

# IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS FOR ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS THROUGH POSTER-MAKING ACTIVITIES: A TOOL OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

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## **Abstract**

This study aims at investigating the effect of using poster-making activities as a multiple intelligences (MI) tool on improving learning motivation and developing English speaking skills for English major students. Based on the literature review and related studies, a list of 05 most related skills to English speaking skills were selected for the English speaking training program. The experimental group consisted of 30 second-year students. Tools of the study included a training program based on using poster-making activities as an MI tool to improve students' learning motivation and develop their English speaking skills, an MI questionnaire, and 03 English speaking pre-post tests administered before, during and after the training course. The experimental speaking training program was taught to students during a 15-week period. The results show that the experimental program has brought positive impacts on students' learning motivation and improved their speaking skills.

**Key words:** multiple intelligences, poster-making activities, motivation, speaking skills

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Rationale**

The English language has become an international language of communication. The main function of our daily language-using activities is to achieve the communicative goals. However, for the majority of Vietnamese language learners, English oral communicative skills are considered the most difficult to be developed.

However, with the traditional method of training and developing English speaking skills for EFL students, it seems that much attention is paid to only linguistic and logical skills. Gardner, H (1983) argued that most of the schools and organizations normally use the traditional methods – measuring human intelligence quotient (IQ), which is probably not fair for the children who do not strongly possess such two skills of reasoning and using linguistic skills.

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According to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MIT), children are intelligent in at least eight different types of intelligence. This is a relatively new concept towards intelligence and the philosophy of MIT implies in the following remark:

*“Every child is intelligent; however, for some individuals, the door of intelligence is still closed behind them”* (Jensen, 1998, p. 217).

This research aims at confirming the effectiveness of the integration of poster-making activities into the English speaking training program. Hence, the major contribution of this research is to promote the development of English speaking skills of the English language major students through the principle of integrating poster-making activities, as a multiple intelligences (MI) tool in the English speaking training program.

## **1.2. Significance of the research**

The research applies Gardner’s MIT, via poster-making activities as an MI tool, with the hope of bringing about some benefits for language teachers and researchers.

The research focuses on developing the students’ English speaking skills as oral skills are always among the first priorities to be developed and served as the foundation for the development of other language skills. Furthermore, we do hope the results of this research, to some extent, will actively respond the trend of comprehensive and fundamental renovation of the education and training, based on communicative approach and learner-centeredness.

## **1.3. Literature review**

Christison, M.A. (1996) stated that in a foreign language classroom, the students’ intelligences profiles are much diversified. The various types of intelligences of each individual student combine with each other in complicated models. Because intelligences do not exist in their single and independent forms, foreign language learning activities can become successful only if classroom activities, in which multiple intelligences are catered for and involved at the same time, are encouraged and conducted actively.

In 2013, Salem, A.M.S applied MIT to verify the positive impact of the MI-based instruction program in developing speaking skills for a group of pedagogical students in their final year at the university. The results of his research proved and confirmed the effectiveness of the instruction program integrated with MI activities in developing the English speaking skills for the students.

### **1.3.1. Scope of the study**

My research is confined within the following scope:

- The participants of the study were 60 second-year English majored students (Course 2014-2018), from the Foreign Languages Department, Phu Yen University. These students

are selected to take part in the research because English Speaking – Level B2 is a compulsory subject component in their training curriculum.

- The English speaking skills designed for development in this B2 subject component are (a) talking about general topics; (b) comparing pairs of pictures; (c) expressing personal opinions about the contents of a picture; (d) making quick decisions on how to choose something; and (e) persuading other people to agree with your decision.

### 1.3.2. Definitions of key terms

In this research, we use the following definitions:

#### 1.3.2.1. *The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*

Multiple Intelligences is a psychological and educational theory developed and refined gradually by psychologist Howard Gardner, suggesting that different kinds of "intelligence" simultaneously exist in each individual person. Gardner states that each person possesses different levels of these different intelligences, and hence each person has a unique "cognitive profile." The theory was first published in 1983 in his book, *Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, and has been refined up to now.

The first seven types of intelligences are as follow:

*Verbal-linguistic intelligence* is the ability to use words to express the concepts from simple to complicated forms. Relevant classroom activities include rewriting complicated bulletin, conducting interviews with celebrities, keeping learning journals and the like.

