

Diversifying Foreign Language Teaching Activities through the Application of Multiple Intelligences Theory

Hong Thu Thi Nguyen

Hanoi Law University

*Corresponding Author: Hong Thu Thi Nguyen

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15011962](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15011962)

Abstract

Original Research Article

The purpose of this article is to examine teaching activities that apply Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) in the foreign language classroom. The study aims to elucidate the fundamental aspects of the theory, its application in education, and strategies for integrating it into English language instruction. These strategies include instructional techniques and academic activities tailored to the intellectual traits of individual students. To enhance the effectiveness of English teaching and learning, educators must adapt their pedagogical approaches and strategies to accommodate diverse activities that foster students' intellectual variety and language proficiency.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligences Theory, Intelligence, Howard Gardner, Legal English

1. INTRODUCTION

Student performance can be enhanced when students are given the choice of learning style and are able to capitalize on their individual strengths (Deligiannidi and Howard-Jones, 2015). Pawlak (2019) believes that each student processes and responds to language in different ways based on their diverse backgrounds and intelligences.

The diversity of learners is further clarified in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983). His theory of intelligence comes from a new perspective compared to the previous view that there is only one type of intelligence that can be measured by a standardized test, and that there are only two types: high intelligence and low intelligence (Strauss, 2013). With the advent of this theory, many educators have changed their perspective on learners' abilities, that intelligence can be measured in many different ways, there is no inferior intelligence, but only people who are good at one field but not good at another. The way of organizing the classroom, teaching methods, and assessment are adjusted in the direction of diversification and have achieved many

positive results. Akbari & Hosseini (2008) believe that the application of multiple intelligences theory into language teaching and learning is necessary and has had positive results (Dolati & Tahiri, 2017). Similarly, Wallace (2010) concluded that applying MIT in lessons for foreign language learners makes learning easier, as long as teachers recognize the uniqueness of each person. Teachers must respect the diverse backgrounds of their students and consider using a variety of teaching strategies to help them acquire language knowledge and skills, while providing students with ample opportunities to practice the language (Dörnyei, 2006; Mongkolchai & Sitthitikul, 2024). Kevin (2006), Dillon (2005), and Xie and Lin (2009) all argue that despite certain difficulties and challenges, the application of MIT is essential in the context of diversifying forms of higher education.

In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching, and at the same time meet the diversity in needs, abilities, and diversity of students at University, the application of multiple intelligences theory in teaching is extremely necessary. This study

aims to clarify the basic contents of the multiple intelligence theory (MIT), the application of the multiple intelligence theory in education, and ways to apply this theory in teaching English through MIT-based activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Multiple Intelligences

There are many different perspectives and approaches applied to the study and definition of “Intelligence”. According to Gardner (1983), intelligence is the ability to solve problems, perceive or think at a high level. People can successfully adapt to the working environment by using their thinking ability to create valuable products. The diversity of intelligence mentioned by Gardner has denied the previous monotonous forms of education and assessment. Traditional intelligence tests are used to measure specific human abilities while ignoring many other talents, so these tests only give us a partial view of the learner's ability. Thus, Gardner (1983) describes intelligence as a person's ability to solve problems or create products in a variety of contexts and cultures, rather than the traditional concept of intelligence, monolithic, innate (Christison & Bassano, 2005), which is somewhat static and does not change with age, training or experience (Christison & Bassano, 2005). Similarly, Mongkolchai & Sitthitikul (2024) assert that everyone has potential intelligences, which can be developed and utilized to achieve desired learning and working results with timely encouragement and guidance. Willingham (2004) expanded the definition of intelligence presented by Gardner to include: in addition to using intellectual functions effectively, one must also know how to apply physical functions and skills to not only solve problems but also to create useful products. Gardner (1983) initially classified Multiple Intelligences into seven types and later added an eighth type, including:

Types of intelligence adapted and modified from Chapman (2006) include:

- Linguistic intelligence: Ability to learn, practice and use language
- Logical-mathematical intelligence: Ability to think logically and solve scientific problems, especially related to numbers

- Musical intelligence: Ability to music, sound, rhythm
- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: Ability to control body movements, use body activities to perform tasks
- Spatial intelligence: Ability to perceive, measure, process images, directions in space
- Interpersonal intelligence: Ability to work effectively in relation to people around
- Intrapersonal intelligence: Ability to work well independently
- Naturalist intelligence: Ability to systematize, arrange, classify, love nature, enjoy outdoor activities,...

