

# 2018 iconelite exploring el school teachers in applying MI

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## EXPLORING EFL PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN INTEGRATING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES TO THE CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

This study aimed at exploring how EFL primary school teacher integrated multiple intelligences to the classroom. In particular, it was carried out to 1) identify intelligences, other than linguistic intelligence, used by the teacher to help students learn English, 2) describe how EFL primary school teacher manipulated multiple intelligences application in English classroom, and 3) describe how EFL primary school teacher used his dominant intelligences in teaching. The data were gathered through observation and interview. From the data, it was obtained that 1) other intelligences in addition to linguistic intelligence used by the teacher were spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and naturalist intelligence, 2) the teacher manipulated multiple intelligences application by reconciling which intelligences to be applied with students' characteristics and interests, and 3) the teacher used his dominant intelligences to maximize him in performing classroom activities and did not allow the dominant intelligences affected his way of teaching.

**Keywords:** EFL teacher, primary school, multiple intelligences

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana guru bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar mengintegrasikan kecerdasan majemuk (multiple intelligences) ke dalam kelas. Secara khusus, penelitian ini dilakukan untuk 1) mengidentifikasi kecerdasan lain, selain kecerdasan bahasa, yang digunakan oleh guru untuk membantu siswa belajar bahasa Inggris, 2) menjelaskan bagaimana guru bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar mengatur penerapan kecerdasan majemuk di kelas bahasa Inggris, dan 3) menjelaskan bagaimana guru bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar menggunakan kecerdasan dominannya dalam mengajar. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara. Dari data tersebut, diperoleh bahwa 1) kecerdasan lain selain kecerdasan bahasa yang digunakan adalah kecerdasan visual, kecerdasan musikal, kecerdasan intrapersonal, kecerdasan kinestetik, dan kecerdasan naturalis, 2) guru mengatur penerapan kecerdasan majemuk dengan menyesuaikan kecerdasan mana yang diterapkan dengan karakteristik dan minat siswa, dan 3) guru menggunakan kecerdasan dominannya untuk memaksimalkan pembelajaran dan tidak membiarkan kecerdasan dominan memengaruhi cara mengajarnya.

**Kata Kunci:** guru bahasa Inggris, sekolah dasar, kecerdasan majemuk

### A. INTRODUCTION

Until early 1980s, intelligence was discerned as a static status, unchangeable, as well as a birth-gift which could be assessed through intelligence quotient test or commonly named as IQ test. At that moment,

many researchers began to doubt that notion and perceived the depiction of intelligence was too narrow. It was Howard Gardner, a professor at Harvard University, who challenged the traditional view of intelligence. Through his 1983 book entitled *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*,

Gardner proposed a contemporary theory on intelligence which is called multiple intelligences (MI) theory.

Initially, Gardner introduced seven different types of intelligence that might be possessed by humans, including linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence, to which later naturalist intelligence was inserted. Naturalist intelligence was added to the list as it met the criteria which Gardner uses to define intelligence.

In highlighting the notion of multiple intelligence theory, Gardner (2011:xxviii) defines intelligence as “the ability to solve problems and create products, that are valued in one or more cultural or community settings”. By its definition, multiple intelligences theory has obviously rejected the customary view of intelligence as ability to utilize language or work on mathematic. Once being introduced, Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory has been translated from a psychological theory into various policy and practice in education.

Some experts like Campbell & Campbell (1999) and Lazear (1992) have taken part in integrating multiple intelligences to classroom. In their book, Campbell & Campbell (1999:3) state that multiple intelligences theory provides educators basic knowledge and beliefs about human mind, professional practice, and students’ academic achievement.

As Campbell & Campbell (1999:3) pinpoint multiple intelligences benefits in classroom practice, Lazear (1992:24) demonstrates four stages in teaching with multiple intelligences which later on can be considered as ‘the syllabus design’. The stages can be optimized by modifying as well as developing into lesson plan which contributes

to multiple intelligences. The four stages are: excite the intelligence, reinforce the intelligence, teach with/for the intelligence, and shift the intelligence. The four-stages mentioned by Lazear (1992:24) can be utilized as an alternative to apply multiple intelligences theory into practices in classroom.

The positive trend exhibited by the number of books related to multiple intelligences theory is also followed by the emerging of researches discussing diverse topics under multiple intelligences theme in ELT field. Many studies overseas were mostly concerned on the relationship between dominant intelligence and language learning. For example, a research which was carried out by Mahdavy (2008) focused on the role of multiple intelligences in listening proficiency, particularly in comparing TOEFL and IELTS listening tests from multiple intelligences point of view.

