ความท้าทายในการจัดการห้องเรียนแบบคละความสามารถ

วัชรี ไพสาทย์ [1]

บทคัดย่อ

      บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อแบ่งปันแนวคิดเรื่องการบริหารจัดการห้องเรียนที่มีความหลากหลายของนักศึกษาในด้าน ความสามารถทางภาษา ความสนใจในการเรียนรู้ วิธีการเรียนรู้ และอื่นๆ โดยปกติแล้วหากโรงเรียน วิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัย หรือ สถาบันการศึกษาต่างๆ สามารถจัดการเรียนการสอนโดยให้เด็กนักเรียน นักศึกษา ที่มีความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ หรือความ ถนัดในการเรียนรู้ใกล้เคียงกัน ได้เรียนร่วมกันในห้องเรียนเดียวกัน ซึ่งมีแนวโน้มทำให้การวางแผนการสอนของครู หรืออาจารย์ ผู้สอนเป็นไปในทิศทางเดียวกันซึ่งอาจส่งผลต่อประสิทธิภาพในการเตรียมการสอนในแต่ละห้องมากยิ่งขึ้น แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม ในบางสถาบันการศึกษา อาจมีข้อจำกัดบางอย่างที่ทำให้ไม่สามารถจัดให้นักเรียน นักศึกษาที่มีความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ ใกล้เคียงกันมาเรียนร่วมกันได้ ซึ่งสิ่งนี้ถือเป็นความท้าทายในด้านการจัดการเรียนการสอนสำหรับผู้สอนเช่นกัน ดังนั้น การใช้ทฤษฎีพหุปัญญา (Multiple Intelligences) จึงเป็นอีกทางเลือกที่อาจนำมาซึ่งประสิทธิภาพในการเรียนรู้ของนักเรียน นักศึกษา อีกทั้งยังช่วยครู อาจารย์ ในการวางแผนการสอนให้เหมาะสมกับห้องเรียนที่มีนักเรียนนักศึกษาคละความสามารถ ให้ดียิ่งขึ้น ในบทความนี้ได้มีการอภิปรายถึงปัญหาที่มีในการจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบคละความสามารถ (Mixed-Ability) ยกตัวอย่าง ปัญหาต่างๆ ที่มีการพูดถึง เช่น ด้านการเตรียมสอนของครู อาจารย์ ด้านการเตรียมสื่อหรือหนังสือที่ใช้สอน ด้านความวิตกกังวลของครู อาจารย์ผู้สอน ด้านการตรวจติดตามความก้าวหน้าของนักเรียน นักศึกษา ด้านการจัดการห้องเรียน และอื่นๆ ด้วยปัญหาดังที่กล่าวมา จึงได้มีการนำเรื่องทฤษฎีพหุปัญญามาอภิปรายให้เห็นถึงประโยชน์และความสำคัญในการ หาแนวทางเพื่อช่วยจัดการห้องเรียนแบบคละความสามารถ เพื่อให้มีประสิทธิภาพ และเกิดผลสัมฤทธิสูงสุดในการเรียนการสอน

คำสำคัญ : ทฤษฎีพหุปัญญา การเรียนการสอน การจัดการเรียนการสอนแบบคละความสามารถ

[1] อาจารย์ ดร.ประจำภาควิชาภาษา คณะศิลปศาสตร์ประยุกต์ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าพระนครเหนือ

Challenges of Mixed-ability Class Management

[1] Corresponding Author, Tel. 081-3890458 E-mail : watcharee.p@arts.kmutnb.ac.th
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Watcharee Paisart [1]

Abstract

　　　　This academic article was written to share some ideas on how to manage a mixed-ability class with effective solutions. Especially in some educational institutes or universities where a class management could not manage to get students in the same levels or learning styles to be in the same classroom due to some reasons. The idea of "multiple intelligences" was raised and discussed. Individual students or learners are known to have different styles of learning preferences. Eight items of this theory are mentioned and explained. The article points out some possible and relevant difficulties, together with challenges in having mixed-ability classes in teaching and learning in various aspects, for example, teaching preparation, materials and resources, teachers' uncertainty and worry, students' progress follow-up methods, classroom management, and so on. Then, the theory of "multiple intelligences" has been introduced to help support these possible problems. The multiple intelligence investigation is stated and examples of studies which the theory of multiple intelligences were employed in teaching and learning were shown. The conclusion of this article aims to draw some attention of teachers and relevant stakeholders where a class consists of mixed-ability students to consider some ideas of multiple intelligences to manage the class for better benefit and effective learning of students.

