

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

English language education has gained attention as part of the efforts to strengthen students' language skills. In this context, the role of gender in the English language learning process emerges as an intriguing issue to investigate. According to a study by Karpova, et al. (2019), gender differences in learning styles can influence how students absorb information and interact in learning environments, which in turn can impact their academic performance (Karpova, E., et al. 2019). If teachers in English classes know about the different ways that students learn best, they can help their students have better learning experiences.

Knowing about the different ways that people learn can help students learn and grow as people. If teachers know about the different ways that students learn, they can better help their students do well in school. Because of this, both teachers and students will benefit from getting helpful feedback on how they're doing in class. When teachers really understand the different ways that students learn, they can use a learner-centered curriculum plan more effectively. Finding out which learning style works best for each student can make their school years much better. For young learners, the way they learn is a good sign of how well they will do in school, according to research. There was a link between how hard students worked in school and the way they learned. Researchers have discovered that students do better in school when they know their strengths, such as their

preferred learning style, and how to make the most of those skills (Rahman, & Ahmar, 2017; Indreica, Cazan, & Truta, 2011).

Learning style and gender are topics that have been researched for a long time. Some studies highlight the importance of learning styles in learning. In terms of gender, it is proven that students have differences in implementing learning styles in the learning process. The way or learning style of students affects the success of the learning process. To understand the learning material, students can apply learning styles that fit their personalities and choose a comfortable style. Learning involves a process of seeing, observing, and understanding something, which turns into understanding knowledge. In the learning process, students will experience the process of acceptance and information management. Many researchers have worked on how gender affects learning styles. Males are more visual, more inspired by their peers, and learn less by listening than females. On the other hand, females are more auditory and learn better while silent (Tatarinceva, 2009, as cited in Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014).

Moreover, Tannen (1992) states that male students prefer doing learning tasks that involve talking in public settings more because they feel obligated to create or preserve their position in the group. Otherwise, female students prefer talking more in private settings because they see conversation as a significant way of maintaining relationships. In addition, females are better than males at language learning tasks relating to remembering verbal information, faces, names, and object locations (Viriya & Sapsirin, 2014). According to Wehrwein, Lujan, and DiCarlo (2007), most male students preferred multimodal instruction, precisely

four modes (VARK), while most female students preferred single-mode instruction, with a preference for the kinesthetic type. It showed that students have significantly different learning styles.

Various models have been created to explain learning styles, each grounded in different theoretical perspectives on learning. Certain models emphasize experiential and cognitive processing, such as Kolb's experiential learning theory, while others focus on perceptual and cognitive dimensions, as reflected in the Felder–Silverman learning style model. In addition, the Dunn and Dunn learning style model highlights environmental and physiological factors that influence learning, whereas Honey and Mumford's model categorizes learners based on their approaches to experience and reflection. Within this range of theoretical frameworks, the VARK model developed by Fleming concentrates specifically on learners' instructional preferences in receiving information through visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic modalities. Among those models, Visual, Auditory, Read-write, and Kinesthetic (VARK) is a questionnaire developed by New Zealand educator Neil Fleming (Fleming, Mills (1992). Thus, the use of the term *various* is academically justified, as learning styles are conceptualized through multiple models, with this study adopting the VARK model due to its relevance to classroom-based language learning.

VARK is a short, simple questionnaire designed to help students learn more effectively and to help faculty members become more sensitive to the diversity of teaching strategies necessary to reach all students (Anjali, N. et al., 2016). Learners with a V (visual) preference learn best by seeing or observing (drawings,

pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, and the like.). Listening to or recording lectures, sharing content, and talking about the material with themselves or others are the best ways for A (auditory) learners to understand. R (read-write) type learners learn through interactions with textual materials. K-style (kinesthetic) uses physical involvements such as touching, performing an activity, moving, lessons emphasizing action, and manipulating objects to help students achieve their best results.

All of these sensory modes of learning can be used by student learners; however, each student has a distinct preference, or collection of preferences, in which one mode is frequently dominant (Coffield et al., 2004, as cited in Wehrwein et al., 2007). Learners who favor a single learning style are called unimodal, and those who prefer a range of styles are referred to as multimodal.

Based on observations at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan reveal notable differences in how male and female students interact in English classes. Female students are more active in group discussions and tend to be more open in asking questions, while male students often prefer to work independently. This creates challenges for teachers in fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. Research by Rahman and Sari (2022) highlights the importance of approaches that consider gender differences in teaching to enhance student engagement and achievement (Rahman, A., & Sari, D. 2022).

Although preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan indicate distinct gender-based disparities in classroom interaction patterns, such as female students' greater propensity for collaborative discourse and male students'

inclination toward independent work, the underlying pedagogical reasons for these differences remain inadequately explored. The current understanding is primarily descriptive, noting the behavioral manifestations without a corresponding empirical investigation into the foundational learning style preferences that may precipitate them. This study seeks to address this gap by systematically examining the dominant learning styles, as defined by the VARK model, among male and female students. The objective is to transcend superficial observation by identifying the cognitive and perceptual preferences that underpin these classroom behaviors and elucidating the factors responsible for this divergence.

This study aims to explore the relationship between male and female students learning styles in the context of English language education, as well as to provide recommendations for developing more effective and inclusive teaching methods. By understanding the gender gap in students learning styles, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of more effective English language teaching strategies at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan. This study is also anticipated to serve as a reference for further research in the field of English language education in Indonesia.

1.2 Problems of the Study

The problems of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What learning styles is dominant in male and female students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan?

2. What factors influence the gap learning styles of male and female students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems of the study above, the objectives of this study as follows:

1. To identify the dominants learning styles between male and female students at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan.
2. To analyze factors that caused the gap of learning styles based on gender among students.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Percut Sei Tuan, focusing on the eighth-grade students. The research has involved qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to gather data on the experiences of both male and female students regarding their learning styles in English language learning. This study specifically look at the learning style factors of male and female students.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This finding of the study would be expected to have both theoretical and practical perspective. The significances are as follows.

a. Theoretically

This study will be helpful for the author to increase knowledge about the learning styles based on gender related to learning English language and will be helpful to contribute to a deeper understanding of the learning styles between male and female students. The study results can be used as a reference for those who want to do more in-depth research on learning styles between male and female students in learning English language..

b. Practically

This study is intended to be valuable for:

1. Researcher

This study contributes to deeper understanding of male and female students' learning styles specifically in English classroom. The findings are expected to serve as reference for future researchers who are interested in exploring similar topics. The study also encourages further investigation using alternative research methods to expand knowledge in the fields of English learning

2. Students

This study is intended to furnish more information of male and female students' learning styles in learning English classroom. The results of this study is intended to furnish more insights for teachers about male and female students' learning styles in English classroom. The research also aims to assist teachers in managing their English classroom more effectively to encourage better in teaching

3. Other researchers

This study is expected to be useful as a reference for future researchers who are interested in exploring similar topics. The study also encourages further investigation using alternative research methods to expand knowledge in the field of English classroom.