*Logical-mathematical intelligence* is the ability to calculate, identify the quantities and solve mathematical puzzles. This intelligence enables students to understand abstract concepts, develop argumentation skills, and think in deductive and conductive methods. Relevant classroom activities are constructing time charts and filling in them with necessary information, doing puzzle works, finding a place based on a map, playing games relating to calculations and the like.

*Visual-spatial intelligence* is the ability of thinking in three dimensions (3D), including imagination and reasoning in space, the use of images and the graphic skills. Relevant classroom activities include drawing pictures, making posters, creating 3D models, taking pictures or recording things to prepare reports...

*Musical-rhythmic intelligence* is the ability to perceive the melodies, tunes and rhythms, which allows a student to identify, create and modify the music. It is not necessary that the student must be able to sing or play a musical instrument well, but he must be sensitive with music, rhythms or beats. Relevant activities are performing musical instruments, creating songs containing the topics of vocabulary, performing short "rap" songs...

*Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence* is the ability of using the body in various skills. This

intelligence exists and strongly develops among the students keen on playing sports, dancing or acting. It is a combination of body and mind to perform the activities. Relevant classroom activities are role-play, drama, using gestures and miming to tell stories or illustrating the details of a story.

*Interpersonal intelligence* is the ability to communicate effectively and understand other people, including verbal and non-verbal communication; it is also the ability to identify the originality in other people or sensitivity with other people's moods, etc. which helps you sympathize, comfort, bring about inspiration to the others. Relevant classroom activities: creating jigsaw and communicative activities, organizing co-operative learning activities, group-work and pair-work.

*Intrapersonal intelligence* is the ability to listen to and understand yourself as well as understand your thinking and feelings and then, use such understandings to make plans and establish orientations for your daily life and learning activities. Relevant classroom activities are designing self-study lessons, doing individual and independent small projects or research, conducting self-assessment tasks...

Then, in 1999 he added an eighth, *the naturalistic intelligence*, which is the ability to identify, distinguish and classify the things found in the natural environment. This is also the ability to recognize and understand clearly the differences among the living things, the sense of curiosity in discovering the natural laws and principles. Relevant classroom activities are re-constructing the natural scene of a historic period; organizing trips to outdoor destinations; observing the clouds and stars, then describing some weather forecast, etc.

#### 1.3.2.2. *Multiple intelligences classroom activities and poster-making activities*

Gardner (1983) regards MI activities as the tools to convey the contents of knowledge of every subject to the students by mobilizing all types of intelligences and competences from each individual student. The students engage in various classroom activities starting from his or her different preferred intelligences.

#### 1.3.2.3. *Speaking skills*

Fakhar Naveed (2015) defined speaking skills as the process of interaction that creates the meanings of the communication. This process involves the delivery, the reception, and the treatment of information.

In this research, we define English speaking skills as “*the process of interaction and communication in using English language, consisting of five (05) groups of sub-skills: (a) talking about general topics; (b) comparing pairs of pictures; (c) expressing personal opinions about the contents of a picture; (d) making quick decisions on how to choose something; and (e) persuading other people to agree with your decision.*”

#### 1.3.2.4. *Poster-making activities*

According to Bear, 1994, posters are often designed to appeal to peers and colleagues at conferences and/or public displays, and to meet the organizational and informational requirements of conferences and/or public display. The audience of a poster is usually people. A poster presentation can allow for question-and-answer sessions, and the exchange of ideas and information regarding research; a poster presents the most important information.

In other words, Heyman (1998) also mentioned the following major features in a language classroom: (a) Poster-making activities are an excellent alternative medium for developing communication skills; (b) They involve students in the assessment process; (c) They encourage students to investigate a topic thoroughly; (d) They provide opportunities for peer-learning; (e) They promote a positive attitude in students; (f) They explore and confront misconceptions.

### 1.4. Hypothesis of the research

In this research, the Quasi-experimental Design is used to verify the appropriateness of the research hypothesis. This research design is in line with the nature of our research. Concretely speaking, the participants in the research are divided into two (02) groups: the controlled group and the experimental group. The experimental group took part in doing the English speaking tests before, during and after the intervention of the poster-making activities in the English speaking training program. The hypothesis for verification is that “There are some significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the results of performing the English speaking tests before, during and after the intervention.”

