Chapter - V

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken to find out whether MI inputs could generate motivation among the students to write better and this enabling would also promote independent learning, leading to learner autonomy. The study was undertaken under the premise that in most Indian classrooms, writing is a problematic area in L2 learning as writing skills are central to education and examination system in India. Very little attention is paid to students' writing process, for only the 'product' is evaluated. Thus, the aim of this study was to provide MI inputs through which they can improve their writing skills in report writing task. Providing various MI inputs to the process of writing would eventually result in learner autonomy.

Until now, the discussion has tried to indicate how the MI inputs stimulate the students' learning styles. It also helped the researcher to understand that pedagogical treatment, rather than a learner's mental makeup, is responsible for the writer's block, affecting learner's performance and its persistence in later life. Despite the various kinds of psychological and intellectual differences among individual learners, it is still possible to motivate them to write after their own fashion making the best possible use of the intellectual resources available to
them. Open-ended writing tasks with a range of inputs to stimulate various other MI in learners along with the verbal-linguistic will motivate learners to write.

The interest created in learners, leading to task-engagement, activates various other MI in them. These MI, then help the learners to overcome their inhibition and generate content on a given topic through a process called translation. The more the content generated, the more the opportunities gained for the different kinds of thinking. It involves in analyzing and selecting raw material, organizing and revising points selected, creating a new synthesis, and finally, expressing the whole in a coherent form. For most students, thus, writing can become an opportunity for learning the sub skills and its styles as well as learning how to learn. In this way, writing processes are far more important to young learners than written products, because while the latter indicate their quality of expression, the former actually enable learners to hone their thinking skills. This is why writing to be motivated in learners by stimulating various MI through task inputs. This conclusion was borne out by the results obtained from the writing samples, stimulated by MI inputs collected by the researcher among the +1 standard learners.

On the whole, three positive outcomes were manifested in the closing phase of the MI in the present study. The first outcome in the study was the improvement in writing performance in terms of linguistic accuracy and overall development indicated by the comparison between before and after intervention scores in the written output of the MI tasks.
Secondly, there was a marked improvement in the student behavior in terms of motivation which could be logically associated with the greater task engagement among learners whose strengths lay outside the linguistic and logical-mathematical areas typically valued by schools. Motivation levels can also be ascertained from the fact that when students were exposed to texts, they took turns to read and never hesitated to take a chance to clarify their doubts. This strategy of making the students to participate paid off in the subsequent writing tasks and it enabled them to improve the writing both in terms of content and ideas.

Thirdly, there was a lot of scope for group work and discovery learning to happen. The students claimed to enjoy doing MI tasks much more than their academic lessons, as these tasks helped them acquire new knowledge and skills in a much more enjoyable manner. They also had opportunities to interact with teammates and other members of the school community in much more meaningful exchanges than before. Thus, more fruitful learning could be enabled through learner contribution to the negotiation of the meaning that can affect the writing in a positive way.

Towards the end of the study it was apparent that teacher's unique authority declined as learners assumed leadership roles while sharing their own views and knowledge with their classmates. Discovering various sources as alternative sources of information to do the writing tasks during the MI approach adopted by the researcher, learners were released from the constraints of textual and teacher authority in many academic aspects which, in turn resulted in student-centered learning. Teachers who had hitherto lectured from an entrenched and superior
position of information monopoly were now forced to come off their pedestals and
argue, justify, illustrate and defend, in order to prove the veracity of the
information they were providing. This led to the desired participatory accessing
of knowledge, replacing teacher explanation in many classes.

MI activities in every discipline would initiate this process by enabling such
learning through group work, promoting student solidarity, increasing learner
independence and tolerance of difference, enabling introspection and time
management, developing individual abilities and encouraging quality
relationships between student-student and student-teacher.

