CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Significance and Rationale of the Study

Language is one of the pillars of the human intellect. It is the principal means whereby individuals formulate thoughts and convey them to others. It plays a role in analyzing the world, in reasoning, solving problems and planning actions. It allows us to convey memories of the past and beliefs about the future, to engage others about events that have not taken place and to express the relations between events (Caplan, 1995). It is through the ability to think in words that human can remember, analyze, problem-solve, plan ahead and create (Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson, 2004). Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson (2004) cited Gardner's proposal that language is a "pre-eminent instance of human intelligence" that has been indispensable to human society. He describes the importance of the rhetorical aspect of language, or the ability to convince others of a course of action; the mnemonic potential of language, or the ability to use words in remembering lists or processes; the capacity of language to explain concepts, and the value of metaphor in doing so; and the use of language to reflect upon language or to engage in "meta-linguistic" analysis. Therefore, language is the primary medium of doing different kinds and aspects of transactions and communications as well as the foremost intermediary of education.

According to Lin (2002) as cited in Lally (1998), we have always approached the teaching of foreign languages as much as we would the teaching of any other subject. But we have not been tremendously successful at it. Many different methods have been developed to address this problem such as suggestopedia, constructivism, community language learning, whole language, the silent way, and cooperative learning. However, these methods have not had much of an influence in the second language classroom. Although over 15 years ago, many second language acquisition (SLA) theorists recommended a communicative approach--many textbooks still have a large percentage of forced-choice mechanical drills incorporated.

In line with the educational innovations and language teaching-learning, the sprouting of Multiple Intelligence theory has given educators a new perspective in education as well as in the language acquisition. Gardner's theory (1983) has captured the imagination of educators and has transformed the understanding of human cognition. He believes that different parts of brain function on an independent basis. Students are equipped with intelligences that we call multiple intelligences. Each child possesses one or more intelligences. The nine intelligences that he mentioned were: verbal-linguistic intelligence, the ability to use words effectively, orally or in writing; logical-mathematical intelligence, the ability to use numbers and to reason well; visual-spatial intelligence, the ability to perceive visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations upon those perceptions; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, the ability to use your whole or parts of your body to solve problems or make something; musical intelligence, the ability to think in music, to be able to hear, recognize, remember and perhaps manipulate patterns; interpersonal intelligence, the ability to understand, perceive and make distinctions of people; intra-personal intelligence is the ability understand self and know our strengths and weaknesses; naturalist intelligence, the ability to discriminate among living things as well as the sensitivity to other features of the natural world: and existential intelligence, our desire and ability to understand and pursue the ultimate questions, meanings and mysteries of life. This certainly supports the theory that every child has different profile of strengths and weaknesses across these intelligences and each of them learns in different ways. Intelligences can be equally valued, taught, nurtured and strengthened as stronger intelligences may be used to awaken weaker ones.

In addition, researchers on multiple intelligences believe that the process of learning is both wondrous and complex. They are peering deep into this wonder to more fully explain how the brain works and to redefine learning itself. They have found that brain activity occurs in a number of ways: spontaneously, automatically, and in response to challenge. To learn effectively, this brain activity must be stimulated in at least one of these ways and be combined with useful and suitable feedback systems. Likewise, for learning to continue, the brain must be provided challenging tasks that require significant amounts of reflection or emotional energy. This challenge is an important part of healthy brain functioning.

Intelligence manifests in diverse ways and students learn in different rates for different reasons; thus using multiple intelligences students will have access to learning. The students are not assessed on “How smart are you?” but “How are you, smart?” These intelligences influence the styles of learning of students. Integrating learning styles and multiple intelligences activities is believed to be effective in the enhancement of communicative abilities, motivation and attitude of the learners. By doing this, there is hope of reaching every student, not just a portion of the class.

Subsequently, giving learners the opportunity to experience multiple intelligence-based learning activities can support very positive learning environments where students can experience information in new and exciting ways. With the knowledge of multiple intelligences and learning style theory, educators can integrate various learning strategies so that students bombard their minds in many different ways with new ideas and remain engaged in the educational process. Gardner believes that using multiple intelligences simply provides students with the experience he calls “many windows looking into one room” (Carlson, 1999). The challenge for teachers is in aiding students to discover which of the intelligences are predominant, to incorporate a multitude of teaching strategies to address differing intelligences, and to teach students how to study to capitalize on intellectual strengths.

Moreover, in properly implementing multiple intelligences theory and teaching challenging contents to all students’ intelligences and preferred learning styles, students will show increased independence, self esteem, self-confidence in ability to learn, responsibility and self-direction, behavioral, attention and learning problems both at home and school are greatly reduced, cooperative skills have improved, increased ability to work multi-modally when doing school reports, media reports, etc., demonstrate notable improvement in leadership skills, academic achievement, critical thinking, problem solving and retain information better. The benefits of using multiple intelligences for students also include understanding of learning differences instead of learning disabilities; focuses on skill and knowledge necessary to meet common curriculum outcomes, personal and social development as part of curriculum; challenging, comprehensive and integrated curriculum; authentic assessment of learning; and preparation for living, working, and life-long learning in the new age of globalization.

