Multiple intelligence assessment in teaching English for young learners

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Abstract

There are many schools in Indonesia that provide English as one of their subjects. English has been taught from elementary schools, even in Kindergarten. Ironically, teaching English in most rural schools still uses a conventional method such as memorizing and translating. Many teachers cannot afford to provide well-designed, meaningful exercises for students to use on a one-to-one learning basis. As a result, students seem not having interest in learning English. Based on this reason, this study was conducted to identify students' intelligence through Multiple Intelligence Assessment to get effective approach in teaching English for young learners. The participants are an English teacher and students at an early childhood education center. This research focuses on presenting a deep description of the Multiple-Intelligence assessment to identify students' intelligence in order to get an effective way of teaching English for young learners. In collecting the data, three instruments were used: observation, interview, and document analysis. The findings of this study show that students have different interests and nature; some students love singing, some others enjoy drawing, and others like role-playing. Multiple-Intelligence Assessment helps the teachers to identify students' interests and bring them building some learning activities to attract them in learning English.

Keywords: *multiple intelligence, assessment, teaching English, young learners*

Introduction

In recent years, Indonesian parents tend to choose an educational institution which provides English as one of their subjects. English becomes more popular because of its prestige as an International language.

The purpose of National Education is to develop students' potential to be faithful and devoted the Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and responsible citizen of the democratic country (Law of Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003). In order to reach the purposes, the government applies the 2013 curriculum which is based on knowledge, behavior, and ability competence cohesively to create productive, creative, and innovative students who are able to compete in globalization era.

During the last few years, the world of teaching witnessed the innovation of Teaching English for Young Learners. In Indonesia, as reported by Musthafa (2010), the government makes its own decision to put English as local content. This brings public awareness of learning English improved. English has been taught from elementary school, even in kindergarten.

According to Pinter (2006), language development starts well before children are

able to say anything. Cameron (2005) also states in her book that children learn a second language better than adults. These opinions bring many kindergartens in Indonesia to offer English as one of their subjects. Indonesian parents engage their children to learn English at an early age.

In teaching English to young learners, teachers use many different approaches. All of the approaches have the same goal, to make an effective way in the learning process. Therefore, teachers build some activities to maximize students' potential in learning a language. Ironically, teaching English in most rural schools, still, uses a conventional method such as memorizing and translating. Many teachers cannot afford to provide well-designed, meaningful exercises for students to use on a one-to-one learning basis (Musthafa, 2010). As a result, students seem to have less interest in learning English. Maryanto (2005) on his research states the standard competency of Kindergarten teachers developed with Focus Group Discussion and Delphi Techniques have 50 indicators. One of these competencies is developing fun and interesting learning. Based on those reasons, teachers need to find a way in teaching English which provides interesting and enjoyable activities suited to children's interests and characteristics.

Students, as the object in the learning process, have a different nature. Some students enjoy singing, some others love drawing, while some of them like reading. According to Gardner (1983), all humans exhibit a range of intelligence. They are linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and natural. These differences indicate that children have a different way to enjoy the learning process. Pinter (2006) states that it is important for teachers to take into account that all children have stronger and weaker aspects of their multiple intelligences and preferred learning style.

Multiple Intelligences theory has been reported to be effective in teaching English to young learners. Hassan and Maluf (1999) who have conducted a study about the application of multiple intelligences in Lebanese kindergarten got the result that MI theory has successfully improved students' understanding in the learning process.

Multiple Intelligence assessment was conducted to identify the variety of students' intelligence. After knowing the interests of each student, the teacher will be easier to get an effective approach in teaching English for them. In detail, this study attempts to find out the activities and benefits of the implementation of Multiple Intelligence theory in teaching English for young learners.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of Multiple Intelligence Assessment in the learning process, especially in teaching English for young learners in Indonesia. In addition, it can give inspiration for teachers in order to make and create some activities that can help students to improve their ability in learning a language and maximize their potential in the learning process.

Teaching English for Young Learners

The term 'young learners' has been defined by Pinter (2006) as children who start their primary schools, either in kindergarten or elementary school. Wright (2001) states the specific age range of young learners, which is between age five to 12.

