

# Introducing the Theory of Multiple Intelligences into English Language Teaching Programs

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## Abstract

The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) developed by Howard Gardner (1983) suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient) testing, is far too limited. Instead, Gardner proposes different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults. In order to invite English as foreign language (EFL) teachers to use MI in their classrooms, first English language teaching (ELT) teacher educators should be encouraged to include the theory into their programs. This article aims to point out how the idea of multiple intelligences can become part of ELT teacher education by raising some questions and issues which should be considered in the process of ELT preparing teachers. The paper also advocates the presence of a new intelligence, Moral Intelligence.

**Key words:** *ELT, Teacher education, Multiple Intelligences, Moral Intelligence*

## Çoklu Zekâ Kuramının İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Programlarına Dâhil Edilmesi

### Özet

Howard Gardner (1983) tarafından geliştirilen Çoklu Zekâ Kuramı, zekâ derecelendirme testine dayanan geleneksel zekâ anlayışının çok sınırlı olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bunun yerine, Gardner, çocuk ve yetişkinlerdeki insan potansiyelinin daha geniş bir yelpazesine açıklama getirmek için farklı zekâlar önermektedir. İngilizce Öğretmenlerini sınıflarında Çoklu Zekâ kuramını kullanmaya teşvik etmek için, öncelikle İngiliz Dili Eğitimi öğretmen eğitimcilerinin Çoklu Zekâ Kuramını İngiliz Dili Eğitimi öğretmen yetiştirme programlarına dâhil etmek konusunda cesaretlendirilmeleri gerekmektedir. Bu makalede, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi öğretmen eğitimi sürecinde dikkate alınması gereken bazı unsurlara değinilerek, Çoklu Zekâ Kuramının İngiliz Dili Eğitimi öğretmen eğitiminin bir parçası olabileceği savunulmaktadır. Makale de ayrıca yeni bir zekâ olarak, Ahlâkî Zekâ'nın varlığına vurgu yapılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *ELT, Öğretmen Eğitimi, Çoklu Zekâ, Ahlâkî Zekâ*

### Introduction

Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences helped educators to revolutionize their concept of human potential. This theory challenged the classical view of intelligence that most of us have absorbed either explicitly from psychology and educational courses or implicitly from the culture we live in.

Gardner (1983) refused to accept the monolithic and stable conception of intelligence, and he opposed to the idea of identifying and

measuring of intelligence through tests. He proposed that humans are better defined by saying that they possess a series of relatively independent intelligences than by saying they have just a single intelligence defined by IQ (Intelligence Quotient).

Gardner (1983) suggested that the human organism had at least seven distinct units of intellectual functioning. He labeled these units, intelligences each with its

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own observable and measurable abilities. Gardner (1999) defines intelligence as a "bio-psychological potential for information processing that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or fashion products that are of value in a culture" (p.33-34). This new look about intelligence differs greatly from the traditional view, which usually recognizes only two intelligences, verbal and mathematical and which are practiced under the term of I.Q. In this view, intelligences are not something that can be seen or counted, but rather neural potentials that may be activated or not depending on the values of a particular culture and the decisions made by each person, their parents, their teachers, etc.

Gardner also challenged the cognitive development work of Piaget. Bringing evidence to show that at any one time a child may be at very different stages, for example, in number development and spatial/ mathematical maturation, Gardner intelligently undermined the idea that knowledge at any particular developmental stage comply with in a structured whole. This article attempts to bring an answer to Gardner's (1993) vision when he states:

I hope that the idea of multiple intelligences will become part of teacher training. While lip service is paid to the existence of differences among students (and among teachers!), there have been few systematic attempts to elaborate the educational implications of these differences. Should a sensitivity to different intelligences or learning styles become part of the "mental models" constructed by new teachers, the next generation of instructors are far more likely to be able to reach each of their students in the most direct and effective way (p. 251).

It also attempts to raise some questions and issues that should be considered in the process of training teachers so that they can add MI (multiple intelligences) dimension to their training. The article also advocates the presence of the tenth intelligence "Moral Intelligence" which Gardner has some difficulty in defining.

## Background

The original seven intelligences according to Gardner (1999) are:

**Linguistic Intelligence:** Sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages and the capacity to use language to accomplish goals (p.41). Sample skills include; understanding order and meaning of words, convincing someone of a course of action, explaining, teaching, and learning, humor, memory and recall, etc. Lawyers, speakers, writers, poets are among the people with high linguistic intelligence.

