



# The Applicability of MI Theory in English Classrooms

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## چکیده

با وجود این که مفهوم هوش یکی از بحث‌برانگیزترین موضوعات در حوزه‌ی روان‌شناسی و آموزش می‌باشد، هیچ‌گاه تعریف ثابتی از معنای دقیق هوش در دست نبوده است. هر چند وجود هوش عمومی مدتی طولانی مورد تأیید روان‌شناسان بوده است، این باور با تئوری هوش چندگانه که در سال ۱۹۸۳ توسط هاوارد گاردنر ارائه گردید، جایگزین شد. تئوری هوش‌های چندگانه بر لزوم در نظر گرفتن و شناسایی ابعاد هوش بشری تأکید دارد و بر این باور شکل گرفته که دانش‌آموزان دارای روش‌های یادگیری مختلف، نیازهای گوناگون و چندین بعد متفاوت از هوش می‌باشند.

این مطالعه تلاش دارد استفاده از فعالیت‌های کلاسی براساس هوش‌های چندگانه را در کلاس‌های آموزش انگلیسی به‌ویژه مقطع تحصیلی دبیرستان در ایران گسترش دهد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** تئوری هوش‌های چندگانه، تکنیک‌های مبتنی بر هوش‌های چندگانه، فعالیت‌های کلاسی مبتنی بر هوش‌های چندگانه، کتب آموزشی انگلیسی در مقطع دبیرستان در ایران

progress in their post-test compared to high proficiency ones. So the rate of progress is as follows: EL > INT > AD. This finding indicates that dictogloss was more beneficial to low proficiency learners than high proficiency learners.

Thirdly, it was found that the effect of

**dictogloss is an effective method to encourage students to create meaning and process language syntactically**

dictogloss was not moderated by gender. In other words, the typical performance of male vs. female participants in all groups who received dictogloss did not significantly change according to gender.

