ABSTRACT

As the theory and practice of language teaching enters a new century, the importance of helping students become more autonomous in their learning has become one of its themes. The idea of autonomy often provokes strong reactions. To its critics, autonomy is an idealistic goal and its promotion a distraction from the real business of teaching and learning languages. To its advocates, autonomy is a precondition for effective learning; when learners succeed in developing autonomy, they not only become better language learners but they also develop into more responsible and critical members of the communities in which they live.

This study was undertaken to find out whether Multiple Intelligences (MI) inputs could generate motivation among the students to write better and this enabling would also promote independent learning which leads to learner autonomy. The study emerged under the premise that in most Indian classrooms, writing is a problematic area in L2 learning where 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. Moreover, factors like, students persistent poor performance during board examination and over-dependence of learners on teacher which impedes the language growth forced the researcher, who himself is an alumnus of the same context, to probe and explore the possibilities of putting the learners on the path of autonomous learning so that they become better language learners. This study was conducted with the XI class learners of Navodaya Vidyalaya for duration of eight weeks.

Thus, the aim of this study was to provide various MI inputs through which they can improve their writing skills in report writing task. The process of writing provided with
various MI inputs like, providing a reading text, supplementing visual aids along with a group discussion on the topic before writing, stimulate the linguistic, visual-spatial and interpersonal intelligences of the learners, which would engage the learner in the task and eventually result in learner autonomy.

One of the most remarkable features of the theory of multiple intelligences propounded by Howard Gardener (1983) is its provision of at least eight different potential pathways to learning. If a teacher has difficulty reaching a student in the more traditional linguistic or logical ways of instruction, MI theory suggests several other ways in which the material might be presented to facilitate effective learning at all levels. Learning tasks based on MI not only have inputs catering to differentiated intelligence profiles in learners but can also be made culture-specific and learner-specific to match both LI and L2 learning. This is especially relevant to L2 writing tasks where interest motivation in learners plays an important role in initiating learning. Inputs which are learner-friendly, taking intelligence profiles into consideration motivate interest in learners to write with greater confidence as well as task engagement in individual learners.

This thesis proposes a conceptual framework rooted in Multiple Intelligences theory (MI) as substantiated by empirical data for describing and analyzing the development and exercise of learner autonomy in an ESL writing classroom. In keeping view of the following research questions the study was conducted.

a) Does Multiple Intelligence teaching approach generate motivation among the ESL learners?
b) How far Multiple Intelligences teaching approach helps to develop writing skills?

c) Do the motivation and development of writing skills lead to learner autonomy?

The outcome of the study is, 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 increased accuracy in their writing. This accuracy was examined to find out whether it helped the students to develop communicative efficacy for which the students' feedback in the form of interviews was served as triangulation.

The principle aim of the researcher was to improve the writing performance of the learners in the Board Examination, which was imminent in the near future, and makes them lifelong learners. Chapter one presents the background of the study—it explicates the issues in L2 writing and establishes the importance of autonomy in the writing processes. Chapter two explores the theoretical notions underpinning the autonomy and multiple intelligences and the intricacies in detail. Chapter three describes the research design, the procedure adopted to conduct the present study and research tools used. Chapter four explicates the analysis and interpretation of the data both quantitatively and qualitatively, collected during the course of study. Chapter five discusses the finding and its implications to language teaching and learner autonomy.