

Impact Factor: 3.4546 (UIF) DRJI Value: 5.9 (B+)

# The Relationship between Multiple Intelligences and Success in Foreign Language Learning: Case study of Albanian Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language

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#### Abstract:

This study aimed to explore any possible relationship between multiple intelligences and Albanian TFL (Turkish as a foreign language) learners' achievements in grammar, vocabulary, and

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writing. The 77 participants were 10th class students in a private high school in Tirana, Albania, where Turkish is taught as a foreign language. The participants' intelligence types were measured through conduct of Multiple Intelligence Inventory for Adults, while Pearson correlation tests were carried out to analyze the relationship between students' dominant intelligence types and their scores in each section. The results revealed the existence of negative correlation between the participant learners' bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence and their performance in the grammar test. No other relationship between any intelligence types or Multiple Intelligence overall and achievements in vocabulary or writing was established. This study suggests grammar instruction should be provided with all learning styles in mind and that further research focus on effects of MI-based instruction on foreign language learning proficiency.

**Key words:** multiple intelligences, foreign language learning, Turkish as a foreign language, grammar, vocabulary, writing

### MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY

Gardner's theory of MI came as an opposing and challenging alternative to the standardized way of defining intelligence and the commonly used IQ tests, which inhibit people from demonstrating their real capacities in different areas, categorically labelling them simply as intelligent or not intelligent. Believing that all human beings are able to know and perceive the world in different ways (Gardner 2002), Gardner held that intelligence and competence "should include a number of abilities which contribute to problem-solving, and which help individuals to find solutions to the problems and difficulties they encounter" (Gardner 2004, 40). In his MI theory Gardner suggested that there are seven types of intelligences and each individual possesses all of them in different strengths (Gardner 2004). However, suitable levels can be attained in each of them through further development.

When it comes to learning, not only does the sharp standardized classification discourage students from learning, but their teachers might also incline to hardly have any expectations from the "unintelligent" learners. The MI theory suggests that each individual learns differently and the way in which learning occurs is determined by the stronger intelligence type/s. In addition, Gardner held that a complex interaction of all intelligences is necessary for the completion of many learning activities and that even within each category you can be intelligent in different ways.

Gardner also suggests that the MI may be a potential partner for effective teaching and learner motivation. He underlines that teachers should know the difficulties students encounter in correctly understanding new concepts and topics; therefore, the need arises for them to consider the differences between minds and to provide a type of education suitable for a larger number of learners (Gardner 2003). Consequently, teachers' awareness of multiple intelligences and application of strategies and activities comprising use of the various intelligences results in a two-fold benefit. On the one hand, awareness of individual learning preferences motivates teachers to effectively incorporate all-integrated techniques and strategies in their approach; on the other hand, engagement in learners' and preferred activities increases eniovable motivation and positively affects their academic achievements.

# The seven intelligence types

Although Gardner originally introduced seven types of intelligences, he later on added the naturalistic intelligence believing that it matched the eight criteria of an intelligence type to be considered as such, suggested in *The Frames of Mind*. Below there will be provided a brief description of each of the eight intelligence types as proposed by Gardner in his book

"Intelligence Reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st Century" (1999).

Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to both spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. Lawyers, speakers, writers, poets are among the people with high linguistic intelligence.

Logical-mathematical intelligence involves the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations and investigate issues scientifically. Mathematicians, logicians and scientists exploit logical-mathematical intelligence.

*Musical intelligence* entails skill in the performance, composition and appreciation of musical patterns.

Spatial/visual intelligence features the potential to recognize and manipulate the patterns of wide space (those used by navigators and pilots) as well as the patterns of confined areas (those used by sculptors, surgeons, chess players, graphic artists or architects).

Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems or fashion products. Dancers, actors and athletes foreground this type of intelligence.

Interpersonal intelligence denotes a person's capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people and, consequently, work effectively with others. Salespeople, teachers, clinicians, religious leaders, political leaders and actors all need acute interpersonal intelligence.

Intrapersonal intelligence entails the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of oneself-including one's own, desires, fears and capacities, and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life.

