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Integrating Multiple Intelligence Activities for Teaching Story Writing to ESL Learners

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to find out how the theory of Multiple Intelligences can be integrated for teaching story writing. In order to check the validity of the investigation, the researcher has formed a few activities which make use of different types of intelligences that can be implemented in an ESL class to teach story writing.

The anticipated outcome of the study is that integrating Multiple Intelligences for teaching story writing to ESL students will provide learners the scope to use their stronger intelligence to foster their weaker intelligence and teachers to teach to a broader range of talents and skills making learning easy and interesting. However, it is important to note that the implication of Multiple Intelligence theory is best possible in the Communicative Approach to English Language Teaching and it also demands teachers to be creative and innovative to be able to apply the theory in their lessons to yield maximum result.

Keywords: English as Second Language (ESL), English Language Teaching (ELT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Multiple Intelligences (MI), (MI) based activities for teaching story writing.

Introduction:

The traditional methods of English Language teaching have outlived their worth. English Language Teaching by now has witnessed shifts from the Grammar Translation Method to Communicative Language Teaching and to post- methods era. This was possible only because teachers readily accepted innovative teaching techniques, modified materials from time to time to suit their learners.

Today's education system appreciates the uniqueness of every individual. Each of us is blessed with some unique ability or talent. Some students may be good at language, some at maths, some at arts, some at music, or at dance. And it is important for teachers to acknowledge their abilities and talents. The traditional definition and method of measuring Intelligence of a person developed by Alfred Binet through a test seems to be a very narrow approach to tag a person as intelligent or unintelligent. Binet's Intelligence Quotient IQ test basically measured two types of cognitive ability: verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical which is indeed a very limited view of intelligence. Hence, the researcher is convinced with Gardner's new paradigm in intelligence.

“The single most important contribution education can make to a child’s development is to help towards a field where his talents best suit him, where he will be satisfied and competent. We have completely lost sight of that instead; we subject everyone to an education where, if you succeed, you will be best suited to be a college professor. And we evaluate everyone along the way according to whether they meet that narrow standard of success. We should spend less time ranking children and more time helping them to identify their natural competencies and gifts and cultivate those. There are hundreds and hundreds of ways to succeed and many different abilities that will help you get there.”(Gardner, 1993; cited in Hafifah 2013:4)

What is Multiple Intelligences?

Howard Gardner, a notable psychologist of Harvard, in his book “Frames of Mind” which for the first time appeared in 1983 challenged the traditional definition of intelligence that it is an innate uniform mental capacity people are born with and viewed intelligence through a new perspective. According to him each individual has eight distinct intelligences with varying degrees and later he added one more type of intelligence and said there is a possibility of a few more. Some intelligences are naturally stronger in some individuals and some other intelligences can be strengthened through practice and training.

The eight types of intelligences are:

- **Verbal- Linguistic intelligence:** It refers to the inclination towards language, language structures, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation etc. Verbally or linguistically intelligent people show a natural inclination or sensitivity towards language. They often possess the ability to understand, interpret conversation, stories or poems better than others. Hence, they are often good at speaking, writing, explaining and teaching.
- **Logical-mathematical intelligence:** It refers to the ability to think critically to solve problems based on mathematical operations. Children with high logical/ mathematical intelligence are generally good at applying logics to solve patterns, puzzles, reasoning questions etc. They are also often good at inferencing, organising, classifying, proving and understanding logics of how and why. Children with high verbal- linguistic intelligence and logical- mathematical intelligence are often valued in education as they perform well in the traditional classroom settings and fit to the narrow criteria of evaluation.
- **Musical intelligence:** This is the ability to understand, differentiate, compose, and appreciate musical patterns, changes in pitch, tone and rhythm. It is easy to overlook this kind of intelligence in the traditional classroom.
- **Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence:** This is the ability to use the body for expressing feelings, ideas and emotions. These Children indulge themselves in activities which make use of body parts such as running, dancing, playing, fighting etc. These children find difficult to be in one position. They learn best through activities and are often labelled as hyperactive.
- **Visual-spatial intelligence:** This intelligence involves sensitivity to recognize, use, and interpret pictures, shapes, colours and patterns. Children demonstrating high level of spatial intelligence enjoy charts, maps, tables, puzzles etc. They want to see and often visualise things about which we are talking in order to understand.
- **Interpersonal intelligence:** This is the ability to understand feelings, mood, intentions, and desires of others. Children with strong interpersonal intelligence learn best in groups

or in pairs they love making friends, talking, advising and spending time with people. These children share feelings of sympathy and empathy for others.

