

The Effect of a Multiple Intelligences Theory-Based Program on Tenth-Grade Students' Reading Comprehension Skills in Jordan

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of a multiple intelligences theory-based program on tenth-grade students' reading comprehension skills in Jordan. The researcher used a quasi-experimental design in which the participants were divided into four groups. The participants, chosen through purposeful sampling, consisted of 110 male and female tenth-grade students from two different schools in the Ramtha Directorate of Education. The first control group consisted of 28 female students, while the first experimental group included 27 female students from the same school. The second control group comprised 24 male students, whereas the second experimental group consisted of 31 male students from the same school in the academic year 2017/2018. The two control groups were taught the reading comprehension texts using traditional methods, while the two experimental groups received treatment through a multiple intelligence's theory-based program for ten weeks. For data collection, the researcher used a validated reading comprehension pre-test and post-test, along with an observation checklist. The results, analyzed using SPSS, indicated that the multiple intelligences theory-based program had a positive effect on the students' reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, the results showed that the program positively affected all the reading comprehension sub-skills. The researcher recommended that EFL curriculum designers and teachers consider multiple intelligences when designing and teaching reading comprehension texts.

Keywords: EFL Students, Multiple Intelligences, Reading Comprehension.

1. Introduction

In 1904, Binet and his fellow psychologists produced Intelligent Quotient (IQ) tests in France. These kinds of tests became popular and were imported to the United States several years later. It was the first time that intelligence was measured in the form of IQ tests. These tests concentrated on the verbal and logical students' abilities. (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider & Gardner 2011).

In 1983, Howard Gardner, a psychologist at Harvard University, challenged the view that intelligence is a single faculty upon which students are classified as either smart or not (Gardner,

1999, p.34). Gardner stated that every human being has eight (or more) basic abilities which are born with them, and they work unequally in the brain.

Gardner stated that an individual may have high aptitude in any intelligence, but this does not mean that he has the same high aptitude in another intelligence. For example, a person might possess a high-level profile in interpersonal intelligence but a low or average profile in kinesthetic intelligence (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider & Gardner 2011).

The eight intelligences proposed by Gardner are linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence (Gardner, 2008).

There are four key points in the Multiple Intelligences Theory that should be remembered all the time. First, each person possesses all kinds of intelligence. These types function together in ways different for each person. Most people seem to appear somewhere along a continuum which represents their strengths or weaknesses in performing within these intelligences. Secondly, most people can develop certain intelligence to a certain level of competency if given the appropriate encouragement, enrichment, and instruction. Thirdly, intelligence usually works together in a complex way, and they interact together in a fascinating way. Finally, there are many ways to be intelligent within each category. It is not necessary to be able to read or write to possess linguistic intelligence. It is enough to be able to give an oral talk using advanced sets of words (Armstrong, 2009).

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education stated six specific outcomes of reading comprehension for tenth-grade students. First, using print and electronic dictionaries and glossaries to confirm word meaning, pronunciation, parts of speech, derivation, synonyms, antonyms, and clarify shades of meaning. Second, identifying the main ideas in informational materials and explaining how the details support the main idea. Third, recognizing the organizational pattern of a text (e.g., compare; cause and effect). Fourth, paraphrasing information, ideas, opinions, and themes in written reading materials. Fifth, reading relevant material to get background information on current issues and events. Sixth, reading functional material for a variety of purposes (e.g., advertisements to make a purchase, brochures to plan a vacation). These major outcomes are prescribed by the Ministry of Education after a long and careful study of the students' needs, desires, and aptitudes. Any English language textbook should achieve these outcomes if it is to be taught for the tenth-grade students in Jordan. (Ministry of Education, 2013).

1.1 Theoretical framework and previous studies

In his book, *Frames of Mind*, Gardner – a psychologist at Harvard University- produced a new view of intelligence. He stated that intelligence is not a single trait, but it consists of many abilities. Gardner declared "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, 1983, p. 6). It is obvious from his speech that people can be "intelligent" in many ways. As a psychologist, Gardner investigates the human mind from a pluralistic view which says that every human has more ways of thinking and acting as well. This view of intelligence also states that every human has his own weaknesses and strengths in any type of intelligence. (Gardner, 2008)

If teachers introduce their subjects at school in many ways, students will achieve better results. Gardner stated, "the broad spectrum of students - and perhaps the society as a whole - would be better served if disciplines could be presented in a number of ways and learning could.

be assessed through a variety of means" (Gardner, 1991). This means that students do not learn in the same way, and they represent and utilize knowledge in a variety of ways. This would challenge teachers as well as educators to find new methods of presenting the material to students in a way that corresponds to their own intelligence.

