

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of study, problem statement, research objectives, hypotheses, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and limitations of the study.

A. Background of The Study

In Indonesia, formal education is learning conducted at school under the instruction of teachers. It is the foundation of the national education system to prepare the next generation for the problems and challenges of the future. This formal education is related to the rapid development of science and technology (Taty Fauzi et al., 2025). Therefore, the Indonesian government continues to make moves to update the curriculum to ensure a structured and organized learning process.

The curriculum is one of the main guidelines that plays an important part in ensuring the successful implementation of the education process. The Indonesian government has developed a curriculum, one of which is the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is a new educational system that is more flexible and provides greater freedom to schools and students. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022), the Merdeka Curriculum aims to motivate schools to prioritize the improvement of students' individual potential and personality, while also establishing English as an essential subject. This measure was implemented because English is crucial for increasing the global competitiveness of the younger generation. Moreover, incorporating English into

the curriculum is an important step to ensure that all students, both in urban and rural areas, have equal opportunities to learn the international language from the beginning (Kawuryan et al., 2021).

This focus on English language education in Indonesia started in 1967 and has consistently undergone growth and modification in the curriculum to improve the quality of education (Dzulkifli Isadaud et al., 2022). With the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, students can not only develop an understanding of grammar but also comprehensive English language skills, including speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Brown, 2007). This aims to measure success in English language learning.

The success of students in mastering English language abilities can be measured by their English Academic Achievement. This is measured by exam scores, assignment grades, practical assessments, and competency tests given by teachers. Academic achievement is an indicator of student success in achieving the goals of learning. Iyai et al. (2021) explain that academic achievement currently reflects more than just grades; it shows students' abilities and capacity to apply their knowledge in real-life situations.

More deeply, the success of English Academic Achievement can be analyzed using three main domains of ability. According to Bloom (1976), academic achievement includes three abilities: cognitive, such as remembering and understanding material; affective, related to student attitudes, interest, and learning motivation, which have an impact on students' academic achievement in English, as motivated students tend to be more active in participating in the learning process

and finish assignments effectively (Yuzulia, 2021); and and psychomotor, with practical skills, and students' ability to apply knowledge in real-life situations.

To help students understand the material better and be active in English learning activities, the first thing that is very important for students to know is their awareness of their individual learning styles (Pratama & Anwar, 2024). Everyone has a unique way of absorbing information. Therefore, it is essential to introduce learning styles to help students identify suitable learning techniques. Thomas et al. (2021) explain that by understanding learning styles, the language learning process for students will feel much easier. Understanding learning styles helps students master foreign language material more effectively and purposefully (Nguyen, 2024).

Understanding learning styles plays an important role in the learning process. Learning styles can help students master the material and improve their grades. This impacts not only the improvement of material comprehension but also contributes to English language learning more efficiently and specifically (Banaruee et al., 2022). The benefit of being aware of learning styles can help students find comfortable learning methods, helping them to choose methods of studying that align with their learning styles (Komang et al., 2024). Findings from Sari (2022) also show that the application of mastery learning that takes into consideration students' learning styles can increase their enthusiasm and interest in learning English. Therefore, understanding and applying appropriate learning styles are important in supporting the improvement of both the learning process and learning outcomes in English.

Learning style is the way or method every person uses to understand and remember learning material while studying. According to Hepriansyah et al. (2023) a learning style is a combination of how a person absorbs, organizes, and processes information. Learning style is a concept of how a person acquires, processes, and retains information (Brown, 2007). In other words, learning style indicates how an individual organizes information to make it easy to understand and remember during the learning process. Learning style is divided into four categories: Visual (V), Auditory (A), Reading/writing, and Kinesthetic. This learning style is known as the VARK model (Fleming, 2001). Additionally, developed learning styles and divided them into four categories: Visual (seeing), Aural (hearing), Reading/writing, and Kinesthetic (doing). He separated visual learning preferences from reading/writing because they have different ways of receiving information. This division is known as the VARK model.

In learning activities, each student must understand their own learning styles. English language learning, learning style is one of the factors that can influence learning achievement (Manipuspika, 2020). Teachers must also be able to know and understand their students' learning styles. Moreover, every student has a different learning style. Therefore, students must have awareness and knowledge of their learning style, and teachers can adjust their teaching based on their students' learning styles to achieve success in learning English.

The correlation between learning styles and academic achievement has been extensively researched by researchers. In the context of English language learning, Hidayah et al. (2022) found a reasonably strong correlation between learning styles

and the academic scores achieved. However, this research highlights that learning styles are not the only determinant for success in the learning process. Learning styles play an important role in helping students understand English. International research shows a positive correlation between learning styles and academic achievement, while the level of effectiveness varies for each type (Liu, 2023). This is consistent with the findings of Thi et al. (2021) from an experiment in Vietnam that included high school students as participants. The results of the study found a significant positive correlation between students' learning styles and their science grades.

