

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

English is a crucial language since it plays an important role as a bridge to exchange information among countries in this globalization era. Such condition requires people to have proficiency in English. For that reason, in Indonesia English has been taught since in primary schools.

However, teaching English in primary schools “can be both a rewarding and a demanding experience” (Halliwell, 1992: 2). Halliwell asserts that teachers need to be clear about what they are going to do. It includes how teachers treat learners in teaching-learning process.

In a classroom, learner A might be good at understanding materials through songs while learner B might demonstrate better understanding through pictures. It may be because student A has high sensitivity in musical thing while student B does not really catch up with it. Consequently, teachers should take into account learners’ strengths in designing learning activities.

Based on the explanation above, many language educators start to use a new approach to maximize learners’ strengths (Armstrong, 2009). Then, Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory emerged and it has been used in Indonesia. MI theory states that someone may possess different intelligences from other people. These intelligences are linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist (Baum, Viens & Slatin, 2005; Campbell & Campbell, 1999; Fleetham, 2006; Gardner, 2003).

MI theory has been reported to be effective in developing individual capacity. Chen's work (2005) in a classroom for junior college students in Taiwan showed that MI benefitted students in encouraging them to learn English and improving their four language English skills. Other related studies conducted in Indonesian young learners' classroom settings (see Dewi, 2007; Elroy, 2008; Komariah, 2007; Marliani, 2007; Paridawati, 2007; Suhartatik, 2008; Sundusiah, 2005). Dewi (2007) explained that MI theory helped students improve their abilities, such as imitating sounds and knowing new vocabulary. Elroy (2008) and Marliani (2007) found that MI theory created a fun and meaningful English learning. Additionally, Paridawati (2007) stated that MI theory improved students' English vocabulary achievement while Sundusiah (2005) discovered that MI theory improved students' English writing. Furthermore, Komariah (2007) and Suhartatik (2008) asserted that MI-based instruction was influential in encouraging students to learn English. Therefore, MI theory can be implemented in this present study.

This study attempts to investigate if MI theory has been attended to by the observed teacher, the advantages and the barriers of MI implementation in the classroom. The results of the study are expected to contribute to the development of MI implementation in classroom. In addition, through MI theory, teachers are encouraged to conduct a teaching-learning process which emphasizes on students' strengths. The idea of MI theory can also help students at all levels recognize their highly-developed and less-developed intelligences. Therefore, they can implement MI theory in their learning activities in order to maximize their potentials.

1.2 Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

1. Has multiple intelligence theory been attended to by the teacher in the classroom?
2. If multiple intelligence theory has been attended to, what are the advantages and barriers of implementing it in the teaching-learning process?

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aimed to investigate:

1. If multiple intelligence theory has been attended to by the teacher in the classroom.
2. The advantages and barriers of implementing multiple intelligence theory in the teaching-learning process.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In Bandung, where the present study took place, few studies related to Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory implementation in the classroom have been conducted. Therefore, this study is urgent as it will contribute to the development of MI implementation in classroom, especially for the school where this study is conducted.

Even though MI is a well-known theory among language educators, not every single teacher at schools has already known about it. Some teachers may have

understood about it while some others may not. Thus, this study presents a real picture on how MI-based teaching strategies are applied in classroom. Teachers can both adopt and adapt the teaching strategies for their teaching-learning process in the class.

MI theory gives teachers benefits not only in improving their pedagogical competence but also in developing their social competence. The teachers' understanding of MI theory can also affect their professionalism. MI theory encourages teachers to accommodate students' different strengths by providing a wide range of learning activities. Besides, MI theory enables teachers to assess students' performance based on their strengths. By doing so, students are given chances to demonstrate their best.

Although this study is focused on young learners, the idea of MI theory is universal. Students at all levels can implement MI theory in their learning activities. The results of this study are expected to encourage students at all levels to be aware of their highly-developed and less-developed intelligences. Therefore, they can maximize their strengths so that they are able to reach their success sooner.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focused on if MI theory has been attended to by the teacher in the classroom. In addition, the researcher attempts to find out advantages and barriers of implementing MI theory encountered by the teacher. This study was conducted in an elementary school located in Bandung, West Java.

1.6 Clarification of Main Terms

- a. Multiple Intelligence Theory: A theory, initially proposed by Gardner (2003), stating that someone may possess different intelligences from other people. These intelligences are linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist intelligence.
- b. Young Learners: in this study, young learners are defined as learners at age 6 – 8 (first and third graders of elementary school).

1.7 Organization of the paper

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one consists of background, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, clarification of main terms and organization of the paper.

Chapter two provides theories that are relevant to the study. Chapter three contains research methodology that consists of research design, sites and participants, data collecting techniques, and data analysis. Chapter four reveals the findings and discussions. Chapter five presents the conclusions and suggestions.