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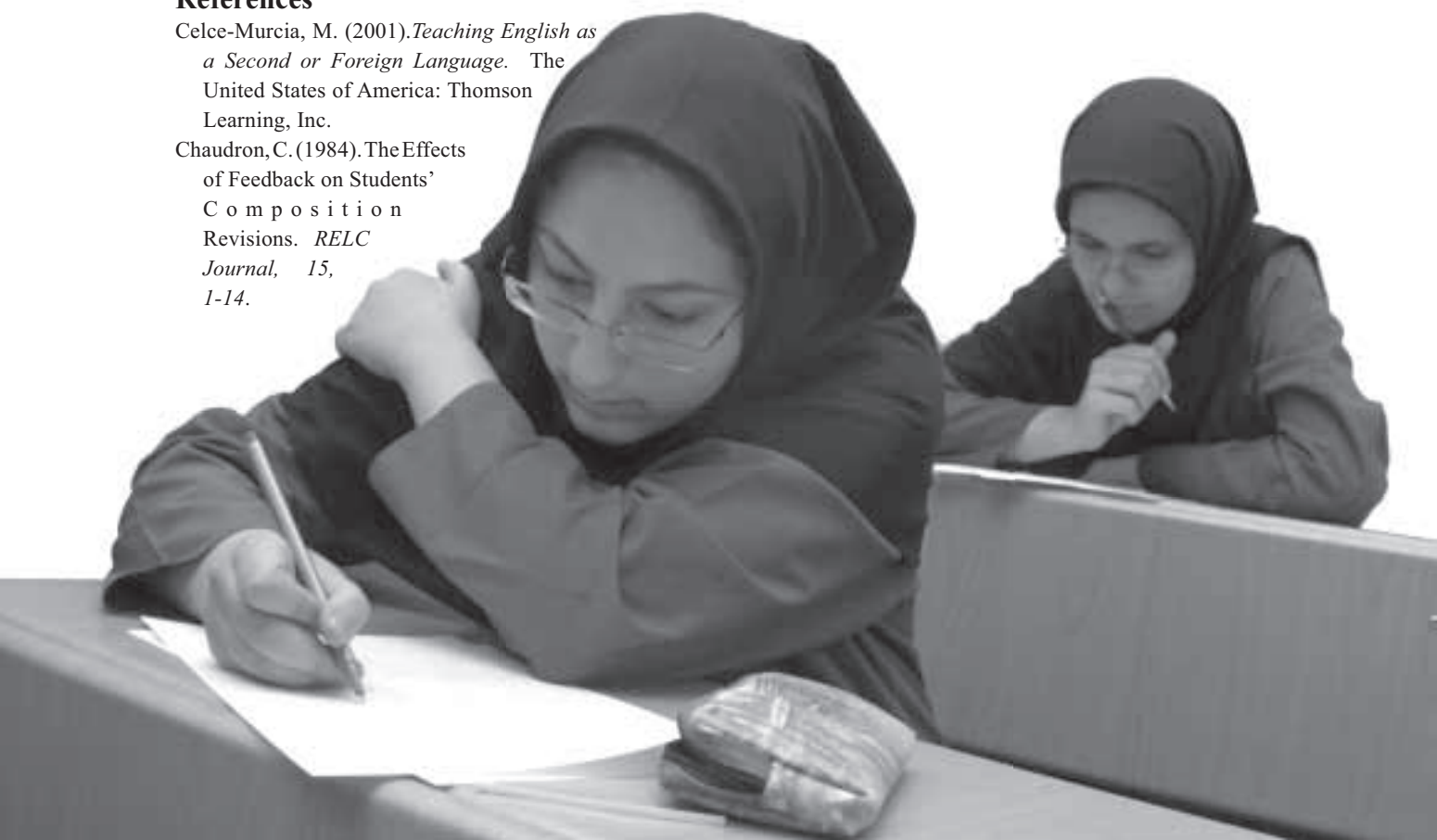
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variable of gender, table 4 clearly shows that the male and female groups show no difference toward the effect of treatment and the difference is not significant,  $F=1.21, df=1$  and  $p=0.27$ . To sum up, table 4 also shows no interaction between the proficiency and gender level ( $F=.787, df=2$  and  $P=0.45$ ) indicating that dictogloss is an effective task to improve EFL general writing skills regardless of the learners' language proficiency levels and their gender.

**Table 2: Between-Subjects Factors**

		Value Label	N
Proficiency	1,00	primary	88
Level	2,00	Intermediate	80
Gender	3,00	Advanced	80
	1,00	Boys	120
	2,00	Girls	128

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

Dependent Variable: all scores

Proficiency level	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Primary	Boys	15,8250	2,61051	40
	Girls	15,7083	2,24042	48
	Total	15,7614	2,40208	88
Intermediate	Boys	16,7250	2,23018	40
	Girls	17,3750	1,79297	40
	Total	17,0500	2,03700	80
Advanced	Boys	18,2750	1,43201	40
	Girls	18,5750	1,10680	40
	Total	18,4250	1,28058	80
Total	Boys	16,9417	2,35966	120
	Girls	17,1250	2,15903	128
	Total	17,0363	2,25560	248

**Table 4: A Two way ANOVA analysis of the effect of dictogloss on writing skill**

#### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: all scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	307,882 <sup>a</sup>	5	61,576	15,706	.00
Intercept	72019,430	1	72019,430	18369,367	.00
Proficiency	294,967	2	147,484	37,617	.00
Level					
Gender	4,762	1	4,762	1,215	.27
Level					
Proficiency	6,167	2	3,084	,78	.45
*Gender					
Error	948,792	242	3,921		
Total	73235,000	248			
Corrected Total	1256,673	247			

## Discussion and Conclusion

We can draw three main conclusions from this study.

First, the present limited study found that dictogloss had a significant effect on the learners' writing ability. This findings is in line with Kagan and McGroarty (1993) who hypothesize that in the traditional classroom, input is often not comprehensible, but when there is collaborative learning, the input becomes comprehensible through the negotiation process.