Naturalistic intelligence involves an extensive knowledge of the living world and the capacity to recognize and

classify numerous species of the environment as well as the skilfulness of looking after living creatures and ingeniously interacting with them.

# MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

This section consists of two parts: the first part focuses on some implications of the MI theory for the foreign language learning context. Although in his theory Gardner mainly makes reference to learning in general, foreign language learning setting provides room for the application of a wide range of teaching methods and learner-centred activities. The second part presents a brief review of research in the relationship between MI and foreign language learning aspects.

## MIT implications for foreign language learning

The traditional approach to EFL teaching presents language material in a way that engages certain types of intelligences, particularly the logical-mathematical and the verbal-linguistic ones. Therefore, inadequate encouragement of other intelligences results in less or not full involvement of learners whose strong intelligences are other than mathematical or linguistic. Consequently, the traditional methodology does not allow all learners to engage equally but favours those with specific strengths. In contrast, acknowledging the existence of different intelligences, MIT does not put an emphasis only on the more common intelligences. It endorses the employment of activities that require engagement of various intelligence types, which makes it inclusive of a broader range of skills and learner styles.

Since according to Gardner, each person possesses the seven intelligences to varying degrees, this means that learners may be highly developed in one or two of them and moderately or underdeveloped in the others. However, the idea that each of the intelligences can be developed to a reasonably high level is encouraging because not all learners are linguistically intelligent. In other words, application of MI activities in classes will help students who are more developed in other intelligences to develop their linguistic intelligence. Therefore, a foreign language learner does not have to be linguistically intelligent only to become highly proficient in the target Her/his learning may be supported by the language. intelligence/s she/he possesses more dominantly. Meanwhile, in order for the learners to be able to develop and engage all the intelligences to a high level, a teacher will have to look for and prepare teaching-learning activities which entail the use of various intelligence types.

Putting MI theory into practice and making the best of it requires both learners and teachers' awareness of its ideas and principles. Learners' awareness may help and encourage them to detect their own strengths and use them as a basis for engaging and developing their linguistic abilities and achieving a higher proficiency in the target language. Teachers' awareness of various styles and intelligences can motivate them to design and exploit activities and strategies suitable for various learners' preferences. Consequently, this awareness results in a provision of, as described by Gardner and Hatch, (1989) "intelligence-fair" activities and materials, which allow all learners to engage their strong intelligences and further develop the weak ones.

# Review of research on MIT and foreign language learning

Put forth in 1983 and despite lack of direct reference to foreign language learning, the theory of multiple intelligences has inspired a lot of research in the field of applied linguistics and second language acquisition. Researchers have focused on various aspects through which MIT can be related to or may affect foreign language learning.

One of the mostly researched topics is the relationship between learners' particular intelligence types and their achievements in one of the four skills. In their study with BA level English Literature and English Translation students (517) Mohammadzadeh & Jafarigohar (2012) discovered a significant correlation between the learners' MI profile and their willingness to participate in L2 communication.

Studies investigating the relationship between the writing ability and the MI elements reveal controversial results. While Sadeghi and Farzizadeh' s (2012) findings showed no significant relationship between MI elements and the writing ability of Iranian EFL learners, another study (Ahmadian and Hosseini 2011) with 33 female Iranian EFL learners majoring in English translation showed that MI and L2 writing are related; however, this relationship is statistically significant with the linguistic and interpersonal intelligences only. Another study (Alizadeh, Saeidi and Tamjid 2014) also focusing on the writing performance examined the relationship between multiple intelligences and the quality and accuracy in writing across genders. The results demonstrated no correlation between overall MI and the female learners' accuracy of writing; however, a positive correlation between overall MI and the female learners' general writing quality was revealed. A more detailed correlation analysis of the components showed a positively significant correlation between intrapersonal intelligence and the female learners' writing quality. In contrast, no correlation was found between MI overall or its components and the male learners' accuracy and quality of writing.

