



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

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to examine foreign language teaching activities for foreign language proficiency using Howard Multiple Intelligences Theory, specifically in the context of language instruction. The study intends to elucidate the fundamental ideas of the Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT), its application in education, and strategies for using it in English language instruction. These strategies include instructional strategies and lecture activities that are tailored to the intellectual traits of individual students. To improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning specialized English, teachers must modify their pedagogical approaches and strategies for structuring various activities to foster the intellectual variety of their students.

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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 intelligences theory (MIT), the application of the multiple intelligences 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 favourite 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 in teaching English as follows:

1. Linguistic intelligence:

Diversifying foreign language teaching activities through the application of Multiple Intelligences theory, particularly linguistic intelligence, allows educators to address learners' varied language strengths while enhancing engagement and achievement. To support learners with strong linguistic intelligence, teachers can design a wide range of activities that promote vocabulary development, fluency, and critical thinking.

Teaching methods and techniques: Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Natural Approach, Active Teaching Method, Communicative Approach.

Preferred activities:

- Word games and quizzes using English vocabulary: Word Association, Taboo, Scrabble, Banagrams, Word Chains, and 20 Questions (players guess a word through yes/no questions).
- Story-Building: Each student contributes a sentence to a collaborative narrative to develop creativity and fluency.
- Word Bingo: Students mark vocabulary items they hear instead of numbers.
- Portfolio or learning diary: Learners record new vocabulary, summarize key points, reflect on challenges, and track progress.
- Presentations: Students present on assigned topics, applying speaking and presentation skills.
- Debates: Learners discuss lesson-related topics from multiple perspectives.
- Essay writing: Writing samples such as essays, letters, and creative texts.
- Journalistic writing: Students act as reporters to write short academic articles for a class website.
- Reading comprehension: Reading and analyzing foreign legal articles, followed by oral summaries or lecture-style presentations.

By integrating these varied activities, teachers not only cater to linguistic intelligence but also create a dynamic, learner-centered environment that supports deeper language mastery and communicative competence.

2. Logical-mathematical intelligence:

In the context of foreign language teaching, learners with strong logical-mathematical intelligence benefit from instructional approaches that emphasize structure, reasoning, and purposeful tasks. *Teaching methods and techniques:* Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Active Learning.

Preferred activities:

- Exploring correlations between theoretical concepts and their real-world applications.
- Analyzing, comparing, and contrasting related topics from multiple sources.
- Identifying and proposing solutions to given problems.
- Encouraging inquiry and critical questioning.
- Selecting topics for evaluation or commentary.
- Using educational games to test vocabulary and conceptual understanding.
- Creating mind maps to systematize knowledge.

Through these varied activities, foreign language instruction becomes more inclusive and effective, allowing logical-mathematical learners to engage deeply with language learning while developing both linguistic and analytical competence.

3. Musical intelligence

Learners with strong musical intelligence benefit from activities that integrate sound, rhythm, and multimedia elements into language learning. Organizing language games related to music, such as identifying lyrics, matching sounds with meanings, completing song-based gap-filling exercises, or associating sounds with images, helps students internalize vocabulary and structures in an enjoyable and memorable way. Using audio and visual materials, such as songs, podcasts, short videos, or recorded dialogues, enables students to learn new vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and topic-related content while developing listening comprehension skills. These materials also expose learners to authentic language use, intonation, and cultural nuances. Additionally, encouraging students to create their own audio recordings or videos based on lesson content promotes active learning and creativity. Through composing short songs, recording dialogues, or producing themed videos, students practice language production while engaging their musical and technological abilities. Such tasks foster confidence, collaboration, and deeper retention of language knowledge. By incorporating music-based and sound-oriented activities, foreign language teachers can create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that effectively supports students with musical intelligence while enhancing listening skills, communicative competence, and overall motivation in language learning.

4. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence:

Teaching methods and techniques: Communicative Approach, Project-Based Learning (PBL), Cooperative Language Learning (CLL).

Preferred activities:

- Using gestures or physical demonstrations to explain vocabulary or concepts.
- Role-playing or recording dramatized scenarios.
- Organizing dramatization competitions.
- Conducting experiential and extracurricular activities related to course topics, such as observing court procedures in different countries.
- Reconstructing lesson content through student-made videos and explanations.
- Participating in English-language contests.
- Engaging in physical games related to lesson themes.

Teaching methods such as the communicative approach, project-based active learning, and Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) are particularly suitable, as they emphasize interaction, collaboration, and learning by doing. In the foreign language classroom, teachers can design activities that require learners to describe the meaning of words or concepts through simulated actions, gestures, or vivid physical explanations, helping them internalize vocabulary and structures more naturally. Role-playing activities, dramatizations, and recorded performances allow students to practice language in realistic contexts while expressing themselves through movement and expression. Competitions organized in the form of short plays or dramatized situations further increase motivation and engagement. Extracurricular activities, such as visits, simulations, or projects related to real-world contexts, for example, exploring the organization and characteristics of court activities in Vietnam and other countries, enable students to connect language learning with practical experience. Reconstructing lecture content through videos, physical demonstrations, and explanations supports deeper understanding and retention. Additionally, participation in English competitions and physical games related to lesson content creates an energetic learning environment that encourages confidence, teamwork, and communicative competence.

5. Spatial intelligence:

Teaching methods and techniques: Active Learning, Project-Based Learning, Technology-Enhanced Learning, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

Preferred activities:

- Presenting vocabulary and concepts through diagrams or illustrations.
- Designing charts and tables to demonstrate structures and topic features.
- Using digital tools to present content visually.

- Creating visual simulations of cases, situations, or trials through diagrams and infographics.

Learners with strong spatial intelligence understand and retain information more effectively when it is presented visually through images, diagrams, maps, and graphic representations. They are able to identify, design, and implement lesson content creatively, as well as present ideas vividly by transforming abstract language concepts into visual forms. By integrating spatially oriented activities, foreign language instruction becomes more accessible and effective, supporting deeper understanding, creativity, and long-term retention of language knowledge.

6. Interpersonal intelligence:

Teaching methods and techniques: Communicative Approach, Project-Based Learning, Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), Experiential Learning.

Preferred activities:

- Discussing lesson-related topics in groups or pairs.
- Playing interactive language games emphasizing teamwork and understanding.
- Role-playing or dramatizing lesson content.
- Participating in expert-led talks or seminars.
- Forming academic or peer-learning communities.
- Engaging in extracurricular or outdoor group activities.
- Competing in academic contests.
- Initiating projects to promote and disseminate legal knowledge.

Learners with strong interpersonal intelligence acquire language most effectively through collaboration, dialogue, and shared experiences. Teaching methods such as the communicative approach, project-based active learning, Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), and experiential learning are particularly suitable, as they emphasize interaction, teamwork, and real-life communication. Through these interpersonal-focused activities, foreign language teaching becomes more dynamic, collaborative, and effective in developing communicative and social competence.

Intrapersonal intelligence:

Teaching methods and techniques: Flipped Learning, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Problem-Based Learning (PBL).

Preferred activities:

- Independent study and lesson planning, including self-generated questions.
- Researching topics and organizational structures from various international sources.
- Maintaining learning diaries and portfolios to document progress.
- Writing essays, reports, or presentations on selected issues.
- Participating in structured debates.
- Solving real-world problems through case-based tasks.

Learners with this intelligence understand their own strengths and weaknesses, can adjust learning strategies accordingly, and are capable of organizing tasks efficiently. In foreign language education, intrapersonal intelligence supports autonomous learning and long-term language development. By integrating intrapersonal-focused activities, foreign language teaching fosters learner autonomy, self-reflection, and deeper engagement with language learning.

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.

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