

## The Effects of Reading Puny and Clever Jokes on The Multiple Intelligence of TEFL Students

**Azadeh Nemati \***

Department of English Language Teaching,  
Jahrom Branch,  
Islamic Azad University,  
Jahrom, Iran  
&

**Delaram Payehvar**

Department of English Language Teaching  
Shiraz Branch  
Islamic Azad University  
Shiraz, Iran.

### Abstract

*This study examines the impact of reading 54 Puny and Clever Jokes on the multiple intelligences of 35 freshman EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at Shiraz University. Employing a quantitative approach with a survey research design, the study utilized Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences questionnaire consisting of 80 Likert-scale items. The data analysis utilized SPSS version 29 and included descriptive statistics, independent sample T-tests, as well as the Kruskal-Wallis test. Results revealed that prior to intervention, interpersonal intelligence was the most prominent among students, followed by bodily-kinesthetic and intrapersonal intelligences, while natural and musical intelligences were the least. Post-intervention, significant increases were observed in interpersonal, verbal-linguistic, and intrapersonal intelligence. The study highlights humor's potential as a pedagogical tool for enhancing certain types of intelligence in EFL contexts. However, findings are constrained by the small, homogeneous sample size, suggesting the need for future studies with more diverse participants.*

**Keywords:** Multiple-intelligence, Reading Jokes, Freshman EFL students.

### Introduction

Since its introduction, the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) has captivated psychologists and educators, generating considerable scholarly critique to evaluate its development, scope, and empirical foundation. This concept has also influenced educational curricula aimed at enhancing children's intellectual growth. Over the last 20 years, Howard Gardner's MI theory has challenged the idea that intelligence can be measured through a single score or quotient.

\* Corresponding Author: Azadeh Nemati

Email: [azadehnematiar@yahoo.com](mailto:azadehnematiar@yahoo.com)

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In *Frames of Mind* (1983), Gardner proposed at least seven fundamental intelligences, later expanding the list to include an eighth. His work encourages educators and parents to view children as individuals rather than measuring their potential solely through standardized tests or specific academic competencies. MI theory acknowledges that children have unique intellectual profiles and do not conform to a singular archetype.

Armstrong (1994) argued that MI theory should be seen as an educational philosophy or a perspective on learning, aligning with John Dewey's progressive education ideals (1916, 1938), rather than as a fixed system of techniques. Its principles offer educators flexibility to creatively apply them in various contexts. For classroom practices and school reform, MI theory suggests diverse teaching strategies, curriculum adjustments, and broader student assessments. Remarkably, disengaged and underperforming students have shown improvement through multifaceted interventions guided by MI principles (Janes, Panagos, Mason, & Villaranda, 2000). The theory advocates individualized education rather than standardized curricula, adapting the content to suit each student's needs.

Gardner (1999) identified eight intelligences that develop differently across individuals, supporting the concept of customized learning. While these intelligences interact with one another, proficiency in one can enhance others. Gardner encourages nurturing all intelligence to maximize overall capability. The eight intelligences include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Gardner's analysis notes that modern schools emphasize linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences, labeled as "academic intelligence." Providing students with experiences across all intelligence domains equips them with diverse ways of learning. For instance, ski instructors using MI theory can better understand students and tailor teaching methods effectively. MI theory diverges from traditional intelligence concepts rooted in early 20th-century frameworks, which focus on general problem-solving abilities measured by IQ tests (Binet & Simon, 1911, 1916; Spearman, 1904, 1927; Perkins & Tishman, 2001). Spearman's theory of general intelligence remains prominent, forming the basis for numerous IQ tests (Brody, 2004; Deary et al., 2007; Jensen, 2008). Some scholars argue intelligence is influenced by environmental factors like upbringing and education (Diamond & Hopson, 1998; Lucas, Morley, & Cole, 1998; Neisser et al., 1996; Nisbett, 2009). However, proponents of general intelligence view it as a fixed trait (Eysenck, 1994; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1980, 1998).

