

## Enhancing Communication Skills of the School Learners Using Gardner's Musical Intelligence

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**Abstract:** *The Society, in general, even today believe that only students with strong linguistic, logical and mathematical intelligence can survive in this world, whereas students who possess other intelligences are not even considered as human beings. The present education system, which considers or measures the capacity of the students only in terms of marks and grades, might be one of the reasons for this kind of beliefs in the society. Students who have other intelligences such as musical or spatial are neglected and downgraded. This paper focuses on enhancing the communication skills of learners of English using Gardner's Musical Intelligence (MI). For this purpose Gardner's MI questionnaire was adopted and administered to 150 randomly chosen school students and the data was assessed and analysed on the Likert Scale. An intervention programme was organized based on the pre-test scores and the improvement in performance was measured through the post-test scores.*

**Key words:** *Multiple Intelligence, Likert scale, intervention programme*

### Introduction

Gardner who worked on Multiple Intelligences not only disproved the ideas that intelligence is a single entity, that it results from a single factor, or that it can be measured simply by IQ tests, but also challenged the cognitive development of Jean Piaget, bringing forward evidence to show that any given time a child may be at very different stages of intellectual and affective development. Thus, Gardener has successfully undermined the idea that knowledge at any one particular developmental stage, exists as a structured whole. He, however, also opined that the present society is slowly learning to pay equal attention to individuals who possess other intelligences viz. artists, architects, musicians, naturalists, designers, dancers, therapists and entrepreneurs.

### Review of Literature

Gardner (1983) was much against the traditional models of intelligence, which is generally termed 'IQ'. Based on his research work he categorized intelligences and also described each intelligence as follows:

1. Linguistic: people who have the ability to use language creatively possess this intelligence.
2. Logical/Mathematical: people who can think rationally often possess this intelligence.

3. Spatial: those who are good at imagining or creating mental models possess this intelligence.
4. Musical: those who have a good ear for music are strong in this intelligence.
5. Bodily/Kinesthetic: people who have a well-coordinated body often have this intelligence.
6. Interpersonal: those who have the ability to mingle or move freely with people are strong in this intelligence.
7. Intrapersonal: those who have trust on oneself and have self-confidence and self-esteem are good at this intelligence.
8. Naturalist: those who have the ability to understand and organize the patterns of nature possess this intelligence.

However, Gardner stated that the naturalist intelligence is not very popular and also is not much in use. The idea of Multiple Intelligences attracted educators and the public alike in the West. Unfortunately, many are not aware of the importance of MI in India. Parents in India still consider that only logical-mathematical intelligence can fetch a living. That is the basic reason for the mad rush for engineering and medicine coaching centres. Our educational system still labeling learners as underachievers is unjust as well as short-sighted, when the unique ways of thinking and learning of such learners are, in the first place, not addressed in a system that is heavily biased towards the linguistic or logical-mathematical classroom. Hence, the present study makes an effort to improve the language skills of the school learners using Gardner's Musical Intelligence.

### **Language Learning and Music**

According to Nadia Wehbe (2014) "learning a different language is a fantastic life skill."(p.ii). She further stated that learning a new language is extremely important in this globalised modern world.

Learning language is fun, opening up new experiences and a chance to understand different cultures and make new friends...Children have a natural curiosity about new things and they love mimicking and copying, an ideal starting point for learning a new language. By looking at what is around them and listening to the sounds and rhythms of everyday life, children absorb language without being fully conscious of it... So childhood is a great time to learn a language because the 'learning' can be done in a non-formal way, without the students realizing they are actually learning. (p.ii).

Language learning mostly depends on the nature of interaction that can share features such as a simplified vocabulary, change in voice, formulaic expressions, and the frequency of repetition,

and modification of international patterns. Rhythm and melody of speech have a great impact on communication and helps in language learning (Zybert&Stepien, 2009).

Music is part and parcel of human life. It activates the right hemisphere of the brain and coordinates with the left hemisphere of the brain as language is a necessary element in music. It enhances the functioning of the immune system. Besides providing enjoyment, music is also a great tool for learning. It helps in improving the memory of learners and works as a great aid in keeping the mind and body active.

Aaron G Myers (2012) stated that according to the science of language learning, the “critical period” of language acquisition is longer than what was previously expected and further added that the present multilingual people are “mental jugglers”. These multilingual people can enjoy music of different languages and it becomes easier for them to learn language through music.

Sleve and Miyake (2006) claim that Structural and motivational properties of music in songs helps in language learning as these musical activities can develop auditory perception and metacognitive knowledge and aids in phonological memory. They further aver that music and songs can increase sensibility, improve concentration, and develops reading and writing abilities.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of the present study is to develop the English language skills of the sample learners using Gardner’s Musical Intelligence

### **Statement of the Problem**

By and large the English language skills of the students in the District of Karimnagar in Telangana State are very poor. Since the teachers still follow conventional teaching methods in the classroom, instead of following innovative teaching methods, learning still remained traditional. Consequently, learners are unable to achieve their full potential, or acquire even some survival skill.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Teachers are either ignorant or unconcerned about the different intelligences possessed by the students.
2. Musical intelligence of the students is not taken into consideration in the classroom.

### **Objectives of the research**

1. To conduct an intervention program based on the Musical Intelligences of the students in order to enhance their English language skills.
2. To find out whether the teachers value the different intelligences possessed by the students.

