ABSTRACT

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE AND EFL PEDAGOGY: EXPLORING THEORETICAL AND APPLICATIONAL PARADIGMS

Background and Rationale

Since the time English language teaching was recognized as an academic subject in the school curricula, it has witnessed the a plethora of teaching/learning theories and methodologies. From the most traditional ones i.e. Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to the latest ones i.e. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) these methodologies mirror varying approaches towards key concepts such as language, learning and teaching as well as needs and demands of the society in different periods of time.

However, today, no single methodology is taken as the cornerstone in English language classes. According to Brown (2002), “The whole concept of separate methods is no longer a central issue in language teaching practice” (Brown, 2002, p.10). He asserts that:

An approach to language pedagogy is not just a set of static principles “set in stone”. It is in fact, a dynamic composite of energies within a teacher that changes (or should change, if one is a growing teacher) with continued experience in learning and teaching. There is far too much that we don’t know collectively about this process, and there are far too many new research findings pouring in, to assume that a teacher can confidently assert that he or she knows everything that needs to be known about language and language learning. (Brown, 2002, p.11)

Generally speaking, the humanistic ideology was the acting force behind the educational evolution in ELT. It gave rise to new terms such as whole person learning, individualized or personalized learning. Prabhavathy and Mahalakshmi (2016) write:

The term humanistic describes learning approaches that assert the central role of the 'whole person' in the learning process. Humanistic approaches emerged in the mid-twentieth century which counterbalance to exclusively intellectual (or cognitive) accounts of learning, such as mentalism... A humanist approach to education enhances on the learner as an individual, taking their interests and goals as the basis to organize or to mould and facilitate their learning experiences. (p.5)
The theory of Multiple Intelligences is a humanistic psychological theory which calls into attention the differences among individuals in terms of their intelligences. This theory was first proposed by Howard Gardner, the psychology professor at Harvard University. Gardner argues that intelligence does not manifest in the same manner in all individuals, it is not simply a single static construct which can be measured in all people by the same sort of questions. He, in fact, challenges the traditional IQ (Intelligence Quotient) tests that label individuals dependent on their performance in a restricted domain. Initially, he identified seven intelligences in all individuals though later on added one more intelligence to the list and he talks about more potential intelligences. These intelligences are briefly discussed as below:

1. Linguistic/Verbal Intelligence: The ability to use language effectively, having the sensitivity to words either written or oral.

2. Logical/Mathematical Intelligence: The ability to reason sensibly and to cope with logical-mathematical problems easily, and also being adept at mathematics and using numbers.

3. Visual/Spatial Intelligence: The potential to apprehend the visual world and transfer the visual perceptions into the real world.

4. Interpersonal Intelligence: The ability to understand and recognize the feelings, emotions, moods and intentions of other people and acting upon them.

5. Intrapersonal Intelligence: The ability to know one’s own inner moods, feelings and emotions and “the capacity for self-discipline, self-understanding, and self-esteem” (Armstrong, 2009, p.7).

6. Musical Intelligence: The ability to perceive musical forms. “Sensitivity to the pitch, timber, and rhythm of sounds as well as responsiveness to the emotional implications of these elements of music” (Nelson, 1998, p.11).

7. Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence: The disposition towards using one’s body to express oneself, and also the ability to create things skillfully using one’s body.

8. Naturalist Intelligence: Having a feeling for recognizing and classifying plants and animals. It can also be expressed through the ability to classify inanimate objects.
The theory of multiple intelligences was embraced by the enthusiastic language teachers who think of their students as different individuals with varying abilities. In fact, they found the underlying theory of the way they teach.

In light of the above discussion, the present study is an attempt to investigate the application of the theory of multiple intelligences in EFL pedagogy. It provides a comprehensive review on theoretical paradigms of the theory of multiple intelligences and also, this study presents and analyze the result of a survey that the researcher conducts among foreign students at AMU. The survey, as a complementary work, aims to identify the multiple intelligences profile of the participants and to accordingly analyze the status and scope of the application of the theory in EFL education.

