

Integrating Multiple Intelligences Activities in Developing English Speaking Skills for English Major Students at Phu Yen University, Vietnam

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Abstract

The purpose of this study are to investigate the effect of using multiple intelligences classroom activities in developing first-year major students' English speaking skills.

Based on the literature review and related studies, a list of twelve (12) English speaking skills was prepared and discussed among the teaching staff of the Foreign Languages Department at Phu Yen University to select the five (05) most related skills to first-year English major students. The experimental group consisted of thirty (34) first year English major students. Tools of the study included: An English speaking training program consisting of using multiple intelligences classroom activities to develop the students' English speaking skills, an MI questionnaire, an MI check-list of classroom activities and an English Speaking pre-post test that was administered to the experimental group before and after their training course. The English speaking training program integrated with multiple intelligences classroom activities was taught to first-year English major students during a fifteen-week period.

Students' academic scores were selected and analyzed. T test and effect size formulas were used to measure the effect of the training program on the student's English speaking performance. Results revealed that the program had a great effect on the students' English speaking skills as there are statistically significant differences between the pre and post administration of the test. The study also proposed many recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: of multiple intelligences activities, speaking skills, English major students, Phu Yen University

1. Introduction

1.1. Introducing the Problem

This research investigates the effectiveness of integrating multiple intelligences classroom activities in developing the speaking skills for English major students. Therefore, the ultimate contribution of this research is to promote students' English speaking skills by integrating Multiple Intelligences Theory in speaking training program.

The hypothesis of the research is that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in students' performance in their English speaking skills and sub-skills. The subskills included in the research are asking and answering personal interview questions, making a conversation based on a ready-given situation, the oral presentation skills, describing pictures, making questions and answers about a given topic. In order to test the hypothesis, the researcher selected randomly a group of sixty students in the Department of Foreign Languages, Phu Yen University to be pre-tested and post-tested to verify the effect of implementing the training programme.

The research represents a step towards developing English speaking skills for the first year English major students. This demand comes from the importance of these speaking skills for the first year English major students. Moreover, it should be of interest that the participants in this research are supposed to be trained to become teachers of English whose English communicative skills, particularly speaking skills, will be of priorities to be developed according to the 2020 Project implemented by Vietnam Education and Training Ministry.

1.2. The Importance of the research

The research applies Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) in the field of English Language Teaching, which may result in many useful implications for both teachers and researchers. MIT calls for multi-modal teaching strategies in which students are given more chances or options while they are learning and speaking. MIT based instruction helps in involving and reaching more and more students in the learning process because it addresses various types of intelligences.

The major focus of the research is to develop students' English speaking skills as these skills always play key roles in the students' learning processes and simultaneously, English speaking skills are always a great necessity for applying for certain jobs for major students in their future after graduation. In addition, the majority of students in our research will become English teachers after graduation, which means they should develop their speaking skills once they become teachers of English at schools. Furthermore, we also hope that this study will help them develop teaching courses to meet the requirements of the Foreign Languages Department based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the learner-centered approach.

1.3. Review of literature

Nowadays English has become an international language. The main function of language use is to achieve communicative purposes. Language learners use language functionally in their daily life to different extents. However, oral communication skills (listening and speaking skills) are viewed as the most difficult to be developed. Researchers explain why language learners are reluctant to develop their speaking skills because they lack native speaking environment as well as the learners' apprehension. Using alternative teaching strategies depending on brain-based instruction as well as addressing various abilities, aptitudes and intelligences may help develop speaking skills (Salem, 2013).

Fiona Lawtie (2004) argued that speaking is fundamental to human communication. If you just think of all the different conversations you have in one day and compare that with how much written communication you do in one day, you will see that in our daily lives most of us speak more than we write. However, many English teachers still spend too much of class time on reading and writing practice almost ignoring speaking and listening skills. If the goal of your language course is truly to enable your students to communicate in English, then speaking skills should be more and more taught and practised in the language classroom.

