

TEACHING ENGLISH USING A MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This research was done to study the use of the Multiple Intelligences Approach (MIA) for teaching English especially for young learners. The participants of the study were fourth grade, primary school, students at Al-Imtiyaz Islamic School in Banda Aceh and the study used a descriptive qualitative research method. The school English class emphasized the implementation of MIA for apperception and also used a variety of teaching-learning strategies. The data was obtained by direct observations, an interview with the teacher and document analysis. It was found that the apperception section in the MIA took longer than any of the other approaches. This was because the apperception section had four stages (alpha zone, warming up, pre-teaching, and scene setting). The function was to enable the teacher to figure out each student's best conditions for learning. The result of this study showed that from observations at five meeting, the apperception took 20 to 25 minutes, the core activities took 55 to 60 minutes, and the closing took only 5 to 10 minutes. Furthermore, in the core activities, the dominant intelligences of the students were integrated using various learning strategies. The results also showed that the teacher combined more than two intelligences in teaching the English class. The verbal-linguistic intelligence was the main component of the English class and reached about 24%, the bodily-kinaesthetic and intrapersonal intelligences were each 19%, musical intelligence was 14%, and interpersonal intelligence was about 9%. Furthermore, logical, naturalist, and spatial-visual intelligences each had about 5%. whilst existential intelligence was not found in this study (0%).

Keywords: *Multiple Intelligences, Approach, Learning Style.*

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INTRODUCTION

A number of language experts are certain of the teachers' significant role in improving the language learners' skills and boosting their learning motivation (see Lo, 2000; Gorham, 2002). In some cases, learners rely heavily on the teacher during the instructional processes due to limited learning resources (Bayley, 2005, p. 15). In order to encourage student involvement many teachers use a student-centered approach in which they act as learning facilitators. Teachers should ensure that lesson plans are designed to allow student participation.

In Indonesia, English is one of the compulsory subjects in secondary school, since it is tested in the national final examinations. Meanwhile, in primary schools, English is placed in the local content after the Ministry of Education put it with two other optional subjects (Computer Skills and Sport) and it is directly evaluated by the teacher (Baskara, 2013, p. 2).

The changing of the English requirements for primary schools in the current curriculum has changed the teacher's position in presenting English to her students. The teacher, now, also needs to consider the national identity and the psychological aspects of her students (Baskara, 2013, p. 2). Regulation No. 32 of 2013 from the Ministry of Education states that the changes in the rules for elementary schools is to develop students' competence and achievements and to improve the efficiency of the learning processes. The regulation mentions that the national final examination for elementary school should be eliminated and the lessons be taught with integrated themes. The integration is to be done by combining two subjects in one meeting (Baskara, *ibid*).

In order to integrate the lessons, it is essential that teachers recognize some characteristics of their students. According to Gorham (2002, p. 240), the recognition of differences in students' learning styles can lead teachers to use more effective teaching methods in the classroom. This is supported by Pica (2000, p. 3), who found a number of methods being used in the language classroom. She found that the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Total Physical Response (TPR) Technique were commonly used at the beginner language level. Gorham (*ibid*) has said that these traditional approaches to English teaching are teacher-centred and textbook-driven approaches. This means that the teacher asks the students to follow her but she does not put them into the knowledge of language function itself.

During the writer's preliminary research study, in June 2014, she found that the students' performance of English at Al-Imtiyaaz Islamic School Banda Aceh was good as most of them scored 80 or more. The school requires the students to understand the components of English (i.e. adjectives, nouns, numbers and the alphabet) and to have a good performance (i.e. presentation, writing, simple conversations) in English. In other words, the school requires the students to know enough about vocabulary and phonetics, and to be able to use English to make a project presentation. The writer witnessed one of the fourth grade students make a presentation about "an electricity circuit to turn on a light bulb" introducing the materials like wires, light bulb, electricity source, and explaining the steps in simple vocabulary. Furthermore, the writer interviewed the teacher regarding the teaching approach implemented in the school, the material taught, and the assessment process.