Berman, (2002) believes that intelligence is a static and single construct. However, Gardner argues that intelligence consists of many abilities and not just one. These specific abilities work together to allow learning to happen. In his definition of intelligence, Gardner asserts that intelligence is something that is biologically born with every person.

According to Armstrong (2009), the eight types of intelligence can be defined as follows: Linguistic intelligence which is the ability to use words effectively whether in writing or orally. Logical/mathematical intelligence which is the ability to use numbers and reason well. Spatial intelligence which is the ability to view the visual and spatial world accurately and carry out transferences upon those observations. Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence which is the ability to use one's body to express ideas and feelings. Musical intelligence which is the ability to understand, differentiate, transform, and express musical forms. Interpersonal intelligence which is the ability to understand and make discriminations in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other persons. Intrapersonal intelligence which is the ability to know oneself and perform upon that knowledge. Naturalist intelligence is the ability to experience, recognize and classify numerous species of the environment.

Reading Comprehension

The goal of reading is comprehension. Simultaneously, comprehension is the desired end of proficient reading. Reading comprehension is "building meaning out of a text which helps learners understand a written text" (Boudraf, 2012 p 43). Abu Shamla (2010) defines reading comprehension as the process which involves two steps; decoding the writer's words and then using background knowledge to build a convergent conception of the writer's message.

1.1.1 Summary of previous studies

Gaines and Lehmann (2002) carried out research which aimed at improving students' reading comprehension using multiple intelligences. The sample of the research consisted of two groups of fourth-grade students. Findings of the research showed that the use of multiple intelligences strategies had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension.

McMahon, Rose, and Parks (2004) investigated the relationship between multiple intelligences and academic achievement in reading. The sample consisted of 288 fourth grade students. The findings suggested that there was a positive relationship between multiple intelligences and students' academic achievement in reading comprehension.

Jallad (2008) investigated 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. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant

difference in the students' reading comprehension due to the reading strategies in favor of the experimental group.

Razmjoo (2008) carried out research study to examine the strength of the relationship between language proficiency in English and the nine types of intelligences. The sample of the study consisted of 278 candidates for the Ph.D. program at Shiraz University. The instruments of the study were a 100-item language proficiency test and a 90-item multiple intelligences questionnaire. The results of the study showed that there was no relationship between intelligence in general and the nine types in particular and language proficiency.

Abu Minshar (2012) investigated the effect of an instructional program based on multiple intelligences theory on students in English. The results of the study showed that there was a positive effect of multiple intelligences program on teachers' practices in the classroom. The results also showed that there are significant differences between the two groups in favor of the experimental group.

Jokar and Hesabi (2014) examined the relationship between eight kinds of intelligence and students' reading skill. The sample of the study consisted of a hundred third-grade male students studying at a high school in Azna, Iran. The results indicated that there was a positive relation between linguistic-verbal, logical-mathematical, spatial, and interpersonal intelligences with students' reading skill.

Nemat Tabrizi (2016) examined the relationship between Multiple Intelligence and Reading Comprehension Abilities of Iranian EFL learners. The sample of the study was 117 senior English students who were randomly selected. The results of the study indicated that all types of students' intelligence profiles have a significant relationship with students' reading comprehension scores.

Gündüz (2018) investigated the effects of multiple intelligences activities versus traditional method on English reading comprehension development of ninth- grade students in Türkiye. The sample of the study consisted of 79 ninth-grade students at a public school in Türkiye. The findings of the study showed that there was a significant difference in favor of the experimental group on the scores of the posttest which means that there was an improvement in students reading comprehension.

Concluding Remarks

It can also be noticed that most of the previous studies have consensus on the positive effect of teaching reading comprehension based on students' intelligences profiles compared with the traditional methods.