**Logical/Mathematical Intelligence:** The capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically (p.42). Sample skills include; abstract pattern recognition, inductive /deductive and scientific reasoning, discerning relationships and connections, etc. Mathematicians, logicians, and scientists exploit logical-mathematical intelligence.

**Visual/Spatial Intelligence:** This intelligence features the potential to recognize and manipulate the patterns of wide space (those used, for instance, by navigators and pilots) as well as the patterns of more confined areas (p.42). Sensitivity to form, space, color, line, and shape. Sample skills include; perceiving from different angles, recognizing spatial relationships, image manipulation, active imagination, etc.

**Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence:** This intelligence entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body (like the hand or the mouth) to solve problems or fashion products (p.42). Sample skills include; coordination, control of voluntary and pre-programmed movements, mind/body connection, etc. Dancers, actors, and athletes foreground this intelligence.

**Musical Intelligence:** This intelligence entails skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns (p.41). Sensitivity to rhythm, pitch and melody. Sample skills include; recognizing the structure of music, sensing qualities of a tone, etc.

**Interpersonal Intelligence:** This intelligence denotes a person's capacity to understand

the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and, consequently, to work effectively with others (p.43). Sample skills include; creating and maintaining synergy, working cooperatively, making distinctions among others, etc. Salespeople, teachers, clinicians, religious and political leaders need this intelligence.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence:** This intelligence involves the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of oneself—including one's own desires, fears, and capacities—and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life (p. 43). Sample skills include; transpersonal sense of the self, awareness and expression of different feelings, understanding how one is similar to or different from others, higher order thinking/reasoning, etc.

Gardner (1993) argued that everyone is born possessing the seven intelligences. He also warned us that this list is a preliminary one and is not limited to seven intelligences only. As a result, Gardner (1999) introduced the possibility of three new intelligences, although he points out "the strength of the evidence for these varies, and whether or not to declare a certain human capacity another type of intelligence is certainly a judgment call" (p.47). These additional candidate intelligences are:

**Naturalist Intelligence:** "Naturalist combines a description of the core ability with a characterization of a role that many cultures value. A naturalist demonstrates expertise in the recognition and classification of the numerous species—the flora and fauna—of his or her environment" (p.48). According to Gardner (1995) the individual with high naturalist intelligence is "able to recognize flora and fauna, to make other consequential distinctions in the natural world, and to use his ability productively [in hunting, in farming, in biological science]" (p.206).

**Spiritual Intelligence:** Gardner (1999) argues that "if we humans can relate to the world of nature, we can also relate to the supernatural world— to the cosmos that extends beyond what we can perceive directly, to the mystery of our own existence, and to life-and-death experiences that transcend what we routinely encounter" (p.54). Furnham (2008) points

out that "it is the ability to master a set of diffuse and abstract concepts about being, but also mastering the craft of altering one's consciousness in attaining a certain state of being" (p.212). Such intelligence can help us to understand the ultimate questions, mysteries and meanings of life: who are we? Where do we come from? What does the future hold for us? Why do we exist? What is the meaning of life, of love, of tragic losses, of death?

**Existential Intelligence:** Although Gardner (1999) finds Existential Intelligence difficult to define, he proposes that it involves "the capacity to locate oneself with respect to the furthest reaches of the cosmos—the infinite and the infinitesimal—and the related capacity to locate oneself with respect to the most existential features of the human condition as the significance of life, the meaning of death, the ultimate fate of the physical and the psychological worlds, and such profound experiences as love of another person or total immersion in a work of art" (p.60).

In "Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century," Gardner (1999) warned us that the most important task in the new millennium will not be to "just hone our various intelligences and use them properly, but figure out how intelligence and morality can work together to create a world in which a great variety of people will want to live" (p.4). However, Gardner and his colleagues excluded moral capacities since they found these capacities normative rather than descriptive. In spite of the fact that it is difficult to please everybody with just one definition of morality, we cannot ignore the possibility of a definition as a universal moral code.

