

# USING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE TEACHING ACTIVITIES FOSTER THE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION IN THE READING CLASSES

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## ABSTRACT

*For many of the language teachers, motivation is one of the essential elements of successful language learning. Since not all the learners alike and individuals are different and learn in different ways in the classroom, teachers should promote various types of teaching strategies to motivate students and keep them motivated or avoid them from boredom, lack of motivation or demotivating influences. Multiple intelligence teaching strategies provide different instructional methods, and when these methods match the strengths and needs of learners, can significantly arouse the students' interest. Consequently, individuals have sustained motivation with this interest. The implementation of multiple intelligence theory in teaching reading at the language school of Ishik university has increased the students' interest and motivation in reading classes.*

*Keywords:* learner diversity, multiple intelligence, fostering motivation, interest, arouse curiosity

## Introduction

Motivation is considered as one of the most important dynamic of successful language learning. Although motivation has been pointed out as one of the key factor of language learning, there is not an exact consensus about the definition and measurement of it. Motivation is defined as the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors (<http://psychology.about.com/od/mindex/g/motivation-definition.htm>). Harmer (2007, p. 98) describes motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something". In addition to this description Brown (2007, p. 169) includes "the need for ego enhancement" as a prime motivator. William and Burden (1997, p. 120) claims that motivation is a "state of cognitive arousal which provokes a decision to act of which there is sustained intellectual and physical effort". One of the eligible descriptions of motivation for the education field is "the usual meaning of motivation for the teacher is probably the interest that something generates in the students" (Cook, 2008).

Motivation in L2 learning has mostly been used to refer to long-term stable attitudes in the students' minds, in particular integrative and instructional motivation, introduced by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). "The integrative motivation reflects whether the student identifies with the target culture and people in some sense, or reflects them" (Cook, 2008, p. 137). In other way, integrative motivation refers to the desire of the learner to learn the language in order to integrate into the community of speakers of that language. In contrast, Instrumental motivation refers to the need to learn language for material or to get educational benefit: to get a better job, to pass a standardized test, and so on.

In discussion of motivation, a sharp distinction is made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which comes from inside and outside. Ushioda (2012, p.79) describes intrinsic motivation as "doing something as an end itself, for its own self-sustaining pleasurable rewards of enjoyment, interest, challenge, or still and knowledge development". In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is based upon the perceived benefits of success in learning and penalties of failure (Ur, 2012). In the educational field many researches claim that intrinsic motivation produces the optimal kind of internally driven motivation and better results than extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2002) suggests that because intrinsically motivated learners show enthusiasm to learn well, they reach optimal knowledge of their level and competence. According to Cook (2008) one of the main reason for some language learner being successful than the others is undoubtedly as they are intrinsically well motivated. However, in L2 classes, sometimes learners face with the pressures and demands of the institutionalized language learning. In such cases, it is a little bit unrealistic to expect language learners to be motivated to achieve and more importantly to maintain a high intrinsic motivation.

In L2 classes, as in the other ones, learner diversity brings their different goals, enthusiasm, and needs, which influence the certain aspects of motivation. Since particular features of the learners' personality or mind encourage or inhibit L2 learning, the needs and goals are different from each other, there would be challenges in motivating the students to the courses. It has been recognized that motivation is a challenging and complex phenomenon and not all learners are motivated in the same way and their responses may vary to teaching (Devies, &

Pearse.,2000). As Kolb (1984) states that all learners are different and they are unique in a diverse L2 classroom and they are different in the way they prefer to learn. While some prefer to learn on his own, others may want to learn with groups and pairs through interactions, some are more visual some are kinesthetic and learn by doing, some learn by listening. It seems that in such kind of a diverse classroom, students find difficult to learn a second language. However, in an English Language classroom all learners can be motivated by worthwhile goals and clear objectives, the constant use of English, a plenty of activities, interactions, and sensitive handlings of errors.

Teachers, especially those teaching within the non-English speaking country education system, have a vital role to play in increasing high motivation to learn. Because, "high motivation is a factor that causes successful learning, in reverse successful learning causes high motivation" (Cook, 2008, p.140). Also he points out that the process of creating successful learning can spur the high motivation that is under the control of language teachers. Thus, teachers are the key factors to increase and sustain the motivation inside the classroom. They can influence learner's motivation by ensuring that classroom activities are interesting. It is not enough that tasks are communicative or that tasks are interesting, teachers need to employ a number of strategies in task design that can help to create and even more importantly, maintain interest in doing them.

For the L2 learners it is important to work hard at making the course itself enjoyable and satisfying. Even the most carefully planned activities will normally motivate students if they are related to their interests, needs, and aspirations. For example, extrovert learners may want to work on communicating in English through group works while intrapersonal learners want to study alone. It is a good idea to consult with the learners about topics and activities, and get them to bring to class materials and activities they are interested in. one of the ways of motivating learners to the courses is to use interesting activities and topics which may be a rich source of motivation. There are many interesting topics for the personal interest but if the tasks are not interesting and they are boring even the most interesting topics can be killed (Davies & Pearse. 2000). Different teaching activities should be used to teach successfully to the different learners. Using convenient activities for the learners will strengthen the individual's motivation, which is the main factor in second language learning. One way to improve the students' motivation is to use multiple intelligence activities.

