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Subject: methodology of
teaching English

Gimnazjum Students - Analysis of Learners' Group

Part I: Introduction

In this article would like to present the brief characteristic of the pupils I have known for five years and whom I first taught Biology and later on, in gimnazjum (the junior-secondary), both Biology and English. I made this observations from the personal experience, the talks to their class teacher, from some pedagogical documentation (psychological opinions of individual child, the advisor s' and school guidance teacher's recommendations) and questionnaires which forms and results I include here.

Age: All pupils in the class III B are at the same age of 16.

Number of students: 23

Sex: 10 boys and 13 girls

Social background: Generally they come from the lower middle-class families, almost all of them live in nuclear families of rather average social status, in blocks of houses. Some suffer from occasional unemployment and poverty.

General performance: This is a class of rather good general performance. The last semester results were much above those of the whole school. The average class grade from 12 school subjects (including religion and physical education) was 3,95 which is due to the fact that there are more students with high notes (the number of those who have average above 4,5 is seven, comparing to only one girl of very poor performance – 2,58) than weaker ones with results about 3,1 in average.

Attitude to schooling: Except four boys and three girls my pupils present quite good attitude to learning, their achievements correspond with their abilities and both, teachers and parents expectations. There are of course individual cases of students who neglect systematically their duties, but those examples are not very common. What is interesting from my point of view is fact that for the last three years none of them has attended private lessons or courses at any of many different language schools. I still wonder whether they consider my lessons giving them enough practice and contact with language or perhaps there is a problem with the lack of the money or time if not motivation.

Values: Students were asked to choose and tick the statements' answers they mostly agree with.

Part II: Values Sheet

In the chart below, which is originally of the same shape they filled up, I presented a number of the given answers. After this questionnaire we discussed the most controversial statements and as I explained them my views and doubts there was no single student who refused to sign the sheet, which might show friendly relationships and I hope, mutual understanding.

'VALUES' SHEET and the results:

Statement	Answers		
	Strongly agree	Neutral or uncertain	Strongly disagree
1. People are rather good.	6	13	1
2. Power corrupts.	12	7	1
3. Free medical help should be for everybody.	20	0	0
4. The death penalty should be sentenced in some cases.	14	4	2
5. Free market is better regulator than the government control.	6	14	0
6. Human nature cannot be changed.	10	6	4
7. Private education divides people into the poor or the rich.	15	2	3
8. Films and books should be free of all censorship.	16	2	2
9. The group is more important than the individual.	9	4	7
10. Democracy is an illusion.	9	4	7

Conclusions:

- In the first statement it is interesting how many of them are uncertain about human's nature, does it show their low esteem or bad experience? Here might be the reason.
- The second sentence reveals very critical attitude to economy and life around them.
- But the next one could be taken as a sign of high social awareness and democratic preferences.
- Very controversial topic about introducing the capital punishment has found many advocates.
- They are in average rather sceptical about the power of free market (to my surprise as those uncertain are mainly children of some minor entrepreneurs).
- Slightly pessimistically they see the humans' nature: only 20% believes it is changeable. This corresponds with opinion about peoples' nature in the first statement.
- 85% see private education as a privilege of the rich.
- Most students are liberal considering censorship.
- But only 35% give more rights to an individual than to a group
- When taking into account 100% demands for free medical help and comparing it to the last quite significant group of democracy non-believers, the slight discrepancy can arise

Part III: Questioning for motivation

Learning Aptitude: Similarly, as in 'VALUES 'SHEET the class was presented with a kind of questionnaire. The whole procedure remained exactly the same. Numbers in the last, added column show the percentage of chosen answers.

