Jordanian EFL Students’ Attitudes toward Using an Instructional Program Based on Multiple Intelligences in Teaching Speaking Skills

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Abstract:
This study investigated the attitudes of Jordanian EFL students toward using Multiple Intelligences in teaching speaking skills. The participants were one section of the seventh-grade students in Success Story School in Irbid, who were the experimental group. The experimental group was taught the speaking skills through an instructional program based on Multiple Intelligence (verbal-linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence). An attitudinal questionnaire of 11 items was developed by the researcher to the participants of the experimental group to find out their attitudes toward the significance of the Multiple Intelligences instructional program on EFL students’ speaking skills. The results showed that the students’ attitudes were positive as the program was reported to have a noticeable effect on improving their speaking skills. This study recommended that Multiple Intelligences should be integrated into the EFL teaching to improve students’ speaking skills.

Keywords: attitudes, multiple intelligences, speaking.
اتجاهات الطلبة الأردنيين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية نحو استخدام برنامج تعليمي قائم على الذكاءات المتعددة في تدريس مهارات التحدث

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ملخص:

بحثت هذه الدراسة في اتجاهات الطلبة الأردنيين في تدريس مهارات التحدث باستخدام الذكاءات المتعددة. كان المشاركون في هذه الدراسة هم شعبة من طلاب الصف السابع من مدرسة قصة نجاح في إربد، وتم توزيع المشاركين ليكونوا المجموعة التجريبية. تم تدريس المجموعة التجريبية مهارات التحدث من خلال برنامج تعليمي قائم على الذكاءات المتعددة. تم توزيع استبانة المواقف من إحدى عشرة فقرة والتي تم تطويرها من قبل الباحثة على المشاركين في المجموعة التجريبية لمعرفة مواقفهم تجاه أهمية برنامج الذكاءات المتعددة التعليمي بعد انتهاء البرنامج. أظهرت النتائج أن مواقف الطلاب كانت إيجابية واظهرت أن البرنامج له تأثيرات قيمة في تحسين مهارات التحدث لديهم. وتوصي هذه الدراسة بدمج الذكاءات المتعددة في الصفوف لتحسين مهارات التحدث لدى الطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاتجاهات، الذكاءات المتعددة، التحدث.

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**Introduction**

Within the creative process of teaching, teachers usually deal with different students’ abilities to learn where the teacher is always expected to be innovative and come up with learning ways that accommodate the needs of all the students in their classroom, taking into account the different intelligences and skills of those students. Gardner (1994) believed that the teacher’s role is to vary the teaching strategies to refine learners’ intelligences. Keeping in mind that having the ability to do something is basically having the skill of doing it, and this applies to language learning as well. Therefore, teachers should activate the students’ intelligences in order for them to be able to learn the skills of the language.

In order to be able to communicate using any language and to attain competency, one should be able to express him/herself both in spoken and written forms of it. Language teaching should be based on the basis that the four language skills should be integrated for one to be proficient in this language. Integration of skills proved to be successful when it comes to urging the students to use the four skills in real contexts (Finocchiaro and Bonomo, 1973; Hersan, 1998; Hobson and Schuman, 1990; Omaggio, 2001).

Students should be aware that words are powerful; they should be encouraged to listen carefully to words, absorb the variety of vocabulary and use them wisely to express their feelings, defend a point of view, develop an argument, or even communicate with people and discuss certain points with them.

Speaking is considered as the most important and the most difficult of the four skills when it comes to acquiring any foreign language for it includes different processes that work together (Rao, 2019). Its undeniable difficulty is noticed even among the learners who have learned the language for many years; they would still hesitate and find it difficult to use the language and speak in real life situations (Rao, 2019). Since it is a productive skill; it involves producing language after receiving and processing it. English learners usually evaluate their competency in the language according to their proficiency and development in the spoken language. Brown (2001) defined speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information.

Multiple Intelligences Theory is considered one of the successful teaching strategies among many others that help students improve their...
levels and achievement (Alqatanani, 2017). Using varied teaching methods and activities in order to address student’s strengths is recommended by Gardner (1993). Most people display more than one intelligence, Gardner stated “all humans possess certain core abilities in each of the intelligences” (1993, p.25). He introduced eight intelligences: logical-mathematical, verbal-linguistic, special, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, and he was open to the idea that other intelligences exist (Armstrong, 2000).

