

## HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTELLIGENCE INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

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Every teacher has experienced at some time in his or her professional life the feeling of not having enough attention during the class. We have wondered if the topic being taught is not interesting, if we are not able to maintain the students' attention, if our method is not suitable. In some cases, this might be true and we have to think over the approaches and aids used to support our classes. In other instances, however, it is important to analyze the other component of the class: the students. Each person has diverse talents and, as stated by some authors, diverse types of "intelligence". Do teachers know about this phenomenon? How do we deal with it?

First of all it is relevant to describe briefly each type of intelligence, its advantages, weaknesses and strategies to make the most of it without affecting the rhythm and demands of the class.

Let us begin by remembering that language is a natural function carried out by the brain, mainly by its left hemisphere. But language is not the only function asymmetrically located in the brain. Some other factors that can have influence in learning a language like memory, analysis, synthesis, processing of incoming information, among others, are found here too. Each one of these factors is an essential part of intelligence.

Howard Gardner is a psychologist of Harvard University and the first person to talk about a wide range of talents. In 1983

he published a book that included seven kinds of intelligence from which the most well known types are:

### *Academic Intelligence*

This is what we traditionally expect to achieve regardless of the type of science we are studying. Teachers decide if a student is successful or not by judging his or her grades. In our case, a good student is the one who is able to repeat the English words and structures taught in the classroom with an acceptable level of accuracy. To evaluate it, "universal" tests, like the IQ test (intellectual quotient), the ICFES, the SAT and others, have been designed. But "getting an exceptional score on one of these tests is not a guarantee that we will be able to find a better job, be more successful or happier in life." (1996:56). This type of intelligence does not offer any practical preparation for assuming the downfalls of life. It does not prepare us for recognizing the opportunities that life offers either. Nevertheless, we know that in our system we can enter a better university or get a better job depending on the results of the examinations we take and whether we like it or not we are only tested on our academic intelligence.

There are some activities that are specially suitable for it, for example learning a second language, studying medicine, engineering or any other science in which the person must obtain a great amount of information. The features of the brain that

are found in academic intelligence are the short and long term memory and the processing of information. A clear advantage of having students with academic intelligence is that they are prepared to make the most of any activity in the classroom; they know the importance of learning and they focus their efforts on doing it as well as possible. They are ambitious and try to fulfill their expectations.

### *Emotional Intelligence.*

This type of intelligence concerns the ability to know our feelings and the feelings of others and the skill to manage them. Any student with this capacity can have success in his/her relationships, choose the right options concerning classroom organization, feel more satisfied with his/her performance, be efficient and become a leader. People emotionally intelligent can motivate themselves, persist despite the failure and avoid negative trends.

In this case, the brain works mainly with the analysis and the synthesis processes. The advantages of dealing with these people are obvious. The stress produced by the fact of learning a second language is diminished and the relationship between teacher and student is more open and suitable to establish a communication enriched by the curiosity of the learner. However, those with this intelligence will easily get bored if they do not get any rewarding feeling or activity. They usually get distracted and the teacher must change constantly the pace and scope of the class. Large classes will decrease the performance of these students since they need a more personalized teaching. The tasks/activities that will offer more opportunities to emotional learners are those in which they

have a commitment and a defined responsibility. Activities like contests, group work, guessing games, controlled and free dialogues are adequate to keep the attention of this audience as long as there is a final reward.

### *Spatial Capacity.*

The use of the senses and the capacity of transforming the environment are the main characteristics of this type of intelligence. These students enjoy creating, playing, having physical contact with the object of knowledge and learning from their own experience. What is taught by the teacher is just the beginning of the great adventure of knowledge. This aptitude is easily seen in children but, as people grow older their brain becomes "lazy", and lose this interaction with their ambiance. In the case of the students of a second language, this ability can be directed towards the practice (outside the classroom) of the abilities of reading, listening and even speaking. These learners will take advantage of their senses to reach a good level of performance in the L2 without demanding a great participation of the teacher.

On the other hand, it is difficult for a teacher to equate these active learners with the passive ones. Discipline troubles can often be present in a class like this. So, some solutions could be working with scrambled words and sentences, discovering new words from a basic one, describing how something works, solving puzzles and getting involved in any audio visual exercise.

The best professional field for these learners is constructing and designing.