The focus of other studies has been the relationship between multiple intelligences and language proficiency in general. Razmjoo's (2008) study revealed that neither one

intelligence type nor a combination of intelligences can serve as a predictor of language proficiency in the Iranian context. In contrast to Razmjo's findings, Saricaoglu and Arikan (2005) study with Turkish EFL learners showed a low positive correlation between writing performance and the musical intelligence, and some negative correlations between learners' grammar achievements and their bodily-kinaesthetic, intrapersonal and spatial intelligences.

Other research has investigated the effect of MIT-based instruction on the learning of English and the attitude towards it (Soleimani, Moinnzadeh, Kassaian, & Ketabi, 2012; Bas & Beyhan, 2010). Both studies revealed that students who received MI-based instruction exceeded the traditionally instructed students and demonstrated a higher motivation toward learning English. However, negative results have also been retained. In Ghamrawi's (2014) study with 5-year-old kindergarten EFL learners, although acquisition of new vocabulary occurred faster through traditional methods of teaching, its retention was stronger with MI classes.

### THE STUDY

This study seeks to explore any possible relationship between MI overall and/or its components and Albanian TFL (Turkish as a foreign language) learners' achievements in grammar, vocabulary and writing.

# Participants and instruments

The participants in this study were 77 female learners aged 15-16 learning Turkish as a foreign language in a private high school in Tirana, Albania. Based on the textbooks they were being taught the learners' level of Turkish was estimated as A2.

The participant learners' intelligence types were measured by conduct of Gardner's MI Inventory for Adults

(1993), which was translated and adapted into Albanian by the second author. The inventory is a Likert-type scale (from 0-4) with 0 for totally disagree and 4 for totally agree consisting of 10 statements for each intelligence type adding up to a total of 80 items. The learners' scores in grammar, vocabulary and writing were obtained from a test conducted by the school administration. The test material incorporated 50 grammar items as well as vocabulary and writing consisting of 25 items each.

## Data analysis

SPSS 20.00 was used to analyze the data. Identification of the learners' intelligence types was obtained through descriptive analysis of the collected data using mean and standard deviation tendencies. To investigate the relationship between the intelligence types and the students' success in grammar, vocabulary and writing, the data were analyzed inferentially utilizing correlation analyses.

# Findings and discussion

In order to identify the participant learners' prevailing intelligence types and their scores in grammar, vocabulary and writing, the collected data were analyzed descriptively. The analysis revealed that the most dominant intelligence was logical mathematical (M=2.873) followed by interpersonal intelligence (M=2.661), bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (M=2.657) and spatial intelligence (M=2.661). Meanwhile, the mean scores for intrapersonal intelligence and musical intelligence, M=2.489 and M=2.464 respectively, show that both of these types were moderately common. The least common intelligence type was linguistic intelligence with a mean score of M=2.105 followed by naturalistic intelligence with a mean score of M=2.112.

The standard deviation values for musical intelligence, naturalistic intelligence and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, .7991, .6770 and .6147 respectively, which are also the highest, indicate a greater variation among the students who have a tendency for these three intelligence types.

Table 1 Intelligence types held by students

Intelligence Types	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
Logical mathematical	2.873	.5880
Interpersonal	2.661	.5714
Bodily-kinaesthetic	2.657	.6147
Spatial	2.611	.4704
Intrapersonal	2.489	.4583
Musical	2.464	.7991
Naturalistic	2.112	.6770
Linguistic	2.105	.5226

Table 2 presents a descriptive analysis of students' success in grammar, vocabulary, writing and overall scores. The results show mean scores of 37.23 for grammar, 22.34 for vocabulary, 22.50 for writing, and 82.07 for total, and standard deviations of 9.782, 3.612 and 4.804 and 15.649 respectively. A greater variation among students' achievements is observed in their total and grammar scores.