Sayed (2005) regards speaking skill as a complicated skill as it involves many processes or operations working together. Speaking involve the linguistic, social, psychological, cultural components. The social aspect of speaking is apparent when we deal with another one who may have a different social or cultural background.

Madhumati R. Patil (2007) stated that effective communication re-enforce positive impression of the engineer. Lack of serviceable communication skills contributes to the low profile of engineering in general public. A more proactive and accessible style of communication can be more engaging for the people. Indeed oral skills, presentation skills are considered one of the best career enhancers and to the single biggest factor in determining a student's career success or failure.

Sayed (2008) views that there are various difficulties that face teachers as well as students found in teaching as well as learning speaking in the English language classroom in Egypt. First of all; it is naturally difficult for students to speak in the foreign language they are learning. Second, the teaching conditions that students are involved in can impede the development of their speaking skills. Third, the teachers' methods of teaching can hinder the oral ability of their students. Fourth, students have passive attitudes towards English, particularly in Egypt. They are reluctant to participate in the speaking activities inside the classroom. Fifth, there are psychological factors that may passively influence the students' performances in speaking. Speaking is often viewed as an 'anxiety-provoking' activity.

Moreover, more focus to the enrichment of students' vocabulary could help developing speaking ability for EFL learners. We live in a Vietnamese speaking language environment where English is a foreign language. Meanwhile, we focus on the importance of engaging students in an English speaking environment; students do not have much opportunity to practice using the English language. English is practiced only inside the classroom. Therefore, there should be an intensive practice of speaking skills.

Christison, M.A. (1996) proposed that in language classrooms, students' intelligences profiles are also in diversity. This is encouraging for language educators. She, therefore, argued that the success in helping language learners develop their intelligences is a combination of the right environmental influences and quality instruction. Intelligences work together in complex ways. Because no intelligence exists by itself, language learning activities may be successful if they actively encourage the use of several intelligences.

Some other studies explored the effectiveness of using multiple intelligences activities in developing English speaking skills. One of these studies was conducted by Sayed (2005). It investigated the effect of using a Multiple Intelligences-Based Training Programme on developing first-year English major's oral communication skills. The sample of the study consisted of 30 first year English majors. Tools of the study included: A training programme based on Gardner's MI Theory to develop the students' oral communication skills, and an oral communication pre-posttest that was administered to the group of the study before and after their training. Results revealed that the programme had a great effect on the students' oral communication skills as there are statistically significant differences between the pre and post administration of the test.

Ibrahim (2007) explored the impacts of using a proposed strategy based on MIT in assessing and developing the oral skills. The sample of the study was third year primary school Arabic native speakers' students. Instruments of the study included the training program (student's book and a teacher's guide), multiple intelligences scale and a checklist of the study showed the usefulness of the training program based on MIT.

Another research implemented by Dorgham (2011) investigating the effectiveness of using multiple intelligences based instruction on developing speaking skills of the preparatory schools first graders. The implementation of a program based on MI proved the usefulness of multiple intelligences based instruction on developing first year preparatory stage graders. The current study has different samples but similar general aim.

In 2013, Salem, A. M. S applied MIT in investigating the impact of multiple intelligences-based instruction on developing speaking skills of the pre-service teachers of English. He developed a multiple-intelligences based program to enhance the speaking skills paying a due attention to the individual differences among students. The sample of the study consists of sixty fourth-year Prospective teachers of English. The Quasi-experimental research design was used in the study as the researcher used the one group pre-posttest to assess the usefulness of using this approach. Results of the study proved the effectiveness of Multiple-intelligences based Instruction on developing speaking skills of the pre-service teachers of English.