For example, Churchland (2011) argues that morality originates in the biology of the brain. She describes that the "neurobiological platform of bonding" that was modified by evolutionary pressures and cultural values has led to human styles of moral behavior. So in a sense it is grounded in inborn behavioral dispositions or virtues naturally possessed by all human beings but in various levels. Churchland (ibid) tries to persuade us that recent discoveries in brain science can teach us some important things about morality. And she insists that morality is a feature of flesh-

and-blood humanity, not of some abstract or supernatural world.

Things human beings witnessed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially in early years of the new millennium force us strongly to think about the Moral Intelligence (Altan, 2001, 2010). Altan (2010) claims that “Moral Intelligence is going to be one of the most valued intelligences in the next century since we have witnessed a lot of smart people lacking moral values which caused people to suffer all over the world” (p.63). And I believe that it is definitely the time for the Moral Intelligence. Although the degrees can be changeable, in no culture bribing, telling lies, burgling, smuggling, attacking others’ rights and laws, etc. can be seen as legal, normal or acceptable. Moral Intelligence can be defined as the ability to differ the good from the bad and the right from the wrong; to accept and implement the democracy, law of order, freedom of speech, freedom of belief systems or choice and basic human rights, and respect the environment, etc. Thus, those individuals having, showing and fighting for such values could be considered with high Moral Intelligence. Altan (2010) points out that:

We have had many intelligent leaders and politicians, army commanders who failed to show moral attitudes and behaviors, as a result of which we witnessed wars, ethnic cleansings, and environmental destructions, etc. We have had many intelligent businessmen who were so greedy to make more money so they either cheated or they were blind in making more money, and as result, a global economical crisis happened where millions of people became unemployed and thousands have been added to the list of starving (p.63).

We cannot claim that those causing such problems were lacking the aforementioned very well known intelligences. They all had the seven or eight intelligences in their profiles. What lacked was the Moral Intelligence! It is not possible to raise individuals with high level of virtues, respectful to basic human rights, freedom of speech, choice and belief systems, law of order and democracy by just nurturing their Linguistic, Mathematical, Spatial, etc.

intelligences. Therefore, Moral Intelligence, as in the case of other intelligences, can be activated and thought with certain very well planned activities so that individuals can become more aware of their potential for Moral Intelligence and develop it if they have less developed level of this intelligence.

The ambitions that most parents have for their children naturally include the development of important moral dispositions. Most parents want to raise their children to become persons of a certain kind, persons who possess traits that are desirable and praiseworthy, whose personalities are imbued with a strong ethical compass (Lapsley, 2008). Adults realize that the young need moral direction. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to provide it — to pass on a moral heritage. The school has a responsibility to stand for good values and help students establish their personality around such values. Although values are relative, such an education can assert the rightness of certain universal values — such as respect, responsibility, honesty, caring, and fairness — and help students to understand, care about, and act upon these values in their lives. Therefore, such core values can and should be taught in schools. As a result, tomorrow’s EFL teachers need to do two things: they need to develop their own moral and ethical personality so they can lead by example and they need to learn the *pedagogy* of moral education under the umbrella of Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

### **Integration of Multiple Intelligences into ELT Teacher Education Programs**

English language teaching has always been accused of three important problems: lack of bringing real life to the classroom; the gap between EFL and main educational ideas; and the lack of content on its subject matter. Training novice teachers through MI might enable them not only resolve the aforementioned problems to some extent, but also might enable their students to effectively acquire a foreign language while being empowered by the knowledge, skills, and commitment required by the 21<sup>st</sup> century world citizens.

In order to invite EFL teachers to use MI in their classrooms, first ELT teacher educators should



be encouraged to include the theory into their programs. There are three areas that I would like to mention.

### **Identification of the multiple intelligences**

How should EFL teachers learn both about themselves and their learners? EFL Teachers ought to be aware not only of their own profile of multiple intelligences, but also their learners' profiles of MI, so that the learners are aware of what their intelligences are with the degree we have all nine of the intelligences with us. We need to be aware of our individual profiles in order to accentuate and develop the areas that were not developed as others and take the advantage of the areas in which we are particularly or more developed. For example, Christison (1996) includes a practical inventory useful for both teachers and learners. It helps both teachers and learners to get a clue of what their profiles are.

