CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the basic idea which is related to the introduction of the study. It presents background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of the key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

In educational domain, both English and its grammar are learnt in order to be applied in real life communication. Students are likely to understand the grammar for it is the basic component of language. Understanding the grammatical rules of language will help the students master other English skills such as speaking and writing more easily. ‘So, no one can tell you that grammar is irrelevant, or the grammar is no longer needed in a CLT framework. No one doubts the prominence of grammar as an organizational framework within which communication operates’ (Brown, 2001: 362). Thus, because grammar seems to be a soul which arranges and organizes the rules system of any language sentences, our language will be chaotic without mastering it.

However, learning grammar of second language is not easy for the foreign learners. Swan (2005) argued that English, especially its grammar, is full of problems for foreign learners which can cause difficulties even for advance students and teachers. He added, ‘Foreign pupils often meet the difficulty in understanding the use of present perfect and past tense and the differences between at, on and in with expressions of place’ (Swan. 2005: 8). Both teachers and students are facing serious
difficulties in teaching and learning grammar based on their perspective. Sometimes, grammar can create the confusion between teachers and students because both of them need inseparability in having to identify the grammar and its complicated terms, understanding how it works, and applying it in communication.

Consequently, since the learning of grammar is not easy, teachers are demanded to understand and eradicate the problems occurred in the learning and teaching activity of grammar. They should train and develop their knowledge in order to find the way of helping to solve their students’ difficulties. A trained teacher will be able to identify the possible causes and the reasons why their students are not learning well. A trained teacher also will understand their each student’s needs. According to Coffield, at.al (2004) if the teachers want to reach a success in both improving their pupils’ performance and solving their pupils’ difficulties, they should pay attention to the individual necessities. Therefore, Instructors need to choose the most appropriate method, deliver the lessons effectively, concern of students’ academic development, and try to match the teaching activity with students’ needs in order to achieve the goal of the teaching and learning activity.

Identifying pupils’ needs means detecting their characteristic and their preference in learning that is called style. According to Herod (2004), Learning styles are the ways the person takes in, understands, expresses, and remembers information. Another definition states, ‘Learning style is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others’ (Oxford. 2003: 2). Every student has his or her own style in taking and processing the information. Students will choose their own
learning style since it makes them enjoy and easy to gain and process the subject given. Not all of the teaching activities that are given by the instructors will be compatible for all students. Therefore, it is necessity for educators to recognize their each student’s learning style in order to avoid the mismatch between themselves and the students in the class.

Experts believe that learning styles are vital to be known by the instructors if they want to reach a success in the class. Gilakjani (2012) stated that each teaching strategy that is appropriate for students’ learning styles can influence students’ attainment. Other expert states,

The key to successful learning and working is knowing one’s unique personal learning or working style, accepting one’s strengths as well as one’s weaknesses, and matching personal preferences as much as possible in any learning, or work situation (Prashnig. 2004: 5).

Therefore, pinpointing students’ learning styles is one of the most vital stages which the teachers should take in demand to exterminate the students’ learning difficulties. If there is a correlation between learning style and instructors’ strategy, the equivalent between them can generate the success in achieving teaching and learning goals. However, mismatch between them will create serious problems in teaching and learning activities. In addition, the incongruity of learning style and teaching strategy can cause the low achievement of some students for they do not feel comfortable in the class.

Students with low achievement can be categorized as low achievers. Low achievers are pupils who have limited abilities due to different reasons in the education process (Bakr, 2011). Occasionally, students with low achievement do not
perform well in the classroom and do not get an achievement as expected by the teacher. In this case, they cannot achieve the minimum standard of scores. Sometimes it is due to their life background, environment, illiterate parents, being avoided by the parents in early childhood, and inadequate teachers.

Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that students’ difficulties, students’ achievement, and students’ learning styles have a positive correlation with what the teachers do in the class. Learning styles take the important role in successful learning and teaching since they are the preferable ways for students to accept the information easily. Hence, the researcher is interested in doing the investigation of low achiever students’ learning styles in structure class of English department of university of Muhammadiyah Malang.

A recent research on students’ learning styles done by Aminah (2012) entitled “A Study of Learning Style of English Department Student Academic Year 2008/2009 at University of Muhammadiyah Malang” found that the students mostly applied a visual style (63%) in learning English. Kurniawati (2008) “A Study on the Students Learning Style in learning English at SMA NEGERI 1 Kawedanan, Magetan” found that the most dominant learning style in learning English at SMA Negeri 1 Kawedanan Magetan, was the auditory learning style. On the other hand, Hastani (2011) investigated the teacher’s teaching strategies based on the students’ learning styles entitled “A Study on Teacher’s Strategy Based on Students’ Learning Style at SMAN 2 Batu”. Her finding showed that the expository strategy was more effective for students with visual and auditory learning styles. Then, another previous research on learning styles had been done by Syaro (2012) study about “A Study of
Learning Styles Used by Digital Native Learners at SMP NEGERI 2 Sukapura, Probolinggo”. Her finding indicated that the kind of learning styles mostly used by digital native learners at SMP N 2 Sukapura was kinesthetic.

The researcher is interested to examine the low achievers’ learning styles in Structure class because they are learning about the course in this class. As previously stated, learning grammar is not easy; therefore, knowing the low achievers’ learning styles may have been the appropriate way for the lecture to reduce the students’ difficulties in learning structure. In addition, the Indonesian EFL learners still make many errors in grammar such as the types of morphological and syntactic errors (Mardijono, 2003). These are the reasons why the researcher would like to do the research entitled “Low Achiever Students’ Learning Styles in Structure Class at English Department of university of Muhammadiyah Malang.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

The problems of this research are formulated as follows:

1. What learning styles do low achiever students use in structure class at English department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang?

2. What problems do low achiever students face in applying their learning style in structure class at English department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang?

3. How do low achiever students solve their problems in applying their learning styles in structure class at English department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang?
1.3 Purpose of the Study

Related to the statement of the problems, the purposes of this research are stated as follows:

1. To investigate the learning styles used by the low achiever students in structure class at the English department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

2. To investigate the problems faced in applying their learning style in structure class at English department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

3. To investigate the students’ solutions of their problems in applying their learning style in structure class at English department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The result of this research is hoped to give a contribution for both teachers and students in relation to the teaching learning process of Structure class. For the teachers, by knowing the learning styles of their students who have low achievement in structure, they can select appropriate or more effective strategies for the teaching and learning process. Consequently, teachers can take the right stages in helping and curing their students’ problems by adapting student’s preferences in studying.

For the students, it is hoped that they can identify their strengths and weaknesses in studying grammar by knowing their learning styles. Then, they can adapt it with their learning strategies in order to be successful in learning grammar. In addition, the result of this research will be useful for academic reference especially for the next researchers.
1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this research is focused on the analysis of learning styles, the students’ problems and their solutions of the problems in applying their learning styles in structure class at English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang. It is limited on the students of second semester in structure class at English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang in academic year 2013/2014.

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

1. **Learning** is relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs through experience (Santrock, 2001: 238)

2. **Style** is a term that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual (Brown, 2000: 113)

3. **Learning styles** are not abilities; rather, they are preference in how people use their abilities (Santrock, 2001). Learning styles are the students approach in taking and gathering the information based on their like and preferences.

4. **Low achievers** are those pupils who have limited abilities due to different reasons in the education process. Sometimes it is due to their life background, illiterate parents, environment, being avoided by the parents in early childhood, and inadequate teachers (Bakr, 2011). **Low achievers** can be determined as the students who reported a GPA below 2.5 (McCoach, 2001). In this research, students who get the score 60 or below based on the structure assessment are categorized as low achiever students.