Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter presents the definitions of learning styles, the characteristics of twelve learning styles, and the research studies related to learning styles. Moreover, this chapter includes the understanding of task, task-based teaching, characteristics of task and task components. Finally, the reasons for using task to design the SMP are cited in this chapter.

Theoretical Background of Learning Styles

Definitions of Learning Style

The definition of learning style is different according to different researchers:

Keefe (1979) describes learning style as a general term for the conglomerate of an individual's way of learning, including all of his or her cognitive, affective, and physiological styles.

Nunan (1991) states that learning style refers to any individual's preferred ways of going about learning. It is generally considered that one's learning style will result from personality variables, including psychological and cognitive make-up, social-cultural background, and educational experience.

Parrott (1993) defines a learning style as an individual's predisposition to learn in a particular way. The term is used to describe broad, general

characteristic of approaches to learning, and it is likely that the preferred learning style of any one learner will be manifest in all aspects of learning, not just in relation to the learning of a foreign language.

Patrical (1993) states that learning style can also be defined as persistent qualities in the behavior of individual learners, regardless of the teaching methods or content experienced.

Reid (1998, 3) indicates that "Learning style is an overall pattern that gives a general direction to learning behaviors according to the learner's experience and habits."

The common idea from the foregoing defition is that learning style refers to the consistent tendencies or preferences within an individual's language learning habits, behaviors, and experiences while he/she is in the process of acquiring new information.

Learning Styles

Language learning styles are categorized differently according to different researchers. Reid categorized six perceptual learning styles in 1987. Brown (1987) classified introvert, extrovert, field-dependent, and field-independent styles. In 1993, Parrot and Scarella generalized syllabus-bound, syllabus-free, global, and analytic styles. Christian (1996) designed Seven Multiple Intelligences which are related to learning styles. Based on the understanding of different learning styles, this study only emphasizes twelve learning modalities as follows:

Visual style: Students learn better and more easily when they view, watch, and observe than by learning new information from listening to tapes or from

broadcasts. The students may also benefit from demonstrations and field trips (Reid, 1998).

Auditory style: Students remember and understand much more of what is discussed or heard. They learn easily and well by listening to new information by hearing instead of visualizing it (Reid, 1998).

Tactile style: Students learn best by 'hands-on' experiences with materials. That is, they benefit most from working on experiments in a laboratory, handling and building models, and touching and working with material (Reid, 1998).

Kinesthetic style: Students learn best by body movements. They cannot stay in one place for a long time. They prefer to participate in activities, field trips and role playing in the classroom (Reid, 1998).

Group style: Students like practicing activities and communication projects. They prefer to work with their peers toward a common goal (Reid, 1998).

Individual style: Students learn best individually. Students do not prefer to learn in-group and they will not accept competition among members of the group (Reid, 1998).

Introvert style: Students tend to learn analytically in a planned and organized way. They do not like to share their own ideas with others and they like to depend on themselves in language learning (Brown, 1994).

Extrovert style: Students are people-oriented, and their learning is more intuitive and more interactive. They have easy contact with others and they can adjust to different environments and situations. They prefer to communicate with others (Brown, 1994).

Syllabus-free style: Students learn best when they acquire new information based on different situations. It is believed they learn from elements in the general context and environment. This kind of learner considers the syllabus only as a guide in their learning (Parrot, 1993).

Syllabus-bound style: Students learn best according to a plan or schedule in learning. They require the "packaging" and presentation of data, which the teacher provides. This kind of student prefers to depend on and follow everything from the syllabus instead of utilizing it as a guide (Parrot, 1993).

Global style: Global learners require an overall picture first, then construct small patterns and recognize relationships between those patterns through visual processing. This style rests upon experience, impressions and sensing (Scarcella, 1990).

Analytic style: Students learn best from joining pieces of the details together to form an understanding. The analytic learner moves from one point to another in a step-by-step manner. Analytic learners are more individual, sequential and linear (Scarella, 1990).

The Importance of Learning Styles

It is important for learners to recognize their learning styles in order to use their strengths in language learning. Particularly, the awareness of learning styles impels learners to find their specific learning strategies for successful learning. Rubin and Thompson (1982) state that good language learners can find their own ways and take charge of their learning, such persons learn with different styles and skills in language learning depending on the formality of the situation. Also, Dunn (1990) demonstrates that if students know their learning

styles, they will learn more with less effort and remember better because they are using their learning strengths. Furthermore, Brown (1994) indicates that successful second language learners are usually people who know how to manipulate learning style levels in their day to day encounters with language.

Additionally, teachers' teaching styles also affect learners' achievements. Teachers use their teaching styles when they plan and present materials to their students instead of considering the students' learning styles. The gap between teachers' teaching styles and learners' learning styles needs to be filled. As Cornett (1983) demonstrates, higher student achievement relates to a match between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles. Therefore, learning styles should be the basis for teacher-student interactions in the ways that students can learn well.

In fact, in language teaching, one problem facing teachers is the difficulty of being all things to all students. As Reid (1998) states, if teachers are expected to teach according to the styles of every student in every learning situation, people will certainly be disappointed because it seems impossible to match a teacher's teaching style to each individual's style. Therefore, it is crucial to tell students the advantages and disadvantages of different learning styles and to encourage students to use their learning style preferences, to explore new styles, and to evaluate themselves independently.

