

Enhancing Communication Skills of the School Learners Using Gardner's Musical Intelligence

* **E. Suresh Kumar**, Professor of English and Registrar of Osmania University

** **N. Prathyusha**, Research Scholar in the Department of English, Osmania University

Abstract:

The theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) suggests that learners have different strengths, learning styles and even learning potential contrary to the belief that only students with strong linguistic, mathematical and spacial abilities are accepted and recognized in the society. Once the teachers recognize the different intelligences and inherent talents possessed by their students, they can design different exercises to enhance the language skills of the students. This article focuses on ways of enhancing the English Language skills among the students, using Gardner's Musical Intelligence Theory. For the purpose of the study, Gardner's MI questionnaire was administered to 150 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

Introduction

In the traditional framework of learning, in the mainstream education system, only learners with strong linguistic, mathematical and spacial abilities are accepted, whereas learners with different intelligences which cannot be measured by standard psychometric tests based on behaviorist paradigms are rejected as unable to learn (Weber 1992; Armstrong1993). This difference in the education system is caused by psychometric tests of general intelligence, which are supposed to be the accurate way of finding out the overall academic ability. Since these tests are based on testing linguistic, mathematical and logical abilities, their scope remains limited and much of learner's potential remains untapped, leading to many number of dropouts every year.

The idea of social, practical, and emotional intelligence or of diverse intelligence indicates what people refer to do or how they work on the abilities they have. A complete interpretation of this brain-based difference in abilities as related to intelligence functions was achieved by Howard Gardner (1983) with his theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI).

Gardner not only disproved the ideas that intelligence is a single entity, that it results from a single factor, or that it can be measured simply by IQ tests, but he also challenged the cognitive development of piaget, bringing forward evidence to show that any one time a child may be at very different stages of intellectual and affective development. Thus, Gardener has successfully undermined the idea that knowledge at any one particular developmental stage, exists as a structured whole.

This paradigm shift is also reflected in society and culture, which has ceased to pay sole attention to the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences and to value only highly articulate or logical people. Equal attention is now given to individuals who show gifts in other intelligences viz. artists, architects, musicians, naturalists, designers, dancers, therapists and entrepreneurs.

Gardner (1983) 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). He 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.

The naturalist intelligence is however not very popular and in use. The idea of Multiple Intelligences has attracted the interest of many educators as well as the general public. Schools that use MI theory encourage learning that goes beyond traditional books, pens, and pencils. Teachers and parents who recognize their learners’/children’s’ specific talents can provide learning activities that build on those inherent talents. As a result of strengthening such differences, individuals are free to be intelligent in their own ways.

According to Richards.C and Rogers S Theorode (2010)

There are no goals stated for MI instruction in linguistic terms. MI pedagogy focuses on the language class as the setting for a series of educational support systems aimed at making the language learner a better designer of his/her own learning experiences. Such a learner is both better empowered and more fulfilled than a learner in traditional classrooms. A more goal-directed learner and happier person is held to be a likely candidate for being a better second language learner and user. (p.no 118)

However, unfortunately, a similar movement has not occurred in education, especially in India, where the linguistic and logical-mathematical bias continues to predominate. Children who have other gifts do not receive much reinforcement for these in school. In fact, as Gardner [1983] and Armstrong [2000] observed, many learners even end up being labeled as slow learners or slow processors .Yet, an educational system labeling learners as underachievers is both unjust as well as short –sighted, when the unique ways of thinking and learning of such learners are, in the first place, not addressed in a heavily linguistic or logical-mathematical classroom.So,the present study makes an effort to improve the language skills of the school learners using Gardner's Musical Intelligence.

Language Learning and Music

Learning a different language is a fantastic life skill. In our increasingly globalised modern world, it has become very important for learners to learn a new language. Aside from enhancing their educational and career prospects, learning language is fun, opening up new experiences and a chance to understand different cultures and make new friends. Learners have a natural curiosity about new things and they love mimicking and copying, an ideal starting point for learning a new language. By looking at what is around them and listening to the sounds and rhythms of everyday life, children absorb language without being fully conscious of it. So childhood is a great time to learn a language because the 'learning' can be done in a non-formal way, without the students realizing they are actually learning.

Language learning mostly depends on the nature of interaction that can share features such as simplified vocabulary, change in voice, formulaic expressions, and the frequency of repetition, and modification of international patterns. Rhythm and melody of speech have a great impact on communication and helps in language learning (Zybert&Stepien, 2009).

Music is an indispensable part of human life . It is one of the oldest and most basic socio-cognitive domains of the human being. Music serves various purposes in our life.. It enhances the functioning of the immune system. The melody from musical instruments affects heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and body temperature. Besides providing enjoyment, it is a great

tool for learning and eventually helps in improving the memory of learners. Finally, music can enhance coordination and the ability to listen and respond (Sakamoto, 2000).

