

# Managing the Classes by using Multiple Intelligence Instruction

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## Abstract

Classroom management is one of the challenging and difficult tasks to achieve for many of the foreign language teachers and they confront different types of classroom management problems every day, such as disobeying the school and classroom rules, misbehaving during the lessons, using obscene words and gestures, and showing disrespect. Unless the FL teachers overcome those classroom management problems, it is hard to teach effectively. This study deals with some high school EFL teachers who use multiple intelligence instruction methods in their lessons in Duhok city in Iraq. A questionnaire and interviews were used to collect data about how the teachers control their classes, their attitudes toward managing the classes and assumptions about multiple intelligence instruction. The preliminary results of the study show that teachers who use different types of teaching activities can control their classes easier than the ways they used when they applied traditional teaching approaches. If teachers take into consideration students' Multiple Intelligences, they can achieve higher student engagement in the class activities. On the other hand, those teachers who use the same teaching techniques all the time have difficulties in managing the classes or their lessons are so boring. As a result, using different types of activities which are related to learners' intelligence can both foster a positive climate and help the teachers to control their classes.

**Keywords:** Classroom Management, Multiple Intelligence, Students' Engagement, Positive Climate

## Introduction

Classrooms can be seen as the micro society of the nation with the broad range of various levels of education competency, and some may have exhausting conditions (Armstrong, 2009). Inside the classrooms, it is possible to see different ethnic characteristics, types of socio-economic levels, and culturally different participants. Borich (2011) states that due to the fact that not all learners are like each other, their learning styles are different, too. Students can learn better either in pairs, in small groups or independently. While some students may prefer written work, others may prefer and learn better by performing an activity. Our classrooms consist of these different learners who bring different needs to class. In addition, teachers may find that their classroom has a range of ability or achievement levels, groups of students with skills below the passing grade level, and students with special needs. All of these factors contribute to the diversity of the classroom. In such kinds of classrooms, managing the learning environment is one of the tough issues that teachers face.

In Glasser's (1998) cooperative learning approach, if students are actively engaged in the learning community in their classrooms, problems with students' misbehavior would be minimized. In their study Levin & Nolan (2007) claim that in order to help all students to feel safe, respected and valued, and to enable them to form new skills, a learning community should be designed. Providing discipline, on the one hand,

and student engagement in activities, on the other hand, is a difficult task (Charles, 2005). For this, teachers should be aware of the classroom management issues from many aspects. Awareness of Multiple Intelligences (MIs) will help teachers to solve disciplinary problems in a diverse classroom environment, and they will be able to manage their classrooms effectively.

## I. Theoretical Foundations

Howard Gardner described intelligence from the pluralistic point of view rather than the unitary system. He described the intelligence as "the ability to solve problems or create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (Gardner, 1999:33). On the contrary of his contemporaries he claims that humans have more than only linguistic and mathematical intelligences. In his work *Frames of Mind* (Gardner, 1983) he describes seven intelligences and later on he added the eighth one (see the list below). Nowadays the ninth, existential, intelligence has been added, however, there are many contradictions among psychologists concerning it. According to the MI theory, the intelligence can be measured, applied in various ways. By using Multiple Intelligence, teaching and learning process occurs through many 'avenues'.

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The eight intelligences are:

Linguistic Intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language. The ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use the language to accomplish certain goals.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence involves the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically.

Spatial Intelligence features the potential to recognize and manipulate the patterns of wide space as well as the patterns of more confined areas.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence entails the potential of using one's whole body or body parts to solve problems.

Musical Intelligence entails skills in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns.

Interpersonal Intelligence denotes a person's capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and, consequently, the ability to work effectively with others.

Intrapersonal Intelligence involves the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of one and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life.

Naturalistic Intelligence is the ability to recognize and classify both the animal and plant kingdoms, to make other consequential distinctions in the natural world and to use this ability productively - such as in biological science, farming, and in hunting. (Gardner, 1993a).

As Armstrong (2009) mentioned, the Multiple Intelligence theory offers a new point of view on the different types of management strategies that have been used by EFL teachers to ensure an effective learning environment.

The multiple-intelligence-based teaching strategies offer many different types of teaching activities that foster motivation, students' involvement in the courses, and develop active teaching environment, where all the students feel that they belong to the classroom in different ranks (Gardner, 1993b). Multiple-intelligence-based activities foster the students' active engagement in the class because every learner finds attractive activities related to their interests.