Previous studies investigated the effect of multiple intelligences on the same reading comprehension skills. Each study chose some sub-skills that are different from the other ones. Previous studies used different methodologies, instruments, statistics, and designs to investigate the effect of multiple intelligences on different reading comprehension sub-skills. Similarly, not all the previous studies examined the effect of the same multiple intelligences. Some of those studies utilized two, four, six, or eight intelligences. The present study is different from the previous studies in two things. First, it studied eight of Gardner's intelligences. Secondly, it investigated the effect of the eight intelligences on the sub-skills of reading comprehension

identified in the General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for the English language Curriculum for the Basic and Secondary Stages (2013) for the tenth grade.

2. Problem of the Study and Its Questions

Most students are weak in reading comprehension. This weakness is due to the lack of appropriate methods used by teachers of English inside the classroom when teaching reading and the mal-practices that the teachers commit when they present the reading comprehension texts to their students (Al-Omary, 1996 and Alkhawaldeh, 2012). Other reasons include the minimal exposure and use of the English language inside the classroom by both teachers as well as students, the segregation among the four language skills, and the way National Exams are designed. Being a supervisor at the Ministry of Education, the researcher noticed that most students are unable to read perfectly. Throughout his visits to schools, the researcher also noticed that most teachers are not equipped with the right procedures to teach reading texts. Therefore, one solution for that problem can be the exploitation of students' multiple intelligences in teaching reading comprehension texts. Teaching students in a way that suits their multiple intelligences profiles might help them improve their reading comprehension abilities.

2.1 Question of the study

To what extent does a Multiple Intelligences Theory-Based program affect Jordanian tenth-grade students' reading comprehension skills?

3. Objectives of the study and its importance

3.1 Objectives of the study

This study aimed at investigating the effect of a multiple Intelligences Theory-based program on improving tenth-grade students' reading comprehension skills.

3.2 Studying Importance

This study may add to the literature new empirical evidence on the potential usefulness and utility of MIT in the English language field. It may provide implications for textbook designers to include various activities which respond to MIT principles. It may also help students and their parents know their developed and undeveloped intelligence to find new activities which respond to the undeveloped intelligences. Finally, it may equip teachers of English language with new methodologies of teaching reading comprehension skills based on the Multiple Intelligences Theory.

4. Study Terms

Reading Comprehension

the total score of the students' answers on the reading comprehension test which shows students' ability to confirm word meaning, pronunciation, parts of speech, derivation, synonyms, antonyms, and clarify shades of meaning, identify the main ideas, recognize the organizational pattern of a text, paraphrase information, ideas, opinions and themes in a written material, read relevant materials to get background information on current issues and events, and read functional materials for a variety of purposes in this study.

Multiple Intelligences: in this study, there are eight types of intelligence (logical, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily, musical, spatial, and naturalist) which comprise several activities to be fulfilled by the students.

Linguistic intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which require students to complete a story, write an article, and make a list of words from A to Z relating to events in the text.

Logical intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which require students to make a timeline for events in the text, calculate a sentence value, and use numbers to represent letters.

Interpersonal intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which ask students to write the five most notable events in the text in a group, conduct an interview in a group, and write a biography of a character in the text in a group.

Intrapersonal intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which require students to individually express his/her feelings towards a text, make a mind map for him/herself relating to events in the text, and listing positive information or interactions between characters in the text.

Bodily intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities designed for students to write and act a skit of a play relating to the text, do a model of one of the characters in the text, and use his face to express his/her emotions towards characters in the text.

Musical intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which require students to make sound effects when reading the text, make a song about the text, and assign songs that would suit the various parts in his/her text.

Spatial intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which require students to make a collage using images, words, topics from the text, make bookmarks about the text, and draw and label a map of the texts.

Naturalist intelligence

in this study, it refers to activities which require students to draw animals of the text, write descriptions about characters in the text, and create manuals about different animals/plants in the text.

5. Limits and Limitation of the study

The generalizability of the findings of this study might be limited due to two factors. First, the teaching program was implemented for ten weeks. A longer duration of the program would have given more reliable results. Secondly, the sample of the study consisted of 110 tenth-grade

students at two different schools at Ramtha Educational Directorate. A larger sample would have given more reliable results.

