

Analysis of the Differences between Field-Independence and Field-Dependence in Junior High School English Teaching

Yitong Yin

China West Normal University

Published: 29 February 2020

Copyright © Yin.

Abstract:

Individual differences in foreign language learning determine learners' learning behaviors. Differences in cognitive style play a crucial role in the success of second language acquisition. Students are distinguished by cognitive style, and there are two kinds of students with their own characteristics, field-dependent and field-independent. Therefore, in English teaching, we should adopt different teaching strategies according to field-dependent and field-independent students to maximize the learning benefits of them. In this paper, the author has made a simple analysis of the field-dependent and field-independent students, hoping to help the future education and teaching work.

Keywords: English teaching, cognitive styles, field-dependent, field-independent

摘要: 在外语学习中个体差异因素决定着学习者的学习行为,认知风格的差异对第二语言习得的成功起着至关重要的作用。学生按认知风格来区分,存在场依存型和场独立型两种各有其特点的学生。所以在英语教学中,我们应该根据场依存型和场独立型的学生采取不同的教学策略以使学生的学习效益的最大化。在文中,笔者对场依存型和场独立型两种类型进行了浅显的分析,希望能有助于以后的教育教学工作。

关键字: 英语教学 认知方式 场依存型 场独立型

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Cognitive style refers to the way in which the individual prefers to process information in cognitive activities, that is, in the way of the individual's perception, attention, thinking, memory and problem solving. At present, many researches have been done about field-independent and field-dependent cognitive methods, impulsive and contemplative cognitive methods. Psychologists say the external environment is a field. Therefore, in order to correctly understand the field-independent and field-dependent cognitive styles, it is possible to implement English teaching pertinently according to the student's situation. Teachers should treat students with different cognitive styles differently, and provide each student with the opportunity to choose and develop independently. Teachers should encourage students to integrate and develop another cognitive style while improving their preferred cognitive styles to achieve the effectiveness of English learning.

1.2 Purpose and Significance

In today's educational work, in the face of different types of students, if teachers can not adopt the corresponding teaching strategies, it will not be conducive to students' learning. For this purpose, people began to study it very early. "Field" is a concept of cognitive psychology, which refers to a series of thoughts and emotions expressed considering a particular problem. The two concepts of field independence and field dependence are derived from the study of perception by American psychologist H.A.Witkin.

Field-independent people are rarely influenced by the environment and others when they recognize things, and show greater interest and ability in the abstraction of various things and behaviors. In contrast, the field-dependent people are greatly influenced by the environment and others, especially like to refer to other people's views and behaviors. Field-independent people tend to view things in an analytical way, while field-dependent people tend to consider things in a holistic manner. These two people also have obvious differences in learning methods and strategies.

In foreign countries, there are two different views on the relationship between field-dependence and field-independence. F.L.Evans believed that the degree of correlation between the two is very high, while B.L.Fine believed that the two are not related, they are two different qualities. Chinese Professor Zhang Houyi believed that there is no significant correlation between the two, and it can be considered as two different qualities or dimensions of personality. However, there is a certain degree of

consistency between the two, therefore, they restrict and interact with each other, and coexist in the unity of personality.

This paper briefly describes the connotation of the cognitive style of field independence and field dependence, analyzes its different cognitive characteristics and corresponding learning behaviors, and points out the significance in English teaching, aiming to understand the cognitive style of students and effectively guide junior high school students' English learning.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Definition of Field-dependence and Field-independence

Hua Liqun and Xiong Lijun (2009) proposed that the "field" refers to the surrounding environment, which has different degrees of influence on human perception. Field-dependent people tend to focus macroscopically when they view things, and it is easy to ignore the specific factors of the problem when dealing with it. Field-dependent and field-independent types are classified according to cognitive style. H.A. Witkin has learned through experimental research that some people have strong perceptions and like to use the environmental information around them, while others prefer to use their own internal information. So Witkin called the field-independent type that is not easily affected by environmental factors, and the field-dependent type that is susceptible to environmental factors.

