

# IDENTIFYING, ADDRESSING AND CATERING TO THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES OF LITERATURE STUDENTS IN AN ONLINE CLASS

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**ABSTRACT:** *One of the major differences among learners is their learning styles. Each person has a unique intelligence and each thrives in a certain learning environment, while struggle in others. Still today, if asked, many people will tell you that someone is intelligent when they are good at maths, or science, or when they are articulate or speak several languages. The benefits of this theory are many, and they can be applied across all ages and in all subjects. Students who are given ways to learn and perform at their best are more likely to enjoy the teaching-learning process and are more likely to succeed academically. Making the learners aware about the types of intelligences helps in their self-learning process too. Being aware about the type of intelligence/s most or all of the learners in the classroom or group are high on, aids the teacher in using techniques that enable the learners to learn faster and effectively. It also enables the teacher to use multiple techniques to teach a particular topic.*

**Key Words:** *Multiple Intelligence, IQ, Verbal-Linguistic intelligence, Logical-Mathematical intelligence, Visual-Spatial intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence, Musical intelligence, Interpersonal intelligence, Intrapersonal intelligence, Naturalist intelligence*

## Introduction

Attentive and inattentive are perhaps not the best labels that maybe used to segregate learners. One of the major differences among learners is their learning styles. A heterogeneous mixture of students in a classroom can be broadly classified on the basis of associating the learner's characteristics with a unique intelligence. Once segregated, it facilitates in understanding as to how, why and what causes a particular learner to excel in a particular kind of learning environment but considerably lead to struggling and/or undesirable outcomes. A basic understanding of "being intelligent" by many people till date is still limited with being able to engage conversations in various languages, or being good at specific subjects like Mathematics or Sciences in a quantifying/scoring system.

Howard Gardner took up the task of segregation of types of intelligences, he proposed intelligences of being of eight types. An individual learner may register different levels/values in each type of intelligence, moreover, these may update or modify as time progresses. Tailor-making lessons while keeping multiple intelligences in mind may considerably help teachers yield favourable learning outcomes. Moreover, well-planned updates in the classroom layout and targeting assignments specifically to trigger such multiple intelligences may work like a charm.

As a teacher, Gardner's MI theory convinces me to believe that there is a lot more that can be done as a part of classroom activities inducing to appeal to such multiple intelligences than choosing to deliver the same kind of stuff for all learners. We do come across students who find it challenging to write a coherent paragraph but can solve any kind of puzzle you put in front of them. Then there are also the restless ones who are constantly tapping their pencil rhythmically as they study because 'it helps them think', or the so-called day dreamers, who conjure up fantastic explanations of a concept.

## The Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardener:

Sometime in 1983, it was Howard Gardner of Harvard University who put forward his theory of Multiple Intelligences. Gardener's views posed an opposition to the then standard I.Q. test by enlisting intelligence as being of eight(08) different types. Gardener's arguments thus challenged not only the then standard I.Q. test but also to systems of education based on assumptions of one standard teaching-learning material, method and testing methods can serve the purpose of education. Gardener was of the view that schools, teachers and all such stakeholders of learning should employ methods of teaching that cater to all types of intelligences and thus eradicate the age-old perception of intelligence being associated with linguistic and logical intelligences.

**The Characteristic features of the Eight types of Intelligences(as proposed by Gardener):**

1. Word smart
2. Number/reasoning smart
3. Picture smart
4. Body smart
5. Music smart
6. People smart
7. Self-smart
8. Nature smart

**Linguistic Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Radio Jockeys, Motivational Speakers, Poets, Authors, Freelance writers, Comedians, Newspaper Columnists

**Characteristic Feature:** Word smartness i.e., an advanced ability in verbal and or linguistic processing is the characteristic feature of linguistic intelligence.

