USING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE THEORY IN TEFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract:Each child and individual has a different intelligence profile. Some have better Mathematics skills whereas others are good at acquiring foreign languages. Gardner`s Multiple Intelligence Theory states that there isn`t just one type of intelligence but nine types which can operate in together or independently from one another. Multiple intelligences can be integrated into the teaching of English as a Foreign Language if teachers design and chose their activities according to their students` type of intelligence. Our study tries to reveal the importance of Multiple Intelligences in TEFL and the positive results it has with children of different ages.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligence Theory, TEFL classroom, skills, abilities, activities.

Introduction

A lot of methods of learning and teaching a foreign language have been used along the time and a great deal of research has been done into the subject. However, nobody can pretend that there is a perfect method. Each of them has advantages and, of course, disadvantages. Each of them was very effective and very modern at its time and became ineffective when another one was developed.

BEHAVIOURISM was based on a three-stage procedure where the three stages are stimulus, response, and reinforcement. Behaviourism, which was, after all a psychological theory, was adopted for some time by language teaching methodologists and the result was the audio-lingual method still used in many parts of the world. Constant repetition and reinforcement of the teacher formes the language "habbit".

COGNITIVISM, sometimes referred as "mentalism", refers to a group of psychological theories, which draw heavily on the work in linguistics of Noam Chomsky. He rejected the behaviourist view of language acquisition based on his model of competence and performance.

Chomsky maintained that language is not a form of behaviour, on the contrary, it is an intricate rule-based system, and a large part of language acquisition is the learning of the system. There are a finite number of grammatical rules in the system and with the knowledge of these, an infinite number of sentences can be formed in the language. It is competence that a child gradually acquires.

Language teaching has never adopted a methodology based on Chomsky's work or strictly upon cognitivist theories.

The **AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD** also known as the"Army Method" is probably the most popular method currently. This language teaching approach is based on the premise that learning a new language means learning a new system of habits. It is an outgrowth of behaviorism, a school of psychology, which proposes that all learning is a process of conditioning, a process based on stimulus-response/reinforcement-and structural linguistics.

The **COGNITIVE-CODE LEARNING** in some respects is a modern version of the classic grammar-translation method. The major implications in cognitive-code learning are: a

language is a rule-governed system,students must learn the rules in a new language through analysis in order to use the language competently.

Language learning is more than a matter of habit formation, it is a creative process, and therefore the student should be given the opportunity to be as mentally active as possible in all assigned work.

HUMANISTIC APPROACH- there are several teaching methods and tehniques that share with the school of humanistic psychology a concern for the role of affective (emotional) factors in language learning, among them Total Physical Response and Community Language Leraning. Moskowitz describes humanistic techniques as those that "blend what the student feels, thinks and knows with what he is learning in the target language. Rather than self-denial being the acceptable way of life, self-actualisation and self-esteem are the ideals the exercise pursue. The techniques help build rapport, cohesiveness and caring that far transcedent what is already there...help students to be themselves, to accept themselves, and be proud of themselves...help foster a climate of caring and sharing in the foreign language classroom." (Moskowitz 1978).

The primary aims are to help the students, through active participation, to develop more positive feelings about themselves and their classmates, to co-operate and support each other to grow and excel at their speech performance. This is also a rewarding experience for the teacher.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING (CLL) deviced by Charles A. Curran and his associates, is closely related to Humanistic techniques and seeks to encourage to see their students as whole persons, where their felings, intellect, interpersonal relationships and desire to learn are addressed and balanced. Also known as whole-person learning, CLL is a holistic approach which views human learning as both cognitive and affective.

CLL does not follow a conventional grammar-based syllabus, but is primarily topic-based, with students suggesting areas they would like to cover. In CLL, learners typically sit in a circle of between six to twelve learners while one or more teachers, or knowers, who provide or correct target language statements, stand outside the circle. A learner first tells the knower what they wish to express in their own language, whereupon the knower translates it into the target language. The learner then repeats the knower's translation. This technique is used until students are able to apply words in the target language without translations.

TOTAL PHISYCAL RESPONSE (TPR) was developed by the American psychologist James Asher. It is reffered to as "Natural Method" because it is a methodology based on the premise that adult second language learning develops in a similar way to that in which children naturally acquire their first language. When children learn their first language, Asher claims, most of the language directed towards them consists of commands in the imperative to which children respond physically before they are able to respond verbally. They might say: "Look at mommy!" or "Give me the ball!" accompanied by an appropriate gesture, and children then follow their parents commands.