The researcher found that Al-Imtiyaaz Islamic School Banda Aceh used a Multiple Intelligences Approach (MIA) in the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, MIA is suitable to be applied at any level including the elementary school level. Based on this concept, the writer found that this school applies an interesting approach in enhancing the students' motivation to learn English. The school engages the students from their understanding of the students' different learning styles. This means that the school employs MIA as the theory driving their instructional processes. Al-Imtiyaaz Islamic School considers that every child is born with their own unique ability. Therefore, this school leads the parents' perspective to the Multiple Intelligences concept: to understand, explore, and be proud that their child is unique and precious. Thus, MIA is their solution to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children Development in Language Learning

In learning languages, young learners absorb information much more easily compared to adult learners. This notion has been proven by a number of studies that revealed the rapid development of young learners in learning second or foreign languages (McKay, 2006; Lo, 2000). Regarding the definition of young learners, Brown (2001, pp. 87-93) comments that specific skills and treatments are necessary for successful teaching of young children. He discusses some factors to be considered by teachers such as intellectual development, attention span,

sensory input, affective factors, and meaningful language. For example, using the intellectual development concept, Brown (2001) believes that teachers should avoid explaining grammar by using such terms as “present progressive” or “relative clause” since young learners have not yet learnt these patterns.

Regarding the definition of young learners, McKay (2006) defines young learners as those who are learning language in the first six or seven years of formal schooling. In terms of the characteristics of young learners, McKay (2006) states that children bring to their language learning their own personalities, likes and dislikes and interests, their own individual cognitive styles and capabilities and their own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it can be assumed that children need special treatment and assessment in language learning because they each learn language differently. In addition, Bialystok (2001) as quoted by McKay (2006) proposes that in language learning and most activities, children put them in cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. He provides an example that the attention span of children’s brain in the early stage of school is generally short and is only 10 to 15 minutes long. Consequently, children can be easily distracted from their learning. As they develop, children may willingly do a task that the teacher gives them, but they may drop it when they find some difficulties in it.

Since teaching children is different from teaching adults, the teacher should consider the children’s cognitive development and emotional aspects. In other words, the methodology and material given should be understood by the students. Furthermore, the feedback given by the teacher should not discourage the students when errors are made. This is due to the fact that children tend to use their first language in learning the second language. Additionally, Reddy and Goppy (2013, p. 32) have said that teaching children who have a limited understanding of English can face barriers because as children speak their first language at home so they may encounter some difficulties understanding the meaning of simple English phrases. Thus, it is important that teachers build a good relation with their young learners since many factors can influence their learning of EFL. Some research has proven the benefits of teaching-learning processes that are totally different nowadays. In line with this idea, Schleicher (2012) has commented that higher knowledge is necessary for present-day teachers compared to the needs of the teachers in the past. He has said that “the kind of teaching needed today requires the teacher to be a high-level knowledge worker who constantly advances their own professional knowledge” (p. 11).

Moreover, Brumfit (1991) as cited in Lo (2000, p. 7) has stated that children's psychological aspects are worth considering in learning. This is due to the fact that children often think that 'learning is a happy (form of) studying'. More importantly, children tend to have their own individual characteristics for learning language. For example, some may show a good response when new language is presented through concrete or visual materials rather than abstract ones. To support this statement, Chatib (2009, p. 16) has stated that children find it easy to understand if the teacher involves them in the learning activities. Additionally, Armstrong (2006, pp. 96–99) has claimed that the children's level of creativity runs mainly in the neo-cortex (brain membrane) from when they are born until they are ten years old. After that, it will decrease as the brain elasticity does. These facts prove that children can more easily learn and understand concrete materials because they can observe physical features and movement which will stimulate their thinking.

The Role of the Teacher in Learning

Teachers are undoubtedly crucial for enhancing students' engagement and achievements. They play a vital role in establishing productive and supportive school environments for their students. A teacher's role involves more than simply standing in front of a classroom and lecturing. In fact, even though a teacher spends the majority of the day in the classroom, the actual teaching component is only part of the job. Particularly, elementary school teachers are often the major source of students' learning experiences. The teacher's treatment when teaching and interacting with young learners in these formative years can shape how they will be in the future. Moreover, Armstrong (2006) has asserted that in teaching English for children, several aspects should be considered by the teacher due to the fact that their characteristics are affected by their thinking, attitude, aptitude, etc.