Questions:

	Yes	No	Yes (in %)
1. Why do you learn English?			
a. I have to or my parents want me to do this.	30
b. I want good grades.	80
c. I like to show off.	30
d. I hope to get a better job.	85
e. I like to know, just for satisfaction.	85
2. Education is important for my future professional career.	95
3. If I work hard at school I'll get a better job.	90
4. It's pleasant to learn something new.	60
5. I feel the best on my own.	35
6. Talking about families is a good topic of the class conversation.	35
7. My English grades could be higher, if I work harder.	95
8. I can learn from my class colleagues' mistakes.	95
9. I'm not afraid to make mistakes, it's better to try to communicate than to say nothing.	70
10. If I had a chance to go to London to study, I would go.	75

Conclusions:

They realise how important is to know English, almost all agree it is valuable for the future career. What is positive, they are quite conscious learners who are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from somebody's else experience. There is clear for everybody, only hard work brings better effects and they assume the grades depend on students' efforts.

Type of motivation:

Usually their motivation, if ever, seems to be instrumental and comes from outside, e.g. school, parents, future high-school entry exams, the future occupation and career, utility at hobby, Internet.

Surprisingly half of the class admits that learning English could be itself a pleasure and the source of rewarding intellectual accomplishments. This applies to the pupils of higher self-concept and more independent thinkers and those whose home lives emphasise verbal interaction.

This group of learners, however is small, provides the whole class with necessary drive for achieving successful results.

Thereafter their role is invaluable and very stimulating but requires from the teacher thoroughly balanced group-work's surveillance.

Personality: There are not many who are especially apt to talk about their own families and leave for studies abroad (if chance given). Some pupils are too shy and reserved to co-operate in group work and some hyperactive (boys usually), with limited abilities to concentrate for longer period of time. The long- task projects, even with my stimulation are successfully accomplished by small groups only.

Part IV: ' MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE TEST'

Type of a learner: This feature was checked by another test: ' MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE TEST'. The class was enthusiastic about passing it and discovering something new about themselves. However difficult it is to estimate if they were honest in giving answers and in what grade some of them were simply wishful thinking, but at least this test gave them view into the subject how complicated our intelligence could be and how different each person is. How difficult is to judge objectively and why rejecting stereotypes is essential for good judgement. Generally the weak students benefited from this activity greatly but all the class had a good time.

The information below consists of the test form and the chart of results and the graphs interpreting the data.

Multi-intelligence Test for Adolescent Students (Age of 10-14)

Student's Form

Name.....
Class.....
Date.....

Instruction number 1:

Check these statements by putting YES if the answer applies to you:

1. Books are important to me. ...
2. I can double or triple in my head without a calculator. ...
3. When I close my eyes I can see pictures and constructions. ...
4. I liked singing when I was a child. ...
5. I do at least one sport regularly. ...
6. My friends think I'm a good adviser. ...
7. I often think about important life questions. ...
8. I can hear words in my head before I read, speak or write them down. ...
9. Maths and/or science are among my favourite subjects. ...
10. I'm sensitive to colour. ...

11. I can tell when a musical note is off-key. ...
12. I find difficult to sit still for long periods of time. ...
13. I prefer group sports to individual ones. ...
14. I wouldn't mind talking to a psychologist about myself. ...
15. I get more out of listening than from watching. ...
16. I'm the best in strategy games. ...
17. I like taking photos. ...
18. I like listening to different types of music. ...
19. I prefer manual jobs to intellectual ones. ...
20. When I've got a problem I ask my friends for advice. ...

21. My friends often don't understand my way of thinking. ...
22. I enjoy word games like Scrabble, Anagrams. ...
23. I like experimenting in my head about "What if..." ...
24. I like visual puzzles. ...
25. I play a musical instrument. ...
26. I'm physically active. ...
27. I have at least three close friends. ...
28. People say I'm independent in thinking. ...
29. I enjoy playing with words. ...
30. I've got a mind that sometimes works like a computer. ...

31. I have vivid dreams at night. ...
32. Music is important to me. ...
33. I like outdoor activities. ...
34. I prefer a good party with my friends to watching a video alone. ...
35. I don't mind being alone. ...
36. I often use words others don't understand. ...
37. I wonder a lot about how certain things work. ...
38. I can generally find my way in a new city. ...
39. I very often think about music and keep a popular song in my mind. ...

