The Relation between MI and Motivation and Students’ Likes and Dislikes of Course Books: A Comparison between Interchange and Top Notch Elementary Books

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Abstract

One of the most compelling, yet controversial new approaches to educational reform is Multiple Intelligences Theory, or MI. Recent advances in cognitive science, developmental psychology and neuroscience suggest that each person’s intelligence is actually made up of autonomous faculties that can work individually or in concert with other faculties. Motivation has, on the other hand, been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. According to Gardner (1985), there are two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. Researchers (Arnold & Fonseca, 2004; Christison, 2005) argue that the base of intelligence and the type of motivation a learner possesses, affects the ways s/he favors certain materials and the ways s/he learns them. This study is an attempt to provide empirical evidence to the possible relation between the type and the base of intelligence and motivation, and learners’ satisfaction of Interchange and Top Notch Elementary books through a complicated analysis of the data obtained from Student Textbook Evaluation Questionnaire, Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scales (MIDAS) Questionnaire, and Gardner’s Motivation Test Battery (MTB). In combining the results of the three questionnaires used, it was found that both groups had both instrumental and integrative motivation and a higher base of intrapersonal and logical-mathematical intelligences. They were also satisfied with their textbooks due to variety of topics and exercises included.

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1. Introduction

Textbooks play a pivotal role in ELT classes. They can be important resources for teachers in assisting students to learn English and serve as the foundation of instructions and the primary sources of information. They play a role in actualization of educational plans and decisions into interesting and useful materials, tasks and activities (Azizifar et al, 2010; Kırkgöz, 2009; Richards, 2001). Some researchers (Allwright, 1981; Harwood, 2005; Thornbury & Meddings, 2001) have, however, questioned the actual role of textbooks in ELT classes. They argue that there is a
big gap between learners’ needs, styles and characteristics and the materials prepared commercially for EFL and ESL courses (Richards, 2005).

There has been an increase in demand for English courses due to the global status of English, technological advancements and globalization. In general, the most popular language is English. English is typically the language of latest-version applications and programs, social media networks and websites, software manuals, hardware-installation guides and product fact sheets. English is the language used in every activity at the institutions of higher learning, and most journals and technical periodicals that give international acclaim to scientists, engineers, technologists, and technocrats are printed in English. Therefore, the importance of learning English cannot be ignored in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world (Jordan, 1997; Islami, 2010). There has, therefore, been an increase in the books written by national and international authors to offer materials and exercises to satisfy what they believe are learners’ needs in an English class. Tomlinson (2008) levels his criticism against some of these commercially prepared books as being irrelevant and inefficient and describes them as “a flash flood, leaving behind just the odd bit of debris” (p.70). Teachers, consequently, need to make judgments about the efficacy of the materials developed and to see to what extent they are based on the needs, learning styles and characteristics of those for whom they are prepared, and to what extent they are aligned with the educational goals of the related institutions and the development and administration of language learning programs (Tomlinson, et al, 2001; McGrath, 2002).

Regarding the global status of English and the increasing number of English textbooks, this study is intended to first analyze the results of an evaluation of two English textbooks used in almost all of the Iranian institutes and then to seek the possible relation between students’ likes and dislikes and their bases of intelligence and types of motivation.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Importance of textbooks

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) believe that textbooks are psychologically needed by both teachers and learners and are considered as a universal and essential component of every classroom without which the class seems incomplete. Haycroft (1998) also believes that when textbooks are used in a class, students feel that their progress and achievement can be measured more concretely. Sheldon (1988) similarly believes that in the eyes of learners textbooks have more validity and credibility than in-house materials—i.e. materials prepared by teachers. Textbooks are also cheaper and more accessible than teacher made materials and require less preparation time. They can, therefore, reduce cognitive and occupational loads on both teachers and students. Textbooks also provide novice teachers with security, guidance, and support (O’Neill, 1982; Sheldon, 1988). Other researchers believe that a textbook is an effective repertoire of materials, exercises and activities, a reference source for students, a predetermined syllabus, and a source of creativity which reflects research findings and students’ needs (Harmer, 2001; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; O’Neill, 1993; Swales, 1980). Harmer (2001), also, believes that textbooks are the products of research and long years of experience of the writers and can, therefore, better accommodate new approaches and methodologies and better meet learners’ needs and personalities.

Some researchers (Tomlinson, 2008; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994), however, argue against the efficiency of textbooks and inappropriateness of their organizations and contents. Sheldon (1988), for example, believes that textbooks are usually the product of textbook developers and publishers’ desire to increase the number of their publications and suffer from serious theoretical problems, design flaws, and practical shortcomings. He argues that materials are not ordered logically and are often too limited or too general. Allwright (1981) also believes that textbooks can not meet the vast and changing needs of learners and classes around the world, and are not based on their learning styles and characteristics.

2.2. Multiple Intelligences

One of the most compelling, yet controversial new approaches to educational reform is Multiple Intelligences Theory, or MI. It was first conceived of by Howard Gardner in 1983. Gardner challenge the commonly held view
defining intelligence as a general factor and believed that intelligence is too narrowly defined in this way. He was seriously against testing intelligence by making the person to do isolated tasks that he has never done and may never choose to do. Rather he believed that intelligence as an ability of problem solving must be tested in a natural context (Armstrong, 2009). Multiple intelligences theory, in a nutshell, is a pluralized way of understanding the intellect. Recent advances in cognitive science, developmental psychology and neuroscience suggest that each person's level of intelligence, as it has been traditionally considered, is actually made up of autonomous faculties that can work individually or in concert with other faculties. Howard Gardner originally identified seven such faculties, which he labeled as "intelligences", namely Musical Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence and Intrapersonal Intelligence. Recently, he added an eighth intelligence to the list, the Naturalist Intelligence, and has discussed for a ninth one (Visser et al., 2006).

