

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part starts with the definition of learning styles, the importance of understanding the students learning styles, models of learning style, types of the perceptual learning style and the characteristics are presented. Then, literature related to learning styles is presented.

The second part starts with the definition of English language proficiency followed by the explanation about language domain and level of proficiency then relevant aspects of literature on English proficiency.

#### **A. Learning Style**

##### **1. Definition of Learning Style**

A number of definitions for the term “learning style” can be found in literature. The word *learning* is come from the word *to learn*. According to American Heritage Dictionary it means “(1) to gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study. (2) To fix in the mind or memory; memorizes. (3) To acquire through experience. (4) To become informed of, to find out” (Bower, 1981, p: 1). While Bower and Hilgard define learning as:

Learning refers to the change in a subjects behavior potential to a given situation brought about by the repeated experiences in that situation, provided that the behavior change cannot be explained on

the basis of the subjects native response tendencies, maturation, or temporary states (such as fatigue, drunkenness, drives and so on).

(Bower and Hilgard, 1981, p.11)

Reid (1995) asserts that “learning styles have some fundamental characteristics on which they are based”. The first is that every person, student and teacher alike, has a learning style, learning strengths and weaknesses. Modern authors, who study the theory of language learning, consider the term “learning” or “learned system” as “the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge about the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules” (Schötz. 2007).

From the definition above, we can conclude that learning mean acquiring new, modifying existing knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, or preference and may involve synthesizing different types of information about language in formal situation deliberately.

Learning style (LS) is the way in which each person begins to concentrate on, process, and retain new and difficult information through different perceptual channels. Learning styles are defined as individual differences in the way information is perceived, processed and communicated (Haar, Hall, Schoepp, & Smith, 2002). Stewart and Felicetti (1992) define learning styles as those "educational conditions under which a student is most likely to learn." Thus, learning styles are not really

concerned with "what" learners learn, but rather "how" they prefer to learn.

## **2. The importance of understanding learning style**

Teachers in the ESL classroom can use students' learning styles as a tool to develop their students' learning. According to Ellis (1989), teachers can help students by understanding or knowing their students' preferred learning styles. Successful learning takes place when teachers play to students' strengths and build their capacity to learn in a range of style. For this firstly, teachers need to have an understanding of the different learning style within the class. It can be done by applying certain questionnaire to the students. Second, teacher should create learning opportunities through a variety of teaching strategies and techniques. Thirdly, after teachers find the students' learning styles, the strength and weaknesses; and finish creating teaching strategy and techniques, teacher should match learning style with teaching style.

When the teachers success in doing the three step above, while students then are likely to access easily the activities presented to them and will be enthusiastic and committed to the subject they are studying.

Isemonger and Sheppard (2003, p.196) states as follows:

Clearly, knowing a student's learning style preferences is the first step to a more personalized approach to him or her, and is the first step to customized instruction and greater educational and productivity. In addition to this, knowing a student's learning style preferences is also a

good starting point in helping the students to target and adapt to styles for which they have little current activity.

Matching learning styles with teaching styles seems to be a significant factor in the success of the learning process (Carrell & Monroe, 1993; Nachiengmai, 1998). On the other hand, a mismatch between learning styles and teaching styles may have a negative impact on classroom learning (Felder & Henriques, 1995). Based on Reid's (1987) hypothesis, "a mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration and demotivation".

### **3. Perceptual learning Style**

What is stored in memory are traces of perceptual events (Bower and Hilgard, 1981:302). Reid (1995) claims that three major categories of learning styles are widely recognized and relevant to the field of foreign language learning: sensory or perceptual learning styles, cognitive learning styles and affective/temperament learning styles. Sensory or perceptual learning style has to do with the physical environment in which we learn, and involves using our senses in order to perceive data. In studies on perceptual learning styles, Dunn (1990) has shown that learners whose preferred learning style is visual may have difficulty learning where the teaching mode is through lectures (auditory) as opposed to auditory learners who may prefer them.

Of particular interest to us for the present study is the perceptual learning style defined as a preference for one of the following learning modalities - auditory, visual, kinesthetic or tactile, group or individual. The perceptual perspective allows us to take into account aspects of several well-recognized learning-style theories by synthesizing their important characteristics into an approach that is based on behaviors and/or actions that can be easily perceived in a classroom situation. Sarasin (1998) claims that aspects of the learning style theories of Gregorc (1995), Butler (1998), Sims & Sims (1995), McCarthy (1991), and Harb, Durrant & Terry (1993) reflect an approach based on the primary senses (visual, auditory or tactile) involved in learning.

#### **4. Type and The Characteristics of Perceptual Learning Style**

##### **a. Visual**

As the name suggests, visual style refers to a preference for learning through vision, and visual learners rely on their sight to take in information. They organize knowledge in terms of spatial interrelationships among ideas and store it graphically (Nilson, 2003).

