

Integrating Multiple Intelligences in ESL/EFL Classrooms

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Introduction

The teaching of English to children has become especially important in recent years. One reason for this has been the introduction of primary EFL/ESL teaching in a number of European countries – but it is also a world-wide phenomenon. There is a lot of very good teaching in primary English classrooms. One of the recent approaches in primary English language teaching methods is "the Theory of Multiple Intelligences" (Gardner, 1993, 2000).

We take in information in line with our "learning style". If we have a mainly "visual" learning style, information is learnt mainly through the eye, the "auditory" learning style is based on a presence for learning linked to hearing, while "kinaesthetic" learning style is based on learning through movement and manipulating things (Berman, 1998). As Berman (1998) adds that most young children have the ability to "store memories by associating them with their senses and may even have the ability to cross-sense" (p.187). So they may be able to "hear colour, see sound, taste time and touch smells" (Berman, 1998: 187).

As Gardner (1993) suggests, there are several kinds of intelligence, not one or two intelligences. Gardner (1993) suggested seven kinds of intelligence initially in 1983. Additionally, in an interview with Checkley (1997), Gardner suggested an eighth intelligence, namely "naturalist intelligence" to the original list of the multiple intelligences.

Eight Ways of Teaching and Learning

The theory of Multiple Intelligences offers eight ways of teaching and learning styles. In this regard, armed with the knowledge and application of the multiple intelligences, teachers can ensure they provide enough variety in the activities they use so that as much of their pupils' learning potential can be tapped as possible (Berman, 1998).

The younger the learners the more physical activity they tend to need and the more they need to make use of all their senses (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003). According to Berman (1998) if children can draw or visualise an image, hum it or move through it first, they may be able to more easily talk or write about it. On the basis of the theory of multiple intelligences in this regard, children can also draw a picture while listening to a description, act out a nursery rhyme, follow instructions or make a shape or simple model while they listen to a description of it. This draws on learning by the ear and eye and is good for those with bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence.

Words Are Not Enough

Do not rely on the spoken word only. Most activities for the younger learners should include movement and involve the senses, colours and sounds. You will need to have plenty of objects and pictures to work with, and to make full use of the school and classroom and your surroundings. Demonstrate what you want them to do. The balance will change as the children get older, but appealing to the senses, colours, sounds, and movements will always help the pupils to learn (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990).

Telling Jokes in The Class

Think about children telling jokes. Five year olds laugh because everybody else does, but they do not always understand the joke. If they are asked to re-tell the joke, it will be nonsense. Seven-year-olds think jokes are funny and they learn them off by heart. This means that they often get the punch line wrong or have to be prompted. Ten and eleven-year-olds remember jokes and can work out the punch line from the situation. The system of language and the understanding of it seems to fall into place for many children in the same way (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). Students, in this regard, can create puppets and then tell jokes to their peers. They can also compose a song for the joke and then act out the joke in the classroom. In this way, "jokes not only practise language but also encourage children to think" (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003).

Play with the Language

Let the pupils talk to themselves. Make them play with the language by making up rhymes, singing songs, telling stories, etc. in the classroom (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). Children love songs, rhymes, stories and chants and their repetitive nature and rhythm make them an ideal vehicle for language learning (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003).

Encouraging children to clap the beat as they go along or say rhymes will help to develop a sense of rhythm in English. Additionally, pupils draw (or colour) pictures of songs, rhymes and chants: they can also act out the songs, rhymes and chants and then apply those to new atmospheres. As can be seen, according to Brewster et al. (2003), songs, rhymes and chants can contribute to the child's global development in many different ways. The main overall purpose, however, is that singing, chanting and acting together is fun and it stimulates the child's sense of humour. So this helps children play with the target language in humorous and funfult environments.

Cooperation not Competition

The ideology of the theory of Multiple Intelligences is based on "cooperation" not on competition. So because of this reason, avoid prizes and awards in the class. In this regard, according to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), make room for shared experiences – they are an invaluable source of language work and create an atmosphere of involvement and togetherness. Most of us enjoy the feeling of belonging and this is particularly true of young children.

Group the children together whenever and wherever possible. This does not mean that they have to work in groups all the time, but most children like to have other children around them, and also sitting with others encourages cooperation. Genuine cooperative pairwork or group work is usually the result of a long process (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). Also, working with dialogues with pairs or groups is a useful way to develop the cooperative atmosphere in the classroom. Pupils with their own peers can collaboratively work in the classroom. They can draw pictures, compose songs, rhymes and chants, play games (word, card games, vs.), act out drama, etc. together. So with this way, pupils do not afraid of a possible failure, or on the contrary of that, they work out in a fearless and reinforcing atmosphere in the classroom so that "learning" materialises in a natural way.