It is often termed as verbal-linguistic intelligence. Linguistic intelligence comprises of the ability to use language, expertise in pronunciation of words and usage of grammar rules in language usage. It is about knowledge of language use, pronunciation, grammar rules, etc. Learners imbued with linguistic intelligence may exhibit lingual skills much better than average learners. They exhibit qualities such as discrete expression of thoughts. Learners as such maybe able to assign meaning to connotative and denotative ways of expression.

**Logical-Mathematical Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Computer Coders, Big Data Analysts, Scientists, Mathematicians, Computer Programmers, Lawyers, and Accountants tend to exhibit a higher proportion of Logical/Mathematical Intelligence.

**Characteristic Feature:** Smartness in processing numerical values and/or being able to reason smartly is the characteristic feature of logical-mathematical intelligence.

Such learners may display exceptional ability of thinking scientifically and the ability to reason. They may also exhibit expertise in dealing with abstract symbols and recognizing patterns. Such learners may have the ability to establish relations between different concepts. It enables the learners to engage in the numerical process of calculating and quantifying. Moreover, scientific tasks such as being able to hypothesize and conclude may very well be suited to learners as such.

**Visual-Spatial Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Pilots, Sailors, Vector and Raster Artists, Painters, Constructors, Architects, Graphic Designers, Pilots and people in related professions have high visual-spatial intelligence.

**Characteristic Feature:** Picture smart, i.e., the ability to think about space, visualise situations better in pictorial form is the characteristic feature of visual-spatial intelligence.

Visual-spatial intelligence refers to the ability of the learner that enables him/her to have a multi-perspective visualization of objects. It enables three-dimensional thinking capacity in the learner by facilitating formation of mental images, finally empowering the learner to undertake usage of objects within space. A major part of intelligence employed as such is in accordance with the creation or processing of visual arts, graphics, and architecture.

**Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Athletes, Gym Enthusiasts, Sportsmen, Dancers, Scuba Divers, Surgeons, Artisans, etc. are known to have high levels of Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

**Characteristic Feature:** Body smartness, i.e., the ability to use body parts to convey something better or having vivid features in the execution of physical tasks is the characteristic feature of Body-Kinesthetic Intelligence.

Learners exhibiting higher number of features that enable them to use their body to express emotion employ use of such intelligence. Such learners may also exhibit distinct use of body language, an ability to perform better in tasks such as playing games or in creation of new products (acting). "Learning by doing" is the term often employed in educational institutions to describe activities making use of such type of intelligence. Learners exhibiting this type of intelligence may display an expertise in manipulation of objects and the body.

**Musical Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Composers, Guitarists, Pianists, Musicians, Sound Engineers, Dubbing/Voice Artists, Conductors, Band Masters and Sound Directors all have high musical intelligence.

**Characteristic Feature:** Music smartness, i.e., the ability to understand melodies, tunes, music, rhyme and rhythm is the characteristic feature of Musical Intelligence.

This kind of intelligence is about what its name refers to however it is not solely that. Learners exhibiting a greater knowledge of and sensitivity to tone, rhythm, pitch, and melody may have high musical intelligence. Learners as such may also exhibit a higher sensitivity towards human voice, audio patterns, and sounds in the environment.

### **Interpersonal Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Spiritual Leaders, Gurus, Managers, Assistants, Teachers, Counsellors and Politicians may have high Interpersonal Intelligence.

**Characteristic Feature:** People smartness, i.e., the ability to understand other people and being well to comprehend in their situations is the characteristic feature of Interpersonal Intelligence.

We often find learners in classrooms with a higher sense of understanding with their co-learners, friends, teachers or other school staff. This ability of the learner to engage in effective communication by means both verbal and non-verbal is termed as Interpersonal Intelligence. Such learners are enabled to understand moods, temperaments and other such emotional features of other people.

### **Intrapersonal Intelligence**

**Visible in:** Philosophers, Theorists, Analysts and Psychologists may have high levels of Intrapersonal Intelligence. However, the scope of such intelligence is far beyond boundaries as any profession requires Intrapersonal Intelligence.