Armstrong (2009) pointed out nine types of intelligence in the form of linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and philosophical intelligence. Each person can have more than one type of intelligence, these types of intelligence will coordinate in people in different ways. In the right environment, with certain motivations and efforts, people can develop that intelligence at a high level.

Campbell et al. (2003) generalized the types of intelligence into 3 main types: 1. Spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic and naturalistic intelligence; 2. Linguistic, linguistic and musical intelligence; 3. Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. This classification is based on the common and similar characteristics between the types of intelligence to arrange them into a group. This generalization of the classification can bring simplicity and convenience to the organizer and arranger of activities.

Similarly, McKenzie (2005) proposed a comprehensive classification of 9 types of intelligence through 3 domains: analytical, intrapersonal and interpersonal. The analytical domain will associate intelligence with logical and scientific ways of thinking. The intrapersonal domain will tend to ideas, emotions, and existential abilities. The interpersonal domain will be related to interactions between individuals and the use of physical activities. Different types of intelligence often work together in complex ways.

Understanding the characteristics of the subject's intelligence will help the performer have effective ways to promote capacity, and at the same time understand the relationship between intelligences to be able to organize and make good use of activities in specific contexts to achieve high work performance (McKenzie, 2005). According to Razmajoo (2008), each person will possess different types of intelligence at different levels. Some people demonstrate strong intelligence in only two or three types of intelligence, so it is necessary to know how to take advantage of and promote these strengths with different jobs.

Multiple Intelligences Theory in Teaching

Kevin (2006) asserted that no single teaching method can successfully reach all learners. One of the goals of MIT in teaching is to diversify teaching methods to meet the characteristics of multiple intelligences of learners. If in the past, teachers only provided a specific teaching method to match the course objectives and program content, with MIT, in the same lesson, many teaching methods and techniques are used. These methods will promote the learners' abilities and positivity, learners will be more proactive in activities (Lana, 2000). According to Armstrong (2004), teachers must understand the characteristics of learners and their prominent intelligences to build teaching techniques suitable for each type of intelligence. Willingham (2004) emphasizes the importance of recognizing the impact of differences in learners' intelligence on their learning outcomes in order to design more feasible educational programs and methods in the corresponding educational environment. He believes that there are many ways to introduce a topic to stimulate creativity and different abilities from each learner, while creating great motivation for the learning process. According to Ramos (2007), teachers apply MIT to build motivational methods with the aim of helping learners confidently express themselves through actively designing and implementing their favorite activities while still ensuring the content requirements of the lesson. Through the activities and performances of learners, the strengths and abilities of learners are discovered and promoted. He emphasizes the importance of working in groups and teams so that learners have the opportunity to share different skills and knowledge

and complement each other, and at the same time they have a sense of responsibility for their own work and the collective. It is the group activities that will motivate the intelligences to be expressed and developed in a team that is both competitive and constructive.

The results show a positive relationship between learners' vocabulary memorization ability and the use of MI strategies in ESL classrooms (Ghamrawi, 2014). Wallace (2010) asserts that current foreign language teaching methods will change when Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences is applied. The speed of language acquisition is also affected when this theory is used in second language learning.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research design

Qualitative method was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the applying this theory in teaching. The interviews included both direct questions and experience-based inquiries, where teachers were asked to about classroom practice, they had observed or were involved in. To ensure the reliability of the data, the interviews were conducted after the course was completed. Ethical issues were addressed by obtaining consent from participants through a participation agreement sheet.