Contrastingly, MI theory views intelligence as heritable potentials and skills shaped by relevant experiences (Gardner, 1983). For example, one individual may excel in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence naturally, while another may require extensive practice to achieve expertise in the same domain. This highlights the diverse paths to developing competencies within intelligence areas. MI theory asserts that strength in one intelligence doesn't imply similar aptitude in others. For instance, a person with high spatial intelligence may have moderate interpersonal intelligence or vice versa. Gardner (2006) emphasizes this multifaceted view of intelligence, which distinguishes MI theory from conventional ideas dominant in Western psychology.

The application of MI principles holds promise both within and beyond formal education settings, particularly in the context of lifelong learning. As the world embraces the significance of continuous learning, developing and enhancing diverse intelligences becomes increasingly vital. MI theory's pluralistic perspective on intelligence, tied to specific human and primate environments, is likely to endure. However, Gardner notes that ongoing research in psychology, neuroscience, and genetics may refine the list of intelligences.

This study aimed at addressing two questions:

1. What are the multiple intelligences of EFL freshman students?
2. How does reading *54 Puny and Clever Jokes* affect the multiple intelligence of EFL freshman students?

It provides insights into students' intellectual profiles through humor and examines the impact of jokes on their intelligence.

### **Review of literature**

Traditional teaching methods, commonly referred to as frontal teaching or "chalk and talk," have proven ineffective for all learners. This inefficiency is illustrated by the high dropout rate of 50% in U.S. high schools (Snyder, 1999). The aspiration of completing education should not be restricted to those who excel in traditional intelligence assessments. In 1983, Howard Gardner introduced the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), which emphasizes the existence of nine distinct intelligences: Bodily/Kinesthetic, Existential, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Logical/Mathematical, Musical, Naturalist, Verbal/Linguistic, and Visual/Spatial (Gardner, 1997).

1st **Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence** relates to the ability to use one's physicality for self-expression, idea generation, or creation (Gardner, 1983).

2nd **Existential Intelligence** entails contemplating life's profound questions and exploring human existence in the universe (Gardner, 1999).

3rd **Interpersonal Intelligence** enables individuals to discern others' emotions, motives, and moods effectively (Gardner, 1983).

4th **Intrapersonal Intelligence** reflects a strong understanding of oneself, life direction, and the capacity for self-driven change.

5th **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence** involves numerical manipulation and effective reasoning capabilities.

6th **Musical Intelligence** refers to the ability to appreciate, create, and perform various forms of music.

7th **Naturalistic Intelligence** pertains to understanding, categorizing, and connecting with elements of the natural world (Gardner, 1999).

8th **Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence**, as noted by Gardner (1983), is the skill of using written or spoken language effectively for communication or expression.

9th **Visual/Spatial Intelligence** involves the ability to visualize and alter spatial configurations for improvement or transformation.

Gardner stresses the importance of a broader understanding of human cognition and learning. MI theory suggests that every individual possesses multiple forms of intelligence and that educators must strive to engage all students by employing diverse teaching strategies tailored to these intelligences.

Building on Gardner's framework, McKenzie (2005) proposed a modern MI model that integrates six workplace-relevant skills: Information Technology Skills, Information Literacy Skills, Problem-Solving Skills, Collaboration Skills, Flexibility, and Creativity. Each skill is connected to Gardner's intelligence, such as using kinesthetic intelligence for IT skills or leveraging interpersonal intelligence for collaboration. This integration demonstrates how intelligence can serve practical and professional purposes.

## Activities to Foster Verbal Intelligence

Developing verbal-linguistic intelligence often involves engaging with literature through activities such as storytelling, debating, interpreting, reporting, and discussing. These activities align with key components of linguistic intelligence:

- **Definitions:** The ability to think with words and use language to convey complex meanings effectively.
- **Competencies:** Skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening skills include interpreting tone and rhythm, while speaking skills involve communicating effectively with various audiences.
- **Learning Strategies:** Methods to deliver material through carefully designed activities and experiences.
- **Final Learning Outcomes:** Developing traits like professionalism and communication skills applicable to careers such as writing, journalism, teaching, law, and public speaking.

