

Teaching English to Young Learners as a Foreign Language: Using the Multiple Intelligences Theory

Çoklu Zeka Kuramı Açısından Çocuklara Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi

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Abstract

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) programs for young learners have different dimensions. Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory developed by H. Gardner (1983, 1993) brings a new perspective to lesson design. Teaching plans prepared considering the differences described in MI theory may enable teachers to design teaching in a better way which will appeal to every student in the class. This study discusses the contribution of MI to TEFL by giving examples of lesson outlines prepared in this fashion by teacher trainees.

Key Words: Foreign language teaching, English, multiple intelligences, teacher training, lesson plan

Abstract

Çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi farklı boyutları olan programlar gerektirir. H. Gardner (1983, 1993) tarafından geliştirilen çoklu zeka kuramı bu konuda derslerin daha etkin olarak tasarlanmasını sağlayacak bir bakış açısı içermektedir. Bu çalışmada İngilizce dersinde konunun çoklu zeka ayrımı dikkate alınarak her öğrenciye ulaşılabilecek bir tasarım içinde sunulması gerektiği tartışılmaktadır. Öğretmen adaylarının bu bağlamda nasıl ders planı hazırladıkları örneklenmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancı dil öğretimi, İngilizce, çoklu zeka, öğretmen yetiştirme, ders planı

Introduction

Teaching English to young learners is a demanding but rewarding task since children have an immense learning capacity. It is obvious that classes for young learners require teachers who can think like children and adjust teaching accordingly in order to enter their world and activate their energy. There are a lot of materials suitable for language teaching of this sort. Nevertheless new thinking systems based on theories such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Learning Styles (Visual Auditory Kinesthetic), Emotional Intelligence (EI), and Multiple Intelligences (MI) which have brought new dimensions to teaching-design should naturally affect foreign language teaching. When and how are two questions that are difficult to answer. In this vein, MI

Theory described by Gardner now constitutes a good source of ideas which can be used in reviewing and rearranging EFL (English as a Foreign Language) lesson plan formats particularly for young learners. In fact, English teachers are definitely familiar with the exercise types which could be based on or inspired by the domains of intelligence described in MI theory. However, different activities geared to all intelligence types would not be generally planned to occur in the same lesson, in the same unit, or in the presentation of the same teaching point. The field of EFL has been discussing and implementing learner centered teaching for a considerable length of time. Big changes are difficult to realize but now is the time for a smooth transition from learner-centered to individual-centered teaching. The course of transition for EFL teachers may not be very long, difficult, or expensive as some may argue.

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The study of the implementation of MI in TEFL, particularly in methodology classes of teacher training colleges is now a must and should be seen as a sign of the coming change. It should be carried out as theoretical discussions and applied sessions which include various micro-teachings. In this manner, this study attempts to display short descriptions of a possible range of EFL activities chosen for constructing a single lesson or a unit by English teacher trainees considering multiple intelligences. The terms or domains of intelligence and intelligence types are synonyms and refer to the classification in MI theory.

The discussion about the role of intelligence in education has new dimensions now. The MI theory has been well presented and explained by H. Gardner (1983). It has also gained wide acceptance as a complete and expandable theory about intelligence. After the introduction of MI it has become very difficult to support the traditional approach to teaching even obligatorily by pointing at various financial and bureaucratic difficulties.

Gardner (1993, 78) strictly rejects the claim that individual centered education is utopian having in mind that most discussions of school reform are based on the individual learner. According to him the most important prerequisites are dedication and a good plan, not a good budget as claimed against. Ersöz and Cephe (2000) discuss and compare learning style theory, whose commonly accepted classification today is VAK, and MI theory. The first discusses general learner approaches to a task whereas the second deals with one's capacity geared to a specific content. They state that teachers should master and integrate these two theories in order to design effective materials and activities.

Mettetal, Jordan and Harper (1998) support Gardner stating that traditional curriculum has focused on verbal and logical mathematical skills whereas western culture values all the other domains of intelligence. There is public appreciation for athletes, musicians, and leaders. Mary Ann Christson (1996) discusses the application of MI theory in ESL/EFL lesson planning and displays a student generated inventory for secondary level and young adult learners. She states that through employing Gardner's MI theory we can develop a vision for expanding intelligent behavior in Language classes. Hoer (1996,9) criticizes IQ and standardized tests and

comes to the conclusion that traditional intelligence tests have shortcomings in measuring intelligence, and they have focused too narrowly on what defines intelligence. Hoer (1996,14) discusses that MI is not a set curriculum, it is content specific, school specific and teacher specific. That is, employing the MI approach may be distinct in every setting in terms of curriculum integration and in-class applications.