In addition, Reddy and Goppy (2013) have listed a few characteristics of a good teacher for young learners viz:

- a) the teacher should teach everything with earnestness and passion;
- b) the teacher may share ideas and tools with other teachers as well as with learners, in order to reap more benefits;
- c) the teacher does not coddle the learners, but must try to show and provide guidelines for performing different tasks to the students;
- d) the teacher should have a lot of patience to go above and beyond the students' expected tasks by suggesting materials for extra practice.

Prior to class commencement, it is necessary for the teacher to know the level of ability and understanding of her students. If the teacher does not prepare appropriate materials for the students, the learning process will inevitably be hindered. In relation to this, Vygotsky has popularized the idea of readiness for learning, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this theory, Vygotsky (as cited in Kaufman, 2004) stated that learners have a tendency to study in some specific way. Some of them can learn material independently, some with the help of other's (this can be a teacher, an adult, or others), and the rest is material which the learners cannot complete by themselves.

Moreover, Stern (as cited in Damayanti, 2008) has asserted that the reason children do better in learning a language than adults is due to the plasticity of children's brains, which can develop well if children are exposed to the right environment that supports language development. Based on the explanation above, we can understand why the teacher, teaching English as a second language, for young learners should be more active, have lots of patience, a sense of fun and good communication skills to create fun language learning.

Factors Affecting English Language Teaching

It is generally known that most students in non-English speaking countries face various difficulties learning English as a second or foreign language. Souriyavongsa et al. (2013) have listed some problems in learning English encountered by students, such as poor performance of the students, weakness of curriculum design, lack of qualified English teachers and lack of motivation. These factors undoubtedly affect the development of the teaching-learning processes in the classroom.

The subject material is usually considered as one of the components for achievement of goals or indicators. This is because the teacher has autonomy to choose materials that support the language learning process. These selected materials should be referred to the curriculum and syllabus. Biggers (2013) agrees that most teachers adjust the curriculum materials at various levels especially in their first years of teaching. This is especially so where schools do not have sufficient textbooks or other teaching resources to support the learning process (Moon, 2005).

It is true that elementary school students need special more flexible curriculum in order to reach a high-level of motivation whereas an adult can adjust to a more rigid one. Since motivation can be one aspect that constraints or supports the process of learning, young students require undivided attention from their teachers. According to Stern (1983) and

Ellis (1994) in Damayanti (2008), learners will be influenced by their attitude, motivation and environment to reach the highest possible level of achievement in the process of teaching-learning. Besides the young age of the learners, the psychosocial context and learning conditions are other factors that will influence the level of proficiency that the students can attain. To simplify, when a teacher introduces English to learners, she needs to carefully consider the psychosocial aspects and learning conditions of her students.

Multiple Intelligences Theory

MIA is a theory that was developed by Howard Gardner in 1983. Gardner divided human intelligence into nine categories in order to identify the best natural self-ability. In the first development, this theory was a part of psychology since people did not know how to assess themselves. As the theory spread over years, some experts conducted this approach and proved that it can be applied in the field of education. MIA, Multiple Intelligences, have been classified into several categories by Gardner (2003) viz:

1) ***Verbal-linguistic intelligence*** is the condition where the student acquires well-developed verbal skills and has high sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and rhythm of language,

2) ***Logical-mathematical intelligence*** is the ability to think theoretically and abstractly,

3) ***Spatial-visual intelligence*** is the capacity to think in images and pictures and to visualize accurately and abstractly,

4) ***Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence*** is outstanding ability in controlling body movements and handling objects,

5) ***Musical intelligence*** is the ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timbre,

6) ***Interpersonal intelligence*** is the ability to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of others,

7) ***Intrapersonal intelligence*** is the capacity to be self-aware and in tune with one's own inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes,

8) ***Naturalist intelligence*** is the sense and ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals and other objects in nature,

9) ***Existential intelligence*** is the sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence.

Teaching English Using Multiple Intelligences

Several concepts of MIA have now been introduced and teachers can now teach by using this approach. In order to build good rapport in the classroom, the teacher needs to plan as the first phase always determines the following phase (Chen, Moran, & Gardner, 2009). This means that, if a teacher can interest her students in learning from the beginning of the class, it will be easy for her to teach them later on.