The aims, objectives and the research questions, provided below, give a clear vision of the present research:

**Aims and Objectives:**

i. To outline and discuss the ideas implicit in the theory of Multiple Intelligences;

ii. To analyze the relationships between MIT and different aspects of EFL teaching/learning;

iii. To identify the existence and strength of multiple intelligences among foreign students at AMU;

iv. To investigate the ways of incorporation of MIT ideas into EFL teaching/learning;

v. To design tasks and activities for EFL classes through the assimilation of MIT principles.

**Research Questions:**

i. What is the theory of multiple intelligences? How is it different from the alternative theories?

ii. How is MIT related to education? How can it effectively be incorporated in EFL classes and increase the achievements of learners?

iii. To what extent is the MI profile of foreign students at AMU attended to?

iv. What measures are required for the implementation of MIT ideas in all aspects of EFL classes?

v. How the principles of MIT can be accomplished through tasks and activities?
This thesis is divided into the following six chapters:

First chapter, entitled ‘Statement of Intent’ gives an outline and a general overview of the thesis. The topics which are discussed in this chapter include background and rationale, methodology, aims and objectives, research questions and the proposed chapters of this study. The researcher also calls attention to the significance of the study.

The Second chapter, entitled ‘Review of Literature’ provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. The given literature is generally divided into three portions, the works and materials dealing with the theoretical backgrounds of the theory of multiple intelligences, the works highlighting the pedagogical use of the theory and finally the materials focusing on the integration of the theory in EFL classes from different aspects.

The Third chapter ‘Intelligence, Multiple Intelligences and EFL Pedagogy’ presents an exhaustive introduction to the theory of multiple intelligences. For this purpose, a number of similar theories and concepts which may be mistaken for the MIT as well as the supporting and critical views are discussed in this chapter. Then it comes to the implementation of MIT in education in general and in EFL in particular. On this point, a set of requirements for true application of the MIT in EFL classes is suggested. Furthermore, it presents practical ideas to align the teaching aspects, i.e. teaching strategies, lesson plans and assessment methods with MIT principles.

The Fourth chapter ‘A Survey of Empirical Study at AMU’ deals with the analysis of the results of the survey, conducted at AMU on identifying the MI profile of 125 foreign students at AMU. The chapter provides the introduction and background to the study and explains the methodology of the research and the used instrument. The statistical analysis of the given data is also illustrated in tables and graphs. Besides, this chapter establishes the background for the practice of MI based activities to be discussed in the ensuing chapter.

Fifth chapter, ‘Designing Activities through Assimilation and Incorporation of MIT’, offers a collection of activities for EFL classes. These activities are selected, modified and designed based on the intelligences that they draw on. The researcher also defines the language points, skills and the suitable levels for each activity.
Finally, ‘Sixth’ and final chapter provides an overview of the study along with its conclusions, recommendations, suggestions and limitations. It also contains the findings of the whole study.

**Research Methodology**

The research methodology employed in undertaking this study is discussed in detail. The interpretation of the collected data seeking to identify and examine the existence of multiple intelligences in respondents and its relationship to learning English as a foreign language is provided here.

**The Instrument**

The instrument which is used in this survey is a questionnaire including a combination of statements from three authentic sources which are already checked in terms of their reliability and validity. Among these three scales, the questions were adopted based on the difficulty level of the language, and the clarity of content.

The finalized questionnaire is made up of two sections. The first section, which is related to background information, seeks to get two types of information. The personal information of respondents including age, nationality, gender, class, and self-perception of individuals about their English language level. The second section consists of 24 statements of 4 point Likert type scale – ranging from always, to sometimes, rarely and never. This set comprises eight groups of statements investigating eight intelligences in respondents.

**The Participants**

The participants of the study consist of non-Indian learners at Aligarh Muslim University. All participants come from EFL context and they have been using English language as a medium of instruction at AMU. The total number of participants is 125 foreign students, among which 19 were from Iran, 6 from Afghanistan, 20 from Indonesia, 51 from Thailand, 18 from Yemen and 11 were from Jordan.

