

Improving the Students' Reading Skill using Multiple Intelligences Approach

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Abstract

This paper is aimed to discuss the advantages gained by both the teachers and learners in reading class using multiple intelligences approach. In many second or foreign language learning teaching situations, reading has received special focus, especially on how students develop their reading comprehension skill. The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) allows teachers have to detect students' strengths and weaknesses in the classroom. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to begin to think of lesson planning in terms of meeting the needs for improving students' reading skill by maximizing their dominant intelligences.

Key words: teaching reading, multiple intelligences, maximizing

Among the four language skills, reading is the most important one since every aspect of life involves reading. For example road signs, traffic regulation, menus in restaurants, labels on cans, printed advertisements, newspapers, magazines, insurance forms, and so forth (Burns et al., 1996:4). Its importance makes reading receive a special focus in many second or foreign-language situations (Richard and Renandya, 2002:273). Reading is not only a source of information and a pleasure activity, but also a means of consolidating one's knowledge of a language. Reading indicates the

motivation level of learners; it increases readers' vocabulary and language pattern power. With better knowledge, readers may be able to communicate with others with better ease, and in more sophisticated structures.

Multiple intelligences refer to the philosophy that characterizes human intelligences in having multiple dimensions that must be acknowledged and developed in education. This theory believed that multiple intelligences take a part on someone's successful in teaching learning process

Teaching Reading

In many second or foreign language learning teaching situations, reading has received special focus, especially on how students develop their reading comprehension skill. Reading for comprehension is the primary purpose for reading. It raises the students' awareness of main ideas in a text and explores the organization of a text as the essential component for good comprehension.

According to Nuttal (1985:5-6), there are at least four reasons why readers get difficulties in understand and comprehend text. The first is because the readers and the writer do not share the same code. The second is the readers do not have enough background knowledge about the text. Other reason is the complexity of the concept expressed in the text. The last is the vocabulary which is not familiar to the readers. Therefore, the learners should know the strategy for understanding the content of the text.

Harmer (1998) proposed some principles that lie behind the

teaching of reading. These principles should be considered by teachers in teaching reading. Those principles are as follows:

1. Reading is not a passive skill. It means that to do it successfully, we have to understand what the words mean, see the picture what the words are painting, understand the argument, and work out if we agree with them. If we do not do these- and if students do not do these- then we just scratch the surface of the text and we quickly forget it.
2. Student need to be engaged with what they are reading. It means that students who are not engaged with the reading text-not actively interested in what they are doing-are less likely to benefit from it. When they are really fired up by the topic or the task, they get much more from what is in front of them.

3. Students should be encouraged to respond to the content of a reading text, not just to the language. It means that it is very important to allow students to express their feelings about the topic- thus provoking personal engagement with it and the language.
4. Prediction is a major factor in reading. It means that teachers should give students 'hints' so that they can predict what is coming too. It will make them better and more engaged readers.
5. Match the task to the topic. Once a decision has been taken about what reading text the students are going to read, we need to choose good reading task – the right kind of question, engaging and useful puzzles etc. The most interesting text can be undermined by asking boring and inappropriate questions; the most commonplace passage can be made really exciting with imaginative and challenging tasks.
6. Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full. It doesn't make sense if teachers just get students to read texts and then drop them to move on to something else. Good teachers integrate the reading texts into interesting class sequences, using the topic for discussion and further tasks, using the language for study and later activation.

When reading to learn, students need to follow four basic steps:

1. Figure out the purpose for reading. Activate background knowledge of the topic in order to predict or anticipate content and identify appropriate reading strategies.
2. Attend to the parts of the text that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory.

3. Select strategies that are appropriate to the reading task and use them flexibly and interactively. Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up skills simultaneously to construct meaning.
4. Check comprehension while reading and when the reading task is completed. Monitoring comprehension helps students detect inconsistencies and comprehension failures, helping them learn to use alternate strategies. (taken from <http://www.nclrc.org/about.html>)

Nuttal (1985) states that the aspects of skills or strategies of

Multiple Intelligences' Theory

Multiple intelligences (MI) are based on the work of Howard Gardner. He noted that traditional IQ measured only logic and language competence in human, yet the brain has equally important types of intelligences. He argued that all

reading which are going to be learnt through the exploitation of texts:

- a. Skills involving flexibility of technique: variations in reading rate, skimming, scanning, study reading, etc.
- b. Skills of utilizing information that is not strictly speaking part of the text itself: reference apparatus, graphic conventions, illustrations and diagrams.
- c. Word-attack skills: how to tackle unfamiliar lexical items by using morphology, inference from context, etc, or by using a dictionary.
- d. Text-attack skills: the process of interpreting the text as a whole, using all the clues available including cohesion and rhetorical structure.

human have these intelligences, but people differ in the strength and intelligences combination. He also believed that intelligences can be enhanced through practices.

