Adopting a Musical Intelligence and eLearning Approach to Improve the English Language Pronunciation of Chinese Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of musical intelligence to improve the English pronunciation of Chinese third level students. It is relevant for a human centred systems engineering approach to cross-cultural interaction. Language learning is important as valid communication can help interactions and cultural understanding between countries, this also may benefit international stability. There are natural barriers between the English and Chinese language which are reflected in teaching approaches. The teaching of English in Chinese classrooms is removed from real world English learning environments. The academic environments and approaches focus on the learning of grammar, spelling and writing with little real life conversation and interaction with native English speakers. English language learning in China is from a more academic perspective rather than practical utilisation. Correct pronunciation and accent is therefore diminished. This study demonstrates that a musical intelligence eLearning approach can benefit Chinese English language students.

Keywords: multiple intelligence, musical intelligence, English language pronunciation, eLearning, international stability, cross culture interaction

1. Introduction

The current English learning situation in China continues to be affected by many problems often linked to traditional teaching approaches and learning environments.

The natural barriers to English language acquisition and its differences to the Chinese language are many and varied. English is a stressed and rhythmic language and Chinese is predominantly a tonal one. Several provincial and regional accents compound these differences giving rise to a variety of problems. The researcher's personal experiences and observations combined with a review of the literature highlights the position that Chinese English language students suffer serious limitations on learning methods and environments. The literature also suggests that eLearning and a musical intelligence approach can provide solutions to these problems.

Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences can be used for learning and teaching. Musical intelligence also has parallel structures with language (Gardner, 1983; Stokes, 2008). The convenience of time and distance of an e-Learning approach is important for learners. All of these elements suggest that the adoption of a Musical Intelligence e-Learning approach may benefit the pronunciation and accent of Chinese third level students. In order to assess the research questions, the researcher developed a combined musical multimedia teaching session and used a case study methodology to assess the multimedia teaching session of a sample group. This group was compared with a control group to test if a musical intelligence e-Learning approach had improved students' learning outcomes.