**Characteristic Feature:** Self-smartness, i.e., the ability to understand oneself better and/or having better understanding of one's own needs and wants, self-awareness is the characteristic feature of Intrapersonal Intelligence.

A few learners who understand their own needs are quite a pleasure to have in classrooms. Such learners are guided by a strong sense of self-awareness. Such learners have a clear definition of spirituality, emotional responses and involvement of feelings. Learners having intrapersonal intelligence exhibit consciousness about their own unconscious, enabling them in recognising higher patterns of connection between things in our world. Any profession requires intrapersonal intelligence, however, psychologists, philosophers, etc have high levels of intrapersonal intelligence.

### **Naturalist Intelligence**

**Visible in:** High naturalist intelligence is seen in Bakers, Organic Farmers, Farmers, Nursery Owners, Botanists, Gardeners, Zookeepers, Nature Trekkers, Nature Guides, Veterinarians, Cooks, and Landscapers.

**Characteristic Feature:** Nature smartness, i.e., the ability to understand and/or care for plants, varieties of flora, fauna, natural landscapes, etc. is the characteristic feature of Naturalist Intelligence.

Learners having Naturalist Intelligence are enabled to discern and value features of the natural world around us. This natural world may comprise of plants, animals, water resources and atmosphere. Such learners are enabled to identify and appreciate the senses the visible natural world provides them with. Such learners may exhibit extreme care towards animals, and may show interest in learning how to classify species of both flora and fauna, hence understanding the systems in nature.

**Activities and techniques to cater to the various types of intelligence:**

#### **Activities and techniques to teach for the Linguistically Intelligent -**

Activities for such kind of students must be aimed at extracting the linguistic potential of the learners which can be activated primarily by involving them in tasks that enable them to use their lingual capacities. Creative writing activities such as poetry or script writing for specific situations may help them unlock their creative potential. Moreover, such students may be encouraged to participate in online competitions like debates, extempore, speech competitions, essay writing competitions, etc. They may also be guided by use and encouragement of their sense of humour by facilitating them with online story-telling or writing workshops. The best a teacher can do for such students is creating opportunities for such students to read as more as possible.

**In literature class:** Dialogue writing activity, script-writing, extempore, etc.

#### **Activities and techniques for the logically and mathematically intelligent -**

Such students possess ample reasoning and logical activities which can be triggered by assigning them with tasks involving problem-solving, numerical calculations. Interesting activities like a classroom game in online mode involving deciphering of codes or solving logical quizzes may as well supply them with ample opportunities.

**In literature class:** Activities involving analysis of a character's decision-making abilities, puzzles, quizzes, HOTS.

**Activities and techniques for the highly visual-spatial -**

Such students have the ability to visualise space differently thus use of activities and or PowerPoints in an online class having mind mapping techniques may serve their purpose well. Creation of verbal imagery maybe facilitated by guided visual descriptions thus allowing imagination of such learners for either real or fantasised concepts. Use of images involving collages for visual representation and allowing such learners a platform for artistic expression by usage of multiple mediums as in paintings, clay, architecture and modelling through software in online mode will empower them.

**In literature class:** Creation of art out of literary topics.

**Activities and techniques for the bodily-kinesthetically intelligent:**

An appeal can be made to the intelligence of such learners by allowing them the scope of role-playing in plays that figure on the syllabus or asking them to engage monologues. The scope of physical activity in online class despite being difficult can be kept track of and motivation can be provided for dance, martial arts or physical exercise. In an online mode, such students maybe involved in the various promotional activities of the institution making use of their acting potential.

**In literature class:** Role-playing, Mimes, Mimicry, Parodies and Monologues.

**Activities and techniques for the musically intelligent:**

Appealing to the intelligence of this kind of learners may be one of the easiest tasks if planned well. Opportunities can be provided for the display of musical skills of such students in the assembly. They maybe prompted to compose music for promotional institutional campaigns.

**In literature class:** Learners may create jingles or rhymes for easy summarisation of classroom concepts. They may sing verses figuring on/or related to the syllabus.

