



# GRAPHIC NOVELS: A KEY TO INTELLIGENCE IN ESL CLASSROOMS

**<sup>1</sup>Ms. A. J. Bernita,**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor,

<sup>1</sup>The Research Centre of English,

<sup>1</sup>Fatima College, Madurai, Tamilnadu, India

**Abstract :** This paper analyses the need for learning English by using the Triarchic theory of Intelligence. The paper also suggest the ways in which learning English through various activities based on graphic novels, can enhance the intelligence of a person. Teaching of ESL has become a widely challenging task for the trainers and several new theories are proposed from time to time. Every theory focusses on enhancing a particular ability in the learners, mostly one among the LSRW skills. Linguists and psychologists opine that the overall acquirement of a language, especially ESL, can be attained through inclusive teaching and learning. Tapping the various abilities/ intelligences of the learners can make them learn the language like the acquisition of mother tongue. Among the various intelligence theories, Sternberg's Triarchic Intelligence theory is comprehensive of the theories proposed by his early predecessors. The Triarchic Intelligence comprises of the three types of intelligences, viz., practical, creative and analytical. Sternberg categorises them further as conceptual, experiential and componential. For a holistic learning, the aforesaid triarchic intelligence is necessary and can be tapped by using graphic novels. Graphic novels by its presentation stimulated the practical intelligence; the creation of it kindles the creative intelligence and by deciphering a graphic novel the analytical intelligence is stirred up.

**IndexTerms –** Graphic Novels, intelligence, ESL, EFL, triarchic intelligence, second language acquisition.

English language plays a pivotal role in the spreading of information and knowledge across the globe. It has also provided national life to many nations by being the link language or second language. Technology is said to have shrunk the world into a global village and English is the language of it. The terminologies such as **English as a Second Language (ESL)** and **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)** are hot topics at any time. ESL or EFL is important in the other countries as it is an “international language” and holds library importance, national importance, recreational importance, educational importance, cultural importance and vocational importance (Patel, 2008). Owing to its varied importance, it always holds a special place as a language.

India is one such nation, which with its diverse languages, uses English as the Second Language of the nation and also Lingua Franca. English as a link language in India, connects all the people despite their differences in language, culture, caste and creed. In spite of the questions raised by several other major languages of India about the excessive importance given to English language, English still upholds its primary importance. The Radha Krishnan Commission of India spells out it as English however must continue to be studied. It is a language that is rich in literature, humanistic, scientific and technical. (Patel, 2008). Apart from India, almost all the countries who fought against the language, have accepted English as their link language or associate language. Though English is argued as the language of the colonisers, it still has a strong hold in the minds of the people.

People of diverse backgrounds have now realised the need to study English language. Therefore, there is a great demand in the ESL countries to train learners in the language. Teaching of ESL has become a widely challenging task for the trainers and several new theories are proposed from time to time. Every theory focusses on enhancing a particular ability in the learners, mostly any one among the LSRW skills. Compared to the acquisition of Mother Tongue, learning of ESL becomes a tedious problem for many learners. The lack of motivation, lack of proper models, unavailability of opportunities and situations become barriers in learning ESL.

The various strategies used for language learning include, Grammar Translation, Direct Approach, Audio-lingualism, Cognitive Approach, Affective- Humanistic Approach, Natural Approach and Communicative Approach. These major approaches

in language teaching and learning have been successful only to a minimum. There is always a need for a holistic approach to language learning as foreign language teaching and learning has been mostly teacher centric. Primarily, in English language teaching, the level of the learning process depends upon the way a teacher teaches. It is only in the recent time, this view is altered. At present, there is a shift from teacher-centric attitude to student-centric attitude.

Psychologists have proved that the learners' psychology is very important for learning. The level of this intelligence the state of mind and the interest play a crucial role in the acquisition of first or second language, especially in learning a foreign language. Linguists and psychologists opine that the overall acquirement of a language, especially ESL, can be attained through inclusive teaching and learning. A language is culturally embedded and as a structural system it becomes a habit and influences the social behaviour of people. So, learning a new language involves behaviourism, cognitivism and the psychological traits.

Behaviorism, as a school of psychology was established by the Russian psychologist Pavlov and B.F. Skinner, an American psychologist. The behaviourist theory proposes that language is best learned by behaving in the context by "conditioned behaviour and operant behaviour". Skinner opines that "the consequences of behaviour may 'feedback' into the organism. When they do so, they may change the probability that the behaviour which produced them will occur again" (Skinner, 2005). He also proposes that language teaching can be accompanied by rewards and punishments that would reinforce the desired learning outcome in the person.

