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The Impact of the MIT within Web Quests Models to Develop EFL Speaking

By

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Abstract:

The present case study aimed at measuring the impact of the multiple intelligences theory within WebQuests models to develop EFL speaking skills of Al-Azhar first year secondary school students. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest experimental group/control group design. Subjects in the study were first year secondary school female students. Two classes were randomly selected from Al-Ghoraizat Al-Azhar Secondary Institute for Girls, Sohag governorate in the school year 2016-2017. Then, they were randomly assigned to two groups, experimental (30 students) and control group (30 students). The experimental group was taught by using the proposed strategy to develop speaking skills. Students in the control group received traditional instruction. The proposed strategy of the study aimed at developing some speaking skills of the experimental group students. It was taught over a period of four weeks (three periods per week). The results of the study indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental group and control group in functional speaking, speaking for purposes, and oral presentation. It was concluded that the present study provided evidence for the effectiveness of using the multiple intelligences theory within WebQuests models to develop the experimental group students' EFL speaking skills. It was recommended that teachers should motivate students to use MI theory while learning. They, also, should be taught to cope with current methods and techniques that encourage students to use the internet and technology.

Key words:multiple intelligence theory (MIT), WebQuests, speaking skills, functional speaking, oral presentation).

Introduction:

In today's rapidly changing world, information and communication technologies have become a part of every aspect of society and human's life at an exponential rate. This phenomenon has been of interest to educators, researchers, and policymakers in the field of education. Nowadays, technology integration to enhance student learning and to train students in accordance with the expectations of the current industry and workplace is one of the most desired missions of educational institutions. To fulfill this, schools have been spending a great deal of money, time and effort on getting the latest technological tools. However, no matter how much technology is brought into classrooms, it does not assure effective integration. So, it can be said that WebQuests are one of the most important educational technology tools nowadays.

Literature shows that technology and multimedia can be effectively used to enhance various types of MI employed while learning language (Dryden, 2004; Kim, 2009; Mackenzie, 2002; Stedje, 2005). Mackenzie (2002) demonstrates how teachers can apply technology and multimedia (i.e., CD-ROMs, video clips, videoconferencing, social network sites) in their instructional planning through the use of MI theory. He compares MI with non-digital technologies to MI with digital technologies to demonstrate how teachers can effectively incorporate technology in MI activities. Dryden (2004) supports the curriculum of combining MI theory and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). He claims that incorporating CALL into MI theory offers a new curriculum adaptable to each individual's needs in the 21st century. Based on the empirical studies discussed above, literature shows that MI theory has significant impact on ESL/EFL learning. As a result, the author designed a MIFT Model for ESL/EFL teachers to enhance L2 learners' English language proficiency and explain how to implement these intelligences into ESL/EFL curricula in the following section.

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The theory of multiple intelligences has appeared as a major strategy to improve students' achievement across the curriculum, including students with lower achieving students (Geimer, Getz, Pochert, & Pullman, 2000).

Research questions:

- 1) Are there any significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the posttests in relation to the use of MI theory and WebQuests?
- 2) Are there any significant differences between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group in relation to the use of MI theory and WebQuests?

Literature review

MI theory and EFL

Language teachers have usually developed verbal-linguistic intelligence at an advanced level of performance and it has an influence on their specific teaching styles. These teaching styles can satisfy only students that have a similar MI profile. Therefore, the use of multi-intelligent teaching strategies is useful and adapts the language learning to all students. It also activates wider range of intelligences during language activities (Puchta&Rinvoluceri, 2005, p.16). According to Zhu (2011), "MI model should not be considered as rigid or prescriptive pedagogical formula. Rather, it can be seen as a framework by which language teachers employ in creative, exploratory and trial-and- error reform"(p. 411).

The recognition of multiple intelligences in English language classes can have many benefits. Firstly, students' motivation increases if they find classroom activities meaningful and entertaining. When teachers base their teaching strategy on activities that involve only linguistic abilities, it will be challenging to find interests in these lessons for some students. Therefore, the language focus should be extensive and include a wider range of intelligences in order to engage all students in language learning (Puchta&Rinvoluceri, 2005, p.16). Secondly, the involvement of other intelligences than the verbal-linguistic one in ELT helps teachers to be more objective. According to Puchta and Rinvoluceri (2005), "Generally speaking, we tend to regard as intelligent those students who show a high degree of linguistic ability and who therefore share the intelligence that language teachers are strong in" (p.16).

