ABSTRACT

The main reason for differences in students’ achievements can be described as: Age, Language Aptitude, Social-Psychological factors, Personality, Hemisphere Specialization, Learning Strategies, Cognitive Styles and a few others. Learning theories try to describe the way individuals learn and what similar features there are in all learning. When all of us have naturally human talents of learning, every person treat a difficulty or learns some factors from a unique view. One of the main factors for the theory pointed out is based on cognitive difference in learning a foreign language which is categorized under three main components strategies, styles, and process utilized by learners. The effect of cognitive styles in learning a foreign language has received much attention in recent years. Field in/dependence is one kind of cognitive styles which was introduced by Witkin, et al. (1971) to resemble “the degree to which one perceives analytically or globally” (Hadley, 2003). The ability of a person to extract the ‘message’ or ‘signal’ from the ‘noise’ or irrelevant information or the cognitive restructuring ability is associated with field independent characteristics. Field independents have the ability to break a complex stimulus into separate elements and to give it a different structure or organization based on previous experiences or restructure it in their own way. If it is difficult to do such a thing, the person will be field dependent (Mancy & Reid, 2004).

In the same style, in language learning, the learners have to realize language items in their context and to get them and use them in new contexts (Stern, 1983). For example, the learner may experience situations in which s/he has to understand the meaning of a complex sentence or to comprehend the meaning of a word in its context and use it in other contexts. S/he may encounter with ill-structured sentences in the procedure of
language learning. In such situations, the field in/dependent cognitive style will bear effects on language learning.

Writing is a complicated cognitive process that the writer should handle a number of variables. Writing ability, as a part of language learning, has been studied from different angles. Different methods to teaching writing have been improved like the product approach, the process approach, the genre approach, and the process-genre approach (Badger & White, 2000). Writing is a complex task for both second and foreign language learners and for the native speakers. Furthermore, several reasons such as social, personal, cognitive, linguistic and cultural, L1 transfer, various modes of writing, viewers, methods of teaching writing, and foreign language proficiency have effects on writing.

Concerning the connections between field in/dependency and writing, Kinsella (1996) mentioned that learners with analytical characteristics (field independents) have easier accessibility to the traditional teaching approach a part of which is completing writing tasks. According to Entwistle (1988), on writing tasks, individuals with holistic cognitive style are more probably to use a universal approach of drafting and redrafting rather than filling an initial outline. They may experience difficulties in evaluating form and attending to task and deciding what is essential in the early stages. In other words, field independents make extra endeavors to brainstorm for approaching the subject. They may have difficulty in evaluating content (Town, 2003).

Farther more, the main purpose of reading a text as it has been mentioned by Chastain (1975) is comprehension. However, the very failing of many reading process is that comprehension is not achieved sufficiently, if anything occurs at all. It is mostly originated from ignoring the readers that are a main compound in the reading act (ibid.). The ignorance is primarily related to the readers’ differences and styles of
interaction with the contexts (or fields) they are reading which in turn leads them to
take a perspective of disinclination toward continuing the act. This fact is even more
problematic when language learning setting is concerned where the reader must not
only deal with a reading practice but also has to arrange bunch of a foreign language
words and structures. Whereas the willingness and engagement should be the most
important goal of instruction, since it enhances the quality of the process and as a result
the extent of comprehension (Lftody, 2006, cited in Salmani-Nodoushan; 2007). Two
of the most widely realized differences among the readers include Field Dependence
(FD) and Field Independence (FI), an understanding and awareness of which by both
the teachers and readers can develop the comprehension of the text to a great deals.
But, unfortunately, what is observed in Iranian educational settings is that the same
reading process are performed for the whole body of the ESL readers in the classrooms
no matter what the styles of them are – i.e. how they comprehend the unwritten
meaning (Ellis, 2008). It is clear that knowing how each learner works and conducts in
reading comprehension and comparing them will expose their probably weakness and
strength in reading comprehension. And it also will lead to all educational stakeholders
to take a correct approach and adapt instructional methods to cognitive style.

According to the objectives of the study, there was an attempt to see whether there is a
main difference between the performance of field dependents and field independents in
writing skill in general and the two approaches of process and product in particular.
Furthermore, it was explored whether there is any main difference between the
performance of field dependents and field independents in the ESL reading
comprehension test. the participants in the quasi experimental study consisted of 80
Iranian ESL students aged 25-33 studying in different colleges in Mysore City, India.
The type of sampling was convenience sampling, which is the most common type of sampling in SLA studies and the assignments of classes into two different treatment groups was done on a random basis. The treatment tasks included instructions of process and product approaches of writing for both A and B groups. The measurement instruments consisted of GEFT, Reading Comprehension Test, Feedback Survey, ownership questionnaire; general writing test and post-test essay writing were used in both groups. The reliability and validity of the instruments were established prior to the study and classes were also made homogenous in terms of linguistic proficiency based on a proficiency test for intermediate levels, which was administered before the Reading Comprehension test conducted and treatment started. The data for writing approaches essay writing test coded by a second competent rater to ensure the inter-rater reliability. The aim of this method is nothing but to help the students who can elevate their writing and reading proficiency through discovering their individual characteristics. Despite the fact that there are numerous opinions by teachers and scholars about the writing and reading proficiency of the EFL/ESL students of different cognitive styles who come from different cultural backgrounds in several countries, very few studies have explained the impact of cognitive style on writing ability. As demonstrated in this chapter, GEFT, reading comprehension test, treatment of product and process approaches of writing have been done in two experimental groups to investigate whether cognitive style affects their style of writing and reading comprehension ability. In addition as stated in previous part, cognitive style plays a significant role in accuracy and proficiency of EFL/ESL students in writing and reading comprehension and also impacts on adopting the writing approach. The answers to all research questions are positive and all the hypotheses have been accepted. Therefore, based on the study cognitive style affects students’ achievement in writing approaches and reading comprehension. This study proposes some implications
for ESL/EFL teaching environments. The assumptive implication of this research is that: student’s cognitive styles and differences should be taken in account in all pervasive theory of foreign or second language teaching and learning. However, cognitive procedures associated with second language learning are not simply investigated and realized; having a knowledge regarding cognitive styles enhances the comprehension of the essence of language learning procedure. The results may assist material designers and curriculum developers in paying attention to the role of cognitive styles in foreign language learning. Various subjects and syllabus should be prepared for students with every type of field-dependence/independence cognitive style (Nilforooshan & Afghari, 2007). Town (as cited in Nilforooshan & Afghari, 2007) believes that field-independents tend arbitrary, impersonal, systematic, and genuine materials, while field-dependents have tendency towards materials with individual, social, creative and amusing context.