

THE ROLES OF DIFFERENT MODES OF PLANNING ON STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE ACROSS LEARNING STYLES

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Abstract

This study investigates whether different modes of planning help the students improve their writing performance across learning styles. It also tries to reveal which format of planning results in better writing performance and which learning styles improves students' writing performance best. The design used in the present study was experimental research since it examined the effects of modes of planning (pre-task/PTP and within task planning/WTP) towards students' writing performance across learning styles. The researcher took two classes of ten classes as the subjects of the research using a lottery. After that they were treated using a pre-test to determine whether they were homogenous or not. The data were taken from the following instruments: Writing test and GEFT. The scores of the students were analyzed using independent sample t-test. The findings show that PTP outperforms WTP, and there is no significant difference between Field Independent (FI) Learners and Field Dependent (FD) Learners. Thus, no matter the students' learning styles, students have to be suggested to make a plan before writing a text with the guidance of the teacher.

Key Words: Pre-Task Planning, Within Task Planning, Learning Styles, Writing Performance

Introduction

Planning in writing process is a crucial step to conduct. Ellis (2005) claims that oral and written language production needs planning. Ellis and Yuan (2005) add that since human beings have limited short term memory, planning takes an important role. Also, planning helps learners' recall schemata to make them focus better in linguistic output and produce better language performance (Elder & Iwashita, 2005). Attentional resources helps them process their capabilities in linguistic production (Buodo et al., 2002). For instance, if a student has got sufficient schemata related to the topic and made a good plan, he or she will be able to focus more on the language production in writing activities.

In line with the nature of planning, research addressing the roles of planning has been conducted by several researchers related to oral production but very few on written production (Ghavamnia, Tavakoli, & Esteki, 2013). In addition, (Ortega, 2005) avows that planning has become a focus of research on task-based approach. Planning is considered as a problem-solving activity covering the consideration to use linguistic devices which meets the audience attention (Ellis, 2005). The studies on planning on L2 production conducted by some researchers still remain unclear, indicating some discrepancies to reveal since the studies have different findings and the nature of the construct of planning itself in L2 production has not been described clearly yet. A study by (Ellis, 2009) examined the effects of formats of planning namely rehearsal, PTP, and WTP on the complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) of L2 competence.

In contrast, other studies focusing on the effects of WTP on written production also reveal different results. The study conducted by Ghavamnia et al. (2013) prove that WTP facilitates students to reduce produce error free in their texts. In addition, another study by (Bagheridoust & Fakoor, 2013) proves that within task planning helps students produce more accurate clauses compared to no planning condition even though within task planning requires more time than no planning needs.

In addition, some other studies on planning reveal different results on students' writing proficiency. On the one hand, a study by Rahimpour (2011) proved that both formats of planning (PTP and WTP) are only beneficial to increase students' fluency in written production, but there is no evidence on accuracy and complexity. The finding shows that PTP group focus on proportional content in producing complexity, but WTP group spent their time searching suitable vocabulary items in their production. On the other hand, Ellis and Yuan's study (2005) found that WTP facilitates learners' fluency, complexity, and accuracy.

The previous studies prove inconsistent findings on the use of planning to improve students' writing performance and learning styles are still under reviewed. Thus, conducting further studies investigating different formats of planning to measure its effects on students' writing performance across learning styles is of importance. This study highlights further whether different formats of planning help the students improve their writing performance across learning styles. It is also hoped that this study will reveal which format of planning results in better writing performance and which learning styles improves students' writing performance best.

Method

The design used was experimental research since it examined the effect of different formats of planning on students' writing performance across learning styles. The independent variable was categorized into two formats of planning: PTP and WTP.

The dependent variable was students' writing performance. Also, learning styles acted as a moderate variable. Both Group A and Group B experienced pre-test and post-test, but they got different treatments. Group A was treated using PTP, and Group B was treated using WTP.

The population involved was students of SMK NEGERI 11 Malang. The researcher took two classes of ten classes: Group A and Group B as the subjects of the research using a lottery. After that they were treated using a pre-test to determine whether they were homogenous or not. The results show that they were homogeneous, so the two classes were determined as the subjects of the study. The statistics showed Group A got a little bit lower average score than Group B, so Group A was chosen as the experimental group (treated using PTP) consisting of 35 students, and Group B was the control group (treated using WTP) consisting of 31 students.