40. I often use gestures and body language. ...
41. I like helping weaker students with learning. ...
42. I have a hobby nobody knows about it. ...
43. Polish and history are easier for me than Maths, Chemistry or Physics. ...
44. I don't believe in miracles. ...
45. I like drawing simple pictures when I listen to my teacher's lecture. ...
46. I have a sense of rhythm. ...
47. I need to touch things in order to learn more about them. ...
48. I consider myself a leader (or others have called me that). ...
49. I know what I'm going to do in my future. ...
50. When I go by bus or train, I pay more attention to the billboards than to landscape. ...
51. When I think about happiness, I don't see pictures or words but images. ...
52. I like geometry better than algebra. ...
53. I can hum popular melodies. ...
54. I would like to try an extreme sport once. ...
55. I feel comfortable in the crowd. ...
56. I would follow Robinson Crusoe's example. ...
57. When writing a Polish composition it's easy for me to use quotations. ...
58. I like finding logical flaws around me. ...
59. I can easily imagine the shape of my school from a bird's-eye view. ...
60. I can easily repeat a new melody. ...
61. I think I can easily learn to play tennis. ...
62. I like to get involved in extra activity at school and outside. ...
63. I used to keep a kind of a personal diary. ...
64. I like writing letters to friends. ...
65. I feel secure when I have my school notes in a certain order. ...
66. I prefer books heavily illustrated. ...
67. I sometimes whistle or sing when I'm working. ...
68. I will faster learn how to bake a cake by doing it than by reading an instruction. ...
69. I would rather go out with my friends than go to the cinema with them. ...
70. I like solving my problems by myself. ...

Instruction number 2:

Now fill in this chart and score your points to find out your own type of intelligence.

Kind of Intelligence	Statements' Numbers:	Total score of YES answers	Characteristic jobs and professions
Linguistic	1,8,15,22,29,36,43,50,57,64		writer, poet, translator, linguist, journalist
Logical-Mathematical	2,9,16,23,30,37,44,51,58,65		engineer, mathematician, mechanic, accountant
Spatial	3,10,17,24,31,38,45,52,59,66		architect, designer, painter, sculptor, pilot,
Musical	4,11,18,25,32,39,46,53,60,67		musician, composer, singer, conductor
Bodily-Kinesthetic	5,12,19,26,33,40,47,54,61,68		dancer, actor, sportsman/woman,
Interpersonal	6,13,20,27,34,41,48,55,62,69		teacher, nurse, doctor, guide, manager, counsellor
Intrapersonal	7,14,21,28,35,42,49,56,63,70		philosopher, hobbyist, guru,

Check if you have more than 6 points for each kind of intelligence.

What kind of intelligence do you have? Probably, like many other people you are not a person of only one type of intelligence. **You are simply a multi-intelligent person.**

