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Multiple Intelligence and the Performance of Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Many ways of EFL teaching have been practiced by EFL teachers to optimally improve the learners' performance in English. However, the results of the teaching many times did not meet our expectations. Therefore, this research aims to find a possible better way of teaching EFL by considering the students' multiple intelligence (MI). A quantitative method of ex post facto design was conducted. The data were collected from the students of EFL learners studying English in the Department of English Education, Cenderawasih University, consisting of 236 students as the subject of the research. The data analysis used a non-parametric test, Kruskal Wallis, to compare the groups' scores. The result shows that there is no significant difference in performance among the groups of MI. This result suggests that MI does not influence EFL learners' English performance. This might be caused by the teaching strategies practiced by the lecturers who did not consider MI in their teaching processes. Therefore it is suggested to conduct further comprehensive research on the influence of multiple intelligence-based teaching on the performance of students with higher levels of English ability and or on the adult EFL learners.

Keywords: Multiple intelligence, influence, English, performance

1. Introduction

A question that many EFL teachers and language practitioners might have urgently needed the answer is "Why are some EFL learners more successful in learning English than others while they are studying in the same class, with the same teacher, and the same material? Many experts have tried to answer the question by conducting research that aims to find new ways to help learners more easily achieve the materials and better perform the language skills. The research has become a discussion by many scholars for many years. They have covered many areas of EFL teaching and learning, including the teaching methods and teaching strategies (e.g. Ahmadian, 2017; Fahlevi & Rosyid, 2018; Dorji, 2021), the learning style (eg. Rezeki, Sagala, Damanik, 2018), the EFL teachers' competence (eg. Rinantanti, Asfah, Atmowardoyo, Bin-Tahir, 2017), the language assessment (e.g. Ofrim-Stancuna, 2015; Chaisuriya and Shin 2019), learners' attitude towards English (e.g. Panmei, 2021), and other issues. The research shows a variety of results, with some describing positive results and some others showing the opposite. Despite the long discussions in varieties of topics, the learners' competence and performance in English as a foreign language still do not improve significantly, in Indonesia for instance (e.g. Renandya, Hamid, Nurkamto, 2018; Rahayu, 2020b). For this reason, this current research is conducted to give a foundation to consider in finding a better way of teaching in the future. In other words, Innovation in teaching EFL needs to continually be made, because EFL students always have the potential to improve their English (e.g. Budiono & Rahayu, 2022).

Given the above situation, this research discusses language teaching from the side of the learners' cognitive factors. One of them is their profile of Multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1983) they develop in their mind. Some researchers consider Multiple Intelligence (later called MI) as one of the important factors in provoking the success of second or foreign language learning (e.g.: Maftoon & Sarem, 2012). For example, Andriyani (2017) suggests that applying an MI strategy in Teaching EFL in an elementary school can enhance students' motivation and interest leading to better achievement. Similarly, Bas & Bayhan (2010) found that the students taught by using multiple intelligence-based strategies are more motivated to study than those taught by using a conventional way. Another positive research result useful for EFL language teaching is on MI and language learning strategies (Ahmadian & Ghasemi, 2017). Inspired by the previous findings, this current research tries to discuss MI as the foundation in enhancing the quality of EFL teaching and learning. The research questions addressed are 1). What multiple intelligence are developed by the students? and 2) Does MI influence the performance of the EFL students? Multiple intelligence

might have been familiar to many, but it might still be worthy to expose the term as a reminder and to frame the concept of this research.