The data related to students' descriptive paragraph were taken from two writing tests, namely pre-test and post-test. Before the treatment, the homogeneity of the two groups was tested using a pre-test for both Class A and Class B in order to see their writing skills before the treatment. The second writing test was the post test that was conducted to measure whether planning affected students' writing performance in writing a descriptive paragraph. The second instrument used to collect the data was GEFT developed by Witkin and Goodenough (1981). The test was done to determine whether individuals are field independent (FI learners) or field independent (FID learners).

Results

The GEFT test was done to see the learning styles of the respondents for both groups: experimental and control. It was found that Experimental Group consisted of 13 FD learners and 22 FI learners. Meanwhile, Control Group had 9 FD learners and 22 FI learners.

After the treatment, there was another test namely post test to see the interaction of the writing performance of the two groups: experimental and control groups. Table 1 presents the statistical computation using independent sample t-test between the two groups.

Table 1 The statistical results of independent sample t-test between PTP and WTP groups.

Group Statistics				
GROUP			Std.	Std. Error
	N	Mean	Deviation	Mean
PTP	35	78.1286	11.50214	1.94422
WTP	31	72.2742	10.38415	1.86505

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Experimental	Equal variances assumed	.454	.503	2.159	64	.035	5.85438	2.71109	.43836	11.27040
	Equal variances not assumed			2.173	63.972	.033	5.85438	2.69414	.47217	11.23658

The results of the statistical computation in Table 1 proved that the experimental group got higher scores than the control group. In other words, PTP Group got better writing performance than WTP Group. The significance level was .035 which was lower than .05. It means that the writing performance of the two groups was significantly different.

After the calculation of the writing performance of the two groups, there was another calculation between learning styles in the experimental group as stated in Table 2.

Table 2. The Results of Post Test between Learning Styles

Group Statistics				
Learning Styles	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PTP_FD	13	74.1154	9.93763	2.75620
PTP_ID	22	80.5000	10.69935	2.28111

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
						Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	)	e	e	Lower	Upper
PTP_FD	Equal variance assumed	.066	.799	-1.750	33	.089	-6.38462	3.64826	13.80705	1.03782
	Equal variance not assumed			-1.785	26.866	.086	-6.38462	3.57772	13.72721	.95798

Table 2 indicates that Field Dependents Learners Got better scores than Field Independent Learners but there was not any significant difference between the two groups because the significance value was .089 which was greater than .05. It means that the difference was not significant. In other words, both groups had similar abilities in writing.

Discussion

The findings showed that PTP was more advantageous than WTP in helping students in writing a text. It is in line with the statement of Ellis (2005) that PTP can be predicted to create conditions which support students maximize their writing performance. Meanwhile, WTP makes students lack of chances to maximize their ability in accessing and encoding their linguistic competence. Bygate & Samuda (2005) state that PTP helps students activate their background knowledge before the task, and WTP does not help students focus in aspects of writing. In contrast, PTP can reduce students' burden on working memory and allow them to process their text (Ellis, 2005). In addition, WTP students must rapidly perform the task without any prior preparation indicating that they should perform the task during a limited time (Ahmadian, 2012; R. Ellis, 2005).

It is clear that students have extra time before writing by having a planning activity before writing a text. It may probably be caused by the fact that students need extra time to plan before writing since writing, according to Sulistyo & Heriyawati (2017), is not only a matter of a product but also a process. It is also supported by Sulistyo et al. (2019) who claim that teachers should enable students understand what they need to do in accomplishing a writing task, and one of the helps is planning what they have to write. Then, Johnson et al. (2012) indicate that explicit instruction on PTP affects features of students' texts. That is why, teachers need to be more patient in helping the students make a plan before writing a text.

A study by Ortega (2005:87) supports the present study since he found that PTP enables students to produce a better story and make them less stressed when doing it. Rahimpour (2011) also investigated the effect of PTP and WTP and he found that PTP was more powerful in helping students develop the fluency of their text. The most possible reason was that EFL learners still need a guidance how to start their writing activities by doing a planning. Thus, PTP is beneficial to be applied rather than WTP where learners do their own plan while starting writing their text. Mohammadabadi (2013) also found that PTP helped students to write a better text, especially dealing with fluency covering content and organization of a text.

Ellis (2005) states that planning deals with three possible advantages for students namely attention and noticing, limited working memory capacity, and focus on form. Thus, providing an appropriate chance for them to have a plan before writing, in this context is PTP, should be given to students. Thus, it is very important to give students a chance to prepare their plan before writing, and the helps of teachers are also meaningful. The teaching of writing probably requires process - based approach in which students need a number of steps before completing a single text, and planning is an activity in the pre writing step.