5.2 Discussion on the findings of the study

After the pretest, it was found that there is a strong relationship between teachers
using various MI inputs like linguistic (reading texts), Verbal-spatial (picture &
graphs) and Interpersonal (group discussion) on the writing samples by students in the
subsequent reports. Students were motivated enough to write and grew confident in
their ideas. It was also found that the number of errors made by students reduced in
all categories studied between the first and the last report writing task. It was
apparent that the MI inputs enabled the students to think about what they had
written, and how it could be improved in the next task. The improvement was
therefore not only in the removal of errors, but also in better writing. This continuous
use of MI inputs in their tasks motivated them to write better as well as
communicative efficacy.
Thus, one could conclude that MI inputs motivate the students to write, hone their writing skills and, think about their own writing. All this would eventually lead to learner autonomy with the initial support of the teachers. The improvement along linguistic dimensions has been analyzed under three categories, grammatical, lexical and mechanical. The findings show that there has been a definite improvement in students' report writing samples from both pre-test to post-test and the tasks done in between. As such, the results of the analysis between drafts R1 (PT) to R10 (PTT) showed that R10 was always significantly more error free and fluent than R1. Thus the results reveal that gains were made in formal accuracy between R1 and R10 by all the students after receiving MI inputs on their writing. The communicative effectiveness of students' essays was the combined result of the increased linguistic efficiency of the students and their writing skills. Increase in accuracy helped presentation of content in reports in a clear manner. The combination of error awareness created by researcher now and then and problem-solving techniques had a significant beneficial effect on the development of the students' writing skills.

Therefore, the findings show that there seems to be a strong case for MI inputs if used properly by the teacher on students who have a certain level of proficiency in English. Guiding input from the teacher is essential particularly in the initial stages to push the learner toward autonomy. (Smith, 2008). This 'growth' was visible in the experiment that lasted only eight weeks. MI approach made it possible to enable the students to grow in confidence task to task and therefore contributed to the overall growth. Moreover, students seemed to feel that they were learning more when they
interacted in groups by themselves and were able to recollect the texts and pictures better and relate them to their real life situations. It was also evident that they were highly motivated through enthusiasm they displayed in airing their views and taking part in group discussions. They were of the opinion that the discussions would help them in their future writing.

Therefore the argument that is, made in this thesis is that if the inputs in the form of multiple intelligences propounded by Howard Gardner (1983) are provided to the students, they can definitely engage the students in the writing tasks by generating motivation through which the students would write better and eventually lead them to become Independent learners. The decision on what kind of input to use will always be context specific. Factors like students' proficiency level, course goals, and the nature of errors being treated have to be kept in mind. If this approach, of providing additional inputs could be adopted from the secondary school, level, it would definitely be productive.

5.3 The need for MI Inputs

This study shows that students at the intermediate level of proficiency may fossilize and not continue to make progress in accuracy of linguistic forms if proper inputs to stimulate the students' intelligences were not provided in writing classrooms. The study has also proved that students who receive inputs in the form MI can develop sustained motivation through their active participation in the task either by brainstorming or through the interaction among the student groups in negotiating the meaning of the task provided. Feedback on their written errors will be more likely to
help them self-correct their errors during writing the writing process itself; this may be a necessary step in developing long-term linguistic competence. Such 'linguistic accuracy' will also lead to better communicative efficacy in writing. This will ultimately result in learner autonomy.

The need to incorporate MI approach is also backed by the *Input Hypothesis* propounded by widely known linguist Stephen Krashen, (1980). According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order'- that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence- when he/she receives second language 'input'. The Input Hypothesis highlights that the students should be provided with a comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation, so as to acquire the language. The MI inputs can be equated with the comprehensible inputs that provide meaningful interaction to the learner, as Krashen pointed out. They stimulate the students' intelligences and enable the language acquisition to take place.

Since MI approach is extremely important, it may be necessary for teachers to see this as a central part of identity and devote more attention to enable students to engage in the task of writing as it will make them independent writers. This has huge implications for language teaching; as teaching techniques infused with MI approach along with self correction through teacher help have to be brought into the language classroom to a substantial extent.

### 5.4 Implications for Language Teaching

The principal goal of second language teaching, in this case (English), has always been to enable learners to use it as a medium of communication. Effective
English communication in the Indian context implies that learners have independence, self-reliance and self-confidence to use the language to fulfill a range of discoursal and socio-psychological demands. This autonomy will initially need some assistance but it can be achieved.

