

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This study is mainly a combination between Vermunt and Vermetten's (2004) aspects of learning patterns and Oxford's (1990) Language Learning strategies, in which in the present study this combination is named *routes for learning*. It is concerned with investigating English learning conceptions, motivation, and strategies of students at an Islamic senior high school of a *pesantren* in Bandung regency, West Java, Indonesia.

In this introductory chapter, the background of the present study is provided along with main theories regarding to this study. This chapter also presents the research problem and research questions that this study tries to answer. It is followed by the purposes and significance of the study. Finally, a brief outline of the organization of the dissertation is provided at the end of this chapter.

### 1.2 The background of the study

In Indonesia, the status of English is as a foreign Language (Dardjowidjoyo, 2003; Alwasilah, 2006a), meaning that English is taught in classrooms but not spoken in real and natural communication (Krashen, 1981; Cook, 1999), and not used as a medium of instruction in schools (Huda, 2003). On the other hand, English has been a global language, a language which is spoken internationally (Crystal, 2003). It has been used as a tool for accelerating communication with other nations in almost all aspects of life (Huda, 2003). Therefore, English is very important and strategic to communicate to the world (Hamied, 2012). This becomes a big challenge for Indonesian people. They are expected to be able to face the globalization era in their very limited exposure to English.

To reply to the demand, Indonesian government has been doing various improvements in English-language planning and policy and in every level of education organization including changing and improving curriculum, upgrading teachers' competence, and assessing students' learning achievement nationally. They are to improve the quality of teaching English which (is expected) in turn help students to achieve better result in English learning.

To support the English teaching in our country, both formal and non-formal education institutions are expected to take part in providing and improving English teaching to equip students with the language skills to reply to the demand of this era. Besides, teachers are expected to be able to develop students' communication ability in English, either in teaching to students in superior classes, or to common classes, or to problematic classes (Suherdi, 2012). In addition, teachers are also expected to have commitment to develop learners' autonomy (Lengkanawati, 2017) and have readiness and competence to implement curriculum as expected by the government to actualize quality teaching and learning (Sundayana, 2015).

To the students, learning English is both advantageous and challenging. Learning English is beneficial because it can enrich students' knowledge and skill to face the world. It is also challenging because, as stated above, English is taught in schools but not used beyond the classrooms in daily life.

During their 'journey' in learning English, they may hold various conceptions, different cognitive processing strategies, metacognitive processing strategies and motivations. They may also take different ways of learning, and engage in their learning in different qualities although they have the same purpose, that is a good mastery in the English subject.

In other words, a learner's journey in learning frequently relates to many factors such as conceptions of learning (Säljö, 1979), learning patterns (Vermut & Vermetten, 2004), learning style (Entwistle & Peterson, 2004), language learning strategies (Ellis, 1994; O'Malley et al., 1985; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1987; Stern, 1992), learning environments (Malone and Tranter, 2003; Reyes et al, 2012), learning engagement (Suherdi, 2018), and classroom discourse (Suherdi, 2006; 2009). Therefore, many studies connect students' learning to its various related

aspects e.g. approaches to studying, conceptions of learning and learning styles in higher education (Richardson, 2010), relationship between students' motivation and English learning Achievement (Choosri & Intharaksa, 2011), High school students' conceptions of learning in different domains, (Sadi, 2015), and the influences of conceptions of learning and learner self-concept on High students' approaches to learning (Burnett, Pillay & Dart, 2003), .

A study concerning students' learning which integrate more than one aspect of students' learning is Vermunt and Vermetten's (2004) work which resulted a concept of learning patterns. The concept of *learning pattern*, which refers to learners' regular ways of learning includes four components of students learning: (1) cognitive processing strategies, (2) metacognitive regulation strategies, (3) conceptions of learning, and (3) learning motivations (Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004). Unfortunately, the components of students learning pattern tend to be '*ideational*' and '*conceptual*' which is inside the students' brain and intangible. In addition, the concept of learning pattern was designed for students of higher educations. It pays less attention to (1) the students' actual learning behavior which is more tangible and easier to observe, and (2) to the students of secondary and primary schools. Therefore, a study to analyze the learners' concrete action during the learning process and investigation of students under higher education levels' learning pattern are required. Fortunately, in 1990, Oxford introduced the concept of Language Learning Strategies along with the instrument to assess it. Language learning strategies consist of six strategies, namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. This concept consists of not only the conceptual which is inside the students' brain but also concrete/behavioral strategies. It is because one of the important features of language learning strategies is "action basis" (Oxford, 1990). However, Oxford's language learning strategies do not assess what conceptions behind the students' language learning strategies. In fact, conceptions can be seen as at a higher level of students' learning factors since it can shape the belief of the learners about the learning which in turn may leads their ways of learning including strategies during

the learning process (Benson & Lor, 1999) and finally may influence their learning achievements.

In response to the issues of the aspects of learning patterns and learning strategies, this study is interested in combining these two concepts to see the higher and the lower achiever journey or route for learning, especially the students of senior high school. In other words, this combination is to uncover the Senior High School students' routes for learning, starting from students learning factors which tend to be conceptual (factors of Vermunt and Vermettent's learning Pattern) to those which tend to be behavioral or "action-basis" learning factors to the end of the journey of learning, that is achieving learning outcomes.