In other words, students that have strengths in other areas than in the verbal-linguistic intelligence can be considered as indolent or without ambitions. This generalization is misleading because when teachers consider students as incompetent, it is difficult to eliminate this conviction. Therefore, teaching that activates all intelligences helps teachers to become aware of students' strengths and weaknesses, and to assess students in more complex and objective way. Moreover, students feel more confident and safe in the language classroom that involves MI activities. It is due to the fact that students have opportunities to show their strengths and abilities in this classroom. Each student has different abilities and therefore the integration of various activities presents a chance for students to show their potential.

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Everybody in the language class should sometimes experience success and this strategy provides it. Afterwards, deep-rooted MI theory in English classes causes a willingness to risk more in classes, a willingness to try to develop also other abilities and meta-cognitive awareness. Puchta and Rinvoluceri (2005) stated, "People learn languages much better when allowed to do so within the wide range of perspectives afforded by MI"(p. 20).

According to Puchta and Rinvoluceri (2005), the inclusion of MI theory in ELT goes beyond the classes. It exceeds all subjects and activities because it refines students' personalities in general. It teaches students how to work with their strengths and how to improve their weaknesses. Above all, it leads to the students' self-awareness (p.20).

There is also a connection between the task-based language teaching/learning and multiple intelligence theory. The core of the task-based language teaching is in the use of authentic language. This teaching is based on doing meaningful activities in the target language. Through these activities students learn how to master the second language. Scrivener explained TBL lesson structure in these words, "Lessons are centered round a task, and i.e. the learners have to do a particular assignment (which will probably have a clear outcome). This task will usually be "real world" rather than "language focused" "(2011, p.183). In other words, students work with tasks such as making a party, visiting a doctor or asking for directions. When dealing with these tasks, students naturally use their cognitive potential and their strengths.

WebQuests and EFL

According to Jarvis (2005), technological innovations have progressed alongside the growth of English. In turn, the emerging technology, such as the Internet, has also increased the expansion of the English language. This combination of English language learning and information technology has influenced today's new demand for electronic literacies. With the rapid growth of Internet access and the extensive amount of information available in English, it is no longer a question of whether we should be incorporating the Internet into our classrooms, but how we should be doing it (Warchuaer, 1999). It is fair also to conclude that English teaching curricula should include the literacies of accessing and publishing Web-based information (Warchuer, 2002) in order to help students to become conscious consumers of Web information.

Stoks (2002) contends that WebQuests are a good model for language learning because learners can obtain a great deal of exposure to authentic language by surfing and reading on the web. The literature has been limited to studying the issues surrounding the use of WebQuests by EFL learners in real settings. Issues such as the proficiency level of students, curricular needs, and the cultural background knowledge of students have not been examined to find out how WebQuests fit these learning contexts. Additionally, it has been claimed that technology such as WebQuests can provide opportunities for collaboration and the practice of integrated language skills such as reading, writing and speaking (Blachowicz, Beyersdorfer& Fisher, 2006).

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Considering the aspect of language learning, WebQuests were not originally designed with second/foreign language learning purposes in mind. On the contrary, most WebQuests were designed so that first language speakers could acquire content knowledge. There has been an attempt, however, to create WebQuests specifically for language learners, as evidenced in a Dutch project called - LanguageQuest (Koenraad&Westhoff, 2003). This project is currently underway but could be developed as a useful future tool for integrating Internet into second language classrooms.

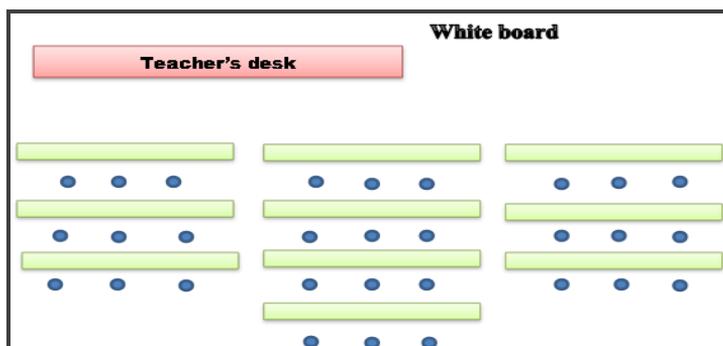


Figure (1) the WebQuests Classroom Setting

Based on the analysis of this learning tool by some scholars, the WebQuest model may actually be congruent with communicative goals that can be achieved through a variety of second language teaching approaches, such as task-based and content-based learning (Stoks, 2002). A content-oriented task directs learners to focus less on the mechanical aspects of a text and to focus more on communicative goals (De Ridder, 2002). WebQuest activities are usually driven by a theme or content aiming at providing learners with structured and meaningful tasks. WebQuest tasks potentially promote meaningful and authentic language use.