A research performed by Zarei & Afshar (2014) investigated types of multiple intelligences as predictors of reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. From the results, it can be obtained several points; including the fact that musical intelligence was the best predictor of both reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

In Indonesia, the implementation of multiple intelligences in EFL classroom is rarely found. One possible reason is due to the lack of awareness and information related to multiple intelligences theory and its application. In addition, many English teachers merely rely on the product rather than process. The teachers seem to be experiencing confusion between the ideal teaching in class and the final output of the students, whether they have to deliver the material interestingly or focus on preparing students to do the written test (Hawanti, 2011; Zein, 2017).

Despite the prior fact, two studies performed by graduate students of State University of Surabaya have brought multiple intelligences to the fore. A study conducted by Hafifah (2012) revealed to what extent the teaching and learning process used each type of intelligence in the EFL class. The study showed that by the influence of multiple intelligences theory, teachers provided students with various ways and materials to learn in the class. Another similar research was performed by Sofia (2015). Yet, she explored MI theory application in classroom from another side. She emphasized on how the teacher implemented MI principles to four skills of language, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing .

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that there are a number of studies exploring the application of multiple intelligences theory in classroom practice. The quantitative studies regarding multiple intelligences are commonly performed overseas. The researchers concerned on investigating the relationship or comparison between two or more variables. In Indonesia, the studies about multiple intelligences are finite since the implementation in education is also hardly found. While the two Indonesia's existing researches discussing specific intelligence for certain skill or vice versa in the multiple intelligences environment and curriculum, this current research intensely focuses on how multiple intelligences theory is integrated to English classroom by the primary school teacher in addition to the prevailing curriculum they follow.

Specifically, this current research is performed to to 1) identify intelligences, other than linguistic intelligence, used by the teacher to help students learn English, 2) describe how EFL primary school teacher manipulated multiple intelligences application in English classroom, and 3) describe how EFL

primary school teacher used his dominant intelligences in teaching.

## B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative design especially a case study. A case study is a method used to obtain in-depth understanding of a single case, that has significant context, and utilize wide range of sources and methods of analysis (Duff, 2008:22).

There was only one teacher involved as the subject of the study in this research. He was selected to be the subject as he integrated multiple intelligences to their teaching in English classroom. The teacher was considered as specialist EFL teacher who graduated from English Language Education program. He complied with the school decision on following school policy as well as the books provided in teaching English.

The study was carried out in a primary school situated in Lamongan, East Java. It was a private and Islamic-based school as well. The school puts English as local content subject which is taught for 2 x 35 minutes in a week. English is positioned as local content subject because it is considered as achievement subject and the final score is listed in the students' diploma.

The data in this research were obtained from field notes of classroom observation and handwritten notes of interview. In classroom observation, data gathered included verbal and non-verbal behaviors from the teacher and students during the lesson indicating teaching activities/exercises/tasks. To elucidate the information gathered during the classroom observation, the researcher conducted interview to the teacher.

Eventually, the data were analyzed using Miles' et al., (2014) framework for qualitative data analysis which split into three

major activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 1. *Other Intelligences in addition to*

##### *Linguistic Intelligence used by the teacher*

To answer the first RQ about other intelligences in addition to linguistic intelligence used by the teacher, the researcher conducted classroom observation. Based on the four times observation, it was obtained that the teacher employed five other intelligences besides linguistic intelligence to help students learn English. They were spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalist intelligence.

In teaching English, the teacher involved spatial intelligence in terms of engaging pictures through power point presentations and in students' worksheet, implementing art in terms of coloring and drawing, and utilizing video as teaching medium.

The elaboration gives a signal that the teacher holds spatial intelligence for each meeting and via diverse forms. What have been performed by the teacher in his English class is in accordance with Connell's statement. According to Connell (2005:67) people with spatial intelligence are outstanding in visual receptive skills as well as their fine motor skills. Visual receptive skills were applied when the teacher exposed students with some pictures of preposition of place through power point presentation, a picture of Maharani Zoo, and a video about animal. Then, students' fine motor skills were used when they draw a map and color some objects.

The second intelligence integrated by the teacher in class was musical intelligence. The teacher integrated musical intelligence in the form of chant, song, and sound. Prior to the lesson, the students enjoyed singing simple chant and song with their teacher. Besides,

the teacher also presented a video about animal at the zoo. The video demonstrated various kinds of animals and their sounds as well. The teacher asked his students to imitate certain animal sound as the extension activity.

The way the teacher integrated musical intelligence in the form of chant and song corresponds to Griffiths' opinion on how to bring music into the classroom. In Hoerr et al., (2010:173), Griffiths elaborates five ways to implicate musical intelligence. One of which is through musical cues. In fact, music can be an excellent way to grab students' attention at the beginning of the lesson. This method was applied by the teacher when he attempted to gain students' attention prior to starting the lesson using chant and song.

Following spatial intelligence and musical intelligence, the teacher integrated intrapersonal intelligence in teaching English. This intelligence was inserted to the teaching through students' individual exercises, choice time in assignment, sharing experience, and self-assessment.