Furthermore, one remarkable feature of multiple intelligences is that it provides different potential pathways to learning. Multiple intelligences theory suggests several ways in which the materials can be presented to facilitate effective learning. This corresponds to the results of prize winning research which made it clear that most children can master the curriculum when they are taught with strategies, methods or resources that complement how they learn (Dunn, 2001). More research states that students suggest the way that they prefer to learn and that there is a correlation between learning style preference and academic achievement as mentioned. It has also been found that the patterns of learning styles affect which students will achieve high, medium and low. In other words, high achieving students prefer independent study (Collinson, 2000). One more researcher studied and concluded that people with different learning styles gathered information in different ways (Wood, 1996). Students will be more involved with the lesson if they are able to understand the lesson better.

Additionally, Lin (2002) cited that multiple intelligences play a valuable role because as in traditional courses, students often do not truly understand important concepts. Nowhere is this true than in the acquisition of a foreign language. Just as the concept of matter should be taught and approached in different ways, a foreign language should be taught in different ways. This is a good practice pedagogically and projects that interest students can form as bridge to teach students. The most important thing a second language teacher can do in the classroom, according to Chomsky (1988), is to get students excited about the subject. Research conducted on the effectiveness of the multiple intelligences theory has clearly shown that children who are taught through a variety of techniques not only retain information more easily, but they appear to be far more attentive as well. Multiple intelligences-based activities offer a learning environment that reach out to students by tapping and stimulating their individual interests and strengths. When a learning environment of this nature is offered to students, their individual strengths are utilized and their weaker abilities are developed.

Therefore, with the multiple intelligence-based activities at hand, language teachers will be equipped with a variety of approaches that cater to the individual learning abilities and talents as well as their weaknesses that facilitate language acquisition using all areas of intelligence. For instance, language teachers can use music to enhance students' listening and

speaking skills by listening to songs, rhymes, chants or raps. Future tense can be taught using music such as “The Weatherman Song” (Let’s Go 5). The teacher can use a picture to aid students in writing a story or eliciting opinions. Students can go on a field trip and work in a group, write about the trip, and even illustrate some events that happened during the trip. To enhance the speaking and reading skills, teachers can use graphs, charts, concept maps, webs, illustrations and pictures to talk or write about certain topic to stimulate students’ spatial intelligence. Role-playing involves linguistic, kinesthetic, interpersonal and intra-personal intelligences. Oral presentation would involve logical, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial and other intelligences as students will be using their logical thinking in preparing and presenting their topic, create rapport with the audience and work with a group. This activity also calls for the use of students’ meta-cognitive abilities in preparing their presentation that assist in their planning, organizing, analyzing and evaluating their tasks. Students’ background and experiences as their strengths will be used as vehicles to perform tasks in language learning. As a result, students become independent and self-directed in searching for information they needed to present their task from different sources. They will be able to plan, monitor and evaluate their work. This corresponds to meta-cognition as related with interpersonal intelligence in simplest term is “thinking about one’s thinking”, (Pickering-Carlson,1993). He further said that because this is a personal action, it is one that requires us to use our interpersonal intelligence, which is our ability to know and understand our own feelings, needs, desires, capabilities, limitations, etc. From an educational perspective, students of today are not required to provide an answer to a problem, but they are usually asked to explain "how" they arrived at their solution that requires them to use their meta-cognitive abilities. For some students, this is an easy task, while others may find it far more difficult than coming up with the answer to the problem. If we ask students to explain how they reach their answers, they will begin to see patterns in their thinking processes and become more fluent in describing how they arrived at a solution. Most educators believe that this will lead to a better understanding of the topic in order to be able to discuss it.

Meanwhile, Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson (2004) stated that self-directed learning is an outstanding example of intra-personal education since it is founded upon student choice and autonomy. Some conventional educational approaches are based on

autocratic principles where teachers serve as authority figures and infrequent opportunities exist for student participation in decision-making. In self-directed classrooms, however, the students rather than the teacher are the central decision-maker, and self-motivation and self-discipline are the keys to success. With guidance from teachers, students select and manage their own learning process, including the topic to be studied, the goals to pursue, the learning strategies to apply, and resources to utilize. They also have say about ways to demonstrate and assess their accomplishments. In self-directed learning efforts, the teacher's role shifts from teaching content to teaching learning processes so that students can design and manage some of their educational experiences.

Consequently, to inspire children to become lifelong learners, they need to meet with success in school on a daily basis. If we were to provide them with experiences that engage them into an area or task that they enjoy, then they would find the whole process of learning more enjoyable, and as a result will lead students to become independent learners. With multiple intelligences-based activities, the learners become active, risk-takers, creative, critical thinkers, analytical and practical. They become responsible for their own learning, independent, peer and group learning are encouraged. Creative students tend to be inventors, initiators and discoverers. Analytical students are successful at defining a problem and monitoring the steps to solving problems. They do well at scheduling and mapping. Practical students apply, implement, or utilize information learned to real-life situations. Activities are child-centered which generally focused on developing the multi-intelligence aspects of the learners. In this way, learners are engaged in using their skills, abilities, potentials, and talents and at the same time discovering and exploring their hidden talents through active involvement in multiple intelligence activities that will lead them to become self-directed learners. Further, the teacher's role in the classroom becomes less directive and more facilitative. Along with their students, teachers will also become more multi-modal in their approach to English language teaching and learning.