### 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the discussions above, the problems of the present study are formulated in the following questions.

1. What is the portrayal of routes-for-learning of students of grade XI at a private Islamic Senior High School in Bandung?
  - a. What learning conceptions do the students conceive?
  - b. What learning motivations do the students hold?
  - c. What learning strategies do the students employ?
2. How is the portrayal of high and low achievers' routes for learning?
  - a. Is the route for learning of high achievers different from the low achievers'? If it is, what is/are the difference(s)?
  - b. Who achieves the learning outcomes best regarding the type of routes for learning?

### 1.4 The purposes of the study

Based on the background and research questions formulated above, the purposes of the study are to investigate:

1. The portrayal of routes-for-learning of students of grade XI at a private Islamic Senior High School in Bandung
  - a. Learning conceptions that the students conceive

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- b. Learning motivations that the students hold
  - c. Learning strategies that the students employ
- 2. The portrayal of high and low achievers' routes for learning
  - a. The differences between high achievers' and low achievers' routes for learning (If any).
  - b. The students who achieve the learning outcomes best regarding the type of routes for learning.

### 1.5 The scope of the study

The present study combines aspects of learning patterns as proposed by Vermut & Vermetten (2004) and language learning strategies as introduced by Oxford (1990). Learning pattern aspects consist of cognitive processing strategies, regulation/metacognitive strategies, conceptions of learning and learning orientations. On the other hand, Oxford's (1990) language learning strategies consist of memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

### 1.6 Research Significance

In supporting the government effort in improving EFL teaching and learning quality, the discussions and studies relating to students' learning pattern, students' learning strategies, and students' outcomes are needed and important, especially in schools or education agencies which are commonly under explored including *pesantren*. The result of this research is expected to give the following significance:

#### 1. Theoretical significance

This study is expected to contribute to the theory of students learning, especially to enrich the literature about students' learning conceptions, learning motivations and learning strategies at an Islamic school and *pesantren* environment.

#### 2. Practical significance

It is expected that this study is beneficial for English teachers to understand conceptions of learning that the students conceive, and to trigger students to become more independent and motivated learners.

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### 3. Social significance

This study is expected to contribute socially as it can be used to trigger students to be more motivated and autonomous students in learning English. It is also expected that this study becomes ‘a gate’ for other researches to investigate other factors of students’ English learning and outcome.

### 1.7 Clarification of terms

To avoid misunderstanding, the writer would like to clarify key terms used in this study. These terms should be understood in relation to the present study.

#### 1. Learning patterns

In the present study, the term learning patterns describes a student’s ways of learning which are done regularly or repeatedly. This term was proposed and used firstly by Vermunt (1996) which refers to learners’ regular ways of learning which is constructed by four learning components: cognitive processing strategies, regulation/metacognitive strategies, notions of learning and learning orientations.

#### 2. Learning conceptions

In this study, the term learning conceptions refers to a student’s learning concepts, what learning is thought by students. This term is similar with the term *learning conceptions* which means what learning means to the learner (Marton et al., 1993).

#### 3. Learning strategies

This study uses the term learning strategies to portray a student’s efforts or activities to make the process of learning English easier and better.

#### 4. Routes for learning

This study uses the term routes for learning to describe a student’s ways of doing or experiencing the learning which consists of conceptions of learning, learning motivations and learning strategies.

#### 5. Learning orientations

The term learning orientations refers to what a student tries to get in learning English. In addition, Entwistle and Peterson (2004) defined learning

orientations as a student's perception of *what* they are trying to achieve in their learning. In the present study, the term learning motivations and learning orientations are used interchangeably.

#### 6. Learning outcomes

The term learning outcomes commonly refers to learning objectives or competence (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domain) that should be achieved by students at the end of the learning program. However, in the present study, the term learning outcomes is used to describe the achieved outcomes especially in the domain of cognitive.

#### 7. Pesantren

Pesantren is Indonesian Muslim traditional school-like where all students study Islamic-related teachings and taught by *ustads* (male teachers) and *ustadzahs* (female teachers) under the guidance of *Kyai* and the students live in a dormitory (see Dhofier, 2017; Lukens-Bull, 2005; <https://belajar.kemdikbud.go.id/PetaBudaya/Repositorys/pesantren/>).

### 1.8 Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. The current chapter is an introduction which provides the background of the study, research questions, purposes of the study, clarification of terms, research significance, clarification of terms, and organization of the dissertation. Chapter II explores relevant literature dealing with the theories that strengthen this study, particularly relating to learning patterns, the conception of students' learning, learning motivation learning strategies, and learning outcomes. Chapter III outlines the design and methodology of the study. This includes a description of the research questions, participants, setting, data collection techniques and analysis techniques. Chapter IV presents the data, findings and discussion. Chapter V provides conclusions drawn from discussion in chapter IV as well as limitations of the present study and recommendation for further research.