According to Aaron Myers

The science of language learning shows that not only is the previously considered “critical period” of language acquisition longer than previously thought, but that multilingual people are “mental jugglers”. Music is a way to keep your language juggling fluid and natural.

Steve and Miyake (2006) claim that structural and motivational properties of music in songs helps in language learning as these musical activities can develop auditory perception and metacognitive knowledge and aids in phonological memory. They further continue that music and songs can increase sensibility, improve concentration, and develops reading and writing abilities.

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 Musical Intelligence

Statement of the problem

There is a lot of hue and cry 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 Musical 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 Musical intelligence was administered to 150 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

Musical Intelligence

Gardner (1993) defines Musical Intelligence as having greater sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, tones, and music. In fact, it is the ability to perceive and appreciate rhythm, pitch and melody, elements which are crucial in the language learning process. Musical intelligence requires interaction within the musical realm. It is the earliest of the intelligences to appear in human being as even a child as young as two month old can sing and match rhythmic structures (Hallam, 2010).

Gardner (1983) believes that

If we can explain music, we may find the key for all human thought (p.no:123).

The following questions under the musical intelligence were asked to find out how good the learner are in musical composition and rhythm, and if they have a 'good ear' for music.

- I am good at playing a musical instrument.
- I can associate music with my moods.
- I like to hum, whistle and sing in the shower or when I'm alone.
- I remember melodies of songs.
- I have a rhythmic way of speaking.
- I have unquenchable passion for music.

Methodology

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

Musical 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 musical 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 musical intelligence

Activity 1

Completing the Lyrics

People with musical intelligence love music. They appreciate rhythm and composition. They are gifted with the ability to compose, sing and / or play instruments and have a good ear for music.

Heal the world Michael Jackson.

This song was play by the researcher in the classroom. The learners were asked to listen to the song carefully. The researcher then gave part of the lyrics, with few blanks, for the learners to fill in.

There are _____
To get there
If you _____ enough
For the _____
Make a little _____
Make a _____ place.

Only few learners who listened to the song attentively could complete the blanks in the given time of 15 minutes. The researcher further asked if the learners were aware of the song before and played the song again for the learners to understand. The learners were reflective in thought and tried to remember the whole song . By the end of the activity the learners not only improved their memory and cognitive skills but also improvised their language by knowing and learning new vocabulary.

Activity 2

Possible Solution to a Rhyme

Researcher gave a nursery rhyme and asked the learners to recite it together.

Hickory dickory dock
The mouse ran up the clock
The clock struck one
The mouse ran down
Hickory dickory dock.

The learners were then asked to think about a possible reason that caused the mouse to run up the clock. The learners came out with different possible answers like:

There was probably cheese at the top.

A cat was chasing the mouse

The mouse heard some footsteps and got scared

The mouse was in search of a new house so it went up

Through this activity, the learners worked on their problem solving skills, critical thinking and appreciated the value of predictions and consequence.

Activity 3

Interpreting a Song

<http://songlibrary.net/I-Am-The-Earth.html>

The above song was projected in the classroom. The learners had to listen to the song carefully, and jot down whatever thoughts occurred to them. At the end of 30 minutes, they were asked to write a paragraph explaining their feelings and how and why they liked or disliked the song. This activity ignited the minds of the learners and helped them in becoming autonomous in their thinking and learning. Also in the process of explaining they improved their written skills.

Activity 4

Explaining about their favourite song:

The learners were given a chance to think about their favourite song, translate it into English and explain to their classmates about the song, what they feel about the song and how the song makes them feel. At the end of the activity the learners not only admired the song improving their language, but also gained confidence.

Post-test

After the completion of one week of training, a post-test was conducted to measure application and impact of the learning during the training period. The post-test was also conducted to the control group. The average scores are as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of the test	Average score
1	Pre test (Entire Group)	21
2	Post Test (Control Group)	23
3	Post Test (Experimental Group)	31

Table: 3
Post Test Results

A significant increase in score can be observed in the experimental group after the training programme. The improvement was mainly observed along linguistic and communicative dimensions. The sample learners also felt they developed a natural instinct for learning more with musical intelligence inputs intervention.

Findings

- It was proved that the English language skills can be derived from musical intelligence.
- The learners appeared to value knowledge more by 'getting it themselves, instead of being handed down by the teacher from the text.
- 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.

- It was observed that the learners never had the chance to explore / exhibit their leadership qualities and musical talent, as they never got any choice to take lead in the classroom discussions.
- The sample learners tried to evaluate themselves after trying out a new activity as they wanted to know where they stand.

Conclusion

As a broad result of the MI project initiated during this study, students, teachers, parents and the management together thought that a multiple learning framework which includes an anxiety-reducing quotient 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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