To strengthen linguistic intelligence, students can retell stories from literary works such as novels, fairy tales, and plays. Teachers can guide students to read or listen to age-appropriate literary material, take notes on key points, and recount the story either verbally or in writing. Localizing literary content can make learning more relatable.

## Multiple Intelligences and Humor

Nemat Tabrizi (2016) highlighted the effectiveness of MI theory in increasing student motivation and performance in classroom assessments. Adapting teaching methods to cater to diverse intelligences allows students to choose activities that align with their strengths, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. Researchers agree that reading is a multifaceted process (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Hashemi (2008) found that kinesthetic and verbal intelligences significantly influence reading comprehension.

Using humor is another way to develop linguistic and critical thinking skills. Dickinson (1935) emphasized humor as a critical life skill that brings joy and alleviates challenges. Classrooms that embrace humor create an engaging environment for learning. Children's ability to grasp humor develops with age—five-year-olds laughing in response to social cues, while older children can understand and deliver jokes more effectively. Activities such as

puppet shows, joke-telling, or composing humorous songs help students practice language skills and cognitive development. Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2003) noted that humor not only enhances language practice but also fosters critical thinking.

## **Methodology**

The present study utilized a quantitative approach, with all stages of data collection and analysis conducted through statistical and numerical methods. This means that the researcher used quantitative techniques and data analysis methods for data collection. The present study employed a survey research design, to find the effect of reading 54 puny and clever jokes on the multiple intelligence of EFL freshman students.

## **Participants**

For this study, the researcher selected 35 freshman students who were studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Shiraz University. Their participation in the study was voluntary and they were asked to respond to a questionnaire during their class time. The researcher used Intact sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling method. So, it should be noted that the results of this study can only be generalized under very strong assumptions about the sample(s).

## **Instruments**

The researcher used a questionnaire to answer the questions stated earlier. Gardner (1983) designed the questionnaire to assess the effect of 54 puny and clever jokes on the intelligence of EFL students from Azad University. Additionally, the researcher aimed to determine the multiple intelligence of freshman students after reading the book. The questionnaire contained 80 multiple-choice questions, and each response was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed that the total Alpha was 0.63, indicating acceptable reliability.

## **Data collection**

To gather data on the impact of the book "45 Puny and Clever Jokes" on the multiple intelligences of Iranian EFL students, a questionnaire was administered to 35 students. Finally, students were asked to fill out the questionnaires above. The teacher distributed the questionnaire during the student's class time. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that before

administering the questionnaires, brief instruction was given to the students about the purpose of the questionnaire to have a background about it.

### Data analysis

The study aimed to investigate the impact of reading puny and clever jokes on 35 senior students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire analyzed using SPSS version 29. The analysis primarily focused on descriptive statistics, such as personal correlation and independent sample T-test.

The questionnaire was designed by Gardner (1983) and consisted of various sections. The questions were aimed at determining the students' mathematical, spatial, verbal-linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, and natural intelligence. The questionnaire comprised 80 items in the form of 5-point Likert Scale statements. The study began by asking the students to complete the questionnaire. The main objective was to find out the effect of reading a funny book on the intelligence of EFL students at Shiraz University.

### Results of the study

#### Addressing the First Research Question

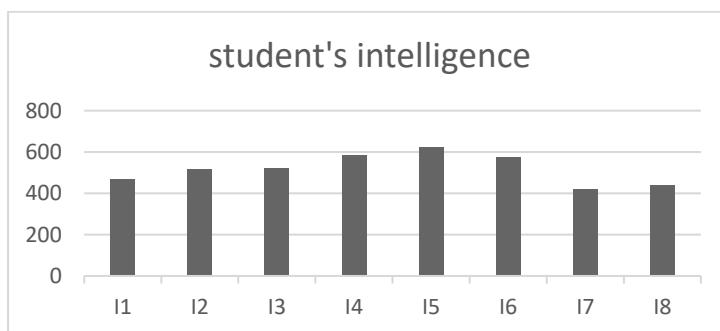
RQ1: What are the multiple intelligences of EFL freshman students?

