

## **A REPORT ON TERTIARY STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY: A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH SKILL RELATED TO SPECIFIC COGNITIVE STYLES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to contribute theoretically and practically to the improvement of EFL teaching and learning process. Speaking learning techniques discussed in this research are role play and group discussion. The reason for researcher to use both techniques because both of them expose students to communicate one another so that they are expected to be confident to express their ideas. While the cognitive styles used in this research as parts of learning style are field dependence and field independence. This research is done to show that besides preparing teaching materials and activities, teachers need to consider the students' psychological part so that they can help their students optimally. Role play as well as group discussion give significant impact on the students' speaking ability improvement.

**Key words:** *EFL, cognitive, speaking*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the main reasons for someone to learn English language is to be able to use it in communication. To converse in English is a priority for the second or foreign language learners of English. It means that the success of the learners in learning English can be measured on the basis of whether or not they can use it in a form of communication. Moreover, English is an international language used by Most of people all over the world. Therefore, English is very important to get knowledge and science, so that is why the learners of English as the foreign language in Indonesia need to use it as an essential tool to carry out a conversation with others and exchange information with the interlocuters. Speaking is an interactive Activities to get and give message from and to both speaker and listener; giving, receiving, and analyzing information using several competences, such as accurate pronunciation, stress and intonation and appropriate use of formal and informal expressions. To gain those competences, the learners need to be supported by English speaking environment, sufficient exposures, and appropriate techniques as well as regular practice.

By contrast, there are still some problems found in teaching and learning of speaking skill, such as several teachers find it difficult to encourage their students to speak. These problems may be caused by some factors, such as: limited duration of English teaching, lack of exposures, learners' inconfidence, lack of vocabularies, inaccurate pronunciation, and inappropriate techniques used in the classroom. In addition, to these problems, students have different kind of cognitive styles. If some activities or techniques used in the classroom do not consider their cognitive styles, it might also cause some problems in learning a language.

In relation to that, teachers should create or prepare the very communicative materials and activities in the teaching and learning process because teaching is an act which has three

elements – teacher, learner, and materials. The learners must develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations.

In line with that, the teachers should also be aware of the learners' differences in their learning and cognitive styles. The differences are assumed as the teaching and learning process because the learners respond differently towards the activities given by the teacher. A teacher should pay more attention to the responses and try to identify and classify the learners' styles before preparing and presenting the materials and activities in a classroom. This, may help teachers select and provide materials and activities that can fulfil each learner's learning needs.

In relation to that, Davidoff and Berg (1990) in their research found that students will learn better and more quickly if the teaching method, materials, and activities are match to the students' learning styles. Meanwhile, if the teaching method, materials, and activities are mismatch to the students' learning styles, the objective of the lesson cannot be achieved and the students will not enjoy the learning process. This finding strengthen the theory of this research that activities as well as the materials provided by the teachers need to be based on the students' needs.

Based on the issues and problems raised above, it is important to conduct a research about: HOW DO THE SPEAKING LEARNING TECHNIQUES AND THE STUDENTS' COGNITIVE STYLES EFFECT ON THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY? (A CASE STUDY AT SOME NONFORMAL INSTITUTIONS). Speaking learning techniques discussed in this research are role play and group discussion. The reason for researcher to use both techniques because both of them expose students to communicate one another so that they are expected to be confident to express their ideas. While the cognitive styles used in this research as parts of learning style are field dependence and field independence. This research is done to show that besides preparing teaching materials and activities, teachers need to consider the students' psychological part so that they can help their students optimally.

There are some factors that may cause a student to have insufficient ability in speaking. Based on the background of the problems above, the reasearcher suspects a great number of factors:

1. There is limited time allocation for English subject;
2. The learners are lack of confidence;
3. The learners are lack of vocabulary;
4. Teaching and learning materials may not appropriate for the EFL, just focus on the structure instead of speaking skill.
5. The teaching of speaking is only done in the classroom, while outside class, speaking skill activities are really exposed.
6. Teachers have limited knowledge and experience about the learners' cognitive or learning styles.

After identifying some problems related to the effect of speaking learning techniques and cognitive styles towards the students' speaking ability, the major problems is that there are limited time allocation, lack of confidence, unappropriate activities, limited vocabulary, and unchallenging activities.