6. Method and Procedures

6.1 Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study were 110 male and female students were chosen from two schools. The first control group consisted of 28 tenth-grade students, while the first experimental group consisted of 27 tenth-grade students. The second control group consisted of 24 tenth-grade students, whereas the second experimental group consisted of 31 tenth-grade students.

6.2 Teaching the Control Groups and the Experimental Groups

The two control groups were taught using the steps identified in the Teacher's Book of Action Pack 10. The two experimental groups were taught according to the procedure found in the Instructional Program which was designed and validated by a fifteen-member jury. Teachers of the experimental groups did not go into the class alone. Instead, the researcher always accompanied them himself as well as another teacher from the same school.

6.3 The Instructional Program

The researcher selected eight reading comprehension texts from Action Pack 10. The researcher redesigned the material, adapting some of the existing activities and adding more new ones. The new activities were carefully selected in a way that they serve the eight intelligences (verbal, logical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, and naturalist). To ensure the validity of the instructional program, it was given to a fifteen-member jury and some modifications were made upon the jury's suggestions.

6.4 The Reading Comprehension Test

The researcher designed a reading comprehension test based on the six criteria which comprise the sub-skills identified in the **General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for the English language Curriculum for the Basic and Secondary Stages (2013)** for the tenth grade. The test consisted of four reading texts followed by 20 multiple choice items. To establish its validity, the test was sent to a fifteen-member jury to evaluate it in terms of suitability to the level of the students, criteria, table of specification, and time. Based on the jury's feedback, the test was lengthened to include 24 items instead of 20. To achieve reliability, the researcher conducted a pilot study and the coefficient correlation between the two tests was found to be (83 %).

6.5 The Observation Checklist

The researcher designed an observation checklist and sent it to the same fifteen-member jury to establish its validity. The purpose of the checklist is to make sure that the teachers of the experimental groups exactly follow the instructions of the program when teaching the reading comprehension texts. Another purpose for the checklist is to reduce the bias of the researcher to the teachers of the experimental groups. That is achieved by using another teacher from the same school to act as an inter-rater together with the researcher in all classes.

6.6 Data Analysis

The researcher used simple descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) to measure any difference between the two control groups and the two experimental groups. The researcher used MANCOVA to determine whether there was a significant difference between teaching through multiple intelligences and the six criteria of the tenth-grade reading comprehension specific outcomes.

6.7 Procedures of the Study

- Identifying the problem of the study and reviewing the related literature.
- Designing the instruments (the test and the observation checklist), and the instructional program, then sending them to a jury for validation, and making modifications.
- Purposefully selecting the two schools and choosing the sections, the subjects, the teachers, and assigning the two control and the two experimental groups.
- Getting the approval from Ramtha Educational Directorate to conduct the study and to facilitate the teachers' efforts.
- Training the two male and female teachers who are going to implement the instructional program.
- Conducting the pilot study to establish the reliability of the reading comprehension test as well as the checklist.
- Carrying out the instructional program, and then collecting the data.
- Analyzing the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to get Descriptive Statistics.
- Interpreting and discussing the results obtained from the instruments of the study.
- Explaining the results and then drawing conclusions and implications.

7. Results of the Study

To answer the question of the study, means and standard deviations of students' scores on the pretest/posttest were calculated. Table (1) presents the results.

Table (1): Means and Standard Deviations of the Pre and Post Reading Comprehension Tests of the Total Scores for Both Groups

reading comprehension	Group	N	Pre		post	
			Mean	Std.	mean	Std.
Reading comprehension skills	Control	52	10.09	3.47	10.67	3.62
	Experimental	58	8.72	3.13	12.31	3.97

The results indicate that there is a difference in the mean scores between the control and the experimental groups. To decide whether this difference between the two adjusted means for the control group and the experimental group was significant at $\alpha \leq 0.05$, the researcher analyzed the students' scores using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). This is shown in Table (2).

Table (2): Results of One-Way ANCOVA of the Students' Scores on the Posttest

	Source	Sum squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig	Eta
reading comprehension skills	Pre	1304.30	1	1304.30	525.55	0.000*	
	Way	249.32	1	249.32	100.46	0.000*	0.48
	Error	265.55	107	2.48			
	Corrected total	1643.35	109				

The results show that there is a statistically significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ of the students' scores on the reading comprehension pre-posttest in favor of the experimental group. The value of significance was 0.000 which is a statistically significant value. Eta square was (0.48) which means that it is an extremely high value.