Visual learners are learners who “prefer to learn via the visual channel. Therefore they like to read a lot, which requires concentration and time spent alone. Visual students need the visual stimulation of

bulletin boards, videos and movies. They must have written directions if they are to function well in the classroom” (Oxford, 1995, p. 35).

In this type, the student has some characteristics such as prefers to read, to see the word, illustration and diagrams, talks quite fast, using lots of image, memorizes by writing repeatedly, remembers what she/he saw than she / he heard, when inactive, looks around, doodles or watch something.

#### **b. Auditory**

Learners who prefer the auditory style learn through hearing or listening to things. They learn best when they can hear themselves express an idea (Nilson, 2003). Auditory learners are “students who enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus they want to engage in discussions, conversations, and group work. These students typically require only “oral directions” (Oxford, 1995, p.36).

In this type, the student has some characteristics such as likes to be told, to listen to the teacher, to talk it out, talks fluently, in a logical order, and with few hesitations; memorizes by repeating word words aloud; when inactive, talks to self or others.

**c. Kinesthetic**

Kinesthetic learning “implies total physical involvement with a learning environment such as taking a field trip, dramatizing, pantomiming, or interviewing.” (Kinsella, 1995, p. 172).

In this type, the students has some characteristics such as likes to get involved, hands on, to try it out; uses a lots of hand movements; talks about action and feelings, speaks more slowly; memorizes by doing something repeatedly.

**d. Tactile Learners**

Tactile learning “suggests learning with one’s hands through manipulation or resources, such as writing, drawing, building a model, or conducting a lab experiment” (Kinsella, 1995, p. 172).

**e. Individual learners**

Individual learners are learners who prefer to work alone than together with their friends. (Reid, 1995, p. x).

**f. Group learners**

Group learners are learners who prefer to work with others. (Reid, 1995, p. x).

## **5. Differences in Learning-Style Components and Measurement Instruments**

Even within learning styles, again there are differences in the components that make up each one. For example, in the category of perceptual learning styles, Dunn, Dunn & Price (1975) include visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic, Keefe (1979) uses kinesthetic/psychomotor, visual/spatial and auditory/verbal. O'Brien's (1989) components are visual and haptic (a combination of tactile and kinesthetic), while James & Galbraith (1985) include print visual and interactive (verbalization and olfactory). Reid's (1995) perceptual learning style includes visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, group and individual learning styles. In this research, the researcher used perceptual learning style by Reid to find out the students' learning style of English Education program at STAIN Tulungagung is taken as a basis.

Because of many category of learning style among experts, consequently the instruments chosen to measure a learning style vary from one researcher to another. For example, Dunn and also Kolb measure learning style by using learning style inventory (LSI), The Honey & Mumford apply *Learning Styles Questionnaire* (LSQ) as a tool to decide the learning style, Fleming's VARK Learning Style Test, Jackson's Learning Styles Profiler (LSP), and the NLP meta programs based iWAM questionnaire and so on. Here, the researcher uses Reid's Perceptual



Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). Since it concern to the perceptual learning style and generally has high reliability and validity and has been used as the norm on non-native speakers.

## **B. English Proficiency**

### **1. Definition of English Proficiency**

Proficiency is a person's skill in using language for a specific purpose. Proficiency refers to the degree of skill which a person can read, write, speak or understand language (Richard et al, 1992: 204). English proficiency or linguistic proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired English language. As theories vary among pedagogues as to what constitutes proficiency, there is little consistency as to how different organizations classify it. Additionally, fluency and language competence are generally recognized as being related.

### **2. Language Domain**

Becoming fluent in English, students have to master in language skills. Blagojevich et.al (2004:4) stated that "English language proficiency standards encompass four language domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing." In order for students to become truly proficient in social and academic English the students also have to be proficient in those. The definitions of the language domains are as follows:

**a. The Listening Domain**

Listening is a process and the first skill that must be acquired. When a person listens it means that he or she tries to understand oral communication which is presented by a speaker and accompanied by body language and/or visual clues. The listener must interpret what he/she hears and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations, in everyday functional situations such as in restaurants and transportation hubs, in job or career-related settings, as well as in academic settings.

It is common for beginning second language students to spend significant amounts of time in listening practice. This is often called the “silent period.” Because they try to listen what had been said by the speaker seriously. Language learners at all levels will vary widely in their ability to listen, understand, and interpret the speaker language in a variety of settings and situations.

In order for an English language learner to become proficient, there must be guided practice in active, interpretive listening. This practice must take place in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes (for example, listening to social conversations, to multi-step directions, and to lectures).