- **Intrapersonal intelligence:** This is the ability to analyse and understand one's own self to interpret and value our own feelings, emotions and motivation. Children who are high in this type of intelligence tend to be quiet and reserved. They show characteristics very different from interpersonally intelligent children. Intrapersonally intelligent children like to spend most of their time alone with themselves away from crowd and chaos.
- **Naturalistic intelligence:** The skill to recognize and appreciate our relationship with the natural world is the core definition of this intelligence. Children with strong naturalistic intelligence like outdoors, outings to places which capture the beauty of nature, field trips etc. (Adapted from Armstrong, 2009).

Putting Multiple Intelligences theory in Communicative Language Teaching

Nowadays the most popularly used language teaching method is the Communicative Language Teaching. The main essence or the back bone of this approach is that it sees communication as the method and goal of learning a language. It aims to make learners communicatively competent. Communicative Competence refers to the ability to use language correctly as well as appropriately according to different social situations. And this is achieved through engaging students in such activities which incite students to use the target language. With the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching, there occurred a paradigm shift in language teaching. The quest of attaining communicative competence has given rise to learner centred teaching. Now the role of teacher from an authoritarian figure has also changed to that of a facilitator. Another important aspect of Communicative Language Teaching is that it encourages the use of authentic materials. Authentic materials refer to those materials which are produced for purposes other than teaching such as using newspapers, magazines, videos, songs etc. Therefore it is evident to note that, Language teaching in recent days does not entail developing only linguistic intelligence. English Language Teaching does not limit itself to developing the ability to read, write, listen and speak. It is important to develop not only the four language skills but also to mentor and groom the different intelligences which shape the overall personality and behaviour of an individual. This ultimate goal of English Language Teaching can be best fulfilled by accommodating Multiple Intelligence theory which believes that every student is different. Thus, it is important to recognise their strengths, weaknesses and accordingly plan activities which should cover most of the intelligences so that everyone gets an opportunity to feel motivated and confident.

Hence, it is evident from the above discussion that the theory of Multiple Intelligence is a key element of Communicative Language Teaching as they both take care of learner's needs and aim at promoting individualized education and learner autonomy.

Using Multiple Intelligences for teaching Story writing

The primary desire of teaching story writing in an ESL class is to promote the linguistic intelligence of the learners. As discussed earlier, some learners might already have strong linguistic intelligence while others might not have. In order to catch hold all the students, it is important for language teachers to use those activities which make use of different intelligences

so that each learner at some point of time finds his/ her own highly developed intelligence involved in the task and hence, finds learning interesting.

The researcher has tried to formulate a few activities that make use of different types of intelligences which can be used for teaching story writing.

Overall Aim:

- To enable learners write and enjoy stories in English.
- To enhance student's interaction and communication in the class.
- To enable student's use their inner ideas, imagination and experience into words to create stories.
- To apply Multiple Intelligences activities for teaching story writing with the view to acknowledge and accept differences in individuals and their learning styles.

Interpersonal Intelligence

By involving interpersonal intelligence activities, learners learn the ability to work in group, respect other's views and sometimes compromise their own feelings. In other words, it teaches the art of teaming and skills of cooperation, compromise and communication. Reading to the audience, responding to feedback also develops interpersonal intelligence.

Activity 1

For utilising and developing interpersonal intelligence, learners should be grouped or paired.

- Learners can be given a proverb and asked to discuss with the group members and come up with a story.
- The group can also be asked to give a character or role to each member of the group and perform a role play activity based on a story.
- Learners can be asked to write a joint story- one starts and passes on to the next.
- Once they have written the story they can read it to the class. The rest can be asked to ask questions and give their feedback verbally or in writing.