Herbert A. Simon and Craig A. Kaplan in their article in the book *Foundations of Cognitive Science* explain that cognitive theorists study "intelligence and intelligent system with particular reference to intelligent behaviour." (Posner, 1989). The cognitive psychology takes into consideration experimental psychology, artificial intelligence, linguistics, philosophy, neuroscience and social psychology. They correlate psychology with the level of intelligence of a person determined through various intelligence tests. Cognitive psychology in language learning lays emphasis on "Sensory and motor processes such as rote verbal learning, tracking tasks requiring hand, eye coordination, memory tasks involving relatively short- term retention and the attachment of simple concepts" (Posner, 1989).

The theories about learning and intelligence of the late nineteenth and the following centuries are based on the broader psychological theories (ie) Behaviour and Cognitive psychology. The major theories of intelligence comprises of Galton's Intelligence Theory, Spearman's General Intelligence, Thurstone's Primary Mental Abilities, Gardner's Multiple intelligence and Sternberg's Triarchic theory of Intelligence. A brief overview of the different theories of intelligence is given below.

Sir Francis Galton, a British Psychologist proposed his intelligence theory in the eighteenth century and was named after him as Galton's Intelligence Theory. He theorises that intelligence and most of the mental capabilities of human beings are inherited and is a biological concept. He is the pioneer to test intelligence using scientific methods. He named the tests of intelligence as "reaction time tests". Though his concept was welcomed in the beginning, it lost its importance due to the increased desire in humans to boost intelligence biologically. It also led to harmful medical practices to boost intelligence through medications.

Following Galton 1904, Charles Spearman, an English psychologist developed his two factor theory of intelligence. He proposed that the two factors that greatly influence a person's intelligence are g factor and s factor. 'G' factor refers to the 'General intelligence' and 'S' factor refers to 'Specific or Specialized intelligence'. According to Spearman's theory general intelligence is in born with all the individuals but its level varies. Whereas specific intelligence is not inborn but are developed by individuals on the basis of their needs. He also opines that if the g factor is greater than s factor, those individuals have a greater probability to achieve more than vice versa. This theory was criticised by Godfrey Thomson in 1916 and began to lose its lustre.

Louis Leon Thrustone succeeded Spearman and brought out his theory of intelligence in 1930s. Unlike Spearman, Thurstone categorised the mental abilities or intelligence under seven heads as "verbal fluency, word fluency, number facility, spatial visualisation, associative memory, perpetual speed and reasoning" (Thurstone, 1941). Thurstone's intelligence theory was the first of its kind to include all the abilities of the human mind. He stated that each mental ability is different from one another and its degree also varies from person to person. He was the pioneer to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence. He also developed a formal technique called Thurstone's scale to measure the intelligence and emotions of the people. After the emergence of Gardner's and Sternberg's theories, Thurstone's theory is not used widely.

Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple intelligence founded in 1983 was a ground breaking concept in the field of psychology. He was of the view that the traditional theories of intelligence and views about psychology have been too limited. Hence, he grouped all the possible intelligence a human has into eight categories. In this book *Frames of Mind : The Theory of*

**Multiple Intelligence** he lists out the types as linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily - kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligence. His theory replicates the fact that these multiple intelligence can help in understanding and can help in the overall development of individuals psychology. Gardner states that “We are all so different largely because we have different combinations of intelligence. If we recognize this, I think we will have at least a better chance of dealing appropriately with the many problems we face in the world” (Gardner, 2008). His multiple intelligence theory was widely used in teaching at schools and some institutions follow them till date.

After several empirical study on Gardners’ multiple intelligence, some critics observed that it did not account for other types of intelligence. Later in 1985 Robert Sternberg published his “Triarchic Theory of Intelligence”. His theory is a notable concept in the field of intelligence as it rectifies and integrates all the aspects of intelligence that were unrecognized by his forerunners. His definition of intelligence differs from others and he defines successful intelligence as “one’s ability to choose, reevaluate and to the extent possible attain one’s goals in life, within one’s sociocultural context (Sternberg,2018). According to him, the analytical, creative and practical aspects are the three important aspects of intelligence.