8. Study Result and Discussion

The question of the study asked about the effect of a multiple intelligence theory -based program on students' reading comprehension skills. The results revealed that there was a significant difference at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the students' scores on the pre-posttest in favor of the experimental group. This difference was attributed to the treatment in which the instructional program was used. The researcher believes that the difference in the students' reading comprehension skills in the pre-posttest could be ascribed to the use of the multiple intelligence's activities.

The researcher believes that the differences between the control groups and the experimental groups can be ascribed to the multiple intelligences-based program in which various pedagogical practices were cautiously used and purposefully designed. Some of these practices were the suitability and feasibility of the activities presented to the students in the program. These activities were carefully designed and tailored to meet the students' varied and multiple intelligences. For example, students with linguistic/verbal intelligences who love and enjoy thinking in words were asked to retell an interesting part of the reading text using their own words, or to tell their classmates about what they think about the title. Similarly, students with logical/mathematical intelligence who enjoy thinking by reason were given activities which involve numbers and calculations. In addition, students of the experimental groups were strongly willing to participate in these activities because these activities awakened and tapped their intelligences.

The researcher also believes that the multiple intelligences activities were supportive to the students as they provide an active, interactive, and constructive learning environment inside the classroom. Students were encouraged to participate in the activities despite their low-level proficiency in English. For instance, students with an elevated level of interpersonal intelligence were seen to be positive members in the groups when doing the activities.

For more clarification, teaching by multiple intelligence provided the students with maximum opportunities to use the language inside the classroom. This claim goes in harmony with what Hadley and Reiken stated in their book *Teaching Language in Context* when they talked about the five hypotheses. Hypothesis one says, "opportunities must be provided for students to practice using language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture"

(Hadley and Reiken, p. 90). Students of the experimental groups were encouraged to express themselves through the varied activities they encountered in the program. The activities of the program provided the students with chances to communicate interactively. For example, in one activity students of the experimental group were asked to work in groups and calculate the sentence value of the sentence which carries the main idea. Students began to communicate among themselves to asking each other to create a table of the twenty-six letters on a separate sheet of paper, then they began to calculate the value of the sentence.

The findings of the study go in harmony with most studies that investigated the effect of multiple intelligences on reading comprehension skills such as Jallad (2008), Abu Minshar (2012), Jokar and Hesabi (2014), and Nemat Tabrizi (2016). However, the findings contradict with Razmjoo (2008) who found out that there was no relationship between the intelligences in general and the nine types in particular and language proficiency.

9. Conclusions

The discussed results of the study revealed that using the Multiple Intelligences theory was amazingly effective in developing the reading comprehension skills for the students as compared to the conventional methodology that is prescribed in the Teacher's book. The researcher strongly believes that using MIT inside the classroom positively affected the performance of the students in their reading comprehension skills.

Using ready-made programs facilitated the application of the multiple-intelligences program as it provided the teachers with tailor-made activities and instructions on how to deal with and carry out the activities. Teachers do not have to bother themselves with planning for the activities or spend much time preparing for their lessons because everything is prescribed for them to follow. This helped the teachers to save both time and effort.

10. Implications and Recommendations

The findings of the current study support the major principles of differentiated instruction which focuses on each learner as a separate individual. These principles allow each learner to pursue his learning according to his own abilities and pace. This view of language learning has become more popular in the last two decades.

Although MIT has emerged for more than thirty years, and it has gained significant popularity in the field of language learning and teaching, more research must be carried out to verify its fruits to the discipline. Researchers can study MIT from other perspectives or add more sub-skills of reading.

Textbook writers and syllable designers should be aware of fruitful results of MIT and so they are advised to incorporate more activities that take students' multiple intelligences into consideration.

MIT is not only beneficial to teachers and students, but it is also of immense importance to parents. If parents are well-informed about the strengths of their children, they will become aware of the best ways to help their students overcome their difficulties in learning.

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Conflicts of interest statements

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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