Participants

The study was conducted with 5 teachers and 34 students at a university in Vietnam. The 5 teachers who participated in the study had more than 3 years of English teaching experience. All of them had previous experience with applying MIT in teaching methods.

Research Instruments

In addition to the questionnaire, in-depth interviews were conducted with students and instructors to gather more detailed information, which were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Observations was also used to collect data related to engagement in the classroom, while interviews were conducted with students and instructors to collect data on activities and methods preferred in classroom through MIT.

Data collection

The interviewer also conducted the interviews with the interviewees in two ways: direct communication (face to face) or indirect communication (via social networks or mobile phones). The direct conversation was recorded, taken notes and rewritten in writing. The indirect conversation was saved in writing data analysis

Data analysis

For the qualitative data, the coding technique was employed, which selects a specified amount of text and codes it with a previously selected code. The information from the in-depth questions, interviews, and reflection notes was sorted based on repetition indigenous categories or specialized vocabulary, key words in context, compare and contrast, metaphors, and analogies, to be grouped into codes and common themes.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Corresponding to each type of intelligence, there will be the most suitable teaching methods and techniques, activities specifically designed for the lesson content, and effective forms of testing and evaluation for the learner's results. MIT is applied to teaching English as follows:

1. Linguistic intelligence: Ability to recognize, understand, remember, and apply spoken and written language effectively; ability to use words effectively, manipulate language structures or syntax, phonetics, semantics, and apply flexibly.

Teaching methods and techniques: Grammar-translation approach, The Direct Method, The Natural approach, Active teaching method, communicative method.

Preferred activities designed for students with linguistic intelligence:

- Word games and quizzes involving English terms: Word Association, Taboo, Scrabble or Banagrams, Word Chains, Questions (A term is thought of by one player, and other players guess it by answering yes/no questions.), Story-Building: With an emphasis on creativity and language, each player contributes a sentence to an expanding narrative, Word Bingo (Students mark off vocabulary words they hear rather than numbers.)

- Writing a Portfolio or diary: Write down new words, meanings, and content of the lesson, summarize important points of the previous lessons, write about strengths, weaknesses, and learning goals, reflect on what was easy or difficult.

- Presentation: Students are required to make presentations about the topic that they learned and applied the necessary skills, presenting, and discussing views on a topic

- Debate on the topic: Discussing a topic and the issues related to the lesson with partners and classmates from different perspectives.

- Writing an essay: Writing samples, including essays, letters, or creative writing pieces,

- Writing an introductory article on websites: students play roles of journalists to publish the articles on students-by-made academic webs.

- Requiring students to read and understand foreign legal articles, and present them orally or design a lecture.

2. Logical-mathematical intelligence: Ability to think logically and solve scientific problems, especially related to numbers

Teaching methods and techniques: Applying problem-based teaching methods, Task-based language teaching (TBLT), Active teaching methods

Preferred activities designed for students with Logical-mathematical intelligence:

- Exploring the correlations between issues, between general theory and how to apply each issue in a specific case

- Analyzing, comparing and contrasting relevant topics from different sources

- Determining solutions to the problems raised

- Encouraging questioning to enhance critical thinking

- Selecting an issue to comment on

- Using intellectual games to test vocabulary and related lesson knowledge

- Recording and systematizing knowledge based on mind maps

3. Musical intelligence- musical ability, the ability to receive and practice language and information through the perception of sound and music.

- Audio-lingual approach, communicative approach,

Preferred activities designed for students with Musical intelligence

- Organizing language games related to music, or associated with sound and images

- Learning vocabulary and topic knowledge from audio and visual materials related to the lesson topic

- Letting students create their own videos or audio files based on the lesson content

4. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: Ability to control body movements, use body activities to perform tasks

Teaching methods and techniques: Communicative approach, project-based active learning, Cooperative Language Learning (CLL),

Preferred activities designed for students with Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

- Requiring learners to describe the meaning of words through simulated actions or vivid explanations

- Requiring students to role-play or record activities

- Organizing competitions in the form of dramatization

- Organizing extracurricular activities and experiences to introduce content related to the learning content such as: characteristics and organization of court activities in Vietnam and other countries

- Reconstructing lecture content with videos and explanations

- Participating in English competitions

- Organizing physical games related to the lecture content for learners

5. Spatial intelligence: Ability to perceive, measure, process images, directions in space, ability to identify, present, design, and implement lesson content through visual and spatial images; understand its meaning, and can present ideas vividly using graphics, maps, and images.