2. Multiple Intelligence

Multiple intelligence was introduced by Howard Gardner (2011) in his book "Frames of Mind". This concept was a critique of the old Intelligence concept of mental power known as IQ in which the individuals are taken out of their context of life (Armstrong, 2009). IQ also focuses only on Verbal and Numerical abilities as stated by Christenson (Bas & Beyhan, 2010). A human being can live not only supported by those two abilities. A person with a relatively high IQ does not guarantee success in his or her life. On the contrary, a person with a relatively not high IQ may have a successful life. Some boxers, for instance, may not be considered intelligent in the old concept, but they can be skillful in boxing and successful in their life. Another example, as we can see in our life, some politicians can be successful in politics not because of their ability in numerical or verbal, but because they are smart socially, in that they can understand the public's will and adjust to them. Multiple intelligence is then defined by Howard Gardner (as cited in Armstrong, 2009, p. 6) as "the capacity for (1) solving problems and (2) fashioning products in a context-rich and naturalistic setting".

Multiple Intelligence was divided by Howard Gardner into 8 categories (Armstrong, 2009): Linguistics, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Natural. The characteristics possessed by each category of MI, especially in learning, were also given by Armstrong. Firstly, learners with Linguistic intelligence think in words and would like to do activities in reading, writing, telling stories, and playing word games. Therefore, what they need are pieces of equipment to do those activities such as books. Secondly, learners with Logical-Mathematical intelligence tend to think by reasoning and like an experiment, to ask questions, to figure out logical puzzles, and to calculate. They like to go to any place where they can learn how to experiment, manipulate things, and so on. Thirdly, Spatial intelligence learners would think in images and pictures in their minds. They like to make designs, draw anything, visualize things, and doodle. The activities they like to do may include trips to museums, playing imagination games, Watching movies, and some others. Fourth, learners with Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence tend to think through somatic sensations. Therefore they tend to like dancing, running, jumping, building, touching, and gesturing. The teaching strategies for this group of learners might be role play, drama, movement, building things, sports, and physical games, tactile experiences, hands-on learning. Fifth, learners with Musical intelligence tend to think through rhythm and melody. Because of that, they like singing, whistling, humming, tapping their feet and hands, and listening. The activities EFL teachers can assign to the students with Musical intelligence can be related to sing-along time, trips to concerts, playing music at home and school, and musical instruments. Sixth, learners with Interpersonal intelligence tend to think by sharing their ideas with other people. The teaching strategy the teacher can apply would be appropriate when it is related to friends, group games, social gatherings, community events, clubs, mentors/ apprenticeships. Seventh is Interpersonal intelligence. Learners with Intrapersonal Intelligence tend to think in a way related to their needs, feeling, and goal. They tend to like activities such as setting goals, meditating, dreaming, planning, and reflecting. The teaching strategy appropriate for this group of students can be related to secret places, time alone, self-paced projects, and choices. Eight types of MI Natural intelligence. Lastly, Natural intelligence. Learners with Natural intelligence would think through nature and natural forms. The activities they like to do might be playing with pets, gardening, investigating nature, raising animals, and caring for planet Earth. EFL teachers, in their teaching to students with natural intelligence, can use teaching strategies that are related to access to nature, opportunities for interacting with animals, and tools for investigating nature (e.g., magnifying glasses, and binoculars).

Some research on MI in language teaching and learning has been conducted with various results. Some research has given evidence that MI is likely to influence EFL achievement. Research investigating the influence of MI on basic EFL learners found that learners with Musical intelligence tend to perform higher achievement of English as a foreign language (Rahayu, 2020b). Hajhashemi, Akef, and Anderson (2012) also found that there is a significant difference in EFL achievement among low achievers of pre-university students with Musical intelligence in Iran. These two findings might have given evidence that EFL learners with Musical Intelligence tend to achieve better English. This might be influenced by the similarity of music and language which involve rhythm, stress, accent, and melody (Currie, 2003).

Some research on Linguistic intelligence has also shown a positive correlation to EFL achievement. Riswandi and Achyanadia (2017) found that there is a relationship between Linguistic intelligence and interpersonal communication in Junior high school. Supporting this finding, Dewi and Wilany (2019) reveal that English department students with Linguistics intelligence perform better in EFL reading.