Children construct knowledge through other people, and through interaction with adults. Adults/teachers work actively with children in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the difference between the child's capacity to solve problems on his own and his capacity to solve them with assistance. The adult's role is very important in a child's learning process. Like Vygotsky, Bruner focused on the importance of language in a child's cognitive development. He shows how the adult uses 'scaffolding' to guide a child's language learning through finely-tuned talk (Cameron, 2005).

Characteristics of Young Learners

Young learners or children have some typical characteristics. Piaget, as cited by Cameron (2005), states that a child is an active learner. They have a huge curiosity about learning something new. Children are often

more enthusiastic and lively. However, they also lose interest more quickly and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find difficult (Cameron, 2005). Further, Shin (2013) in her module entitled 'Teaching English to young learners' has classified the characteristics of young learners in learning English.

Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of educational processes Ghani (2008). According to Fenton (1996), assessment is the collection of relevant information that may be relied on for making decisions. In addition, Davies (2000) states that 'assessment for learning is ongoing, and requires deep involvement on the part of the learner in clarifying outcomes, monitoring on-going learning, collecting evidence and presenting evidence of learning to others.' She further points out that assessment which directly supports learning has five key characteristics: (1) learners are involved so a shared language and understanding of learning is developed, (2) learners self-assess and receive specific, descriptive feedback about the learning during the learning, (3) learners collect, organize, and communicate evidence of their learning with others, (4) instruction is adjusted in response to ongoing assessment information, and (5) a safe learning environment invites risk-taking, encourages learning from mistakes, enables focused goal setting, and supports thoughtful learning.

Assessment can be designed to measure a wide range of abilities. Assessment is designed to measure the ability of students' high order thinking which can be done by developing several instrument evaluation. These instruments can be used to measure the ability of students' high order thinking skill: multiple choice, essay, performance evaluation, and rubric.

Multiple Intelligences

Multiple Intelligences theory is genuinely introduced by Harvard psychologist named Howard Gardner. Regarding Gardner (1999), Multiple Intelligence theory consists of seven bits of intelligence, they are linguistics, logical-mathematic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthe-

tic, interpersonal, and also intrapersonal. In 1999, Gardner, as cited by Armstrong (2009), added an eighth, natural intelligence. This theory has become a tool that educators around the world seize with enthusiasm (Hoerr, 2000).

Gardner, as cited by Veenema, Hetland, and Chalfen (1997), defines intelligence as an ability to solve problems or create products that are valued in at least one culture, whereas Helding (2009, p. 195) defines intelligence as a biopsychological potential. The specific explanation of Multiple Intelligence can be seen as follows:

The first one is linguistic or verbal intelligence; verbal intelligence involves the mastery of language. People with verbal intelligence tend to think in words and have highly developed auditory skills. They are frequently reading or writing.

The second is logical-mathematic intelligence; it consists of the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, and think logically. These are usually the children who do well in the traditional classroom because they are able to follow the logical sequencing behind the teaching and are, therefore, able to conform to the role of model student.

The third one is spatial intelligence. This intelligence gives a person the ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve a problem. Spatial thinkers 'perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformations and modifications upon one's initial perception' (Gardner, 1999, p. 173). People with this kind of intelligence tend to learn most readily from visual presentation such as movies, pictures, videos, and also demonstrations using models.

The fourth is bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. It entails the ability to understand the world through the body. These people can use their body in very expressive skilled ways for a distinct purpose.

The fifth is musical intelligence. It makes use of sound to the greatest extent of possible. Those with musical intelligence have a firm understanding of pitch, rhythm, and timbre.

The sixth one is interpersonal intelligence. It consists of the ability to understand,

perceive, as well as discriminate between people's mood, feelings, motives, and also intelligence.

The seventh is intrapersonal intelligence. Intrapersonal deals more with the individual itself. It is the ability to know oneself and to understand one's own working.

The last is natural intelligence. It involves the ability to understand nature's symbols, to respect the delicate balance that let us continue to live. They have a genuine appreciation of the aspects of nature and how they intertwine.