## **THEOROTICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Speaking Skill**

Mc Clean (2007) says that “speaking is language and the language skill developed in the childhood begin with speaking skill.”The statements indicates that speaking is the most important part of communication because through speaking human express their thoughts and it is a way of human interaction among others. And when someone learns a language, he/she actually learns how to speak the language. Speaking is more than just pronunciation and intonation. Pride<sup>1</sup> says that “at the functional level, speaking requires the correct and idiomatic use of target language.” Speaking is also defined by Brown and Yule (1989) as to express the needs, requests, information, service. It means that people speak not only to express his/her thoughts but also to give and gain information, the needs and service.

As described above speaking is a process of transferring and receiving information. The speaker sends a message and the listener receives and responds to the message. Don Bryne<sup>2</sup> states that “oral communication (or speaking) is a two way process between speaker and listener and involves the productive skill. It means that the process of speaking needs expressions and understanding skill. Terrence and Heide<sup>3</sup> describe the process of speaking as follows:

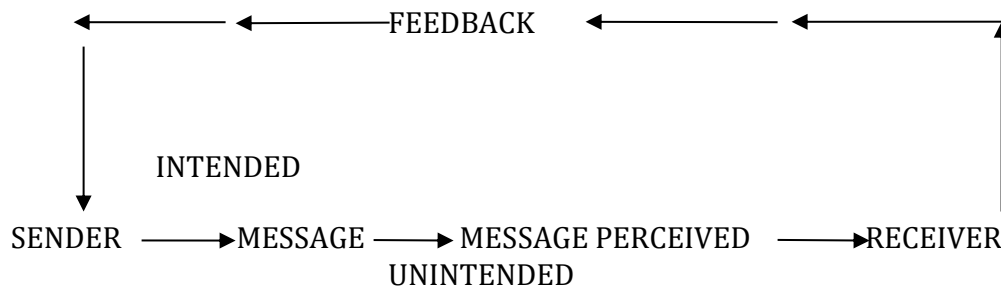


Figure 1. The process of the speaking

1. What someone communicates is called the message. A message is merely what someone communicates.
2. When someone consciously tries to communicate something, it may be called intended message.
3. What the other person experiences the message, may be called the perceived message .
4. The person sending the message is called the sender.
5. The person receiving the message is called the receiver.
6. feedback is the receiver’s reaction to the message.

### **The Teaching of Speaking Classroom speaking activities**

Considering the importance of speaking skill, it is urgent that the teachers of foreign language to pay more attention to the teaching of speaking skill. As Ur (1998) states from all the language skills taught, speaking naturally the most important, people who have knowledge in language are called the speakers. It is assumed that speaking skill covers all components of

language. That is why it is necessary that activities in a language class focus on the objective of the ability for the learners to speak.

Language input comes in the form of teacher talk, listening activities, reading passages, and the language heard and read outside of class. It gives learners the material they need to begin producing language themselves. So, that is why teaching speaking needs very great effort from the teacher to provide activities that can accommodate students with all those four dimensions above.

### **Speaking Techniques**

Techniques are ways used in a teaching and learning process for gaining the understanding of a subject matter. A definition given by Brown (2001) that techniques are the certain activities conducted in the classroom which are in accordance with a method and therefore also in line with an approach.

It means that in teaching and learning process, techniques are used in the form of activities which are guided by suitable method and approach of the subject matter learned in classroom. There are many kinds of techniques used for teaching and learning speaking skill in the classroom. The description below is the major types of speaking techniques:

### **Role play**

Role play is an activity which can give opportunity for the students to be in created real life and have more chances to use a language in a real interaction. Byrne (1987) defines *role play* as a way of taking the students out of the classroom for a while and showing them how English can be useful for them in certain situation.

A Role play puts students in situations in which they are required to use and develop those phatic forms of language which are so necessary in oiling the works of social relationships, but which are so often neglected by our language teaching syllabus. Many students believe that language is only to do with the transfer of specific information from one person to another. They have very little small talk, and in consequence often appear unnecessarily brusque and abrupt. It is possible to build up these special skills from a very low level through role play.

Some people are learning English to prepare for specific roles in their lives. People who are going to work or travel in an international context. It is helpful for these students to have tried out and experimented with the language they will require in the friendly safe environment of a classroom. For these students role play is a very useful dress rehearsal for real life. It enables them not just to acquire set phrases but to learn how interaction might take place in a variety of situations. Role play helps many shy students by providing them with a mask. Some more reticent members of a group may have a great deal of difficulty participating in conversations about themselves, and in other activities based on their direct experience. These students are liberated by role play as they no longer feel that their own personality is implicated. The most important reason for using role play is that it is fun. Once students understand what is expected of them, they thoroughly enjoy letting their imagination rip. Although there does not appear to be any scientific evidence that enjoyment automatically leads to better learning, most language teachers would probably agree that in the case of the vast majority of normal people.