### 1.5. Main question of the study

This study aims at answering the following two questions:

- a. Are the students in the research motivated when poster-making activities are integrated in the English speaking training program?
- b. What is the effect of integrating poster-making activities in developing the speaking skills of the second-year English majored students?

## 2. The study method

### 2.1. The research design

This research is conducted with an experimental study consisting of an intervention process taking place before, during and after the intervention, applied only for the experimental group. In this research, we use an English speaking training program with the integration of the poster-making activities, and three (03) English speaking tests conducted before, during and after the intervention in order to measure and verify the effectiveness of

the English speaking training program with the integration of the poster-making activities.

## 2.2. The participants of the study

The participants in this study are the second-year English majored students (Course 2014-2018), belonging to the Foreign Languages Department at Phu Yen University. There are 60 students who are selected and voluntarily participate in the research.

### 2.2.1. The experimental group

The experimental group consists of 30 students. This is the group whose English speaking skills are trained through a subject component of 45 periods, designed and compiled based on the principles of integrating poster-making activities, as an MI tool.

### 2.2.2. The scope and competences of the participants

The participants are homogeneous in terms of their input language standards, particularly their English speaking skills. This is reflected from the score of the first English speaking test, conducted before the beginning of the experimental English speaking training program.

### 2.2.3. The procedures of the experimental study

- The checklist of the speaking sub-skills for the English training program:

After viewing the speaking training programs handled by the Foreign Languages Department at Phu Yen University, and studying the materials and resources for English speaking skills development, the researchers have selected, designed and proposed a list of five (05) English speaking skills which are necessary for the improvement of the English speaking skills for the second-year students to achieve their speaking competence. This English speaking sub-skills checklist has been verified, discussed and passed by the Group of speaking lecturers, aiming at:

+ Obtaining a common agreement on confirming the most important speaking sub-skills that second-year major students need to develop;

+ Adjusting the contents and items to be suitable with the requirements of the English speaking training program.

Table 1. The speaking skills checklist

| Speaking Skills   | Agreement | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| 1. Talking about general topics                                 | 10        | 100%       |
| 2. Comparing pairs of pictures                                  | 10        | 100%       |
| 3. Expressing personal feelings about the contents of a picture | 9         | 90%        |
| 4. Making quick decisions on how to choose something            | 8         | 80%        |
| 5. Persuading other people to agree with your decision          | 8         | 80%        |

- The multiple intelligences inventory for EFL young adults:

An MI Inventory for Adults developed by Thomas Armstrong (2012), consisting of 40 questions, was conducted with the experimental group. Through this inventory, the students gained some initial concepts on their preferred intelligences and learning styles, at the same time, the researcher could establish an intelligences profile of the students. From this, the researcher designed the activities and tasks catering for the students’ preferred multiple intelligences.

Table 2. Profile of the most dominant intelligences of the participants

| Types of Intelligences               | Percentage | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------|--------------------|
| 1. Verbal-Linguistic Intelligences   | 82.35%     | 2.47 | 0.38               |
| 2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence | 35.29%     | 1.05 | 1.37               |
| 3. Interpersonal Intelligence        | 70.59%     | 2.12 | 0.62               |
| 4. Intrapersonal Intelligence        | 70.59%     | 2.12 | 0.62               |
| 5. Bodily/kinesthetic Intelligence   | 44.12%     | 1.32 | 1.19               |
| 6. Visual/Spatial Intelligence       | 94.12%     | 2.82 | 0.13               |
| 7. Musical/Rhythmic Intelligences    | 23.53%     | 0.70 | 1.62               |
| 8. Naturalistic Intelligences        | 20.59%     | 0.67 | 1.68               |

- The MI classroom activities such as poster-making activities are designed and conducted based on the principles of promoting students’ diversified learning styles and preferred MIs.

- The MI English speaking tests were implemented before, during and after the intervention with the poster-making activities.

### 3. The study results

The results of implementing the English speaking tests were counted, analyzed and treated in order to measure the effectiveness of integrating the multiple intelligences classroom activities in developing English speaking skills – Level B2, based on the academic performance in the English speaking tests for the students participating in the experimental study.

#### 3.1. The statistical procedures

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23.0) was used to treat the results of the study. The T-test verification formula was also used in analyzing the scores of the students’ English speaking tests before, during and after the intervention of the poster-

making activities in the English speaking training program for the experimental group.