Attitudes can be considered as the tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event (Ajzen, 2005). Different factors can affect the process of learning a foreign language. Attitudes are one of these factors, Gardner and Lambert (1972) stated that the learner’s motivation to learn is to be determined by his/her attitudes toward the learning task itself. There is a strong relationship between learners’ attitudes toward languages and learning a language.

Students’ tendency toward language learning in general is highly connected to one’s attitudes toward this language. Attitudes are the positive or negative feelings toward any language (Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985). The process of language learning is always associated with learner’s emotional behaviour (Brown, 2000). Within the changing focus on language learners rather than teachers, their attitudes affect their learning and teaching output. An attitude can be defined as “a combination of feelings or the disposition to respond to an object, person, institution, or event both favourably and unfavourably”. Feelings are positive, negative, and neutral.

**Purpose of the study**

This study aims at investigating the students’ attitudes toward learning through an instructional program based on Multiple Intelligences theory (MIT). It addresses the following question:

**Question of the study**

1. What are the students’ attitudes toward learning speaking skills through an instructional program based on Multiple Intelligences strategies?

**Significance of the study**

This study derives its significance from the fact that implementing an instructional program that is based on MIT on private school students might help improve students’ speaking skills. After reviewing the literature, the researcher has noticed that many studies, both locally and internationally, conducted to establish the effectiveness of MIT but studies that prioritize students’ attitudes toward the instructional program are scarce. Henceforth,
this study could be significant since it investigates the effect of MIT on speaking skills of private school students and sheds the light on their attitudes toward it.

**Theoretical Background**

Gardner (1983) proposed seven different capacities in his book “Frames of Mind”. One of his definitions of intelligences was that it is not a single but rather multiple abilities achieved and identified and then expanded to their maximum. He also noted that intelligence is more than IQ tests. He stated, "I believe that human cognitive competence is better described in terms of a set of abilities, talents, or mental skills, which I call intelligences" (Gardner, 1984, p.134). Moreover, he believed that these intelligences could be developed with practice.

Gardner (1983) introduced seven intelligences, at first, which are, linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, after a few years he added the natural intelligence and then came the existential intelligence, mental-search intelligence, and laser intelligence (2003).

Armstrong (2009) identified linguistic intelligence as using the words effectively both in the written and oral forms, mathematical as using numbers and logic properly, patterns and logical sequence, and problem solving, interpersonal as the ability to comprehend and differentiate the moods, feelings, and intentions of other people. While identified intrapersonal as the ability to understand oneself and recognize one’s strengths, weaknesses, and emotions and act effectively according to this knowledge. Bodily-kinesthetic refers to the ability to use one’s body and hands and moving products to express oneself or solve a problem.

According to Gardner (1983, 2008) where he mentioned that each person possesses all intelligences since birth; some might have one type of intelligences stronger than the other types and training could develop them. These intelligences interact with each other and there are no specific standards for a person to be considered intelligent (Armstrong, 2009).

Gardner (1993) believed that good teachers realize that different approaches are effective with different types of students. In English language teaching, many attempts have been taken to implement MIT for students will benefit more if they are allowed to choose the activities that meet their strengths.

Dickinson (1998) proposed different types of activities to be
implemented in the classroom for teachers to benefit from the MIT such as storytelling, tape recording, and using maps. Therefore, teachers should be involved in designing the activities that contain different intelligences since they are aware of their students and their interests and abilities (Haboush, 2010). Teachers should know the theory to be able to use properly (Armstrong 2009).

Florez (1999) defined speaking as a two-way process involving a true communication of ideas, information, or feelings. According to Bygate (1998) speaking is based on the interaction that involves making decisions about communication. Whereas, Chaney (1998) defined speaking skill as the process of making and sharing meaning in different contexts using verbal and non-verbal symbols.

Moreover, Burns & Joyce (1997) defined speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. However, Bygate (1987) pointed out that speaking is considered as combining sounds in a systematic way, according to language specific principles to form meaningful utterances.

According to Harmer (2001) speaking skill includes two major subskills; accuracy and fluency, which in turn have many various aspects. The use of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are considered to be practiced using guided activities under the ‘accuracy’ category; whereas, measuring one’s ability to speak continuously and spontaneously is considered ‘fluency’.

Speaking is defined as a way to communicate verbally for interpersonal and transactional purposes (Nunan, 1999). Moreover, speaking is defined by Brown (1994), as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information.