**Activities and techniques for students and groups with high interpersonal intelligence -**

In online mode, the use of collaborative tasks has become increasingly difficult. However, with ample time and multiple opportunities, the intelligence of such learners can be appealed to by group tasks. Moreover, classroom activities like group versus group debate and multifaceted communications maybe helpful.

**In literature class:** Such learners can be given a group task on discussion of various unseen facets of a text.

**Activities and techniques for students and groups with high intrapersonal intelligence:**

Learners with high intrapersonal intelligence may be motivated for activities like diary writing, personal blogging thus providing them opportunities for self-reflection. Practice of meditation and yoga among such learners should be motivated in order to establish mindfulness and facilitating them reach altered states of consciousness.

**In literature class:** Such students maybe allowed scope to ponder self-reflection by stepping into a character's shoes.

**Activities and techniques for students and groups with high naturalist intelligence:**

Learners maybe given platform to share their knowledge about various activities such as their love for nature and conservation of nature. They may be motivated to involve in online display of medicinal plants.

**In literature class:** They may be given opportunity to speak about plants, plastic free environment and nature walks when similar topic pops during teaching in an online mode.

**Educational Benefits of Applying Multiple Intelligences Theory in Online Classes**

Educators can greatly benefit by applying this theory to online classes across all ages and subjects. Learners learning in environments tailor made to suit their intelligence are more likely to succeed in academics. Making the learners aware about the types of intelligences helps in their self-learning process too.

Being aware about the type of intelligence/s most or all of the learners in the classroom or group are high on, aids the teacher in using techniques that enable the learners to learn faster and effectively. It also enables the teacher to use multiple techniques to teach a particular topic.

**Multiple Intelligence & online teaching-learning process:**

With the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional classroom teaching has come to a halt. Teachers and students are alike compelled to use online platforms and tools to continue the teaching-learning process. Online platforms provide a plethora of tools and material that comes in handy to cater to the multiple intelligences of the invisible students in online teaching.

As a literature teacher, teaching learners both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the main task is to make the learners understand the aesthetics of the literary text. Classroom teaching enables focussing on understanding the aesthetics but the same could be especially tough in online teaching. Focussing

simultaneously on the mental, cognitive, psychomotor, affective domains, linguistics, and much more in online teaching mode can be difficult.

For example, a simple play like Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* which the playwright himself urges to watch rather than read, primarily because of the sheer attention that the playwright imbibes into the play. The music accompanying the play composed by German composer Johannes Brahms is nothing more but appeal to a musically intelligent audience.

Another example is George Bernard Shaw's famous play *Pygmalion*. Unavoidably what better a choice than allowing the students to listen to the Cockney accent. Moreover, why not use Sir Michael Caine's cockney accent to actually make students grease up with the aesthetics. In mocking such an accent, and the ragamuffin girl's initial behavioural scheme, why skip adding fuel to the fire of bodily-kinesthetic learners.

### **Teaching the Way the Child Learns: An Approach for Online Classes**

Gardener's views are revolutionary in the sense that they promote teaching in the way the child learns. The use of multiple intelligence theory in online classes is an approach to allow the learner a key space in the teaching-learning process. It is primarily based on the concept of learner-centred education by enabling students to be responsible, self-directed. It may promote the learner's sense of independence ultimately helping them to flourish academically.

As a teacher, it is important to use multiple intelligences in the classroom, but first you must understand the multiple intelligence theory and know which intelligences your students have to be able to teach them in the best way possible.

Learners, too must know which intelligences they have so that they can make the most effective outcomes on their way to learn. As prospective teachers also, giving your learners the chance to discover and develop their different intelligences can have a series of benefits for the learners. Knowledge of multiple intelligence will help cater learners to become more involved and active. This will help learners identify their own strengths and value one's own potential leading them to achieve goals pertaining to academics and strengthening to become able individuals in individual field of interest.

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