Besides the findings which have given evidence of the correlation between MI and EFL achievement, some other findings show different results. Razmjoo (2008) found that there is no relationship between multiple intelligence and language proficiency in the EFL entrance test of Ph. D students in Iran. This is supported by Sadeghi and Farzizadeh (2012) who found that there is not any relationship between MI and EFL writing achievements among college students.

The contradiction of the mentioned research findings has suggested that there has not been any confirmed description of the relationship between MI and EFL achievement. This has given opportunities to scholars to further investigate this area, and this current research is one of them.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative method of Ex Post Facto design was applied in this research. Firstly, the students' MI profiles were investigated by distributing a questionnaire in the form of an MI checklist by Armstrong (2009). The analysis of the questionnaire resulted in groups of students with different MI profiles. Secondly, the student's scores in English performance which are from the courses Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Structures were taken from their record in the database. Thirdly, each group of students with an MI profile and their EFL scores was listed. Fourth, a comparison test among groups of different MI profiles was conducted. Kruskal Wallis test was used since the distribution of the data was not normal. The design can be viewed in the following Figure 1.

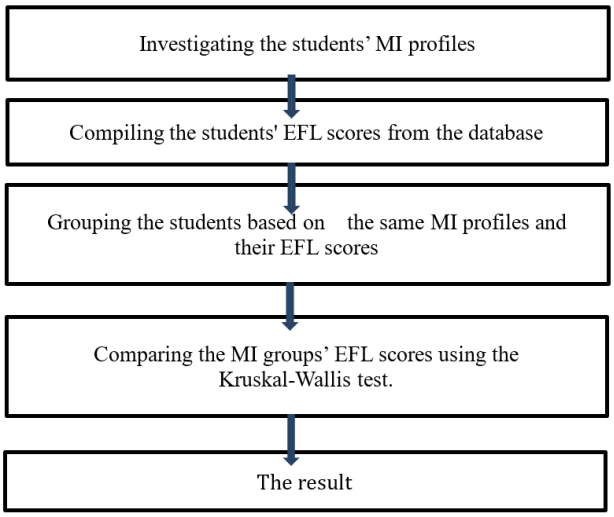

Figure 1. Research Design

3.2 Research Subject

The research subject of this study is all 236 students in the English education department, at Cenderawasih University, registered in 2021. They consist of students from all commencement years, comprising the commencement years of 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 students, attending the courses of Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Structure. In terms of gender, 47% are male, and 53% are female students. Finally, they come from different areas in Indonesia; 25.6% of them come from low land areas in Papua island including cities, 33.7% come from highlands in Papua island, and 40% come from other areas in Indonesia such as Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java, etc.

3.3 Instrument and Data Analysis

The research instrument is basically to investigate the students' profiles of MI. This instrument is a questionnaire taken from Armstrong's (2009) inventory of MI. An example of the instrument can be seen in Figure 2, which is an example of an instrument for investigating Natural intelligence (Armstrong, 2009, p.6).

__ Talks a lot about favorite pets, or preferred spots in nature, during class sharing

__ Likes field trips in nature, to the zoo, or to a natural history museum

__ Likes to water and tend to the plants in the classroom

__ Likes to hang around the gerbil cage, the aquarium, or the terrarium in class

__ Gets excited when studying about ecology, nature, plants, or animals

__ Speaks out in class for the rights of animals or the preservation of planet earth

__ Brings to school bugs, flowers, leaves, or other natural things to share with classmates or teachers

Figure 2. An example of an instrument

As shown in Figure 2, respondents were asked to tick (√) a line on the left side if he or she agrees with the statement. A student is considered to have this Natural MI if the check mark is more than those in other MI questionnaires (Linguistic, Mathematics, etc.). These students' profiles become the first data of this research. The second data are the students' records of their scores in Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Structure courses. These students' scores were compiled from the department's database.