In order to get the students to focus on the learning process, some strategies may be applied by the teacher in the classroom. For MIA itself, the first phase of studying is viewed as the crucial aspect. Therefore, this approach emphasizes the length of the activity and numerous ways of teaching. The first step in learning in the classroom is apperception; which is a brain stimulus and the teacher may use some techniques to arouse interest at this stage. Some surveys conclude that a teacher who does apperception with an interesting method will motivate students' participation in the instructional process. This means that the teaching material will be automatically received in students' hearts since their brain is relaxed. So, MIA provides extra attention for the Apperception process and divides it into several steps viz: *Alpha Zone, Warming up, Pre-Teaching, Scene Setting*.

The learning strategy is also viewed as a required activity where the teacher and the students follow steps to achieve a goal. In the learning strategy, there is a concept called 'planning' wherein the teacher plans how the teaching-learning process will be done in the classroom. Armstrong (2006) has said that the learning strategy is prepared by the teacher by considering the needs of the students since the teacher has the authority to prepare the learning strategy to achieve the best results from their students in their joint practice of teaching-learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to study the concept of MIA in the English classroom especially for young learners. Therefore, this research used a descriptive qualitative approach in order to describe and to understand the classroom process as it was. This study was conducted at Al-Imtiyaz Islamic School in Banda Aceh. The participants in this study was the main teacher for the grade 4 English class and her students. She used the New Gem's English Course Book 1 and Work Book 1 by Fanthom and Fanthom (2011); the syllabus was prepared to follow the Indonesian National Curriculum. The teaching-learning process was

observed following the MIA steps sheet and then explained for the purpose of data analysis. The face-to face interview with the teacher, done after the 5 sessions of classroom observations was recorded and transcribed with mark ups as proposed by Yusuf (2009) thus it can be seen as a real interview.

Data Analysis

To treat the data from observation and interview, this qualitative study followed steps suggested by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Creswell, 2007). There are three important steps in the data analysis process viz:

Data reduction, data reduction includes the process of collecting data including interview transcript, field notes and observations; then the mass of data has to be reduced.

Data display, in data display the conclusions from the mass of data are presented in tables, charts, networks, and other graphical formats. Lastly.

Verification or conclusions are drawn which allows the researcher to develop a number of conclusions regarding the findings from the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected through direct observations in the classroom and from the interview with the teacher was presented in tables and was also described and a table of teaching steps was adapted from Gardner (2003). Moreover, the interview guide used in this research was adapted from Chatib (2011). Additionally, the school documentation such as the lesson plan and textbook materials were explained clearly to support the research findings. The observations showed that the Multiple Intelligences Approach spent more time in Apperception in order to engage the students' interest and readiness to learn.

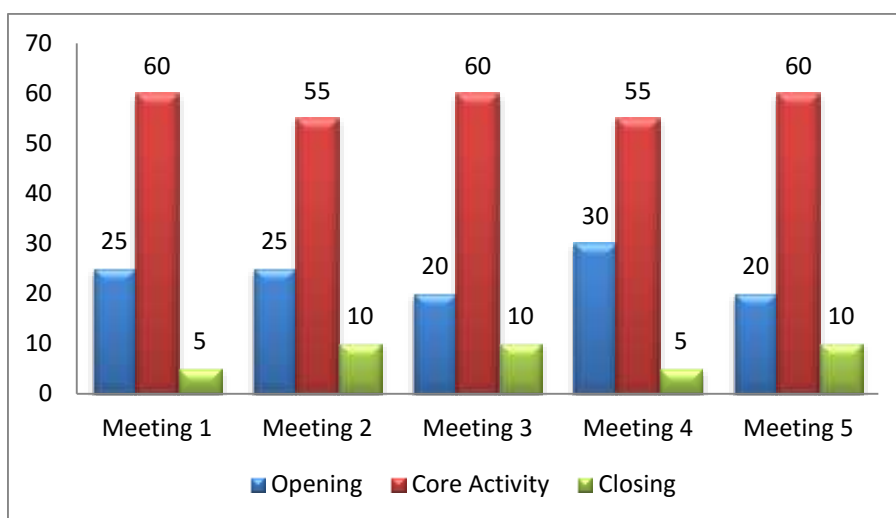


Figure 1. Time used for Multiple Intelligences Approach

Figure 1 above shows the length of time that the MIA took in the classroom. The Opening took at least 20 minutes while the Core Activity spent 55 to 60 minutes and the Closing needed only 5 to 10 minutes. The variety of intelligences which appeared in each meeting is shown in Table 1, below:

Table 1. Intelligences that Appeared

NO	DAY/DATE	MEETING	INTELLIGENCES
1	Tuesday/ September 22, 2015	1st (Observation)	Verbal-linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Intrapersonal
2	Tuesday/ September 29, 2015	2nd	Verbal-linguistic, Musical, Bodily-kinaesthetic, Interpersonal
3	Wednesday/ September 30, 2015	3rd	Bodily-kinaesthetic, Verbal-linguistic, Intrapersonal
4	Tuesday/ October 6, 2015	4th	Bodily-kinaesthetic, Musical, Intrapersonal, Verbal-linguistic, Naturalist
5	Tuesday/ October 13, 2015	5th	Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Verbal-linguistic, Spatial Visual, Musical, Bodily-kinaesthetic

The frequency of intelligences that appeared in Table 1 was analysed following Arikunto (2010) and is presented in percentages in the chart that follows:

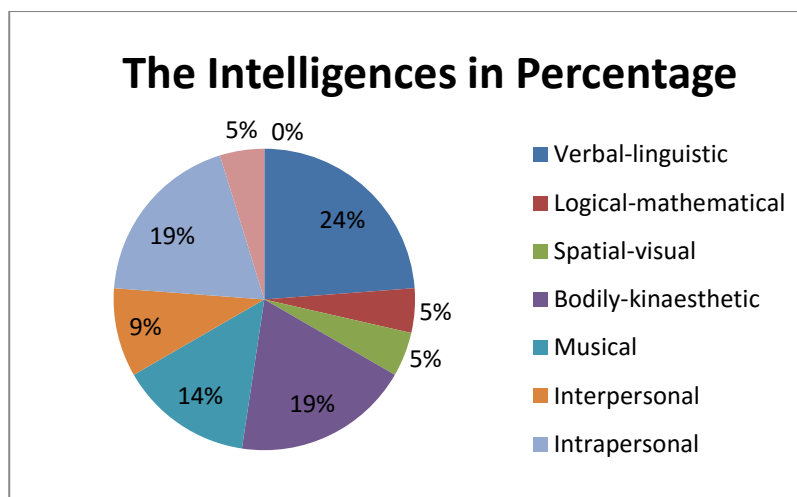


Figure 2. Intelligences that Appeared

From Figure 2 above, it is obvious that verbal–linguistic intelligence (24%) was the most dominant intelligence used in the English class and it emerged in every meeting. This was the basic intelligences that the teacher developed in the English class because the focus of language learning was to make the students enjoy learning the target language. The second most dominant intelligences were bodily-kinaesthetic and intrapersonal intelligences where both were 19%. Body movement occurred in some meetings in order to make the students' more relaxed. The body movement was also balanced by intrapersonal intelligence since appreciating themselves supported the study progress. Talking about rhythm, tone, and vocalizing, musical intelligence also emerged several times totalling 14%. This was because most of the students like singing a song while in alpha. Furthermore, the interpersonal intelligences that can be defined as how to become aware of the feelings and emotions of others and is very important for adapting to a new environment. Most students received help from their peers during the classes hence interpersonal intelligence occurred about 9% during the classes. Three other intelligences– i.e. naturalist intelligences, logical-mathematical, and spatial-visual each took 5%. Existential intelligence was not seen during the study.

In addition, the interview between the researcher and the teacher revealed several findings that were not covered by the direct observations such as details about the opening sessions, the teaching materials, the syllabus and lesson plans and the theory of MIA. As a result, it was shown that the students used various cognitive abilities in learning as the teacher provided an enabling environment. showing that a proper approach in teaching is needed for the development of students.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the data obtained from the classroom observations, the interview, and the analysis of documents, the school applied MIA as suggested by experts. The combination of multiple intelligences in the lesson plans and the steps of the MIA in the classroom activities created meaningful learning experiences. From this preliminary research and observations, it appeared that the students enjoyed learning English because they were taught and evaluated by means of a variety of concepts. The materials used for teaching English to young learners were taken from Fanthom and Fanthom (2011). *New Gem's English Course-book 1 and Workbook 1* published by Dickens in the UK and the syllabus was prepared to suit the national curriculum.

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