Multiple intelligence theory, emerged by Gardner (1983), focuses on a broader view of intelligence rather than Linguistic and Mathematical intelligence. According to Gardner there is more than one intelligence and applying these intelligences to the education filed provides many different ways of teaching to the educators. Since there are eight types of intelligences (*Verbal- Linguistic, Logical Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalistic intelligences*), applying different types of activities relevant to each intelligences can increase the motivation of the students.

### **Sampling**

The students in this experiment were in preparatory school of English at Ishik University. Those students had learned English for more than three years in high school. According to the placement test results the students are grouped into classes. During this experiment, the average class size was 21. Two intermediate classes were chosen for the study, as we needed to compare the results in two same-level classes. The study duration was six months. The students in this study were English preparatory school students whose majors were different. Totally there were 44 subjects in this study and all the subjects were placed randomly to the control and experimental group from the population.

### **Data Analysis Processes**

The data have been collected through a survey that defines the participants' dominant intelligence, pre test, posttest and an interview. At the beginning of the study a pre test was done to find out the students' level of reading comprehension. The same pre test was used as a posttest to distinguish how much they develop their level. During the study among the volunteer students an interview, which is a bit important for gathering information about the students' assumptions towards reading comprehension, was conducted. The interviews were recorded into a voice recorder.

### **Findings and discussion**

In my research I used one type of paper-pencil based MI survey to find out the students' dominant intelligences, - Multiple Intelligences Inventory - was copyrighted by Walter McKenzie and gained from the internet web site: [//surfaquarium.com/MI/inventory.htm](http://surfaquarium.com/MI/inventory.htm). The subjects' overall MI distributions according to McKenzie's test in the intermediate experimental group were analyzed by SPSS 19.0. The analytical results of SPSS 19.0 shows the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.748, and p is <0.0001. Therefore the result of the survey seems quite credible.

The total participants of the intermediate level of English Language experimental group was 22 and 12 of them were female, 10 of them – male. As Gardner states (1983), individuals can have more than one dominant intelligence; generally females showed the intrapersonal intelligences dominantly in the first or second rank among

their multiple intelligences. Male participants also showed their dominant strength as intrapersonal intelligence but not as much as the female subjects do.

All 22 participants responded all the items in the questionnaire in different ratio. According to this result among the 22 participants, intrapersonal intelligence ( $m=74.8$ ) and Logical mathematical intelligence ( $m=63.2$ ) were the most dominant smarts. The less dominant intelligences were interpersonal ( $m=57.2$ ) and verbal ( $58.4$ ) intelligences. 2 students scored all the 10 items relevant to the intrapersonal intelligence, 5 students marked 9 items and interestingly 11(44%) students marked 7 items of the intrapersonal intelligence in this questionnaire. And the other students marked 1 item which illustrates the intrapersonal intelligence. By the effect of the culture, generally all the students at the university seemed that they were intrapersonal both in their school lives and in their social lives. Many of them, also included the male students, were shy at a high level. It was also observed that many of the participants liked working alone or with just one friend who again liked to work alone.

During the experiment all the students involved in the study were administrated one pre-test, and a post-test to illustrate the changes in students' reading skills. By doing those examinations enables us to see how multiple intelligence teaching activities affected the students' progress in reading courses by the motivation of the multiple teaching activities. From an inspection of all those examinations of the reading courses, there seemed to be significant differences arising. Both the experiment and control groups had to take the same examinations that identified the differences between the groups. The results were an important measure of how multiple intelligence teaching activities affected the students' reading proficiency. SPSS 19.0 was used to analyze the results. It is shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1. Descriptive statistics for the pre-test, achievement examinations and post-test of the control group and experimental groups at pre-intermediate level of English**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>PRETEST (experimental)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>68.48</b>	<b>14.145</b>
PRETEST (control)	22	32	77	58.72	15.238
<b>POSTTEST (experimental)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>88.96</b>	<b>16.772</b>
POSTTEST (control)	22	38	94	74.80	15.168

There are some reasons why the students were successful in reading skills. Firstly, although

the curriculum was designed the same with the control group, in the experimental group there were many different activities on the same curriculum based on the multiple intelligence theory. While the control groups were just taught in a traditional way, the experimental groups were given many different kinds of activities that were all relevant to their intelligences in the process of the study.

With the help of those activities, more than half of the experimental groups' students' reading level was significantly developed. In addition, all the students in the experimental groups could go to the Learning Centers for self-study, cooperative study, tactile study and visual study to complete their assignments and to do the activities as they wished. This provided students a self-esteem and enthusiasm towards reading. Choosing to do activities which were adequate to their intelligence type made the experimental groups' students motivated more than those from the control groups. Motivation and attitudes were further transformed to the learning action. As a result, students in the experimental group improved their reading skills with the help of multiple intelligence activities rather than the control group.