It is probably reasonable to claim that PTP is more beneficial than WTP to be applied in the classroom because senior high school students have more time and guidance in the writing class. Letting them make a plan before writing is more important than asking them make a plan without a teacher guidance when starting writing a text. Ahmadian (2012) found that careful planning affected the accuracy as well as complexity of language learners' production. It is clear that spending an extra time in planning helps students write their texts because they can plan what they have to write. Ortega (2005) found that learners have perceptions that PTP helps them understand how and why PTP work in writing activities in the classroom.

In contrast, other studies proved different results than the results of this present study. For example, Rahimpour (2011a) found that PTP and WTP do not affect complexity and accuracy of learners' production except fluency of the learners' written production. It means that there is no difference between PTP and WTP on students' writing performance. Skehan & Foster (2010) also revealed that there was no different result between PTP and WTP on learners' written production. Somehow, they suggest that planning is an observable activity which is crucial to lead to real performances.

Another discussion on this present study deals with the question whether learning styles affected students' writing performance. The findings showed that there was not any significant effect of learning styles on students' writing performance. It shows that no matter the students' learning styles, the students would write better if they made planning before writing. These findings were supported by a study which was conducted by Wahyuni (2017) that reveals learning styles of the students did not affect their writing ability, but students wrote better simply because they got feedback from the teacher. Chapelle & Fraiser (2009) conducted a study focusing on how different learning styles affected learning outcomes when students worked with computer assisted language learning found that no specific learning style outperformed better than the other, but learners with each style had their own ways in acquiring materials. Shih & Gamon (2001) also found that different learning styles: FI and FD learned equally well and they worked with similar motivation and attitudes in the classroom. Maghsudi (2007) revealed that learning styles do not affect linguality in English Achievement Test scores. Khatib (2011) revealed that there is no interaction between the learners' FI/D cognitive style and their Introvert/Extrovert variable as well as their learning preferences.

The findings suggest the outcomes of learning are not determined by learners' learning style. It is suggested that teachers need to understand students' characteristics such as learning styles in order to maximize their potentials because they are personally unique. Unfortunately, research on planning and learning styles has not yet conducted by experts, and if any it is still limited. Then, Xu (2011) claim that learning style is a consistent way of behaviour in teaching-learning activities. Yet, so far there is no strong fact to claim which learning style is more powerful than the other. Then, Pithers (2006)

claims that it is important that learners attempt to learn and apply flexible style based on the problems they have to solve. Unluckily, it is hard to match between teachers' style and students' learning styles, and it has been shown to be problematic over long periods. Thus, it is really important to understand how teachers help students maximize their potentials in teaching-learning process. Let alone, writing activities in the classroom still needs a lot of teacher guidance.

In short, the term learning styles: Field Independent and field dependent seem to have been a hot topic for a long time but the results still remain unclear across different fields. Somehow, there must be special characteristics of a certain learning styles that lead students to work in different ways also. Thus, it is considered wise if teachers let their students work with their own styles. Xu (2011) suggests that teachers should teach in a fair way according to the range of students' learning style, so one teaching approach cannot work for everyone in a class. Different teaching approaches may be implemented and different tasks or activities may be applied in classroom to motivate students to work harder in obtaining better teaching results. Also, Baghban (2012) states that both teachers and learners may benefit by gaining more knowledge about the ways of learning that match their style and preferences better. So, each student with their own learning may have equal chance to be successful in teaching-learning of writing if they maximize their potentials, and teachers have a significant role to help them get the outcomes of learning.

In short, Pre-Task Planning should be given in the writing activities because it is useful to maximize students' writing ability without asking them to work in the same style of learning because field independent and field dependent have a similar power in the classroom with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Conclusion

The findings show that pre task planning (PTP) is more powerful than within task planning (WTP) to help students in writing a text. It implies that when students are given an extra time to make a plan, they will be able to produce a better text. Pre task planning help students to prepare what they will write since writing is not only a matter of a product but also a process. That is why, teachers need to be more patient in helping the students make a plan before writing a text since they still need a guidance from the teacher. Planning deals with three possible advantages for students namely attention and noticing, limited working memory capacity, and focus on form

In addition, there was no significant effect of learning styles: Field Independent and Field Dependent learners. The students merely got their writing ability after making a plan in the writing activities. It does not mean that learning styles are not important in teaching and learning process, but students work with their styles and the teacher needs to help them in developing students' writing performance.

In short, no matter the students' learning styles, students have to be suggested to make a plan before writing a text with the guidance of the teacher.

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