Ain Shams University
Faculty of Education
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction

The Effectiveness of a Task-Based Learning Strategy on Developing Primary Students' Reading Comprehension and Writing skills in light of the Multiple Intelligences Theory

A thesis

Submitted for the Ph.D degree in Education

Curriculum & Methods of Teaching

English as a Foreign Language

By

Manal Mahmoud Lotfy Kabesh

Researcher at the National Centre for Educational Research and Development

(NCERD)

Supervised by

Dr. Zeinab El Naggar

Professor of Curricula and EFL Methodology
Faculty of Education,
Ain Shams University

Dr. Safaa Abdallah Hassan

Assistant Professor at the National Centre For Examinations and Educational Evaluation
(NCEEE)

2010

ABSTRACT

The Effectiveness of a Task-Based Learning Strategy on Developing Primary Students' Reading Comprehension and Writing skills in light of the Multiple Intelligences Theory

Manal Mahmoud Lotfy Kabesh

Researcher at the National Centre for Educational Research and Development

The present study aimed at developing the necessary reading comprehension and writing skills for upper primary stage students through using of the Task-based learning strategy based on the Multiple Intelligence theory. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group/experimental group design. A group of fifty four sixth year primary school students were randomly selected from one of Cairo experimental schools, namely Maadi Experimental Language School (twenty seven students in the experimental group and twenty seven students in the control group). Students of the experimental group received training through the proposed program while students in the control group received regular instruction. The study results provided support for the hypotheses, i.e. the TBL strategy based on MI theory was effective in developing the necessary reading and writing skills among the experimental group students. Moreover, adopting the task-based learning approach based on the Multiple Intelligences theory and integrating reading and writing in teaching the novel helped students improve their writing and reading performance substantially.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, Reading Comprehension and Writing Skills, Multiple Intelligences Theory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher is deeply grateful to her supervisor **DR. ZEINAB EL-NAGGAR** for her wholehearted interest in this study, her valuable constructive comments throughout conducting the study, continuous guidance and devotion of her valuable time to discussing every minute detail of this study. She was always supportive, understanding, encouraging and willing to help. If it had not been for her efforts to organize this thesis, this work would have never been accomplished.

The researcher wishes also to express her deepest thanks and gratitude to her supervisor **DR. SAFAA ABDALLAH EISSA** for her continuous guidance, dedication, distinguished remarks, insightful ideas and advice throughout the study.

Special thanks are extended to the members of the National Centre of Educational Research and Development for their sincere willingness to help and support the researcher throughout her study.

Special thanks are also extended to the jury members especially **DR. SALAH EL-ARABY** and **DR. RUZZANE HUZAIN** for their worthy valuable comments, sincere help and valuable advice.

The researcher wishes to express her deep appreciation, endless thanks and gratitude to her husband **MEDHAT EL-MANADILY** and her three children **MOSTAFA, HANA** and **RANA** for their love, support and great encouragement. Special thanks go to the souls of her **FATHER** and **MOTHER** who were surrounding her all the time.

Table of Contents

	Page
- Abstract	i
- Acknowledgements	ii
- Table of Contents	iii
- List of Tables	vi
- List of Figures	vii
Chapter One: Background and Problem	1
- Introduction	1
- 1.1. Context of the problem	11
- 1.2. Statement of the problem	13
- 1.3. Purpose of the study	14
- 1.4. Hypotheses of the study	15
- 1.5. Delimitations of the study	15
- 1.6. Significance of the study	17
- 1.7. Definitions of terms	18
- 1.8. Organization of Remainder of Dissertation	19
Chapter two: Theoretical Background and Related Studies.	21
- Introduction	21
- 2.1. Theoretical Background	21
- 2.2. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory	21
- 2.3. Educational Applications of Vygotsky's theory	23
- 2.4. Task-based Learning	26
- 2.5. The rationale for task-based learning	26
- 2.6. Defining a task	27
- 2.7. Criterial features of a task	29
- 2.8. The types of tasks	30
- 2.9. Advantages of TBL	32

