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The School House

The Publication of the JALT Teaching Younger Learners SIG

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From the Editor

Happy New Year! I'm sure each one of you, our readers, deserve a standing ovation for getting through 2020. Now 2021 is well underway I hope you have renewed hope and strength for whatever may come your way. Last year was a year of navigating through 'unchartered waters' and 'exploring new dimensions' in our teaching. Now, medical advances give us hope, and I hope this edition of The School House does the same. We have a very international edition to start the year, containing submissions from various parts of the world including Wales, Vietnam, Nigeria as well as Japan.

Flora Komlosi-Ferdinand discusses the importance of teaching young learners Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Her explanations are pertinent to us teaching here in Japan and it is a topic that is not much discussed here. I hope you find her five strategies not only food for thought but something you may look at weaving into your classes.

Gaby Benthien gives us a solid foundation about using Multiple Intelligences (MI) and how to ensure their integration into the classroom. Following on from Gaby, Dung Nguyen focuses on using MI-based Language Activities to Enhance Learning Motivation in EFL young learners; something every teacher ponders.

Boluwaji Oshodi & Adewale K. Rafiu discuss the implications and impact of the language of instruction by comparing the languages of instruction on two groups of children. Relating these finding to teaching English through the learners' mother tongue, or maintaining an English-only classroom environment, open up opportunities for discussion.

Over the course of this year, starting in our next issue of The School House there will be a three-part article showcasing student reflections on multi-media book review projects. It is packed with information, which alone may be a source of inspiration to many of you. Something we can look forward to.

While we continue navigating in these unusual circumstances please think about sharing any tips on how you are adapting. Alternatively, a 'my share' article is another idea. Whatever you would like to write, please consider submitting it to The School House. We will look it over and help you brush it up as our team of wonderful reviewers give you their input. For more information see the last page of this issue.

Take care and here's to wishing you a happy and healthy 2021!

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Message from the TYL SIG Coordinator

Hi SIG membership,

As the beginning of a new year starts, I am reminded of the last time many of us get together in person. It was the February EBM in Tsukuba. That seems like a long time ago, but I have been encouraged by the efforts of many teachers in our organization since then. These teachers have stepped up and shown that even in these novel times, we can not only get by but actually grow from online learning. To help with this new way of teaching, we have had many conferences and professional development seminars to help our membership use the tools available to them. Of course, these have all been online and using remote applications to get that information to you.

Last year also brought a few changes to our SIG. We have had 5 officers continue in their current positions as representatives of our SIG. We also have a few new officers. Specifically, a few officers have had to resign due to personal reasons and that is totally understandable. In the vacuum left, we had a very successful election and were able to replace all officers. In fact, we even got a few more to join our team. We welcome back our former coordinators Jane Takizawa to now be programs chair and Mary Virgil Uchida to take charge of JALT Junior (JJ). These appointments were announced at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November but just in case here they are again.

> Your 13 Officers: Coordinator: Grant Osterman, Membership: Paul Nanton, Treasurer: Paul Nanton, Program Chair: Jane Takizawa, Co-Chair Katie Kato, JJ Chair: Mary Virgil, Publicity Chair: Gaby Benthien, Co-Chair Nicholas Wilson, Webmaster: Nicholas Wilson, Social Media Coordinator: Brittny Okahara, Publications Chair: Kate Sato, Publications Co-chair: Michael Pettovello, Reviewer: Jean Taylor, Members at Large: Marian Hara and Marybeth Kamibeppu.

What we have accomplished is truly a team effort, and I have nothing but praise and admiration for all your officers. We have also finalized our constitution to be ratified in February at the JALT executive board meeting. This has been a long process, but the light is at the end of this tunnel.

As you may have also noticed, we have a new logo. Thanks to the efforts of Kate Sato and Gaby Benthien, we now have a new look that perfectly fits our goals. That coupled with our new webmaster Nicholas Wilson and social media coordinator Brittny Okahara, we should be able to get more information to you via your social media channel of choice. Again, I have nothing but praise for the efforts of your officers and the volunteer work they do. Our flagship publication, *The School House*, is going strong and we have added a new reviewer with Jean Taylor. If you would like to get published in this journal, or if you would like to write an article, please contact the editor (Kate Sato: the email is at the back of this publication). There are many opportunities for you to get involved in our SIG, so I would like to ask that you reach out to your officers and see how they can help you enhance your professional development.