As a result, it is important to remember that learning style is one essential factor to successful education. Teachers need to combine learners' learning styles with teacher's teaching styles and to create more appropriate classroom activity. As Brown (1994, 192) indicates, "the more your classroom activity can model the

behavior exhibited by successful language learners, the better and more efficient your students will be."

Related Research on Learning Styles

Many researchers and language experts have done studies on learning styles. The Learning Style Inventory (Dunn, 1979), was the first comprehensive instrument to analyze an individual's learning style. Dunn's research analyzed five conditions in which students preferred to learn: *immediate environment, emotional, sociological needs, physical needs and psychological area.* This Learning Style Inventory permitted students to identify how they preferred to learn and provided a basis for the students' preferred learning styles.

Brown mentioned that the extroversion test and the left/right-brain test were two other instruments used to encourage self-awareness of individual's learning styles. Brown's research (1987) reflected that the right-brained learners learn more effectively through visual, analytic, reflective, self-reliant learning; the left-brained learners learn more effectively through auditory, global, impulsive, interactive learning. If learners could become aware of their possible style tendencies, and consider the relationship between such styles, they would be more act to succeed in their language learning goals.

Culture is another factor influencing learning styles. Reid (1987) states that different nationalities have different learning styles due to difference in culture. Based upon her research of comparison of the perceptual learning style preferences between western learners and eastern learners, Reid found that American students prefer visual style while Japanese students prefer auditory style and tactile style.

Furthermore, the idea of individual's learning style is viewed as relatively fixed and not really changeable has been questioned by recent studies. Sunderland (1994) indicates that a student's learning style may be influenced by the way he or she was taught. Moreover, it is possible to help adult learners to explore their learning styles to suit the requirement of a particular learning task. Reid (1987) also believes that different language proficiencies or different learning environments may change a learner's previous learning styles. For example, kids prefer auditory learning style, tactile style, and kinesthetic style, but when they grow up, they might prefer visual style, analytic style, or global style.

Task Design

Since the 1970's, teachers in western countries have been encouraging learners to become more independent in their approach to language learning. However, language teaching still remains firmly rooted in the classroom with textbooks due to the lack of a learner-centered environment and suitable materials (Gardner & Miller, 1996). In order to create the learner-centered environment, learners need to initiate the implementation of independent learning according to their different learning styles, strategies, and skills. Task design can take place in the classroom, outside the classroom, or in a self-access center based on a learner's learning styles.

Definition of Task

"Task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language

while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (Nunan, 1989, 10).

Brown (1994) states that task usually refer to a specialized form of technique or series of techniques closely allied with communicative curricula by using authentic materials beyond the language classroom. The classroom activities aim at encouraging learners to comprehend, produce and interact with each other by using target language in the language learning process.

Definition of Task-based Teaching

"Task-based teaching has an ultimate focus on communication, purpose, and meaning. It is not linguistic in the traditional sense of focusing on grammar or phonology, but by maintaining the functions like greeting people, expressing opinions..." (Brown 1994, 228).

Five Characteristics of Task-based Teaching

Nunan (1991a, 279) categrized 5 characteristics of task-based teaching as follows:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learners' owns personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Task Components

Also, Nunan (1991) classified 6 task components as follows:

1. Goal: the teacher's general aim for the task.
2. Input: the data that the learners can observe/manipulate.
3. Activities: the things the learners and teachers will be doing during the class.

4. Teacher role: the types of functions teachers are expected to fulfil, e.g. whether that of practice director, counselor or model.
5. Learner's role: the part that learners are expected to play in carrying out learning tasks as well as the social and interpersonal relationship between the participants.
6. Settings: refers to the classroom arrangements specified or implied in the task

Input for Task from Authentic Sources

Furthermore, Nunan (1989) suggested some authentic input for practicing

students'communicative skills as follows:

cartoon strips	interviews	narratives
conversations	invitations	oral description
diaries	labels	photos
games and puzzles	media extracts	songs

Advantages of theTask Design

There are several advantages for using tasks to develop this SMP: first, the objectives of each Task can specify the content and develop learning skills. Second, the processes of planning each Task's objectives lead to an end product to reach the main objective of this SMP. Third, the use of Tasks is particularly appropriate when learners are encouraged to value their own experience, beliefs, opinions and knowledge. And fourth, Tasks are the grounds which, help the learners develop the skills they need in the real world beyond the classroom.

This SMP considered five characteristics of Task-Based teaching suggested by Nunan (1991). First, each specific classroom activity is organized to match the subjects' specific learning style (group, extrovert) preferences. Second, the Tasks are effective in using authentic material in learning situations according to students' interests. Third, the Task framework combines the authentic materials and the students' learning style preferences. Fourth, the Task framework provides the opportunities for students to search for materials from various sources and to learn independently. Finally, the whole supplementary unit emphasizes encouraging students to use target language to express their opinions and logical thinking, and not specifically focus on linguistic outcomes.