The implication of role play in communicative language teaching is very important because they give students opportunity to practice communicating in different social roles. Role plays can be set up so that they are very structured (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are, and what they should say) or in a less structured way (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are, what the situation is, and what they are talking about, but the students determine what they will say). Another benefit of using role play as the technique in teaching speaking in communicative language teaching method is also stated by the *national capital language resource center*<sup>4</sup>, that in role plays, students are assigned roles and put into situations that they may eventually encounter outside the classroom, because role play imitate life, the range of language functions that may be used expands considerably.

Also, the role relationships among the students as they play their parts call for them to practice and develop their sociolinguistic competence. They have to use the language that is appropriate to the situation and to the characters through well-prepared communicative output activities such as role plays and discussions, teachers can encourage students to experiment and innovate with the language, and create a supportive atmosphere that allows them to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. This will contribute to their self confidence as speakers and to their motivation to learn more.

### **Group Discussion**

Discussion is a speaking technique that commonly used in language teaching classroom. Gall and Gillet (1980) state that discussion is an effective way to promote higher-level thinking, develop attitudes, and advance student capability for moral questioning.

Why teaching group discussion? It is very important to be developed because we always have discussion in our daily life concerning our family, friends, teachers, school mates in a form of either formal or informal (lightfoot).

McCloskey (1990) says that Group discussion enables students to use higher level cognitive processes as they compare contrasting views in order to come to a consensus and jointly synthesize information to present it to the rest of the class. Throughout this process students of all levels of language proficiency gain practice that is more varied, purposeful, and directed to students' proficiency levels.

The success of the group discussion also depends on the teachers' preparation, so it is better for the teacher to make a very good preparation before holding a group discussion. And according to Byrne (1987), a group discussion can be successful as long as the teacher does the following: Form the group in the simplest way possible, have mixed ability group, select the activities for group work carefully, present the activities carefully, avoid interfere with group work unless something is seriously wrong, avoid correct mistakes, stop group work at an appropriate moment and show the result.

### **Cognitive Styles**

Cognitive style is the ways of students' reaction or responds toward any stimulus given to them. Saracho (1997) states that cognitive style identifies the ways individuals react to different situations. She also adds that cognitive style influences how abilities develop. It describes consistencies in using cognitive processes. Cognitive style includes stable attitudes,

preferences, or habitual strategies that distinguish the individual styles of perceiving, remembering, thinking and solving problems. Cognitive style includes more than intellectual ability. Individual consistencies in cognitive behavior are derived from a wide range of

behaviors and strategies employed to cope with specific situation, tasks, stimulus, constraints, and purposes for which they are especially relevant and suited.

Since cognitive style relates to a person's psychological and educational attributes and is part of each individual's personality. It becomes an important factor in schooling because it influences the performance of students and teachers (Sarach, 1997) There are nine cognitive styles, as follows:

a. *Field dependence* versus *Field independence*: an analytical, in contrast to a global, way of perceiving (which) entails a tendency to experience items as discrete from their backgrounds and reflects ability to overcome the influence of an embedding context.

b. *Extensiveness* and *intensity* of attention deployment, leading to individual variations in the vividness of experience and the span of awareness.

c. *Broad inclusiveness* versus *narrow exclusiveness*, in establishing the acceptable range for specified categories

d. *Conceptual differentiation*, as well as *consistencies* in the utilization of particular conceptualizing approaches as bases for forming concepts (such as the routine use in concept formation of thematic or functional relations among stimuli as opposed to the analysis of descriptive attributes or the inference of class membership).

e. *Cognitive complexity* versus *simplicity* individual differences in the tendency to construe the world, and particularly the world of social behavior, in a multidimensional and discriminating way.

f. *Reflectiveness* versus *impulsivity* individual consistencies in the speed with which hypotheses are selected and information processed with impulsive subjects tending to offer the first answer that occurs to them, even though it is frequently incorrect, and reflective subjects tending to ponder various possibilities before deciding.

g. *Leveling* versus *sharpening* reliable individual variations to assimilation in memory. Subjects at the leveling extreme tend to blur similar memories and to merge perceived objects or events with similar but not identical events recalled from previous experience. Sharpeners, at the other extreme, are less prone to confuse similar objects and, by contrast, may even judge the present to be less similar to the past than is actually the case.

h. *Constricted* versus *flexible control*: individual differences in susceptibility to distraction and cognitive interference.

i. *Tolerance for incongruous or unrealistic experiences*: a dimension of differential willingness to accept perception at variance with conventional experience

From the nine cognitive styles suggested by Messick above, this study is intended to investigate field dependence and field independence because it is supported by a lot of theories that can be the basis of this study.