Multiple Intelligence Activities

In teaching English to young learners, teachers are expected to give their best efforts to maximize students' potential. Lash (2004) believes that in order to assist the children in getting the most from their learning experiences, the teacher must first identify the areas of intelligence in which each child excels. By doing this, the teacher will be able to understand the children's learning styles, and thus, know the best way to help the children integrate their experience into their body of knowledge.

Armstrong, as cited by Lash (2004, pp. 14–15), explains that there are some activities that can help students to maximize their potential based on their dominant intelligence, as follows: (1) Linguistic: Learners who fall into this category enjoy word games, drilling, creative writing, and reading for pleasure. They enjoy listening to stories being told aloud. (2) Logical-Mathematic: They enjoy playing strategy games like chess and checkers. They are willing to spend lots of time working on logic puzzles, such as Rubik's cube. They enjoy putting things into categories and using reason to work through problems. (3) Spatial: Art may be one of the activities in which spatially intelligent persons might like to spend lots of time. They enjoy jigsaw puzzles and other visual activities. (4) Bodily-Kines-thetic: They are good at competitive sports. They need to touch things in order to learn more about them. These individuals are good at mimicking people's gestures, mannerisms or behaviors. They enjoy messy activities like working with clay or finger painting. (5) Musical: This one seems pretty obvious. Musically gifted learners enjoy playing musical instruments, singing, or collecting CDs. They are sensitive to environmental sounds and respond strongly to different kinds of music. (6) Interpersonal: They have lots of friends and enjoy socializing with others in large and small groups. They enjoy playing group games. They enjoy teaching others and are seen as natural leaders. (7) Intrapersonal: They have a realistic sense of their strength and weaknesses. They react strongly when controversial topics are discussed. They have a sense of self-confidence. (8) Natural: Persons with high naturalist intelligence enjoy being in natural environments. Hiking and camping might be listed as their hobbies.

Hoerr (2000) in his book entitled 'Becoming a multiple intelligences school' writes a table about how to arrange and create some activities based on children's intelligence. This table is adapted from 'Succeeding with Multiple Intelligences', by the New City School faculty, 2000 (Hoerr, 2000).

Method

This research focuses on presenting a deep description of the Multiple Intelligence assessment used by the teacher in teaching English for young learners. For this reason, the researchers used a descriptive-qualitative method.

Qualitative research is a holistic approach that involves discovery. It is also described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researchers to develop a level of detail (Cresswell, 1994 quoted in Williams, 2011). Furthermore, Keegan (2009) explains qualitative as a research design that primarily concerned with meaning rather than measuring.

There are several characteristics of qualitative research, namely: (1) the focus of the research is 'quality', (2) the aim is description, findings, and understanding, (3) the settings are natural, (4) the sample is small and purposive, and (5) the data collection consists of the researchers as the main instrument, interview, and observation (Alwasilah, 2008, p. 92).

The aim of the descriptive method is to examine the current event or phenomenon of the research (Alwasilah, 2008). For this reason, the qualitative approach of the descriptive method is suitable to this research because it could be used to explain the detail of multiple intelligence activities used by the teacher in teaching English for young learners. In addition, this study employed the descriptive qualitative method because there is no treatment given during the observation. This study only observes the phenomena happened in the classroom; in detail, this study was set to investigate the implementation of multiple intelligence activities in teaching English for young learners.

The participants of this study are an English teacher and students at an Early Childhood Education Center of Taman Anak Sholeh As-Salaam, which is located in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia. The observation was held in two months, from February to April 2018.

After collecting the data, the data of the study were then analyzed by several steps as proposed by Huberman and Miles, as cited by Basrowi and Suwandi (2008): First, data reduction; the researchers reduced unnecessary information from the data obtained through observation. In this process, the data from observation and interview were a transcript. Second, data analysis; the data from observation, interview, and document analysis were analyzed.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The findings are from the data gained through observation and interview. This chapter consists of two main points: (1) multiple intelligence activities in teaching English for young learners in the Early Childhood Education Center being the object of the study, and (2) the benefits and challenges of using multiple intelligence activities.

