

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **A. Background of the Study**

This study aimed to identify learning style preferences of the students at SMPN 1 Dagangan Madiun and their implication to English teaching. SMPN 1 Dagangan is one of the state secondary schools in Madiun Regency. It is located in Banjarsari Kulon Village, about 15 km from Madiun City, East Java. The school has 632 students and most of their parents are farmers. Living in a village makes the students tend to be ashamed and low motivated, especially in learning English. Thus they have many kinds of learning styles. The ways how to learn are influenced by their backgrounds; where they live, what their parents are and how they do their lives.

Classroom teachers and educators are aware that each student learns differently. Through education classes and constant discussion, educators are aware that by identifying each student learning style, teaching to his or her learning style and implementing curriculum that compliments student learning can improve on-task behavior and increase content knowledge. The thought of identifying each student learning style may seem impossible and time consuming. However, with the right instrument, that is quick and effective, the process will be much more approachable.

There is no easy way to master a language, particularly a language which is not our first language. This can be seen especially in countries where English is

learned as a second or foreign language like in Indonesia. In order to be a successful language learner, one must strive and search for new experiences and challenges, to develop a feel for the language and to find opportunities for constant practice. Apart from these, there are many other contributing factors that determine the success in learning the language.

In the process of learning the language, there are many variables that determine the success of a language learner. Language learning success is associated with a range of factors including age, gender, motivation, intelligence, anxiety level, learning strategies and language learning styles (Sharp, 2004). In a class made up of various learning styles, it is always necessary for the teachers, particularly the language teachers to identify, respect and work on the diversity of the learners' differences.

Some researches in the field of language teaching have been trying to find out teaching methods, classroom techniques, and instructional materials that will promote better language instruction. However, in spite of these efforts there has been a growing concern that the students have not progressed as much as it was hoped. Because there are considerable individual differences in language learning such as gender, age, social status, motivation, attitude, aptitude and culture. As results, what works for one student might not work for another. Grenfell and Harris (1999: 10) stated that "Methodology alone can never be a solution to language learning. Rather it is an aid and suggestion".

Having reached this conclusion some other people in the field changed the focus from language teaching methodology to the language learner and the

variables that affect language learning. Language Learning Strategies (LLS) have been one of the most popular aspects researches have focused on. Some variables that affect them including gender, achievement, motivation, career orientation, national origin, aptitude and learning styles have also been taken into consideration while doing research.

Today's teachers are well trained and they know that they have not succeeded as long as some students have not reached the objectives of their teaching. A knowledge and understanding of the learning process, the importance of sensorial stimuli and activity, and recognition of the significance of learning styles, will enable today's teachers to succeed in teaching English.

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that any individual student relies on a single style of learning. The reality is that humans learn through a variety of processes and all of them involve fundamental sensorial and motor components. What the teacher must realize is that some students require more sensorial or motor engagement than others in order to learn effectively. It has always been recognized, of course, that sensorial experience and activity are the fundamentals of anyone's learning process, whether the students and effective teachers have always provided the opportunity for these in their lesson plans. It is only in recent years, however, that educational theory has focused on learning styles as a way of helping students who are not achieving normal learning objectives. If some students do not succeed well by one approach, then perhaps they will do better by another.

The success of teaching-learning process is not only determined by how the teachers teach but also, most importantly and principally is determined by how the students learn. Language learning styles is one of the main factors that help determine how the students learn a second or foreign language. However, the students have different personalities so they learn in many ways or styles.

A study conducted by Stapa (2003) concerning teachers' awareness of ESP students' learning preferences discovered that students' tendency towards working in pairs or small groups was well perceived by teachers. On the same case, Kavaliauskiene (2003) conducted a study regarding the learners' methodological preferences for learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

In a more recent study, Felder and Silverman (2005) formulated a learning style model that comprises of four dimensions including sensing and intuitive learners, visual and verbal learners, active and reflective learners as well as sequential and global learners (as cited in Felder & Spurlin, 2005).

Later, another study was conducted by Hoque (2008) who investigated the learners' strategies and preferences in learning EFL in Bangladesh. It was discovered that most of the students studied English due to its curriculum requirement, and that they studied English just for the sake of examinations. Only a few number of students realized the actual need for English in practical life (Hoque, 2008).

The students of rural areas generally think that English is not a major priority and learning it would only add to their burden while studying for the examinations. Studies that were carried out found that even though the students

are going through the same curriculum, the level of English proficiency in rural schools is much lower than the level in the urban schools (Nooreiny et al., 2003; Shaari, 1987; as cited in Marlyna, Hua & Khazriyati, 2007).