The data analysis was conducted by firstly grouping the students with the same MI profiles and their EFL scores, resulting in eight (8) groups: a group of students with Linguistic intelligence, a group with Mathematics intelligence, a group with Spatial intelligence, a group with Music intelligence, a group with Kinesthetic intelligence, a group with Interpersonal intelligence, a group with Intrapersonal intelligence, and a group with Natural intelligence. Secondly, the scores of each group were compared by the application of SPSS' Kruskal Wallis test, as the data distribution was not normal.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 The Students' MI Profiles

The investigation on the MI, using questionnaires, shows that the students developed all MIs with different numbers of students in the groups. The following Table 1 shows the students' groups of MI

Table 1. Grouping of Students on MI

Multiple Intelligence	Number of students	%
Natural	91	38.56
Music	74	31.36
Intrapersonal	56	23.73
Kinesthetic	53	22.46
Linguistic	43	18.22
Spatial	37	15.68
Mathematics	24	10.2
Interpersonal	23	9.75

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As listed in Table 1, the group with the biggest number is the group of Natural intelligence with 91 students or 38.56%, followed by Musical intelligence and other MIs. The group with the least number of students is Interpersonal intelligence with only 9.75%. To note, the total number of students exceeds the number of subjects mentioned in the methodology, and the percentage exceeds 100%. This is caused by the fact that some students developed more than one profile of MI.

As listed in the Table, Natural intelligence is developed by most students (38.56%). This may be related to the students who come and were born in villages with natural environments, as revealed from the questionnaire. Villages in Indonesia, especially in Papua, cover areas where various trees still grow well, exposing nature to beautiful scenery. As Armstrong (2009) suggests that the development of MI is influenced by the surrounding environment where a person is growing up.

4.2 The Scores of the Students

After the groups of MI were formed, then we need to find the students' EFL scores for each group. As mentioned before, the EFL scores consist of the scores for the courses in Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Structure. The tests of these courses were designed by each lecturer teaching the courses based on the syllabus provided by the institution. The compilation of the scores from the database resulted in the data displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. The students' scores

Multiple Intelligence	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Structure
Natural	3.1	3.2	3.0	2.9	3.1
Music	3.2	3.3	3.1	3.0	3.1
Intrapersonal	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1
Kinesthetic	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.2
Linguistic	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2
Spatial	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.1
Mathematics	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.2
Interpersonal	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.1

Table 2 above shows various scores. The scale of the scores is from the lowest zero to the highest four (0 – 4). The scores listed are the average scores within each group. For example, the average score of the Natural group for Listening is 3.1. The Table shows that the highest score is 3.4 in Reading, achieved by the group of Mathematics. While the lowest score is 2.9 in Writing, achieved by a group of Natural. These various scores from different groups of MI were then compared to see if there are any significant differences in achievement, explained in the following section.

4.3 The Comparison of the MI Groups' Scores

After the students' scores were collected and the MI groups were formed, then a comparison between the MI groups' scores was conducted. First, the normality test in SPSS showed that the data were not normal. Therefore, the non-parametric test of Kruskal-Walis was applied to see the differences among MI groups. The result of the test is displayed in the following tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Table 3. The Significance of Listening Score

	Listening Score
Chi-Square	5.975
Df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.543
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Intelligence profile	

Table 3 displays the result of the Kruskal Wallis test for Listening scores. As seen in the table, the obtained value is 0.543. This value is considered to be not significant, since the significance value is less than 0.05 (<0.05). In other words, any MIs developed by students do not influence the performance of students in EFL Listening.

The second comparison is in Speaking. The result of statistical analysis comparing Speaking score between all groups of MI can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4.The significance of Speaking

	Speaking Score
Chi-Square	9.130
Df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.243
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Intelligence profile	

Table 4 displays the result of the comparison among MI groups in Speaking. As shown in the table, the obtained value is 0.243, while the significance value is less than 0.05 (< 5). This result suggests that there in not any significant differences among the 8 MI groups in speaking performance. In other words, MI developed by the students does not affect the student's performance in speaking English as a foreign language.