Table 2 Students' success in grammar, vocabulary and writing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Grammar	74	10	50	37.23	9.782
Vocabulary	74	7	25	22.34	3.612
Writing	74	5	25	22.50	4.804
Total score	74	35	100	82.07	15.649

In order to find if there is a relationship between overall MI and students' success in grammar, vocabulary, writing and their total score, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted (Table 2). The results indicate no significant relationship between overall MI and students' achievements in grammar, r = .187, p=.120, vocabulary r= -.041, p=.727, writing r=.013, p=.920, or their total scores, r=-.100, p=.396.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation for Overall MI and Students' achievements in grammar, vocabulary, writing and total scores

Overall MI	Grammar	Vocabulary	Writing	Total score
Pearson correlation	182	041	.013	100
Sig(2-tailed)	.120	.727	.920	.396
N	74	74	74	74

Another Pearson correlation analysis was employed to find out if there exists a relationship between any of the components of MI and students' achievements in grammar, vocabulary and writing. According to the results presented in Table 4, there is a moderately significant negative relationship between bodily intelligence, r = .235, p = .041 (p < .05) and interpersonal intelligence, r = .229, p = .049, (p < .05) and their success in grammar. Nonetheless, no relationship was revealed between students' success in grammar and their linguistic, logical, spatial, musical intrapersonal and naturalistic intelligences.

Table 4 Pearson correlation analysis for components of MI and success in grammar

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Grammar	Linguistic	Logical	Spatial	Musical	Bodily	Inter.	Intra	Naturalistic.
Pearson correlation	031	.175	124	152	235*	-229*	061	108
Sig(2-tailed)	.795	.135	.294	.195	.043	.049	.608	.361
N	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74

<sup>\*</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The correlation analysis results presented in Table 5 demonstrate no significant relationship between students' success in vocabulary and any type of intelligence.

Table 5 Pearson correlation for components of MI and success in vocabulary

Vocabulary	Linguistic	Logical	Spatial	Musical	Bodily	Inter.	Intra	Naturalistic.
Pearson	.029	.023	009	.124	.079	.005	120	018
correlation								
Sig	.803	.846	.942	.291	.501	.970	.308	.879
(2-tailed)								
N	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74

The results of correlation analysis in Table 6 revealed no significant relationship between any of the MI components and their success in writing.

Table 6 Pearson correlation for components of MI and success in writing

Writing	Linguistic	Logical	Spatial	Musical	Bodily	Inter.	Intra	Naturalistic
Pearson	.130	.148	063	005	003	.044	171	052
correlation								
Sig	.270	.208	.594	.968	.978	.709	.146	.662
(2-tailed)								
N	74	74	74	74	74	74	74	74

#### DISCUSSION

This study aimed to find out the existence of a possible relationship between Albanian TFL (Turkish as a foreign language) learners' performance in grammar, vocabulary and writing and Multiple Intelligences. Two types of analysis were conducted to obtain the results. While descriptive analysis was utilized to identify the learners' dominant intelligence types and their mean scores in each of the sections measured, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to investigate if students' achievements in grammar, vocabulary and writing correlate with the combination of intelligences in general and any type of intelligence in particular.

The results revealed that the prevailing intelligence type of the participant learners was logical mathematical intelligence. These findings are consistent with those obtained by Saricaoglu &Arıkan (2009) and Razmjoo (2008), according to which, logical intelligence was the leading intelligence and the second most common type respectively. Nonetheless, these studies differ in that interpersonal intelligence was found to be the second most dominant intelligence among Albanian TFL learners, while in Saricaoglu &Arıkan's (2009) study it was the fifth most common intelligence with Turkish EFL learners. The present study's findings are in contrast with those of Mahdavy's

study (2008), according to which logical mathematical intelligence was the fifth most common intelligence out of eight intelligences. However, in both studies interpersonal intelligence was identified among the leading intelligence types.

Since the participant learners had been intensively learning Turkish as a foreign language for approximately 8 months, the researchers had assumed that this might have led to a development of the linguistic intelligence. In contrast, the findings revealed that the least common intelligence type was linguistic intelligence, which is in line with Saricaoglu &Arıkan's results (2009), according to which linguistic intelligence was the second least common intelligence type. However, this study differs from Saricaoglu and Arikan's in that interpersonal intelligence was the second most common intelligence. Based on these results, it can be inferred that whereas exposure to linguistic material may not have encouraged development of linguistic intelligence, instructional material and/or the method of presentation may have led to a development of the interpersonal intelligence, some aspects of which are considered as affective variables with a huge impact on foreign language learning.

