

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

INCORPORATING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY INTO EFL TEACHING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Multiple intelligences (MI) theory was first proposed by a Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner. He argues that individuals are not intelligent in only one or two way-logical-mathematical and linguistic- but there are seven (later on he added two more intelligences) ways in which people can be intelligent. The intelligences which he initially introduces in his book *Frames of Mind* (1993) include, linguistic intelligence, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

MI theory can be applied in EFL pedagogy and its ideas can be incorporated in teaching/learning strategies as the recent learning theories are moving toward ideas like brain-based learning and personalized learning in which individual differences of learners are taken into account. Teachers can practically implement the ideas of MI theory into their classrooms and adapt their teaching strategies to these ideas.

There is always a need for the Teachers in an EFL environment to recognize strengths and preferences of learners and accordingly expand and improvise the variety of strategies and activities which they use. MI offers a wide variety of options to such teaching situations.

This article reviews the theory of multiple intelligences and its relevance for EFL classroom. I aim to present strategies and activities based in MI to teach EFL.

Keywords: multiple intelligences, teaching/learning strategy, individual differences

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VIEWS ON INTELLIGENCE

Traditional views define intelligence as an inborn ability that all people have to a varying degree, and it can be measured by a series of tests known as IQ tests. The higher score one obtains in these tests the more intelligent he is considered. The IQ tests measure however only a limited set of human abilities such as verbal memory, numerical reasoning, visual thinking and logical problem solving.

Psychologists like Charles Spearman (1927) and Lewis Terman (1975) believed that intelligence was best conceptualized as a single general capacity for conceptualization and problem solving.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, with his colleague Theodore Simon, Binet devised the first test of intelligence, which later came to be known as the IQ test (intelligence quotient). Later on, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget took one step further and came to believe that it is not the accuracy of the child's response that is important but rather the lines of reasoning the child invokes. (Gardner 18).

By proposing his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner challenged the traditional view of intelligence. He states that "...the IQ, the Piagetian, and the information-processing approaches all focus on a certain kind of logical or

linguistic problem solving; all ignore biology; all fail to come to grips with the higher levels of creativity; and all are insensitive to the range of roles highlighted in human society” (Gardner 25). He claims that MI theory is based on neurological, evolutionary, and cross cultural evidence.

Gardner argues that intelligence is not a single, static construct which can be measured by a set of tests, rather it is made up of component pieces. He defines intelligence as “the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings”. (Gardner xxviii)

In his definition of intelligence, Gardner puts a special emphasis on culture “... progress in a domain does not depend entirely on the solitary individual’s actions within his world. Rather, much of the information about the domain is better thought of as contained within the culture itself, for it is the culture that defines the stages and fixes the limits of individual achievement. One must conceive of the individual and his culture as embodying a certain stage sequence, with much of the information essential for development inhering in the culture itself rather than simply inside the individual’s skull”. (Gardner 28).

Multiple Intelligences Theory

Gardner argues that there is evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intellectual competences which he calls “human intelligences”. He declares that a precise number of intelligences has not yet been fixed but there exist at least some intelligences that are relatively independent of one another and manifest themselves in different skills and abilities, the balance of these intelligences within an individual will affect their preferred mode of learning.

In his book *Frames of Mind*, Gardner has defined seven intelligences however, recently he has added the eight and has claimed the possibility of more. These eight intelligences are summarized as follow:

Linguistic: This alludes to the ability to utilize words adequately, whether orally or in composing, the capacity to control the linguistic structure of language, the phonology or hints of language, the semantics or implications of language, and the

commonsense measurements or pragmatic employments of language.

Logical-mathematical: This entails sensitivity to consistent patterns, connections and relationships. Characterization, deduction and categorization are among the processes which highlight in this intelligence.

Spatial: The capacity to see the visual-spatial world precisely and to perform changes upon those recognitions. This intelligence incorporates the ability to envision, to graphically address visual or spatial musings, and to arrange oneself suitably in a spatial lattice.

Bodily-kinesthetic: Skill in utilizing one's entire body to express thoughts and emotions and the ability to utilize one's hands to deliver or change things.

Musical: The ability to see, separate, change, and express musical structures. This intelligence involves sensitivity to pitch or song, and timbre or tone shade of a musical piece.