- 2.10. The TBL framework (Willis; 1996) 35
- 2.11. Rationale for using Willis's TBL framework: 42
- 2.12. The MI theory 45
- 2.13. The Theoretical Basis for MI theory 48
- 2.14. Key Points in MI theory 52
- 2.15. The Multiple Intelligences Teacher 53
- 2.16. Key Materials and Methods of MI Teaching 54
- 2.17. Teaching literature through integrating reading and writing skills 58
- 2.18. Literature Circles, TBL and MI theory 70
-2.19. Commentary and Conclusion 73
-2.20. Related Studies 75
- 2.21. Studies Focusing on Task-Based Learning 75
- 2.22. Studies focusing on the Multiple Intelligences theory 75
-2.23. Studies focusing on teaching literature and integrating reading and writing skills 94
- 2.24. Commentary and conclusions 99
-2.25.General Conclusion 102
Chapter Three: Method 103
- Introduction 103
- 3.1. Design of the study 103
- 3.2. Subjects of the study 103
- 3.3. Instruments of the study 104
- 3.3.1. The writing skills checklist 105
- 3.3.2. The reading comprehension checklist 106
- 3.3.3. The pre-post test 108
- 3.3.4. The program 112
- 3.5. Evaluation 120

Chapter Four: Results and Discussions 124
- Introduction 124
- 4.1. Results related to the study hypotheses 124
- 4.2. Discussion and interpretations of the results 137
- 4.3. Qualitative analysis of the reading comprehension sub-skills 145
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions 151
- Introduction 151
- 5.1. Summary 151
- 5.1.1. The Research questions 151
- 5.1.2. Hypotheses of the study 152
- 5.1.3. Subjects of the study 153
- 5.1.4. Significance of the study 153
- 5.1.5. Instruments of the study 155
- 5.1.6. Procedures of the study 155
- 5.2. Results of the Study 156
- 5.3. Findings 157
- 5.4. Conclusions 159
- 5.6. Recommendations 161
- 5.7. Suggestions for further studies 163
- Bibliography 165
- Appendices 183
Appendix "A" The writing skills checklist 183
Appendix "B" The reading comprehension checklist 190
Appendix "C" The Pre-post test 197
Appendix "D" Criteria for judging the program validity 204
Appendix "E" The program (Teacher's manual) 206
Appendix "F" Students' workbook 310

Appendix "G" Sample of students' work 369
- Arabic Summary

List of Tables

	Page
1. Summary of the "Seven Ways of Teaching"	55
2. Summary of the correlation coefficients among individual raters	112
3. T-test results of the pre-test of both the control and experimental groups	121
4. T-tests of the pre-test of both the control and experimental groups in writing sub-skills categories	122
5. T-test results of post-test of both the control and experimental groups mean scores in reading comprehension	125
6. The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t-values	126
7. T-test results of the post-test of both the control and experimental groups in each content sub-skill	127
8. T-test results of the post-test of both the control and experimental groups in each organization sub-skill	128
9. T-test results of the post-test of both the control and experimental groups in each language sub-skill	129
10. T-test results of the post-test of both the control and experimental groups in each mechanics sub-skill	130
11. T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group in reading comprehension sub-skills	131
12. T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group in each content sub-skill	132
13. T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group in each organization sub-skill	133

14. T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group in each language sub-skill 134
15. T-test results comparing the pre-test vs. post-test means for the experimental group in each mechanics sub-skill 135
16. Effectiveness of the program 136

List of Figures

Page

1. Components of the TBL framework 35
2. The Eight Intelligences 48
3. MI Planning Questions 57

Background and Problem

Introduction

Individuals from diverse backgrounds of race, culture, gender, language and educational experiences possess a myriad of teaching and learning styles, affecting the quality of their educational outcomes. Multiple intelligences theory framework is a useful tool for planning language learning tasks which insure that students can cope in the presence of challenge. When learners see what they can do, this has a positive effect on their self-esteem and can lead to enhancing success in language learning. By using a range of activities which activate MI, rather than teaching language in a purely linguistic manner, teachers assist learners to approach language from their strength areas as their strongest intelligences are highlighted and addressed.