Teaching methods and techniques: Active learning methods, project-based learning methods, technology-enhanced learning, task-based language teaching (TBLT).

Preferred activities designed for students with Spatial intelligence

- Requiring learners to present the meaning of the language and knowledge learned through diagrams and images

- Requiring students to design diagrams and tables to show the structure and characteristics of the topic

- Using IT to present the lesson content through images

- Summarizing and simulating the processes and details of the case, situation, or trial through diagrams and images

6. Interpersonal intelligence: Ability to work effectively in relation to people around. Ability to understand, respond appropriately, and communicate effectively; ability to develop language, knowledge, and skills through interactive and communicative activities, and ability to create interactions and communication to practice and develop language.

Teaching methods and techniques: Communicative approach, project-based active learning, Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), experiential learning

Preferred activities designed for students with Interpersonal intelligence:

- Discussing topics related to the lesson content in groups or pairs

- Organizing language games that emphasize understanding and interaction between group members

- Organizing role-playing activities, dramatize the lesson content

- Participating in talks with experts and teachers
- Organizing academic communities to exchange expertise
- Participating in extracurricular activities, outdoor- activities
- Organizing academic competitions between teams
- Launching projects to develop and disseminate legal knowledge

7. *Intrapersonal intelligence*: Ability to work well independently: Ability to be self-aware of strengths and weaknesses; ability to adjust oneself to suit other factors; ability to self-organize and perform tasks effectively.

Teaching methods and techniques: Apply flipped learning methods, task-based language teaching (TBLT), problem-based learning

Preferred activities designed for students with Intrapersonal intelligence:

- Requiring students to study the lesson themselves, plan, content and ask questions about the problem
- Learning about topics, characteristics, organizational structures, or refer to documents for lesson content from many sources, many different countries
- Building learning diaries and portfolios about the learning process,
- Guiding students to write essays, reports, presentations on issues
- Requiring students to debate issues
- Providing situations for students to solve problems

It can be seen that with the learning content of the same subject, there will be many different approaches. Therefore, teachers need to adjust teaching methods and ways of organizing

different activities to promote the intellectual diversity of learners. Teachers can flexibly combine many activities for a lecture from many different sources of documents, many ways of assessing a subject so as not to bias the assessment of ability and ignore some talents of learners. It is necessary to develop both language and thinking, orientation and intuition, combine theory and practice, movement and inner self, or interaction between individuals and internal strength in the proposed methods. At the same time, teachers also encourage and motivate learners to find for themselves learning methods and strategies that are suitable for their abilities to achieve the subject's goals in the most favorable way. Finding their strengths will also help learners have long-term goals for the learning process and career orientation.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article has clarified the contents of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MIT), including: views on the theory, classification of intelligence, and the application of the theory of multiple intelligences in education. The study has also proposed ways to apply this theory in teaching English to develop diverse talents of learners, including: teaching methods; lecture activities designed to correspond to the intellectual characteristics of each learner; appropriate forms of assessment to improve the quality of English teaching. Teachers need to know how to choose teaching methods suitable for the diversity of learners' intelligences, such as combining many activities for a task or organizing diverse forms of assessment so that learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their full potential

REFERENCES

1. Akbari, R., & Hosseini, K. (2008). Multiple intelligences and language learning strategies: Investigating possible relations. *System*, 36(2). 141–155. doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2007.09.008.
2. Armstrong, T. (2009). *Multiple intelligence in the classroom (3rd Ed.)*. ASCD.
3. Arnold, J., & Fonseca, C. (2004). Multiple intelligence theory and foreign language learning: A brain-based perspective.