Asher believed that if children learn their first language like this, then it followed that adults could also learn a second language in the same way. In the classroom the teacher and students take on roles similar to that of the parent and child respectively. Students must respond physically to the words of the teacher. The activity may be a simple game such as „Simon Says" or may involve more complex grammar and more detailed scenarios and it can

also be useful for storry-telling. Though some say it is only really appropriate for beginners, it has, nonetheless, become a common tool in the language classroom, especially useful with lower levels and younger learners. As well as being fun, TPR caters to kinesthetic learners and requires few materials.

A recent approach is the **COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH**, defined by Jeremy Harmer as "a concentration on language as a means of communication focused on communicative activities". Its aims are overtly communicative and great emphasis is placed on training the students to use language for communication.

As an approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been seen as a response to the Audiolingual Method and it emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language.

The goal of the CommunicativeApproach is to have one's students become communicatively competent. Communicative competence involves being able to use the language appropriate to a given social context. To do this, students need knowledge the speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it.

Using Multiple Intelligence Theory in Teaching English

Intelligence is the human being`s ability to reason, solve problems and understand complex, abstract things.

Some people are exceptional thinkers but prove to lack practical skills or emotional intelligence. Others, less gifted with logical-mathematic thinking have other gifts, talents in the field of art or creative activities. Thus, the types of intelligence coexist and people can be gifted in a certain area and weaker in other.

Each individual has a different intelligence profile but inborn s/he has them all. The educational process can be improved by using the students` intelligence profile and designing activities accordingly. Multiple Intelligences can be used in foreign language teaching, if the teacher uses specific intelligence based lesson. Teachers have to adapt the theme to suit to three or four dominant intelligence types in the classroom.

Gardner`s Theory of Multiple intelligences tries to prove that people possess not less than nine types of intelligence. These types of intelligence develop differently in each individual, according to certain inborn features. Gardner says that our schools function according to linguistic and logical-mathematic intelligence. Unfortunately, each child which possesses another type of intelligence, artistic for example, is considered out of the pattern, out of the ordinary, even learning disabled. Many pupils labelled with ADD (attention deficit disorder) are actually pupils with predominant intelligence in other areas than linguistic and logical-mathematic.

In terms of language teaching, it is known that most classes function on reading and writing activities. Yet, there are pupils who do not function well in this type of learning environment. For them, the Multiple Intelligence Theory is a helping hand. The types of intelligence are the following:

Visual – spatial intelligence

This type of intelligence refers to one`s ability of visually perceiving what surrounds us, of observing shapes, ideas and structures which can be memorized for a long time. Pupils

use a concrete image to synthesize and create new meanings. It is commonly used in writing and reading activities, as well as in painting, photography, drawings and sculpture.

Specific activities for the development of visual – spatialintelligence are:

- Experiments
- Photo essays
- Investigations
- Nature walks
- Recognition of things in the nature

Verbal – linguistic intelligence

It is represented by one`s ability of using words, developing a rich vocabulary and learning foreign languages in an easy way. It is the most common type of intelligence; therefore sometimes others fail to notice it. Pupils possessing this type of intelligence learn easily if they hear the information rather than read it; therefore teachers should use CDs and other audio materials. Teachers develop this type of intelligence in listening, speaking, writing, word game activities.

Specific activities for the development of verbal – linguisticintelligence are:

- Listening exercises
- Vocabulary activities
- Grammar exercises
- Word games
- Oral presentation
- Summarizing
- Authentic readings
- Discussions and debates

Logical – mathematical intelligence

It is represented by one`s ability to use logic, reason and numbers, to solve problems easily, to make future plans and to face challenges, It involves superior analytical activities and uses statistics, abstract concepts and calculations for problem solving.

Specific activities for the development of logical – mathematical intelligence are:

- Word order activities
- Categorizing
- Problem- solving activities
- Computer games
- Critical thinking activities
- Sequence events into story line

Spatial intelligence

Spatial intelligence has to do with vision and spatial judgement. Students possessing visual intelligence respond to visual cues and they like to invent and design. They are often artistic and have a strong visual memory. They are sensitive to colours, shapes, form, space and the relationships between these elements.

