Effects of Personal Intelligence Reading Instruction on personal intelligence profiles of Thai university students

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the impact of reading instruction using personal intelligence (PI) on Thai university students' PI profiles. Thirty-nine undergraduates majoring in English involved in the study for ten weeks. Their PI profiles were measured twice at the pre-and post-interventions. The mixed methods research design was employed. The results showed that the students developed more personal intelligence in the post-intervention profiles ($\overline{x} = 2.72$, SD $= 0.80$) than in their pre-intervention ones ($\overline{x} = 2.54$, SD $= 0.82$). The students showed a preference for intrapersonal intelligence, in goal setting ($\overline{x} = 2.85$, SD $= 0.78$), monitoring ($\overline{x} = 2.85$, SD $= 0.74$), and evaluation strategy ($\overline{x} = 3.21$, SD $= 0.77$). Their interaction assessed by classroom observation and student worksheets also highlighted the PI profile findings. Personal Intelligence Reading Instruction facilitated the students setting specific and achievable goals, making overt and doable plans for their reading tasks, adjusting strategies helping them understand the text better, and identifying sources of difficulties while reading.

Introduction

Thai students are exposed to formal English language learning for many years, but their English reading ability is not satisfactory. One of the main reasons may be due to the traditional teaching reading method Thai teachers use (Chandavimol, 1998). Other factors affecting students' reading comprehension involve the first language reading ability, low level word decoding skills, lack of cultural knowledge of the materials, lack of opportunities to read, and inadequate exposure to reading materials (Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Suknantapong, Karnchanathat, & Kannaovakun, 2002). These factors also applied to students in the southernmost provinces of the country due to the acts of terrorist insurgency.

This situation cried out for attention as reading is a fundamental and necessary skill for students learning English

as a foreign language, especially at the university level. Learners use reading as a tool for studying and acquiring English and to gather information for the professions of medicine, science, technology and law, among others. Moreover, most of the tasks and assignments at the tertiary education level involve reading and researching. Students depend on effective reading to acquire knowledge. Poor reading may interfere with a students' overall achievement.

Reading in a foreign language, in particular, is more challenging because the act of reading is complex and demanding on the brain. It is not just someone learning to read in another language; rather, L2 reading is a case of learning to read with languages (Grabe, 2009). Generally, individuals vary in the way they process information. For example, some students prefer studying in groups and like to discuss information with others whereas others learn better in an independent setting. However, it seems to be impossible for students, as adults, to always work in their preferred mode.

Personality and individual differences are considerably related to Gardner's groundbreaking proposal of Multiple Intelligences (MI theory). It offers a radically different explanation of intelligence and considers learners as different individuals possessing varying types of intelligences and learning dispositions (Gardner, 1993). The MI theory holds that each person possesses nine intelligences and uses them to carry out different kinds of tasks. However, intelligence development depends on personal, environmental, and other factors.

Gardner's (1983) formulation of multiple intelligences includes a pair of intra- and interpersonal intelligences to which he refers together as Personal Intelligences (PIs). They are more prominent among L2 researchers (Akbari & Hosseini, 2008; Behjat, 2012; Mirzaei, Domakani, & Heidari, 2013). Most of these research findings show that intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are the good L2 readers' most dominant intelligences, except for linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences.

Personal Intelligence Reading Instruction (PIRI) might bridge the gap between students' learning styles and reading strategies as mentioned above. Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the effects of PIRI on the students' PI profiles. Specifically, the objectives of this study were: 1) to examine the effects of PIRI on students' PI profiles; and 2) to explore the types of personal intelligence that students report employing while reading.

Literature Review

Multiple intelligences

Gardner (1993, p. 6) conceptualized intelligence as "the ability to solve problems or create products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community". He clarified it into linguistic, logical, musical, kinesthetic, spatial, intrapersonal, interpersonal, natural and existential intelligences (Gardner, 1999).

Christison (2005) claimed that MI theory, specifically, intelligence profiles helped students become aware of their learning preferences and their metacognitive skills would enhance accordingly. A host of researchers (Armstrong, 2009; Gardner, 1993; Haley, 2004) noted that teachers who designed and organized instruction around students' learning preferences might maximize learning opportunities for the students. One of the most cited and well-designed MI inventories is Gay's (2001) Multiple Intelligences inventory (http://www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/mitest.html). It consists of measuring 80 items clearly classified into eight types of intelligences. Therefore, it is easy to identify each item in the inventory as only two intelligences—intrapersonal and interpersonal—that were used in this study.

Personal intelligence

Intrapersonal intelligence is defined as the development of the internal aspects of a person. It has as its core "access to one's feelings about life—one's range of affection and emotion" (Gardner, 1993, p. 239). The second member of the pair, interpersonal intelligence, is intelligence about others. It allows individuals to cooperate in groups and be instinctively sensitive to the feeling of others. This intelligence also contains other skills more classically associated with social intelligence such as manipulating situations and motivating groups (Gardner, 1993, pp. 239−253).

Christison (2005) defines intrapersonal intelligence as the ability to understand oneself as well as one's strengths, weaknesses, moods, desires, and intentions. This includes such skills as understanding how you are similar to or different from others, reminding yourself to do something, knowing about yourself as a language learner, and knowing how to handle your feelings. She also suggests second language teachers should develop intrapersonal intelligence in EFL learners by giving students opportunities to express their own preferences, reflect on how they participated in an activity, set goals for their own learning, and help them evaluate their own styles of learning. Interpersonal intelligence, on the other hand, is defined as the ability to understand another person's moods, feelings, motivations, and intentions.

The interpersonal intelligence can be applied to reading skills in two ways. One is the ability to understand the point of view, directions, and explanations provided by the reading teacher who will facilitate the development of various reading sub-skills and strategies. The other is the capacity to imaginatively place one's self in the role of the author of a text and the perspectives of characters in a story that will enhance semantic understanding and textual comprehension.

Multiple Intelligences have been previously studied with different variables such as language learning strategies and reading comprehension (Akbari & Hosseini, 2008; Behjat, 2012; Hashemi, 2010; Mirzaei et al., 2013). Akbari and Hosseini (2008) found the highest correlation between metacognitive strategy use and almost all the domains of MI. Hashemi's (2010) findings was the pleasant relationship between MI and reading comprehension. Behjat's (2012) study used Gay's MI inventory and Armstrong's MI checklist to investigate inter-and intrapersonal intelligences in the language performance of male and female students. The study suggested that language learners were more successful if they could recognize the type of intelligence that was dominant in them. Mirzaei et al.'s (2013) study also revealed that linguistic, logical-