- International Journal of English Studies*, 4, 119-136.
4. Campbell, L., Campbell, B., & Dickinson, D. (2003). *Teaching and learning through multiple intelligences (3rd Ed.)*. Pearson Education Inc.
 5. Christison, M. A., & Bassano, S. (2005). *Multiple intelligences and language learning: A guidebook of theory, activities, inventories, and resources*. Alta Book Center Publishers.
 6. Dekker, S., Lee, N. C., Howard-Jones, P., and Jolles, J. (2012). Neuromyths in education: prevalence and predictors of misconceptions among teachers. *Front. Psychol.* 3:429. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00429
 7. Deligiannidi, K., and Howard-Jones, P. (2015). The neuroscience literacy of teachers in Greece. *Proc. Soc. Behav. Sci.* 174, 3909–3915. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.1133
 8. Dolati, Z., & Tahriri, A. (2017). EFL teachers' multiple intelligences and their classroom practice. *SAGE Open*, 7(3). SAGE Publications. doi.org/10.1177/2158244017722582.
 9. Dörnyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA review*, 19(1), 42-68.
 10. Ferrero, M., Garaizar, P., and Vadillo, M. A. (2016). Neuromyths in education: prevalence among Spanish teachers and an exploration of cross-cultural variation. *Front. Hum. Neurosci.* 10:496. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2016.00496
 11. Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of Multiple intelligences*. Basic Books.
 12. Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of Multiple intelligences (3rd ed.)*. Basic Books.
 13. Gardner, H. (2011b). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
 14. Ghamrawi, N. (2014). Multiple intelligences and ESL teaching and learning: An investigation in KG II classrooms in one private school in Beirut, Lebanon. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 25(1). 25–46. doi.org/10.1177/1932202X13513021
 15. Jones, E. (2017) One size fits all? Multiple intelligences and legal education, *The Law Teacher*, 51(1), 56-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2015.1082238>
 16. Lana, C.(2002). *Implementing Multiple Intelligences and Learning Styles in Distributed Learning MS projects*. The Education Coalision(TEC).
 17. McKenzie, W. (2005). *Multiple intelligences and instructional technology (2nd Ed)*. International Society for Technology in Education.
 18. Papadatou-Pastou, M., Haliou, E., and Vlachos, F. (2017). Brain knowledge and the prevalence of neuromyths among prospective teachers in Greece. *Front. Psychol.* 8:804. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00804
 19. Pawlak, M. (2019). How teachers deal with individual differences in the language classroom: results of a study. *Neofilologs*, 52(1), 179-195.
 20. Razmajoo, S.A. (2008).On the Relationship between Multiple Intelligences and Language Proficiency. *The Reading Matrix*. 8(2)
 21. Ramos,Rosalba (2007). Incorporating the Multiple Intelligences Theory in Language Teaching: Portfolios,Projects and team teaching. *Lenguaje*,35(2),221-240
 22. Rato, J. R., Abreu, A. M., and Castro-Caldas, A. (2013). Neuromyths in education: what is fact and what is fiction for Portuguese teachers? *Educ. Res.* 55, 441–453. doi: 10.1080/00131881.2013.844947
 23. Sabiq, A. H. A. (2023). Investigating individual differences, school locality, and management on Indonesian students' attitudes and motivation in EFL learning. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 16(1), 726-752.
 24. Strauss, V. (2013, October 16). Howard Gardner: 'Multiple intelligences' are not 'learning styles'. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/10/16/howard->

gardner-multiple-intelligences-are -not-learning-styles/

25. Xie, j. and Lin,R. (2009). Research on Multiple Intelligences Teaching and Assessment. *Asian Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences*. 4(23) ,106-124
26. Wallace, R. (2010). *The perceptions of community college students to foreign*

language acquisition grounded in Multiple Intelligence theory. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

27. Willingham,D.,T. (2004). *Reframing the Mind:Howard Gardner became a hero among educators simply by redefining talents as" intelligences"*.
www.educationnext.org