The time consuming development in the implementation of individual centered teaching forces foreign language teachers to seriously consider to view the class from the MI perspective. In order to take action, from the methodological point of view, there are further questions to be answered:

1. Does MI theory bring new perspectives to TEFL?
2. Can the lessons geared to the range of domains in MI theory meet learner needs in classes for young learners?
3. Do teachers need training on MI theory and its adaptation to TEFL to young learners?
4. Does MI based activity planning require an easy and practical adaptation in the syllabus?
5. Is it possible to prepare complete and effective lesson plans considering MI theory?
6. Will the future foreign language teaching trends largely take MI into consideration?
7. Is it inevitable to consider MI in TEFL in order not to neglect any learners in the class with different intelligence profiles?

Participants

The teacher trainees (TTs) who are attending the third year teaching program at Gazi Educational Faculty, ELT Department prepare various micro-teachings for their "Teaching English to Young Learners" class. Within this frame, each teacher trainee attending this course prepared a MI based lesson plan. They were asked to include an exercise for each domain of intelligence. They were free to choose the language subject they would teach. The number of the lesson plan outlines included in this study is ten. The class activities prepared by teacher trainees are grouped and displayed according to the domains of intelligence they were planned to address. In table 1, the whole outline of the plan prepared by each TT can be found out by following

the class numbers in the beginning of the activity lines in each group. The MI based exercises in their lesson plans were not presented in a certain order. The subjects taught through each plan are out of the scope of this study. The aim of the display system in table 1 is to show the possible preferences of the teacher trainees about a given domain when they are planning an MI oriented foreign language lesson.

Activities

This part briefly reviews the exercises in each group. There are written or oral descriptions supported by pictures in the verbal linguistic part. The exercises mostly include oral interaction. Logical/mathematical drills contain puzzle based activities. The majority of exercises in the visual part contain pictures as starting points. Bodily/Kinesthetic exercises contain role play, cut and stick activities, miming, and music. Writing is the main activity in interpersonal part. They write about a subject, fill in family trees or match sentences with pictures. Drills for the musical domain mostly contain learning and singing a song. The level specific themes of the songs make activities appealing to young learners. Naturalistic part contains perhaps the most interesting and different activities from observing what the people around learners eat and drink to telling how their mothers prepare their favorite dish.

To conclude with, if a teacher considers MI theory when she prepares lesson plans, very appealing lessons within the desired dimensions can be created. Such an approach constitutes a good attempt to invite all learners in the class to the core of the lesson and benefit from it consciously and unconsciously. It seems that the range of activities geared to different domains enables "the foreign language lesson" approach to the students who cannot be dragged into the class interaction due to incomplete teaching design.

Implications For Teaching and Teacher Training

Consideration of MI theory in education requires commitment from the teaching staff. It is not a teaching aid but a concept which may radically change the flow of the lesson by including a richer variety of exercises with the expectation of more active participation from the learners. This crucial system of thinking about intelligence may help EFL teachers have a better

understanding of their learners' approach to what is happening in the foreign language class. Traditional schooling employs a single teaching pattern regardless of learner differences in terms of intelligence. MI theory now is a serious reminder for teachers which reinforces the idea that no student in the class must be out of reach just because the presentation of the subject does not consider the intelligence type he is high in. In a sense, intelligence profile surveys in the class can help teachers design class activities by definitely taking the domains of intelligence that are high in the class into account. Teachers should absolutely bear in mind whether their lesson presentation and class-work match the intelligence profile of the class. A mismatch of this sort may cause failure of promising students for no reason at all. Considering MI profile may bring a quick change and may make things easier for the teacher and the class to the surprise of the obligatory supporters of traditional schooling who think that new theories are difficult to implement .

Conclusion

Mixed intelligence EFL classes are a reality like mixed ability classes. For this reason devising language activities that appeals to the whole range of intelligences outlined in MI theory would be the sound approach in TEFL.

Inclusion of MI perspective in TEFL is a crucial task. Neglecting or including it may affect learning. Many issues such as learner intake and output during the lesson, power relationship in the class, and students development of self image and learning capacity are affected by learners' intelligence profile differences in the class. It is impossible to neglect the messages given by important reminders such as TQM, V (visual) A (auditory) K (kinesthetic) O (olfactory) G (gustatory), and EI beside MI. We should help the learners do their best by introducing them to familiar learning paths. The sound way is to understand the domains of intelligence they are good at and never leave them out of the scope of teaching. As mentioned in the beginning, the activity types inspired by the domains described in MI theory are not new for EFL teachers. Teachers now should think about presenting activities that will appeal to all individuals in the class. The slow development in raising and considering the issues about foreign language learners' different intelligence profiles gives this subject priority in teacher training programs.

Table 1
Sample Lesson Outlines

Verbal / Linguistic

- Class 1 Students match pictures of clothes with words.
 Class 2 Teacher describes family members and asks who is who.
 Class 3 Students describe pictures about a baby.
 Class 4 Students read a poem and memorize it.
 Class 5 Word game: Students rearrange the letters to find the words
 Class 6 Students choose what they will have for breakfast from the picture.
 Class 7 Teacher describes an animal, and students guess what it is. Then, they use pictures for the same task.
 Class 8 Teacher describes a season, and students guess what it is.
 Class 9 Students fill in the blanks in sentences about a picture in a given letter.
 Class 10 Class talk about sports.

