comprehension.

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