### 3.2. The main hypothesis of the research

In this research, the main hypothesis supposes that there are some significant differences in the statistics tables related to the mean scores of the score columns for the English speaking tests before, during and after the intervention of the MI classroom activities in the English speaking training program for the experimental group in comparison with the test scores of the controlled group.

Table 3 below shows the results of analysis of the test scores of the speaking tests before, during and after the intervention. The comparisons of the students' test scores were implemented for both experimental and controlled groups.

Table 3. Comparisons of the test scores of the English speaking tests before (Test 1), during (Test 2) and after (Test 3) the intervention between the experimental group and the controlled group

|                 | Number of students in experimental group (N= 30) |                    | Number of students in controlled group (N=30) |                    | P value of t-test | The Effect Size |
|-----------------|--|--------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                 | Mean score                                       | Standard deviation | Mean score                                    | Standard deviation |                   |                 |
| Speaking Test 1 | 6.1000   | 0.80301            | 6.0667  | 0.90719            | 0.869099          | 0.019431        |
| Speaking Test 2 | 7.1000   | 0.75886            | 6.7000  | 0.79438            | 0.043397          | 0.249328        |
| Speaking Test 3 | 7.4000   | 0.71197            | 6.7833  | 0.72734            | 0.000930          | 0.393820        |

From the data presented in Table 3, we can see clearly the significant differences among the mean scores of the English speaking tests conducted before, during and after the intervention of the poster-making activities in the English speaking training program.

The differences of the mean scores between the 2 groups in the 2<sup>nd</sup> English speaking test is 0.40 (7.10 – 6.70), revealing that the experimental group has better mean score than the controlled group. And once again, such results are reconfirmed in the results of the after-intervention speaking test (3<sup>rd</sup> test), with the result of 0.6167 (7.4000 – 6.7833). The results of the study showed that there is a significant difference (sig.=0.01) among the mean scores of the participants' three (03) speaking tests in the post-test, which means that the English speaking training program in which poster-making activities are integrated has brought about some benefits to the second-year English-majored students.

This improvement means that the English speaking training program in which poster-making activities are integrated has brought about some benefits to the second-year



English-majored students. Therefore, the hypothesis is approved, which means there are some significant differences between the mean scores of the test results in the pre-test and those of post-test on the English speaking skills. This result is also in line with previous studies by Dorgham (2011), Sayed (2008) and Ghazala (2005). All of these studies have showed that integrating MI classroom activities is effective in developing students' English speaking skills.

#### 4. Discussion

With  $p = 0.043397$ , smaller than 0.05 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> English speaking test, we can conclude that the differences of the mean scores between the experimental group and the controlled group is very significant. These differences demonstrate that this result obtained from the procedures of data analysis cannot occur randomly, but these changes of the test scores have come from the techniques of integrating MI classroom activities in our English speaking training program.

Simultaneously, the results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> test, the after-intervention English speaking test, once again, reconfirm our above-mentioned conclusion. With the  $p$  value of 0.000930, smaller than 0.001, we can confirm that the differences in the mean scores of both experimental group and controlled groups are very significant. Therefore, we approved and accepted the hypothesis, that is, the integration of poster-making activities in our English speaking training program has brought about positive effectiveness in terms of improving the students' performance in their English speaking tests.

In order to measure the effect size, the standard deviation (SD) is required in the calculations and this will help us define the effect size of the intervention. With the following formula for SD:

$$SD = \frac{\text{Mean score}_{\text{Experimental}} - \text{Mean score}_{\text{Controlled}}}{\text{Standard deviation}_{\text{controlled}}} \times \frac{1}{2}$$

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> English speaking test, we have  $\frac{7.10 - 6.70}{2 \times 0.79438}$ , so we have the results: SD  $\approx$  0.25

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> speaking test, we have  $\frac{7.4000 - 6.7833}{2 \times 0.72734}$ , so we have the results: SD  $\approx$  0.4

Following Cohen's scale, the scope of effect size is arranged from a very small degree to very large degree based on the value of the effect size. The SD value of the intervention of 0.25 has shown a large degree of the effect size. Synonymously, the increase of 0.4 of the mean score in the 2<sup>nd</sup> English speaking test means that the integration of the poster-making activities in the speaking lessons has a large effect size in developing students' English speaking skills.