Specific activities for the development of spatial intelligence are:

- Making mind maps
- Making charts
- Taking photos
- Making videos
- Designing slide shows

The kinaesthetic intelligence

It is represented by the ability to use the body to solve problems, to share feelings and wishes. These students are skilled at physical activities such as sport and dance, mime, etc. Specific activities for the development of kinaesthetic intelligence are:

- Dancing
- Field trips
- Movement games
- Mime or act out a story

Musical intelligence

Musical intelligence is one`s ability to produce and interpret music, to identify a composer`s style, pitch and timber. This ability is commonly used to reduce stress and release stress. For these activities it is necessary to be able to play an instrument, to sing and have artistic skills.

Specific activities for the development of musical intelligence are:

- Creating songs
- Singing
- Learning about music
- Creating rhythms
- Playing an instrument
- Having music in the background while studying

Interpersonal intelligence

Interpersonal intelligence involves the ability to understand others, their feelings and emotions, and also the ability to cooperate, socialize, analyse and handle emotions. It is the most common type of intelligence used by foreign language teachers. It includes: empathy, listening, team work, conflict solving, group guidance and organization.

Students who have interpersonal intelligence are excellent leaders, help their peers and work in team.

Specific activities for the development of interpersonal intelligence are:

- Interact with English speaking people daily
- Watch English speaking movies
- Written communication
- Interactive computer games
- Paired activities

Intrapersonal intelligence

People with intrapersonal intelligence have great self-knowledge; they know their strengths and weaknesses, their motivations and intensions. They are independent personalities, like to work alone and plan carefully their work. Intrapersonal intelligence is important in individual study and homework.

Specific activities for the development of intrapersonal intelligence are:

- Essays
- Journals
- Diary entries
- Research activities

Research on the use of MIT in TEFL

Methodology

The objectives of the empirical study (survey by questionnaire)

- Validation of direct survey data;
- Identification of mechanisms for using and developing certain types of intelligence
- Identification of correlation degree between the teachers` and students` answers;
- Determining the usefulness of using MIT in TEFL

Study sample: 150 students from the following high schools: "MoiseNicoara" National College of Arad, "Elena GhibaBirta" National College, „DimitrieȚichindeal" Pedagogic High school, Secondary School No 5, "VasileGoldis" National College, Arad and 20 English teachers from the same schools.

Method of data collection: direct survey based on a questionnaire filled in at school. Teachers had to answer another questionnaire.

The questionnaire contained 10 questions aiming to identify the students` type of intelligence and the:

- Types of activities they prefer;
- Their skills and abilities in a certain field
- The school subjects they like and are good at
- What activities do they dislike
- How do they picture a nice English class
- The variety of activities and methods used by the teacher

The questions were formulated as multiple choice questionsbut there were also two questions where students had the possibility to elaborate on their answers.

General results

The students were asked to fill in the questionnaire that would determine their predominant type of intelligence. Based on their answers, we present the following data:
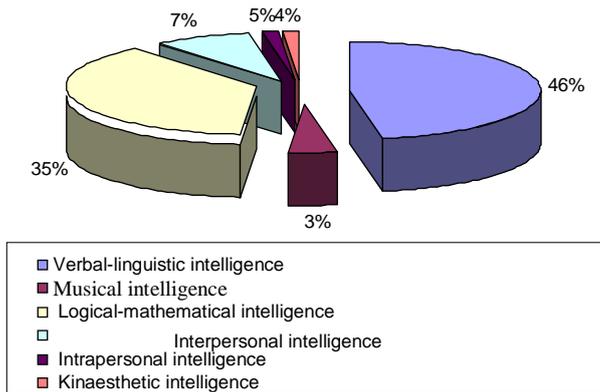
Chart no 1 – Students` intelligence type

As revealed by the students` answers, there are several types of intelligence among children of a certain age. Therefore, teachers should use activities do help all students improve their knowledge and give them the change to use their intelligence in a proper manner.