Keywords : Multiple Intelligence Theory, Teaching and Learning, Mixed-ability classes

[1] Ph.D., Department of Languages, Faculty of Applied Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok

1. Introduction

In managing a class effectively, there are many relevant factors, such as selected books to be used, lesson planning of a teacher in a single class, designed activities, materials, students' motivations, facilities of a classroom, time management, and so on. Many theories have been employed throughout decades so as to help support learning and teaching English for better outcomes. Some theories may be successful but some may fail in some contexts or situations. However, as language teachers, we should try to find the most appropriate approach to suit ones' teaching context or situation. Not only the approach that we have to consider, but the teachers' roles also have to be various depending on the activities implemented in class, teaching methodology use, and material employed. Those teachers' roles can be adjusted according to the students' characteristics such as a controller, an assessor, an organizer, a prompter, a participant, a resource, a tutor, and an observer. The roles of the teacher can be changed according to the students' characteristics and need for help from the teacher (Harmer, 1991). As long as the students still need some full help from the teacher, the teacher may have to act like the class controller who manage and control everything and students do along the instruction. However, if the students need less support from the teacher, then, the role can be only the facilitator in class. The teacher's support can be requested only when needed.

Multiple intelligence theory is one of the theories that has been discussed in many years. It has been stated as one theory which can be employed in a class where there are many varieties of learning styles in a classroom. For example, the study of Millward-Sadler, Casey, and Newman (2010) on engineering students about the use of multiple intelligences to improve foreign language competence.

The theory of "multiple intelligences" which has been introduced by Gardner (1983), has been considered as an interesting and important relevant theory which affects students' learning. On the basis of individuality, each person owns different and unique characteristics. He or she likes and dislikes something differently. The same way as they may find different learning paths which may be attractive for some people but may not for other people. Ur (2005) explained about a heterogeneous class which students in the class possess different styles of learning such as language learning ability, language knowledge, cultural background, learning style, mother language, and intelligence. To make this clear, imagine a class where there are beginner, intermediate, or advanced learners studying together. Moreover, there might be young, teenager or adult learners mixing in the same class. This class is called heterogeneous class according to Ur. (2005). In this paper, a class where there are a mixture of English ability only would be focused and will be used as "mixed-ability class." Then, the idea of "multiple intelligence theory" should be raised and discussed so as to be an issue for teachers who are required to give lectures or teach in a class which consists of mixed-ability students. At least, some appropriate techniques, activities, or options supporting their competent learning would be considered.

As known that there are both positive and negative aspects of teaching paradigm, this article aims to raise this "multiple intelligence theory" into teachers' consideration and awareness in teaching in terms of some argued discussion on students' differences. Since teachers, or educational personnel who have been involved in teaching and learning for years, also have faced difficulties in finding ways to manage a mixed-ability class. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2004) stated many disadvantages for managing with a class with mixed-ability students. The following items are those disadvantages.

1. Preparation and marking: The teaching preparation and score marking are required to take more time because details should be able to evaluate all objectives which have been set.

2. Resource use: There will be a variety of resource use and teachers should be more prudent when using the resource since it might have to be modified or planned well before implementing in class to suit all levels of students.

3. Teachers' worry: Teachers may have been worried when planning to teach effectively because there are many different levels of students' abilities.

4. Teachers' uncertainty: Even if the lesson was well planned, teachers are still unclear if the plan is effective for the class or not. They may not be able to assure if all students from all different levels could follow their teaching or not because it might be hard to notice.

5. Detailed and frequent record of progress: In order to make sure if students' learnings are developed, their progress would be detailed and frequently collected. Each student would progress differently according to their background. To make the record, it should be done by focusing on personal progress record rather than group comparison.

6. Wide ability range: Teachers have no choice to confront with this mixed-ability difficulty which is hard to expect for the wide range. This can be considered a challenging job for teachers to manage this kind of class.

7. Hardship to make use of ready-use resources: Sometimes, in order to support students' learning, many resources such as extra worksheet or other materials would be added. However, those resources are likely to have the same level of competency. In this case of mixed-ability, it might be hard for those kinds of resource to be applicable for teaching. Then, modifying those resources for all students are suggested.

8. Classroom management with mixture of wide range ability: In some classes where the levels of proficiency are mixed with wide range of grades or scores as a "cut-off" criteria for managing a class, there might be some big gap between those in-class students (for example, two students got different grades, one got A and another got C but these two students would be put together in a class and would be considered the same level of proficiency). This problem may happen with freshmen most because they would have to take a specific kind of test to enter a university, then, to arrange a class sometimes, these students are put in a class because they are in the same major without considering about their scores or grades.