In the field of language, it was also found that learning styles greatly help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students achieve better grades (Khalaf & Hilo, 2022). The results additionally showed that learning is more successful if the learning methods align with the instructions given by the teacher in class. The correlation between students' learning styles in processing information and their learning achievement is also highlighted in the study conducted by Sartika et al., (2023) titled "The Correlation of Learning Style and English Achievement of the Students of Nurul Huda Senior High School." The data shows that the majority of high school students are dominated by visual learning styles, and significantly, this learning style positively contributes to the improvement of their academic achievement in English subjects. Additionally, success does not only depend on learning styles, but also on the level of student motivation and the learning strategies used by the students.

Based on the phenomenon presented in the background, this study aims to investigate the correlation between students' learning styles and their English academic achievement at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung. The learning style theory used in this research by V.A.R.K learning styles Fleming (2001). While the learning achievement was taken from students' English scores on their final test. The reason for choosing this school is that it is the only private school with the most students in the Karangrayung area. In the context of education, each student has a different learning style. Therefore, based on the phenomenon, the researcher is going to investigate the correlation between students' learning styles and their English learning achievements at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung.

B. Problem Statement

Based on this background, the researcher decides on the problem statement: is there a significant correlation between students' learning styles and their English academic achievement of tenth grade students at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung?

C. Learning Objectives

Based on the problem statement, this study aims to examine the correlation between students' learning styles and their English academic achievement of tenth grade students at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung.

D. Hypothesis

A hypothesis is an assumption created to answer a research question and is examined during the research process. In this study, the hypothesis consists of two types:

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1. The alternative hypothesis (H_a), which states that there is a significant correlation between learning styles and English academic achievement on tenth grade at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung.
2. Null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant correlation between the two variables on tenth grade at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung.

E. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

The significance of The purpose of this study is to investigate the correlation between students' learning styles and their English academic achievement. For the readers, this study is expected to increase their understanding of the importance of learning styles in the English learning process. For future researchers, this study can serve as a theoretical foundation for other researchers who want to examine the correlation between learning styles and academic achievement, especially in English language learning. For teachers, this study can help them understand the importance of using teaching methods that match students' learning styles. For students, this study can help them understand their own learning styles and how they impact their achievement in English.

2. Practical Significance

Significance of this study for readers: This study provides an overview of the importance of understanding learning styles to improve student achievement in English. For future researchers, this study can serve as a practical reference for designing and conducting studies on the correlation between learning styles

and academic achievement in English. For teachers, in reality, this study helps teachers understand the variations in students' learning styles in the classroom. For students, this research provides practical benefits for students to identify their own learning styles. Students are expected to apply more suitable and effective learning methods to improve their academic performance in English.

3. Pedagogies Significance

Significance of this research for readers: This study helps readers understand that achievement in learning English depends not only on the material but also on how students learn. For future researchers, this study can serve as a pedagogical foundation for future researchers to develop English learning models that align with students' learning styles. For teachers, this study can support teachers in improving the quality of English learning in the classroom by understanding students' learning styles, allowing teachers to choose more varied methods, media, and activities. For students, this study provides pedagogical significance for students by helping them understand the learning methods that match their own learning styles.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Learning style

Learning styles are the ways students have for understanding and processing information during the learning process. Students have different learning styles, including visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic. Which can influence how they learn and understand subject matter, including in English language learning.

2. English Academic Achievement

English academic achievement is the learning achievement students achieve after participating in an English language class, indicating whether they understand the material and develop English language skills. English language skills measured by scores, assignments, or tests show the degree to which students successfully develop English.

3. English Subject

English is a subject studied as a foreign language in school. This subject aims to develop students' ability to use English, including four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

4. Tenth Grade at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung.

Tenth grade students are students who have graduated from junior high school (SMP or MTS) and have just chosen to continue to the next level of school, such as general senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK), usually aged between 15 and 16 years. Students in the tenth grade of SMK Yasemi Karangrayung in the 2025/2026 academic year.

G. Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, this research was only conducted on tenth grade students at SMK Yasemi Karangrayung in the academic year 2025/2026, so the research results cannot be generalized to other schools with different characteristics. Second, this study only examines the correlation between learning styles and English academic achievement. Other factors that can influence

students' learning achievement, such as learning motivation, family environment, and teachers' teaching methods, are not discussed in this research.