CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problems, significance of the study, purpose of the study, definition of the key terms, and scope and limitation.

1.1 Background of the Study

We speak a language in daily communication to share ideas, exchange knowledge and be able to communicate with other people. English as one of international languages is being spoken and learned over two and a quarter billion people across the world. The importance of English language in any skill in global industries shows an increasing level. Language learners can study independently or choose one of several preferences such as joining English clubs, English course programs, or study intensively at English Department in a university level.

Learning any subject particularly a language is commonly not easy. "Learning is a process in which the learners (students, parents, and teachers) interact with the effective environment to produce a stable change in behavior” (Worell and Stilwell: 1981). Every learner has different a way in following and understanding the materials given by the teacher. According to Petty and Jensen (1980), “Some basic factors of learners which might interfere upon achievement in a study include their mental abilities, physical characteristics, sex, home and other environmental contexts, and ethnic and also economic backgrounds”. The other different characteristics of learner such as learning habit and learning strategies might lead them to succeed in learning or even to a failure.
A learning process in a classroom is certainly conducted by the teacher and learners. In order to meet the learning objective, the teacher in classroom must help the students master the lesson effectively by employing the best methods or concepts of teaching including the use of creative media to accommodate different individual ways of learning. Brophy and Putnam (1979) describe, “An effective teacher is person who is able to remain calm in crises, listen actively without being defensive, avoid win-lose conflicts, and maintain a problem-solving orientation rather than resorting to withdrawal, blaming, or other emotional reactions”. Considering that the teacher in classroom has applied one teaching method to his students, consequently not every student is able to follow and understand every material given because of several specific causes or issues.

The importance of identifying individual ways of learning is that by understanding and analyzing learners’ style in learning, it will help the learner achieve their goals in studying and absorbing knowledge in a better way so that the development of study shows improvement. Learning English will find a problem if learners do not have any specific learning style. Ryan and Cooper state:

Learning style is the latest in a long line of concepts that give us a more sophisticated view of the learner. It is a powerful concept in that it directs the teacher’s attention to the fact that different students process information in different ways (1984:100).

Additionally, various researchers also stated that in order to improve student ability in mastering a subject, particularly English, teachers should assess the learning styles of their students and adapt their classroom methods to best fit each student’s learning style.

Related to this issue, the writer would like to present a report on a study of learning style of English Department students academic year 2008/2009 at University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The study is primary designed to provide a clear description about the most preferences and dominant learning style of English Department students in learning the subject.
I.2 Statement of the Problems

The problems in the study entitled “A Study of Learning Style of English Department Student Academic Year 2008/2009 at University of Muhammadiyah Malang” are as follows:

1. What learning styles do the students apply in their study at English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang?
2. What is the most dominant learning style the students consider to apply in their study at English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang?

I.3 Purpose of the Study

The primary purposes of this descriptive study are:

1. To describe the learning style students apply in their study at English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang.
2. To identify the most dominant learning styles student apply in their study at English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

I.4 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to be useful for the writer and the reader in general, which can be concisely depicted as follows:

1. Extending a better understanding about learning style
2. Providing an insight for the reader to know more about the categories of learning style which can help in improving student ability in studying English in particular and other substantial subject in general.
I.5 Definition of the Key Terms

The writer presents the definition of key terms to avoid misunderstanding of the basic concepts used in this study.

1. Learning is a stable change in behavior as a person interacts with specific environment stimulation

2. Learning style is one of various approaches or ways of learning which involve educating methods and particular to an individual

I.6 Scope and Limitation

There are numerous themes and topics about learning style and its categories used in language comprehension or other substantial field which is really interesting to be further studied and discussed. However, this study is only focus on varieties type of learning style. The writer limits her discussion only in the part of what is the most dominant categories of learning style of the students which can give influence and help to improve their skill and ability in studying the subject.