### **Field-Dependence and Field-Independence**

Keefe (1979) states that Field-dependence and field-independence is one dimension of cognitive styles which is the most researched of all of the learning styles dimension. Field-dependence and field-independence measures whether the learner uses an "*analytical* as

opposed to a *global* way of experiencing the (subject matter) environment”, and this style has a great implication for improving the learning process .

In addition, field-independent learner appears to be more active, autonomous, self motivated, and task-oriented in their approaches to life. These individuals have the ability to analyze information from the learning situation and solve problems independently. The analytical-oriented learners resist distractions that would adversely affect their educational experience and have a longer attention span and greater reflectivity than global learners. They tend to be more sedentary and prefer formal learning situations, viewing the instructor merely as a source of information. They are competitive, achievement - oriented, and impersonal.

The characteristics of field-dependent and field-independent learners are summarized by Garger and Guild (1987). These are illustrated in the following table.

Table 1. Characteristics of Field dependent and Field Independent Learning Styles Field Dependence and Field Independence Description

<b>FIELD DEPENDENT</b>	<b>FIELD-INDEPENDENT</b>
Perceives globally	Perceives analytically
Experiences in global fashion adheres to structures as given	Experiences in an articulate fashion, imposes structures of restrictions
Makes broad general distinctions among concepts, sees relationships	Makes specific concept distinctions little overlap
Social orientation	Impersonal orientation
Learns material with social content best	Learns social material only as an intentional task
Attends best to material relevant to own experience	Interested in new concepts for their own sake
Requires externally defined goals and reinforcements	Has self-defined goals and reinforcements
Needs organization provided	Can self-structure situations

### Hypotheses

This research was conducted in order to prove the hypotheses of this study. Alternative Hypotheses of this study are as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>1: There is a significant difference of speaking ability between the students who are taught using role play and those taught using group discussion.

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant difference of speaking ability between the students who are taught using role play and those taught using group discussion.

H<sub>1</sub>2: There a significant difference of speaking ability between field independent students who are taught using role play and those taught using group discussion;

H<sub>0</sub>2: There no significant difference of speaking ability between field independent students who are taught using role play and those taught using group discussion;

H<sub>1</sub>3: There is a significant difference of speaking ability between field dependent students who are taught using role play and those taught using group discussion;

H<sub>0</sub>3: There is no significant difference of speaking ability between field dependent students who are taught using role play and those taught using group discussion;

H<sub>1</sub>4: There is a significant difference of speaking ability between field independent students who are taught using role play and those of field dependent students who are taught using role play.

H<sub>0</sub>4: There is no significant difference of speaking ability between field independent students who are taught using role play and those of field dependent students who are taught using role play.



H<sub>15</sub>: : There is a significant difference of speaking ability between field independent students who are taught using group discussion and field dependent students who are taught group discussion.

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference of speaking ability between field independent students who are taught using group discussion and field dependent students who are taught group discussion.

H<sub>16</sub>: There is an interaction between speaking learning techniques and cognitive styles in effecting the students' speaking ability.

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no interaction between speaking learning techniques and cognitive styles in effecting the students' speaking ability.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This research is quantitative and also is classified as experimental research, using pre test and post test control group design. The purpose of this research is to find out the effect of speaking learning techniques, that is role play and group discussion and cognitive styles that is field dependence and field independence on students' speaking ability. In this case, the experiment group is a group that is treated using role play and the control group is a group that is treated using group discussion. 90 students were involved in this study.

To identify the effect of the treatment, a pretest and a post test were conducted. The design of the research is as follows:

Table 2. Research Design

LT (A) \ CS (B)	ROLE PLAY (A <sub>1</sub> )	GROUP DISCUSSION (A <sub>2</sub> )	ΣB
Field Dependence (B <sub>1</sub> )	X <sub>11</sub>	X <sub>12</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>
Field Independence (B <sub>2</sub> )	X <sub>21</sub>	X <sub>22</sub>	X <sub>20</sub>
ΣA	X <sub>01</sub>	X <sub>02</sub>	X <sub>00</sub>

Note:

A : Speaking learning techniques

A<sub>1</sub> : Role play

A<sub>2</sub> : Group discussion

B : Cognitive styles

B<sub>1</sub> : Field dependence

B<sub>2</sub> : Field independence

X<sub>11</sub> : The result of field dependent students who are taught speaking skill by using role play

- $X_{12}$  : The result of field dependent students who are taught speaking skill by using group discussion.
- $X_{21}$  : The result of field independent students who are taught speaking skill by using role play
- $X_{22}$  : The result of field independent students who are taught speaking skill by using group discussion.

