

# Renaissance and Reformation of ELT in India through Multiple Intelligences

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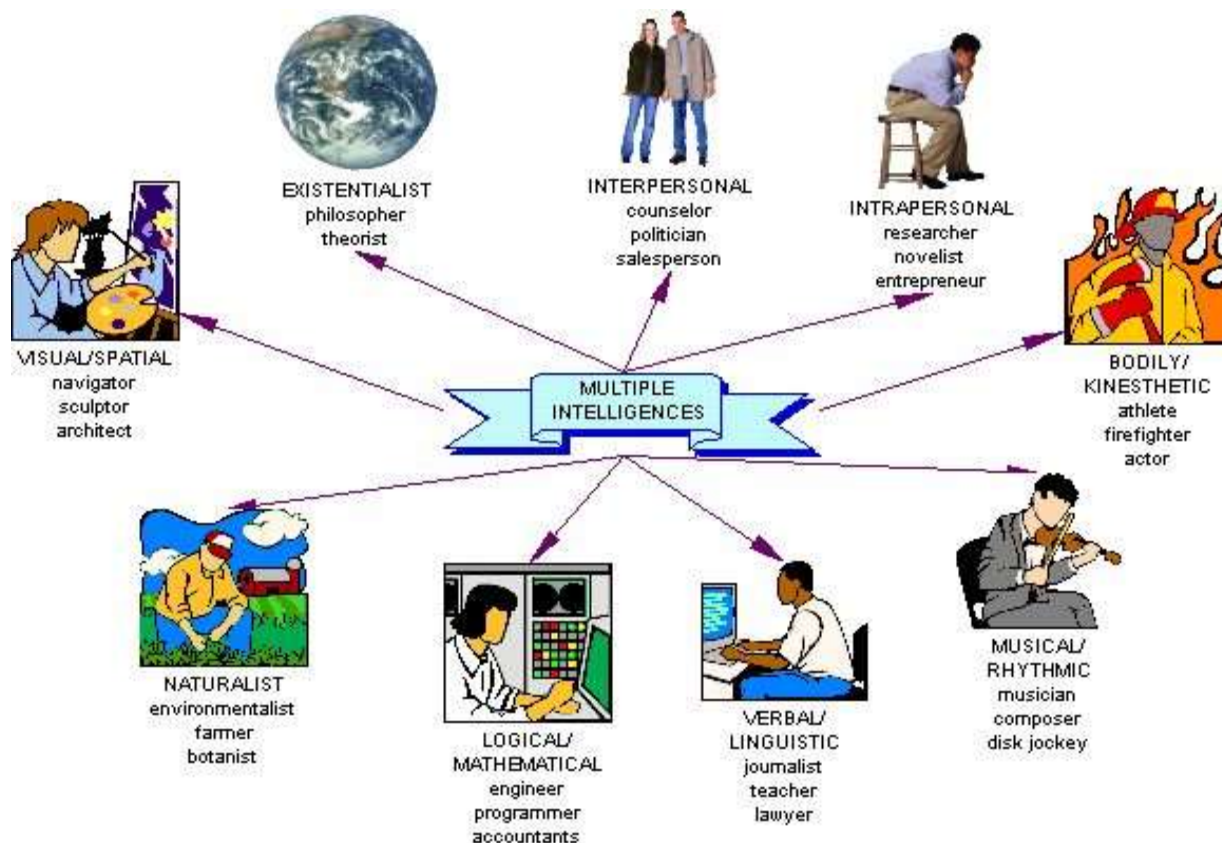
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## Abstract

Human being has his own individuality and his own sphere of intelligence. But the teachers who train the human mind may be unaware of the fact that all the learners are not of the same cadre of intelligence and capability. Many creative geniuses like Hollywood director Spielberg were mislabeled by traditional teachers as “lazy” and “underachievers”. These individuals with dyslexia tend to have strengths in other areas like creativity and imagination though they lack linguistic and logical intelligences. Dr. Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983, 1999) challenged the traditional teaching methods which is limited to the sphere of mathematical and linguistic abilities.

This paper argues how far the MI theory can pave way for the language teachers to recognize the holistic nature of learners and adopt constructive pedagogy to suit the student diversity with different learning profiles. It also highlights the mode of enlightenment with entertainment by adopting music, sports, storytelling, mass media and language games as pedagogical tools to enhance constructive learning framework for ESL/EFL tutoring.

**Keywords:** dyslexia, Multiple Intelligence theory, constructive pedagogy, enlightenment with entertainment



**Dr. Gardner at IIM-Bangalore: multiplier effect**

Courtesy: <http://www.educationworldonline.net/index.php/page-article-choice-more-id-3074>

## Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences in his path-breaking book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983) has had a profound influence on modern education

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practice and delivery. MI theory gives significant answer to the puzzling phenomenon of class room mediocrities often blossoming into sports stars, political and professional leaders. It is true that though the classroom backbenchers lack verbal and mathematical intelligences, they are often excellent sports personalities (kinesthetic intelligence) or good team leaders (interpersonal intelligence) and well aware of their capabilities and career paths (intrapersonal intelligences).