**Method of Data Collection**

The required data for the current survey was collected through the administration of the questionnaire to the foreign students at AMU. The process of the survey was undertaken during the academic session 2014-2015. The researcher was challenged with the dispersion of the target population. She contacted some representatives from each category of nationalities to get as many candidates as
possible for filling the questionnaires. To ensure and increase the validity of the applied questionnaire the researcher put a lot of effort to get as accurate responses as possible. To this end, she explained the function and purpose of the questionnaire and the study and for that matter the theory of multiple intelligences to almost every respondent. Since the questions were new to the respondents, it frequently happened that they were mistaken for psychological and sociological enquiries or personality tests which it could have led to the misunderstanding or biased perception of the participants. In order to clear up such kind of confusions, the researcher consulted with every respondent individually.

**Data analysis and Results**

In the current survey the statistical software SPSS 16 was utilized for analyzing data. The descriptive statistics frequency and percent are used in this study. Since the applied questionnaire is divided into two sets. By the same token, the gained data is interpreted and analyzed in two sections. The first section comprises three questions which extract information about the respondents’ self-perception of their proficiency level, achievement and improvements in English language on a four point Likert type scale ranging from excellent to weak indicates. The analysis of the results of this section indicates:

Concerning the fact that the participants of this survey were EFL college students, studying in an English medium instruction, at AMU, a good level of English language proficiency is expected from them. However, according to what they report, they are yet to be satisfied with their overall proficiency level, their last obtained score in an English test and their improvement after passing undergraduate course. In other words, they are still far from the desired level of proficiency in English.

The second section of the given questionnaire deals with the analysis of responses to a bank of statements seeking to identify and examine the existence and strength of eight intelligences in individuals. This body of statements comprises eight sets. Each set includes three statements looking for one type of intelligence. However, to make a more structured analysis, responses to each set are discussed and analyzed respectively. Statistical data related to each statement is given in separate tables. For the sake of brevity, only the collective information related to each of the three statements, exploring a particular intelligence, is presented here.
Musical Intelligence

Having a look at the collective data related to the statements identifying musical intelligence directs our attention to the high potential of the majority of students towards this intelligence. This information tells that the chance of actively engaging more minds in our language classes will be doubled or even tripled if we make use of this intelligence of our students. In fact, for some people music is an inseparable part of their life so they may feel left behind in educational sphere, since their passion is overlooked there. There is actually good scope for attaching music to language teaching and there are ample ways to increase the involvement of musical intelligence of learners in ELT classes. To this end, strongly musical students can help a lot in suggesting and designing musical tasks or even involving their classmates who feel weak in this intelligence.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Here the results look more debatable since the frequency of responses to the options of ‘always’ and ‘rarely’ suggests that quite a big number of respondents are assumed to be kinesthetically intelligent. The message of this information to the teachers is that it is incumbent upon them to prepare the stage for students to perform. This intelligence can be artistically used in ELT classes. There are endless ways to let the learners flourish through their kinesthetic intelligence. They need to be given opportunity to express their language knowledge through their actions and to develop their verbal language through their body language. This intelligence has to be taught and underlined in ELT classes to highlight the connectivity between word and action.

Possibly, one of the reasons that some respondents showed reluctance to this intelligence is the fact that doing bodily activities are not of primary importance in today’s life in many societies and even they are not highly attended or valued in educational settings. People know bodily-kinesthetic intelligence as a talent rather than intelligence. It is hardly considered as a privilege to appreciate in educational settings and particularly in theoretical fields like English Language Teaching (ELT).

Spatial Intelligence

The aggregate data of three statements exploring spatial intelligence reflects that the highest frequency of responses belongs to always and sometimes. It implies that the maximum number of respondents is inclined towards spatial intelligence.
In spite of the high disposition of learners towards spatial intelligence, in many cases it is not either considered as an intelligence to count on it, or teachers find no relationship between it and language learning. They simply neglect this intelligence by translating visual-spatial information into linguistic mode. Spatial intelligence is largely associated with art and artistic works like drawings, pictures and graphic symbols.