Secondly, it was found that not only the study found a greater improvement in writing using dictogloss, but it also found that low proficiency learners (EL) made more progress in their post-test compared to intermediate ones and intermediate ones made more

### ***Materials and Procedures***

To conduct the research, 42 stories were needed, 14 stories for the elementary groups, 14 stories for the intermediate groups and 14 stories for the advanced groups. Since the researcher intended to include the stories in which the students were interested, he decided to choose the stories from a comical book. The stories were chosen from the book “steps to understanding” by L.A Hill. The book had already divided the stories to three levels of elementary, intermediate and advanced. The stories were parts of the participants’ syllabus and formed a major part of their class activity evaluation but they were not graded except for the first (pre-test) and the twelfth (post-test) one. So twelve of the stories were not graded and only were commented on and returned to the group. The time allocated to each writing assignment was about twenty to thirty minutes.

### ***Scoring***

To score the stories rewritten by the students, the researchers considered the following grammatical and discourse points in their measurement. They are usually included in the evaluation process of learners’ L2 writing skills (Wajnryb, 1998). Subject-verb agreement, correct verb tenses, correct use of articles, determiners and prepositions, correct singular/plural forms of the words.

Maximally 15 scores were allocated to the accuracy of the above-mentioned grammatical points. An extra 5 scores

were given to the correct use of coherent and cohesive ties used within and between sentences used in their rewritten stories. They composed of transitional words like *then, and, first*, correct forms of anaphoric devices making connections between the references and referents. Clearly they cause meaningful connection between sentences for linguistic and pragmatic purposes (Yule, 2007).

## **R**esults

This section presents discussion of the findings of the study. The results will be discussed systematically beginning with research question one and concluding with research question three.

### ***Univariate Analysis of the Variance***

A univariate analysis of variance on the posttest scores as the dependent variable and dictogloss intervention at three different language proficiency levels as the independent variable. To show the effect of the moderator variable of gender, the researchers also included the effect of gender level in the analysis.

As table 4 shows, the main effect of the study which is the effect of dictogloss on all proficiency levels at male/female groups is significant ( $F=15.70$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Concerning the role of proficiency level on the effect of dictogloss, we can see that all the groups have been under the effect of the treatment as  $F=37.61$ ,  $df=2$  which is significant at  $p<0.05$ .

To show the effect of the moderator





## Method *Participants*

The participants were 124 Iranian EFL students between the ages of 15 and 50. They were selected from an English Language Institute in Yazd, and were both males and females. All participants were native speakers of Persian. None of them had stayed in English speaking countries for more than a week. All had studied English in senior and junior high school as compulsory foreign language for 3-7 years before starting their extra English classes. Educational background of the participants ranged from high school students to university students, but none of them majored in English. The participants of the study were divided into three groups (high, intermediate and low proficiency levels) based on ILI placement test. The term elementary and intermediate and advanced levels have been used by the ILI to divide its language learners into three proficiency groups. The participants were also divided into six groups based on their proficiency levels and genders: 1) Elementary females, 2) Elementary males, 3) Intermediate females, 4) Intermediate males, 5) Advanced females and 6) Advanced males. In all six groups the students were asked to work in small groups and practice to improve their English including writing skills through dictogloss activities. The participants of each class were randomly assigned to small groups of 4 or 5 according to the number of student in the class. Approximately there were equal numbers of students selected naturally in

each of the six groups.

All participants took a pre-test, followed by the treatment and the post-test. Only those students who completed all 12 sessions of treatment were included in the data analysis. Due to this requirement, 4 students were later excluded from the study. In addition, 7 other students were not included in the study due to an exceptionally high error rate on writing assignments. The final 124 students participated in the study. As for their pre-test, all the participants had to write one in-class reconstructed story by him/herself within 20 minutes time limit. Three of the classes were taught by the researcher and the other three were taught by a colleague of the researcher. The classes met for 4 hours a week for seven weeks. It is worth noting that the classes were not writing-oriented ones, rather all skills were taught and practiced with especial attention to the writing skill.