## II. Method

This study was held in the mixed research format. A teacher interview (qualitative research) was combined with McKenzie's MI inventory (quantitative research). The primary objective of this study was to find out whether implementing multiple intelligence teaching activities decreases the classroom management problems in an educational setting in the 8th and 9th grade classrooms in Duhok city.

## III. Research Questions

In the previous section we have seen that there is a close relationship between multiple intelligence teaching strategies and gaining the students' interests and, as a result, managing the classroom with less problems. Based on the above literature review of Multiple Intelligence theory and its connection with classroom management, two research questions concerning this relationship emerged.

1- To what extent do Multiple Intelligence teaching activities increase students' active engagement in the lessons? (based on teacher observations revealed through teacher interviews)

2- Does students' active engagement in the lessons decrease the classroom management problems?

## IV. Subjects

Thirty 8th grade students from Duhoklshik Girls' College at the age of 14-15, and forty-five 9th grade students at the age of 15-16 from Duhoklshik Boys' College participated in the experiment which lasted 14 weeks in the spring semester of 2012-2013 academic year. Those students were chosen purposefully because many of the teachers were complaining about their attitudes towards the lessons and their behavior in class. Many of the students were acting as if they were in the street and were not caring about the school and class rules.

In order not to affect the result of the study the students were not told what exactly was being studied, which permitted to avoid the possibility that participants would make an extra effort to help the researcher to achieve the aim of the study.

## V. Data Analysis

With the aim of gathering the data, first relevant literature was reviewed. Many of the books, articles, and interviews about the Multiple Intelligence theory have been collected, examined and read carefully. Before starting the research, Walter McKenzie's (2005) MI Inventory survey was used to find out students' dominant intelligences in the class. Then, to check the validity of the survey results those students' behaviors was observed by their teachers, as Gardner (1983) states, the most important tool to identify individuals' dominant intelligence is observation. Also, a meeting with the parents was held to compare their ideas, teachers' observations and the survey results. All those results were coinciding. After figuring out the students' dominant intelligences, thematic weekly lesson plans were prepared, including different types of teaching activities for different intelligences. At the beginning of the study four EFL teachers, who were teaching English to those students, were interviewed about the classroom management problems in those classes. After implementing the Multiple-Intelligence-based teaching activities the same interview questions were asked to the same teachers to see whether the classroom environment had changed during the study.

## VI. Findings and Discussion

There were two 8th and two 9th grades participating in the study. The subjects' overall MI distributions according to McKenzie's psychometric test in all classes were analyzed by SPSS 19.0. The analytical results of SPSS 19.0 show that the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.748, and  $p < 0.0001$ . Therefore, the survey results were reliable.

The 30 students from the 8th grade were females ages 14-

15. As Gardner (1983) states, individuals can have more than one dominant intelligence. The girls in the study revealed the intrapersonal dominant intelligence ( $m=74.8$ ) in the first rank among their intelligences. Below the Table 1 the general statistical information is provided about the frequencies of distribution of the MI in the 8th grades. Interpersonal ( $m=57.2$ ) and verbal ( $m=58.4$ ) intelligences were on the lowest level.

The 40 participants from the 9th grade were male students at the age of 15-16. As it is seen in the Table 2 be-

**Table 1.** Statistical information about the frequencies of distribution of the MI in the 8th grades (female students)

		Naturalistic	Musical	Logical	Interpersonal	Kinesthetic	Verbal	Intrapersonal	Visual
N	Valid	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		54.35	56.09	<b>73.91</b>	60.87	60.43	55.65	<b>76.52</b>	57.39
Mode		30	60	90	70	60	70	70	70 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation		23.321	13.05	16.98	17.82	19.88	15.32	14.016	21.578
Minimum		20	30	40	20	20	30	30	20
Maximum		100	80	100	90	100	80	100	90

**Table 2.** Statistical information about the frequencies of distribution of the MI in the 9th grades (male students)

		Naturalistic	Musical	Logical	Interpersonal	Kinesthetic	Verbal	Intrapersonal	Visual
N	Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		63.2	60.8	69.2	57.2	61.6	58.4	<b>74.8</b>	62
Mode		60	60	60	60	50	60	<b>80</b>	70
Std. Deviation		14.1	19.1	15.25	17.45	22.49	19.72	20.6	18.93
Minimum		40	30	50	30	10	10	10	20
Maximum		90	100	100	90	100	90	100	90
Percentiles	25	55	40	60	40	50	45	65	50
	50	60	60	70	60	60	60	80	60
	75	70	75	80	70	80	70	90	70

low, among the 40 participants, intrapersonal intelligence ( $m=76.52$ ) and logical-mathematical ( $m=73.91$ ) were the two dominant intelligences. Naturalistic ( $m=54.35$ ) and verbal intelligences ( $m=55.65$ ) were represented on the lowest level.

