

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Background of the Study

Learning is the process of gaining and retaining knowledge in a way that suits the individual. The learner starts to reflect further upon what is learned to decide whether or not it might turn out to be useful in the future (Rossum et.al, 2010). In traditional classroom, learners typically did not learn how to become better language learners on their own once they left a school or college. While they learned how to memorize individual words and grammatical patterns, and to practice them in contrived context, the underlying strategies behind the classroom tasks were rarely made explicit. As a result, students rarely learned how to make use of this stored knowledge in an organized and creative way. Ways of learning language better and more effectively was not on the pedagogical agenda, and practice was therefore often unfocused and not directed at those skills they need to improve (Nunan, 2002 : 82).

Learning style is one of important things in students' learning process. Learning styles refers to "an individual's natural habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skill." (Kinsella, 1995, p. 171). These styles seem to persist regardless of the context you are trying to master (e.g., learning to fly an airplane vs. learning another language) or the method of instruction you are given (e.g., straight lecture vs. problem-solving, small group work). Whether you know it or not you also have preferred ways of

absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Dunan, 2003 : 268).

Researchers from around the world have different opinions when it comes to their personal views about learning styles. Some believe they exist and are important to enhance student learning while others disregard the subject.

Wang (2007: 409) defines “learning style as an individual’s preferred or habitual ways of processing the knowledge and transforming the knowledge into personal knowledge”. It is an educational condition under which a student is most likely to learn. Thus, learning style is not really concerned with what the learners learn, but rather how they prefer to learn the materials. Furthermore, each person has his or her own best way to learn, governing how they prefer to receive and process the knowledge. Some learners may rely on visual image or presentation, others prefer listening to the music while learning; still others may respond better to hands-on activities.

Identify learning style is also important toward in learning process. Recently a new thought comes up, that is teaching must be taken care of student’s learning styles. If a student’s learning style is known automatically the teacher can determine appropriate teaching strategies based on student’s learning style.

Reading is one of the skills that must be taught to the students. In daily life, it is very important to get information from every reading passage, especially in learning English. In fact the student’s difficulties in reading comprehension are affected by many factors, such as lack a vocabulary, the concept of the words,

unfamiliar syntactical grammar, etc. The ability of students in reading is important because by having the ability to read, they will be able to improve general language skills in English; reading can enlarge the students' English vocabulary and it can help to improve the students' writing or speaking abilities. So, it can be concluded that reading is one of the keys to success for everyone who wants to be an educated person (Pratiwi, et.al, 2013).

Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. We use the words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. In other words, Westwood (2008: 31) defines reading comprehension can be defined as an active thinking process through which a reader intentionally constructs meaning to form a deeper understanding of concepts and information presented in a text. To comprehend, readers must use information they already process to filter, interpret, organize and reflect upon the incoming information from the page.

In the new digital and knowledge society in the 21st century, education is facing great challenges from traditional ways of learning towards innovative ways of learning. It also raises great demands for the transformation of teacher roles from the traditional knowledge transmitter to a new set of roles such as facilitator and coordinator. Conventional teaching is not able to educate adequate citizen to live in the 21st century. Therefore, a person needs to develop his/her skills and knowledge constantly due to persistent change in every aspects of the society.

However, the beliefs and practices of teaching have to transform from old-way thinking first before teachers can influence students' thinking and learning critically.

According to Newman (1993) higher order thinking skills "challenge students to interpret, analyze, or manipulate information". Educators consider higher-order thinking skills as high order thinking that occurs when the student obtains new knowledge and stores it in his memory, then this knowledge is correlates, organized, or evaluated to achieve a specific purpose. These skills have to include sub-skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation, which are the highest levels in Bloom's cognitive taxonomy.

Having good competence in reading is very important for English foreign language students. One of the main factor that help to determine how and how well students learn a second language or foreign language which can influence their comprehension in listening, speaking, reading, and writing is learning style. Thus, it can be concluded that learning styles relates to skills comprehension. Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it, and understand its meaning. An individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by their traits and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences. But, although reading is important, students still have any difficulties in mastering reading comprehension.

It is proved by the preliminary observation done by the writer in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan. The writer found that the teacher was not interactive with students in the classroom, the teacher only gave a text to

students without explaining the material given. The teacher did not care whether the students understand or not with the theory taught.

On the other hand, students had difficulty in understanding reading texts in English, so the students were confused what they had read. They tried to find out difficult word in a text in dictionary. Besides, the students felt bored in learning reading; also they could not use their learning style in learning reading. The lack of ability of the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan in reading English is influenced by several factors.

First, the students have difficulty in finding the main idea of the text they read. Second, students have difficulty in understanding English word, phrase and sentence in English. Third, students are not accustomed to practicing reading in the classroom and everyday life. Last, teachers did not identify their students' learning styles. During the observation at the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan, it was found that the teacher just asked the students to read whole of the text and asked students to find the main idea of the text, after the students finished it the teacher asked one student to collect it without explains what is exactly the text about.