**Empirical Research**

Bilgin (2006) examined the effectiveness of multiple intelligences theory-based instruction on 50 ninth grade students from two classes of high school in Ankara. An achievement test about chemical bonding concept was used to determine the effectiveness of multiple intelligences-based instruction over traditional science instruction. The results showed that students who were instructed using multiple intelligences achieved higher than those instructed using the traditional science instruction. There was also a significant difference between the students instructed using multiple intelligences and the students instructed using the traditional instruction with respect to their attitudes toward chemistry.
Jallad and Abdelrahman (2008) examined the effect of multiple intelligences strategies on ninth grade students' reading comprehension achievement in an EFL setting. The sample of the study consisted of four ninth grade sections; a reading comprehension test was constructed and administered to the participants of the study, which consisted of four ninth grade sections. It concluded that there was a significant difference in the students' reading comprehension due to the teaching strategies in favor of the experimental group.

Haboush (2010), investigated the effectiveness of a suggested program based on Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory on eighth graders’ English reading comprehension skills. An achievement test and weekly quizzes were administered to the participants, 65 EFL male were divided into experimental and control groups. The findings showed that there were statistically significant differences between both groups, in favor of the experimental one, due to the programme implemented.

Safein (2012), examined the effect of implementing a program based on the theory of Multiple Intelligences on developing listening and speaking skills of prospective teachers of English in Qena faculty of Education. a pre-posttest of listening and speaking skills was administered to a sample of sixty prospective teachers of English in Qena faculty of Education. The findings showed that the Multiple Intelligences based program had significant effect on improving the participants’ listening and speaking skills.

Koura and Al-Hebaishi (2014) investigated the relationship between multiple intelligences, self-efficacy and academic achievement of students. A multiple intelligences inventory, the self-efficacy scale, and a language achievement test were administered to 85 Saudi female third intermediate grade students. The study concluded that there was significant correlation between multiple intelligences and achievement in specific language skills.

Sumarta (2016) investigated the effects of linguistic intelligence and interpersonal communication competence toward students’ English speaking skills. Thirty students in the English department in the third semester at the University of Singapebangsa Karawang participated. Both interviews and questionnaires were used to collect the data. The findings showed that there was a significant effect of linguistic intelligence and interpersonal communication competence collaboratively on students’ English speaking skills.

Safranj (2018) examined the application of multiple intelligences
theory in Business English classes for engineers at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad by assessing the students’ coursebook Market Leader (intermediate) in terms of multiple intelligences theory. 100 second year students studying at the Department of Engineering Management, at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad. Both student multiple intelligences survey and a checklist of activities four each intelligence were used in data collection. The survey was used to determine the students’ multiple intelligences profiles while the checklist was used to determine the multiple intelligences profile of the coursebook activities. The study concluded that there was a gap in terms of multiple intelligences which separates students and their coursebook.

Van Don (No Year) examined the effect of using multiple intelligences training program on developing speaking skills for 60 second-year English major students. A multiple intelligences based training program, a questionnaire, a checklist, and speaking pre-posttests were used to measure the effectiveness of the multiple intelligences training program. The results revealed that the program had a great effect on improving students’ English speaking skills. Furthermore, students expressed their opinions that the program brought them chances to develop their English speaking skills.

Yavich and Rotnitsky (2020) investigated the relationship between dominant intelligences and middle school students’ academic achievement. 158 seventh grade students participated in the case study; where they attended six classes, two of which were classes with high to very high achievers, and four classes with high, medium and low achievers. A questionnaire examining the learner’s dominant intelligence was sent digitally to all students. The findings indicated that the dominant intelligences that highly influenced and measured achievement in the education system were not the logical-mathematical and the linguistic-verbal, but the logical-mathematical.

XU (2021) investigated the effect of a task-based teaching approach with multiple intelligences in developing Chinese students’ speaking competency. A total of 60 students were divided into two equal groups; experimental and control. A questionnaire survey, a pre-post-test, and final tests were used to collect the data. The results indicated significant improvement after the experiment with regard to complexity, accuracy and fluency.

Concluding Remarks

Previous research investigated a wide variety of issues with regard to
multiple intelligences and speaking skills. There is a plethora of studies that aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a proposed program based on multiple intelligences on students’ speaking skills and all four language skills as well (for instance, Jallad, & Baniabdelrahman, 2008; Van Don, No Year; Rizqiningsih and Hadi, 2019; Sumarta, 2016; Fauziah, 2015).

Based on the findings, it is evident that multiple intelligences theory when implemented in a good manner holds a unique potential as an effective instrument of language instruction that affects students’ speaking skills positively (for example, Ibrahim, Qoura, and Hassan, 2020; XU, 2021).