Teachers, however, may need to keep some points in mind when providing MI inputs in order to enable learning to happen. Teachers' own experiences, intuition and also students' needs are likely to affect the nature of learning but teachers may need to 'train' themselves first. They will have to be selective and familiar with the skillful use of MI inputs in the classroom, as a supplement to the task of writing, so as to provide the maximum benefit to the students. A meta knowledge of grammar and the ability to identify and respond to the commonest errors in students' writing is also necessary. It needs to be remembered that if the feedback is 'improper', it may lead to the deterioration of students' knowledge of grammar (Zhao, 2010). Secondly, the choice of error to be corrected also has to be carefully made. Thirdly, feedback should be given on both linguistic accuracy and content.

5.4.1 Implications (for MI) in the Classroom

Given the diversity of the classroom situation, it is very difficult to sketch the profile of a learner in a classroom, especially in today's world where there are so many changes occurring in the political, social, economic and cultural domains. Learners in any classroom differ from each other in several ways. One immediately identifiable difference is in their varying levels of performance. Thus we have fast learners as well
as slow learners, or categories like A graders and C graders. While differences do exist among the learners in terms of performance, it is yet to be ascertained if our modes of assessing performance are valid. With the theory of Multiple Intelligences, propounded by Dr. Howard Gardener (1983), gaining ground, people seem to have realized that academic performance is only one of many variants in assessing a person.

It is essential for a teacher to understand the differences among the learners. Several factors contributing to the learning process or performance are related to their immediate environment or the background they come from. Therefore, knowing about them will help teachers from realistic expectations, set achievable targets and assess learners individually and objectively. Learners differ from one another in several ways. Age is key factor. Within a class, one may have learners who are older or younger than the rest. The targets you set for those learners will considerably vary depending upon the age factor.

The second major difference among the learners is their gender. Gender prejudice exists in some societies. However, a teacher has the responsibility of promoting gender equality in the class. Being sensitive to this factor will help them prepare effective and unbiased teaching-learning materials. The third major difference is the different learning styles. Besides being visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners, they also differ in many other ways: while some are analytical, some others are intuitive. Learners also differ in their personality. Some are extrovert, highly social, preferring group interactions, while others are introvert preferring to work individually. Some learners are teacher dependent, while others may be autonomous and like to take up
challenges on their own. Some learners have access to resources and hence are able to do certain tasks such as projects very well. In certain situations, there may be first generation learners who come from illiterate families and thus cannot expect any support from parents and or with limited, if any access to resources. Such learners may not benefit much from project work unless it is structured in such a way that the facilities available to them are in to consideration.

To grapple with diversity as a situation in a classroom, MI theory is capable enough to address the issues in general by doing justice to every single learner if it is orchestrated properly.

5.4.2 Implications for learner Autonomy

In recent times, there has been a move towards increased authenticity and communication in second language teaching (Saito, 2003). This development is in line with constructivist theories of language acquisition which hold that language teaching is most effective when it is learner-centered and when the student actively participates in and realistically evaluates his/her own learning (Shepard, 2000). Self-assessment requires students to reflect upon their learning and make judgments about the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the target language. This thesis argues that providing varied MI inputs as a supplement to teaching writing would stimulate learners’ intelligences which, in turn, could motivate the learner to engage in the task deeply. With motivation, students are encouraged to become autonomous and are compelled to monitor their progress, thus becoming more independent and responsible for their own learning.
For teachers with a large number of students, this has special significance since it is difficult to provide individual attention. Instead, the teacher acts in a supportive capacity and students become more independent by learning to learn through different MI inputs they receive. It also provides students with important skills like analyzing and goal-setting that will benefit future learning. Such work however is not likely to happen by itself. One long term implication, that is not a direct outcome of this thesis, is the need to emphasize the significance of MITA in teacher training courses as one size does not fit all.

5.5 Training Teachers in MITA

To implement MI theory successfully, it is important that English teachers at all levels discuss the implications, share concerns and problems and look for ways to streamline MI inputs systematically in classroom. It is important to note that, 'poorly handled MI implementation procedures will not help student writers and may even mislead them. In order for the teacher to understand the nuances of MI theory, its effectiveness and the benefits that it offer to students, teacher education courses have to focus more on helping pre-service and in-service teachers to cope up with the time-consuming task of providing MI inputs and its methodology. It is crucial that teachers should adopt long-term measures to help students become independent writers and make learning an integral part of teaching and learning in the writing classroom. While implementing MI approach in student writing, teachers should abandon the 'get-the-job-done' attitude. Instead, they should consider the long-term significance of it, how to link it to pre and post-writing stages, grammar instruction
and how to help students take on greater responsibility for learning, and thus helping them become more autonomous.