Learning styles are found to affect the students' learning behaviors. Students who have different learning style preferences would behave differently in the way they perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Since the learners differ in their preferences to the certain learning styles, it will be important for an educator to know the variations of students on the features of their learning styles because the information about students' learning style

preference can help the teachers or lecturers become aware to the students' differences bring to the classroom Wang (2007: 410).

The topic of learning styles has been widely debated among educators and psychologists for years. Learning styles is a controversial topic as the question raised is if learning styles are an actual, valid phenomenon to enhance learning. The perceptions of learning styles are based on personal beliefs backed by findings of previous research on the topic. There are many skeptics who believe that learning styles do not exist.

According to the findings of Vijayalakshmi and Renuga's (2012) research in comparing a lecture method to the VARK method, the VARK method outperformed the lecturing method attaining higher test scores among students. The test evaluated the level of understanding of students between the two methods. According to Wehrwein, Lujan and DiCarlo (2006), the VARK method's ease of use and accessibility make it a preferred measurement choice of learning style. The VARK method allows instructors to learn more about their students' individual learning style and enhance overall learning by understanding the preferred modes of information transfer in their classrooms (Wehrwein, Lujan & DiCarlo, 2006).

According to Dunn, et.al (1978), only 20-30% of school age children appear to be auditory learners, 40% are visual learners, and 30-40% are tactile/kinaesthetic or visual/tactile learners. Barbe, et.al (1981) state that for grade school children the most frequent modality strengths are visual (30%) or mixed (30%), followed by auditory (25%), and then by kinaesthetic (15%). Carbo

(1983) found that good readers prefer to learn through their visual and auditory senses, while poor readers had a stronger preference for tactile and kinesthetic learning.

For the writer's study used the VAK model, a simplified version of the VARK model created by Flemming. The VAK model measures three constructs, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. There are studies that attempt to explore learning styles by gender. Slater, Lujan & DiCarlo (2007) did not find any significant differences of learning styles between genders. However, Wehrwein, Lujan & DiCarlo (2006) found significant differences in learning styles between genders.

Flemmings VARK model is the only ongoing research on learning styles that is continually administering surveys to gain statistical data. Other studies supporting the existence of learning styles are focused on specific groups of people. People who are unsupportive of learning styles believe that there is a need for more studies to confirm their existence. The results found from previous studies have not been duplicated enough to be irrefutable by researchers.

Based on the problem above it is necessary to identify the learning styles at the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan based on visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles, investigate students' learning style which has higher achievement in reading comprehension and describe how the teacher conducts teaching reading comprehension based on students' learning styles. VAK model is chosen to analyze the students' learning styles.

## **B. Identification of the Problems**

Based on the background of the study, problems of this study could be identified as the following:

1. It found that the students' difficulties in reading comprehension were lack vocabularies, the concept of the words and syntactical grammar.
2. The students felt bored and not interesting when they were learning reading from their teacher.
3. The students were not accustomed to practicing reading in the classroom and everyday life.
4. The teachers did not identify their students' learning styles.

## **C. The Problems of the Study**

In order to focus on the research, the problems of the study were formulated as follows:

1. What are the types of students' learning styles of the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan?
2. What is the type of students' learning style which has higher achievement in reading comprehension of the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan?
3. How does the teacher conduct teaching reading comprehension based on students' learning styles?



#### **D. The Objectives of the Study**

Based on the background of the problems above, the objectives of the study were formulated as follows:

1. To find the types of students' learning styles of the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan.
2. To investigate students' learning style which has higher achievement in reading comprehension of the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan.
3. To describe how the teacher conducts teaching reading comprehension based on students' learning styles.

#### **E. The Scope of The Study**

This study would be focused to find the most dominant learning style in reading comprehension at the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan and to describe the teacher in teaching reading comprehension of descriptive text based on the students learning styles at the tenth grade students in SMK Swasta Al-Washliyah Pasar Senen 2 Medan. VAK is one of the simplest models that includes vision, hearing, and feeling. Visual learning style preferred learning through seeing, Auditory learning through hearing and Kinesthetic learning by doing.

#### **F. The Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study are expected to give theoretical and practical contributions, as follows:

1. Theoretically, the result of this study would be useful for the teachers to improve the teaching learning process, especially in reading comprehension; and this study can be used as references for students who want to conduct the research about learning style in reading.
2. Practically, the teacher as a reference to improve his/her teaching and learning process; and to choose the most appropriate teaching method based on his/her students' learning styles. For the students, it is to make them know what learning styles are they; so it can be easier to learn English, especially reading comprehension. The other researchers as additional information and knowledge of experience in educational.