9. Students' avoidance of teachers: Since students in a class are mixed, they might struggle to support themselves in learning, so teachers may not be able to stand on as a main resource to control their study.

10. The balance of teachers' role and students' role: The roles of teachers and students could have been problems. This should be weighed appropriately. There are many roles for teachers, such as, facilitators, coaches, guides, and so on. In a mixed-ability class, the teachers should play appropriate roles to suit students' characteristics.

11. Family expectation pressure: Parents' expectations on their kids are one of teachers' pressure. While it is hard to manage for teaching well, outside anticipation could also be an annoying factor.

12. Balance of task types: The focus on working individually, in groups and as a whole class should be planned with prudent consideration.

Apart from these problems, Ur (2005) also stated that in a class where many students study together, there might be some problems in terms of:

1. Discipline control: Students' discipline is hard to be managed due to their differences and styles.

2. Certainty in effective learning: Since there are many students in a class so it is hard to be sure about the students' learning if they all learn with great understanding or not.

3. Appropriate material: When teaching in a class with various styles and abilities of students, it might be difficult to find appropriate materials to suite all types of students.

4. Monitor individual progress: In a class where heterogeneity is found, it is likely that the monitoring steps of each person could be more complex than those in a class where all people are in the same level.

5. Individual activation in learning: It could be more difficult to attract all students' interest to pay attention in the lesson if they all have different interest and styles.

From those above difficulties and problems mentioned, negative points of managing students from various backgrounds and styles are clearly revealed. To help manage the class with various styles of learners, "multiple intelligence theory" can be employed so as to help facilitate teacher's management for activities or material use and also support students' learning.

After the multiple intelligences of students in class have been investigated at the beginning of the course, the teachers can select variety of material, plan for activities, and assign tasks which cover their multiple intelligences. To do these, it is expected to serve and support students' learning and encourage them to feel engaged in the study. As Gardner (1983) stated that according to the strengths of people's multiple intelligence, we should provide various kinds of activities to support each person's cognitive learning styles.

2. Multiple Intelligence Theory

Gardner (1983) introduced the theory of "multiple intelligences" to support the idea that each learner has his or her own uniqueness in learning. The word "intelligence" here refers to the learners' preference in learning something. To link this idea to teaching and learning, it could be said that an individual student learns well when he or she is fed with appropriate or right things or suitable channel. Those "multiple intelligences" are:

1. Visual-Spatial Intelligence: Students who are visual-spatial intelligence oriented would learn well when they see pictures or things clearly. So, in class teaching, material or resource use should mainly focus on things that they can see clear pictures so as to facilitate their memory and make them learn to get things quickly.

2. Linguistic-Verbal Intelligence: Students who mainly have this intelligence would learn better when they have a chance to speak or use language to describe or explain something, they would do it well. To plan for activities to suite their learning, reading text or things that they can apply to use their literacy would be suggested.

3. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: Students who possess this intelligence would be able to think logically (can have reasons for everything). They would learn well on patterns or things which need to be calculated, for example, learn with numbers. This intelligence is quite suitable for students who prefer to study in technical majors, for example, mathematics or engineering. Adding things for them to solve the problems with reasons might be challenging and motivating them than only pure lectures.

4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: Students who tend to have bodily-kinesthetic intelligence would learn effectively if they can move their body along while learning. To let them sit still and pay

attention will not work with this group of students. So, activities which require them to move out from their seats could be interesting. To do this in a lesson would draw so much attention from students in this type.

5. *Musical Intelligence:* Students who are musical intelligence oriented would learn well if there are sound, rhythm, or music. Then, the use of music or things relevant to sounds would seize their interest to study and help them understand.

6. *Interpersonal Intelligence:* Students who are intelligent in interpersonal learning means that they could learn well by interacting or communicating with other people. They might have strong and effective skills to negotiate and understand people around them. So, group work assignment may support their learning. This is a good idea to facilitate their preference in learning and also gear them to be independent students who could learn from their friends and help each other which is more realistic in working in society. People have to negotiate and communicate with other people so this is like social interaction which is really necessary. This may link to the idea of social skills which is considered a trendy topic in this period of time.

7. *Intrapersonal Intelligence:* Students who have this intrapersonal intelligence would work well while they work by themselves. They could be prudent and learn effectively by getting to know things or exploring things by themselves. Appropriate tasks for this kind of students may be individual work which they can use their creativity and prudence to get their work accomplished, for example, translating some texts or creating stories.