Finally, as we look forward to a new year filled with promise, I thank you and wish you each a safe and happy 2021.

Sincerely,

Dr. Grant Osterman
TYL SIG Coordinator

Teaching English-related Emotional Intelligence to Young Learners

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EQ), the capability to recognize, comprehend and conscientiously express emotions and to employ those emotions as a thought-facilitating tool (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004) is heavily embedded in individuals' original culture and world view. English language learners often face difficulties when their well-founded EQ skills do not necessarily function when using another language with people from other cultures. Not being able to recognize certain mannerisms or thought processes which are integral parts a foreign language may entirely bias or even prevent communication among the parties (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019). It is particularly important to start educating students from an early age. I propose five empirical teaching strategies that facilitate young learners' understanding of some context-embedded behaviours. These strategies focus on 1) how spatial zones differ across cultures, 2) appropriate communication styles, 3) body language mirroring, 4) emotion recognition across cultures, and 5) being specific. This approach may provide a holistic understanding about the English language and its speakers, and promote successful communication skills.

Communication fails: cultural reasons?

Communication across cultures can be a challenging event, in particular if a lingua franca is used (Galloway & Numajiri, 2019). Given the immense cultural variety of such speakers, cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills are even harder to adapt (Mahboob, 2018). Currently, English is the most widely learnt and spoken second and/or foreign language in the world. Throughout its learning process, individuals often use their first language and their own culture's social-emotional skills as a filter in processing English (Wang, 2014; Nor & Rashid, 2018). Eventually, this behaviour may fossilize and may prevent communication success among individuals from different cultural backgrounds, which is often a source of anxiety and negative classroom emotions (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002; Schutz & Pekrun, 2007; Schutz, Cross, Hong & Osbon, 2007; Fu, 2015). Also, the relationships between emotions, emotional intelligence and events may culturally vary and this may condition foreign-language learning success (Dewaele, 2018; Mahboob, 2018; Dinçay, Barnes & Ulum, 2019).

Emotional intelligence, as described by Brackett, Mayer and Warner (2004), is the capability to recognize, comprehend and conscientiously express emotions and to employ those emotions as a thought-facilitating tool. The development of emotional intelligence is strongly connected with educational success from a young age. In fact, emotional comprehension and control are essential for

the individual's growth, educational accommodation and productivity (Gershon & Pellitteri, 2018). Cefai and Cooper (2009) state that alongside acquiring necessary academic competences at school, young learners need extensive emotional education to become responsible, tolerant, resilient, cooperative and socially wise individuals. Such emotional intelligence skills may vary according to cultures and languages, a factor to be extensively considered in foreign language education. In fact, being aware of English language-related EQ and being able to act upon it has enormous cognitive benefits on its own, furthermore it empowers learner soft skills and results in successful communication.

In this paper, whenever 'English' as a language is used, it refers to global English, as the average language learner usually meets English speakers from a variety of backgrounds. Therefore, highlighting one specific English-language related culture could be biased and entirely misleading. However, there may be a conflict regarding the variety learners should adopt, since there is such a great variety of cultures and therefore emotional intelligences where English is spoken. The key to this dilemma may often depend on specific circumstances such as the parents' wish or the institutions' mission where the learning takes place (Pavlenko, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Feng Teng & Lixun, 2020). Unless such specific requirements are present, educators should aim for teaching skills that are shared in the English speaking world in general. This may seem as a challenging task, particularly because at an early age when language learning motivation is often extrinsic and is mostly about fun and discovery, students heavily rely on their own cultural norms and emotional intelligence when learning English (Asmali, 2017; Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020b). While learners relying on their native language and cultural structure is a very natural process, as English is gradually taught, some basic English-related emotional intelligence elements should be offered at an appropriate level. To achieve this, five key approaches are proposed. These should be introduced and cautiously developed alongside language teaching. These strategies focus on 1) how spatial zones differ across cultures, 2) appropriate communication styles, 3) body language mirroring, 4) emotion recognition across cultures 5) being specific.