The third comparison between groups of MI scores is that of Reading. The analysis result can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. The Significance of Reading

	Reading Score
Chi-Square	8.212
Df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.314
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Multiple Intelligence	

Table 5 displays the comparison result among MI groups in Reading. As can be seen in the table, the obtained value of the Kruskal Wallis test is 0.314. This value is higher than the significance value of 0.05, suggesting that there is not any significant difference among the 8 MI groups in Reading. In other words, MI developed by students cannot influence the student's performance in EFL reading.

The fourth comparison between groups of MI scores in Writing was also analyzed using SPSS, resulting in the significance value as can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. The Significance of Writing

	Writing Score
Chi-Square	8.308
df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.306
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Multiple Intelligence	

Table 6 displays the result of the Kruskal Wallis test in EFL writing to see the differences in the Writing scores among 8 MI groups. It can be seen in the table, the obtained value (Asymp sig) is 0.306. The significance value for the Kruskal Wallis test is 0.05, meaning that the obtained value is much higher than the significance value, suggesting that there is not any significant difference in Reading scores among MI groups. It indicates that MI does not influence the performance of the students in EFL writing.

The fifth comparison between MI groups of the score is in the course of Structure. The comparison analysis using SPSS resulted in the value that can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. The Significance of Structure

	Structure Score
Chi-Square	5.043
df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.655
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Intelligence profile	

Table 7 reveals the result of the comparison to find the difference among 8 MI groups in the course of Structure. It reveals that the obtained value (Asymp Sig) is 0.655, while the significance value is not more than 0.05. This result also suggests that there is not any difference in the Structure scores among the students with different MI profiles.

Analysis of the data suggests that the result of this research is different from other similar research already conducted. Some other previous research found that there are influences of multiple intelligence to English as a second or foreign language achievement (e.g. Rahayu, 2020; Hajhashemi, Akef, Anderson, 2012; Ahmadian & Ghasemi, 2017; Currie, 2003; Riswandi and Achyanadia, 2017; Dewi and Wilany, 2019). The different findings might have been caused by the different nature of the research, especially the age of the students and or the level of English ability. In the previous research suggesting a positive correlation between MI and EFL achievement, the subjects of the research were junior EFL students with and low level of English ability (e.g. Rahayu, 2020a; Dewi & Wilany, 2019), while in this current research, the subject is the adult learners and or learners with a relatively higher level of English ability (as their major study in English). This result can be supported by some findings of the research with more senior EFL students as the subjects which found that there is not any relation between MI and EFL achievement (e.g. Razmjoo 2008; Sadeghi and Farzizadeh, 2012). Therefore, it might be able to be concluded that multiple intelligence tends to give influence to EFL achievement or performance in junior EFL students and or students with lower levels of English ability, and not the higher levels. The second reason that might have influenced the result is that in this current research, the teaching method that the lecturers applied did not consider multiple intelligence in their teaching. The lecturers did not design the materials or the way they were teaching with the MI profiles of the students.

5. Conclusion

A conclusion that we can draw from the result is that there is not any difference in scores among students with 8 different multiple intelligence (Linguistic, Mathematics, Spatial, Music, Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Natural) in the performance of all courses (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Structure). This leads to the suggestion that in this research, MI does not affect the performance of the students in English as a foreign language. The reason for the absence of a significant difference in scores between MI groups could be the teaching method used by the lecturers which did not consider the MI profiles of the students.

Given the result above, this finding can be used as one of the considerations in EFL teaching preparations. It is also suggested that more research on the influence of multiple intelligence needs to be conducted, especially on learners with a higher level of EFL and adult EFL learners. Furthermore, research also needs to be conducted on the influence of MI-based teaching on the EFL of both higher levels of English ability and adult EFL learners.

Finally, it would be wisely noted that first, only one technique was used to collect the data of students' MI profiles (questionnaire), not using other techniques for triangulation. Secondly, the validity and reliability of the English tests (from which the scores were collected) were not considered.

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