**Linguistic Intelligence**

The collective data related to the linguistic intelligence shows that the frequency of responses to ‘always’ and ‘rarely’ are almost equal when compared to each other. And the largest frequency of responses goes for ‘sometimes’. In other words, in a large number of respondents there exists a mild inclination towards linguistic intelligence. On the other hand, a small frequency of responses associates with ‘never’ though not too small to be neglected. If this figure is added to the frequency of ‘rarely’, then the number of those who have a weak disposition for linguistic intelligence would exceed the number of those who are strongly inclined.

As already hinted, linguistic intelligence is the one which has always been the most highly applied intelligence in almost all areas and especially in the domain of ELT. On that account, the largest percentage of respondents were expected to show a strong tendency towards linguistic intelligence. However, the obtained result proved against. The reverse results suggest that in spite of the excessive focus on linguistic intelligence, from the elementary grades to higher education, it is not yet the most favored or developed intelligence in learners. However, by no means is it suggested nor possible to completely overlook this intelligence, but there are manifold strategies advised to develop this intelligence in English language learners. Teachers can also make use of their innovative strategies to develop this intelligence to some better extents.

**Interpersonal Intelligence**

Here the impressive point is that a big number of responses goes for ‘always’, that is to say, a large number of respondents are strongly inclined towards interpersonal intelligence. The largest frequency goes for ‘sometimes’, which means that most of the respondents have this intelligence to one degree or another. The interpersonal intelligence is perhaps one of the most essential elements which is to be
attended to in English language classes since this intelligence has to do with the ability of making social interactions, the ability that is the bedrock of facilitating communication between and among members of a community. The interpersonal intelligence of learners can flourish and develop in the wake of cooperative learning situations, in which team or pair works are encouraged.

**Intrapersonal Intelligence**

As in the previous set of statements, here also a large portion of responses belongs to ‘always’, suggesting that a good number of respondents are strongly inclined towards intrapersonal intelligence. The largest number of respondents claim to have this intelligence in one way or another as they marked ‘sometimes’. Less than a quarter of responses go for ‘rarely’ and a small number of them marked ‘never’ and 2 items were left unanswered.

Though the data gained relating to two personal intelligences (Interpersonal and Intrapersonal) seemed similar to each other, distinctive strategies are needed to be used in classes for cultivating these intelligences in learners since they are two unique intelligences.

**Logical-Mathematical Intelligence**

The aggregate data relating to logical-mathematical intelligence reveals that a good number of respondents claim to have strong tendency towards this intelligence since they went for ‘always’ and the largest number of them have such disposition to one degree or another since they marked ‘sometimes’. The interesting point here is that more than a quarter of responses goes for ‘rarely’, that is, a greater number of respondents report to have low inclination towards the Logical-Mathematical Intelligence than those who claimed having a strong tendency. A small frequency of responses belongs to those who marked never and no statement is left blank in this set of statements.

It might be misapprehended by both teachers and students that a theoretical field like English language teaching has nothing to do with mathematical intelligence, so there is no need and necessity to count on or develop this intelligence in ELT students. However, based on the tenets of Gardner’s MI theory every human being possesses all eight intelligences though in varying degrees. So, it doesn’t make any sense to ignore or confine any of them to some special domains.
Naturalist Intelligence

The naturalist intelligence is the only one among eight intelligences in which the most frequent responses belongs to always and after that sometimes. According to this data, pretty small number of respondents show a weak tendency towards this intelligence. Despite of this remarkable result, naturalist intelligence is perhaps the most overlooked intelligence in educational settings including English language teaching field. Armstrong has some guidelines for using this intelligence in classes.

Findings of the Study

Building upon the analysis and interpretation of the given data, provided by foreign students at AMU, the results and findings of the present study are inferred and discussed as below:

1. Relying upon the information derived from the first three questions, the foreign students at AMU, as participants of this study, do not feel confident enough regarding their English language proficiency which is affirmed by what they claim about their last score, which they obtained in an English test and also their improvement in English language after studying English in undergraduate courses.

2. Generally, in almost all enquiries the least number of responses belongs to ‘never’ and the most answers belong to ‘sometimes’. It is clearly inferred that all intelligences are fairly distributed in all individuals, as Gardner emphasizes that all human beings possess all the eight intelligences though in different degrees or combinations.