Various activities and exercises in relation to intrapersonal intelligence which carried out by the teacher are in line with suggested ways of teaching by Armstrong (2009:59). Regarding intrapersonal intelligence, he mentions that this intelligence can be implemented through individualized instruction and self-esteem building, in which the teacher has benefited individual exercise instruction and sharing experience time. Moreover, Armstrong (2009:59) also suggests that intrapersonal intelligence in teaching can be happened when the teacher connects certain material with students' personal life and allows them to make choices with regard.

The fourth intelligence integrated by the teacher was bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. The intelligence appeared in the form of creative movement, imitating animal movement, and utilizing part of the body to give signal.

Based on an article written by Nuernberger, Rogers, and McKenna in Hoer et al., (2010:77), people with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence tend to use their body to communicate, respond, or comprehend a specific situation. Furthermore, they argue that physical activities like creative movement are used to improve students' attention and memory function. Learning with more physical activities will be memorable and exhilarating for students.

Eventually, naturalist intelligence became the last intelligence applied by the teacher in the classroom. The intelligence existed when the teacher discussed animal topic in the chapter of 'at the zoo'. At first, the teacher exposed this intelligence through a video, to which later he asked the students to complete an exercise about the animals.

According to Eskelsen in Hoerr et al., (2010:227) most children possess natural curiosity and the teacher's jobs are to keep the curiosity and encourage the students to go to the next level, called investigating. In performing the mentioned activity, the teacher has attempted to facilitate students' curiosity about the outside world from inside the building. Then, the exercise coming after the video has a role of investigating. In this case, the teacher also approves Fleetham's (2006:92) idea to draw attention to features in the natural world, in particular animals.

## **2. How the teacher manipulated multiple intelligences application**

Based on the result of the interview, the teacher disclosed that he intentionally integrated multiple intelligences, particularly five selected intelligences in his teaching. The conscious application of multiple intelligences in his teaching proves that he is aware of what he actually does. In other words, the teacher has shifted his mind to think differently by multiple intelligences point of view. Fleetham (2006:49) likens a teacher who thinking with

multiple intelligences to someone who putting on a special pair of glasses. The glasses provides a depiction of the way the teacher sees something, moreover, in terms of observing what students are good at and how they can improve. Therefore, the teacher admits that he selects five intelligences than others to be integrated to the classroom because he has observed his students and in a phase to help them improved.

Furthermore, the way he took those five intelligences into consideration was by relying on the students' characteristics and interests. He revealed that he did not have any rights to do multiple intelligences test or to conduct a multiple intelligences inventory/survey since the school was not a multiple intelligences-based school, but a private Islamic-based. To cope with such situation, the teacher disclosed his students' characteristics and interests to decide what intelligences to apply in the class. Regarding students' characteristics, he mentioned that his second grade students were so active, talkative, and energetic. The students preferred working individually to grouping with peers especially in completing an activity or exercise.

Interestingly, the teacher has indirectly mentioned his student's 'disruptive' behavior which appears when someone possesses certain strong intelligence or the things he or she is good at. The disruptive behavior was investigated and identified by Flaherty as it is in Fleetham (2006:50). Flaherty believes that such problem behavior can be triggered by one certain intelligence or more. Moreover, she links the behaviors to the intelligences addressed.

In the interview, the teacher expressed that his students were active and energetic. These characteristics may refer to bodily-kinesthetic intelligence as Flaherty indicates 'hard to sit still' and fidgets' included to this intelligence. Another characteristic was when students preferred working individually to

grouping with peers. In this case, the characteristic fits the disruptive behavior of intrapersonal intelligence since Flaherty states 'prefer to work alone' and 'does not seek out the company of peers' referred to intrapersonal intelligence. As it is stated previously that the disruptive behavior may represent students' dominant intelligences, then recognizing them as students' strength and the rest as the weakness in class can aid teacher to tailor projects and activities.

Besides students' characteristics, the teacher also relies on students' interests to decide which intelligence to apply. There are three intelligences included in this category; they are spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, and naturalist intelligence. Those intelligences are selected by the teacher considering what students like to do or to have in the classroom. Hence, the students will feel more addressed because they think that the teacher knows what they exactly want.

To obtain students' characteristics and interests, the teacher employed observing behavior method. Observing behavior is one of the seven ways to build up a multiple intelligences profile as proposed by Fleetham (2006:64). Unfortunately, the teacher did not use suggested principles by Fleetham (2006:64) in his observation. He did the observation in general to the students in the classroom to get their characteristics and interests.