SMP Negeri 1 Dagangan Madiun is one of the rural secondary schools in Madiun regency. Rural school students normally have lower self-efficacy in the English language as compared to their counterparts in the cities. This could be due to the poor facilities provided for English teaching and the under privileged status of living in terms of economy and ICT advantages. Another factor contributing to this scenario is that very little effort is put in particularly by the school management to motivate their students to be proficient in the language. Besides, parents and peer groups who do not have a positive outlook towards English tend to discourage and demotivate them to learn the language, and hence this affects the respondents' attitudes towards English (Noran et al., 1993; as cited in Rahil, Habibah, Cheong, Muhamad, Noreen & Maria, 2006).

The knowledge of students' learning styles may help teachers in handling the diversity of learner differences and learning styles among them and thus set a new guideline on how to better help them in achieving good performance in teaching English.

Moreover, the match between the students' learning styles and the teachers' teaching styles can enhance an effective teaching-learning process. Thus, it is important for teachers to be aware of their students learning styles. It is clear then that one factor which can lead to the success of a language teaching-learning process is the match between students' learning styles and the teaching methods

used by the teachers. Due to the importance of knowing the students` learning style and limited number of studies done on identifying the students` learning style difference, this study was conducted.

The design of this study was principally a case study. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984: 23). A good case is generally taken from real life and includes the following components: setting, individuals involved, the events, the problems, and the conflicts. Because cases reflect real-life situations, cases must represent good and bad practices, failures as well as successes. Facts must not be changed to expose how the situation should have been handled (Dooley, 2002: 337).

## **B. Limitation of Study**

This study is bound by the following delimitations:

1. The participants in this study were limited to 15 students of the third year (Class 9A and 9H) of SMPN 1 Dagangan Madiun in the 2013/014 academic year. They have 54 students. The students in class 9A were

identified as having the highest level in competence among the third years and the students in class 9H as having the lowest one. The researcher divided them into 3 groups of competence. Each group has 5 students. They are:

- a. High level competence students. They consist of 5 students who got 1<sup>st</sup> until the 5<sup>th</sup> rank in English test scores.
  - b. Middle level competence students. They consist of 5 students who got the 26<sup>th</sup> until the 30<sup>th</sup> rank in English test scores.
  - c. Low level competence students. They consist of 5 students who got the 50<sup>th</sup> until the 54<sup>th</sup> rank in English test scores.
2. This case study was limited to a small population of students and therefore it is not possible to generalize the results to all students.

### **C. Research Problem**

In this study, the researcher focused on a certain problems related to the effort to identify the students' learning style preferences and then find the ways how to implement the students' learning style in teaching English at SMPN 1 Dagangan Madiun. Based on the research statement, the writer raised some questions subsidiary research questions as follows:

1. Do the three level competence students have different learning styles?
2. What is the kind of learning style mostly applied by the high level competence students?

3. What is the kind of learning style mostly applied by the middle level competence students?
4. What is the kind of learning style mostly applied by low level competence students?
5. Are there any differences of using learning styles by the students based on gender?

#### **D. Objective of the Study**

1. To identify the differences of learning styles applied by the high level, middle level and low level competence students.
2. To figure out the kind of learning style mostly applied by the high level competence students.
3. To figure out the kind of learning style mostly applied by the middle level competence students.
4. To figure out the kind of learning style mostly applied by the low level competence students.
5. To find out the differences of using the learning styles by the students based on gender.

#### **E. Benefit of the Study**

This research was to identify the students' learning styles of SMPN 1 Dagangan Madiun and their implication in English teaching. The benefits were divided into two followings:



## 1. Theoretical

This study was expected to support and to add the referential knowledge on the students' learning styles and their implication in English teaching. This will elaborate the enhancement and effectiveness in the theory of language teaching.

## 2. Practical

- a. For the teachers, it was expected that the teachers can identify their students' learning styles and match them with their teaching methods in teaching English. It will stimulate in finding a new approach which is appropriate for teaching English based on the students' learning styles. It also helps the teachers to do their jobs professionally and innovatively in teaching English. Further, it will encourage them to develop creativity in improving teaching learning process, and improving the teachers' capability in conducting teaching learning process in the classroom.
- b. For the students, the study can enhance students' language acquisition in relation to learning motivation. It will improve the students' capability in learning English. The students have motivation to learn English better and because their teachers teach them in accordance with the ways how they learn.