Table 1 shows all the groups who participated in the study and their abbreviations used throughout the study.

**Table 1: The three language proficiency groups and their gender levels**

Groups	Initials	Numbers
Elementary Level, Males	ELM	20
Elementary Level, Females	ELF	24
Intermediate Level, Males	INTM	20
Intermediate Level, Females	INTF	20
Advanced Level, Males	ADM	20
Advanced Level, Females	ADF	20



example, said that DGs encourage learners to reflect on their output, an activity that Swain believed to be important to push acquisition along. Qin (2008) said that DGs push learners to “notice the gap” or to make “cognitive comparisons”, something that causes learners to “notice their possibly insufficient current developing linguistic competence and then restructure it after exposure to the target model” (p. 63). What one gleans from the various discussions about DG and the research used with them is that DGs invite learners to produce language, which in turn prompts them to compare what they produce with an original text. Thus, DGs are neither purely output nor purely input in orientation, but a blend of both.

What are the tasks which would encourage students to produce output? Kowal and Swain (1994) conducted a study in a grade 8 French immersion classroom in a lower-middle to middle-class area of Toronto. According to Swain’s output hypothesis (1985), speaking and writing can help students move from semantic to syntactic processing. Here, Kowal, the teacher, tried to identify collaborative tasks which would encourage students to think and talk about the function and application of French grammar in specific writing activities. Two tasks, a dictogloss and a cloze activity, were used. Four dictoglosses were given to the class over a two-month period at bi-weekly intervals. The interaction occurring in pair work during the third dictogloss was taped. It was found that

the dictogloss is an effective method to encourage students to create meaning and process language syntactically. The other task used was a cloze activity. Before conducting this activity, the teacher had reviewed two past tenses with the class. In the cloze activity, the students were given a resume of a story. They were given the infinitive of the verbs and required to fill in the blanks.

Kowal and Swain claimed that both tasks can make students become aware of the role that French syntax plays in conveying meaning. Thus, they can be important help for encouraging skills that can be overlooked in the French immersion classroom.

LaPierre (1994) also conducted a study looking into the effects of comprehensible output in a collaborative learning setting on French second language learning of students in an immersion program. The subjects were 69 grade 8 students who were divided into three groups: The Individual Production Group (IPG), the Paired Negotiation Group (PNG) and the Paired Negotiation and Reflection Group (PNRG). The task used by LaPierre was also the dictogloss. The data analyzed consisted of transcripts of students’ talk as they reconstructed the passage in pairs. From these transcripts, pair specific tests were developed. The results of the study showed that when students negotiated and reflected on language, their learning of French was enhanced. Moreover, when these students worked in a collaborative learning setting, they engaged in syntactic processing.

change the input into intake. One of the ways that makes this viable is dictogloss. Dictogloss is a teaching procedure that involves the speedy dictation of a short text to a group of language students. The students take notes during the reading of the text and then, working in small groups, proceed to piece together the text as a cooperative endeavor. This is achieved by the pooling of the group's notes and the making of grammatical decisions about the text: specifically about word choice, sentence formation, and cross-sentence connections. Finally, after each group has produced its own version of the text, the whole class reconvenes and the groups' versions are analyzed and corrected.

## **R**eview of literature *The Output Hypothesis*

This last point about comprehensible output is particularly important. While Krashen (1985) stresses the importance of comprehensible input, saying that the only role of output is that of generating comprehensible input, Swain (1985) argues that there are roles for output in SLA that are not related to comprehensible input. It is normally accepted that output improves fluency, but Swain (1995a) suggests that output serves at least three other functions in SLA. They include the noticing function, the hypothesis testing function and the reflective/metalinguistic function. She believes that the three functions can help promote accuracy. Promoting accuracy has become an important issue because people

have become aware that a focus on form within communicative settings may be the best way to enhance performance. Swain also supports the use of collaborative tasks because she thinks that they can help learners to focus on both form and meaning which can stimulate learners to test hypotheses and reflect on their own language production.