## Methodology

This study focuses on enhancing the communication skills of the school students using Gardner's Musical Intelligence. A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 randomly selected students to assess their Musical Intelligence. The information thus obtained was analysed and interpreted by the researcher. Each question consisted of three options such as "frequently", "sometimes" and "never".

The score for each option is as follows:

Frequently	3
Sometimes	2
Never	1

## Musical Intelligence

Gardner (1993) defines Musical Intelligence as having greater sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, tones, and music. In fact, it is the ability to perceive and appreciate rhythm, pitch and melody, elements which are crucial in the language learning process. Musical Intelligence requires interaction within the musical realm. It is the earliest of the intelligences to appear in a human being - even a child as young as two months old can sing and match rhythmic structures (Hallam, 2010).

The following questions under the Musical Intelligence were asked to find out how good the sample learners were in musical composition and rhythm, and if they had a 'good ear' for music.

- I am good at playing a musical instrument
- I can associate music with my moods
- I like to hum, whistle and sing in the shower or when I'm alone
- I remember melodies of songs.
- I have a rhythmic way of speaking
- I have unquenchable passion for music

The following average score was obtained as per the Likert scale

Musical Intelligence	2.2
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## Pre-test

After the data was analysed, the researcher conducted a pre-test for 50 marks to 50 randomly selected students to evaluate the Musical Intelligence of the sample students. Later they were further divided into two groups - the experimental group, and the control group based on the pre-test scores. The experimental group received an intensive training that was designed by the

researcher. The one week training included various activities connected to Musical Intelligence, which would help them in developing their language skills. On the other hand, the control group was allowed to follow their own way of learning.

## Training

The sample learners participated actively in the following activities designed by the researcher, to improve their English language skills, using Howard Gardner's Musical Intelligence.

### Activity 1

#### Completing the Lyrics

People with musical intelligence love music. They enjoy the rhythm of music and mostly they are gifted with a variety of music related skills such as composing music, singing, playing musical instruments and so on. The following activity was given to the sample students during the training programme:

“Heal the world” is a composition by Michael Jackson.

This song was played by the researcher in the classroom. The learners were asked to listen to the song carefully. The researcher then gave them a part of the lyrics, with the rest as a cloze passage, such as:

There are \_\_\_\_\_  
To get there  
If you \_\_\_\_\_ enough  
For the \_\_\_\_\_  
Make a little \_\_\_\_\_  
Make a \_\_\_\_\_ place.

Only a few learners who listened to the song attentively could complete the blanks in the given time of 15 minutes. The researcher further asked if the learners were aware of the song before and played the song again for the learners to understand. The learners tried to recollect the whole song . By the end of the activity the learners not only improvised their memory and cognitive skills but also improvised their language by knowing and learning new vocabulary

### Activity 2

Using rhymes for cognitive development:

The researcher gave a nursery rhyme and asked the learners to recite it together.

Hickory dickory dock  
The mouse ran up the clock  
The clock struck one

The mouse ran down  
Hickory dickory dock.

The learners were then asked to think about a possible reason that caused the mouse to run up the clock. The learners came out with different possible answers such as:

There was probably cheese at the top.

A cat was chasing the mouse

The mouse heard some footsteps and got scared

The mouse was in search of a new house so it went up

Through this activity, the learners worked on their problem solving skills, and critical thinking, and appreciated the value of predictions.

### Activity 3

#### Interpreting a Song

<http://songlibrary.net/I-Am-The-Earth.html>

A video of the above song was shown in the classroom. The learners had to listen to the song carefully, and jot down whatever thoughts occurred to them. At the end of 30 minutes, they were asked to write a paragraph explaining their feelings and how and why they liked or disliked the song. This activity ignited the minds of the learners and helped them in becoming autonomous in their thinking and learning. Also in the process of explaining, they improved their written skills.

### Activity 4

Explaining their favourite song:

The learners were given a chance to think about their favourite song, translate it into English and explain to their classmates about the song, what they feel about it and what emotions it evokes. At the end of the activity, the learners not only admired and enjoyed the song, but also gained confidence as it helped them in improving their English language skills.

### Post-test

A post-test was conducted on the experimental group and the control group for 50 marks after the training session to find out the effectiveness of the training programme.

The average scores of the pre-test and post-test are as follows:

Sl. No.	Test	Average score
1	Pre-test (Entire Group)	24
2	Post-test (Control Group)	21

3	Post-test (Experimental Group)	35
<b>Pre-test and post-test scores</b>		

It can be stated from the above table that there was a significant development in terms of enhancing the communicative skills in English among the experimental group learners. The sample learners, after the training programme, shared with the researcher their opinions. They enjoyed the training programme as it was something new to them.

## Findings

- The intervention program proved that English language skills can be enhanced through musical intelligence.
- The sample learners realized the importance of acquiring language skills by themselves through music, instead of completely depending on their teachers.
- It was learnt that the sample learners never got an opportunity to exhibit their musical intelligence, as they were confined to passive listening in their classrooms.
- The sample learners were amazed at the progress they themselves showed after the training programme.

## Conclusion

This study shows the importance of including MI theory in the English classroom. The intervention programme proved that the communication skills in English can be enhanced through Musical Intelligence. If teachers of English can incorporate such innovative activities in their classrooms, learning becomes fun and very rewarding.

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