

English Teaching Assistance Employing the Multiple Intelligences Theory to Kasih Bangsa Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Considering that English is not the main language in Indonesia, an effective teaching method at school is crucial to students' ability to speak English fluently. However, in reality, many teachers still depend on conventional teaching methods. Therefore, this teaching assistance aims to facilitate Kasih Bangsa Elementary School students with a method that considers students' overall intelligence adapted from the Multiple Intelligences theory proposed by Howard Gardner, who argues that a person can have more than one intelligence. Furthermore, this teaching assistance is based on the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) method, which focuses on the collaboration between researchers and communities. The program consists of three main processes: an interview with teachers of Kasih Bangsa Elementary School, a workshop on Multiple Intelligences Theory for the teachers, and a teaching demonstration by some of the students of the English Department, Maranatha Christian University. From this teaching assistance, the Multiple Intelligences theory is proven to improve the learning quality and boost students' motivation effectively.

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English teaching, multiple intelligences, teaching assistance*

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Introduction

English has been widely acknowledged as a global language long ago. According to Mohanraj (2013), English is taught in most countries as a second or foreign language because the particular language is not the official language of those countries. In the Indonesian context, English is still categorized as a foreign language. This is because despite English being the main foreign language learned in educational institutions in Indonesia, it is not for everyday usage. However, on the other hand, in countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, English is categorized as a second language. As a result, the English learning techniques will differ in these countries. Indonesians must learn English to excel, while people from Malaysia and Singapore acquire the language. However, Panggabean (2015) states that most Indonesian students think English is the most difficult subject at school compared to other subjects, such as Economics, Physics, and Mathematics.

Nordquist (2020) states that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a learning method by non-native speakers where English is not the dominant language in that particular country. Hussain (2017) further characterizes this method as a conscious process to achieve specific purposes related to work or education. In addition, language learning emphasizes written language, particularly form, rules, and procedures. Accordingly, language learning relies heavily on the motivation and interest of the learners as a learning foundation. However, this contrasts with language acquisition, where motivation is unnecessary since language acquisition is a naturally occurring agenda in the learners' society.

Effective teaching methods are needed to garner learners' motivation and interest to succeed in learning. The effective teaching method recognizes overall learners' potential from various intelligence approaches. However, what happens in practice is far from adequate. Most educators in Indonesia still apply conventional teaching methods up to this day, i.e., they spend the vast majority of the class time lecturing students and summarizing the content of the textbooks without giving students sufficient time to practice their skills of critical thinking (Suyadi, 2016) – something that has also been observed by Utomo (2005) and Weston (2008). This old-fashioned way of learning forces learners to study and memorize English grammar rules and vocabulary. Ultimately, the goal of learning is to secure their grades through exams. Mokhtar (2016) argues that this goal will make the value of education meaningless as a result.

On top of that, the conventional method solely emphasizes one cognitive ability based on logical-mathematical without considering other aspects.

A similar condition is apparent in Kasih Bangsa Elementary School, one of the elementary schools in Bandung, Indonesia. This school is considered new because it was built in 2008. Kasih Bangsa Elementary School is still limited in terms of teachers and facilities. Of 21 teachers, there are only three English teachers for six grades. Besides, the limited teaching and learning facilities might be another obstacle to students' learning process.

Taking everything into consideration, Kasih Bangsa Elementary School requires assistance, from designing the lesson plans to directly demonstrating them to the students. It is expected that by doing the teaching assistance, the teachers in Kasih Bangsa Elementary School could be aware of the significance of effective teaching methods that do not rely merely on recitation. Most importantly, the teachers are encouraged to change their teaching methods in the future to improve their teaching quality. Moreover, the improved teaching methods can be applied not only to English but also to other subjects.

One of the ways to an effective teaching method is to recognize learners' various intelligences. Howard Gardner proposes that each person is unique in terms of intelligence. In Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory, which became the foundation of teaching assistance, there are eight types of intelligences, and each person may possess different intelligences. The eight intelligences include visual-spatial, linguistic-verbal, logical-mathematical, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist intelligence (Davis et al., 2011).

Visual-spatial is the ability to visualize things. People with this intelligence excel in reading maps, graphics, videos, or pictures. Secondly, linguistic-verbal is the intelligence to use words well in written and spoken communication, enabling them to read, memorize, and write well. The most common intelligence is most likely to be logical-mathematical. People with this intelligence are good at critical thinking, identifying patterns, and analyzing problems logically (Davis et al., 2011). Kinesthetic intelligence allows people to move their body parts, conduct physical activities, and control their bodies well. They also have excellent coordination and speed. As the name suggests, people with musical intelligence have music-related skills, namely analyzing voices, rhymes, and patterns. They are capable of arranging songs and performing. Next is interpersonal intelligence, which enables people to interact and understand

people easily. It is easy for them to evaluate the emotions and motivations of people around them. On the other hand, people with intrapersonal intelligence know best about themselves, such as their emotions, motivations, and feelings. Lastly, people possessing naturalist intelligence tend to nurture nature, animals, and other related things (Davis et al., 2011).

A book titled *At the Zoo* is employed as an educational resource at Kasih Bangsa Elementary School to assist in the learning process. This book, which utilizes Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory, was written by several lecturers at the English Department, Maranatha Christian University, Bandung. The book consists of 13 chapters, covering various types of multiple intelligences as English teaching methods. In order to enhance the book's utility in the classroom, it is accompanied by a teacher's guide detailing how to demonstrate the activities effectively. A supplementary CD containing props and extra activities is also available if required.