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate possible relationships between the variables. The results revealed no relationship between overall MI and students' achievements in grammar, vocabulary and writing. These findings are in line with Alizadeh, Saeidi and Tamjid (2014) and Sadeghi & Farzizadeh (2012), who also reported no correlation between overall MI and Iranian students' accuracy and quality of writing. In addition, the present study is in line with Razmjoo's (2008) study which revealed no significant relationship between language proficiency and students' use of multiple intelligences.

Pearson correlation analysis was also utilized in order to detect any possible relationships between each MI component

and students' achievements in grammar, vocabulary and writing. The results revealed that among all intelligence types only bodily-kinaesthetic students' achievements intelligence and interpersonal intelligence negatively correlated with students' success in grammar. No other components correlated with students' performance in grammar, vocabulary and writing. Similar results have been reported by Saricaoglu and Arikan (2009), who also detected low negative correlation between the bodily-kinaesthetic and interpersonal intelligence types and students' performance in grammar. However, their study differs in that their students' success in grammar correlated negatively with spatial intelligence Moreover, they also reported some positive relationship between the writing scores and musical intelligence.

Despite the fact that this study found out no relationship between multiple intelligences and students' achievements in writing, bothpositive and correlations between the three aspects investigated here and MI have been reported. In their study with Iranian students Alizadeh, Saeidi & Tamjid (2014) detected that the female learners' interpersonal intelligence and quality of writing correlated positively, whereas naturalistic intelligence correlated negatively with their complexity of writing. However, no correlation was found between female learners' accuracy in writing and MI components. In addition, the results indicated no relationship between male learners' accuracy, quality and complexity of writing and their multiple intelligences.

Other research results have also indicated positive correlation between MI and students' achievements in vocabulary. The study carried out by Khaghaninejad & Hosseini (2014) revealed a positive correlation between students' lexical awareness and musical intelligence and linguistic intelligence. The same study also reported that

particular intelligence types correlate positively with specific test formats.

### CONCLUSION

Ever since put forth, the theory of Multiple Intelligences has encouraged a lot of studies in the foreign language teaching/learning context. Conducted research has aimed to investigate possible relationships between overall MI and/or its components and learners' achievements as well as effects of MI-based instruction on the learning of foreign languages.

This study focused on investigating relationships between multiple intelligences of Albanian female TFL (Turkish as a foreign language) learners and their success in grammar, vocabulary and writing through correlation analysis. The results revealed that the participant learners' leading intelligence types were the logical-mathematical and the interpersonal intelligence, and the least common types were the linguistic and naturalistic intelligences. The findings also indicated that overall MI does not correlate with students' performance in grammar, vocabulary or writing. Whereas negative correlation was found between learners' bodilykinaesthetic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence and their success in grammar, no relationship was detected between the other MI components and learners' success in vocabulary and writing. Therefore, it can be inferred that factors like the nature of the participants' mother tongue, their language learning background, and particularly the implemented instruments, may have affected the results, and should consequently be further researched.

The negative relationship this study established between bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence and the participants' achievements in grammar may have educational implications for foreign language

teachers. Grammar instruction for these learning styles may be provided inductively through their integration in communicative activities and engagement in role plays, pair or group work/projects, games, etc. The authors believe that recognizing learners' dominant intelligences and particularly different learning styles will allow teachers to explore teaching methods that adapt to and encourage engagement of various intelligences and integration of multiple learning styles.

Based on the obtained results the authors suggest that future research should focus on more detailed investigation of possible relationships between the learners' dominant intelligence types and their foreign language academic achievements in specific types of questions. Another aspect that requires further research are the effects of MI-based instruction on academic achievements, and its implications on active engagement and further development of intelligences at higher levels.

## Acknowledgment of Funding

This study is not funded by any organizations.

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