Based on the observation, the response of students to several Multiple Intelligence activities are related to their interests. The data are displayed in Table 1.

An interview was conducted to find out the teacher's perspective of using multiple intelligence activities and the benefits of using the activities. According to the result of the interview on teacher's perception of the benefits of using multiple intelligence activities for young learners, the teacher mentioned several benefits of using these activities. First, the various activities can stimulate students in learning and they can be more active in the learning process. Since the activities were quite different from those in the conventional approach, the teacher admitted that students seem to enjoy the learning process through song, games, drilling, riddle, and so forth. Second, the learning process can be more effective because students understand the material easily by doing several activities. Third, it can motivate the students to learn English because the activities can cover their interests.

In spite of its benefits, some challenges are found in the use of multiple intelligence activities. The result of the interview shows that some students thought that the use of various activities was confusing. The students may be confused when they have to change from one activity to another.

The other challenge of using multiple intelligence activities was a limited time. The teacher said that sometimes the students need extra time to do the activity such as games and riddle. It means that using multiple intelligence activities needs a longer allocated time.

From the findings, it can be inferred that the use of Multiple Intelligence activities in teaching English for young learners has several benefits and challenges according to the teacher's perception. The advantages are that the activities can make students more active in the learning process, make the learning process more effective, and make students more motivated in learning English. Meanwhile, the challenges are that a long time is needed for the teacher to prepare the activities, and some media are needed in order to make the activities run well.

Table 1. Multiple intelligence assessment applied in the Early Childhood Education Center of Taman Anak Sholeh As-Salaam

Teacher's Activities	Students' Activities	Type of Multiple Intelligence:	Students' Responses	Assessment
Singing '*Kepala, Pundak, Lutut dan Kaki*' song with body gestures	Following the teacher doing the same activity	Musical Bodily-Kinesthetic	Most of students seem happy and enjoy the activity	*****
Showing animals pictures and mentioning the name of each animal	Looking at the pictures and repeating after the teacher to mention the name of the animals	Spatial Verbal-Linguistic	Most of students seem happy and enjoy the activity	*****
Playing the riddle game and giving clues for students to guess the correct answer	Listening to the clues and information given by the teacher	Logic-Mathematic Verbal-Linguistic	Some students look confused because they do not understand some words said by the teacher	***
Counting numbers in sequence and counting down the numbers	Following the teacher doing the same activity	Logic-Mathematic	Most of students can follow the teacher well when they are asked to count from 1-10, but they look a bit confused when the teacher asked them to count down	*****
Showing picture and playing the 'What color is it?' game	Looking at the visualization of the new word	Spatial Verbal-Linguistic	Most of students seem excited to say the various colors in English	*****
Playing 'Take the ball' game is the activity referring to bodily kinesthetic intelligence because the activities in it are related to physical movement	The students have to run quickly to get the right ball; the fastest group that took the right ball is the winner	Bodily-Kinesthetic Spatial	Most of students seem excited to participate in this game	*****
Playing 'Parts of body' game is an activity referring to interpersonal intelligence	Following the instruction by touching parts of body of their desk mate	Interpersonal	Some students seem uncomfortable when they have to interact with and touch their desk mate	***
Showing the picture of a fish to the students and giving personal connection by asking them about the fish. The teacher asked students about their previous knowledge of the material object	Giving opinions on the teacher's questions	Spatial Intrapersonal	Some students need more stimulus to speak up	***
Asking students to look outside the class and asked them about the weather	Looking outside the window, observing the weather, and giving some opinions	Natural	Most of students seem happy and enjoy the activity	*****

Note:
***: only some students participate actively in this activity
*****: successfully attract most of students to participate actively in learning process

Discussions

The teacher used drilling as the activity referring to linguistic intelligence. This activity was found in every meeting. Drilling is a strategy to improve pronunciation by imitating and repeating words, phrases, even whole utterances (Thornbury, 2006). In the first meeting, the teacher showed animal pictures to students and mentioned the name of the picture. After that, the teacher asked the students to repeat the word.