How could we know about our dominant intelligence(s)? There are a couple of things we should know about the identification of intelligences. With IQ measurements, there is real quantification for verbal and mathematical skills. With learning style inventories, there is a strong quantification of one's own learning style. The difference between MI inventories and IQ tests or learning style inventories is that we do not want to label someone in a category of one of the intelligences. Multiple intelligences are much more dynamic. Learners can grow, expand and learn both within their skills and intelligences. Therefore, it is dangerous if we use these inventories as a tool to label someone, and say, "O.K. I've got a bodily kinesthetic learner here and make sure that I do bodily kinesthetic activities in class for this learner." That is not what we want to do. We don't want to be comparing learners with each other, we don't want learners to compare themselves with other learners in class and say "oh, I got X on the musical intelligence, what's your score?" We don't want to view the inventory as scores which would indicate that one learner has an advantage over others. We should use the inventories to help us in the planning process so that we know where we can develop some of the intelligences in a particular reading class. If everyone in the class is underdeveloped in one of the intelligences, then we might plan more activities in that

particular underdeveloped intelligence so that we have opportunity to expand and help learners see where they can grow (Altan, 2002).

### **Curriculum development and multiple intelligences**

What aspects and what issues should be raised in teacher training so that during the lesson planning and the curriculum process teachers are taking the various intelligences into account?

MI theory offers a means for building daily lesson plans, weekly units and yearlong things. In such programs, there should be a way that all students can have their strongest intelligences stressed at least some of the time in the curriculum process. Seven key elements that teachers can use in lesson planning and curriculum development that can help them in the process of identifying how to integrate and infuse in their lesson planning intelligences could be suggested.

First of all, we should focus on a specific objective for our topic. Instead of starting by thinking of a type of intelligence, we should start by looking for the topic for an objective. The intelligences will naturally emerge from the topic. Because they are intelligences, they will be naturally found in the environment in which learners will discuss the topic. So do not start by saying, I am going to do a lesson plan today on musical intelligence. Start with a specific objective for the topic, and then move to asking the key multiple intelligences questions. Second, examine each of the intelligences and ask yourself, how can I bring in musical intelligence into this topic? In what way is music and rhythm naturally exemplified with that particular topic? In what way can I guess learners' introspection on this topic, so that intrapersonal intelligence will be highlighted? Examine each of the intelligences and see how each naturally emerge with the topic you have identified. Third, consider the possibilities. Perhaps, one of the intelligences will naturally emerge as a strong intelligence to be developed or cultivated with a particular topic. Consider possibilities where you could exemplify and strengthen and integrate some of the other intelligences. Fourth, do some brain-storming. Work with other teachers, talk

to other teachers also working on multiple intelligences. Share with them the topic or the objectives that you are working on. And ask them how they have dealt with these issues. Do not limit yourself with your school or campus. Use e-mail and the internet to get help from others who are not in your country. Fifth, select appropriate activities to teach the lesson. Sixth, set up your sequential plan and finally, implement the plan.

It is important that we do not force ourselves to display every intelligence type in every single class period. What we want to do is to look at the entire unit for the entire topic and make sure that there is an opportunity throughout the topic for the intelligence to emerge naturally. But, do not think within every 50 minute-class that you have to build in some musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic, and some mathematical-logical. It is hard to think of a 50 minute-class to touch every single intelligence.

### **Assessment and multiple intelligences**

I recognize that all these intelligences play different roles in my learning and in my teaching. And we have the opportunity as teacher educators to open the door for both novice teachers and in-service teachers during their training to discover the elements of these intelligences for themselves and to learn how to assess them in the process of educating their learners.

Assessment has a central role in an educational system. MI suggests a system that depends less on standardized, formal or norm-based tests and much more on authentic, alternative or assessment in context. It is called authentic assessment because its tasks are similar to real-life tasks; it is called alternative assessment because students *create* a response to a question or task, they have chance to create the way they want; it is called assessment in context because intelligence cannot be conceptualized out of context, since intelligence is always an interaction between a biological potential and a learning opportunity in a given cultural context. The principle that should govern the chosen assessment system is that if learners have different profiles of intelligences, then they have different ways of learning, and should therefore be assessed in accordance with them.

We should be aware that here we are not assessing the multiple intelligences. The purpose of the assessment here is to assess the learners' objectives via multiple intelligences. We should be sure that we assess in a way that the learners have an opportunity to demonstrate their increased proficiency through the intelligences. Armstrong (1994) suggests two key things; first, observation and second, documentation. During the in-service teacher training seminars, teachers usually turn lesson plans and they indicate for the assessment that the teacher trainer will observe. Teachers usually do not articulate what they are observing for. They simply say "oh, watch my students." I think that it is important at the assessment stage to articulate clearly, what you are looking for.

