

Implementation of Multiple Intelligences Theory in the English Language Course Syllabus at the University of Niš Medical School

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SUMMARY

Introduction Theory of multiple intelligences (MI) is considered an innovation in learning the English language because it helps students develop all eight intelligences that, on the other hand, represent ways people understand the world around them, solve problems and learn. They are: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. Also, by focusing on the problem-solving activities, teachers, by implementing theory of multiple intelligences, encourage students not only to build their existing language knowledge but also learn new content and skills.

Objective The objective of this study has been to determine the importance of implementation of the theory of multiple intelligences in the English language course syllabus at the University of Niš Medical School.

Methods Ways in which the theory of multiple intelligences has been implemented in the English language course syllabus particularly in one lecture for junior year students of pharmacy in the University of Niš Medical School.

Results The English language final exam results from February 2009 when compared with the final exam results from June 2007 prior to the implementation of MI theory showed the following: out of 80 junior year students of pharmacy, 40 obtained grade 10 (outstanding), 16 obtained grade 9 (excellent), 11 obtained grade 8 (very good), 4 obtained grade 7 (good) and 9 obtained grade 6 (pass). No student failed.

Conclusion The implementation of the theory of multiple intelligences in the English language course syllabus at the University of Niš Medical School has had a positive impact on learning the English language and has increased students' interest in language learning. Generally speaking, this theory offers better understanding of students' intelligence and greater appreciation of their strengths. It provides numerous opportunities for students to use and develop all eight intelligences not just the few they excel in prior to enrolling in a university or college.

Keywords: multiple intelligences theory; English language course syllabus; students; teacher

INTRODUCTION

In the twentieth century, the conventional teacher-centred model was replaced by the learner-centred model of instruction forcing educators to pay more attention to the impact the learners brought into the learning process. This is how the world of teaching witnessed the innovation in English Language Teaching (ELT) approaches, methods and techniques such as the silent way, community language learning, total approach, interactive learning, task-based learning etc. [1, 2]. However, the findings of Dr Howard Gardner, a distinguished American cognitive psychologist, during the nineties, were ground-breaking for foreign language learning. He suggested, from his research findings (1983, 1993), that human cognitive competence actually was pluralistic, rather than unitary in design thus setting the stage for multiple intelligences (MI) theory [3]. Educators finally came to recognize the diversity of the learners in their learning styles, learning potentials and came to appreciate the development of learning strategies on the part of the learners in the form of „individualized instruction” and „independent learning” [4, 5]. Nowadays, the MI theory has been considered a milestone for educational innovation not only

in the United States but throughout the world because language teaching has finally changed in such a way as to facilitate language learning by engaging both a faculty that collaborates and learns from one another and students through constrained but meaningful learning choices and a sharp focus on productivity and high-quality language performance [2, 4, 5].

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study has been to determine the importance of implementation of the theory of multiple intelligences in the English language course syllabus at the University of Niš Medical School. The study investigated students' performance and improvement in learning English and their performance on the final exam after the implementation of the MI theory in the English language course syllabus.

METHODS

In order to gain a better understanding about how MI theory applies to lecture hall teaching, a lecture plan for the first year students of phar-

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macy at the University of Niš Medical School is sketched out on the topic Intercultural communication and a part dealing with intercultural core competencies.

Time Limitation: 3 consecutive periods

Student Level: Freshmen from the Department of Pharmacy, the University of Niš Medical School

Class Size: 80 students

Teaching Method(s): Whole language learning & task-based learning

- First period:

Classroom Activities Approximate Time Intelligence(s)

1. Giving background knowledge about the topic and why it is important; reading a quote by Martin Luther King Jr., (5 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic (through lecture)

2. Brainstorming on prime questions, e.g. How does the quote coincide with intercultural communication? What purpose do you think Martin Luther King Jr. had for saying this? And/or What does it imply to you? (10 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic(through informal speaking) Intrapersonal, and Interpersonal

3. Listening to a lecture to grasp the main ideas. (5 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic(through listening)