Zhang Xiaoling and Zhang Xiaomin (2007) believed that cognitive style is the preferred information processing method in individual cognitive activities. Field-independent and field-dependent cognitive styles are the core of cognitive style. Sun Dandan (2013) believes that cognitive style is a relatively stable learning style and attitude formed by learners in the process of learning, understanding, transforming, storing and utilizing language information. For Chinese students, they have different cognitive styles, and the most common in second language acquisition are the field-independent and field-dependent cognitive styles.

2.1.1 Field-dependent Students

Field-dependent types are accustomed to using external references as a basis for information processing, and it is difficult for them to get rid of the influence of environmental factors. Their attitudes and self-perception are more susceptible to interference from people around them, especially authorities. For the processing of information, it is preferred of them to use external objects for reference. They are more accustomed to using external things as a reference to judge their own behaviors and characteristics, especially in the case of dealing with ambiguous events. They are good at observing and watching, and paying attention to and remembering the social content of speech information. They have a greater interest in the people around them, and they are good at interacting with other people. It will be very easy for them to solve the problems that they have encountered before, but they always lack flexibility when solving new problems. They less show independent features and accept external cues more easily.

2.1.2 Field-independent Students

Field-independent students prefer to use the internal subjective factors and feelings to make reference. They are not good at coping with interpersonal relationships, and they are lack of sensitivity to information and social skills. When solving new problems, they can find the core of the problems easily, and flexibly use the existing knowledge network to solve new problems. They are subjective and self-centered. They like to be alone and carry on abstract thinking. They tend to show strong independence and autonomy.

In general, field-independent students tend to use their internal references when making judgments about objective things, and are not susceptible to external factors. They tend to process at a more abstract and analytical level in the cognitive process and independently judge things.

Studies have shown that field-independent and field-dependent types are mainly determined by genetic factors, and individuals generally remain relatively invariant in both characteristics. Field-dependent students have poor independence and are easily influenced by social factors, while field-independent ones have strong independence and are not easily affected by social factors. Field-dependent students find it difficult to reorganize information and identify the core of the problem, while field-independent students are more likely to find the core of the problem and easily reorganize the information. Field-dependent students are socially sensitive and motivated. They like social activities and actively participate in interpersonal interactions. On the contrary, field-independent students have low social sensitivity and do not like social activities.

2.2 Learning Behavior of Students with Different Cognitive Styles

Studies have shown that different cognitive styles can form different learning behaviors. For field-independent and field-dependent students, different learning strategies may be adopted by them when dealing with different people on different occasions.

2.2.1 Learning Behavior of Field-independent Students

Field-independent students like to study alone, and they tend to take part in competition to get affirmation. It is not easy for them to obey and feel the emotions of others. They rarely contact teachers actively, and their formal interaction with teachers is limited to classrooms and textbooks. After class, they rarely communicate with teachers. They also like to constantly try new learning, and rush to finish their homework without relying on the help of the teacher. They emphasize the concept of refinement and like personal research.

2.2.2 Learning Behavior of Field-dependent Students

Field-dependent students like to study with others. They are sensitive to others' opinions and emotions. For the relationship with the teacher, they may publicly express positive feelings towards the teacher, and they care about the teacher's personal hobbies and experiences, and will approach the teacher actively. They are eager to get the coaching and affirmation of the teacher and like to study with the teacher to get help. Their homework and courses need to be explained by teachers.

2.2.3 Advice for Students of Two Different Cognitive Styles

Because of the different cognitive styles of junior high school students, the way they behave in dealing with English learning is very different.

Field-independent students are good at analyzing the elements from the whole, and they tend to learn unstructured materials. They are interested in the natural sciences, and they are better at learning in this area. They don't like the influence of the outside world. They have their own opinions on the evaluation of others and are not interfered by the external environment. However, they tend to be impulsive and subjective. Such students should pay attention to the coordination of teacher's requirements with their own ideas, so that they can make their practices complementary to the outside world.

Field-dependent students are good at grasping the whole learning systematic materials. They are more inclined to study social sciences. They like to discuss with their peers or conduct cooperative learning. These people are easy to adapt to the environment and are welcomed by everyone. However, they are easily interfered by the external environment. They are more cautious, and not unwilling to take risks. When they are criticized, their enthusiasm for learning will decline. Such students should be less susceptible to the influence of others. Especially when others criticize, they can analyze the reasons and consider how they work hard to make progress.