**b. The Speaking Domain**

English language learners will need much opportunity to engage in dialogues with peers and with native speakers in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes in order to improve fluency. Making presentations, reciting poetry, engaging in music, and playing verbal games can also contribute to improved proficiency for students of all ages.

**c. The Reading Domain**

Reading includes the skills of understanding, interpreting, and evaluating a variety of texts that represent written language in all its forms. Reading fluency will vary widely among foreign language learners. Reading may actually be the domain in which they are stronger or more functional, even more than speaking.

ESL/EFL students will need experiences with a variety of texts, including the use of digital media. Students will benefit from exposure to poetry, non-fiction books and articles, newspapers and magazines that are age appropriate, and instructions for following directions, as well as fiction. English Language Learners will need guided experiences in retelling, asking questions, translate the meanings, and find out the main ideas in order to experience true comprehension.

**d. The Writing Domain**

In conducting communication not only orally, but it can be done through symbol or letter. The ability to communicate by writing will vary widely among both second language learners and native language speakers depending on the purpose, the setting, and the audience. For instance, the skills needed to write a business letter vary greatly in technicality and complexity from those needed to write a social letter, an essay, a legal brief, an academic research paper, or even to send a cell phone text message for social purposes.

English language learners may need a variety of supports for writing. Students will need guided opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, including writing letters, essays, poetry, and other forms of written discourse. ESL/EFL students should be given lots of opportunities to write for authentic audiences.

### 3. Proficiency Level

**Table 2.1**

Level	Description
<b>Beginning</b>	<p><u>Have little no ability to understand spoken English used in academic or social settings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggle to understand simple conversations and simple discussions even when the topics are familiar</li> <li>• Struggle to identify and distinguish individual words and phrases during social and instructional interactions</li> <li>• May not seek clarification in English when failing to comprehend the English they hear</li> <li>• Frequently remain silent, watching others for cues</li> </ul>
<b>Low Intermediate</b>	<p><u>Have the ability to understand simple, low frequency spoken English used in routine academic and social settings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually understand: simple or routine directions, short simple conversations, and short simple discussions on familiar topics</li> <li>• Often identify and distinguish key words and phrases necessary to understand the general meaning</li> <li>• Request the speaker to repeat, slow down, or rephrase speech when failing to comprehend</li> </ul>

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*Continuation*

<b>High intermediate</b>	<p><u>Have the ability to understand simple, high frequency spoken English used in routine academic and social settings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appear to understand more English than they really do</li> <li>• Functions fairly well in face-to-face contextualized conversation</li> <li>• Experiences difficulty with academic language and higher order thinking skills in English</li> <li>• Can learn using English, still needs many non-verbal cues to construct meaning</li> </ul>
<b>Advance</b>	<p><u>Have the ability to understand, grade-appropriate spoken English in social and academic settings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand longer, elaborated directions, conversations, and discussions on familiar and some unfamiliar topics</li> <li>• Understand main points, most important details, and some implicit information during social and basic instructional interactions.</li> <li>• Occasionally require/ request the speaker to slow down, or rephrase to clarify the meaning of the English they hear</li> </ul>

*Modified from [www.academics.utep.edu/default.aspx?tabid=52965](http://www.academics.utep.edu/default.aspx?tabid=52965) and [www.livoniapublicschools.org/webpages/fbahoora/parent.cfm?subpage=28169](http://www.livoniapublicschools.org/webpages/fbahoora/parent.cfm?subpage=28169)*

#### 4. Proficiency Level Measurement

Proficiency tests measure persons' language ability (however this is understood), irrespective of how this ability has come about. In knowing the

students English proficiency, the researcher used the TOEFL test score. The Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL is a test of an individual's ability to use and understand English in an academic setting designed and administered by Educational Testing Service. It was developed to measure English language proficiency for non-native speakers. It has become an admission requirement for non-native English speakers at many English-speaking colleges and universities. Additionally, institutions such as government agencies, businesses, or scholarship programs may require this test. A TOEFL score is known valid so far.

The TOEFL test consists of four parts as follows:

1. **Listening comprehension**

The Listening section consists of 3 parts. The part A contains 30 questions about short conversations. The part B has 8 questions about longer conversations. The part C asks 12 questions about lectures or mini talks. This listening section is conducted in 30-40 minutes.

2. **Structure and Written Expression**

The Structure and Written Expression section is to test ability in understanding grammar and expression. This section consists of two parts. The part A has 15 exercises of completing sentences correctly and the part B contains 25 exercises of identifying errors. This section is conducted in 25 minutes.

### **3. Reading Comprehension**

The Reading Comprehension section has 50 questions about reading passages. This section is conducted in 55 minutes.

### **4. Writing**

This section is to test persons' writing ability in the form of essay. Consists of one question conducted in 30 minutes. This writing test is hardly even never tested in Indonesia.