Adopting the theory of Multiple Intelligences allows us to employ a wide range of strategies to help students to participate in language learning and improve their confidence and self-esteem.

### **Teaching a Language - an Artistic Venture**

Each human being has his own individuality and his own sphere of intelligence. But the teachers who train the human mind may be unaware of the fact that all the learners are not of the same cadre of intelligence and capability. Many creative geniuses like Hollywood director Spielberg were mislabeled by traditional teachers as “lazy” and “underachievers”. These individuals with dyslexia tend to have strengths in other areas like creativity and imagination though they lack linguistic and logical intelligences. Dr. Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983, 1999) challenged the traditional teaching methods which are limited to the sphere of mathematical and linguistic abilities.

The American writers and Educator Mark van Doren (1894-1972) opines “The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery”.(Mark van Doren quotes- thinkexist.com). Teacher is the facilitator who ignites sparks of interest in the minds of learners. A creative language teacher recognizes creativity in the learner and if that gets rewarded, learning the language becomes faster.

### **English and Career in Global Market**

In today’s globalised world, there is an interconnectedness of people and border-free exchange of ideas, culture and economics through the medium of English language. Viability of organism without air is unthinkable and career without English proficiency is unfeasible now. English proficiency is now a touchstone to one’s efficiency in this global market. Career and communication skills are directly linked. So, teachers are required to help student acquire not

only the traditional LSRW, but also “contemporary skills” (soft skills). Today’s learners need the skills to work with English rather than indulging in mere literary appreciation. The teacher should have the skill to open up the minds of the students to understand and use the new emerging trends in the field of communication. The EL teacher has to incorporate innovative pedagogical approaches.

### **Pedagogy and Theory of Multiple Intelligences**

Pedagogy means the art and science of educating learners. Chalk and talk method is a popular technique which has been used for decades as an educational strategy in all institutions of learning. This learning mode tends to be passive and the learners play less significant part in their learning process. It has been found that this conventional approach is of limited effectiveness in both teaching and learning. This method is “one-way flow” of information in which students assume a purely passive role and their concentration fades off 15-20 minutes. The Chinese thinker and philosopher Confucius reveals that the traditional lecture method is the least effective method through his inspiring quote “I hear I forget I see I remember I do I understand” (Confucius says: The Top 10 Wise Confucius Quotes). <http://www.myrkothum.com/confucius-says-the-top-10-quotes-by-confucius/>

### **Pluralistic Nature of Human Cognitive Ability and MI Theory**

Language learning can be formulated around the Theory of Multiple Intelligences proposed by Dr. Howard Gardner (1999) which throws light on the pluralistic nature of human cognitive ability. It challenged the traditional teaching methods which is limited to the sphere of mathematical and linguistic abilities.

Gardner describes eight different intelligences namely: the verbal-linguistic, the logical-mathematical, the musical-rhythmical, the visual-spatial, the bodily-kinesthetic, the interpersonal, the intrapersonal, and the naturalistic intelligence. Gardner in his *Intelligence reframed multiple intelligences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* opines; “I would happily send my children to a school that ... presents materials in such a way that each child has the maximum opportunity to master those materials and to show others and themselves what they have learned and understood” (91-92).

The MI theory can pave way for the language teachers to recognize the holistic nature of learners and to adapt constructive pedagogy to suit the student diversity with different learning profiles. It offers a balanced approach where different “windows on the same concept” (Gardner 204) are incorporated. For instance, involving the learners in writing the lyrics of a song implies the use of linguistic and musical intelligences. In a role-play, linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal talents are needed. In a task where learners need to mime the title of a film for others to guess, the kinesthetic and interpersonal abilities are brought into play.

### **The Focus of This Paper**

The prime focus of the paper is to emphasize that though whole language learning has at its core the cultivation of linguistic intelligence, the coordination of kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, visual and intrapersonal intelligence are needed to promote constructive language learning framework.

### **LSRW- Pillars of English Language Learning – To Go Past These Pillars**

LSRW- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are the four pillars of English learning on which the edifice of English proficiency is to be erected. In our country 75% of the students are from rural areas and they come through regional language medium schools. Hence based on their background we have to adopt methods to develop basic language skills- LSRW.

