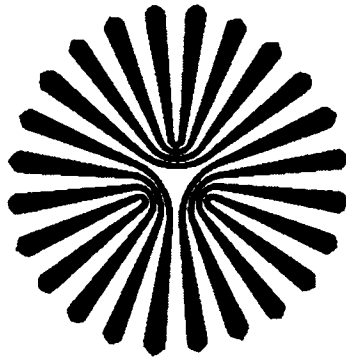


به نام خالق هستی

۱۳۹۳/۳ - ۲۰۳۹۴



**Payame Noor
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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES
AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF EFL LEARNERS
AT PAYAME NOOR UNIVERSITY**

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

by

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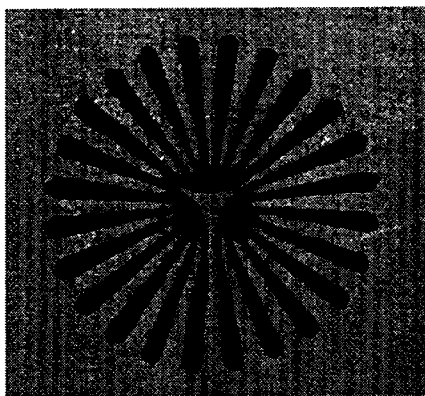
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Dedicated to

My Family

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate the possible relationship between Multiple Intelligences (MI) introduced by Howard Gardner (1983)—both as a unitary and as a multi-component construct on the one hand, and the English proficiency of Iranian students at Payame Noor University (PNU) majoring in English on the other. To fulfill the purpose of the study, a Paper-Based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) together with an MI questionnaire were distributed among 102 students at Shahriyar PNU Campus. The results of the data analysis indicated that, with the significant level being set to 0.05, there is no statistically significant relationship between language proficiency and MI in general and the types of intelligences in particular, except for the linguistic intelligence. Similarly, no significant difference was found between male and female participants regarding language proficiency. In addition, the two groups showed no significant difference in terms of intelligence sub-components, except for the linguistic intelligence, in which men showed more strength than women.

Key Concepts: Multiple Intelligences, Intelligence types, English Language Proficiency, Payame Noor University

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List of Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
MI	Multiple Intelligences
PBT	Paper-Based TOEFL
PNU	Payame Noor University
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.

—Goethe

1.1. Background

Among different human undertakings, education process can be considered as one of the most significant and multi-faceted efforts. “A popular notion is that education is something carried out by one person, a teacher, standing in front of a class and transmitting information to a group of learners who are all willing and able to absorb it” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 5). It is also believed that one of the characteristics of any successful educator is the ability to understand that the process of teaching-learning, as part of the process of education, involves some complexities, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to use this knowledge for empowering learners both inside and outside the teaching context (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Nonetheless, in the 1960s, with the emergence of humanistic theories of learning and their impact on education, the field of education witnessed a change of focus from teacher-centered to learner-centered mode of instruction. In line with this shift of focus, researchers showed more interest in the ways that learners process information. Educators, too, have started to put more emphasis on the impact of learners’ variables

on achievement; which, in turn, led to the development of some fresh and innovative approaches to English language teaching and relative methods and techniques during the 70s and 80s (Lin, 2000).

In fact, the term 'individual differences' has its roots in psychology, where there is more voluminous literature on the topic. To Williams and Burden (1997), learners bring many individual characteristics to their learning processes which will have an effect on the way they learn and also on the results of those processes. The authors have considered the followings as obvious examples of individual characteristics influencing learners' success in learning a foreign language: age, gender, personality, aptitude, cognitive styles and strategies, anxiety and preparedness to take risks, motivation, and intelligence, which is the present variable under study, and is briefly discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

1.2. Intelligence and Different Schools of Thought

A common definition of intelligence is, "...success in problem solving, ability to learn, capability for producing no genetic solutions, understanding of complex instructions, or simple all-round cognitive ability" (Eysenck, 1982, p. 8). There are two main schools of thought on the nature of intelligence. Indeed, one is based on the belief that all intelligence comes from one general factor, known as 'g', which is supported by such psychologists as Eysenck (1982), Galton (1870), Jensen (1993), and Spearman (1904). While the other believes in the existence of more than just one general type of intelligence, that is to say, there are different types of intelligences. This controversial view is mainly supported by Gardner (1983), Sternberg (1985), and Turnstone (1938).

1.2.1. General Intelligence

The proponents of the traditional view believe that intelligence is a general ability found in varying degrees. It is present in all individuals, and is vital to success in school performance. They also found that there is a high positive correlation between different tests of cognitive ability. In doing his research, Spearman (1904) developed such different type of tests administered to many people, and covering several different areas of cognitive ability. Based on the obtained results, the author claimed that there is a positive correlation between the tests for a given individual. By the same token, if a certain person performed well on a test of verbal abilities, then that same person also performed well on another test of other cognitive ability, for instance, a mathematics test.

By studying the available literature, one can see that Alfred Binet was a pioneering figure in the study of intelligence, who in collaboration with Simon, realized that intelligence was measurable. They developed a questionnaire titled intelligence quotient known as the IQ test.