During the autumn semester the traditional method (without any emphasis on MI dominant type) was used.

During the spring semester (the treatment) all four groups were taught, focusing on the activities especially beneficial for their dominant intelligences, but all intelligences received a certain treatment. Thus the same group in the autumn semester was a sort of a control one, and in the spring semester – a sort of experimental experimental one. This provided the reliability of results, as the control and the experimental groups were really equal.

According to McKenzie's psychometric test results, the teacher split students into four groups (according to their dominant intelligences), but, since every learner has all the intelligences in some amount, there were eight learning centers inside the classroom. Each center had a name, such as Logic-Smart (Logical-Mathematical intelligence), Body-Smart (Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence), The Independents (Intrapersonal Intelligence), The Reporters (Verbal-Linguistic intelligence), Easygoing (Interpersonal Intelligence), Music-Smart (Musical Intelligence), Visual-Smart (Visual-Spatial intelligence) and Naturalists (Natural Intelligence). In those learning centers students could practice different learning activities (there were corresponding materials) according to intelligence type.

The groups started by staying at their relevant intelligence learning center for half of the semester, but then they moved in a clockwise manner until every group gained some experience in all eight or the majority of learning centers (they were permitted to skip some centers, if they felt they wouldn't benefit from working in it).

## VII. Results and Discussion

At the end of the research the same interview was held with the teachers to find out what changes in student engagement in the class work and classroom management problems the teachers observed. The following results were gained.

- Multiple intelligence teaching activities build up a positive teacher-student relationship. Many of the research studies on classroom management highlight the importance of having a positive teacher-student relationship in promoting appropriate student behavior (Marzano, 2003). At the beginning of the research (autumn semester) the students were inattentive, passive and bored. Later (spring semester), when the activities were enjoyable and met students' interests, the teachers gained students' attention as a result.

- The students were engaged in the activities, the time flew and the students did not have long stretches of time to start misbehaving. There was noise during the lessons, but that was the sign of how busy they were with language learning.

- Teachers could communicate the school and classroom rules for proper conduct through multiple intelligence approach, such as:

- Linguistic intelligence: rules were written and posted in the classroom.

- Logical-mathematical intelligence: rules were numbered and later referred to by number.

- Spatial intelligence: next to the written rules are graphic symbols of what to do and what not to do.

- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: each rule has a specific gesture; students show they know the rules by going through the different gestures.

- Musical intelligence: the rules were set to a song or each rule was associated with a relevant song.

- Interpersonal intelligence: each rule was assigned to a small group of students who then had the responsibility for knowing its ins and outs.

- Intrapersonal intelligence: students were responsible for creating the class rules at the beginning of the year and developing their own unique ways of communicating them to others.

- Naturalist intelligence: an animal was chosen as the symbol of each of the rule.

- Another application of MI theory to classroom management was in forming the small groups. EFL teachers were aware of the value of heterogeneous groups working cooperatively. Multiple-Intelligence-based teaching activities provided a wide range of techniques for creating heterogeneous groups based on incidental features related to each intelligence.

## VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The MI theory suggests various ways of understanding the human cognitive abilities. In addition, it also shows the ways of making the learning possible, joyful and effective. Multiple intelligence teaching strategies and techniques also stimulate the students to choose the ways they will learn and demonstrate their learning (Arnold & Fonseca, 2004). Students' discipline is improved and becomes conscious, thus, the Multiple Intelligence can theory create a positive learning environment where individual needs are recognized and met during the school year. In such kind of a positive environment students are less likely to be frustrated and confused, misbehave or violate school rules. As a result there is no need for emphasizing students' behavior or elaborate a strict disciplinary system. The application of the Multiple Intelligence theory gives a chance to teachers to encourage their students to use their brains actively to learn, therefore, if there is learning there will be little time left for creating disciplinary problems.

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