The teacher has to enable the learners to go beyond the spoken words and listen to unspoken ones and also the body language and the emotional content of the word. We develop a mental image of a word in some manner before we learn to read and write that word. The right diction and pronunciation are the key areas to master the speaking skill. “There are snakes in the hole. You are welcome to release them.” This is the voice raised in the meeting hall. How horrified the participants would have become? Later on it was realized that “There are snacks in the hall, you are welcome to relish them”. See how the change in the articulation of sounds brings about a great difference and chaos in meaning. In English, for several hundred words there is no correlation between their spelling and pronunciation. In addition, the mother tongue of the teachers and the students also contribute to the confusion. The EL teacher should enable the learners to partake in public speaking and to follow the KISS principle (Keep It Short and

Sweet) in their speaking ventures. It is said that a speech should be like a lady's dress, short enough to remain interesting and long enough to cover the vital points.

"Reading maketh a full man" says Francis Bacon. Reading skill equips the learner with useful vocabulary. But the learners need to be encouraged to read and read on a regular basis. The teachers have a tough time to get the students involved in reading extensively. The teacher has to provide learners with a good understanding of punctuation to accentuate their reading skills. Writing is the most needed skill in the sphere of ELT. Writing depends upon the extent of vocabulary knowledge we have, apart from our knowledge of grammar. Grammar is being a forbidden fruit for many learners. This kind of aversion has to be wiped away and the teacher has to convert the teaching of grammar into a sport and motivate the learners to stay back in the class rather than to run away.

### **Innovative Pedagogical tools**

It is insane to repeat monotonous methods but expecting better results.(taken from saying attributed to the scientist Albert Einstein). In this ICT world students do not feel comfortable with the age-old literary texts and out-moded ELT methods. This paper focuses on how far the MI theory can pave the way for the language teachers to recognize the holistic nature of learners and adapt constructive pedagogy to suit the student diversity with different learning profiles. It also highlights the mode of enlightenment with entertainment by adapting Music, Sports, Storytelling, Mass media and Language games as pedagogical tools to enhance constructive learning framework for EFL tutoring. Lively humour can be achieved by adopting these tools. Everyone loves a teacher who is humorous.

### **Harmony in ELT through Music**

To Shakespeare music is the "food of love" (*Twelfth Night* Act I Scene I) But music is the food of lively learning in ELT. Learners dominant with musical intelligence are the most comfortable and productive when ELT is done through music. It seems easier to sing a language than to speak. Music helps students to avoid any repugnance they may have against the conventional class room materials. Playing music in the class room wakes up the sleepy ones,



calm down the over-excited audience, put time limits to finish a classroom task, arouse curiosity, and grab attention for learning and so on.

Using songs provide valuable source of authentic language material and there are hundreds of ways to exploit them in the class room. Songs can enhance learning atmosphere by providing variety and fun. The rhythm of verse helps the learners to master the important aspects of RSVP (Rhythm, Speed, volume and pitch). It also aids to focus on poetic devices such as alliteration, and onomatopoeia and gives valuable ear-training for phonetics. It is still a hot issue to use native language in ELT class room. But the pupils really can enjoy the thrill of translating lyrics into their native tongue and vice versa.

### **Sportiveness in ELT through Sports Communication**

“No instrument is as elaborative, sensitive, and intimately responsive as the human body. This is why the arts of movement are so important for the expression and perception of human meaning” (Phenix165). Kinesthetic learners need movement and they cannot be bound to their seats. They do not want lectures as their learning process. If it is poetry they want to express it. If it is a play they want to perform it. “To teach, without inspiring to learn, is hammering on a cold iron” posits Horace Mann in *The Eclectic Magazine* Vol.1.Vii (Jan-June 1868). (qtd.in Horace Mann - Wikiquote). Sports and other related activities can be the tool of inspiration to incite kinesthetic learners in the language class room. Sports activities are indispensable for an all round development of the personality. “The battle of Waterloo was won on the playgrounds of Eton ad Rugby”. This is the famous saying ascribed to the Duke of Wellington who carried the sportive spirit to win the battle field. Sports are the necessary part of education which enliven the spirit, mental ability and critical thinking. Sports can spin, fun and flair, in the field of ELT as opposed to tiresome classroom activities.

Instilling vocabulary skills through sports magazine can move their mind to auto-learning. Hints may be given to develop sports topics. Brain storming, Group Discussion, debates and Turncoats can be arranged on controversial topics of sports (like Sportsmen’ indulgence in commercial advertisements, etc). It is heartening to note that sports commentaries can maximize listening and pronunciation. Playing roles of famous sports personalities can arouse the interest of the learners. Thus sports can enthuse the language class make it a vibrant one.