Interpersonal: The capacity to see and make refinements in the states of mind, expectations, inspirations, and sentiments of other individuals; the limit for separating among a wide range of sorts of interpersonal signs; and the capacity to react successfully to those prompts in some realistic way.

Intrapersonal: Attention to inward states of mind, aims, inspirations, demeanors, and wishes; and the limit for self-control, self-comprehension, and self-regard.

Naturalist: Expertise in the acknowledgment and arrangement of the various species—the verdure—of an individual's situation. This additionally incorporates affectability to other characteristic wonders (e.g., cloud arrangements, mountains, and so on.)

Some critics of MI theory argue that what Gardner calls intelligences are just different abilities, faculties or talents, hence, to prove a theoretical foundation for his claims, Gardner has set up a certain criteria or signs which each intelligence requires to meet to be counted as an intelligence. These eight signs are as follow:

1. Potential isolation by brain damage.
2. The existence of savants, prodigies, and other exceptional individuals.

3. A distinctive development history and a definable set of expert "end-state" performances.
4. An evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility.
5. Support from psychometric findings.
6. Support from experimental psychological tasks.
7. An identifiable core operation or set of operations.
8. Susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system.

Review of literature on the use of MI in classroom

MI theory has found proponents among teachers and educators, if you ask some teachers about the theory of multiple intelligences they may tell you that they have heard about it or they are often able to explain this theory, however when it comes to applying it into classroom they may feel challenged. One reason is that they don't have enough information about this theory or they don't feel like replacing their methodologies and techniques with new ones, or the main reason maybe is that they don't know how to put it in practice in their classes.

One must observe that there is lack of information about the significance of MI in academics and pedagogy among the stakeholders therefore this calls for researches to publicize the MI among the stakeholders.

Using a multiple intelligences framework to understand individual differences in how students learn can assist in explaining why some students are successful and others are not. These observations can contribute to instructional strategies that tap individual students' intellectual strengths and allow them to be successful in developing literacy (Baum, Viens and Slatin 60).

If teachers are to actively include the diverse students that they have in their classrooms, they have to use a wide range of teaching strategies. MI has great potential to do this because it allows students to see that they need not necessarily be excluded if they do not register highly in verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligence (Barrington 431).

It is worth noting that as Kezar states "MI is a philosophy, not just a single educational technique or approach. Philosophies offer a new way of conceptualizing education and answer questions about whom to teach, what to teach, how to teach, and what types of schools need to be formed to develop this form of education". (Kezar 153).

Davies has acknowledged that use of methods based on MI can lead to a rise in student's self-esteem and a potentially more liberal approach to curriculum planning. (Dymonke and Harrison 55)

MI and English Language Teaching

In an EFL class people learn language much better when they are allowed to express their feelings and ideas in their preferred mode and learn in their own thinking skills. When they find activities meaningful to them they will be more motivated to take part in them. MI theory can give rise to strategies apt for handling EFL classrooms in which teachers encounter learners with different cultures, language skill levels and diverse needs, teachers can use MI theory as a guide for developing classroom activities that address multiple ways of learning and knowing. Those activities will be successful that encourage the use of several intelligences since some students may be highly developed in one intelligence, moderately developed in one or two and underdeveloped in the other.

To apply MI theory in the class, a good teacher should be aware of her own strong intelligence(s) and its effect on the techniques that she uses in her classes, so that not to stick to a limited number of exercises and activities related to her own thinking skills. There are checklists and inventories designed for this purpose, which can be used by both teachers and learners, some of these are inventories that Christison (2005) has developed to identify the preferred intelligences of ESL/EFL students for the levels of grade 5 to middle school, high school and adults and also for second language teachers, checklists and inventories designed by Armstrong (2009), and MIDAS (Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scale) an online inventory of 70-120 questions. It is worth noting that, these checklists and surveys are not supposed to achieve a definitive score across intelligences, but teachers use them to get an understanding of their students

and involve them in self-reflection on their preferred intelligences, these should not be used as tools for formal assessments or labeling the learners.

In an MI based classroom, while keeping the educational objective firmly in mind, the teacher continually shifts the method of presentation from linguistic to spatial to musical and so on, often combining intelligences in creative ways (Armstrong 56). Teacher should also explain to her students about the theory of multiple intelligences and tell them that all people are intelligent in one or another way or an individual can be intelligent in many ways.