After figuring out students' intelligences through their characteristics and interests, the teacher keeps going on applying multiple intelligences by performing various and creative ways in teaching English. In fact, multiple intelligences open a wide range of teaching strategies which can be implemented in the classroom and develop the innovative ones (Armstrong, 2009:72). Specifically, Nicholson-Nelson (1998:24) emphasizes how important it is for teachers to be aware of

which intelligence used in the lesson, without extremely altering teacher's way of teaching. In short, teaching with multiple intelligences broadens teaching by involving diverse ways in attempt to address all students' intelligences.

### **3. How the Teacher used his Dominant Intelligences in Teaching**

From the previous chapter, it is obtained that the subject, an EFL teacher, possesses four strongest or dominant intelligences. This result is obtained by the assistance of multiple intelligences inventory/survey and an interview. The four intelligences are musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence.

In the interview, the teacher stated that he was aware of his own multiple intelligences, in particular his dominant intelligences. He admitted that as a teacher, knowing his own multiple intelligences was an initial step in teaching with multiple intelligences. This statement is in accordance with Armstrong's (2009:20) belief regarding multiple intelligences theory and personal development. Determining teacher's multiple intelligences and searching for ways to develop them are the principal steps in applying multiple intelligences to the classroom (Armstrong, 2009:20).

Through the interview, the teacher also disclosed that his dominant intelligences were utilized to maximize him in performing classroom activities or exercises. This statement is mainly in accordance with the reality as shown by the observation. From the observation, it is obtained that the teacher does not face any obstacles in singing the chant or song, in which the activity combines musical intelligence and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Indeed, in each song or chant which he sings with the students, he attempts to provide creative movement. The song or

chant and its creative movement work together in harmony.

Beside a combination of musical intelligence and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence in the chant or song, the teacher also optimizes intrapersonal intelligence as his other dominant intelligence in teaching. Regarding this intelligence, the teacher provides diverse classroom activities to integrate into the classroom, including individualized work, sharing time, choice time in assignment, and self-assessment. Those activities ease students to learn English as this intelligence belongs to one of students' characteristics.

In fact, the teacher might come out with a result that he can also be modestly developed or even relatively developed in particular intelligence. However, there is always an answer to fit up the moderate even underdeveloped intelligences which need to bring in the class, one of which is by utilizing available technology. Available technology may be employed to express information which the teacher cannot provide (Armstrong, 2009:27).

In the research, the teacher made use of available technology when dealing with spatial intelligence. During the observation, the teacher never drew any picture or image on the whiteboard. However, the teacher kept stimulating students' spatial intelligences in various kinds of activities, exercises, and materials. Indeed, from the inventory the teacher possesses moderate spatial intelligence. Since the one of the students' interests leads to spatial intelligence, the teacher strives to use this intelligence. To overcome this matter, the teacher employed printed material, utilized power point presentation slides, and played video in the classroom. Similarly, the teacher also utilizes available technology for dealing with naturalist intelligence.

Based on the observation result and the teacher' confirmation, the teacher indeed focused on students' characteristics or students' dominant intelligences and students' interests in determining his teaching, consequently the teacher did not apply logical-mathematical intelligence, whereas it was one of his dominant intelligences.

In short, the teacher used his three dominant intelligences when teaching to optimize him in performing the classroom activities or exercises. However, he left logical-mathematical intelligence in teaching English as it did not fit with students' characteristics or interests. Reflecting on this case, the teacher asserted that he did not allow his dominant intelligences to influence his way of teaching and maximize his dominant intelligences in teaching as long as they are in accordance with students needs (characteristics and interests).

## D. CLOSING

### 1. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the present study, a number of points can be drawn into conclusions. The conclusions are the answers of each research questions as stated in Chapter 1. First, other intelligences in addition to linguistic intelligence other intelligences in addition to linguistic intelligence used by the teacher were spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and naturalist intelligence. Second, the teacher manipulated multiple intelligences application by reconciling which intelligences to be applied with students' characteristics and interests. Third, the teacher used his dominant intelligences to maximize him in performing classroom activities and did not allow the dominant intelligences affected his way of teaching. Additionally, the teacher made use of available technology to cover his moderate

intelligences which needed to be exist in class due to students' needs.

## 2. Suggestions

English teachers are suggested to integrate multiple intelligences to the classroom by considering students' disruptive behaviors which lead to students' strongest intelligences and reflecting on what students like or dislike which included in students' interests. The teachers also should not allow their dominant intelligence drive the way they teach, on the contrary, they must comply with students' needs. Moreover, the teachers can make use of the observed activities or exercises covering spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and naturalist intelligence in their own classroom. The activities or exercises may be altered or modified in accordance with the needs.

For the other researchers, it is suggested to develop a research by extending the time of observation. Since the current research was carried out in nearly semester examination, the researcher could only have one month for performing the classroom observation. The researcher believes that the longer observation yields more various classroom activities or exercises covering multiple intelligences. Furthermore, the further research is expected to cover different level of education and subject.

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