Methods

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a method that involves collaboration between researchers and community members to address a research question or issue (Holkup et al., 2004). This method is typically used in public health or social issues. For example, Luo et al. (2019) discuss how the use of the CBPR method in understanding the challenges faced by low socioeconomic families in providing high-quality language interactions for young children, resulting in lower cognitive and academic achievement by these children; this results in the acknowledgment that funding is one of the biggest challenges in reversing this situation, which leads to the suggestions on how early intervention in language learning should be done by caregivers instead. CBPR aims to engage communities in research and promote active participation and partnership between researchers and their study communities, a notion which is agreed upon by several previous studies – highlighting that community members need to be involved in the adaptation process (Stanton et al., 2006, Stefanich et al., 2006, Tsarouk et al., 2007).

Utilizing the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) method, this community service program unfolded in three stages. In the initial phase, Maranatha Christian University lecturers interviewed three English teachers at Kasih Bangsa Elementary School several weeks before the teaching demonstration. These interviews aimed to assess the teaching methods

employed so far and identify areas for potential enhancement. Following this, the teachers were introduced to the underlying theory and teaching resources that would be the basis for their instructional approach. This preparatory stage was essential to ensure that the teachers had a comprehensive understanding of the theory and instructional materials, enabling them to apply the teaching methods during student assistance effectively. In the final stage, Maranatha students conducted a teaching demonstration, incorporating the concept of Multiple Intelligences to benefit the students. This stage allowed the teachers to witness the direct implementation of the previously acquired theory.

This community service program engaged three Maranatha Christian University lecturers and eleven students. The students were divided into three groups according to their respective responsibilities. Initially, seven students assumed the role of teachers for the first through third grades. Two students were dedicated to supporting the writing process, while an additional two students were responsible for documentation. Moreover, on the day of the teaching demonstration, 94 elementary school students were present, comprising 37 first-graders, 22 second-graders, and 35 third-graders.

Results and Discussions

Based on the interview results with the English teachers, the study revealed that Kasih Bangsa Elementary School has four periods of English within a week, each lasting 35 minutes. As for the teaching method, the teachers gave the first to third-grade students flashcards, whereas fourth to sixth-graders were given vocabulary from their textbooks. The teachers believed that from fourth grade onwards, they should be able to learn the conventional way by memorizing the lesson. After memorizing, the students were asked to describe a list of vocabulary words and make sentences from them. The students were extremely excited by the time they were learning about vocabulary. However, on the other hand, they seemed disenchanted when they learned grammar. This method of learning was used for every topic in the English subject. Consequently, since students were required to memorize a substantial amount of content, they became fatigued and demotivated to engage in further study.

Concerning the examination, since the format was only filling in the blanks or answering questions, it is believed that those exams only rely on the student's ability to memorize and use their logic. The teachers also conducted games for the students, but only once in a while, which

made the learning process rather monotonous for the students and teachers. In addition, when informed about the Multiple Intelligences theory proposed by Howard Gardner, the teachers from Kasih Bangsa Elementary School had not heard about it before.

The teaching demonstration done by several Maranatha Christian University students applied different methods that focused on the Multiple Intelligence theory. At the beginning of learning, students at each level were introduced to animal-related vocabulary using different methods. By emphasizing kinesthetic, visual-spatial, and logical-mathematical intelligence, Grade 1 students were introduced to the vocabulary by utilizing physical movements. For instance, students had to make trunks with their hands when describing elephants. Active movement enhances their kinesthetic intelligence while helping them remember their vocabularies.



Fig. 1. A Maranatha Christian University student demonstrates the elephant's trunk to first graders

As for Grade 2 students, vocabularies were introduced using randomized flashcards between the picture and the animal's name. This type of teaching activity improved the child's logical-mathematical and linguistic-verbal skills.

Finally, Grade 3 students learned animal vocabulary through songs that affected their musical, linguistic, kinesthetic, and logical-mathematical intelligence.



Fig. 2. Maranatha Christian University students using flashcards in teaching vocabulary to second graders



Fig. 3. A Maranatha Christian University student playing the guitar and singing a song to develop third graders' musical intelligence

After recognizing the vocabulary, students in each class did some exercises to understand further and remember what they had learned before. The exercises varied based on the student's potential, for example, attaching pictures to animal names or completing stories and songs. Afterward, the teacher and students discussed the exercises to ensure they understood the material well. Moreover, in Grade 3, since musical intelligence became the focus of learning, the students were invited to sing a song about animals entitled "Let's Go to the Zoo" together. At the end of the lesson, they got rewards such as stationery and stickers to increase their motivation to learn. Students eager to come forward and answer the questions were also given extra rewards.

Furthermore, this teaching assistance received positive reactions from the teachers and the students throughout the process. The teachers were grateful, feeling that the teaching assistance greatly inspired them. As for the students, high enthusiasm could be seen from all grades while the learning process progressed. The teaching demonstration showed that the Kasih Bangsa Elementary School students had diverse abilities and intelligence; some even had special needs. Regardless of this fact, they were highly motivated to study English. This can be proven by their active participation in learning the materials, doing exercises in the book, and participating in interactive class activities. However, some students in the second and third grades were seen to pay better attention to the subject than the first-grade students due to fewer students in the second and third-grade classes, which made them able to concentrate more easily.

Conclusion

This teaching assistance program is deemed successful in the comprehensive development of English language skills among Kasih Bangsa Elementary School students, as it considers their diverse intelligence. Through this initiative, students have shown increased enthusiasm for learning English, as it does not rely solely on one type of intelligence, such as logical-mathematical intelligence.

For further community service in this area, it is advisable for all fellow researchers interested in conducting a similar program to incorporate multiple intelligences and encompass a broader range of topics in the teaching demonstrations. It is also recommended that the researchers conduct ongoing observations over a specified period following the teaching demonstrations to ensure teachers' accurate application of the instructional theory.

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