Is there a way to help you to decide how you will document, and how you will report? Some documentation formats might include; anecdotal records, work samples, audio cassettes, video-tapes, student journals, interviews, and criterion-referenced assessments, portfolios, presentations, etc. Each of them is an excellent assessment tool a teacher can use in a classroom. See Altan (2002) for a detailed list of assessment techniques for multiple intelligences.

Gardner (1999) insists that all intelligent human activities demonstrate that all the intelligences are activated in their execution. The intelligences are independent of one another, but can act in conjunction. For example, a dancer can only excel if she has developed musical intelligence for working with the music and rhythm, interpersonal intelligence for understating how to capture the audience with her movements, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence to give the necessary agility and grace to her movements.

### **Conclusion**

Although Gardner's theory has been attacked and criticized by many scholars (Allix, 2000; Carroll, 1993; Klein, 1997; and Morgan, 1996; White, 2005), it must be admitted that MI is one of the leading psychological theories that has had most influence on education in recent decades. The perspective of the theory of multiple intelligences clearly and practically reveals the mechanisms of scaffolding and the interiorization and negotiation of meaning

that allow the learner's understating and the acquisition of the mentality corresponding to a biologist, musician, author or linguist. Gardner presents no specific educational model, but the central shafts of the approach he proposes are individualized teaching design, contact with life and solutions our ancestors have found to their problems, and collaborative learning.

The new millennium came with a dramatic technological revolution. We now live in an increasingly diverse, globalized, complex and media-driven society. It became increasingly clear that schools must become dramatically more successful with a wide range of learners if many more citizens are to acquire the sophisticated skills they need to participate in a knowledge-based, ever changing globalized society. If learners are to be well-served, schools must be able to place EFL teachers who will be effective in the classroom and if teachers are to be effective and ready to meet the needs of the learners, English Language Teaching Departments must be able to produce teachers who will be ready to meet these challenges.

If the image of the of the learners change, so should that of the ELT teachers. And if learners, far from being interpreted in the classroom as a passive, reactive and dependent being, are seen as pro-active, pro-positive and responsible from their own learning, the role of ELT teachers should change in the same line because they are at the service of learners. The ELT teacher's role in this kind of classroom differs considerably from that of the ELT teacher in the traditional classroom. In the traditional context, the teacher sits or stands facing the class, gives instructions, writes on the board, asks the students questions and waits for them to finish their work. In the MI classroom, ELT teachers will constantly change their method or presentation, moving from linguistic field to the musical one, from there to the logical-mathematical one with all intelligences combined imaginatively.

The ELT teachers in MI will offer their learners direct experiences, which will oblige them to get up and move around the classroom or pass around some object so that the material in question comes to life; they might also ask their students to construct something tangible

so as to show their understating of the topic. The ELT teacher should favor cooperative learning by encouraging their students to interact in different ways.

I think that the three areas pointed out in the article; identification of the multiple intelligences, curriculum development, and assessment and multiple intelligences are areas that ELT teacher educators and trainers need to model for teachers and trainers so that novice EFL teachers and trainees see how these can easily be integrated and implemented throughout the curriculum to strengthen both EFL learning and teaching.

The situation becomes more critical in multi-cultural and multi-lingual and highly diverse classrooms, compared to mono-cultural and mono-lingual and uniformed ones. There are many individual differences and cultural differences that account for the development and patterns of multiple intelligences and each of these will influence the type of intelligence that tends to emerge with learners from different cultures in the first situation. So the teacher trainers working in such situations/ countries should keep in mind the influence that individual differences and culture play.

As Gardner (1999) puts it:

I want my children to understand the world, but not just because the world is fascinating and the human mind is curious. I want them to understand it so that they will be positioned to make it a better place. Knowledge is not the same as morality, but we need to understand if we are to avoid past mistakes and move in productive directions. An important part of that understanding is knowing who we are and that what we can do... Ultimately, we must synthesize our understandings for ourselves. The performances of understanding that try matters are the ones we carry out as human beings in an imperfect world which we can affect for good or for ill (p.180-181).

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