The characteristics of WebQuest lessons that are claimed to be beneficial for ESL/EFL learners in light of linguistic perspectives include 1) exposure to authentic materials 2) meaningful content and 3) possibilities for real communication in the target language (Simina& Hamel, 2005; Stoks, 2002). It is noteworthy that there has not been any study that confirms or rejects these claims. As mentioned above, the underlying principle of WebQuests is based on the principles of constructivist theory, which also have had an impact on the field of L2 studies. Concurrent with the current trend in education, language learning has also seen a shift, from highly-guided, teacher-fronted instruction to be a more learner-centered and group work focus.

Language learning should go beyond rote learning and shift away from the emphasis on drills and grammar-based instruction toward more meaningful learning and communicative goals. Emerging new approaches in language learning, such as task-based instruction, is believed potentially to enhance communicative interaction and to allow - learners ...engaged in trying to communicate content (meaning is primary) to work towards the communicative goal (Ellis, 2000, p. 196). This view offers a useful framework for WebQuest study from ESL/EFL teaching perspectives by looking at the interaction between students and peers, teachers and students, and students and the WebQuest tool within the EFL context.

While research is lacking concerning the real impact of the Internet on language learning, a few studies have already been carried out on learners' perceptions when using web-based learning activities. Through observations and a questionnaire, Yang (2001) investigated the attitudes and perceptions of EFL learners that were engaged in an Internet-based research project in an EFL class in Taiwan. The results

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show that learners found the experience generally positive; however, some of them encountered technical and language difficulties, which caused cognitive overload and frustration. The study suggests that it is important to provide help and scaffolding in order to orient students to a task for successful implementation of technology integration in classrooms, as suggested in the work of Peng, Tsai and Wu (2006), who studied university students' self-efficacy and attitudes toward the Internet. The study found a relationship between students' perceptions of the Internet and their attitudes and self-efficacy. For example, students showed positive attitudes and demonstrated adequate Internet self-efficacy, and they tended to view the Internet as a functional tool as opposed to a leisure tool. Based on these two studies, learners' perceptions toward the use of the Internet in the language class have been identified; however, few studies have been done that examine language.

MI Theory and Web Quests

Multimedia is an excellent resource to include in teaching as it is adaptable to several of the intelligences. Using multimedia such as WebQuests in our teaching is an example of constructivist teaching that allows us to integrate many of the intelligences. "WebQuests help students go beyond learning basic facts. A WebQuest is "an inquiry activity that presents student groups with a challenging task, provides access to an abundance of online resources and scaffolds the learning process to prompt higher order thinking. The products of WebQuests are usually then put out to the world for some real feedback." These online multimedia activities readily draw upon all of the multiple intelligences learning behaviors."(Alick, 1999)

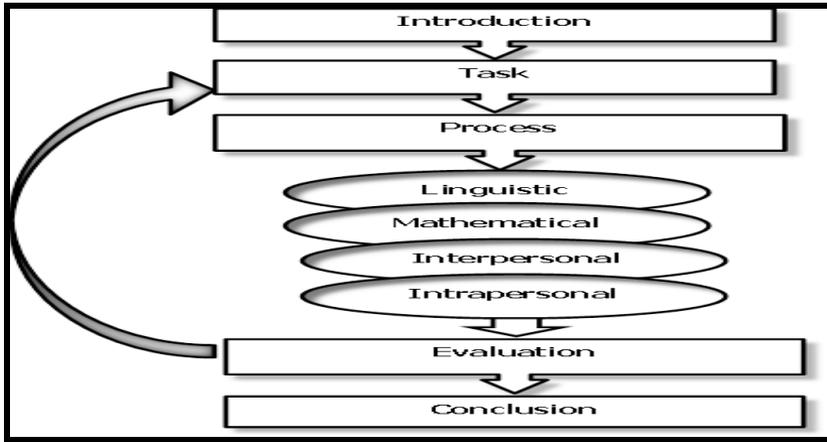


Figure (2) Combining the WebQuests Components with Multiple Intelligences

WebQuests are an excellent way for students to learn new material and review previously taught material. They make use of the constructivist principles of learning as students are learning by doing – in essence, the student is responsible for their own learning in a WebQuest – what they get out of it depends on what they put into it. “WebQuests are currently the most structured, accessible, and promising application of constructivist thought in the field of online education” (Martin, 1999). Many people feel that when students are in charge of their learning, they will take more pride in it and work harder. There are also those that feel that just by adding another factor to a child’s learning, i.e. a computer, students will respond differently and be more motivated. (Hung, 2004)

Statement of the Problem

Secondary stage students lack abilities in speaking skill properly inside and outside the classroom. The present study was an attempt to investigate the impact of using MIT within webquests model for improving secondary stage students’ speaking skill.

