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English Language Teaching: Innovative Techniques in Multiple Intelligence Classes

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Abstract

India having a multi-lingual society, gives every language its own privileges and positions. English as an official and second language has also a vital role in making classrooms active in educational institutions and universities as well, by using it as a powerful tool for teaching subjects. The teaching of English language to students from the primary level has become much relevant in India in recent years since it is the medium of instruction in almost esteemed institutions. One reason for this has been the introduction of English as Foreign Language (EFL)/ English as Second Language (ESL) teaching in a number of European countries – but it is also a world-wide phenomenon. The best teaching methods in English class rooms and approaches, which the better understanding of students depends upon, are playing a vital role in making classes effective. One of the recent approaches in English language teaching methods is "the Theory of Multiple Intelligences MI"(1983), which is coined by Howard Gardner, an American psychologist and professor of education at Harvard university. Because since Classes are meant for clashes of the various minds, where students having different strengths and cognitive thinking come together, it is the necessity of classroom activities and teachings to be inclusive and comprehensive as well.

Keywords: Psychometric, Assessment, Comprehension, Inclusion, ELT, Intelligence

Howard Gardner (1943-) who has been called a “paradigm shifter” turned the psychometric and behaviourist world on its ear in 1983 when he shared his Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory in his book titled ‘Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences’, in which he questioned Piaget and the idea that intelligence can be derived from a single assessment, such as IQ tests and as he suggests, there are seven kinds of intelligence initially in 1983. Additionally, when second edition was released ten years later, in an interview with Checkley



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(1997) headed an eighth and ninth intelligence too, namely “naturalist intelligence” and “existentialist intelligence” to the original list of the multiple intelligences. He also made some assumptions that children can be at different stages of development at different times.

Gardner’s Nine Multiple Intelligences

Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory distinguishes between nine main types of intelligence:

- Verbal-linguistic intelligence (word smart): using language to store, process and transmit information, titled as ‘The word player’
- Logical-mathematical intelligence (number smart): using patterns to think and reason logically and rationally, titled as ‘The questioner’
- Musical intelligence (music smart): using music and rhythm to learn, titled as ‘The musical lover’
- Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (body smart): using the body or physical activity to learn, titled as ‘The mover’
- Spatial intelligence (picture smart): using visual sources like pictures, charts and graphs to interpret information, titled as ‘The visualizer’
- Interpersonal intelligence (people smart): able to interact with others, understand them, and interpret their behaviour, titled as ‘The socialiser’
- Intrapersonal intelligence (self-smart): able to understand self: strengths, weakness, reactions and emotions, titled as ‘The loner’
- Naturalist intelligence (nature smart): able to use patterns to connect to nature, titled as ‘The nature lover’.
- Existentialist intelligence (highly smart): ability to use collective values and intuition to understand others and the world around them, titled as ‘The intellect’

A more in-depth explanation of the eight and ninth intelligences is on The Education Coalition website, which is directed by Dr. Carla Lane and Melissa Kelly respectively. But from the nine intelligences there only a few of them are suitable for English teaching classrooms, verbal/linguistic and interpersonal intelligences are two of them.

Since we are familiar with all these intelligences, it is quite difficult to find even a single man who could achieve altogether. But everyone has some of each of all the intelligences and in different people there one (or more) is more pronounced and sound one. There are questionnaires that help you to work out which of the intelligences is the most prominent one in you and if you are interested to find out your own there are several websites and you or your students can do the test online. In my opinion, one of the best ones is a famous blog created by Birmingham Grid for Learning, where you can find the web



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address:http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks3/ict/multiple_int/index.htm. The test takes five minutes to complete and then provides you with a pie chart to show how your intelligence types are distributed and how many intelligences that you have will be displayed.

There are a lot of ways which would be quite interesting, to give all your students a test to see which of the intelligences is most prominent and which is weaker, so that you can make classrooms inclusive and interactive as well to suit every individuals and If you want to go some way towards achieving this and it is a viable option for you there are some examples of tests in Jane Revell and Susan Norman's books 'In your hands' and 'Handing Over' published by Saffire press. If time permits, it is possible to do individual tests for your students and once you found the types of intelligence individually, you can apply activities and strategies that suit for the majority. You try to make sure that you vary the tasks and use a range of activities so that you touch upon all the types of intelligences now and again.

Multiple Intelligence to Teach English

There has been quite a lot of ongoing discussion about the effectiveness of using multiple intelligences in order to teach English in classrooms. Traditionally, schools use logical and verbal intelligences to teach languages - English in this case and also it is possible through the use of other types of intelligences. For example, some students excel in logical exercises such as learning through analysis using grammar charts, conjugation tables, etc. Others who excel in linguistic learning styles may profit from exercises much focussed on word forms such as prefix, suffix activities, etymology research, etc. While these English teaching exercises prove helpful to many students, they may happen failures with students who don't do well with these types of exercises.