4. Oral reading for comprehension through the strategy of „topic sentence” detecting and commenting on statements about intercultural communication. (20 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic(through reading and reading strategies)

5. Vocabulary learning through the strategy of guessing meaning from context or form. (10 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic (through vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies)

- Second period:

Lecture hall Activities Approximate Time Intelligence(s)

1. Group discussing intercultural communication (e.g., by deductively expanding, inductively generalizing, etc.) and reviewing its main idea(s). (15 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic,(through discussion)Interpersonal, and Logical/Mathematical

2. Doing exercises on dining etiquette either orally or in writing by working in groups and/or individually. (25 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic(through speaking & writing) and Interpersonal

3. Commenting on the concepts/ideas one agrees or disagrees about interculturalism, and giving his/her reasons. (10 mins.) Verbal/Linguistic(through oral presentation) and Intrapersonal

- Third period:

With the reference of activities listed at the back of the text, there are five different tasks to be completed, (10 mins. for the performance/presentation of each task). Students can choose which task to work on either by joining a group or working independently.

Task 1 (team building)

Look at the two drawings, concerning the customs of hand-shaking and social distance. Discuss in group and report the similarities and differences that may exist between the East and the West, or make a verbal debate

against each other. (Visual/Spatial, Interpersonal, Logical, and Verbal/Linguistic Intelligences.)

Task 2 (team building or individual work)

Find a song concerning cultural differences or a folk song from a particular culture and enjoy listening and singing it with necessary explanation of its lyrics. (Musical/Rhythmic and Verbal/Linguistic Intelligences.)

Task 3 (team building)

Write a sketch based on a culture shock anecdote and perform it. (Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic and/or Visual/spatial, and/or Musical/Rhythmic Intelligences.)

Task 4 (team building)

Discuss, in a small group, a problem or an embarrassing situation you may confront with due to cultural conflicts, and come up with a solution by drawing a flowchart to show its procedure. (Logical/Mathematics & Visual/Spatial Intelligences.)

Task 5 (team building or individual work)

Search for some unique words, or body language developed in a culture due to its particular natural environment, e.g., geographic location, climate, etc. (Verbal/Linguistic and Naturalist Intelligences.)

Outline of a lecture is not clearly fixed. It should be adjusted to students' language abilities and the eight intelligences. The teacher, therefore, monitors and singles out intelligences to be developed and worked on in class.

RESULTS

There are two ways of evaluating students after the completion of a course: testing and assessing. Testing represents a singular act that is characteristic of teacher-centred classrooms. Assessment, on the other hand, is a complex process distinctive of student-centred classrooms. Testing is intended to determine what students have learned forcing them to memorize facts without really understanding the context and subject matter. Assessment, on the other hand, is integrated with learning and instruction and is intended to stimulate further learning. Moreover, the core spirit of the MI theory is opposed to the uniform view of education and formal testing (standardized tests) but actually opts for assessment as an essential component of an MI education. It is particularly important to use multiple modes of assessment that will allow students to show their strengths for optimal performance. Many teaching professionals nowadays share the belief that authentic assessment, which emphasizes assessing what students know (knowledge) and what

Table 1. The assessment of the English language final exam results at the University of Niš Medical School Department of Pharmacy after (February 2009) and prior to (June 2007) the implementation of MI theory (out of a total of 80 junior year students)

Grade	February 2009	June 2007
10 (outstanding)	40	10
9 (excellent)	16	5
8 (very good)	11	19
7 (good)	4	16
6 (pass)	9	17
5 (fail)	0	13

students do (performance) from different perspectives aims to provide a complete picture of students' abilities, efforts and progress during the learning process [6]. As far as the assessment of knowledge of the first year students of pharmacy after the completion of the compulsory English language course and especially after the implementation of the MI theory in the English language course syllabus, the results are more than positive especially if the final exam results from June 2007 (prior to the implementation of the MI theory in the course syllabus) and February 2009 (after the implementation of the MI theory in the course syllabus) are compared (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