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics concerning the score of the students' intelligence

|   | Mean  | Total | Intelligence       |          |
|---|-------|-------|--------------------|----------|
| 6 | 23.4  | 468   | Mathematical       | <b>1</b> |
| 5 | 25.8  | 516   | Visual-Spatial     | <b>2</b> |
| 4 | 25.95 | 519   | Verbal linguistic  | <b>3</b> |
| 2 | 29.05 | 581   | Bodily-kinesthetic | <b>4</b> |
| 1 | 31.05 | 621   | Interpersonal      | <b>5</b> |
| 3 | 28.6  | 572   | Intrapersonal      | <b>6</b> |
| 7 | 20.85 | 417   | Musical            | <b>7</b> |

In this study, the researchers assessed the intelligence of freshman students and created a descriptive table to analyze the mean and total intelligence scores of the students. The highest intelligence score was in Interpersonal intelligence, with a total score of 621 and a mean of 31.05, surpassing the scores of other types of intelligence. Additionally, Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence had a total score of 581, Intrapersonal intelligence had a score of 572, Verbal Linguistic intelligence had a score of 519, and Spatial intelligence had a score of 516. Mathematical and Natural intelligence scores were the lowest, ranging from 468 to 440.

**Table2. Multiple intelligence of EFL students**



The researcher tried to determine the average intelligence levels among freshman students before providing them with a joke book. The data revealed that the total score for I5 was 621, which was the highest among all categories of intelligence. Additionally, the score for I4 was 581, and the score for I6 was 572, both higher than the scores for other types of intelligence. Following these intelligences, the total score for I3 intelligence was 519, and then I2 scored 516. Moreover, I1 and I8 respectively received 468 and 440, while I7 scored 417, making it the lowest among other types of intelligence.

### **Addressing the second research question**

RQ2: Does reading 54 Puny and Clever Jokes affect the multiple intelligence of EFL freshman students?

**Table 3.** Pre-test and Post-test results

| <b>Intelligence</b>  |           | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Total percentage</b> |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Logical-mathematical | Pre-test  | 23.4        | <b>468</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 23.5        | <b>470</b>              |
| Visual-spatial       | Pre-test  | 25.8        | <b>516</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 25.9        | <b>517</b>              |
| Verbal – linguistic  | Pre-test  | 25.95       | <b>519</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 26.90       | <b>528</b>              |
| Bodily-kinesthetic   | Pre-test  | 29.05       | <b>581</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 29.05       | <b>581</b>              |
| Interpersonal        | Pre-test  | 31.05       | <b>621</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 33.07       | <b>661</b>              |
| Intrapersonal        | Pre-test  | 28.6        | <b>572</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 29          | <b>584</b>              |
| Musical              | Pre-test  | 20.85       | <b>417</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 20.87       | <b>419</b>              |
| Natural              | pre-test  | 20          | <b>440</b>              |
|                      | Post-test | 20.01       | <b>441</b>              |

The second research question of this study aimed to determine the impact of 54 puny and clever jokes on the intelligence of EFL freshman students. According to the results of the study, the post-test scores for interpersonal and verbal/intrapersonal intelligence increased. However, there was not a significant change in the scores for other intelligences. After reading a joke book, the average score for interpersonal intelligence increased to 33.07, with a total score of 661. The average and total scores for verbal linguistics became 26.90 and

528, respectively. Additionally, the average and total scores for intrapersonal intelligence changed to 29 and 584.

**Table 4.** Kruskal Wallis

|               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>15,147</b> | <b>Kruskal -Wallis test</b> |
| <b>7</b>      | <b>Df</b>                   |
| <b>0.005</b>  | <b>Asymp. Sig.</b>          |

Since the p-value (0.005) is less than 0.05, the researcher states that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups of intelligences.