However, there is a plethora of studies that have been conducted investigating the effect of multiple intelligences on other skills such as, reading, writing, and listening skills. The results showed that multiple intelligences have a positive effect on EFL students’ reading, writing, and listening (for example, Suwarni, Rahman, and Iswara, 2019; Haboush, 2010; Jallad, & Baniabdelrahman, 2008).

This study may enrich the related literature and spread awareness among other researchers of this approach and provide Jordanian EFL teachers with a new approach to teach speaking effectively. This study is different from previous studies in the sense that to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, previous research has investigated the EFL context in general, but few have investigated students’ attitudes toward the effect of multiple intelligences on speaking skills in Jordanian private schools.

**Design and Variables of the Study**

The current study followed the quasi-experimental design in terms of using one experimental group and one control group in order to fit the purpose of the study. Specifically, the study included two variables: the independent variable which is the multiple intelligences strategy with its three levels; verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, and the conventional method of teaching. The dependent variable, which is the students’ attitudes.

**Participants of the study**

The participants of the study were conveniently chosen during the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022 as the researcher works as a supervisor at Success Story School. One section of twenty-one seventh grade students were involved in the study who were randomly assigned into for the purpose of this study (viz. experimental). Experimental group, consisted of 21 seventh graders, was taught by multiple intelligences. All participants were studying the textbook *English World*. 
Instrument of the Study

In order to achieve the purposes of the study, an attitudinal questionnaire was developed and employed to find out the students’ attitudes concerning the academic significance of the Multiple Intelligences instructional program. The questionnaire was a five-point rating scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) that consisted of eleven items in English. The questionnaire was used after the treatment was over for the participants to be aware of the meaning, procedures, and the role of multiple intelligences and acknowledge its effect on their speaking skill. The researcher herself distributed the questionnaire, explained its items in brief, and how to respond to each item based on their own attitudes.

Validity and Reliability of the questionnaire

The validity of the questionnaire was established by an expert jury of ten EFL university professors, supervisors, experiences English Language teachers, and PhD students in education and curriculum and instruction in Jordan. The jury’s comments and feedback for the instruments were taken into account.

Reliability of the Questionnaire of the Study

In order to establish the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach Alpha was computed. It was found to be 0.942 which is a good value for an attitudinal questionnaire.

Results Related to the Question of the Study

The research question of the study was: What are the students’ attitudes toward learning through Multiple Intelligences strategies?

In order to answer the question; the closed-ended questionnaire, previously presented, was administered to the 21 students of the experimental group. Mean and standard deviations for each item were calculated to decide the rank and degree of each one of them. The results are shown in table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In multiple intelligences, I express my opinion freely.</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Using Multiple Intelligences improves my interest in speaking.</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In multiple intelligences, I enjoy speaking English.</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.503</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In multiple intelligences, my role in</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.503</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows that item # 1 "In multiple intelligences, I express my opinion freely" ranked first with a mean score of 4.80 and a standard deviation value of 0.410. As for item # 7 "In multiple intelligences, I ask and answer authentic questions", it ranked last with a mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation value of 0.671. Figure 1 below shows the high degree of the items embodied in the approximate length of bars.

The question of the study investigated students’ attitudes toward learning through multiple intelligences, for the sake of this purpose the researcher included a questionnaire of 11 items administered to the
The researcher determined the rank and the level for each item in the instrument. As indicated by the analysis of the questionnaire, ten items out of eleven in the questionnaire ranked as High; and only one item "In multiple intelligences, I ask and answer authentic questions" ranked Moderate. The item "In multiple intelligences, I express my opinion freely" got the first rank; most students stressed this point as they feel that multiple intelligences allowed them to speak and express themselves freely without being concerned about giving accurate sentences, they were simply able to share their opinions and speak them out freely. This indicates that the well-planned and clear material made learning more fun and enjoyable. The choice of learning activities was effective and adequate. The fact that students were able to connect with themselves and others granted them the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions and speak confidently. In general, the results showed that the students’ attitudes were positive as the instructional program of the multiple intelligences was reported to have a noticeable effect on improving their speaking skills.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of the students appreciated the implementation of the Multiple Intelligences instructional program with an agreement with the statements that aimed at investigating their attitudes toward the effect of teaching using Multiple Intelligences in improving their speaking skills.

Teachers should encourage their students to change their passive roles and attitudes into active ones and work collaboratively by practicing the speaking activities which are based on the principles and rules of implementing the multiple intelligences in their classes.

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