1.3.1. Scope of the Study: The current study is limited to the following:

1. Sixty eight first-year English major students who were willing to participate in the study at the Foreign Languages Department, Phu Yen University. Those first-year students were chosen because they need to develop their English speaking skills through an English speaking training program integrated with multiple intelligences classroom activities as they are going to be teachers of English after graduation.
2. Some English speaking skills that should be developed within the English speaking training program. These skills are:
 - Asking and answering personal interview questions;
 - Making a conversation based on a ready-given situation;
 - Describing pictures;
 - Making questions and answers about a given topic;
 - Oral presentation skills.
3. The content of the English speaking training programme that deals with a combination of at least five types of intelligences: verbal/linguistics, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal. These intelligences were selected as they are relevant to the content presented in the English training program and they are mostly favored by the students.

1.3.2 Definition of Terms

The definitions mentioned below were commonly used in the study.

1. Multiple intelligences classroom activities

Gardner (1983) views Multiple Intelligences classroom activities as a tool through which any content area can be conveyed to students by utilizing their different inner capacities, abilities or intelligences. Using this type of instruction addresses many of the students' intelligences as students are involved in various activities which are based on different types of intelligences.

2. Speaking Skills

Fakhar Naveed (2015) defines speaking skills as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Speaking depends on the context or the situation, Context includes the physical environment, the purposes for speaking is

more often spontaneous, open ended, and evolving. Speaking requires learners to not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary but also that they understand when, where, why and in what ways to produce language.

In the Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English (2015) speaking is defined as the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language.

In this research, speaking is described as “an interactive process that includes certain skills such as asking and answering personal interview questions, making a conversation based on a ready-given situation, describing pictures, making questions-answers about a given topic, oral presentation skills.

3. English major students

English major students are the first-year students at the Department of Foreign Languages who are supposed to be trained to become teachers of English after graduation.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The researcher used the Quasi-experimental Design to test the hypotheses of the study. This research design is suitable for the nature of the study. Thus the researcher has assigned the experimental group which is pre-tested and post-tested using an English speaking test of English majors. The hypothesis was tested:

There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in Students' Performance in English speaking skills and subskills.

From the main hypothesis, the following hypotheses are derived: By integrating multiple intelligences classroom activities throughout the English speaking development lessons, the mean scores of the subjects on the speaking skill will be improved according to the multiple intelligences-based achievement tests. In other words, there are statically significant differences between the mean scores of the subjects of the research on the speaking skills pre-posttest in favor of the posttest. Thus, the main goal of this research is to investigate if it is possible to promote the students' English speaking skills and highlight the benefits that EFL classroom classes may gain in comparison with the traditional EFL classroom instruction strategies by integrating multiple intelligences classroom activities.

The MIT intervention in this research involves a combination of MI activities, MI materials and MI assessment. As the focus of the research is in EFL classroom instruction practice, we only attempt to explore the possible effect of MIT intervention on the five intelligences which have direct relationship to English speaking development instruction, i.e. verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

1.5 Questions of the Study

The study attempted to answer the following main question: What is the effectiveness of integrating MI classroom activities in developing EFL students' English speaking skills?

From this main question, the following sub-questions are derived:

1. What are the English speaking skills required for the first-year English major students?
2. What is the actual performance of first-year English major students in speaking skills?
3. What is the MI profile of the first-year English major students?
4. What are the principles of integrating MI classroom activities in developing first-year English major students' English speaking skills?
5. What is the effect of integrating MI classroom activities in developing the speaking skills of the first-year English major students?

2. Method

In the research, the following steps were used to develop tools, teaching materials and the procedures followed in administering the tools to the subjects of the study as well as an overall description of how the experiment was conducted. In this way, the experimental aspects of the study were sufficiently covered, and the procedures of the experiment were described and clarified.

2.1. The Experimental Design

This research follows the procedures of a study conducted by Salem, A. M. S (2013), with the one-pre-post experimental design in which only the experimental group was used in the implementation process. This design was chosen because the study aims at developing some English speaking skills of a group of students. Three English speaking pre-posttest and an English

speaking training program integrated with multiple intelligences classroom activities to develop the first-year students' English speaking skills.