MI is an instructional perspective that focuses on

differences learners and the need to recognize differences learners in teaching and learning. The process of teaching and learning can be considered successful when these learners' differences are acknowledged, analyzed, and accommodated.

Armstrong (2000) described what Gardner has proposed as eight intelligences that people possess, those are:

- **Linguistic**

This kind of intelligence allows people to use language in special and creative ways. It includes the ability to manipulate the syntax or structure of language, the phonology or sound of language, the semantic or meaning of language, and the pragmatic dimensions or practical uses of language. Some of these uses include rhetoric (using language to convince other to take specific course of action), mnemonic (using language to remember information), explanation (using language

to inform something), and meta-language (using language to talk about itself). People who work as lawyers, writers, editors, and interpreters are dominated with this intelligence.

- **Logical/mathematical**

It allows people to think rationally and use number effectively. This intelligence includes sensitivity to logical patterns and relationship, statement and preposition (if-then, cause-effect), functions, and other related abstractions. The kinds of processes used in logical-mathematical intelligence include: categorization, classification, inference, generalization, calculation, and hypothesis testing.

- **Spatial Intelligence**

This intelligence perceives the visual-spatial world accurately (e.g., as a hunter, scout, or guide) and to perform transformations on those perceptions (e.g., as an interior decorator, architect,

artist, or inventor). involves sensitivity to color, line, shape, form, space, and the relationships that exist between these elements. It includes the capacity to visualize, to graphically represent visual or spatial ideas, and to orient oneself appropriately in a spatial matrix.

- **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence**

It refers to people who use whole body to express ideas and feelings (e.g., as an actor, a mime, an athlete, or a dancer) hands to produce or transform things (e.g., as a craftsperson, sculptor, mechanic, or surgeon). This intelligence includes specific physical skills such as coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility, and speed, as well as proprioceptive, tactile, and haptic capacities.

- **Musical Intelligence**

It allows people to perceive (e.g., as a music aficionado), discriminate (e.g., as a music critic), transform (e.g., as a composer), and express (e.g., as a performer) musical forms. This intelligence includes sensitivity to the rhythm, pitch or melody, and timbre or tone color of a musical piece. One can have a figural or “top-down” understanding of music (global, intuitive), a formal or “bottom-up” understanding (analytic, technical), or both.

- **Interpersonal Intelligence**

People with this intelligence have the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people. This can include sensitivity to facial expressions, voice, and gestures; the capacity for discriminating among many different kinds of interpersonal cues; and the ability to respond effectively to those cues in some pragmatic way (e.g., to

influence a group of people to follow a certain line of action).

- **Intrapersonal Intelligence**

This intelligence includes having an accurate picture of oneself (one's strengths and limitations); awareness of inner moods, intentions, motivations, temperaments, and desires; and the capacity for self-discipline, self-understanding, and self-esteem. People usually focus on themselves.

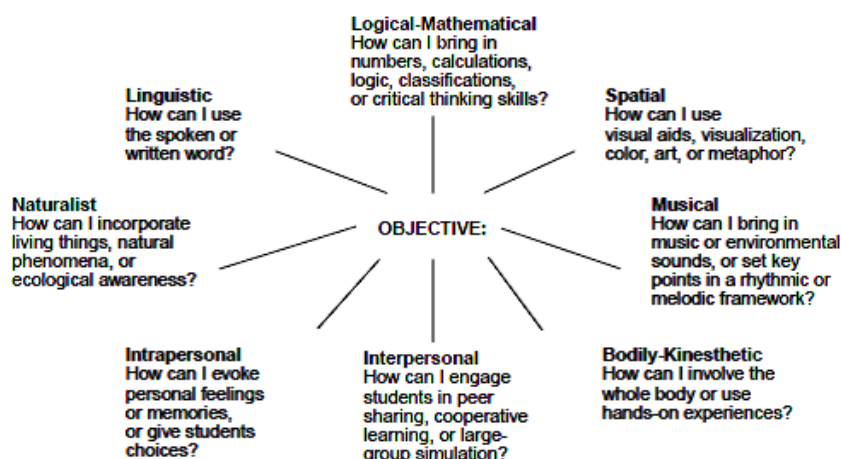
- **Naturalist Intelligence**

It allows the recognition and classification of the numerous species—the flora and fauna—of an individual's environment and also includes sensitivity to other natural phenomena (e.g., cloud formations and mountains) and, in the case of those growing up in an urban environment, the capacity to discriminate among nonliving forms such as cars, sneakers, and music CD covers.

The best way to approach curriculum development using the theory of multiple intelligences is by thinking about how we *can translate* the material to be taught from one intelligence to another. In other words, how can we take a linguistic symbol system, such as the English language, and translate it into the languages of other intelligences, namely, pictures, physical or musical expression, logical symbols or concepts, social interactions, and intrapersonal connections?

The following seven-step procedure suggests one way to create lesson plans or curriculum units using MI theory as an organizing framework:

1. Focus on a Specific Objective or Topic.
2. Ask Key MI Questions
3. Consider the Possibilities.
4. Brainstorm.
5. Select Appropriate Activities
6. Set Up a Sequential Plan.
7. Implement the Plan.