5.6 Need for Teaching Writing

Let us once again examine the need for teaching writing with regard to the outcome of this study. Why at this stage, towards the end of this project, are we still looking at the need for teaching writing? It is because as stated in the previous section, it was found that the writing classroom is a mere dictation class or the process of taking down notes from the blackboard in many of our classroom situations.

Given a worrisome situation where many learners have little idea of their learning needs (Barcelos, 2008), a teacher's priority should be able to realize and expose the strengths and weaknesses of them. It is true of many schools in India that teachers just dictate notes; the main reason for this could be the vast nature of syllabus, which the teachers have to complete in an academic year. Since writing is time consuming, often teachers give away all the written work as homework. But writing should be taught in the classroom as all the examination systems in our country are singularly dependent on writing skills alone and there is no escape from it.

Therefore, students should be trained in organizing ideas, and reading and writing should be integrated. For the writing classrooms to be more effective one should pave way for the introduction of new ways and strategies of teaching. One of the main strategies should be introducing or providing more reading texts, supplemented by visual aids and group discussions in the classroom. This study has clearly pointed out that reading text, pictures and graphs along with group discussion among groups do
enhance students' writing. Thus several implications for teaching writing have been observed during the study. These implications for teaching writing are discussed in the following section.

5.7 Implications for Teaching Writing

The findings of this study offer a number of implications for teaching writing in the Second Language Classroom. They are as follows:

- Teaching writing should not merely be a dictation of the written form, be it report writing, essays, paragraph writing or letter writing. Students should be given or introduced to different inputs so that they can have a variety of ideas, which will help them write better.

- Students should be encouraged to write on their own, should be given space and time in their writing to grow with the help of the input.

- Students should be motivated to use their creativity, their own words and their personal experiences while writing, along with instructions and guidance from the teacher.

- Students should also be introduced to different kinds of writing strategies so that they will be better equipped in every aspect while writing.

- Students should be made aware that writing should generate ideas but should not be a reproduction of the text given by the teacher. In order to make students generate ideas, teachers should have brain storming sessions,
discussions, and provide them with visual aids before writing so that they would be clear about what they have to write.

- Lastly, students should be allowed "opportunities to explore their ideas" (Zamel, 1983) with reference to the topic that they are given.

This study found that there is a lack of providing inputs to the students in the classroom, which is one of the various reasons for the poor performance of students in their writing. The results of the questionnaires, the reading texts, the pictures, the group discussions, the written tasks and the structured interviews suggest that our methodology of teaching writing should be altered and more MI inputs should be provided in the writing classroom to improve the level of the students' writing.

5.8 Limitations of the study

The major limitation could be the background of the subjects or the context, i.e. Navodaya Vidyalaya, in which the study was conducted. Moreover, the students were from the science stream. The findings inferred out of the study would be appropriate to the subjects with a similar background, where most of the students study in Telugu medium until standard VIII and then shifted over to CBSE English medium pattern. Despite the exceptions, like limited time researcher interacted with the subjects and the small sample size, the findings can be generalized.

5.9 Recommendations for further study

In this study, we looked into the implications and the role of MI inputs in the writing classroom. It has been an enriching experience to look into and study the ways in
which the students writing output can be improved. This study brings various areas of future research in the second language classroom such as:

a) Research would be helpful in finding out how MI inputs can be best integrated in our second language classrooms not only for enhancing writing ability, but for the all round development of language skills.

b) It would be helpful to examine the role of Multimedia and its effect on the learner autonomy in a similar context like this.

c) Research is needed to find out why teachers are currently unable to use the MITA as a supplement, given the various learning styles of individuals in a classroom, in aiding the writing process in particular and the rest of the skills like reading, speaking and listening in general.

d) It is recommended to explore teacher beliefs about learner autonomy and their role and responsibilities for language learning in an ESL classroom.

e) It would be more interesting if the same study could be conducted in a English medium school where students learn through English from the basic levels unlike the present context where most of the students study in Telugu medium until standard VIII and then shift to CBSE pattern in English medium.
The above issues came up during the course of this study. As this study represents a small sample of students and teachers and was already designed in a certain way it would be worthwhile and meaningful if the above issues could be extended to another context with a larger sample of students.