

Kinesthetic intelligence and Language learning, A Study among the school learners in the State of Telangana

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Abstract:

The theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) suggests that learners have different strengths, learning styles and even learning potential contrary to the age old belief that only students with strong linguistic and mathematical abilities are accepted and recognized in the society. When the teachers recognize the different intelligences and inherent talents possessed by their students, they can design different exercises and activities to improve the language skills of the students. This article focuses on ways of enhancing the English Language skills among the students, using Gardner's Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence Theory. For the purpose of the study, Gardner's MI questionnaire was administered to 200 school students. A pre-test, intervention programme, and a post - test were conducted to make the study more authentic.

Key Words: Multiple intelligence, questionnaire, pre-test, intervention programme, post-test

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Multiple Intelligences (MI) refer to a learner-based philosophy that characterizes human intelligence as having multiple dimensions that must be acknowledged and developed in education. Traditional IQ or intelligence tests are based on a test called the Stanford-Binet, founded on the idea that intelligence is a single, unchanged, inborn capacity. Christison (2005) states, "The idea is that intelligence is a single, static construct, an innate attribute that doesn't change with age, training, or experience. We are born with a certain amount of intelligence that will not change as a result of life experiences" (p. 2). However this intelligence doesn't include any other activity "it also doesn't look at other virtues like creativity or civic mindedness, or whether a person is moral or ethical" (Checkley, 1997, p. 12).). Furthermore, Nicolson-Nelson (1998) states that the school system has depended on the IQ test over the years and as a consequence, schools emphasize linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. Students who can read, write, speak, and do basic mathematical skills are considered more successful in school. However, traditional IQ tests, while still given to most schoolchildren, are increasingly being challenged by the MI movement. MI is based on the work of Howard Gardner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Gardner 1993). Gardner notes that traditional IQ tests measure only logic and language, yet the brain has other equally important types of intelligence. Gardner argues that all humans have these intelligences, but people differ in the strengths and combinations of intelligences. He believes that all of them can be enhanced through training and practice. For example, Armstrong (2000) indicates the following examples:

To cook a meal, one must read the recipe (linguistic), possibly divide the recipe in half (logical-mathematical), develop a menu that satisfies all members of a family (interpersonal), and placate one's own appetite as well (intrapersonal). Similarly, when a child plays a game of kickball, he needs bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (to run, kick, and catch), spatial intelligence (to orient himself to the playing field and to anticipate the trajectories of flying balls), and linguistic and interpersonal intelligences (to successfully argue a point during a dispute in the game). (p. 9)

Armstrong (2003) expresses that our culture places more value on linguistic intelligence than on any of the other seven intelligences, but this attitude should change. The theory of multiple intelligences suggests such value system needs to be reconsidered. We need to pay more attention to those neglected intelligences in our schools, especially spatial, bodily-kinesthetic,

musical, and naturalist intelligences, which become great strengths to those students who have not been successful in linguistic-bound schools. Concerning the application of MI in education, Gardner (1993) describes the purpose of school as follows:

In my view, the purpose of school should be to develop intelligences and to help people reach vocational and avocational goals that are appropriate to their particular spectrum of intelligences. People who are helped to do so, I believe, feel more engaged and competent, and therefore more inclined to serve the society in a constructive way. (p. 9)

MI thus belongs to a group of instructional perspectives that focus on differences between learners and the need to recognize learner differences in teaching. Learners are viewed as possessing individual learning styles, preferences, or intelligences. Pedagogy is most successful when these learner differences are acknowledged, analyzed for particular groups of learners, and accommodated in teaching. In both general education and language teaching, a focus on individual differences has been a recurring theme in the last 30 or so years, as seen in such movements or approaches as Individualized Instruction, Autonomous Learning, Learner Training, and Learner Strategies. The Multiple Intelligences model shares a number of commonalities with these earlier proposals. Gardner (1993) proposed a view of natural human talents that is labeled the "Multiple Intelligences Model." This model is one of a variety of learning style models that have been proposed in general education and have subsequently been applied to language education (Christison 1998). Gardner claims that his view of intelligence(s) is culture-free and avoids the conceptual narrowness usually associated with traditional models of intelligence (e.g., the Intelligent Quotient [IQ] testing model). Gardner posits eight native "intelligences" which are described as follows:

1. Linguistic: the ability to use language in special and creative ways, which is something lawyers, writers, editors, and interpreters are strong in.
2. Logical/mathematical: the ability to think rationally, often found with doctors, engineers, programmers, and scientists.
3. Spatial: the ability to form mental models of the world, something architects, decorators, sculptors, and painters are good at.
4. Musical: a good ear for music, as is strong in singers and composers.
5. Bodily/kinesthetic: having a well-coordinated body, something found in athletes and craftsperson.
6. Interpersonal: the ability to be able to work well with people, which is strong in salespeople, politicians, and teachers

7. Intrapersonal: the ability to understand oneself and apply one's talent successfully, which leads to happy and well-adjusted people in all areas of life
8. Naturalist: the ability to understand and organize the patterns of nature.

Language learning and Kinesthetic Intelligence

The capacity to use the body in an effective way to share our thinking, to communicate or to present anything is called Kinesthetic intelligence (Shu-Fen-Chen, 2005). This intelligence involves the Total Physical Response approach in language learning and teaching (Maftoon and Sarem, 2012). Solmundardottir (2008) states that people in this intelligence prefer activities which involve actions and movements. Shu-Fen-Chen (2005) is of the opinion that even if the Kinesthetic intelligence is not a person's specific intelligence, it is still useful to improve the body and mind. Dancing, swimming, walking, jogging and such other physical exercises can improve mental health. People with good Bodily/Kinesthetic intelligence choose professions like actors, models and mimes.

There is a great deal of correlation between kinesthetic intelligence and language learning. Practice is the utmost thing needed to get hold of language

According to Will (2014)

Becoming amazing at a sport takes a long time and hard work. It's the same with learning a language: success is not instant but when you reach your goals the rewards are great. Being able to communicate fluently, do business or lead your daily life in more than one language is a special thing and worth all the hard work.

Ddeubel(2011),an athlete and a coach has become a language teacher and he was of opinion that , teachers don't really "teach" a language – rather they provide the conditions through which a learner might practice the skill that is "speaking a language". They should focus on performance not product (knowledge of the language itself). In essence, a teacher is a coach, a coach that guides their protege through the various stages of learning a language. He further adds that

Becoming proficient or even excelling at a sport bears most of the same developmental patterns that one should step through to become proficient in a language. There are no short cuts!

Aim of the research

The present study aims at developing the English language skills of the school students in the state of Telangana, using Gardner's Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence.

Statement of the problem

There is a lot of discussion on the poor English language skills of the students. If the foundation is good, the students can excel both in their personal as well as their professional lives. The teaching-learning process in many schools is not innovative and students are not encouraged to try out different ways of learning.

Hypotheses

1. Teaching-learning process in most of the schools of Telangana State is by and large traditional.
2. No innovative methodology is adapted to tap the potential of the students.
3. Musical Intelligences of the students are given least priority.
4. Students are unaware of their own potential.

Objectives of the research

1. To find out the innovative methodology adopted by the teachers of English to tap the hidden potential of the students.
2. To make students aware of their own hidden potential.
3. To design a module for learning English based on the Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligences of the students.

Research Design

The present study focuses on developing the English language skills of the school student's using Gardner's Musical Intelligence. For this purpose, a preliminary study was carried out by the researcher in different schools. It was observed in the preliminary study that English language learning was not given priority by the school authorities. A structured questionnaire based on Gardner's Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence was administered to 200 randomly selected students. After collecting the data from the learners, their perceptions were analyzed, tabulated and interpreted. For each question, three options such as frequently, sometimes, never were given.

Score for each option is given as:

Frequently	3
Sometimes	2
Never	1

Table: 1
Evaluation scale for the research

Responses For Bodily – Kinesthetic Intelligence

The questions under the Bodily – Kinesthetic Intelligence were asked to find out how good the learners are at sports and physical skills. The sample learners were asked to respond to every question in the column by marking tick.

- I enjoy running, jumping and wrestling
- I enjoy working with clay or other tactile experiences
- I pick up new dance steps fast
- I learnt bicycle fast
- My sense of balance and coordination is good
- I can run, swim and exercise without getting tired
- I use a lot of hand gestures and body movements while talking to friends

Methodology

The data was analysed and calculated according to the Likert scale. The following is the score

Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence	2.2
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Table: 2
Analysed data through Likert Scale

A pre-test was conducted for 50 randomly selected students. Based on the scores of the sample learners a training programme was designed.