Logical/Mathematical

- Class 1 Students solve the word puzzle alone or in pairs about weather and clothes.
 Class 2 Students read the text about a family and fill in the family tree.
 Class 3 Students make sentences using the words on the board.
 Class 4 Word puzzle: There are words coded with numbers. Students get the key and tell the words.
 Class 5 A new alphabet is given. Students are asked to write English equivalents of the words given in it.
 Class 6 Food puzzle: Students write the names of the foods hidden in the puzzle.
 Class 7 There is a puppet whose strings are muddled, and students write his body parts at the ends of the strings.
 Class 8 Students calculate how many months there are in their favorite seasons and say their names.
 Class 9 Students read the sentences and complete the family tree.
 Class 10 There are sentences that contain pictures instead of words. Students decode them.

Spatial (Visual)

- Class 1 There is a picture of an untidy room. Students put the objects in correct places by drawing connecting lines.

- Class 2 Students fill in the speech balloons.
 Class 3 There are animal pictures in action. Teacher demonstrates them and sticks verbs on the board. Students elicit the grammar rule.
 Class 4 They match the parts of a picture story with body parts.
 Class 5 Puzzle: Students follow the maze to find food and drinks, then they write their names.
 Class 6 There are two charts. The first chart contains colorless food pictures, and the second one contains colors. Students match them.
 Class 7 They draw in what is missing in each picture.
 Class 8 Teacher asks questions about seasons using pictures.
 Class 9 Students draw their own family tree.
 Class 10 There are pictures of sports on the board. Students classify them and make relevant sentences.

Bodily/Kinesthetic

- Class 1 There are ten items of clothing in the class. Students put them on and say their names.
 Class 2 They are given role cards. A student acts his part and others guess his role.
 Class 3 A student mimes the actions of the person in a given picture. Others guess what he is doing.
 Class 4 There are pictures and boxes, students cut the pictures and stick on the boxes.
 Class 5 Timed word game for groups: Students match the words with the pictures using scissors and glue.
 Class 6 Group work: Students mime whether they will eat various foods using knife or spoon.
 Class 7 Students draw body parts of a crazy monster and combine them. They may describe their animals. There is music in the background.
 Class 8 Group game: They complete picture puzzles of seasons.
 Class 9 Students choose a toy animal and mime it, then talk about it.
 Class 10 They play a game by standing on pictures on the floor, then they sing the song they have learned.

Interpersonal

- Class 1 Group game: The group who first rings the bell answers some questions about the mentioned month and clothes.
 Class 2 Group game: They answer yes/no questions about the family members in the pictures.

- Class 3 Students fill in the blanks in a dialog about a picture on the board and then they act it.
- Class 4 Game: Students act out various words in groups.
- Class 5 Interview/report: Groups prepare reports about their favorite food and drink.
- Class 6 Role play/pair work: They act the roles of the people at a restaurant..
- Class 7 Group work/game: They cut and stick body parts, one group wins.
- Class 8 Groups prepare games which can be played in spring especially in the garden.
- Class 9 Students write about their physical appearance and in groups they guess who is who.
- Class 10 Groups receive sentences with pictures. They put happy or unhappy faces on them.

Intrapersonal

- Class 1 Students choose a month and write about it.
- Class 2 Students write family names in a family tree.
- Class 3 Students match sentences with different pictures of an animal.
- Class 4 Students have some picture sentences. They match pictures with correct words.
- Class 5 Students complete the sentences according to the given pictures.
- Class 6 Homework: Students choose ingredients for preparing a meal.
- Class 7 Students write new sentences using the pattern they have learned.
- Class 8 Students write a paragraph about their favorite seasons.
- Class 9 HW: Students answer questions about a text that has a picture.
- Class 10 HW: Students draw a family sports tree.

Musical

- Class 1 Students sing a song about seasons and view pictures on the board.
- Class 2 Students change the underlined words in the song.
- Class 3 Students try to guess the animals in the song and stick their pictures.
- Class 4 Students move their body parts according to the body parts song.
- Class 5 Students sing a song introduced by the teacher.
- Class 6 Students learn and sing a song.

- Class 7 Students learn and sing a song about heads and shoulders.
- Class 8 Students learn and sing a song about winter.
- Class 9 Students learn and sing a song.
- Class 10 Students learn a song and also use it in a class game.

Naturalistic

- Class 1 Students choose suitable clothes to wear in order to go out.
- Class 2 Students observe family members and write about their physical features.
- Class 3 Students visit the zoo and describe the actions of the animals.
- Class 4 Students say the names of the body parts of a doll.
- Class 5 Students observe what people around them eat and drink, then they report it.
- Class 6 Students observe and tell the class how their mothers prepare their favorite dish and bring some food to the classroom.
- Class 7 Students say the body parts of different animals like turtle, lion etc.
- Class 8 Project: Students find spring flowers and collect them in a notebook.
- Class 9 They visit the zoo, take some notes, and prepare a report.
- Class 10 Group project: They choose some sports and find their relations with nature.

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