The other categories are less related to the learning of a second or foreign language

but it is important to mention them. They are:

### ***Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence***

It involves the skill of controlling one's body and the ability to perform outstanding activities with it. Among the people who belong to this particular group we can mention people like Michael Jordan or other sportsmen and dancers who have the talent to create a masterpiece of each of their movements.

### ***Personal Intelligence.***

This category has two kinds of talent that can be useful in all instances of our lives:

- *Interpersonal skill*: it refers to the capacity of recognizing people internal emotions and needs. Professionals in the field of Psychology like Carl Weissman or leaders able to produce major changes in a country like Martin Luther King belong to this category.

- *Intrapsychical skill*: it conveys the talent to give an interpretation to reactions, hidden and real feelings of people. The most remarkable example of it is Sigmund Freud who was able to synchronize his mind with those of others giving as a result an impressive theory about the role of our unconscious side in our life.

After examining briefly the types of intelligence that students can develop, it is relevant to mention the intelligence a teacher *should* develop or at least attempt to develop inside the classroom to create a facilitating environment for learning. *Interpersonal Intelligence* is the most desirable and involves Group Organization described by Gardner in his book: "Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in

Practice".

The Group Organization is essential in a leader, and includes these skills:

- Visualizing the way people are motivated.
- Knowing how to make people work with cooperation.
- Forming a realistic image of himself and using it to perform efficiently in different fields.
- Recognizing and using his/her feelings and those of the students and using them to guide the behavior inside the classroom.
- Selecting thoughtfully the moment to give a reward or being tough without letting your feelings make the choice.

Up to now, we have described in a brief way the types of intelligence we can find among students. It is important to include in the field of *emotional intelligence* the diverse character features that can also affect the performance of a student in the specific field of learning a language.

Brown also talks about personality factors in relation to the learning of a foreign language. Brown quotes in his book "Principles of Language Learning and Teaching" two important researchers that have investigated the influence of character types in the learning process. Isabel Myers and Katheryn Briggs mention four character types that can be compared to the classifications explained above. These two authors classify people in four categories according to dichotomous styles of functioning: (1) introversion versus extroversion, (2) sensing versus intuition (3) thinking versus feeling, and (4) judging versus perceiving. (1994:103)

The Extroversion-Introversion (E/I) refers

to the way we act in social situations including the classroom. By combining the knowledge of the type of intelligence a student may have and the social factors a teacher can help in the acquisition of a language. How to reach a student emotionally is really an important factor in his or her learning. What exactly can we do? An introverted person needs to have someone to help him or her feel secure, not necessarily someone that talks or acts for them but someone that can be patient enough to guide them toward a more sociable situation. Therefore, group activities need to be encouraged. Single tasks like individual presentations or speeches will be a torture for people that are not ready to assume this kind of factor as part of their lives.

The Sensing- Intuition (S-I) are two factors that refer to the way someone perceives the world around him. A sensing type is oriented toward data and relies on facts that can be observed and measured. Meanwhile, the intuition types are inclined toward hunches, imagination and inspiration. These factors can be associated with the academic and emotional intelligence explained earlier in this paper. It is important to restate that one is not more important than the other or one is more accurate for learning than the other. They are simply two different types of characteristics people may have. In fact the only thing a teacher needs to consider is the teaching approach he or she might have toward the diverse types of students. Sensing students prefer memory strategies; and intuitive learners are better at compensation strategies.

Thinking -Feeling (T/F) are related to the ways someone may get the information and how it is kept inside the memory. Thinking types can be more logical and objective while Feeling types can be oriented toward affectivity and harmony. These two factors

can be considered a part of Intellectual Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence. The teacher needs to keep in mind these factors and characteristics and know that thinkers prefer metacognitive strategies and analysis while feelers reject them.

Judging - Perceiving (J/P) once again these two factors are related to the way an individual accepts the "outer world". J's want organization and planning while P's are spontaneous and are comfortable with open-ended contexts. In a classroom setting it is important to remember that judgers rarely use affective strategies while perceivers might find them helpful.

As a conclusion, we can say that no matter how we classify students it is important to know that as human beings they are different and therefore their learning strategies and speed are different as well. As teachers we need to make sure we accept these principles and begin to make changes or adjustments in our classrooms. We need to stop talking about the performance of a whole class. On the contrary we need to begin talking about the performance of individuals. We also need to change the homogenous teaching and we need to start to create a dynamic, evolving and versatile class to assure all the students obtain the knowledge in one way or another.

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