Sternberg defines the **practical intelligence** as the ability to get along in different contexts. It can also be described the ways in which a person can get used to the various types of environment, say, home, school, workplace and at any public place. Similarly, it is the ability to get adapted to different environments in different countries. For instance, a person going to London from Japan for his career prospective, will get adapted to the land’s rules, culture, food and so on. In the same way, in the language learning process, the learner can best learn when he/she gets used to the context of the lesson taught.

**Creative Intelligence** is the ability to create new ideas. The creativity of a person allows him/ her to invent possible ways to make themselves used to a particular situation. When a person is in the practical context and given space for innovation, their creative intelligence makes wonders. In the same way, when the language learners get used to the practical context of learning, they try to use the language in a creative manner. Taken for instance, a person who pursues his higher education in an alien country just knowing to communicate with the people in the country’s language, will adopt creative measures or use the known words in a creative manner to get any work done.

All the creative ideas that occur in the mind, cannot be put into practice. In such as case, analytical intelligence comes in rescue. **Analytical intelligence** is the ability to evaluate and solve problems. In any context, everybody meets some challenges, they use their analytical skills to discern, evaluate and arrive at a solution. The same can be applied in language learning. Through puzzles, riddles and games the learners learn to evaluate and find a solution.

The Triarchic theory of intelligence is further divided into sub-theories as Contextual, Experiential and Componential. The contextual refers to the ways in which a person learns to relate oneself with the environment. It then moves on to the stages of adapting and adjusting to the environment. The final stage is to explore ways to fit into the environment. In the learner’s context, a learner first relates oneself to the subject, then adapt it in their lives and they also use some of the ways to adjust in difficult areas. After getting little comfortable by adjusting and learning some facts, they look for new ways to fit into it that is to become knowledgeable about the subject.

The experiential trait is learning by experience, by being in the context for a specified period of time. This trait is easily adaptable as it requires only minimal thought processing. It works mostly on the emotions and the character of a particular person. The componential trait is a more matured trait in which after attaining a particular thing, the various components that helped in achieving are outlined. These characteristics are then made available to others. This can be best explained in the language learning context. After mastering a new language, the learner becomes a tutor for others and use componential trait to teach the other learners.

In learning an ESL in classrooms, fulfilling the triarchic intelligence theory, graphic novels can be used for effective learning. Graphic Novels can be defined as a story that is presented with pictures in a comic strip format or published as a book. It can be shortly defined as images that tell a story. Graphic novels have its origin from the nineteenth century narrative comics that appeared in the newspapers. The graphic novels became increasingly popular from the twentieth century onwards. The graphic novels include fiction, personal narrative, nonfiction, manga, Japanese form, stories about superheroes and memoir.

Originally the graphic novels were intended for children’s reading but in the recent times it has readership among people of all age groups. Graphic novels take their inspiration for the old cave paintings and the strips of paintings in the religious places that told a story. Eisner describes graphic novels as a disciplined application that creates the ‘grammar’ of a sequential art (Eisner,

2008). So the graphic novel primarily consists of images designed for each of the scenes. The graphic novels, unlike the other novels, are linear in type. It has a clear beginning, middle and end to enhance the readability. Most of the graphic novels possess only one central narrative sometimes they are supplemented by subplots not more than one at a time. The graphic novels are centered around a single theme and always conveys a message to its readers.

The graphic novels are characterized by the journey or development of a character. They include devices like perspective techniques, narrative voice (external/ internal, explicit/ implicit, in legends and balloons), the presentation of dialogue through (speech and thought balloons), the technique of following (as sentiments and thoughts are revealed through actions in a sequence of images), and other means of visual showing such as facial expression, gesture, body language, gaze and character's position in the image in relation to other visible objects (Nikolajeva, 2001). The other important characteristic features of a graphic novel are its structure, layout, comic elements and relevant pictures. Foucault's words can be found appropriate to a graphic narrative. He expresses that, the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of texts (Foucault 2001). He thus points out that the narrative must have unity and the author or the one who re-makes it must take care of its linearity. Thus, recreating a novel into a graphic novel becomes a challenging task.

Generally, the graphic novels are adapted from the original published traditional novels. The process of changing a traditional novel into a graphic novel involves the following steps:

- \* Studying the novel for details of character and important events
- \* Designing an interesting setting and preparing a layout for the novel.
- \* Sketching the characters of the novel
- \* Writing precise dialogues

The graphic novels can be used as tools to enhance triarchic intelligence of a learner, especially ESL learners. The first intelligence, **practical intelligence** of the triarchic concept can be tapped by making the learners read and reproduce a novel as a graphic novel.