Intelligence has traditionally been defined in terms of an intelligence quotient (IQ), which measures a narrow range of verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical abilities a person receives at birth. Howard Gardner in his book entitled "Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences" [3] postulates an alternative definition of intelligence according to which intelligence is defined as 'the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting' [5] adding that humans possess a number of distinct intelligences that manifest themselves in different skills and abilities [5, 7]. Gardner also argues that there are many, not just one, different but autonomous intelligence capacities that result in many different ways of knowing, understanding and learning about the world: "It is of the utmost importance that we recognize and nurture all of the varied of human intelligences, and all of the combination of intelligences. We are all so different largely because we all have different combinations of intelligences. If we recognize this, I think we will have at least a better chance of dealing appropriately with the many problems that we face in the world." [8] Generally speaking, all human beings apply these intelligences to solve problems, invent processes, and create

things in ways that are valued by a community or culture. Accordingly, Gardner has singled out eight intelligences suggesting that there are probably many others that we have not yet been able to test up to the present [8] (Table 2).

In his "Frames of Mind," Howard Gardner also treated these personal intelligences 'as a piece' of a bigger jigsaw puzzle arguing that because of their close association in most cultures, they are often linked together claiming that the eight intelligences rarely operate independently. They are used at the same time and tend to complement each other as people develop skills or solve problems [3]. Moreover, Howard Gardner made two essential claims about multiple intelligences. His first claim was that "the theory is an account of human cognition in its fullness. The intelligences provided 'a new definition of human nature, cognitively speaking' [9]. The second claim was that "human beings are organisms that possess a basic set of intelligences and pointed out that people have a unique blend of intelligences." Gardner argues that the big challenge facing the deployment of human resources "is how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences" [9].

Nevertheless, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has had a profound impact on thinking and practice in education - especially in the United States and has found a ready audience amongst educationalists. How big this contribution is can be gauged from the following comments in his Introduction to the tenth anniversary edition of his classic work "Frames of Mind. The theory of multiple intelligences": "In the heyday of the psychometric and behaviorist eras, it was generally believed that intelligence was a single entity that was inherited; and that human beings - initially a blank slate - could be trained to learn anything, provided that it was presented in an appropriate way. Nowadays an increasing number of researchers believe precisely the opposite; that there exists a multitude of intelligences, quite independent of each other; that each intelligence has its own strengths and constraints; that the mind is far from unencumbered at birth; and that it is unex-

Table 2. The eight intelligences as defined by Howard Gardner

Intelligence	Language skills
Verbal/Linguistic	Involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability to effectively use language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically; and language as a means to remember information. Writers, poets, lawyers and speakers are among those that Howard Gardner sees as having high linguistic intelligence.
Logical/Mathematical	Consists of the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically. In Howard Gardner's words, it entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.
Visual/Spatial	Involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.
Bodily/Kinesthetic	Entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements. Howard Gardner sees mental and physical activity as related.
Musical/Rhythmic	Involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms. According to Howard Gardner musical intelligence runs in an almost structural parallel to linguistic intelligence.
Interpersonal	Is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others. Educators, salespeople, religious and political leaders and counselors all need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence.
Intrapersonal	Entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. In Howard Gardner's view it involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives.
Naturalist	Enables human beings to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment. It "combines a description of the core ability with a characterization of the role that many cultures value".