From the observation, it was discovered that the teacher taught a new word by saying it repeatedly in the drilling process. After saying the word out loud several times, the students finally remember the word. Therefore, this activity can be an effective way to teach children about foreign language. Students enjoy doing this activity, and saying the new words together with their friends make students get motivated to speak English in the classroom. However, students seem a bit confused when they have to repeat a long sentence. Teacher should know how to divide the sentence into a shorter part, especially when drilling a lyric from a song.

The teacher used riddle and counting numbers in a sequence as the activities referring to Logical-Mathematic Intelligence. Riddle was used by the teacher when teaching about an animal. The teacher prepared some animal pictures as the media. Before the teacher showed the animal pictures to students, the teacher did a riddle by giving some clues to students about the animal. The students have to listen to the clues and information given by the teacher; after that, the students have to analyze the information and clues from the teacher. In this activity, they need to think logically before answering the riddle. If the students have known the answer, they can guess it by saying out loud and give the answer to the teacher. And the last, the teacher will show the picture and mention the name of the picture. The logical mind can be stimulated anytime information is put into some kind of rational framework (Armstrong, 2009). In this activity, giving some clues and information about the animal is the stimulation of logical thinking.

Spatial intelligence has something to do with pictures - either the pictures in one's mind or the pictures in the external world, such as photos, movies, drawings, graphic symbols, ideographic language, and so forth (Armstrong, 2009). Showing picture and also games 'what color is it?' are the activities referring to spatial intelligence because these activities involve visualizing the objects and creating a mental image. Showing picture was found in the first, fourth, and fifth meeting; and games 'what color is it' was found in the sixth meeting.

The teacher used some pictures as the media to teach learning material. The pictures are related to the topic of each meeting. From the picture, students get the visualization of the new word. Wright (2001, p. 10) said that picture can play a key role in motivating students, conceptualizing the language they want to use, giving them a reference, and in helping the discipline of the activity.

Body answers and playing 'take the ball' game are the activities referring to bodily-kinesthetic intelligence because these activities are related to physical movement. Responding to the instruction with physical gesture was found in the third and fourth meeting, while 'take the ball' game was found in the sixth meeting.

Playing the game 'Parts of Body' is an activity referring to interpersonal intelligence. In this activity, the students are supposed to be working in pairs. The teacher gives the instruction first, and then the students follow the instruction by touching part of the body of their chair mate. The students have to listen to the teacher's instruction carefully.

Personal connection is an activity referring to intrapersonal intelligence. This activity was found in the first meeting. In the beginning, the teacher showed the fish picture to the students and gave personal connection by asking them about the fish. The teacher asked students about their previous knowledge of the material object.

Observing the weather is an activity referring to natural intelligence. This activity mostly happened at the beginning of the class before the teacher gives lesson material to the students. In this activity, the teacher asked the

students to look outside the class and asked them about the weather. The students seem happy when the teacher asked them to look outside the window and observe the weather.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

This study was concerned with identifying students' intelligence by Multiple Intelligence (MI) assessment and applying MI activities in the process of teaching English for young learners. According to the findings and discussions, there are several multiple intelligence activities employed by the teacher in teaching English for young learners. These activities are categorized into eight groups based on the eight multiple intelligences.

It can also be concluded that the teacher has to know students' characteristics, interest and ability to create interesting and suitable activities for students. The variety of activities may improve students' attention and motivation in learning English.

Moreover, the result of the interview shows that there are several benefits in using MI activities in teaching English for young learners. However, in implementing MI activities in teaching English for young learners, the teacher found many challenges.

Suggestions

After concluding the analysis, the researchers would like to propose some suggestions related to the research conducted. Since this study involved merely only one teacher as a respondent, further study is suggested to involve more teachers as respondents.

Furthermore, implementing multiple intelligence activities in teaching English for young learners can be a recommendation to be used by kindergarten English teachers. Teachers should find many activities of teaching English which may cover students' interests and intelligence. To improve teachers' knowledge of multiple intelligence activities, the teachers can attend seminars, workshops, or training. In addition, teachers can get more information about multiple intelligence activities by reading books or searching on the internet.

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