Teaching Strategic Reading using Multiple Intelligences

Before teaching reading strategy using MI approach, teachers should understand the criteria of successful in teaching learning process. Bloom's Taxonomy is a multi-tiered model of classifying thinking according to six cognitive level of complexity. The successful in teaching and learning process, according to Bloom's Taxonomy, can be achieved through six levels; those are (1) Remembering. It deals with retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory; (2)

Understanding.

meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, classifying, summarizing, comparing, and explaining; (3) Applying. It relates

with carrying out or using a procedure through implementing; (4) Analyzing. It deals with breaking materials into constituent parts, and determining how one part relates to another parts by differentiating, organizing, and contributing; (5) Evaluating. It relates with the ability for making judgement based on criteria and standards through checking; (6) Creating. It deals with putting the elements together to form a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing. In Bloom's Taxonomy, the lowest three

ring, understanding, and applying, while the highest three levels are analysing, evaluating, and creating. A student can use this pyramid as self-

evaluation to see themselves in the process of learning.

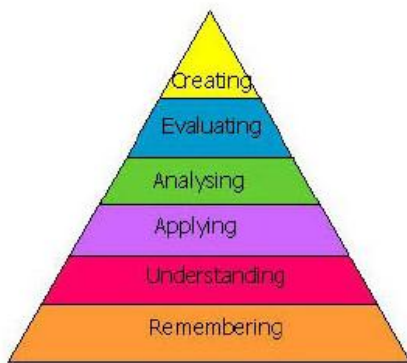


Figure 2. The levels in Bloom's Taxonomy

Reading strategies can be defined as the plans used to solve the problems during the process of constructing meaning. These strategies range from bottom up vocabulary strategies to more comprehensive section, such as connecting the content of the text to the readers' prior knowledge. Janzen (2002) defines the number of effective instructions in strategic reading in the classroom into five, those are; (1) General strategy discussion; (2) Teaching modelling; (3) Student reading; (4) Analysis of strategies used by the teacher or by students when thinking aloud; and (5) Explanation/discussion of individual strategies on a regular basis. The five strategies above

combined with the steps proposed by Brown can be applied in teaching reading using MI approach.

The first process is general strategy discussion. Here, the teacher explains and the class discusses the importance of applying reading strategies. The aim for having class discussion is to build the students' awareness of the value of what they are doing, explain the method used in approaching reading, and ensure the students that they are connecting their progress in reading to the use of strategies. The discussion also helps the students to get deeper understanding of their reading behaviour. At this step, students also try to identify the purpose of reading.

Teaching modelling is the second important element of strategy instruction. The teacher reads aloud some parts of the text, and thinks aloud. In this part, the teacher shows to the students how to make predictions, check the predictions, and summarizing or paraphrasing. Teacher also introduces how to use graphemic rules and patterns to aid in bottom-up decoding (especially for beginning level learners). The

deployment of charts, mapping, or classifications (with colourful shapes) can help the students with linguistic, logic/mathematic and spatial intelligences to understand the examples better, while reading in rhyme will bring benefit to the students with musical intelligence in understanding the lesson.

Student reading allows the students to read and think aloud. These components present a very high cognitive load for readers' L2. Students apply the silent reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension (for intermediate to advanced levels). Then, they try to skim the text for main ideas and scan the text for specific information. Here, students use semantic mapping or clustering, guess the unknown meaning of words, analyze vocabulary, and distinguish between literal and implied meanings. Giving students the opportunity to express their impression toward the text will

Conclusion

Reading, as a source of information and a means of consolidating one's knowledge of a

encourage those with linguistic and logic/mathematic to get involved since it allows them to "play" with sentences and analyze the text.

Analysis of strategy use allows the students to get full benefits from the teacher's modelling. By discussing what the teacher did, they will be better in incorporating effective strategy use into their own reading. The students with interpersonal and kinaesthetic intelligences will get benefit at this stage since it allows them to be participated actively and capitalize on discourse markers to process relationships.

The process of strategy explanation and discussion entails the naming of strategies and repeated on how to use the strategies. Allowing the students to notice the steps done using their own interpretation will "hook" the strategy of reading to their knowledge.

language indicates the motivation level of learners; it increases readers' vocabulary and language pattern power. Multiple intelligences refer to

the philosophy that characterizes human intelligences in having multiple dimensions that must be acknowledged and developed in education. This theory believed that multiple intelligences take a part on someone's successful in teaching learning process. The teachers should also understand what is so called "Criteria of success" in teaching L2 as proposed by Bloom before they go

to teach the language skills. The classroom process of effective instructions in strategic reading argued by Janzen combined by the theory of MI and teaching steps proposed by Brown can be used as the example of how to teach reading. By considering kinds of intelligences the students have, teachers can determine the appropriate activities in teaching reading.

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