

Multiple Intelligence Theory is all too often simplified or simply misunderstood. Catering to a learner's strength is critical but this theory is not actually about teachers creating an activity for mathematical kids; another for visual kids; and yet another for those who have musical aptitude. Quite frankly, this results in little more than teachers who are exhausted as they create two zillion activities!

MI Theory is actually about receiving, internalising and expressing learning.

In an effort to keep this brief, I will attempt to make my point through a series of annotated images.

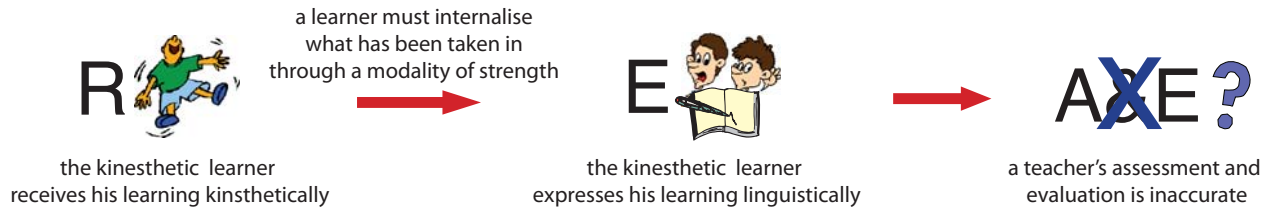
Let's assume you have a learner in your classroom who is strongly kinesthetic in his abilities. This does not mean the child does not have abilities in all intelligences - remember - the entire brain is connected. Still, he enjoys kinesthetic experiences and responds well when engaged in such opportunities. In order to learn anything, a learner must take in the new learning (receive); he must process the learning (internalise); and finally, he will communicate his knowledge and understanding (expression) in an effort to share what he now knows.

What is key to recognise at this point is this - the teacher generally assesses and evaluates a learner based on his expression only. If one was to be honest, very few, if any teachers would be considering how said learner took in or received the learning and how or even if the learner actually internalised it.

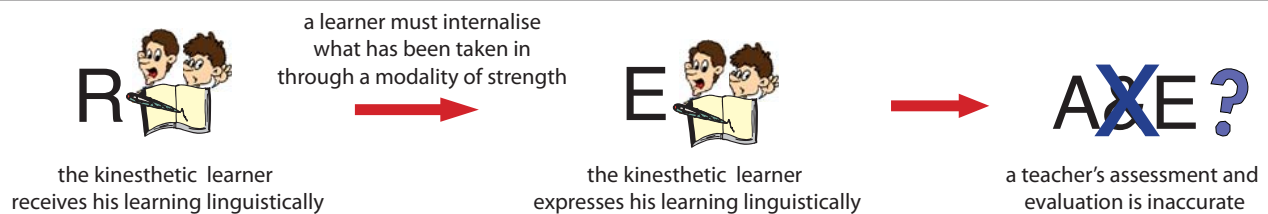


Scenario 1 often leaves teacher and learner 'none the wiser'. Because they are expressing their understanding and knowledge via a modality of strength, both may expect that the evaluation is accurate. Learners can only express what has been received and in this situation the learner received new information through resources which present difficulty.

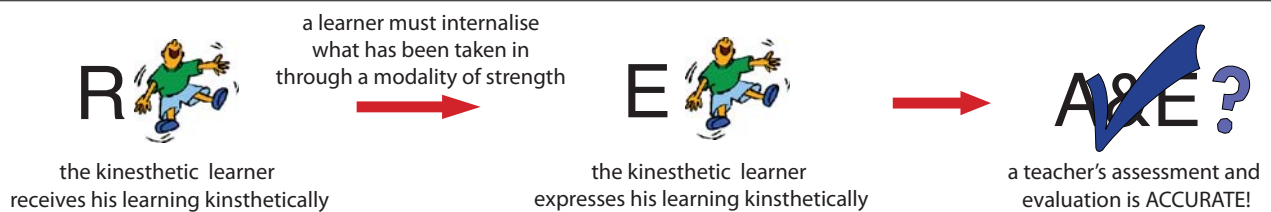
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The learner in scenario 2 may know and understand the learning but may be unable to demonstrate this due to their limitations in communicating linguistically. This scenario frustrates both learner and teacher as both know they know more - the learner couldn't get it out!



Scenario 3 is perhaps one of the most tragic of examples. This learner is both receiving and expressing through modalities of weakness. What chance for success have we really offered this learner? How many of our students have been diagnosed 'at risk', 'learning disabled', 'struggling'? What are the implications for the learner who has been misdiagnosed, labeled unnecessarily and inaccurately? Knowing the effects of stress on academic performance and learning potential, how many learners have been further limited through the very nature of this diagnostic process?



The learner who has been provided the opportunity to receive and express in ways which draw on their strengths and abilities is the learner who has been assessed and evaluated accurately, fairly, and with validity. The teacher who offers this scenario to the learner is the teacher who 'walks the talk' of mi. It is this teacher who empowers the learner to develop 'intelligence' as the solid understanding of new learning is used to 'solve problems and fashion products'.

So how does the teacher do it? How does the teacher possibly cater for each individual learner, ensuring that they receive, internalise and express through modalities that are personal? As promised, let's look to thinkbox/thinktower™ and see how individualisation becomes reality.

Multiple Intelligence Theory is not about differentiating through activities...it is about differentiating through the use of **tools**! It is about enabling and empowering learners to self select tools to use when they receive, internalise and communicate their learning, that best suit their modalities of strength.

This is where the thinkbox and thinktower thinking frameworks come in. When using these frameworks to plan learning opportunities, a diversity of tools are explicitly outlined so that learners see options for accessing information, internalising new learning and reporting understanding, analysing and evaluating learning. This self selection of tools ensures that learner modalities are catered to, while teacher directed must do's ensure the development of all intelligences or modalities. Learners are encouraged to use tools that engage areas of strength before using tools that engage areas of struggle. Both are critical if learners are to develop their true potential.