1.2.2. Multiple Intelligences

Another view suggests that the mind is composed of different and distinguished domains of function (Gardner, 1993). There are two recent approaches holding this view on learning which are concerned with both the development of intelligence in general and achieving success in certain contexts such as school in particular. The first, Sternberg's (1985/1988) triarchic theory of intelligence, defined intelligence in terms of: (a) the internal world of the individual, (b) the external world of the individual, and (c) the experience of the individual in the world. The second approach which has been put forth by Gardner (1983)—the approach adopted in the present

study—highlighted the importance of skills being used in specific cultural contexts. Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) has its roots in developmental psychology. In addition to developmental psychology, Armstrong (2000) has believed that MI theory is connected with various fields, namely anthropology, cognitive psychology, studies of exceptional individuals, psychometrics, and neuropsychology. This theory expands intelligence beyond verbal and mathematical intelligences and maintains that all humans possess at least eight different intelligences that represent a variety of ways to learn and demonstrate understanding (Armstrong, 2000; Gardner, 1983/1993/1999/2006; Lazear 1999). The eight intelligences identified are Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Musical, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Visual-Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist which will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

However, when Gardner was asked about the existence of the 'g' factor, or the lack thereof, responded:

I do not deny that 'g' exists; instead, I question its explanatory importance outside the relatively narrow environment of formal schooling. For example, evidence for 'g' is provided almost entirely by tests of linguistic or logical intelligence. Since these tests measure skills that are valuable in the performance of school-related tasks, they provide reliable prediction of success or failure in school. So, for that matter, do last year's grades. The tests are not nearly as reliable in predicting success outside of school tasks. (1993, p. 39)

Following the development of learner-centered approaches to learning, several new instruction methods, with the intention of fulfilling learner's needs and interests, also emerged. These methods or techniques can be linked to Gardner's (1983) intention of developing or using different kinds of intelligences. The Silent Way, for instance, emphasizes the development of students' inner thinking (intrapersonal

intelligence). Total Physical Response, however, takes physical action into account in language learning (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence). Suggestopedia, on the other hand, uses drama and visual aids as keys to unlock a student's learning potential; this approach emphasizes the use of music (musical intelligence) to facilitate language cognition. Both the Communicative Approach and Cooperative Learning seem to place their greatest emphasis upon the importance of interpersonal relationship (interpersonal intelligence) to language learning. Similarly, the Whole Language Learning not only emphasizes the wholeness and reality of language (verbal/linguistic intelligence) but also believes in the coordination of bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences encouraging language learning. (Lin, 2000)

Having in mind the nonstop changes occurring in the field of education, which has led to the formation of a variety of educational modes, an intense need for understanding the impact of each type of intelligence on success of different learners is felt more than ever. Particularly, in the open and distance system of education, in which due to the nature of the system learners go through a learning process somehow different from conventional learners, this effect should be investigated. In addition, ways of diagnosing the more influential intelligences and thereafter enhancing them should be identified. Payame Noor University of Iran, the only university in the country solely offering distance courses, is not an exception in this regard, and in the researcher's opinion, there is a need in this university, too, for investigating the influence of multiple intelligences on achievement of the students in general and EFL students in particular.

The new view of intelligence, that is, MI theory has applications in curriculum development, and can be integrated into different learning activities.

This theory has already been implemented in various curricular activities (Armstrong, 2000). It has motivated many educators and curricular designers in coming up with learning activities appropriate for different learners and a variety of learning situations, one of them being distance learning. Furthermore, MI theory has also been a source of motivation for educators in practicing alternative methods of assessment (Silver, Strong, & Perini, 1997). This calls for more research on the pedagogical implications of the theory in context of distance education.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Due to the advent of globalization, and also the technological and economic developments taking place in Iran, this country is undergoing major changes in its political, economic, and at the same time educational system. As a result, English has gained more prominence in the international communication of Iranian people. In actual fact, English is not only the dominant international language in many fields of development such as trade, research, technology, and tourism, but also most of the existing information on many of these areas is available mostly in the English language.

Unfortunately, most PNU students, even EFL students of the university are greatly suffering from a lack of English language knowledge and proficiency, and this can be taken as one of the main sources of many failures which these learners experience in their course of studies and careers. This can also, in turn, result in the development of a lower self-esteem in these people as opposed to more proficient English users.

One other problem that can be detected is that despite the proposition made by some well-known researchers as to the positive effects of 'multiple intelligence-based

instruction` on learning (e.g., Armstrong, Christison, Gardner, Lazear, etc.), to the best of the researcher`s knowledge, few studies have been conducted in Iran to investigate this effect. Particularly, in the context of distance education (in this case PNU), to date no attempt has been made in this regard.

1.4. Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between the overall score of the MI tests and the proficiency levels of EFL students at PNU?
2. Is there any relationship between the sub-components of the MI tests and the proficiency levels of EFL students at PNU?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

Based on the above questions, the null hypotheses this study aims to test are:

1. There is no relationship between the overall score of the MI test and EFL proficiency.
2. There is no relationship between each sub-component of the MI test and EFL proficiency.

1.6. Significance of the Study

In view of the specific characteristics of distance learning and to some extent distance learners, helping the learners in gaining a higher degree of self-esteem and subsequently self-confidence seems of great value. However, the way to deal with these certain qualities is a big challenge with which educators, material developers, and also administrators are supposed to cope. In this specific educational context, to