Strong intelligences of learners can be almost discovered through their behaviors, actions, and preferences, and this is possible when the teacher provides the opportunities for all learners in the class to express themselves and take part in activities. Teachers should enrich their classes with various activities which are built on

different intelligences. If a language teacher focuses mostly on the linguistic domain, only the students who are strong in this area will be benefited and the others will start negative feelings towards their own abilities or the target language.

Therefore, I present here a summary list of strategies and activities engaging different intelligences for teaching English as a foreign language. The activities are further explained in appendix 1 (these sample activities are taken from the book "Multiple Intelligences in EFL" by Puchta and Rinvoluceri, 2005).

We should keep in mind that since different intelligences work together, not in isolation, the activities cut across different intelligences. In other words there is no activity which taps on a unique intelligence.

Intelligence	Strategies	Activities	Skills
Linguistic	Brainstorming, tape recording, storytelling, reading, journal writing, talking	Writing a cinquain,	Creative writing
Logical-mathematical	Quantifying, categorizing, classifying, Socratic questioning	Sequencing paragraphs of a story	Paragraph writing
Spatial	Visualizing, drawing, idea sketching, creating graphic symbols, mind-mapping, coloring	Dreaming, imaginative activities, e.g. listening with your mind's eye	Listening and speaking
Bodily-kinesthetic	Acting out, dancing, touching, building, hands-on thinking, body maps	Mime, classroom theatre, using bodily language, e.g. making a dialogue physical	Intensive listening and reading
Musical	using rhythms, songs, raps, chants, singing, listening	Making a dialogue musical	Intensive listening and reading
Interpersonal	Peer sharing, cooperative groups, board games, simulations,	Writing autobiography, sharing and discussing memories	Intensive writing, and speaking
Intrapersonal	Reflection periods, personal connections, goal-setting sessions	Reflection, dreaming and imaginative activities, e.g. fifteen minutes of yesterday.	Creative writing,
Naturalist	Nature walks, pet in the classroom, eco-study, connecting to living things and natural phenomena	Giving presentations on natural resources, wildlife, climate, etc. talking on behalf of an animal or plant	Listening, speaking

Conclusion

MI theory was a psychological theory that many educators found in conformity with their beliefs that students possess different abilities and talents which lead them to learn in different ways, hence different ways are required to deal with them.

In EFL area those approaches are mostly welcomed by educators which by overcoming emotional, attitudinal, cultural and individual differences barriers can make the best of learners' potentials. Definitely MI theory does not dictate any unique approach which can be applied for all learning/teaching situations; however by having definitive goals and educational environment, teachers can improvise their already used techniques and strategies based on the MI ideas.

Teachers can use their imagination to design MI-based activities, they can share their ideas together to achieve a variety of activities, since each teacher as a different person has distinct combination of intelligences so they use different ways to present the materials to their students. On the other hand, students can also be assumed as a good source of various activities. because students look at the class from a different point of view, so, teachers can reach to innovative ideas by introducing MI theory to their students. Today, though MI theory is more or less a known theory among teachers and educators, still there is a need for more efforts to make it more practical in educational setting.

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Appendix

Activity 1: Writing a cinquain

MI focus: linguistic

Write one or two sample cinquains onto an OHP transparency or poster paper.

1. Display your cinquains and read them out to your class.

Example:

MY friend-

Fun, laughter, tears.

You're always there for me.

No one listens to me like you.

Partner.

2. Tell your students that a cinquain is a special poetic form that is more than 600 years old. Ask them to work with a partner and find the rules which govern the forms of a cinquain.

3. Tell your students to write their own cinquain. You might like to set them a topic, or alternatively give them the choice to write on whatever they choose.

Acknowledgment: the learners who are strong in linguistic intelligences prefer learning through reading and writing, this activity makes them think analytically while reading to find the governing rules, and they would enjoy creating a written work as a result of their reading.

Activity 2: Sequence in a story

MI focus: Logical-mathematical, interpersonal

Photocopy the whole story, one copy for each student. Also for every 10 students in your class you will need to make one copy of each of the last five paragraphs, and cut them up separately.