In fact, students' learning styles are mostly between the two extremes. Zhang Jie (2014) believed that, in general, students who tend to be field-dependent will be better at doing something than students who are field-independent. In addition, students' cognitive styles are not static, and they are possible to switch.

2.3 Teaching Analysis for Two Types of Students

2.3.1 The Influence of Different Cognitive Styles on English Learning

It is generally believed that field-independent students are more likely to achieve good results in the English class, while field-dependent models are more rewarding in the natural learning environment. The former can take advantage of independence in each teaching session of the English class, independently and actively complete various learning tasks and make progress. The latter is more suitable for learning languages in various activities. With their good social communication skills, they can achieve optimal learning effects in interaction.

Both types of students have their own advantages, which can be reflected in the language test scores. For example, Xiao Xinxin (2012) concluded that high school students' English listening performance is positively correlated with field independence, and field-independent students' listening scores are higher than field-dependent ones. Liu Sanru (2014) proposed that the field-independent cognitive style has a significant positive correlation with high school students' English listening, reading, writing and comprehensive scores. Under the same English level, field-independent students can get higher scores in English test than field-dependent students. Teachers should also pay attention to these characteristics of students in the teaching process, and strive for the best results in accordance with their features.

2.3.2 Teaching Strategies for Students with Different Cognitive Styles

Linguists believe that field-independent and field-dependent cognitive styles can promote learning in different ways. Teachers should understand the cognitive styles of different students by analyzing the relationship between cognitive style and language learning. They should be familiar with students' learning habits, and create learning environments and conditions that adapt to each student's characteristics. In this way, students can be made to use appropriate speed and methods in the learning process, and achieve a defined teaching goal through joint efforts with teachers.

2.3.2.1. Learning Strategies for Field-independent Students

Fu Yao (2006) believed that the analytical tendency and cognitive reorganization skills of field-independent students are conducive to the formal language learning in class. They are usually quiet and introverted in class. Also, they are more analytical, inductive, and prominent in reading and writing. But they will pay too much attention to details and neglect the relationship between details and the whole. They are not keen on developing communication skills in the second language. In terms of English learning, field-independent students are interested in articles that are highly technical and logical. They prefer to listen and write.

Ma Tianhui (2012) said that different cognitive styles will inevitably lead students to adopt different strategies in the reading process. Field-independent students can receive information with higher reading speed and accuracy when reading English.

Field-independent students have strong autonomy. They believe their own opinions and opinions on the issues.

Bao Jiafu (2015) argued that for this type of students, teachers should pay attention to the authoritative image of their own. They are supposed to tell students the teaching goals exactly, and encourage them to learn and acquire knowledge and skills.

The author believes that teachers should give them full freedom and sufficient time to let them make their own learning plans and choose learning methods. Students should be made to find, analyze and solve problems by themselves. In addition, teachers respect their individual thoughts from the perspective of students, give them appropriate counseling, and do not impose their own way of thinking on students. At the same time, teachers can also encourage students to promote their progress through competition, and teachers only need to give guidance when they have difficulties. Teachers should pay attention to the details of the content, create opportunities for students to think independently, and encourage students to acquire knowledge and experience through discovery. Moreover, teachers should actively give them praise and reward when they finish learning tasks well.

2.3.2.2. Learning Strategies for Field-dependent Students

For field-dependent students, Fu Yao (2006) believes that they are interested in literary and descriptive articles. They prefer to listen and read. Field-dependent students are more susceptible to punishment. Deng Zhuo and Zeng Xiaoyou (2008) have found that field-independent students are not good at accepting prompts, while field-dependent students can promptly identify and correct problem

errors in the clues. However, in the case of misleading information, field-dependent students have difficulty in identifying and correcting errors.

Because field-independent students are better at dealing with interpersonal relationships, the author believes that teachers should give full play to their extroverted, enthusiastic personality and social skills, and let them learn English vividly in communication. For example, teachers should allow such students to conduct collaborative learning in class, such as group discussions, role-playing, and class debate competition, so that they can get information in time when cooperate with others, thus improving themselves. Most of the field-dependent students are active and good at communicating with others. Teachers don't have to worry about how to let them speak, but should pay attention to how to let them speak well.