8. *Naturalistic Intelligence:* Students who are intelligent in naturalistic learning would learn effectively if they learn to explore things in their environment, or relevant to nature around them. Assigned tasks for this type of students may have to link to things or environment around them so as to cheer them up to enjoy what they are doing and

with great hope that they could learn something from their working tasks.

3. Multiple Intelligence Investigation

It is interesting to investigate among students in class to see the tendency of these multiple intelligences so as to plan for effective lessons and teaching. The more the teachers could plan ahead, the more effective the learning is, and the more efficient the learners learn.

Especially in English language learning which is said among students that they find this subject very difficult to get through. If teachers could get to know most of their students' intelligences, they could prepare their teaching and materials to suite the students' characteristics.

In one English class, not only students' abilities are mixed, their various multiple intelligences are mingled. Everybody has his or her own characteristic as mentioned earlier. They are different in their requirements, motivations, goals, intentions, responsibilities, attitudes, skills, and so on. As Razmjoo (2008) said that human beings are not the same. They are all unique and have different kinds of intelligences. As a result, it is likely hard to plan for effective and practical teaching for all students in one class. However, to discover both the ability and the hidden intelligence, some testing should be implemented. For the ability discovering, it is easy to do; for example, the students' abilities can be tested via some tests. The scores derived from the tests could be useful for grouping students into study classes where their levels of proficiency could be similar. While, on the other hand, it might be hard to do that for the hidden intelligence. A kind of questionnaire focusing on this intelligence test could be employed instead of a specific test on this according to Armstrong (2009) that in general market, there is no test to investigate the multiple intelligences. However, even if we use a questionnaire to help discovering information on this, there are many factors that might affect students' answers.

So, teachers' observation or interview may lead to required information.

4. Studies of Multiple Intelligence Theory in Teaching and Learning

In learning and teaching, there are many studies which researchers applied this multiple intelligence theory into their investigation. Many experts stated that the multiple intelligence theory is advantageous and essential to put into account while teaching. Some of those scholars are Şener and Çokçalışkan (2018) who see that the multiple intelligence theory is very vital. They mentioned that the multiple intelligences can reveal some strength and weakness of the students. Therefore, the teachers of those particular classes can plan their lessons and activities to suit their students in class. Murray and Moore (2012) also supported that it is the teachers' responsibility to help students learn so as to improve both academy and emotion. For teaching effectively the teachers should try to support students' individual interest and abilities. As a result, tasks or work that the teachers need to assign can be different due to individual needs.

To this point, it is no doubt that the theory of multiple intelligences is interesting to be implemented in class by any relevant people. It can be used to study with students from various majors, namely, accounting, science, medical sciences, humanities and social sciences, architecture, technical education, fine arts, liberal arts, international languages, engineering, and many more in order to see the tendencies of most students in a particular class.

Putting the idea of multiple intelligences into practical implementation, the teacher should start with the very first things to do before beginning the lesson, such as studying the lesson plan to see what activities can be included (individual work, pair work, group work, etc.); what kinds of material to be employed (textual material, visual material, audio material, etc.); what types of things can be used to show in class as an input (Power Point Presentation, realia, magazine, clip, etc.).

In a class where there are limitations of time, student number, must-finished content relevant to test and evaluation, teachers cannot choose only an activity, material, or appropriate input in class so as to suit the whole students. One possible solution to accomplish the idea of using the multiple intelligences in class with all things the teachers should cover (time, student number, content and evaluation), choices can be provided for students to select the most comfortable or satisfied way that support their study. While the content would be pursued for all students, as the goal to reach, the techniques to study are like the ways to the goal. The students are like the travelers who could choose their own ways to reach the goal by themselves while the teachers are responsible for recommending, suggesting, and promoting variety of vehicles for them to get along their way. The teacher's role is trying to create variety to promote for their students, and the students would be the person who chooses their own study pace.

5. Conclusion

All in all, this article points out possible problems that may happen in class if the levels of proficiency of students are mixed. However, in another perspective, it could be a very challenging job for language teachers to try to blend these differences in the students' cognitive learning styles with their teaching approaches to facilitate their learning. It might be certainly hard for teachers, especially a novice teacher who has less experience to manage this kind of class. As a result, the idea of "multiple intelligences" would be one of interesting options that may help teachers to be aware of the students' differences and preferences in learning. At least, to understand this theory, teachers could insert some applied activities or tasks which help support those students who have no choice to study in separated classes could have their own way to

learn things more appropriate to their paths of better learning. The next question is how to identify the students' multiple intelligences. Many available forms could be searched via relevant sources. If teachers could get to know their students at the very beginning of the course, suitable teaching methods, and materials can be adjusted to be implemented in class.

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