3. Concerning the musical intelligence, quite a big number (more than half of the total population of the respondents) reported being inclined towards this intelligence in a degree or another.

4. There is a large number of respondents, who are sure about their kinesthetic/bodily intelligence and yet a larger number thinks they have this inclination to one or another degree.

5. As the aggregate data related to spatial intelligence shows, a rather large number of respondents have a strong disposition towards this intelligence and quite a big number of them have such disposition to some extent or another.
6. About the data profiling linguistic intelligence the interesting point is that a large number of respondents reported having low inclination towards this intelligence and most of them have such inclination to some degree or another.

7. To add to the previous finding we refer to statement 12. In response to this statement ‘I am good at writing reports for class assignments or work’ the larger frequency of responses go for ‘rarely’ than for ‘always’.

8. Regarding the personal intelligences (interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences), as the accumulative results indicate, a remarkable number of respondents assert having strong tendency towards these intelligences.

9. Concerning the logical-mathematical intelligence a great number of respondents report to have a low tendency towards this intelligence.

10. The naturalist intelligence graph is noteworthy from this point that the majority of responses belongs to ‘always’. That is, most respondents claim being strongly inclined towards naturalist intelligence.

11. The study reflects that the respondents have all the intelligences inherent in them, which need to be incorporated in the EFL pedagogy for which there is a need to sensitize the teachers and stakeholders about this theory.

**Conclusion of the Study**

The conclusion of the present study in one hand reflects the theoretical arguments on MIT and its applicative prospects in EFL pedagogy. On the other hand, it is derived from the analysis and interpretation of the data provided by the responses of the foreign students to the given questionnaire. It highlights the MI profile of foreign students and more importantly analyzes the degree these intelligences are developed in them and the extent to which they have been utilized in English language classes:

1. Based on the first three questions in the questionnaire, the majority shows that:
   
   i. They are not confident enough about their overall proficiency in English.
   
   ii. They are not quite satisfied with the last score they obtained in English language test.
   
   iii. Studying English in undergraduate course did not fulfill their expectations regarding their English language improvement.
2. Theoretical argumentations in chapter three suggest that the theory of multiple intelligences in many aspects can be highly effective in improving the status of English language teaching and learning as a foreign language.

3. The researches in MIT are the best evidence endorsing that application of this theory is of prime significance in EFL pedagogy.

4. Likewise, chapter five shows that there is a good scope for the infusion of the intelligences in EFL activities to be implemented in classroom situations.

5. The provided literature on the theory of MIT in this study supports that multiple intelligences are premised on solid theoretical basis. It means that the implementation of this theory in language learning and teaching process is needed to make the EFL pedagogy more interesting, encouraging and motivating for students.

6. The analysis also establishes that these foreign students are not naturally incompetent in their language abilities. Because they showed that they have almost all intelligences in them. This means that their intelligences have not been properly exploited in their language learning classes.

7. The analysis and findings reflect that the most number of participants are musically intelligent. In fact, musical intelligence is the one which can be most easily and prevalently engaged in English classes. So, it is upon the teachers to take it as an advantage and count on this intelligence in their teachings to involve more learners into the active learning process.

8. Regarding the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, a rather large number of respondents showed weak inclination towards this intelligence, quite the same number claimed being strongly inclined. It is so because they have not possibly learned to express themselves/ to show their talents through bodily activities as often as they learned to manifest their knowledge verbally. It might have been assumed that performing physical or hands on activities are not of primary importance in today’s daily life. Therefore, they are not highly attended or valued in educational settings as well. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is closely attached to the area of language learning and teaching that it cannot be simply neglected. Communication and conveying the messages in a foreign language is not only the matter of verbal communication, but it needs a mastery over body language too. Besides, many students do not feel to be in the process of learning unless they do
something physically, or create something or practice an action. So, it needs a good effort by the language teachers to go beyond the monotonous lecture-based methods and benefit from this intelligence in their students.

9. The number of participants who reported having a weak or no inclination towards visual-spatial intelligence is not too small to be neglected. It suggests that still lots of work is needed to introduce and develop this intelligence. This can be accomplished by incorporating colors, art works, ideographic languages and graphic symbols into language classes.