#### **The interview and its results**

By applying this interview I tried to explore the reasons behind the significant gain in the reading courses within the whole year. There were about 18 volunteer students from experimental groups. Many of the students who interviewed expressed they were really satisfied, happy and exciting during the study. The reason for this is that multiple intelligence activities met different types of needs. The typical comments were adopted from the students' interviews of experiment classes and summarized as follows.

Some students mentioned that

Because of the interesting and attractive activities they became Multiple Intelligence activities could lower their anxiety and restore their confidence and self-esteem. Typical comments were:

- I was a shy person, therefore I hated to read or make comments in the class, but I liked to work in the groups and felt more comfortable to participate and read in the groups. Reading aloud in the classroom used to be a torture for me but now I like reading more than ever.
- In the group work, when sharing learning tasks, everyone was assigned a role, I felt that I had less pressure and would like to do my best to complete the assignment and duty. This self-esteem made me a good reader and now I think that my teachers like to listen to me while I am reading.
- I liked the way of choosing projects by my interest.
- I was not a good reader in school and never liked reading either in Kurdish or English. I felt bored while reading because I was not able to figure out what the reading text was about. But I liked using songs and drawing pictures to illustrate the new vocabulary. I felt that learning by singing could attract my attention in the classroom. The most important thing was that I felt more confident to read, to answer the comprehension questions and to guess the meaning of the words from the content even though some guesses were false.
- Though I did not get good grades in the exams, I did a very good job by performing the drama. I had used the internet just for fun, but now much of the time I try to use the internet to read something interesting.
- Though my exam results were unsatisfactory, my teacher gave me a chance for assessment. I could choose my own way to present a reading project. I sang two English songs and searched a lot of pictures that had English words under them to present them in class. Now I don't think that I will forget those words. I like reading.

Some students said that Multiple Intelligence activities provided them an active environment to improve reading. Typical comments reflecting the active nature of the class were:

- The method of multiple intelligence learning activities in reading courses provided us the opportunities to work together and share opinions, feelings, knowledge, and understanding. Those interactions helped us to feel that learning is enjoyable and motivated.
- I am motivated to learn through the visuals teacher and classmates brought to the class because I can see better what I read. I feel that I can understand the vocabulary or reading with the chart or pictures provided in class. Besides, I like to draw pictures for the English words. It can help me memorize the new words.
- We practiced reading and writing by various kinds of activities and did different homework. All of them made me feel comfortable, motivated and interested.
- I seldom had the chance to speak English and felt nervous when I needed to speak or read in English, but in the drama performance I could talk it out without hesitation. I found it was a good way to improve my oral skills. In addition, when preparing the performance of the drama, everyone was assigned a role.

It can be seen from these selected comments that the students felt they were growing in confidence and motivation. The important thing was that the interview was open and these comments were volunteered. From this perspective many students may have answered in this way if they were asked a specific question. All participants appreciated the more dynamic atmosphere inside the classroom in the reading classes. The use of the multiple intelligence teaching activities seems to be important. Besides, many students recognized that using different teaching strategies to different learners with individual work has an important role to improve the understanding of reading. It is very valuable. Students' comments to those interview questions are supporting the results of the questionnaire findings.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

With the advent of "humanism" in the 1960s, the conventional authoritative teacher-centered instruction has given way to the learner-centered mode of education. Thus, by today the most important variable in teaching a language (including reading) is the individual approach in the classroom.

Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory introduced by Howard Gardner in the 1990s suggests that there is not just one concrete measure of intelligence and by implication a single way of teaching, but several: Mathematical-Logical, Linguistic-Verbal, Musical, Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Bodily-Kinesthetic and Naturalistic (more intelligences are still under discussion).

The rationale of my research was to apply the findings of this theory to teaching reading in order to increase the quality of reading skills and the motivation of reading. An experiment (accompanied by questionnaires and interviews) was held, with 2 control groups taught without an MI treatment and 2 experimental groups with an MI treatment. The dominant intelligences of the students in the experimental groups were diagnosed; the students were grouped according to them and offered corresponding classroom tasks and homework.

During the experiment, the students brought almost more than two hundred pages of pictures collected from the subjects. According to the students' diverse interests different pictures that had English captions on them were selected to be displayed in the corridor and in the classroom. One student from the intermediate level whose intelligence was naturalistic liked to collect pictures from the natural environment and was willing to memorize new words in this way. It seemed that the students especially improved their vocabulary skills in the areas that they were interested and familiar with. In group work, each member was assigned a different assignment based on their dominant intelligence and shared one another. In addition, I received a lot of teaching materials prepared by the students. From the results of the questionnaire and interviews, it can be seen that forming new ways of teaching according to different intelligences, helped to improve students' language proficiencies – not only in reading but also other skills - and reached different teaching goals.

Thus, I can conclude that the results of experiment – testing, questionnaires, classroom observation, and interviews – all support the hypothesis about the positive impact of taking into consideration the students' dominant type of intelligence in the process of teaching reading. I, certainly, realize the limitation of the study – it deals with one university in one country. Much research has to be carried out to be able to say that it is a general regularity. However, as the experiment lasted long enough and involved many enough students, as all requirements to validity of results were fulfilled, and the results were rigorously treated statistically, we can speak at least of such a tendency.

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