GlobELT: An International Conference on Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language, Antalya - Turkey

A textbook adaptation using data gathered by a multiple intelligence inventory

Evren Gürkaynak[a]*

[a]*Yaşamkent Mah. 3272. Cad. Esertepe Yeşiller Sit. C Blok No: 37 06810 Çankaya / Ankara - Turkey*

Abstract

The purpose of this work is providing applicable ideas for English teachers on designing materials using "Needs Analysis" concerning "Multiple Intelligence Theory" (MIT) which broadened conception of "intelligence" by proving the existence of several intelligences that may seem independent though work in coordination. Since the theory bases on encouraging learners to use intelligences simultaneously to complement each-other, this study also sets its sights on using the stronger types of intelligences as a stepping stone to boost weaker ones as the students develop new language skills. To serve this goal, the text-book which is being used was adapted using the data gathered by a Multiple Intelligence Inventory (MII). The participants were thirty-seven eighth grade students attending Private Evrensel Schools in Ankara. Collected data were analysed by first keeping tallies for each student, class and for entire group; second by graphing the range of intelligence types for each and both classes. The inventory disclosed that the prominent types of intelligences are the "Bodily-Kinaesthetic" and "Interpersonal". As the next step the group was given tutorials first without taking into consideration the research findings and second by presenting redesigned materials through gathered data. Right after each tutorial, students were given tests which were identical in complexity and genre, to state whether a significant difference appears or not. Finally, the test results were compared and they revealed that a curriculum and materials interwoven with students' needs can remarkably change students' perception of language learning and cognitive processes in this respect.

Keywords: multiple intelligence theory (MIT); needs analysis (NA); textbook adaptation; material design

* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* evren.gurkaynak@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Recently a student-centered teaching model has been found more useful among teachers following current trends in English Language Teaching (ELT). One of the most important components of learner-centered teaching is "Needs Analysis (NA)" which gives the teachers the opportunity to learn about their students clearly, scientifically and in a detailed way. Although stating the needs of students is this vital, it is rarely conducted by teachers in Turkey. Furthermore, the course-books used might fall short in tapping into students' learning needs; since the prime material of teaching is "human" and since this requires a multidimensional way of thinking. In this manner, working on a detailed analysis of needs becomes a prerequisite for teachers. With respect to its results; adapting current materials and designing additional ones to provoke students' strengths and enhance weaker traits will constitute another must. This work is one of those studies setting its goals to draw the general profile of the participants in terms of Multiple Intelligence Theory (MIT). In order to clarify the basis of the study, it is vital to give detailed information about what NA means, the scope of it, the general structure of MIT and its place in ELT before going deeply into the research results and implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Needs Analysis (NA): Definition and the Scope

The emergence of the term NA; in today's perspective and with respect to language teaching; goes back to 1970s. It was the result of the extensive studies conducted by the Council of Europe Team. (Alshumaimeri, 2001:1) (as cited in Gürkaynak, 2010:60) The team felt that successful language learning resulted not only from mastering linguistic elements, but also from determining exactly what the learner needed to do with the target language. (Alshumaimeri, 2001:1) (as cited in Gürkaynak, 2010:60)

Since those days many definitions of NA have been made. According to Iwai *et al.* (1999) (as cited in Songhori, (2008:2) and Gürkaynak, (2010:60)) for instance, NA generally refers to the activities to collect information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students. On the other hand, Fatihi (2003:39) (as cited in Gürkaynak, 2010:60) says "NA is an information gathering device to know the learners' necessities, needs, and lacks in order to develop courses that have a reasonable content for exploitation in the classroom. NA is therefore a process for identification and defining valid curriculum and instructional and management objectives in order to facilitate learning in an environment that is closely related to the real life situations of the student." Johns (1991), (as cited in Songhori, (2008:3) and Gürkaynak, (2010:60) close to Fatihi's view, says that, NA is the first step in course design and it provides validity and relevancy for all subsequent course design activities.

In the light of the definitions above, in Gürkaynak E. (2010:61) NA is defined as a data gathering process to gain information about the *needs* of students in order to design a strong curriculum, choose rich course books with useful supplementary and supporting materials and to develop a teaching program point shots these *needs*.

Indisputably, the coverage of the term "needs" is very wide. For that reason, this study focused on only "Learning Needs" that involves motivational features, learning styles, Multiple Intelligences (MI), learning strategies, cultural needs, etc. which constitute valuable information telling who our real materials; learners are (Gürkaynak, 2010:61). To serve this goal, some concrete information about the major types of intelligences was gained by using an inventory of multiple intelligences. Before giving information about the findings, it will be better to give place to the definition of MIT and its place in ELT either.

2.2. MIT and Its Place in ELT

Clearly "intelligence" carries a very heavy meaning and it is hard to give a complete definition. As cited in Lin, Po-Ying (2005), Dr. Howard Gardner has postulated a definition of intelligence based on a radically different view of intelligence. According to him, intelligence entails the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community (1993:15) (as cited in Ying L.). There are many, not just one, different but autonomous intelligence capacities that result in many different ways of knowing, understanding,