### ***Some Related Studies***

Within contemporary second language acquisition research, the effect of instruction on the formal properties of language has been debated ever since Krashen (1985) proposed his famous acquisition-learning distinction. Krashen's claim was that instruction of formal properties would not affect acquisition (the creation of an implicit linguistic system) but would affect what he called learning (the creation of an explicit linguistic system). Positions about the relative effects of instruction included those that were in alignment with Krashen's position (Truscott, 1996) and those that aligned themselves with the idea that instruction did have some kind of effect (Ellis, 1994).

Dictoglosses (DGs) have recently received attention in the focus-on-form literature. It first described in Wajnryb (1990), and later featured in works by Swain (1995) and Qin (2008).

Proponents of DG claim that this particular activity type prompts learners to pay attention to form while working through meaning. Swain (1995), for



در مورد نحوه برخورد دبیران زبان انگلیسی (به عنوان زبان خارجی) با زبان آموزانی که از پختگی و توانایی کمی در نگارش برخوردارند، پژوهش‌های معدودی به چاپ رسیده است. در حالی که پژوهش‌های متعددی به مسائل مربوط به بازخورد معلم و هم‌کلاسی در کلاس‌های «نگارش محور» پرداخته‌اند، به تأثیر فعالیت‌های مشارکتی به ویژه dictogloss بر مهارت‌های نگارشی کمتر پرداخته شده است. فعالیت‌های مشارکتی تولیدی، از جمله فعالیت‌های آموزشی هستند که برای بهبود مهارت‌های نگارشی توصیه می‌شوند.

پژوهش حاضر دو هدف را دنبال کرده است:

(الف) مقایسه تأثیر فعالیت‌های مشارکتی تولیدی بر کیفیت نگارش زبان آموزان سطح پایین، متوسط و بالا؛

(ب) مقایسه این تأثیر بین زبان آموزان دختر و پسر.

مشارکت‌کنندگان در تحقیق را ۱۲۴ زبان آموز ایرانی سنین ۱۵ تا ۵۰ سال در یکی آموزشگاه‌های زبان تشکیل می‌دادند. تحقیق حاضر به سه نتیجه مشخص دست یافت:

(الف) dictogloss تأثیر معنی‌داری بر توانش نگارشی زبان آموزان دارد و باعث می‌شود اشتباهات آن‌ها در نگارش کاهش یابد.

(ب) زبان آموزان سطح پایین در مقایسه با دو سطح دیگر، پیشرفت بیشتری داشته‌اند.

(ج) عامل جنس بر نتایج تأثیر معنی‌داری بر جای نگذاشته است.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** فعالیت مشارکتی تولیدی، مهارت نوشتن، آموزش زبان فعالیت محور.

## Introduction

No matter how fluent language learners are at speaking, they sure have challenges in second language writing. Second language writing became an important instructional issue in the mid-20th century since writing would enable learners to plan and rethink the communication process (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Due to the fact that writing involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way, it is often considered to be the hardest skills even for native speakers of a language.

Many scholars believe that collaborative tasks will work because they often demand positive interdependence among the students. And when students know that they are all in the same boat, they will be motivated to help their teammates, to tutor them or practice with them. In writing too, if the students try to share their knowledge and

try to use the experience of their teammates, they will gain more. When they are writing individually, there is no motivation for them and they don't try to use their full competency and energy.

Writing skill is a productive skill which require learners focus more on form in order to improve to accuracy. In writing what learners notice in input becomes intake for learning. In other words, the first condition for converting input to intake is noticing. Ellis (1994, p. 708) defines intake as "that portion of the input that learners notice and therefore take into temporary memory". According to Ellis (1994), corrective feedback provides such "noticing" by drawing learner's attention and therefore helps learners with opportunities to produce comprehensible output. This won't be realized unless they can work in some kind of group so that they can interact with each other and