pectedly difficult to teach things that go against early 'naive' theories of that challenge the natural lines of force within an intelligence and its matching domains." [3] Christinson, however, argues that MI theory provides a way of understanding intelligence, which teachers can use as a guide for developing classroom activities that address multiple ways of learning and knowing [10] whereas Gardner responds to his theory being applied in education by first making the point that psychology does not directly dictate education, „it merely helps one to understand the conditions within which education takes place" [3]. What is even more important he says is "eight kinds of intelligence would allow eight ways to teach, rather than one. And powerful constraints that exist in the mind can be mobilized to introduce a particular concept (or whole system of thinking) in a way that students are most likely to learn it and least likely to distort it. Paradoxically, constraints can be suggestive and ultimately freeing." [5] Moreover, Kornhaber has identified a number of reasons why teachers and policymakers in North America have responded positively to Howard Gardner's presentation of multiple intelligences: "The theory validates educators' everyday experience: students think and learn in many different ways. It also provides educators with a conceptual framework for organizing and reflecting on curriculum assessment and pedagogical practices. In turn, this reflection has led many educators to develop new approaches that might better meet the needs of the range of learners in their classrooms." [11] Therefore teaching strategies as proposed by MI theory transfer some control from teacher to students by giving students choices in the ways they will learn and demonstrate their learning. By focusing on problem-solving activities that draw on multiple intelligences, these teaching strategies encourage students to build on existing strengths and knowledge to learn new content and skills [5]. It is also a way for a teacher to gain a deeper understanding of students' learning preferences and a greater appreciation of their strengths. Moreover, students are likely to become more engaged in learning as they use learning modules that match their intelligence strengths. In addition, students' regular reflection on their learning broadens their definitions of effective and acceptable teaching and learning practices. Students' increased engagement and success in learning stimulates a teacher to raise his/her expectations, initiating a powerful expectation-response cycle that can lead to greater achievement levels for all. Thus, the theory of multiple intelligences offers a way for the teacher to examine and form the best teaching techniques and strategies in the light of differences in each student. To this end, the English teacher becomes aware of the fact that students bring with them specific strengths, unique learning styles and different learning potentials. As Christinson suggests, there are four ways of using MI theory in every lecture hall in order to enhance and channel both students' intelligence and language abilities [12]. Hence, MI theory becomes:

1. A tool to help students develop a better understanding and appreciation of their own strengths and learning preferences and according to an inventory to identify the preferred intelligences of English language learners. According to the

preferred intelligences, teachers may adapt the teaching to suit the needs of the students in their classes.

2. A tool to develop a better understanding of learners' intelligences. An understanding of MI theory broadens teachers' awareness of their students' knowledge and skills and enables them to look at each student from the perspective of strengths and potential. Teachers also become aware of the different ways in which students may demonstrate their understanding of material.

3. A guide to provide a greater variety of ways for students to learn and to demonstrate their learning. Identification of personal strengths can make students more receptive to nontraditional learning activities and can give students a successful experience that builds their confidence as learner.

4. A guide to develop lesson plans that address the full range of student needs. An MI-informed reading lesson may begin with typical pre-reading activities (reviewing earlier material, predicting what will happen next), followed by silent reading or reading aloud with discussion of vocabulary and text meaning [12, 13].

Correspondingly, the implementation of MI theory in the English language course syllabus at the University of Niš Medical School has brought many positive changes in the lecture hall. The MI theory has provided a way of handling differing language skill levels within each group of students. For instance, students are assigned to complete a project, individually or in groups, to demonstrate their understanding of the text. The teacher then offers a choice of projects, such as descriptive essay writing, resume and business letters/emails writing, preparing seminar presentations etc. The objective is not to teach to specific intelligences or to correlate intelligences with specific activities, but rather to allow learners to employ their preferred ways of processing and communicating new information. For instance, this has shown that students become more engaged in and enthusiastic about discussing specific topics; the students gain greater understanding of the topics discussed when they express their opinion in ways that are comfortable for them; and their thinking strategies improve as discussion debate becomes a tool for completion of projects they are interested in when their voice is heard. As far as multiple activities are concerned, more students can find ways to participate and take advantage of language acquisition opportunities. With the MI course syllabus, students become aware that different people have different strengths and that each person has a substantial contribution to make. This fits in well with project-based learning where students in a group can divide tasks based on individual strengths. For example, one student might feel confident about planning, another might prefer to do the writing, and a third might feel able to present the project to the whole class. Team-building becomes necessary and makes individual characteristics of each student emerge. During the compulsory the English language classes at the University of Niš Medical School students are, therefore, taught to develop and generate intelligence in diverse ways and on more levels. To this end, the lecture hall activities/tasks are tailor-made to suit and/or enhance the following: students' needs, strengths, levels, learning

styles, learning strategies, learning potentials, the nature of the subject matter, the teacher's person and teaching rationales, his/her MI profile, teaching styles etc. What should be pointed out is that the teacher need not include activities for developing all the eight multiple intelligences within each lesson. On the contrary the teacher should expand lecture hall activities for the neglected intelligences by way of examining and analysing the MI checklists for a period of time. Below are steps to show how MI theory is implemented in ELT to freshmen (Table 3).