Foreign languages are becoming essential for Arab professionals and academicians as keys to unlock the stores of knowledge in more developed countries. Industrial and social development programs necessary for the modernization of Arab countries require good knowledge of foreign languages to facilitate the flow of scientific information. Besides, the explosion of information in many sciences demands adequate proficiency in foreign languages to enable Arab scholars to keep up with the hurried pace of new findings. (**El-Araby**, 1983, p.ix). This clarifies the importance of teaching English to Egyptian students who are introduced to several fields of information as English plays a basic role in obtaining knowledge and exploring new areas of information.

Integrating reading and writing instruction has gained tremendous momentum as both a research topic and as an instructional procedure over the last decade. **Heller (1991)** explained that both readers and writers are

involved in similar, if not identical thought processes during comprehending and composing. Readers and writers are actively both intellectually and emotionally in reconstructing the author's meaning (reading) and in constructing meaning (writing).

Linking reading and writing activities provide students with opportunities to personally respond to literature. Some popular personal response activities include composing a personal letter to a character in a story or acting out a text they have read before they write about it. These activities increase story comprehension by reviewing happenings in a text and by giving students the opportunity to become a character in role-playing. **Barr and Johnson (1997)** pointed out that children become more active and interested readers when they are given opportunities to react to materials that they read.

Researchers have demonstrated that reading is essential for ESL writing development. In fact, a number of linguists consider reading (written at an appropriate English proficiency level) a key source for the acquisition of writing proficiency. The importance of a reading / writing connection is highly emphasized as students need to have an opportunity to acquire grammar, vocabulary, and discourse through reading. Reading and writing are two skills that mirror each other, and they ought to be taught in such a way as to complement each other.

Despite the importance of reading and writing, the current situation of teaching them in the Egyptian primary schools does not develop the integration between these two important skills. For successful educational outcomes for diverse students it is imperative for instructors to align their teaching styles with the learning styles of their students. The Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory proposed by **Gardner (1983)** is a valuable tool in achieving that goal. According to this theory, students learn best about a

domain when they experience that domain through the mirror of different "intelligences" linguistic intelligence, logical – mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily – kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, and existentialist intelligence **(Gardner, 2000)**. There are several ways to be intelligent within each of the intelligences, and every individual possesses all of the intelligences. **Armstrong (2000)** postulates that it is possible to attain an adequate level of competency in each of the intelligences.

Teaching for the variety of learning styles found in a classroom can present a challenge to any instructor. Therefore, educators must acknowledge differences in the way students learn to develop their unique capabilities **(Eisner, 2004)**. Different learning styles among learners affect language acquisition. Learning styles are the ways an individual prefers to learn. They are internally based on characteristics of individuals for the intake or understanding of new information.

Learning styles have been categorized in many different ways. According to **Reid (1995, viii)**, learning styles refer to "an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills." In other words, learning styles are the ways an individual prefers to learn. **Reid (1995, X)** categorizes styles of young learners as follows:

- Auditory learner: learns more effectively through the ear (hearing).
- Visual learner: learns more effectively through the eyes (seeing).
- Tactile learner: learns more effectively through hands – on experience (touch).

- Kinesthetic learner: learns more effectively through concrete body experience (whole – body movement).

Diversifying style preferences, **Scarcella and Oxford (1992, 63)** are of the opinion that language learners:

must extend themselves beyond their stylistic comfort zone to use techniques and behaviors that might not initially feel right to them.. Teachers can help their students develop beyond the comfort zone dictated by their natural preferences. They can do this by providing a wide range of classroom activities to cater to a variety of learning styles and that challenge students to try new things.