The class was further divided into two groups:

- The experimental group
- The control group

An intensive training programme was designed by the researcher to give training to the experimental group in the English language using the bodily kinesthetic intelligence, by including a variety of language activities in their routine. The control group on the other hand continued with the same teaching techniques used in the school. The training schedule was conducted for a period of 1 week.

Training

The learners worked on the following activities given by the researcher to enhance their English language skills using their kinesthetic intelligence.

Activity 1**Dumb Charades**

Dumb Charades:

It is a game in which words or phrases are acted out for others to guess. The learners were divided into two groups and a player from each team is given a secret word by the other team to be enacted to their group members. The team members attempted to guess the word based on the actor's performance. Few words used by the learners for playing the game are:

Kung Fu	Pickpocket
Milk Shake	Gardner
Bookworm	Detective
Google	Goldsmith
Ambulance	Prank
Naughty	Tooth Fairy
Spine	Daisy

Playing dumb charades offered students a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere. After learning and practicing new vocabulary, or the words previously known, learners got the opportunity to use language in a non-stressful way. While playing the game, the learners attention was on how to enact the word and win the game rather than on the language. This eases the fear of negative evaluation, as the concern of being negatively judged in public, is removed. In this game – oriented context, anxiety is reduced and non-verbal communication and confidence were achieved.

Activity 2

Plan for a 10 minute PT Drill

People with bodily / kinesthetic intelligence are skilled at using their body to convey feelings and ideas. They have good hand eye coordination and fine gross motor skills.

The learners were asked to form a group and plan for a 10 minute PT Drill, yoga or aerobic to be performed in the school assembly. The learners were then asked to write a detailed description of their moves and formations, with diagrams wherever necessary.

Initially only 13 students showed enthusiasm in this activity, however seeing their friends experiment with different exercises, the rest of the learners also joined their friends. After completing the written work, the learners exchanged the written instructions among themselves. However, out of 5 groups, only 3 groups could give the instructions accurately for the new group to perform. Learners who were more inclined towards sports showed an improvement in their academics, team work and co-operation. These learners also become positive mentions.

Activity 3**Maintaining a Balanced Diet**

The researcher has given the learners the number of calories to be consumed per day also, a list of food items with the calories in each item are given. The learners were asked to prepare a diet chart with varied options to match the calories intake.

	Total Calories
Breakfast	400
Lunch	650
Dinner	500

Food Items	Calories per Item
Beetroot	43
Chapati	70
Egg	94
Rice	111
Dal	125
Idly	140

Food Items	Calories per Item
Dosa	150
Vada	151
Aloo	210
Paneer	300
Curd	300
Sambar	308

Maintaining a balanced diet is important for proper functioning of the human body. Without an adequate diet, a person is at a risk of chronic health conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure. Few learners in the class did not show much excitement in the activity as they did not find the food items interesting. However after the researcher told them about their nutritional value, they tried making a well – balanced diet chart matching to the calories intake listed at the beginning. A healthy diet can stabilize energy, sharpen the mind, and improves the learners mood, allowing them to maximize their potential both inside and outside the class.

Activity 4

Role Play

Role plays are an excellent way of getting the students practice their English. They simulate real life situations and allow them to act out what they would do in a real situation. These are two ways a role play can go:

- Scripted
- Non-scripted

With a scripted role play, the teacher might use an example in a text book. Non-scripted ones are when the students are given a role each and must use whatever knowledge they have in order to speak with that partner.

Topic for role play is “phoning to make a complaint”

Many learners came forward for the role play as the topic given to them was a part of their real life situation .The learners enacted using different reasons for complaining. The learners gained confidence and developed interpersonal skills, through this activity. When properly employed, role plays can motivate students in a fun and engaging way.

Findings

- It was proved that the English language skills can be derived from bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.
- The inclusive framework of the MI tasks enabled discovery learning to take place within new roles and procedures that evolved as a part of learning.
- It was learnt that most of the learners did not show much interest in learning vocabulary. But after the training programme, they started developing interest in learning vocabulary using different activities of their own interest.

- Though the learners were not fluent in speaking English, they tried their best to communicate with their peers in English while playing games to enhance their language skills.

Conclusion

As a broad result of the MI project initiated during this study, most of the students, teachers, parents and the management felt that a multiple learning framework which includes an relaxing environment needed to be planned integrally into the school curriculum itself instead of being confined to any particular period in the timetable as the results shown were very impressive and effective.

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