Part V: The chart of results

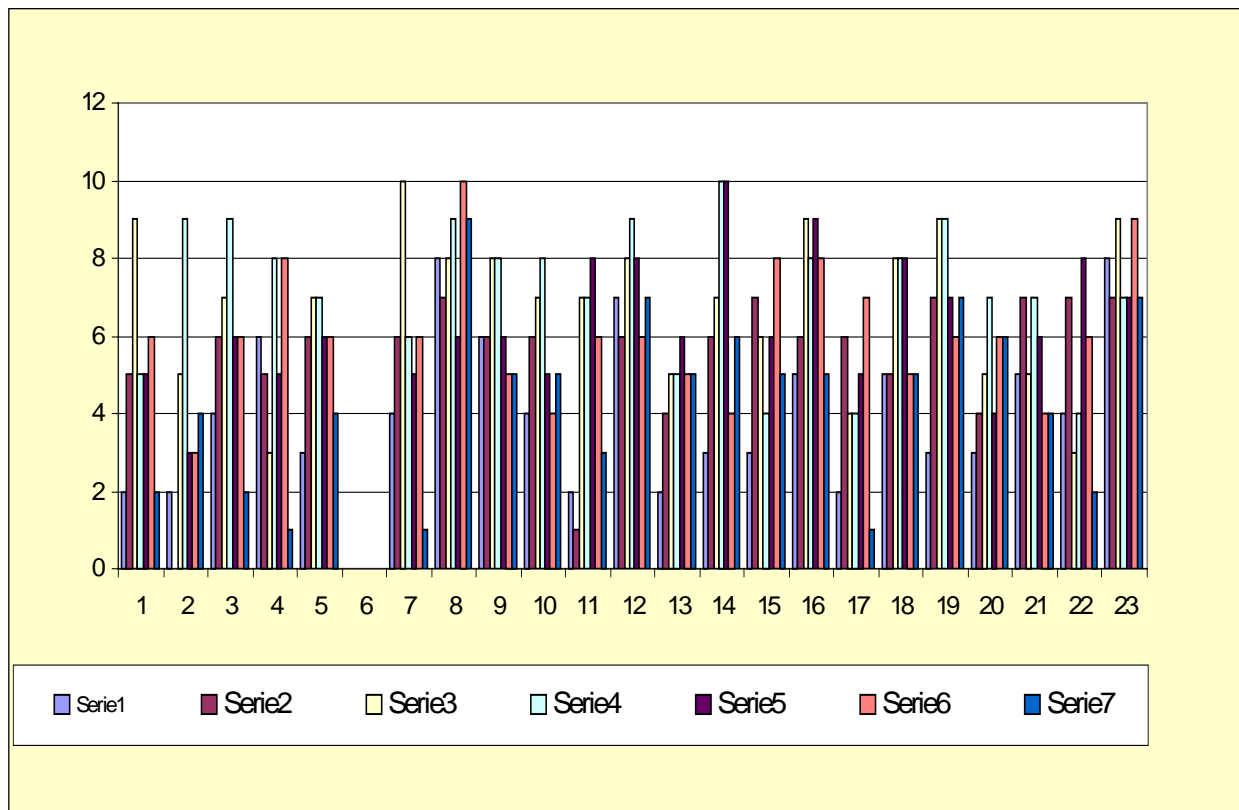
	name of the student	linguistic	logical-mathem.	spatial	musical	bodily-kinesth.	Inter-personal	Intra-personal
	those with > 5points	5	15	15	17	15	15	6
	those with > 7points	3	6	14	16	8	6	4
1	A.B.	2	5	9	5	5	6	2
2	B.M.	2		5	9	3	3	4
3	B.D.	4	6	7	9	6	6	2
4	D. M.	6	5	3	8	5	8	1
5	E. A.	3	6	7	7	6	6	4
6	Student absent							
7	J. E.	4	6	10	6	5	6	1
8	J. M.	8	7	8	9	6	10	9
9	K. P.	6	6	8	8	6	5	5
10	K. K.	4	6	7	8	5	4	5
11	M. D.	2	1	7	7	8	6	3
12	M. M.	7	6	8	9	8	6	7
13	M. P.	2	4	5	5	6	5	5
14	N. K.	3	6	7	10	10	4	6
15	O. M.	3	7	6	4	6	8	5
16	P. D.	5	6	9	8	9	8	5
17	P. T.	2	6	4	4	5	7	1
18	S. A.	5	5	8	8	8	5	5
19	S. K.	3	7	9	9	7	6	7
20	S. M.	3	4	5	7	4	6	6
21	S. K.	5	7	5	7	6	4	4
22	S. P.	4	7	3	4	8	6	2
23	W.P.	8	7	9	7	7	9	7
	average	3,53	5,45	6,77	7,18	6,31	6,09	4,36

The results for each student (the maximum score 10 points)

The series numbers specified as followed:

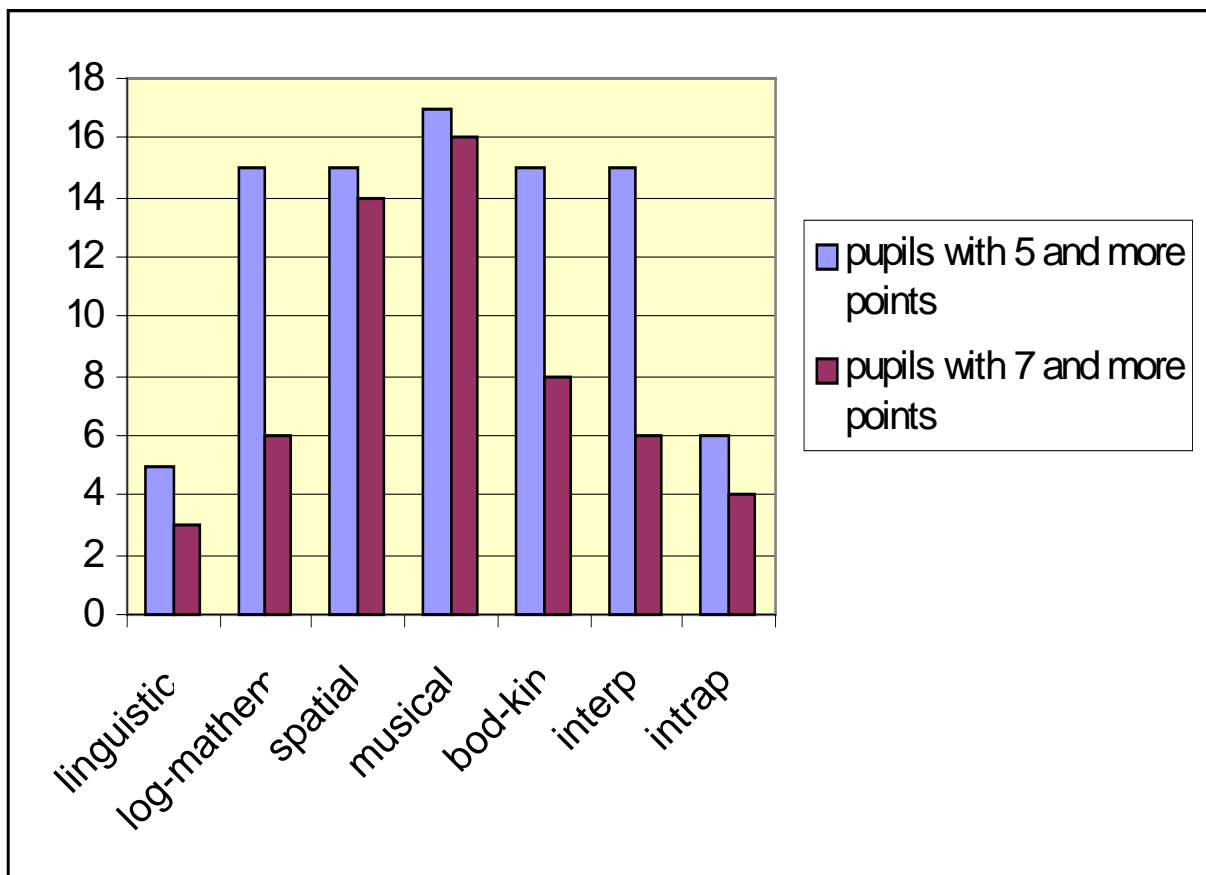
1. Linguistic
2. Logical-Mathematical
3. Spatial
4. Musical
5. Bodily-Kinesthetic
6. Interpersonal
7. Intrapersonal