As a matter of fact, the one group pre-posttest design was utilized in the experiment. The study sample was purposefully chosen and assigned to one group from the total number of first year English major students at the Department of Foreign Languages, Phu Yen University, Vietnam. The participants are sixty eight first year English major students who are supposed to be trained at Phu Yen University to become English teachers in the future. The participants studied the new English speaking training program after they were pretested. At the end of the experiment, the speaking skills test was administered.

2.2. Variables of the Study

1. The Independent variable was:

The use of the multiple intelligences-based instruction program

2. The dependent variables were:

Students' English speaking skills

3. The control variables were.

a. Age level.

b. Language proficiency level in English speaking.

c. Years of studying English.

2.3 The participants of the Study

The participants under investigation were taken from first year English major students at the Department of Foreign Languages, Phu Yen University, Vietnam. Sixty eight students were selected according to their willingness to participate in the study.

2.3.1. Sampling Procedures

The number of the thirty four (34) students were involved in one experimental group which was instructed and trained in order to develop their speaking skills in English through a multiple intelligences-based instruction training program.

2.3.2. Sample Size, Power, and Precision

The participants were homogenous in terms of their academic level in English in general, and their speaking skills in particular. This was reflected from their scores in the pre-test (English Speaking Test 1, conducted at the beginning of the English speaking training program.

2.3.3. Validating the Tests

After modifying the test according to the suggestions of the jury members, the tests were conducted in order to:

1. Assure the clarity of the test items and instructions.
2. Decide the time needed for the tests.
3. Determine the item difficulty index of tests.
4. Determine the discrimination index of the tests.
5. Determine the tests reliability.

To pilot the tests, a number of eight students, other than those in the experimental group, were randomly selected from among the first year English major students at the Department of Foreign Languages, Phu Yen University, Vietnam.

2.3.4 Experimental Manipulations and Intervention

2.3.4.1 A Checklist of Students' Speaking Skills

After reviewing the English speaking courses at the Department of Foreign Languages, Phu Yen University and going through literature on the speaking skills, a checklist for the TEFL lecturers of the most important English speaking skills for first-year students was proposed. This checklist was submitted to the Group of Speaking Specialists, belonging to the English Major Division in the Foreign Languages Department, to:

1. Determine the most important English speaking skills that first-year English major students need to develop.
2. Modify the linguistic statement of any skill when necessary.
3. Add any other necessary skills students would need to develop.

Table 1. Results of the speaking skills checklist

Speaking Skills	Agreement	Percentage
1. Asking and answering personal interview questions	10	100%
2. Making a conversation based on a ready-given situation	8	80%
3. Describing pictures	10	100%
4. Oral presentation skills	9	90%
5. Making questions and answers about a given topic	8	80%

2.3.4.2 Multiple Intelligences Inventory for EFL Young Adults

A Multiple Intelligences Inventory for EFL Young Adults developed by Laura Candler (2011) was administered to the experimental group of first year English major students. Through this inventory, the students gained some initial concepts on their preferred intelligences and learning styles, simultaneously, the researcher could establish an intelligences profile of students. From this, the researcher designs the activities and tasks catering for the students' preferred intelligences.

Table 2. Profile of the most dominant intelligences of the participants

	Types of Intelligences	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Verbal-Linguistic Intelligences	82.35%	2.47	0.38
2	Logical-Mathematical Intelligence	35.29%	1.05	1.37
3	Interpersonal Intelligence	70.59%	2.12	0.62
4	Intrapersonal Intelligence	70.59%	2.12	0.62
5	Bodily/kinesthetic Intelligence	44.12%	1.32	1.19
6	Visual/Spatial Intelligence	94.12%	2.82	0.13
7	Musical/Rhythmic Intelligences	23.53%	0.70	1.62
8	Naturalistic Intelligences	20.59%	0.67	1.68

2.3.4.3 The Speaking Pre-Posttests

a. Aim of the tests

Three English speaking tests were used to develop the skills of asking and answering personal interview questions, making a conversation based on a ready-given situation, describing pictures, making questions and answers about a given topic, giving oral presentations, in the pre and post testing.

b. Description of the tests

Each test was divided into five parts as follows:

Part (1) asking and answering personal interview questions.

