

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, hypothesis, and definition of the key terms used in the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Over many years, philosophy in the education has been developed rapidly. Many issues related to psychological aspect in terms of education has been explored and investigated by some experts. Psychology and education are correlated and affected each other. It was proved by Edward Lee Thorndike in Green (www.psychclassics.yorku.ca) who states that psychology makes the aim of education clearer. Psychology is an important contributor in the educational process to understand the material. The origin of the knowledge method used in education may also come from the psychological theory.

From the psychological theory, we can find how people do in their learning process. It can also measure or defines people personality or style in their learning activity. Everyone has different types or personality to process and receive information about something in their environment. There are people who love to study by herself instead of a group work. This kind of personality of the learner can be called as cognitive style.

The learners' cognitive style can be a key to know their achievement in the educational process. As stated by Witkin and Goodenough in Daniels (1996),

different types of cognitive styles of the learners influence in the students' achievement and learning task in the teaching learning process. Cognitive style plays important role in the learning process, because the different characteristic of learner can be the key of the successful learning in the educational process. There are many cognitive styles which have been explored by some researcher, but the dimension of cognitive styles which received much attention in the second or foreign language researches are field dependence and field independence or FDI (Yousefi, 2011).

Furthermore, the English education achievement, we have many goals in the end of the teaching learning process. Mastering competency of the English can be related to their cognitive style because cognitive style can describe how individual preference or characteristic in learning process. As cited in John E. Readence & David A. Hayes (1982) "field dependence-independence is one dimension of cognitive style which may influence learner process discourse". It means that cognitive style is the characteristic of how the learners demonstrate their cognitive activities in the learning process. Moreover, Witkin, Moore, Goodenough and Cox (1977) claimed that field-dependent and field-independent cognitive styles have big implication in educational area. Different types of cognitive styles show different characteristic in the receiving and processing information from their environment. Field-dependent and field-independent learners show a different type of learning and performance in the learning progression.

In the domain area of education, English for foreign language has many courses to be learnt. One of important courses is reading. In the university especially

in English language department, students have to master reading as the one of the main courses should be taken. In the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik, students take reading 1, reading 2, reading for scientific, and the last is extensive reading. Every student has different performance in their reading. For example in the extensive reading, when the students asked to read a book then retell it, some of them are easy to retell the story and can answer the questions related to the content of the book perfectly because they understand it well and for another students they are seems to be difficult to retell the story. From the students' performance, it shows that there is something which is may influence to their reading comprehension ability. Many factors can influence to the individuals achievement in the learning process, related to this case, cognitive styles may also influence to their reading performance in the class.

Many research about cognitive style conducted by some researchers. Oh and Lim (2005) examined the correlation between students' cognitive styles with their attitude toward online education and learning behaviors in online learning environment. Yousefi (2011) investigated how students' cognitive style correlated with EFL learners' listening comprehension ability of the English students of Islamic Azad University, Iran. This research found that there is correlation between cognitive style and listening comprehension. Another researcher, Kheirzadeh (2011) tries to find out the relationship of field-dependence/ independence (FD/I) cognitive style and the Iranian EFL learners' performance on listening comprehension sub-skills. The result of this study showed that there is no difference performance of FD and FI

students on general listening. Khodadady (2012) also explored if the field dependence/ independence cognitive style was related to listening comprehension. He found that the test-takers' cognitive styles influences on their listening and task performance

As matter of fact that cognitive styles may influence to the students' achievement, researcher interest to conduct a study that examine the relationship of the cognitive style and EFL learners' reading comprehension ability in the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik. This study will be conducted in the reading class, especially for the extensive reading class which has advance level for their mastery in English. Researcher chooses to do the study in the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik because there is a limited research in cognitive styles related to the reading comprehension in the field of foreign language learning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the problem statement in this paper addressed as follow:

“Is there any significant relationship between cognitive style and EFL learners' reading comprehension?”

1.3 The Objective of the Study

The purpose of the study tries to examine and explore cognitive style field dependence/ independence and reading comprehension. This project is determined to

find out whether any significant relationship between cognitive style and EFL learners' reading comprehension ability or not.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study conducted to determine the relationship between cognitive style and reading comprehension ability of the EFL learners of Muhammadiyah University of Gresik. For the theoretical significance of this current study, it will hopefully provide relevant information for educators about correlational study between cognitive style and reading comprehension in similar context. It may be benefit to researchers and teachers who are willing to conduct a similar study in the future.

Practically, from the result of this research, researcher also hoped that the students and educators get information about the relationship between cognitive styles and their reading comprehension ability and consider the importance of their cognitive style which may influence to their teaching learning process.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

To limit the study into a broader discussion, the researcher scopes the study to students of the Muhammadiyah University of Gresik 4th semester about "The relationship between cognitive style and EFL learners' reading comprehension ability". The limitation of this study is only focused on cognitive style and EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. Researcher has identified several types of

cognitive styles, but this study is only concerned with dimension of field dependence and field independence.

1.6 The Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research stated as follow:

There is no significant relationship between cognitive style and EFL learners' reading comprehension ability.

1.7 The Definition of Key Terms

To avoid ambiguous meaning and misunderstanding of the study, researcher defines some terms bellow:

- 1) **Cognitive style** is the psychological process an individual exploits to perceive and react to his/her environment related to their learning process. It concerned with how an individual thinks, solves problems, relates to other, and learns.
- 2) **Field dependence** is the dimension of cognitive style in which individual is characterized as having a greater aptitude for interpersonal skills, they have tendency to relate well to other, warm, and affective also accommodating, but they have difficulty breaking information into isolated parts.
- 3) **Field independence** is the dimension of cognitive style in which the individual have better at analytical activities. This typical person can solve problems, recall information, isolates facts and can separates relevant and irrelevant things and encode information quickly and accurately.

4) **Reading comprehension** is the process of reading with a full knowledge to understand text.

5) **EFL learners** are the students who learn English as their foreign language.