Apart from singling out and monitoring each of the eight intelligences in each student, the approach and cooperative learning also emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationship (interpersonal intelligence) to language learning whereas language learning not only emphasizes the wholeness and reality of language (verbal/linguistic intelligence) but also the coordination of bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences to promote language learning [14]. Since the implementation of the MI theory is a two-way process, there are also several ways by which a teacher may facilitate the MI theory implementation. The teacher should:

1. Examine his/her own intellectual profiles and find out his/her own teaching styles through a multiple intelligence inventory.
2. Understand the intellectual profiles of students through students-generated inventory.

3. Consider specific teaching approaches and methods that appeal to particular intelligences or combinations of intelligences.

4. Plan a variety of activities from different resources (including the use of internet, MPP) for specific lectures or classes with multiple intelligence theory in mind (e.g. focus on diversity, learning process, and the transferring of learning to life beyond the lecture hall, etc.).

5. Provide students with different learning strategies necessary for lifelong learners.

6. Put emphasis on multiple forms of assessment rather than traditional standardized testing [5, 15].

Following the above-mentioned ways, a teacher, can achieve a better effect in the MI-inspired ELT lecture halls.

CONCLUSION

While there may be some significant questions and issues around Howard Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences, it still has had utility in education. It has helped a significant number of educators to question their work and to encourage them to look beyond the narrow confines of the dominant discourses of the four skills development (reading, writing, listening and speaking), curriculum, and testing. Nonetheless, applications of the MI theory in the English language course syllabus at the University of Niš

Table 3. Implementation the MI theory in ELT at the Department of Pharmacy at Medical School in Niš

Intelligence	Language skills
Verbal/Linguistic	Listening – listening to lectures Formal and informal speaking – making verbal presentations to others, making conversations, having discussions and debates, etc. Humour or jokes – creating puns, limericks and telling jokes on topics of study Reading – silent reading, oral reading and group/chain reading of excerpts in liason with a lecture topic Writing - doing written exercises (business letters/emails, short analytical essays), minutes, summary/report writing Creative reading – reading original pieces (e.g. stories, poems, essays, novels etc.)
Logical/Mathematical	Logical/Sequential Presentation – inventing point-by-point logical explanations for items or making systematic presentation of subject matter Problem solving – listing appropriate procedures for problem solving situations Forming relationships – creating meaningful connections between ideas Syllogisms – making “if ..., then ...” logical deductions about a topic
Visual/Spatial	Visual aids using/making – using pictures, paintings, charts, graphs, diagrams, flowcharts, slides to facilitate learning and encourage students to make the visual aids by themselves Mind mapping – creating or arranging visual mapping activities (e.g. word maze, visual webs of written information)
Bodily/Kinaesthetic	Physical actions – arranging TPR ¹ (total physical response) Body language – “embodying” meaning, interpretation or understanding of an idea in physical movement Role playing/Mime – performing skits or characters to show understanding of topics of study Dramatic enactment – creating a mini-drama that shows the dynamic interplay of various topics of study
Musical/Rhythmic	Vocal sounds/tones – producing sounds with one's vocal cords to illustrate the meaning of a word or a concept Jazz chants/tones – producing or using rhythmic patterns, such as jazz chants or raps to help communicate or to remember certain words, sentence structures, concepts, ideas or processes Singing/humming – creating songs for a class, a team, a topic of study or finding existing songs that complement a topic
Interpersonal	Person to person communication – focusing on how teachers and students relate to each other and how to improve their relating Giving and receiving feedback – offering input on one's performance or about one's opinions; and accepting another's input or reaction to one's performance/opinions Pair work and group projects – investigating and discussing a topic problem in teams
Intrapersonal	Independent studies/projects – encouraging students to work independently for goal-setting, process-planning, self-assessing and seminar presentations choosing Focusing/concentration skills – learning the ability to focus on a single idea or task Thinking strategies - learning what thinking patterns to use for what task
Naturalist	Elements classification – the elements in the periodical system and their counterparts in nature Sensory stimulation exercises – exposing the senses to nature's sounds, smells, tastes, touches and sights.