Development of each type of mentioned intelligences is an interaction of the following factors: “1. Biological endowment—including hereditary or genetic factors and insults or injuries to the brain before, during, and after birth 2. Personal life history—including experiences with parents, teachers, peers, friends, and others who awaken intelligences, keep them from developing, or actively repress them 3. Cultural and historical background—including the time and place in which you were born and raised and the nature and state of cultural or historical developments in different domains” (Armstrong, 2009:27). MI theory has opened a door to new and wide range of teaching strategies, materials, curriculum development and lesson planning. In MI era a successful teacher is a person who first recognizes his own bases of intelligences and looks for areas waiting for further development. Otherwise teachers, for example, without a base of spatial intelligence will avoid using visual and art activities and this type of intelligence will not be taped in their classes. Instead, they need to shift continually from one intelligence to another and use a combination of all types of intelligences in lesson planning and material development in a way that all students can have their strongest intelligences addressed at least some of the time (Armstrong, 2009). Textbook developers should, accordingly, present their materials into the languages of different intelligences, namely in the form of pictures, physical or musical expressions, logical symbols or concepts, social interactions, intrapersonal connections, and naturalistic associations.

2.3. Motivation

Motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. Gardner (1985) defines L2 motivation as “the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p: 10). According to Gardner, there are two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. An integratively motivated L2 learner shows interest in learning about the culture and the people of the target language, whereas an instrumentally motivated learner has more pragmatic considerations in his/her mind regarding L2 learning, such as obtaining a job or earning more money. Motivation, therefore, energizes, directs and gets students moving to a particular direction, and keeps them going. Students’ motivation affects their personal investment and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in class activities, tasks and materials (Ormrod, 2008), and teachers, material and textbook developers should try to accompany this miraculous power with their methodologies, tasks, exercises and materials to have more initiation, persistence, enhanced performance, and personal, cognitive and emotional investment on the part of students.

2.4. The purpose of the study

Taking the effects of factors like MI and motivation on the performance and engagement of the students in English classes, this study seeks the answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent Iranian English learners are instrumentally or integratively oriented towards English language learning?
2. Is there a relationship between students' base of intelligence and type of motivation and their satisfaction of the books used?
3. The study

3.1. Participants

58 elementary students studying English at ACECR English Institute (I.U.T Branch) took part in this study. Their age ranged from 13 to 16 and they were mostly students of junior high schools. 28 of them studied Top Notch Fundamental and 30 of them Interchange Intro, two famous series widely used in most of the English institutes in Iran.

3.2. Procedure and Instrumentation

A student textbook evaluation questionnaire comprising of 28 items classified under seven major headings was given to the subjects first. The form was taken from Litz (2005) and modified to better meet our context. The response categories for this questionnaire ranged from “excellent: 4” to “weak: 1”. Then a Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scales (MIDAS) questionnaire (in Likert scale type ranging from ‘always=1’ to ‘never=0’), and Gardner's Motivation Test Battery (MTB) (Gardner, 1985) (adapted to a 5-point scale, ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’) were given to the subjects. The questionnaires were given to students in the classroom, after getting the related permissions, to be filled out under the supervision and guidance of the researcher.

5.3. Results

Table 1, 2 and 3 represent the overall frequency percentage of the students’ responses to the items available in the questionnaires. Table 1. summarizes students’ evaluation of their textbooks. As it is indicated the total score is 76 for Interchange Intro and 62.7 for Top Notch Fundamental, stating that students are somehow satisfied with their course books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of the students</th>
<th>Organizational features</th>
<th>Practical considerations</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Language type</th>
<th>Subject and content</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Notch</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>58.</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interchange</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>75.31</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. represents students’ bases of intelligences. As shown, different bases of intelligences can be found among the students but intrapersonal, logical-mathematical, spatial and interpersonal have the highest rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of the students</th>
<th>Naturalistic</th>
<th>Intrapersonal</th>
<th>Intercultural</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Spatial</th>
<th>Logical- mathematical</th>
<th>Kinesthetic</th>
<th>Musical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Notch</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interchange</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. shows the rate and the kind of motivation students possess. As indicated, students are highly motivated and possess both instrumental and integrative motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Integrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Notch</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interchange</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4. Implications

The results of the present study revealed that the students were highly motivated and possessed both instrumental and integrative motivation and had developed all the bases of intelligences. It also showed that students were somehow satisfied with their textbooks. Its reason can be traced in different types of exercises (matching, fill in the blank, pair work etc.) and lessons used in these two books which accommodate students of different tastes.

This study further proves the heterogeneity nature of the classes and students, and the complexities and difficulties involved in accommodating it in the tasks, materials and methodologies used. It is, therefore, suggested that before anything, teachers need to know their students’ types and personalities and plan their teaching act accordingly in a way that students can have their strongest intelligences and motivation addressed at least some time. It can be accomplished by creating complex tasks and including different topics and exercises which appeal to different groups of students at once.

References