1. Ask the students to work in pairs and give each pair one of the paragraphs numbered 1 to 5.

Tell the pairs that you have given them a paragraph taken from somewhere in a news story. Ask them to write the paragraph they think precedes it and the one that follows it. Tell them not to use more than 30 words in either paragraph, and not less than 20. Tell them to call you if they need language help.

2. If you have 10 students in class, get them to group together. The pair with paragraph 3 reads their original paragraph first, and then the preceding and following paragraphs that they have written. They repeat the same process with the pairs who have paragraphs 1,4,5 and 2, in that order.
3. Hand out copies of the complete story. Ask the learners to read the paragraphs in the order of the original news story.
4. Allow time for their comments on how news stories are written.

Acknowledgment: besides using their imagination, students learn to progress their logical thinking by organizing the paragraphs of the story. Those who feel weak in logical-mathematical intelligence can improve it while working cooperatively in pairs or groups.

Activity 3: listening with your mind's eye

MI focus: Spatial and linguistic

Select a poem or any other text suitable for your class that is likely to stimulate the students' visual and spatial imagination.

1. Tell your students that you are going to read out a text to them. Ask them to listen with their eyes closed, and focus on what they see, hear, feel etc. while you are reading. Tell them that some of them may be mainly seeing clear and colorful pictures, while others will probably be able to get a feel for visual images, but may see only very blurred pictures or no pictures at all.
2. Quietly ask the students to work in small groups and to share their favorite moments during their experiences of the poem.

Acknowledgement: this activity helps learners to learn better in a relaxed state. Learning through imagination was used to be practiced earlier in ELT methods, as in the method of Suggestopedia.

Activity 4: Making a dialogue physical or musical

MI focus: kinaesthetic and musical

You'll need the tape-recording of your chosen course book dialogue, and a tape player.

Ask one of your students who likes drama to choose a scene or dialogue from a previous unit in the course book, and to prepare a mime based on it. Also ask two or three musically talented students to pick a previous dialogue, and prepare to present it musically, using voice and maybe instruments.

1. Ask your mime artist to perform. All the students silently re-read the dialogue/scene from the book. The mime is repeated. Then ask the musicians to present their dialogue/scene.
2. Ask the students to listen carefully to the new coursebook dialogue, books closed. Deal with language difficulties, and then play the dialogue a second time.
3. Tell the students to open their books and read the new dialogue. Ask each of the students to choose whether they prefer to re-present it in mime or as a song.
4. Divide the class into two groups: the mimers and the singers. Let these groups sub-divide into numbers that correspond to

the number of roles in the dialogue. Give them 15 minutes for preparation time.

5. Give each group of singers and mimers a chance to perform to the whole class.

Acknowledgement: it gives a chance to students to think over the content and to make a relationship with it so that they can present it through mime or music.

Activity 5: Alphabet dialogues

MI focus: Linguistic, intrapersonal and interpersonal

1. Ask for a volunteer to come to the board and write a dialogue with you. Tell them to write their first line of a dialogue with you on the right hand side of the board, while you write the first line of another dialogue with them on the left hand side. The first word of both your sentences and of theirs must start with the letter "A".
2. Change places and reply to each other's first line. (tell them to reply to you while, simultaneously, you reply to them.) You must both start your replies with the letter "B".
3. Send the volunteer back to their place and pair the students. Ask each students to write on a separate sheet of paper, and follow the model above so the members of each pair write simultaneous dialogues to each other. Then instead of changing places, the student swap the sheets of paper. The first line of each dialogue must start with the letter "C". The response must start with the letter "D"

Acknowledgement: the activity demands students' linguistic knowledge, and helps them to learn with their peers in a cooperative situation while they have time to think individually too.

Activity 6: Introduce your puppet

MI focus: naturalist and kinaesthetic

1. Ask your students to think of an animal or a plant, it can be either their own pet or their favorite animal or plant.
2. Ask them to make a puppet of that chosen animal or plant, tell them that they can use socks as puppets.
3. Give each student five minutes to introduce his puppet. Tell them that the puppet

should say about his food, living place and anything related to its life conditions.

4. After each puppet introduced itself students are allowed to ask questions from the puppet or give their comments or new ideas about the puppet to the class.

Acknowledgement: it provides a situation for students to talk in a pseudo character, in this way they can express freely and it facilitates learning. In this activity they are talking on behalf of their favorite creature so, they would be more motivated to speak in English more fluently and correctly.