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Objective of the Study

The present study aimed at;

- Identifying the impact of the multiple intelligences theory within webquest model in developing students' speaking skills.

Significance of the Study

The importance of the present study stemmed from the following;

1. The present study helped students to develop their speaking skill.
2. It may contribute to providing teachers with effective methods and activities of teaching speaking skill.
3. It may help students to be self-independent learners.
4. It may verify the effect of combining webquests and MIT in learning how to speak.

Methodology: Research design

The Experimental Design of the Study

According to Ary et al. (1979, p. 237) "Experimental design refers to the conceptual framework within which the experiment is conducted. An experimental design serves two functions: (1) It establishes the conditions for the comparisons required by the hypotheses of the experiment and (2) it enables the experimenter through statistical analysis of the data to make a meaningful interpretation of the results of the study". The present study follows the quasi-experimental design. Two intact classes were randomly assigned into two groups, an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group students received

instruction through using the impact of multiple intelligences theory with webquest models to develop EFL speaking skills. Students in the control group received traditional instruction. A pre-post speaking test was given to the two groups before and after the treatment.

The following figure clarifies the whole story:

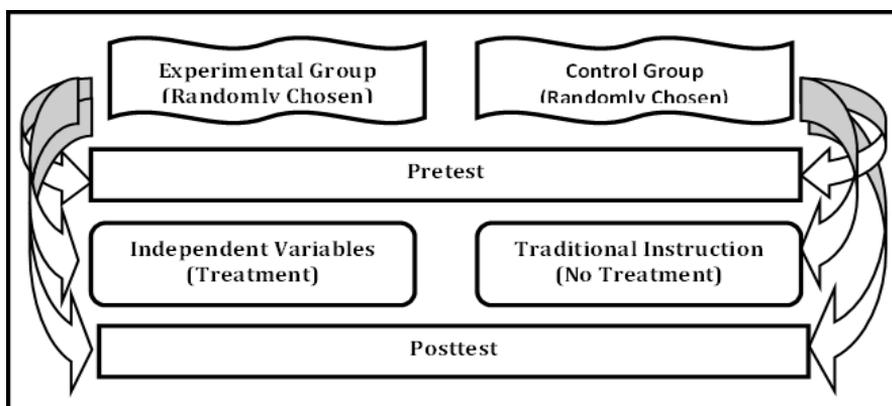


Figure (3): The Study Experimental Design

Participants and Context

Subjects in the present study were first-year secondary Al-Azhar institute female students. Two classes were randomly chosen from one of Sohag governmental secondary institutes, namely Al-Ghorizat Secondary Al Azhar Institute for Girls in Sohag Al-Azhar Zone in the year 2016-2017. Then, they were randomly assigned to two groups, experimental (n: 30) students and control (n: 30) students who were chosen randomly. In order to make sure that the improvement of the students' speaking skills is attributed only to the influence of teaching through MI theory and WebQuests, some variables were attempted to control in order to make sure that both the experimental and control groups were equivalent. These variables are:

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- **Age:** all students' ages ranged from 15-16 years old.
- **Grade:** all the students were in first-year secondary school.
- **Level of achievement in speaking:** there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on the speaking pre-test. (See the results of the pre-test).

T-tests for independent samples were concluded in order to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the speaking skills pre-test. Table (1) shows that the calculated t-values were much fewer than (2.66). Thus, it can be said that there are no statistically significant differences at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group students on the pre speaking skills test. See table (1).

Table (1)

T-test Results of the Speaking Pre-test Comparing the Control and Experimental Groups in Speaking Skills

Group	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Significance
Experimental	10.27	1.874	0.294	nonsignificant
Control	10.13	1.634		

- **Educational background:** all students had the same schooling background of governmental schools and had studied English for nine years (see table 2) for the characteristics of the participants.