#### Activity:

The learners can be given a short passage from a novel and can be asked to create a dialogue of it.

#### Expected Outcome:

The learners during the activity will be able to

- => Decipher the facts
- => Understand the context of the novel.

**Creative intelligence** can be brought out by making the learners create layout, caricatures, shapes, fonts and colors for each dialogue.

#### Activity:

The learners could be asked to draw the setting or the character or the storyboard of a given extract of a novel.

#### Expected Outcome:

At the end of the activity, the learners would be able to

- Create a character
- Use the given space in a creative manner.
- Use appropriate images or sketches for the scene.

The final **analytical intelligence** can be gained through the evaluation of the text. The learners when they interpret the story and the characters, they also interpret the story's background and the culture. So they would be able to analyze the morals of the story and distinguish the good and the bad.

#### Activity

The learners can be asked to draw/ sketch a character through the clues given by the author and the other characters in the story.

#### Expected Outcome:

At the end of the activity, the learners would be able to

- analyse the emotion exhibited by the character.
- imagining the character with the traits said by others.



➤ give a heroic or villainous look for the character.

Distinct from all the means of teaching and learning is the new form called 'accelerated learning'. Alan Pritchard defines accelerated learning as, an umbrella term for a series of practical approaches to learning which are based on research and developments in aspects of brain function' theories of human attention and motivation; the psychology of learning and neuroscience (Pritchard, 2008). The main perspective of accelerated learning is that children can achieve more beyond their capabilities. Accelerated Learning calls the teachers to the visual, musical and physical factors and create a positive learning environment. Feedback, Over view and Purpose are also mandated in accelerated learning. In this type the learners are provided with time for reflection, discussion and opportunities of working in groups. All these characteristics can be put into practice with the analysis and creation Graphic Novels.

Smith in his six principles of learning, creates an acronym BASIS for the sixth principle. BASIS stands for belonging, aspiration, safety, identity and success (Smith, 1996). This acronym becomes much suitable for learning through graphic novels. The creation of a graphic novel which includes reproducing of dialogues gives a sense of belongingness to its creator. The activities that feature in the making of graphic novels, instigates the aspiration of the learners and creators. Moreover, the pictures or the dialogues used in the graphic novels aid to the safety of interpretation of the text. The various connected activities that center around graphic novels, create an identity for themselves as script writer, storyboard designer and editor, artist and so on. All these ends up with the successful completion of a graphic novel.

In addition, Graphic novels by the way of its making enhances a variety of intelligence like linguistics intelligence, spatial intelligence, artistic intelligence and interpretative intelligence which fall under the Triarchic theory of intelligence. It also increases certain abilities of the learners like systematic analysis, language competence, timeliness and precision. The activities prescribed above provide desired outcomes both when done as an individual or as a group. It is a new genre of literature that enables the learners to learn a language joyfully like that of first language acquisition.

## REFERENCES

- Patel Dr. M. F & Praveen M. Jain. (2008). *English Language Teaching Methods Tools and Techniques*. Sunrise Publishers and Distributors, 3-9.
- Skinner B.F. (2005) *Science and Human Behaviour*. Pearson Education Inc, 59.
- Posner, Michael I. (1989). *Foundations of Cognitive Science*. E-book, 1-3.
- Thurstone L.L & Thurstone T.G. (1941) "Factorial Studies of Intelligence". *Psychometric Monographs*. Vol.2, University of Chicago Press, 8.
- Gardner, Howard E. (2008) *Multiple Intelligence : New Horizonism Theory and Practice*. Macchete, 15.
- Sternberg, Robert J. (2018) *The Nature of Human Intelligence*. Cambridge University Press, 590.
- Eisner, Will (2008). *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist*. New York: Norton. 2
- Nikolajeva, Maria and Carole Scott (2001). *How Picture Books Work*. New York: Garland. 118.
- Foucault, Michel (2001). "What is an Author?" Vincent B. Leitch (ed.). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton. 1630
- Pritchard, Alan. (2008) *Ways of Learning: Learning Theories and Learning Styles in the Classroom*, Taylor and Francis. 99.
- Smith, A. (1996). *Accelerated Learning in the Classroom*. Stafford: Network Education Pvt Ltd. 72.