

Multiple intelligences

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Have you ever thought about why your students react in different ways to the activities you do in the class? Or even why different groups react differently to the same activity? Why do some students really enjoy working in groups whilst others are much more productive working alone? Why do some learners draw pictures in their vocabulary books while others seem to need to just hear a word to be able to use it themselves?

Types of intelligence

American psychologist, Howard Gardner developed a theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) which can go some way towards explaining different learner styles. According to Gardner there are eight different types of intelligences.

The eight intelligences are:

- **Linguistic** - The word player
- **Logical / Mathematical** - The questioner
- **Visual / Spatial** - The visualiser
- **Musical** - The music lover
- **Bodily / Kinaesthetic** - The mover
- **Interpersonal** - The socialiser
- **Intrapersonal** - The loner
- **Naturalistic** - The nature lover (added by Gardner at a later date)

In the classroom

You could just try to make sure that you vary the tasks and use a range of activities so that you touch upon all the types of intelligences now and again.

By observing your students and making notes on how they react to different activities you may well discover, for example, that you have a class with a majority of visual learners so you may try to use more flash cards or improve your board work.

Linking learners to activity types

Below is a table of learner types and some suggested activities for each type. It is adapted from Jeremy Harmer's book *The Practice of English Language Teaching* but was originally taken from 'How to use Gardner's intelligences in a class program' by M Loon for the University of Canberra.

Learner type	Is good at	Learns best by	Activities
Linguistic	Reading, writing and stories	Saying, hearing and seeing words	Memory games Trivia quizzes Stories.
Logical / mathematical	Solving puzzles, exploring patterns, reasoning and logic	Asking questions, categorising and working with patterns	Puzzles Problem solving.

Visual / Spatial	Drawing, building, arts and crafts	Visualising, using the mind's eye	Flashcards Colours Pictures Drawing Project work.
Musical	Singing, listening to music and playing instruments	Using rhythm, with music on	Using songs Chants Drilling.
Bodily / Kinaesthetic	Moving around, touching things and body language	Moving, touching and doing	TPR activities Action songs Running dictations Miming Realia.
Interpersonal	Mixing with others, leading groups, understanding others and mediating	Co-operating, working in groups and sharing	Mingle activities Group work Debates Discussions.
Intrapersonal	Working alone and pursuing own interests	Working alone	Working individually on personalised projects
Naturalistic	Nature	Working outside and observing nature	Environmental projects.

Conclusion

Although you can't please all the students all the time, it's just good to bear in mind that there are many different ways of learning.

- If you try an activity with one group and it falls flat, it may well be worth trying it again as it may work really well with another set of students.
- If you can identify the loner of the class or the one who is always up and out of his seat, try and put activities into your lesson plan that you think will suit them from time to time.
- Finding out my own intelligence type has helped me to better understand how I learn. I now sit in my Catalan class and as we get told to copy lists of random vocabulary off the board I think to myself, 'This won't work for me - I don't learn like this. I need to see some pictures of these things, I'm a visual learner!

Further reading

The Practice of English Language Teaching by Jeremy Harmer
How to use Gardner's intelligences in a class program by M Loon