



# THE CONCEPT OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR THE LANGUAGE TEACHERS OF FIRST GENERATION LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** Effective communication in English Language plays a vital role in enabling the young graduates realize their dream positions in their careers. Proficiency of English Language allows an individual to communicate freely and effectively with people around the world. Learning English as a second language or foreign language demands intensive attention of students with active participation and involvement in the classroom. But the young graduates from rural backgrounds (most of them are first generation students) face several linguistic and cognitive limitations like shyness, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation, grammar, scarcity of vocabulary, monotonous classroom teaching, and so on and so forth. Probably they experience all these, as they are devoid of enough exposure to English language either at home or in their localities since childhood. These inhibitions affect their communicative ability. Once the students free themselves from these unnecessary inhibitions, there will be maximum scope for effective learning of the language which in turn reflects in their effective communicative ability. Hence, teaching English to the first generation students is not similar to teaching English to the students of urban localities. Under such circumstances, the activities of Multiple Intelligence Approach, introduced by Howard Gardener, a psychologist from Harvard University, accommodates the needs of the rural students in learning the English language based on their intelligence.

**Index Terms:** Effective communication in English, linguistic and cognitive limitations, Multiple Intelligences

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this era of communication, the English language is playing a key role in our lives. Fluency of the language helps us to study and understand any subject. In addition, it helps the students to enhance their knowledge, develop skills, achieve their goals, prosper in their careers and to lead a quality life. Moreover, the English language is taught in more than 118 countries, demanding it as the most important and useful language to prosper in academics and career as well. In the field of education, the importance of the English language is much wider as the student studies other subjects like Arts, Science, Mathematics, Culture, Geography, Engineering etc. in English.

Over the years, there have been revolutionary changes in language teaching methodologies. Unlike the traditional modes of language teaching which have been proved inadequate and time consuming in the modern era, new innovative and student-centric methods are being tried out to create the best learning environment in the classroom, especially in English language

teaching. In the modern education system, the English teachers become facilitators ensuring the active participation of the students..

As the saying goes “ All the fingers are not the same”, in practicality, all the students in the classroom may not possess the same levels of intellect and grasping ability. Moreover, all of them will have their own individual areas of interest. But they are all unique with their different talents, creativity and intelligence. Hence, it is to note that teaching English through the lecture method alone does not meet the requirement of all the students in the classroom. The English teacher should focus more on “How to teach” rather than “What to teach” by adapting some interesting techniques or designing some activities not only to sustain the attention of the students but also to make the learning process much more exciting.

### **Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)**

Howard Gardner, a psychologist from Harvard University, introduced the concept of “Multiple Intelligences” in his book “Frames of Mind” published in the year 1983. According to Gardner, there are eight types of intelligences such as Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Musical/Rhythmic, Body/kinesthetics, Visual/Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Naturalist and each person is unique with a blend of multiple intelligences. In support of Gardner’s theory of MI, Armstrong (1995) and Christison (1996, 2005) provided some illustrative activities that fit the eight types of intelligences. Based on these, the language teachers can introduce innovative activities/tasks to make the learning process very interesting by involving all the students with different intelligences.

### **MI as an excellent tool for the Language Teachers:**

The concept of Multiple Intelligences (MI) acts as an excellent tool in the hands of language teachers to provide learners a good number of opportunities to excel in the language learning process through activities.

- First type of Intelligence, Linguistic/Verbal is the ability of an individual in using vocabulary either in spoken or written contexts. The individuals possessing this type of intelligence can use language creatively and effectively. They possess good reading skill, writing skill, oration etc. Teachers can plan activities like group discussions, debates, note-making, note-taking, narrating an incident, crossword puzzles, giving seminars/presentations, participation in mock interviews, choosing odd man out, etc. to improve verbal intelligence among the students.
- The second type of intelligence Logical/Mathematical is the ability of an individual in using numbers effectively. Obviously the students with this intelligence can solve problems easily and possess good reasoning power. In an English classroom students can be given activities such as puzzles, chess, computer games through ELL software, Aptitude and reasoning worksheets, classifications, word order activities, Jigsaw puzzles, finding errors etc. As recommended by Armstrong, if they are given activities that demand re-reading of the text, the students will have a chance to strengthen their vocabulary.
- Musical/Rhythmic is the third type of intelligence. Individuals with this type of intelligence are more inclined towards pitch, intonation, rhythm and volume. Listening activities like gap filling by listening to songs, listening comprehension, singing, word antakshari, poetry recitation, tongue twisters, podcast are highly motivating to this section of students.
- The fourth type of intelligence is Body/Kinesthetics. It is the capability of an individual in using his/her own body to express one’s own self and to explore solutions to the problems. In the language class role-plays, games, dramas, peer teaching, sensing gestures, postures, facial expressions etc and group activities (preparation of models) can be given to students to encourage their participation and involvement.
- Visual/Spatial intelligence is the fifth type of intelligence. The individuals having this intelligence are good at visualising the concepts as they are sensitive to colours, shapes and structures. To motivate this section of students the teacher can use activities like grids, mind-mapping, video lessons, drawings, poster presentations, describing an object/picture etc.
- Coming to the sixth type of intelligence, it is interpersonal. It deals with the ability of an individual to coordinate with others. They are quite empathetic towards others and suitable for group tasks. They enjoy working in teams and learn the best from others. Activities like pair work, group work, discussions, debates, event organizing, anchoring, community surveys/projects etc. help a lot in motivating this category of students in the class.
- Intrapersonal is the seventh type of intelligence. It projects more on understanding one’s own self. They better understand their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats/challenges and try to find a way to overcome their problems.

Activities such as self introduction, describing a personality, asking for opinions on different incidents, writing stories to college magazines etc. can elevate this intelligence in the students.

- Lastly, it is Naturalist intelligence. It enables the individuals to relate to nature and categorize what is being found in nature as plant species, animal species, minerals etc. They possess the natural ability to discriminate between useful and harmful things to a man. Activities like collecting samples from nature, knowing their names, grouping them into different categories, writing poems on plants or other things in nature, script writing for a role-play to save nature/water/environment etc., can be interesting to this section of students.

### Conclusion:

Just like how all the fingers though not equal in size and shape, they are all complementary to each other enabling the hand to perform its duty, similarly, though the students in a classroom do not possess the same levels of intelligence and interests the teacher can make it playful and interactive through language activities. Beyond doubt, the concept of MI proposed by Gardner, in combination with the illustrative activities suggested by Armstrong and Chirstison have shown a distinctive path for the modern English teachers to make their classes lively as activities can make learning playful. Moreover student-centric activity based teaching enables students to acquire and practice the language in different contexts working individually, in pairs and groups as well. As the teachers have their own liberty in delivering a concept, they can adapt some interesting techniques or design their own lesson plans which include innovative activities not only to withhold the attention of the students but also to take them to the exciting world of learning which is far away from the monotonous teaching.

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