The SD value of 0.4 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> test also confirms the fact that the effect size of the intervention is 0.4, which belongs to the very large degree in Cohen's scale. Compared with the 2<sup>nd</sup> test, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> test the researcher has made some adjustments to the contents and methods of implementing the poster-making activities, therefore the results obtained are better for the experimental group, and the effect size is also higher ( $0.4 > 0.25$  following the statistics in Table 3). This result again confirms that the increase of 0.3 of the mean score in the 3<sup>rd</sup> English speaking test is due to the fact that the integration of the poster-making activities in the speaking lessons has a large effect size.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of integrating poster-making activities in the speaking training program to promote the students' motivation and develop their English speaking skills.

Regarding the students' learning motivation, all the students participating in our experimental lessons expressed their common opinions that most of the MI activities we conducted really brought about their high motivation and involvement. All of the 30 students in the experimental group expressed their opinions that the English speaking lessons integrated with MI activities really brought them opportunities to develop their English speaking skills. Specifically, MI activities helped them become more and more confident in performing such English speaking skills, cater for and improve their favored intelligences and learning styles.

The results of the study showed that there is a significant difference in the statistics at the significance level (0.01) between the mean scores of the participants from the three (03) speaking tests with better results in the post-test. This might be the results of integrating the poster-making activities in the English speaking training program that brought about significant improvement in the students' performance of the English speaking tests.

In addition, the results of this research are also in line with some previous studies in which MIT is applied in developing and improving communicative skills in the field of foreign language teaching in general (Xie, J.C. et al., 2009) and (Bas, G., 2010), and in the field of English language teaching in particular, especially in developing speaking skills (Sayed, 2005; Dorgham, 2011 & Salem, 2013).

This result is in accordance with Salem's research (2013), which verified the benefits of applying a speaking training program in which poster-making activities were mobilized to develop the pre-service English teachers' speaking skills. The results of this study revealed that the program had a great impact on his participants' English speaking skills.

According to the findings of this research, the students gained remarkable progress in their English speaking skills. This improvement can be brought about by the experimental English speaking training program as well. The participants were trained to make use most of their different learning styles and preferred MIs to demonstrate and perform their English speaking skills. The effective use of visual aids as well as combining information

technology (IT) skills to support their English speaking skills helped students become effective communicators of English, not only in the classroom but also in their communicative activities outside the classroom.

In general, the results of the English speaking tests have shown that the students' English speaking skills have been promoted as the confirmation of the hypothesis mentioned at the beginning of the research. The participants obtained significant achievement in their English speaking skills. These achievements are the results of integrating MI classroom activities in the new English speaking training program.

## 5. Conclusion

From the above-mentioned results of the research, we can conclude that the integration of poster-making activities is an effective method to develop students' English speaking skills. We propose that applying poster-making activities in EFL classrooms has created many favorable conditions for both language teachers and students to make their transition from the traditional methods of teaching and learning, which is based mainly on the two types of verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences to the more and more humanitarian methods of training and assessing the students' all-round competence and academic results, following each individual student's multiple intelligences and learning styles.

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## TĂNG CƯỜNG KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ THÔNG QUA CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG KIẾN TẠO ÁP PHÍCH – MỘT CÔNG CỤ ĐA TRÍ TUỆ

**Tóm tắt.** Nghiên cứu này khảo sát ảnh hưởng của các hoạt động kiến tạo áp phích, một công cụ đa trí tuệ nhằm tăng cường động cơ học tập và phát triển kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh cho sinh viên chuyên ngữ. Trên cơ sở phân tích các nghiên cứu liên quan, nhóm nghiên cứu đề xuất một danh mục gồm 5 kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh cần phát triển cho các sinh viên tham gia nghiên cứu. Công cụ nghiên cứu bao gồm: một chương trình luyện nói tiếng Anh tích hợp các hoạt động kiến tạo áp phích, một bảng khảo sát năng lực đa trí tuệ, 03 bài kiểm tra trước, trong và sau tác động. Chương trình được thực hiện trong 15 tuần. Kết quả cho thấy chương trình đã đem lại nhiều ảnh hưởng tích cực đến hứng thú học tập và cải thiện kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh cho sinh viên chuyên ngữ.

**Từ khóa:** đa trí tuệ, hoạt động kiến tạo áp phích, hứng thú học tập, kỹ năng