CHAPTER 1

Statement of Intent

Once you realize things can be different that is tremendously freeing.

Howard Gardner\textsuperscript{1}

Background and Rationale

Since the time English language teaching was recognized as an academic subject in the school curricula, it has witnessed a plethora of teaching/learning theories and methodologies. From the most traditional ones i.e. Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to the latest ones i.e. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) these methodologies mirror varying approaches towards key concepts such as language, learning and teaching as well as needs and demands of the society in different periods of time.

However, today, no single methodology is taken as the cornerstone in English language classes. According to Brown, “The whole concept of separate methods is no longer a central issue in language teaching practice” (Brown, 2002, p.10). He asserts that:

An approach to language pedagogy is not just a set of static principles “set in stone”. It is in fact, a dynamic composite of energies within a teacher that changes (or should change, if one is a growing teacher) with continued experience in learning and teaching. There is far too much that we don’t know collectively about this process, and there are far too many new research findings pouring in, to assume that a teacher can confidently assert that he or she knows everything that needs to be known about language and language learning. (Brown, 2002, p.11)

Generally speaking, the humanistic ideology was the acting force behind the educational evolution in ELT. It gave rise to new terms such as whole person learning, individualized or personalized learning.

\textsuperscript{1} qtd. in Lockwood 1993: 3
Prabhavathy and Mahalakshmi (2016) write:

The term humanistic describes learning approaches that assert the central role of the ‘whole person’ in the learning process. Humanistic approaches emerged in the mid-twentieth century which counterbalance to exclusively intellectual (or cognitive) accounts of learning, such as mentalism… A humanist approach to education enhances on the learner as an individual, taking their interests and goals as the basis to organize or to mould and facilitate their learning experiences. (p.5)

The theory of Multiple Intelligences is a humanistic psychological theory which calls into attention the differences among individuals in terms of their intelligences. This theory was first proposed by Howard Gardner, the psychology professor at Harvard University. Gardner argues that intelligence does not manifest in the same manner in all individuals, it is not simply a single static construct which can be measured in all people by the same sort of questions. He, in fact, challenges the traditional IQ (Intelligence Quotient) tests that label individuals dependent on their performance in a restricted domain. Initially, he identified seven intelligences in all individuals though later on added one more intelligence to the list and he talks about more potential intelligences. These intelligences are briefly discussed as below:

1. **Linguistic/Verbal Intelligence**: The ability to use language effectively, having the sensitivity to words either written or oral.
2. **Logical/Mathematical Intelligence**: The ability to reason sensibly and to cope with logical-mathematical problems easily, and also being adept at mathematics and using numbers.
3. **Visual/Spatial Intelligence**: The potential to apprehend the visual world and transfer the visual perceptions into the real world.
4. **Interpersonal Intelligence**: The ability to understand and recognize the feelings, emotions, moods and intentions of other people and acting upon them.
5. **Intrapersonal Intelligence**: The ability to know one’s own inner moods, feelings and emotions and “the capacity for self-discipline, self-understanding, and self-esteem” (Armstrong, 2009, p.7).
6. **Musical Intelligence**: The ability to perceive musical forms. “Sensitivity to the pitch, timber, and rhythm of sounds as well as responsiveness to the emotional implications of these elements of music” (Nelson, 1998, p.11).
7. Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence: The disposition towards using one’s body to express oneself, and also the ability to create things skillfully using one’s body.

8. Naturalist Intelligence: Having a feeling for recognizing and classifying plants and animals. It can also be expressed through the ability to classify inanimate objects.

The theory of multiple intelligences was embraced by the enthusiastic language teachers who think of their students as different individuals with varying abilities. In fact, they found the underlying theory of the way they teach. Armstrong writes, “MI theory essentially encompasses what good teachers have always done in their teaching: reaching beyond the text and the blackboard to awaken students’ minds” (Armstrong, 2009, p.56).