The steps in doing this experiment is as follows:

1. The students were classified into two cognitive styles: students who are field dependent and those who are field independent. This is done using the assessment in a form of questionnaire. It was adopted from the weekly column 102 article, June 2002 written by Robert Wyss. It was identified that from the total numbers of students there were 32 field independent students and 58 field dependent students;
2. After that she took the sample out of the population in equal number of students which were 24 field independent and 24 field dependent students by using drawing technique.
3. And then she gave pre test to the sample, to find out their speaking ability before they were treated. The pretest was in a form of controlled oral test. There were two examiners.
4. After doing the pretest, the students were put into four groups, they were;
  - a. Twelve (12) field independent students who were treated using role play;
  - b. Twelve (12) field independent students who were treated using group discussion;
  - c. Twelve (12) field dependent students who were treated using role play;
  - d. Twelve (12) field dependent students who were treated using role play;
5. Finally, after having been treated the students were given a post test. Just like the pre test, post test was also in the form of oral test.

## RESULTS ANF DISCUSSION

### Description of the Data

In this research, the researcher collected six types of data, first is the scores of students' speaking ability who were taught using role play, the scores of students' speaking ability who were taught using group discussion, the scores of field independent students' speaking ability who were taught using role play, the scores of field independent students' speaking ability who were taught using group discussion, the scores of field dependent students' speaking ability who were taught using role play, the scores of field dependent students' who were taught using group discussion. The students' scores in general are shown in the following table:

Table 4.1. The Result of Descriptive Research Data

	Role play (A <sub>1</sub> )		Group Discussion (A <sub>2</sub> )		ΣB	
	n <sub>11</sub>	12	n <sub>12</sub>	12	n <sub>10</sub>	24
Field independence (B <sub>1</sub> )	Σ X <sub>11</sub>	913	Σ X <sub>12</sub>	699	Σ X <sub>10</sub>	1612
	ΣX <sup>2</sup> <sub>11</sub>	69637	Σ X <sup>2</sup> <sub>12</sub>	40841	ΣX <sup>2</sup> <sub>10</sub>	110478
	X <sub>11</sub>	76,08	X <sub>12</sub>	58,25	X <sub>10</sub>	67,17
	n <sub>21</sub>	12	n <sub>22</sub>	12	n <sub>20</sub>	24

Field dependence (B <sub>2</sub> )	$\sum X_{21}$	677	$\sum X_{22}$	724	$\sum X_{20}$	1401
	$\sum X^2_{21}$	38457	$\sum X^2_{22}$	43786	$\sum X^2_{20}$	82243
	$X_{21}$	56,42	$X_{22}$	60,33	$X_{11}$	58,38
$\Sigma A$	$n_{01}$	24	$n_{02}$	24	$n_{00}$	48
	$\sum X_{01}$	1590	$\sum X_{02}$	1423	$\sum X_{00}$	3013
	$\sum X^2_{01}$	108094	$\sum X^2_{02}$	84627	$\sum X^2_{00}$	192721
	$X_{01}$	66,25	$X_{02}$	59,29	$X_{00}$	62,77

### The Findings of the Research

The result of the hypotheses test above can be described as follows:

1. Students' speaking ability between students who were taught using role play and group discussion is significant different.
2. Speaking ability between students whose cognitive style is field independence taught using role play and those whose cognitive style is field independence taught using group discussion is significant different.
3. Speaking ability between students whose cognitive style is field dependence taught using role play and those whose cognitive style is field dependence taught using group discussion is significant different .
4. Speaking ability between students whose cognitive style is field independence taught using role play and those whose cognitive style is field dependence taught using role play is significant different.
5. Speaking ability between students whose cognitive style is field independence taught using group discussion and those whose cognitive style is field dependence taught using group discussion is significant different.
6. There is interaction between speaking learning techniques (role play and group discussion) and cognitive styles (field independence and field dependence) in influencing the students' speaking ability.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the study, it can be concluded that students who have cognitive style field independent have better speaking ability compared to those with cognitive style field dependent using both techniques role play and group discussion. While students with cognitive style field dependent have better speaking ability when they were taught using group discussion compared to when they were taught using group discussion.

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