Intrapersonal Intelligence

Intrapersonal intelligence activities can be used as a tool to gain self-awareness and self-control.

Activity 2

- Learners should be asked to think of their own life experiences or incidents, or any special childhood memory which can be utilized in writing a story. The learners should also be told not to hesitate in writing their experiences as they are supposed to write anonymously.
- The teacher can tell an open ended story to the class and ask each group to write the end based on their perception.
- Learners can be encouraged to write an autobiographical story about themselves or about anything they want to share.
- Learners can also be asked to guess the writer of the story through their interpersonal intelligence.

Visual/ Spatial Intelligence

Activities involving visual/spatial intelligence use pictures, paintings, videos and other visual aids as stimulus for storytelling and writing.

Activity 3

- Learners can be shown a picture or a painting or a silent movie and can be asked to write a story inspired by the inputs given to them.
- Students with high spatial intelligence can be asked to close their eyes, visualize for a moment and then draw pictures to describe the different stages of a story. Others can be asked to narrate or write the story based on their perception of the picture.
- Learners can also be given a story as a cloze passage based on a picture, painting or video and learners can be asked to complete the story.

Musical Intelligence

Musical intelligence is present in all of us with varying degree and it is the first intelligence which develops in us even before our birth in the foetus. Musical intelligence activities can be used as an important tool for teaching story writing.

Activity 4

- Music/ songs have the capacity to evoke emotions. Thus, learners can be asked to write a story about a song.
- Learners can be asked to listen to any of their favourite songs twice or as many times as required in order to tap the emotion the song conjures up such as happiness, sorrow, love, regret, despair etc. and then write a piece conveying the same emotion.
- Sometimes the lyrics of songs tell a story, or a character, and often take us back to our own special experience or memory. Such ballads, or folksongs can also be used a tool to foster writing stories.

Bodily/ Kinaesthetic Intelligence

These activities include tasks which involve body movements such as movement of hands, dance, role play, dumb charade, mimicry etc. are used for story writing.

Activity 5

- The group of learners demonstrating high bodily and kinaesthetic intelligence can be asked to act out a story, perform dance, or play dumb charade. Others can be asked to write the story they have understood through their performance.

Naturalistic Intelligence

Naturalistic intelligence activities need learners to observe first, investigate later and then experiment. Naturalistic intelligent people have an inclination towards nature and an important part of nature is language. Hence, naturalistic intelligence can easily be incorporated in language class.

Activity 6

- Learners can be taken out to a garden or to any nearby place and then asked to create a story.
- Learners can also be asked to write a story using animal characters or in the voice of an animal or flower, about their life, love, family, characteristics etc.
- Stories representing one's culture, tradition, region, food, festival or linguistic diversity can also be a great source of interest among learners and it will eventually involve naturalistic intelligence.
- Learners can also be asked to use their imagination to create a special land, visualise a group of colourful animated characters or whimsical plot and then write their creative story. This will insist them to apply visual/ spatial as well as naturalistic intelligence. Thus, one activity can make use of more than one type of intelligence.

Logical/ Mathematical Intelligence

Story writing can also be applied to mathematical and logical intelligence.

Activity 7

- Learners can be told a story about brothers and sisters who have magical powers, whatever brothers touch doubles and whatever sisters touch triples or when they touch something for the first time it doubles, for the second it triples and so on. Such stories will stimulate their mathematical/logical intelligence.
- Learners can also be given a jumbled story or story puzzle and can be asked to join different parts to create a comprehensive one.

Conclusion:

Providing learners with the opportunity to involve themselves in story writing tasks in an ESL class is an effective way to develop linguistic intelligence through the theory of Multiple Intelligences. Creation of stories permit learners to think, visualize, recall an incident, experience, memory or relate to an earlier heard or read story. It also allows learners to focus on pictures, use their interpersonal, intrapersonal skills, and often demands them to tap their emotions to produce or to enjoy a piece. However, it is not always essential nor possible to embrace all intelligences for covering any topic rather the idea is that even those learners who are strong in intelligences other than linguistic at some point of time may find their own highly developed intelligence utilised if involved in Multiple Intelligence tasks and hence, find learning interesting.

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