Part (2) making a conversation based on a ready-given situation.

Part (3) describing pictures.

Part (4) giving oral presentations

Part (5) making questions and answers about a given topic.

The total score of each test was 10 points

These parts represented the core of speaking development program for the first year students at Phu Yen University (Based on the Common European Framework of References for Language, Level B1, CEFR). Designing the tests was based on reviewing appropriate viewpoints of EFL specialists as well as on related literature.

Table 3. Table of specifications of the speaking pre-posttest

Speaking Skills	Number of Items	Total marks
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1. Asking and answering personal interview questions	1	2
2. Making a conversation based on a ready-given situation	1	2
3. Describing pictures	1	2
4. Giving oral presentations	1	2
5. Making questions and answers about a given topic	1	2

c. Validity of the English Speaking Skills Pre-post Test: The test was submitted to Group of Speaking Specialists to decide on:

1. Clarity of test instructions.
2. Suitability of test items for assessing the speaking skills of the first-year English major students
3. Suitability of test items for the first-year English major students' level.
4. Suitability of the proposed scoring technique.
5. Any other comments or suggestions.

The Speaking Specialists decided that the test is generally valid to be used in assessing the first-year English major students' speaking and oral presentation skills.

d. Reliability of the test

The researcher used the inter-rater reliability to determine the reliability of the test. Two raters participated in scoring the speaking skills and oral presentation skills by students participating in the speaking skills pre-posttest (each rater was given a separate copy of the test papers to score by himself) after they were instructed in scoring tests using the scoring criteria.

3. Results

Results of implementing the program were tallied and tabulated to decide on the effect of integrating multiple intelligences classroom activities in developing English speaking skills for the first year major students in terms of their performance in speaking skills test.

3.1. Statistical Procedures

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22.0) was used in the treatment of the results of the study. *T-test* formula was employed in analyzing students' scores on the speaking skills test.

3.2. Validating the Study Hypotheses

In order to validate the study hypotheses, the researcher tabulated the data obtained from the participants' raw scores. After tabulating these data to cope with the statistical formulas, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 to establish the necessary statistics. The researcher made the simple descriptive statistics to calculate the means of scores and standard deviation. The researcher then calculated the observed t-test in order to compare the means of scores and subsequently to determine the accurate effect of the proposed program. In order to make sure that the statistical differences between the mean scores are due only to the training program, the researcher calculated the effect size.

3.3. The Main Research Hypothesis

The Main hypothesis of the study was stated as follows: *There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the subjects of the study on the speaking skills pre-posttest in favor of the posttest.*

The Table below (Table 4) presents the results of analyzing students' scores in the English speaking skills tests.

A comparison between the test results of the English Speaking Tests of the students in the 2 groups

Comparison of the Test Scores of the English Speaking Test 1, 2 & 3
between the Experimental Group and the Controlled Group

	Number of students in experimental group (N = 34)		Number of students in control group (N = 34)		P value of t-test	The Effect Size
	Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation		
English Speaking Test 3	7.44	0.80	5.65	0.88	0.079e-9	0.73
English Speaking Test 2	6.96	0.51	6.12	0.60	0.000003	0.60
English Speaking Test 1	6.57	0.68	6.19	0.71	0.032	0.26

It is clear from the data represented in table 4 that there is a statistically significant difference between mean scores of the subjects' pre-posttest scores on their performances in the English Speaking Tests. This difference is in favor of the post testing. This indicates that English speaking training program in which multiple intelligences classroom activities are integrated was beneficial to the subjects of the study. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted, i.e. there is a statistically significant difference between mean scores of the subjects of the study in the pretest and posttest on the speaking skills test in favor of the posttest. This result coincides with the study conducted by Dorgham (2011), Sayed (2005) and Ghazala (2005). All of these studies reveal that integrating multiple intelligences classroom activities is effective in developing English speaking skills.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of using a program that integrates multiple intelligences classroom activities in developing the English speaking skills for the first year English major students at the foreign languages students at Phu Yen University.