Horizontally: the classbook number Vertically: the score in scale 1-10



The number of pupils with significantly high results

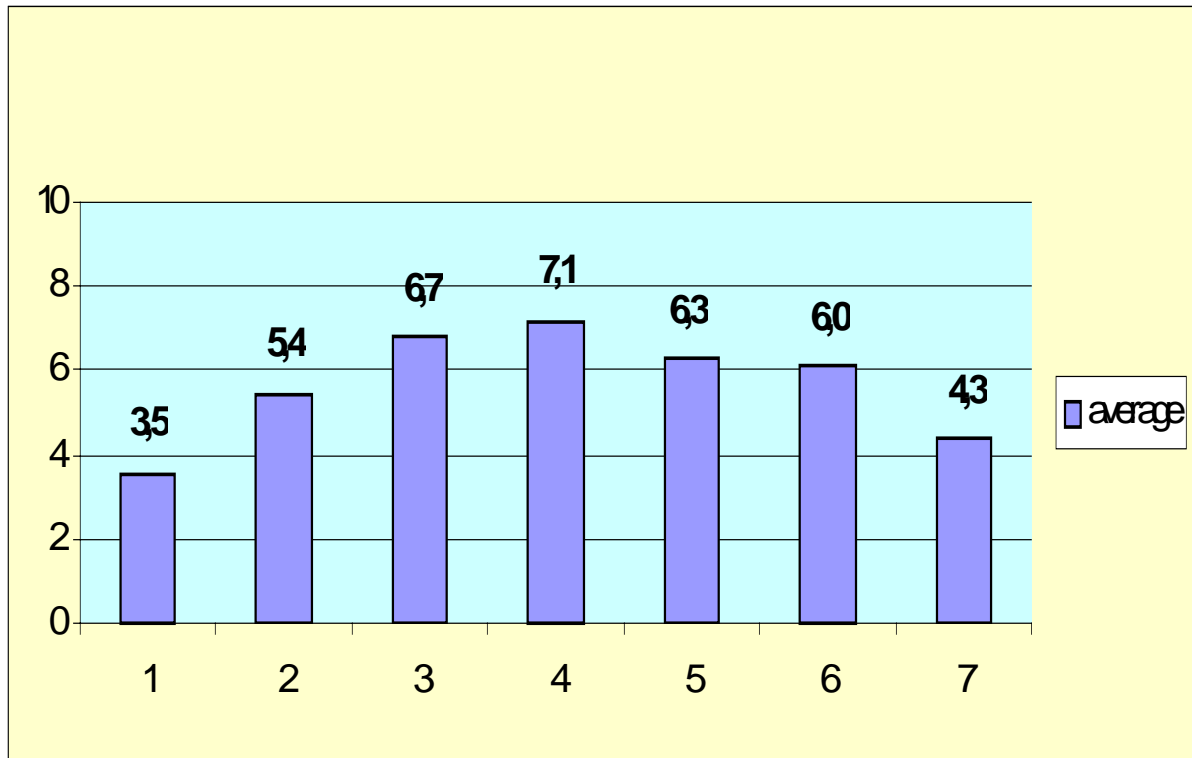
1. Linguistic
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Conclusions:

- the number of pupils with more than 7 points is significantly high for two types of intelligence: **musical** and **spatial**
- **linguistic** skills are the less representative

The average results for the class



1. Linguistic
2. Logical-Mathematical
3. Spatial
4. Musical
5. Bodily-Kinesthetic
6. Interpersonal
7. Intrapersonal

Part VI: Conclusions and suggestions

- It is highly advisable to use **audio-kinesthetic** methods as this is the prevailing type of intelligence.
- Spatial skills with logical-mathematical thinking could be successfully employed in **visual activities, grammar charts, posters, task-solving projects and personal records** of acquired grammar/vocabulary.
- The group as the whole has a good motivation and all efforts should be done to help the students to find their **own learning techniques**. As students are open to teacher's suggestions and not aware of mistakes they can become more and **more responsible for their own progress**.
- Some problems with **low concentration** can be overcome by **differentiating activities and thorough checkout and support**.

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