## Discussion

This section presents an analysis of the study's findings, comparing them with results from earlier research. The development of dominant intelligences among students is influenced by various factors, including gender, age, family background, parental education, parental involvement, and academic performance. However, these results should not be generalized to the entire student population at the university, as the study specifically focused on assessing the intelligences of freshman students at Shiraz University. Among the intelligences evaluated, Interpersonal intelligence achieved the highest score, with a total of 621 and an average of 31.05, outperforming other intelligence types. Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence followed with a score of 581, Intrapersonal intelligence with 572, Verbal-Linguistic intelligence with 519, and Spatial intelligence with 516. On the other hand, Mathematical and Natural intelligences had the lowest scores, ranging between 468 and 440.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of reading a book containing 54 puny and clever jokes on the multiple intelligence of EFL freshman students. The researcher used the Kruskal-Wallis test and conducted pre-tests and post-tests to measure the effect of reading the joke book on the students. The results showed that there was a significant increase in post-test scores for interpersonal and verbal/intrapersonal intelligence. However, there was no significant change in scores for other intelligences. After reading the joke book, the average score for interpersonal intelligence increased to 33.07, with a total score of 661. The average and total scores for verbal linguistics became 26.90 and 528, respectively. Additionally, the average and total scores for intrapersonal intelligence changed to 29 and 584.

These findings differ from those of Özdemir et al. (2006), who reported a stronger preference for logical-mathematical intelligence and a weaker preference for musical intelligence. In our study, it was found that the students showed stronger interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, and intrapersonal intelligence. Our study also revealed that intrapersonal intelligence, which is the ability to understand one's feelings, strengths, and weaknesses (Chen and Gardner, 2005), was the most common type of intelligence among the students. However, after reading 54 puny and clever joke books, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and verbal intelligence became the most common types of intelligence among freshman students.

The current study also investigates the impact of reading a joke book on students' intelligence. In a related study, Zipke (2008) utilized riddles as a tool to enhance third-grade students' metalinguistic awareness and reading comprehension. Over the course of the study, 46 students engaged in lessons that incorporated riddles to identify and define homonyms, alongside activities involving the reading and writing of stories inspired by Peggy Parish's *Amelia Bedelia* series. The results demonstrated that students exposed to this riddle-based instructional approach outperformed those in the control group on both pretests and posttests.

Zipke attributed the students' heightened enthusiasm and motivation to the enjoyable nature of riddles in the learning process. As the author noted, "riddles offer especially engaging instructional content for teaching language manipulation for many reasons: Most children are familiar and comfortable with riddles." This study underscores the potential of using humor and riddles not only to make learning enjoyable but also to deepen students' language skills and comprehension.

Andrioti (2010) found that whether in an online or traditional setting, his students are encouraged to identify their strengths by taking a Multiple Intelligence assessment. Andrioti has found that incorporating humor, whether online or in the traditional classroom, helps put even the most reluctant of students at ease. When students are relaxed and open to learning, the teacher's job becomes much easier. Research showed that teachers who incorporate humor and metaphor into their written language achieve better learning outcomes, both in the traditional classroom and online (Gibbs & Fewell, 1996). However, it's crucial to be clear when using humor, especially online. Gibbs and Fewell suggest that if instructors must use humor and want the students to recognize it as such, the use of an emoticon, such as a smiley or frowning face, would be appropriate (1996). Humor creates a sense of community among online students.

## Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate the influence of reading *54 Puny and Clever Jokes* on the intellectual development of 35 freshman students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). To achieve this goal, the researcher employed descriptive statistics to assess the students' intelligence. Following this, as part of the post-test, the researcher introduced *Puny and Clever Jokes* to evaluate the impact of reading jokes on their intellectual performance. The results showed that after reading 54 puny and clever jokes, the interpersonal, verbal, and intrapersonal intelligence of the students increased.

While the findings regarding the most and least common intelligence types among students offer insights into their individual characteristics, they also hold valuable implications for foreign language educators. Specifically, one of the research questions aimed to explore whether a connection exists between a specific type of intelligence and the activity of reading a humorous book.

Upon realizing this study, we have become aware of certain limitations that need to be addressed shortly. Firstly, the size and uniformity of the sample have not entirely allowed for a clear investigation and analysis of various aspects, including the differences between men and women, and students of different academic levels. It would be beneficial to further explore this area by increasing the number of participants and diversifying the university degrees they pursue to provide a more definite answer to this complex question.

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