What **Scarcella and Oxford** mean is that it is not enough for students to learn only through their preferred styles. They should be encouraged to "style – flex" or to develop an ability to diversify their style preferences (**El-Naggar**, 2002).

Because of individual differences among students, teachers are best advised to use a broad range of teaching strategies. As long as instructors shift their intelligence emphasis from presentation to presentation, there will always be time during a day when a student's most highly developed intelligence is actively involved in learning **(Silver et al., 1997)**.

Offering wider learning opportunities allows students to utilize the intelligences that are most natural to them and which they are best at. As the diversity of students increases with people coming from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds, a multiple intelligence approach is likely to become increasingly useful in embracing learners with strengths and weaknesses **(Barrington, 2004)**.

By using MI theory to inspire teaching in the classroom, the number and variety of activities are expanded so that the choice given to the student is increased. More emphasis is placed on the students

understanding their learning preferences and accepting self-responsibility to navigate their way to achieve the learning outcomes **(Holland, 2007)**.

MI theory has received much attention over the past 20 years **(Campbell, 1997; Silver et al., 1997)**. Howard Gardner challenged the notion that intelligence is something that can be objectively measured and reduced to a single quotient or score. Gardner proposed in **Frames of Mind (1983)** the existence of at least eight basic intelligences; since then many intelligences have been added. Some intelligences that have been proposed included: spirituality, moral sensibility, humor, intuition, and creativity. **(Checkley, 1997; Roper and Davis, 2000)**. Gardner's work has encouraged educators and parents to view children as equals regardless of a quotient produced from an intelligence exam or of academic areas for which they develop competence. Practitioners of MI understand that children do not fit a single prototype.

Gardner sought to broaden the perception of human potential beyond the confines of traditional IQ scores, seriously questioning the validity of determining an individual's intelligence through the practice of taking the person out of his or her natural environment and asking him or her to attempt isolated tasks never done before – and probably never to be done again. Thus, Gardner suggested educators view intelligence as the capacity for solving problems and fashioning products in context-rich and naturalistic setting, rather than place the traditional importance on the ability to produce a large quotient **(Armstrong, 1994)**.

MI theory is perhaps more accurately described as a philosophy of education or an attitude toward learning, rather than a set program of fixed techniques and strategies. As such, it offers educators a broad opportunity to creatively adapt its fundamental principles to any number of educational settings. Implications for school reform and classroom application include

expanded teaching strategies, curricular adaptations, and expanded student assessment. Indeed unsuccessful, unmotivated students have experienced academic growth when exposed to multifaceted interventions and techniques principled by MI theory **(Janes, Koutsopanagos, Mason and Villaranda, 2000)**.

Gardner (2004) criticizes the way students are taught in schools. He stated that students are taught at the surface-level of knowledge without even affecting their deeper understanding of the world. As a result, students are graduating from high school still holding the same superficial beliefs and misconceptions. He recommends an approach to education that challenges these superficial beliefs, provokes questions, invites multiple perspectives, enhances higher order thinking, and ultimately stretches a students' mind to the point where it can apply existing knowledge to new situations and novel contexts.

Understanding means being able to represent knowledge in more than one form using one's own words and not book words memorized without understanding. Memorization does not indicate understanding, when students know something, they must have mentally stored information and can have access to it. **Campbell, Campbell and Dickison (2004)** emphasized that understanding means turning knowledge into performance. Hence, one of the components of effective teaching for understanding is through multiple ways of presentation.

Confirming the idea that choosing motivating tasks for students is very important, **Deci and Ryan (1985)** maintain that intrinsic motivation is related to basic human needs for competence, autonomous, and relatedness. Intrinsically motivated activities are those that the learner engages in for their own sake because of their value, interest, and challenge. Such activities present the best possible opportunities for