10. Among all the intelligences, linguistic intelligence receives most attention in language classes, say, through writing assignments, written and oral tests. However, according to the respective graph, not even half of the respondents report to be strongly inclined towards linguistic intelligence. So, although linguistic intelligence is the most attended intelligence in teaching but it is not the most favored or developed intelligence in learners. However, it doesn’t mean that it should be undermined in our teachings but there is a need to update or replace new, interesting and innovative strategies for availing this intelligence in learners.

11. As it was revealed, a considerable number of participants reported to have a strong tendency towards the both personal intelligences. This can be used as a privilege to develop other intelligences through these two intelligences. As it was already talked about, intelligences do not work in isolation they can interfere each other as catalysts.

12. In case of logical/mathematical intelligence some effort is needed from language teachers to make students participate in problem-solving and logical thinking activities to develop this intelligence. However, since a language class should not look like an extremely rule-based logical class, the corresponding tasks must be chosen cautiously.

13. The naturalist intelligence is one of the most overlooked intelligences in classroom. It is up to the teachers to turn their attention to this intelligence since, on the basis of what was found out, it is a prevalent intelligence among learners.

On the basis of the above mentioned inferences the last but not the least conclusion is that there is a need for incorporating the existing intelligences of students in EFL pedagogy.
Significance/ Implications of the Research

Relying upon the findings of the conducted survey, which were presented above, this study, is significant in the following sense:

1. To identify the theory of Multiple Intelligences in terms of its theoretical and applicative paradigms as a new theory to be nicely adapted in language classes.

2. To help teachers realize the educational aspects of the theory and how to put it into operation in their EFL classes.

3. To shed light on the prospects and scope for the implementation of MIT principles at AMU.

4. To analyze the development and suppression of learners’ multiple intelligences based on practices in EFL classes at AMU.

5. To help teachers discover the different potentials of themselves and their learners and match their teaching strategies accordingly.

6. To highlight the advantages of an MI-based language class over a conventional class.

7. To give teachers practical guidelines to infuse the ideas of MIT in all domains of their teaching in EFL classes including, their strategies, exercises and assessment processes.

8. To help learners find out the wide range of their abilities and their intellectual strengths and learn to utilize them as useful means for learning a foreign language.

9. To suggest the educators and stakeholders set up the educational environments with consideration of MIT principles.

10. To inform the curriculum designers and material developers take into consideration the needs and capacities of all types of learners in EFL classes.

11. To encourage the students to be more expressive regarding the ways in which they prefer to learn through.

To rethink the traditional assessment methods and set them aside in favor of new evaluation techniques on the basis of the ideas of MIT.
Limitations of the Study

The present study discusses about the theory of Multiple Intelligences and its applicability in EFL classes. It looks at the various aspects of the language classes from the perspective of MIT. Moreover, it examines the status of English classes and the intellectual potentials of EFL students at AMU, the conclusions of which were reported above. Regardless of the discussed issues and the mentioned conclusions and implications, the study bears the following limitations:

1. The data based case study has been conducted on foreign students at AMU, while it can also be investigated among students of other courses and classes.
2. There are few other measures, such as interview and observation, which can be used along with questionnaires or checklists to explore the MI profile of individuals which the researcher intends to conduct in the later phase of the study.
3. The present study is confined to investigation of the relationship between the MIT and language teaching and learning processes. However, the future studies can explore the role and relationship of other factors like age and gender in using various combinations of intelligences.

Suggestions of the Study

The following recommendations are provided for future studies:

1. To design programs, like teacher training programs, workshops and conferences to raise the awareness among teachers and educationists about the MIT and applicability of its ideas in education in general and in EFL in particular.
2. To develop materials for EFL learners that caters for their diverse needs with consideration of different intellectual strengths of them.
3. To analyze the effectiveness of applying MI based activities in EFL classes in terms of the achievement of the students.
4. To analyze the relationship between the development of each intelligence and factors like age and gender and the learning styles that learners use.
5. To study the implementation of MIT in other domains such as literature teaching.
6. To conduct specific studies on the relationship between each intelligence and the learning achievements of students.
Bibliography


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