On the account of the importance, benefits and advantages stated above, multiple intelligence theory attracted the researcher because at Assumption College Lampang English teachers encountered various classroom issues that need attention in their English teaching practices. Based on the interview, teachers have been confronted with problems to deal with such as the lack of interest, positive attitude, motivation, self-confidence, self-discipline and

self-direction of some of the students in learning the English language although there may be other factors behind these problems like students' varying characteristics such as personality, personal background as well as teachers' personality and teaching styles. Therefore, there is an utmost need that these problems should be taken into account. With the nature of multiple intelligences theory, the researcher believes that students' English language learning and acquisition will be improved. This research will talk about how multiple intelligences-based activities were brought into the language classroom.

As a rationale, the advantages mentioned above in applying multiple intelligence-based activities in language teaching may promote English language skills of Mathayom Suksa 3 students of Assumption College Lampang. In this research, the presentation, practice, and productions stages used in communicative approach language teaching are employed. The multiple intelligences-based activities are characterized by the incorporation of engaging multimodal activities that promote language skills and self-directed learning. These activities include listening to music, taped conversations, texts and directions; taking down notes and important details; answering questions; predicting; brainstorming, interpreting pictures, drawings and illustrations. Speaking activities will engage students in predicting, discussions, expressing ideas and opinions; reporting, chants; role-playing such as dialogues, skit and oral presentations. Reading activities involve silent reading, reading aloud, chain reading, answering comprehension questions, finding main ideas and noting details using graphic organizers such as concept mapping, chart, etc., using multimedia such as Internet and other references. Writing activities include outlining, summarizing, writing oral presentation; role-plays such as dialogues and skit; and compositions with drawings and illustrations.

The researcher believes that with the varying strategies and activities that provide wide range of learning opportunities offered by multiple intelligences-based activities that stimulate students' cognitive and learning abilities, skills and potentials students' self-direction in their quest for developing and improving themselves and their language skills will be promoted. The results of the research will contribute to English teachers' language teaching practices that would also prompt to the review and adjustment of the school's English language curriculum and syllabus design in response to the background and real and varying needs and of the language learners.

2. Purposes of the Study

The objectives in conducting this study are the following:

1. To compare the English language skills of the students before and after engaging students in multiple intelligences-based activities.

2. To explore the development of the self-directed learning of the students using multiple intelligences-based activities.

3. Scope of the Study

1. Target Group

The target group of this study was the 48 Mathayom Suksa 3 students enrolled in English 015 course on the 1st semester of the academic year 2005 – 2006 at Assumption College Lampang, Lampang, Thailand.

2. Variables

1) The independent variable is the Multiple Intelligences-Based Activities.

2) The dependent variables are the English language skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and self-directed learning ability.

4. Definition of Important Terms

4.1 ***Multiple Intelligence-Based Activities*** refers to the developed multi-modal language activities in the classroom based on multiple intelligences theory. In a lesson plan, a period consist of diverse strategies and activities such as pair or group activities (interpersonal), listening to music, singing, chants, (musical) reading, reading aloud and choral reading (linguistic, logical, interpersonal), dialogues and role playing (verbal, logical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, kinesthetic), oral presentation (verbal, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical), etc. based on the topic of the lesson.

4.2 ***English Language Skills*** refer to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Listening skill is the ability of the students to comprehend, take notes and organize details, grasp the idea and concept of the story and translate or depict them into their drawings and illustrations. This will be assessed by using developed rubrics and scored with the help of

the research assistants. Speaking skill pertains to the ability of the students to respond to questions, express organized ideas, opinions and emotions orally using appropriate gestures and expressions. Reading skill refers to the ability of the students to comprehend, analyse, apply, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate the texts, which will be assessed using multiple choice test. Writing pertains to the ability of the students to write a composition accompanied by drawings or illustrations. These tasks are scored using developed rubrics. The passing score is 50% correct based on the criteria. All the language skills assessments are done before and after the intervention.

4.3 ***Self-directed Learning*** refers to the students' ability to take control and responsibility for the assigned either individual, pair or group tasks, search for further information using different resources to supplement their knowledge of the topic, able to organize details, summarize and evaluate, accomplish and present the given tasks. Students' progress is monitored through their writing of the reflection paper every after accomplishing each task. The reflection paper contains questions that guide students to describe procedures on how they performed their tasks, problems they encountered, how they solved the problems, what they learned from solving problems and what they learned from the tasks.

5. Application Advantages

1. The results of the study can give the school's English teachers new perspectives in teaching the English language using multiple intelligence-based activities.

2. Provide guidelines and paradigms to undergraduate students, teacher trainees and other persons who are interested in English language teaching and learning using multiple intelligence-based activities.

3. The results will give the educational institutions, educators, supervisors, curriculum planners, etc. idea of developing multiple intelligence-based English language curricula.