Let's see the multiple intelligence theory which tries to serve all students by reaching out to their respective strengths and how it's functioning. Here's a quick overview of multiple intelligences as applied to English language teaching;

- *Verbal / Linguistic*– to learn English through the use of words. Mostly it will be teacher centred learning, in which teacher explains an English learning objective then students learn and they can also learn through explaining or sharing to each other.
- *Visual / Spatial*–to learn English through visual means including charts, graphs, maps, etc. Any type of activities either by asking students to interpret visual information or allowing them to comment on it, which can contribute to visual or spatial intelligence. Vocabulary trees are also helpful to improve English vocabulary skills.
- *Logical*–to learn English through the use of logical deduction. It helps students to understand the rules of grammar and to apply them when diagraming sentences and also teacher will request to think critically.



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- *Kinaesthetic* - Learning English through physical engagement. Typing is a great example of kinaesthetic learning. Many English learners improve their spelling skills by typing out and using word processing programs. Fun games such as building and acting out 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' are also examples of kinaesthetic English learning activities. Here body language is most important or essential for the teachers.
- *Musical Intelligence* - Learning English through songs and music. Students who have favourite pop star in English may use musical intelligence to acquire English language skills and in rhythmic learning also it is very important to listen to music.
- *Interpersonal* - English learning through group activities. Some students really enjoy group works, probably they enjoy cooperative learning using some board games to acquire skills in a second language – English and there they have interactive methods also.
- *Intrapersonal* –to learn English through individualised instruction. They will be mostly in touch with their own feelings, values and ideas and this may help a lot in their self-esteem building by checking materials and journals themselves. Teachers should give materials to make them read and reflect on it by connecting it to their personal life.
- *Naturalist* –to learn English through nature. Students who come under this category should learn things by connecting it to living things or natural phenomena and they will be more interested in studies related to nature and ecology. The traditional classroom has not been accommodating to these students.
- *Existentialist* - Children who learn in the context of where humankind stands in the "big picture" of existence. They ask "Why are we here?" and "What is our role in the world?" This intelligence is seen in the discipline of philosophy and theology, etc. since they are able to look beyond the senses like philosophers, cosmologists and theologians. Here teachers should try to make connections between what is being learned and the world outside the classroom, which only may help them to teach language.

Some criticism and questions surround Gardner's ideas about multiple intelligence theory. However, Mark Smith ensures that they are still worthwhile to use and useful in the English classrooms. "For example, Mindy Kornhaber and her colleagues at the Project SUMIT (Schools Using Multiple Intelligences Theory) have examined the performance of a number of schools and concluded that there have been significant gains in respect of SATs scores, parental participation, and discipline (with the schools themselves attributing this to MI theory)" in Smith's article, "Howard Gardner, Multiple Intelligences and Education" on the Infed website.



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Multiple Intelligence Activities

Multiple intelligences activities are playing a vital role in making English teaching classes effective in a variety of situations. The most important aspect of using multiple intelligence activities in classrooms is that you will be giving support to learners who may find more traditional activities difficult and indigestible. The basic idea behind multiple intelligence activities is that teachers can use a range of activities so that can touch upon all the types of intelligences among students and it will facilitate learning using different types of intelligences. For instance, spelling can be learned through typing which uses kinetic intelligences.

But you may be wondering that how we can categorize each and every types which is impossible, then it would be very useful to make a test for students to see which of the intelligences is most prominent so that you can plan your classes to suit every individual students, if time permits it is better to do individual tests for your students and try to make sure that you vary the tasks and now and again, because by observing your students and making notes on how they react to different activities you may well discover, for example, that you have a class with a majority of visual learners so you may try to use more flash cards or improve your board work.

If you try an activity with one group and it falls flat or becomes futile, it may be worthy trying it again and it may work really well with another set of students. Another thing you have to do is that to identify the loner of the class or the one who is always up and out of his seat, try and add innovative activities or techniques into your lesson plan that you think will suit them from time to time. Finding out one's own intelligence type may help to better understand how he learn. Suppose now he sits in a Catalan class and as he gets told to copy lists of random vocabulary off the board he thinks himself, 'This won't work for me - I don't learn like this. I need to see some pictures of these things, I'm a visual learner. This is another way by which each and every one can identify themselves.

There are lots of activities which are useful in English teaching classes. In verbal/linguistic; we have lectures, discussions and storytelling in order to facilitate the teaching, in logical/mathematical; activities like problem solving and critical thinking, in visual/spatial; what we have is activities like visual presentations and mind-mapping as well as in bodily-kinaesthetic; we have hands-on-learning and relaxation exercises. In the case of musical; activities like rhythmic learning is most important, in interpersonal and intrapersonal; activities like cooperative learning and individualised instruction respectively are indispensable in order to English language teaching classes more effective. In naturalist and existentialist intelligences there are many activities, nature study and other intellectual studies are some examples.



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Conclusion

Since we are living in a multi lingual society with diversity in cultures and varieties of belief, where people have different skills and abilities as well as the education institutions are the junctions or centres of multiple intelligences, the theory developed by 'Howard Gardner' is very relevant and contemporary, by which we can develop some strategies for effective English language teaching and it may help to reduce some irregularities or complexities in classrooms but to an extent. It's a few activities only we can utilise from these nine intelligences and it also depends upon students and situations then it may vary according to the changes in both. It is obvious that nothing is constant because activities like discussions work out in some groups only we can't apply on others then it is the duty of a language teacher to be aware of taking classes effectively and they should have some special concerns on inclusiveness and majority.

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