Table (2)

The characteristics of the participants

Sample	Gender	Grade	Mean of age	Type of school	Experience of learning English as EFL
Control	Female	First-year secondary	16,5	Governmental	9 years
Experimental	Female	First-year secondary	16,3	Governmental	9 years

The experimental group was exposed to the MI theory and Web Quests instruction which was taught by the researcher during the four week period. The researcher taught the unit himself to ensure a better control of the instructional variables. The control group received regular instruction (no strategy instruction).

Instruments

Pre- and post-speaking tests were used in this study in order to measure the students' speaking skills before and after the treatment. The tests were prepared by the researcher and revised by number of jury membersto judge the validity of the pre-post test. The test was constructed in the light of reviewing previous studies andidentifying the skills that will be measured. Besides, the items were presented according to the degree of their difficulty so that they ranged from easy to difficult.The first part of the test addressed the use of functional speaking skills (complaining / making suggestions)while the second part addressed the speaking for purposes such as describing pictures and people, and the third part addressed giving oral presentation. (See Appendix III)

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Materials:

The twelve WebQuests used in this study were designed by the researcher. The WebQuests designed were sent to number of experienced EFL professors and lectures to check for appropriateness for the students' level of proficiency and topic. Also, they were reviewed by two educational technology professors for its face validity. In each WebQuest there is one main page, the student's one. The student's page includes five parts.

The first part is the introduction which gives general information in a motivational way about the whole WebQuest. The second part is the task which is a description of what the students should do. The third part is the process and it includes detailed steps or activities, which represent some multiple intelligences theory i.e. linguistic, mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence, describing what exactly the students are required to do. The fourth is the evaluation part which includes a rubric that shows the students how they will be evaluated. It includes the certain points they should accomplish at the end of the task. The final part is the conclusion which provides the students with further websites if they want to read more about the topic. (See Appendix D) Moreover, there are many links over the webquest in order to provide students with more resources. Teacher's guide was prepared which included objectives, teaching aids, teaching techniques, and tasks evaluation. (See Appendix II)

The WebQuests topics were chosen according to the students' level. The researcher tried to use various topics interesting to students' level. Students need only one session to complete the task in each WebQuest, depending on the students' level and motivation. Each session is 90 minutes.

Data Collection Procedures:

In the first week, both the experimental group and control group received the pre-test before the treatment and instruction. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS and a t-test was calculated to ensure the groups equivalence. The treatment period was four weeks. During the treatment period, the experimental group received researcher-designed WebQuests embedded as supplementary models with some MI theory activities. Each WebQuest took one session, three sessions a week. The control group received only the traditional instruction. In week four, both the experimental and control group students received the post-test. The data collected was again analyzed using SPSS. Then, paired sample t-tests were computed for the results of both groups in order to investigate the differences between the two groups, and between the pre-test and post-test in speaking skills.

Findings:

The statistical analysis of the data and the results were interpreted in terms of the research questions. To accomplish this purpose each question is presented together with the findings related to it.

Question One:

- Are there any significant differences between the control and experimental groups in the posttests in relation to the use of MI theory and WebQuests?

T-test for independent samples was conducted in order to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the speaking post-test. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the question. See table (3).

Table (3)

**T-test Results of the Speaking Post-test
Comparing the Control and Experimental
Groups Overall Mean Scores**

Group	N	M	S.D.	D.F.	t-value	Significance level	Effect Size
Control	30	9.83	1.464	58	31.182	Significant	1.14
Experimental	30	29.77	3.181				Large

Table (3) shows that the calculated t-value is (31.182) Thus, it can be said that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental and control group students on the post speaking test in favor of the experimental group. So, the first question is answered.

As shown in table (3), the calculated effect size value of the proposed strategy on students' speaking is (1.14). Therefore, it can be inferred that the proposed strategy had a large effect on the experimental group students' ability to speak on the post-test as compared to that of the control group students. The difference can be illustrated in the following figure:

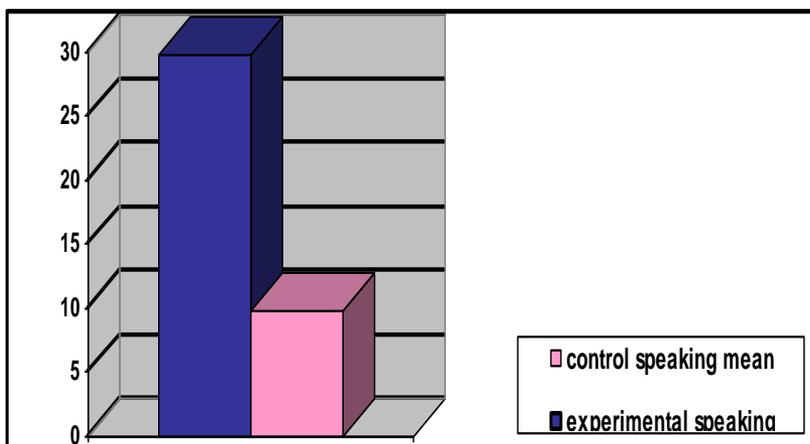


Figure (4)

The Overall Mean Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups in the speaking Post-test

In order to verify the answer this question, a t-test for paired samples was used. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the above question. Table (2) shows the statistical significance.