The results of the study showed that there is a statistically significant difference at the significance level (0.01) between the mean scores of the participants on the speaking pre-posttest in favor of the posttest. This might be attributed to the multiple intelligences classroom activities integrated in the program that brought about improvement in the students' performance of the English speaking skills (namely, asking and answering personal interview questions, making a conversation based on a ready-given situation, describing pictures, making questions and answers about a given topic, oral presentation skills).

Consequently, the results of the this research also match with many studies which used MI Theory" in developing and improving many academic skills in the field of foreign language teaching in general (Xie, J.C. et al., 2009) and (Bas, G. 2010), and in the field of English Language Teaching, particularly in developing English speaking skills (Sayed, 2005; Dorgham, 2011 & Salem, 2013).

This result copes with Salem's study (2013) which investigated the effect of using a Multiple Intelligences-Based Training Program on developing the pre-service English teachers' oral communication skills. The sample of the study consisted of sixty pre-service English teachers. Results revealed that the program had a great effect on the pre-service teachers' oral skills.

The first-year English major students demonstrated significant improvement in their English presentation skills. This improvement can be attributed to the experimental program as well. The participants were given information about the different techniques that a good presenter uses. Effective use of visuals and commenting on these visuals as well as combining information technology (IT) skills to support presentation skills as well as such other English speaking skills as pair presentation and group presentation. These techniques helped students be effective presenters, not only in the classroom but also in their self-study activities at home. Also, they helped them in other speaking skills such as making personal interview questions, describing pictures, and so on.

Students' English speaking skills in terms of making a conversation based on a ready-given situation can also be promoted remarkable in the way of combining a variety of multiple intelligences tools such as interpersonal, visual, linguistic, logical and musical intelligences. Based

on such a combination of students' preferred multiple intelligences, their work of role playing and making conversations has brought about better English speaking products.

In general, the results of the English speaking pre-posttests have shown that the first year major students' English speaking skills can be said to be promoted as the expectation set out at the beginning of the research. The participants manifested significant achievement in speaking skills. These achievements can be attributed to the multiple intelligences classroom activities integrated in the new English speaking training program. Because of the importance of speaking in general, due focus was particularly paid to this area. For example, the participants were instructed in using language functions, as speaking skills. Therefore, once again, it can be concluded that the improvement taking place in the speaking skills can be attributed to the effectiveness of the English speaking training program integrated with multiple intelligences classroom activities.

5. Conclusions

From the results of the study it can be concluded that integrating multiple intelligences classroom activities is an effective way to develop the English speaking skills through focusing on individual differences among students. It is also concluded that the application of MI theory into EFL classroom contexts has provided many opportunities for both language teachers and students in terms of transitioning from the traditional methods of teaching, learning and assessing the students' major abilities of verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences towards a humanitarian way of all-round training and evaluating students' learning abilities and outcomes according to their preferential learning styles and intelligences.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences has undoubtedly enabled EFL teacher to promote their students' English speaking skills according to the results of this research. Students will be able to demonstrate and share their strengths. Building strengths gives a student the motivation to be a "specialist." This can in turn lead to increased self-esteem. (Chapman, C & Freeman, L - 1998)

The application of MI classroom activities and assessment in promoting EFL major students' linguistic competence is of great necessity in terms of creating fundamental and comprehensive renovation of education and training, satisfying the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the direction of the socialism-oriented market economy and global integration.

In the light of MIT, EFL teachers can help their students solve many problems in their learning activities and create relevant language products which are designed and presented through students' diversity of intelligences and learning preferences.

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