Using Storybooks

The educational value of using storybooks and storytelling has always been undisputed throughout the world. EFL teachers of young learners are now more familiar with an acquisition-based methodology, and recognise the true value of using storybooks and storytelling as a way to create an acquisition rich environment and ideal learning conditions which provide "comprehensible input" or "language a little beyond child's current level of competence" (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003; Krashen, 1981). Children enjoy listening to stories in their L1 and understand the conventions of narrative. For instance, as soon as they hear the formula "Once upon a time...", they know what to expect next! For this reason, storybooks can provide an ideal introduction to the foreign language as it is presented in a context that is familiar to the child. Stories can also provide the starting point for a wide variety of related language and learning activities (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003). Stories and storybooks have always been useful and rich in vocabulary and grammar patterns. Storybooks, additionally, that is to say, after positive concrete outcomes in the form of games, competitions, quizzes, drama, songs, projects, book making, colouring, etc. They also develop children's learning strategies such as listening for general meaning, predicting, guessing meaning, and hypothesising (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003). Plus, they help children to link fantasy with the real world. Moreover, most children are familiar with most of the stories, so they work with familiar contexts when they work with stories. Teachers can

also use picture strip stories where students are expected to re-tell a story by using the visuals (Ersoz et al. 2006: 34).

There are several activities which can follow on from regular book reading.

Drawing and Colouring

Children can redraw the characters; create maps showing where the story takes place, think of other possible cover illustrations, and so on. The results of their efforts can be kept and then used as collages and posters to decorate appropriate areas of the book corner. Alternatively, pupils could make a folder of their own work (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003).

Handicrafts

Craft activities are extremely useful as learners can develop their listening and reading skills while following the written or oral instructions. Teachers should always make the craft activity themselves before doing it with their class. The finished work should be shown to the learners to give them a general idea of what is expected from them. Teachers should have the necessary materials with them so that they can do the activity together with their students while also giving the instructions (Ersoz et al. 2006: 42).

Students can be encouraged to create their own masks, hats, puppets, models of streets and buildings, etc. inspired by the characters and places in the books they have enjoyed. Activities of this kind present an ideal opportunity for developing oral comprehension through the language used for giving instructions (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003).

Songs and Rhymes

Very often, the rhymes developed in stories are to be found in various songs and rhymes (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003). Pupils can also compose songs for the storybook(s) they have read and then sing the song they have composed in the classroom.

Children like songs, and they learn a lot of songs in their mother tongue anyways; hence, it is a medium that children are very comfortable with. Songs and music can add variety to the class. A song hides the nature of exercises making them look like fun when in reality students are working with the language in the way we want them to (Ersoz et al. 2006).

The use of songs is flexible. A song can be used in any stage of the class: as a presentation tool, as a practice exercise or as a production activity.

Vocabulary Activities

Pupils can create their own "picture dictionary", based on words from the stories they have read or heard. They can work individually or pool their efforts to illustrate the words, either by drawing pictures or by cutting pictures out of magazines or catalogues. They can choose whether to arrange the words alphabetically or thematically (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003). Pupils can also create card games in order to learn the newly learnt vocabulary. Also, pictures, cards, and other sorts of materials can be used to present the vocabulary.

Drama

Pupils can act out the story in the storybooks or song they have read or listened to. They can organise a place and write, if they want, a different end for the story and then perform the story in the classroom. The pupils can also compose a song for the story and sing it in some parts of the drama if they wish.

Using drama and drama activities has clear advantages for language learning. It encourages children to speak and gives them the chance to communicate, even with limited language, using non-verbal communication, such as body movements and facial expressions. Drama involves children at many levels, through their bodies, minds, emotions, language, and social interactions (Ersoz et al. 2006: 58).

Games

Students may wish to play games purely for fun. Teachers, however, need to make sure that whatever done in the classroom is for teaching and learning purposes (Ersoz et al. 2006).

Teachers can use of games in order to create a valuable atmosphere and develop students' linguistic awareness. In this regard, students can create games (such as card games, vs.) on the basis of the storybook or song they have read or listened to. Pupils can be put in three or four (or more) groups and each group develops a new game and then introduces their games to the class. A pupil from each group joins a different group in the class and learns the game and then returns to his/her own group and teaches the game to their friends in the group.

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