Question Two:

- **Are there any significant differences between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group in relation to the use of MI theory and WebQuests?**

T-test for independent samples was conducted in order to compare the mean scores of the speaking pre-posttests. The results of the t-tests proved to be statistically consistent with the question. See table (4).

Table (4)

T-test Results Comparing the Speaking Pre- test and Post-test Overall Mean Scores of the Experimental Group

Tests	N	M.D.	Sum of S.D. difference square	D.F.	t-value	Significance Level	Effect size
Pre-test	30	10.27	3.49	29	48.7	Significant	1.14
Post-test		29.77	10.12				large

As shown in table (4), the calculated t-value (48.7) is statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, it can be said that there is a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the experimental group students on the speaking pre-test and post-test in favor of the post- test. So, the second question is answered.

The calculated effect size value of the proposed strategy on students' overall speaking skills is (1.14). Therefore, it can be inferred that the proposed strategy had a large effect on the experimental group students' overall performance in speaking on the post-test as compared to that of the pre-test.

Discussion of the results:

The significant results of the present study could be due to many factors. First, students' multiple intelligences were focused. There is an indication that students made use at least four intelligences of the nine multiple intelligences, i.e. linguistic, mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. Second, students' use for webquest models and strategies appropriate for speaking were also developed. Third, students successfully and effectively proceeded in the MI theory and webquest models following the different learning activities for achieving their goals.

First, students' performance showed that they acquired the skill how to use multiple intelligences; linguistic, mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. Students were introduced to the objectives of the program and to the procedures for achieving these objectives. They were informed of the importance of practicing their multiple intelligences appropriate for developing their speaking skills. They were informed of the importance and the relevance of this skill in learning English. Students showed their intention to develop their speaking skill. They completed a learning contract with their teacher that their speaking skill should be developed after the completion of certain learning activities and tasks.

Second, students' use for multiple intelligences activities within webquest models was also developed because they were informed of the importance and relevance of these activities and tasks for enhancing learning in general and for enhancing and developing the speaking skill in particular. Students were trained on the use of webquest models appropriate for developing their speaking skill. Training students on the use of the procedures of webquest models tasks was of great importance.

Conclusion:

The results showed the potential of MI theory activities and WebQuests use for promoting EFL speaking skills. Teachers and students do, however, need to be trained in order to use MI activities and WebQuests more effectively in the blended learning classroom. The students of this study, only needed help to get started on the task and then managed to continue on their own with no difficulty. Teachers in general need to be provided with training to explore the usefulness of MI theory and WebQuests and to master their integration in their classrooms. There are challenges inherent in the implementation of MI and WebQuests due

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to the changing pedagogical principles and practices arising from the use of the strategy and the tool. Teachers need support in understanding and adjusting to the new way of teaching, especially when they are used to the transmissive mode of instruction. Therefore, it is crucial for the teachers to understand the changing role from an authoritative figure to the role of facilitator or mentor as required by the MI and WebQuest design. Also, the use of pre-designed WebQuests in this study may have constrained the teachers in implementation and in choosing interesting topics that meet the needs of the students. The researcher suggests that the teacher's experience of the WebQuest tool, and the challenges to its integration in the blended learning classroom, should be investigated further.

The use of MI theory and WebQuests seems to be motivating for students as observed by the researcher in the study. Although this is anecdotal evidence, teachers should invest in the potential of WebQuests as a motivating model and activity. However, more research is needed. Moreover, the topic and difficulty level of materials are important issues that the teacher should consider when selecting or designing a WebQuest. March (2004) suggests the teacher choose a topic that the students find compelling and then build an authentic learning task around it. If more than one WebQuest is to be used, the teacher may design topics that seem likely to draw diverse student interest. The type of task should also be designed carefully. If, for example, an information gathering task is to be included, it should be used as a step to a more complex task rather than an end in itself. However, the teacher needs to be careful about the level of difficulty of the tasks and its appropriateness for the students.

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