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## **Renaissance of ELT through Storytelling**

Storytelling technique never goes out of fashion. Storytelling with appropriate body language can appeal to learners of kinesthetic, linguistic and interpersonal intelligence. People are always interested in hearing stories with untiring interest. The teacher can select stories from children's literature of international repute. The EL teacher should select right pieces of literature. The use of literature in the ELT classroom is now popular. As a matter of fact, knowledge of literature helps participation of students in lively conversations. Once teachers use children's literature, they often find it difficult to return to more conventional and monotonous EFL materials. Many students favour visual/spatial modality. Many may think in pictures in three dimensions rather than in words. So literary texts can be supplemented by audio texts, film clips and all of which can enhance the richness of fun-learning.

## **Reformation of ELT through Mass media**

Media is the most powerful entity on earth as it controls the minds of masses. Today's youth experiences a media-saturated world. The mass media – Newspapers, Magazines, TV, radio, movies and Internet can animate and enliven the ELT class. Learners favouring linguistic, interpersonal, visual/spatial and kinesthetic intelligence enjoy learning through mass media. Newspapers and magazines are reliable source of materials to hone language skills. Out of these materials drilling exercises can be designed to develop basic skills of language. They can provide platform for Group Discussion, professional presentation, role-play, advertisements, mock interviews, welcome address, vote of thanks, report writing and travelogues. They offer plenty of topics of current value for Group Discussion, debate, turncoat and presentation.

Radio stimulates the imagination of the listeners to fill in the visuals through the power of words. Listening to radio and television programmes is a practice in contemporary listening. It helps in increasing knowledge as well as vocabulary building. T.V programmes may be used as warm up activities

Visual elements are especially useful for providing comprehensible and meaningful input for learners. These help develop ability in second language because they facilitate information retrieval. Movies are effective in storytelling. They have the power to reach large audiences.



Film reviews, Role-play, a scene from a film, designing posters to advertise a film, comparing the film with the book if the same story appears in both ways (e.g. *Slumdog millionaire*, *The Namesake*, *3 Idiots*, *Jumanji*, etc.).

### **Game spirited ELT through Language games**

Language games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class. Games enhance ‘unconscious acquisition’ of language skills with fun-filled environment. They can integrate various linguistic skills with spontaneous touch. W. R. Lee puts it, “Games should be treated as central, not peripheral (2)” (qtd.in Agnieszka Ubermen). They can win the goal of improving communicative competence with fun. A variety of language games can cater to the interest of learners with diverse intelligence such as logical, linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal and kinesthetic etc.

Who am I?, Find your Partner, and Dumb charades are useful tools to drill Yes/No and Wh-questions. Bon Appetite is a fun game which aids reading comprehension. Grouping idioms into categories like animal idioms (cat’s paw, crocodile tears, pigeon hearted, butterfly effect) and colour idioms (red letter day, green signal, pink hour, blue films, black magic, white collar job, etc.) is fun. Beat the clock (phrasal verb game), Maxim match (proverb), photo fit (word game) can build flair for writing skill.

The gift of narration can be mastered through narrating incidents, episodes, story building and storytelling. Teachers can resort to games like JAM (Just a Minute), Turn coat (for and against), Fun with photos (picture description), etc., for building up narrative skill. Chinese Whisper can sharpen and sustain listening skill. It also drills to what extent clear pronunciation, appropriate intonation and stress are responsible for accurate listening. Articulation of tongue-twisters can hone the skill of pronunciation. Thus games help captivate the minds of learners with creative frame of mind. Five minutes of captivation replaces 15 minutes of perspiration.

### **To Conclude**

The old saying “A little progress everyday adds up to mega results” reminds the EL teachers to adopt progressive pedagogy to put forth mega results in everyday language classes. EL teachers need to open up new horizons and provide vistas for the resurgence of renaissance in

EL teaching. As W.B. Yeats once said “Education is not the filling of a pail but lighting of fire”, (famous quote attributed to W.B.Yeats) the EL teacher has to keep the spark of interest alive by giving the fuel of innovative pedagogy. Learning a language is not to weaken the spirit of the learner but to empower them. If the traditional chalk and talk method is followed it is like that of driving through the learning path with hand breaks on, and attaining destination will be only a day dream. So the teacher should be creative to incorporate the latest innovative pedagogical approaches. Preparation of ghee rice includes the addition of ghee and a variety of spices which can enhance the flavor and thereby making it a delicious dish to eat. If not it is only boiled rice. Similarly the EL teacher should enact the role of a good cook by adding spices of fun to the arena of language skills by his/her creative bent of mind to suit the different sphere of intelligences. If you enable the learners to learn with child’s eye suffused with fun you will win in your teaching career. The teacher’s ideal is not in identifying winners but making winners out of ordinary people. The teacher should be a star and not a bore. Adopting constructive pedagogy to suit the learners’ diversity with different learning intelligences has to be the prime focus of modern EL teachers. The teacher has to take the role of a facilitator to create a learner-friendly environment.

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### **Abbreviations**

MI – Multiple Intelligences

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

EFL – English as a Foreign language

ELT- English Language Teaching

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