In the process of learning, teachers should also pay attention to them from time to time to guide and correct. The teacher has to make a moderate praise when they do something well. But when they didn't manage to succeed, teachers should not over-criticize. In addition, because the field-dependent students have insufficient self-consciousness about study, teachers should appropriately remind them so that they can follow up in time.

2.3.2.3. Learning Strategies for Intermediate Students

Intermediate students, who combine the characteristics of the two different cognitive types, can both work collaboratively and think independently. They will rely on the teacher, and they can complete the learning task independently without the influence and help of the teacher. The teacher's praise will encourage them, but the teacher's criticism and punishment will not bring them too much impact.

For this type of student, the teacher's guidance can be carried out in two aspects. On the one hand, the student should understand that he has the advantage, that is, the ability to learn independently and the potential for active cooperation. On the other hand, teachers should start from the aspects they are interested in, cultivate and establish their self-confidence, and let them become active in class. Meanwhile, the teacher should try to generate students' interest and make them dare to speak. Also, the teacher should guide them to think independently and find problems.

2.4 Teachers Should Also Pay Attention to their Own Teaching Styles

Li Zhijun (2010) believed that as a teacher, only by discovering the teaching style of his own and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the two cognitive styles, can he avoid making superior or inferior value judgments on these two cognitive styles. And only in this way, can the teacher adopt appropriate teaching strategies to guide students to learn English better.

3. Conclusion

Field-independent and field-dependent learning styles, which are the core content of cognitive style, play an extremely important role in the choice of cognitive activities and learning strategies. Firstly, this paper introduces the connotation and characteristics of field-independent and

field-dependent learning styles. Then, it explains the impact of these two types of learning styles on English learning strategies. Finally, it points out that in the process of English learning and teaching, teachers should choose appropriate teaching strategies according to students' learning style to effectively improve their English proficiency.

Field-independent students are better at independent learning, while field-dependent students are better at cooperative learning. They are also very different in the areas they are good at. We can see from the above analysis that field-dependent and field-independent types have their own advantages and disadvantages, and they are good at different fields, so it cannot be said which type is absolutely excellent.

The diversity of cognitive styles determines the diversity of teaching methods. The differences in students' cognitive styles determine the different learning strategies and the choice of teachers' teaching strategies. Teachers should pay attention to the orientation of the students, teach them in accordance with their aptitude, and receive good teaching results.

References

- [1]鲍家福. 2015. “场独立、场依存在初中英语教学的运用策略”. 《读与写（教育教学刊）》.
- [2]邓铸, 曾晓尤. 2008. “场依存性认知方式对问题表征及表征转换的影响”. 《心理科学》.
- [3]付瑶. 2006. “场独立性和场依存性认知风格在外语教学中的意义”. 《济宁学院学报》.
- [4]华立群, 熊丽君. 2011. “场独立、场依存的认知风格对英语教学的启示”. 《华章》.
- [5]李稚君. 2007. “场独立/场依存的认知风格对中学生英语水平的影响”. 《新西部》.
- [6]刘三汝. 2014. “场独立/场依存认知风格对英语学习成绩的影响--以赣州市中心城区高二学生为例的定量研究”. 《赣南师范学院》.
- [7] 马天慧. 2012. “场独立与场依存型认知风格对于英语阅读的影响”. 《读与写（教育教学刊）》.
- [8]孙丹丹. 2013. “场独立、场依存认知风格对中职生英语教学的启示”. 《天津商务职业学院学报》.
- [9]肖欣欣. 2012. “高中生英语听力成绩与场独立/场依存认识风格相关性研究”. 《山东师范大学》.
- [10]张杰. 2014. “场独立型--场依存型认知方式与初中英语有效教学”. 《当代教育科学》.
- [11]张小玲, 张晓敏. 2007. “场独立性和场依存性认知风格与大学英语阅读教学”. 《湖北理工学院学报（人文科学社会版）》.