However, in implementing the MI ideas in classes many issues can arise which are the result of a superficial understanding of this theory. Beyond any doubt, misunderstanding of the theory is more destructive rather than constructive. To incorporate the MIT in our classes, we have to take all dimensions into consideration. The MIT principles have to be applied in all aspects of teaching and learning. The techniques we teach through, the kind of tasks we ask the students to perform, and the ways we assess their performance all must be adjusted together. Armstrong nicely touches upon this point:

Educators would clearly be sending a double message to students and to the wider community: learning in eight ways is fun, but when it comes to our bottom line- evaluating students’ learning progress- we’ve got to get serious again and test the way we’ve always tested. (Armstrong, 2009, p.130)

In the light of the above discussion, the present study makes an attempt to explore the theoretical and applicative paradigms of MIT in EFL context. It discusses the effectiveness of infusion of MIT principles into our EFL classes from various dimensions. It also intends to identify the perceptions of foreign students at AMU about their multiple intelligences.
1.1 Aims and Objectives

The present study aims to:

I. Outline and discuss the ideas implicit in the theory of Multiple Intelligences;

II. Analyze the relationships between MIT and different aspects of EFL teaching/learning;

III. Identify the existence and strength of multiple intelligences among foreign students at AMU;

IV. Investigate the ways of incorporation of MIT ideas into EFL teaching/learning;

V. Design tasks and activities for EFL classes through the assimilation of MIT principles.

1.2 Research Questions

I. What is the theory of multiple intelligences? How is it different from the alternative theories?

II. How is MIT related to education? How can it effectively be incorporated in EFL classes and increase the achievements of learners?

III. To what extent is the MI profile of foreign students at AMU attended to?

IV. What measures are required for the implementation of MIT ideas in all aspects of EFL classes?

V. How the principles of MIT can be accomplished through tasks and activities?

1.3 Research Methodology

The thesis will undertake literature survey, analysis of theoretical paradigms, applying the theoretical postulations to developing activities, aids etc. for the use in an EFL classroom. It will also conduct data analysis to identify the combination of multiple intelligences in foreign students at AMU.

1.3.1 Participants

The target number of this study will be 125 foreign students studying at AMU. They come from Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Yemen and Jordan. The participants have been using English in their countries as a foreign language and are studying in the English medium instruction at AMU in B.A, M.A and PhD programs. They are from the age group of 18 to 40 including 80 male and 43 female students.
1.3.2 Instrument and Tool

To gain the quantitative information a modified set of questionnaire will be administered to the target population. The questionnaire is intended to identify the MI profile of the participants.

1.3.3 Data Interpretation and Analysis

To process, tabulate and analyze the collected data in this study the statistical software SPSS 16 will be utilized. The descriptive statistics, frequency and percent are used in this survey.

1.4 Plan of the Study

The present study is divided into the following tentative chapters, besides the present, chapter one ‘Statement of Intent’.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature.

Chapter 3: Intelligence, Multiple Intelligences and EFL Pedagogy

Chapter 4: A Survey of Empirical Study at AMU.

Chapter 5: Designing Activities through Assimilation and Incorporation of MIT.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The present study is significant since it explores the effectiveness of applying the theory of Multiple Intelligences in EFL classes. It presents a comprehensive introduction to the theory of Multiple Intelligences, including its theoretical backgrounds, its principles and ideas, critics against it, similar theories and so on. The study looks at essential aspects of a language class from the standpoint of the theory of multiple intelligences i.e. learning and teaching strategies and assessment. Another significance of this study is that it provides a comparative look at the conventional language classes as one-dimensional classes and MI based classes as multi-dimensional classes.
Besides the theoretical discussions, this study conducts an empirical survey giving an overview about multiple intelligences in EFL students at AMU; based on which, a collection of practical ways is suggested for teachers to teach and practice language by developing and engaging multiple intelligences of their students in the process of learning.

On the whole, the significance of this study is to help improve the learning and teaching scenario at EFL context through exploring the theoretical foundations and principles underlying the MIT and investigating its applicative paradigms in EFL.
REFERENCES