The teachers were asked to fill in a questionnaire so that we would identify whether they know what type of intelligence do their students possess and how often do they use special activities to develop each type of intelligence. The answers are presented in Chart no 2.
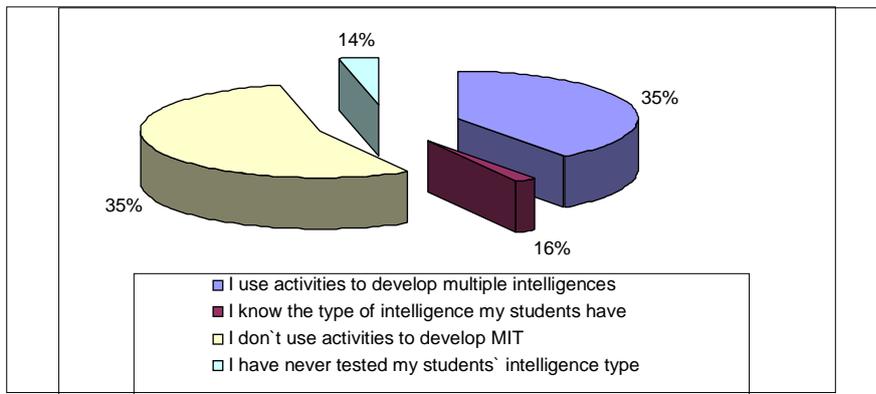

Chart no 2 – teachers` answers

As revealed by the teachers` answers, the results are equal in terms of activities used to develop MIT. There are teachers who are aware of the importance of developing the students` predominant type of intelligence and consequently they use activities to help them in their activity. There are also teachers who ignore the importance of letting children work in their own way and their own pace, and therefore don not use activities to support MIT.
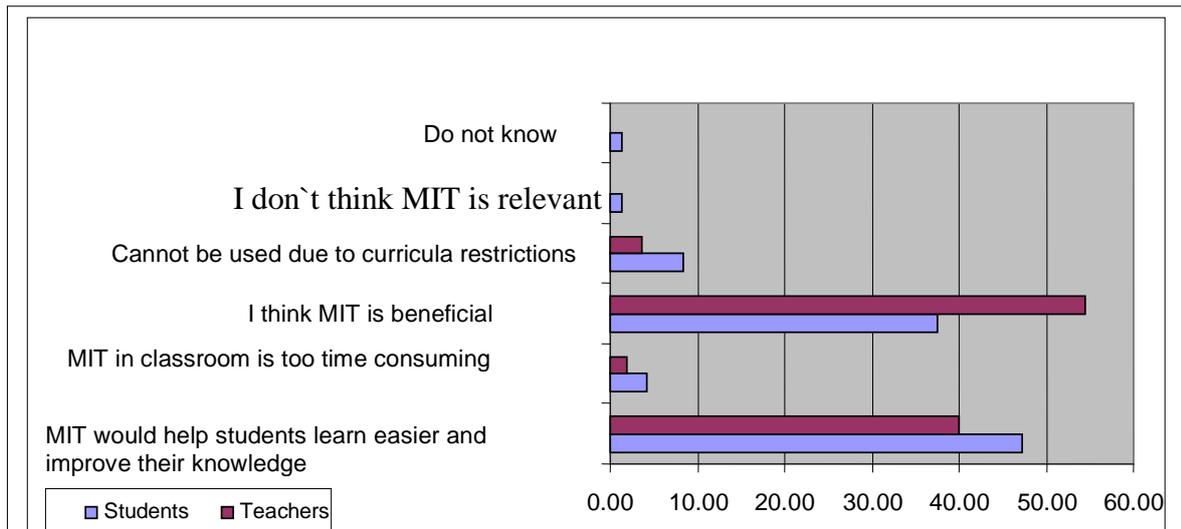
Chart no 3. The importance of using MIT

We can see both from teachers` and from students` answers that MIT is of interest to them. Both parties would be interested in spending more time in applying MIT in classroom activities. However, there are people who believe that MIT activities are more time consuming compared to other traditional activities and that using them may have a negative influence on the curriculum. Teachers as well as students fear that using MIT will lead to drawbacks in terms of curriculum coverage.

Conclusions

Teaching with Multiple Intelligence Theory increases the students` interest in studying and offers teachers the opportunity to organize their material in a pleasant and interesting manner. Students feel more comfortable if they are taught according to their own skills and abilities. Developing these skills offers them the change to be prepared for real life situations. MIT in TEFL is especially useful because students can apply and use their language skills in everyday situations and later on in their career. We believe that teachers should try to use MIT more often in their classes and accustom their students to working with activities connected to multiple intelligences.

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