Medical School have had a positive influence on learning English language in class and enhanced students interest in language learning up to the present. Rather than functioning as a prescribed teaching method, curriculum, or technique, the MI theory applied in ELT at the University of Niš Medical School provides a way of understanding students' intelligence, which the teacher can use as a guide to develop lecture hall activities that address multiple ways of learning and knowing. The MI theory offers a richly diversified way of understanding and categorizing human cognitive abilities, and combinations of abilities, heightening awareness of what makes learning possible and effective for individual students. Moreover, teaching strategies grounded by the MI theory can transfer some control from teacher to learners by giving students choices in the ways they will learn and demonstrate their learning. By focusing on problem-solving activities that draw on multiple intel-

ligences, these teaching strategies encourage learners to build on existing strengths and knowledge to learn new content and skills. To this end, the use of the MI theory in the English language course syllabus development at the University of Niš Medical School offers a better understanding of students' learning preferences and a greater appreciation of their strengths. Students likely become more engaged in learning as they use learning modules that match their intelligence strengths. In addition, students' regular reflection on their learning broadens their definitions of effective and acceptable teaching and learning practices and increases students' engagement and success in learning. Generally speaking, the implementation of the MI theory into the English language course syllabus provides numerous opportunities for students to use and develop all eight intelligences not just the few they excel in prior to enrolling a university or college.

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Примена теорије различитих интелигенција у наставни план за предмет Енглески језик на Медицинском факултету Универзитета у Нишу

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КРАТАК САДРЖАЈ

Увод Теорија различитих интелигенција се сматра иновацијом у учењу енглеског језика зато што помаже студентима да развију свих осам интелигенција које представљају начине на које људи спознају свет око себе, решавају проблеме и уче. То су: вербална (лингвистичка), логичка (математичка), визуелна (просторна), телесна (кинестетичка), музичка (ритмичка), интерперсонална, интраперсонална и природњачка интелигенција. Усмеравајући пажњу на активности решавања проблема, наставници применом ове теорије охрабрују студенте да надграђују постојеће знање, али и да уче нове језичке области и вештине.

Циљ рада Циљ рада је био да се утврди значај имплементације теорије различитих интелигенција у наставни план за предмет Енглески језик, као и значај који има у едукацији уопште.

Методе рада Начин на који је теорија различитих интелигенција примењена у наставном плану, а нарочито на једном предавању за студенте прве године студијске групе за фармацију

Медицинског факултета Универзитета у Нишу.

Резултати Резултати завршног испита из предмета Енглески језик после примене теорије различитих интелигенција из фебруара 2009. године у поређењу са завршним испитом из јуна 2007. показали су да је од укупно 80 студената 40 добило оцену 10, 16 оцену 9, 11 оцену 8, четворо оцену 7 и деветоро оцену 6. Ниједан студент није био неуспешан на испиту.

Закључак Имплементација теорије различитих интелигенција у наставни план за предмет Енглески језик на Медицинском факултету Универзитета у Нишу има позитиван утицај на учење енглеског и уједно повећава интересовање студената за учење страних језика. Ова теорија пружа начин за боље разумевање интелигенције студената, али и различите могућности за студенте да искористе и развију свих осам интелигенција, а не само оне које су им већ развијене када упишу факултет.

Кључне речи: теорија различитих интелигенција; наставни план за енглески језик; студенти; наставник