While exploring these points further, it is important to consider that respecting learners' cultural identities should be a priority for all schools and teachers (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Jørgensen, 2006; Swain, 2013; Butler, 2019). A relatively common mistake in foreign language education is that learners' own cultural background is not fully taken into consideration by foreign teachers (Morris & Mims, 1999; Allred, 2018). However, when teaching English, the focus should not be on transforming learners into foreigners, but to teach them some key qualities, which should enable them to fully function in the target language. Therefore, it would be necessary to have a basic understanding of the local culture, as the following strategies must always be based on concepts that

are clear and understandable to the learners from their own cultural perspectives (Brown 2007; Huynh, Oakes & Grossman, 2018; Dewaele, Petrides & Furnham, 2008). Importantly, the following five ideas should not necessarily be introduced in a linear fashion, rather, according to the perceived and empirical needs of the children's ages and level of study.

How spatial zones differ across cultures is a commonly unrecognised factor in foreign language teaching. Western countries and Asian countries may have drastically different definitions of personal space, and consequent behaviours partially have their roots in locally acceptable cultural intelligence. It is vital to educate learners from a young age that in other countries different norms are accepted and endorsed. In fact, introducing these concepts of differences alongside the grammar and the fun part of language teaching may prevent culture shock or inappropriate behaviours once the learners meet foreigners other than the school staff (Liu, Volčič & Gallois, 2015; Fiori & Vesely-Maillefer, 2018; McKee, 2018).

Appropriate communication styles. Inevitably, teachers are role models in shaping learners' communication style and EQ in English. Foreign teachers, such as ALTs, or native assistant teachers often appear as less formal, more friendly and associated with more fun and less discipline during their lessons than their local counterparts (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2020b). It is necessary to avoid the association of English language with lack of formal behaviour. It should not be assumed that mastering English related EQ can be acquired in its full complexity without any instruction. In fact, teaching vocabulary and behaviours to empower learners to be able to express themselves in correct, polite ways is vital. (Leffert, Brady & Siperstein, 2009).

Body language mirroring is an essential strategy while learning emotional intelligence skills related to another language (Barkai, 1990). This approach is part of non-verbal communication**,** which helps to interpret the speakers' intentions based on their gestures. Partly, this should naturally occur in the classroom. However, if the teacher is not an appropriate role model, or body language mirroring is not consciously taught, this could do more harm than good. Importantly, the goal is not to alter children's naturally acquired, culturally-embedded body language, or to allow them to senselessly imitate anything foreigners do. Learners should be familiarized with the manifestations of English-related social skills, the body language that accompanies it, and the body language that should be avoided from their own perspective (Tipper, Signorini & Grafton, 2015).

Emotion recognition across cultures is probably one of the most difficult tasks when communicating in a foreign language. It is critical to teach how emotions and implicit wishes are expressed in other cultures (Sparrow & Knight, 2006; Sándorová, 2016; Mahboob, 2018). Teaching ways of expressions and interpretation of emotions should gradually encompass complex ideas. To avoid cross-cultural miscommunication or even offending the others, guessing the other party's

intentions may not be the appropriate strategy. Learners from an early age should be taught to ask for polite clarification. If such a request is properly done, discomfort can be eased and even a certain measure of bonding may take place. In case a country and/or culture where specific-integrative motivation is present, it is desirable to focus on specifics, as opposed to general ideas (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006).

Being specific. The act of being specific in opinions and requests may seem somewhat a personal trait and choice. Here, the focus is on differences between low context communication style, which may be described as individualistic and self-enhancement centred, as opposed to high context communication style, which prefers a collectivistic and group-opinion approach. As many Western cultures (low context) are regarded as individualistic and many Asian cultures (high context) collectivistic, being specific in communication may have an entirely different meaning and may easily lead to misunderstandings. In some high context cultures, non-verbal clues, rather than verbal cues, are more often used to express preferences. However, the same strategies may not work well in English, and the expected outcome of the learner's communication goal may be entirely lost (Gudykunst *et al*, 1996). Hence, it is crucial to teach learners at a young age about when and how being specific is acceptable and expected when speaking English.

Conclusion

Raising awareness about the above mentioned five big challenges can easily be achieved by teaching cultural self-awareness to children (Sarlagtay, 2002; Heyward, 2004). In fact, very few, if any young learners are aware that their culture is unique, or at least, of the exact ways other cultures are different. By incorporating the teaching of cultural differences or different emotional intelligence skills into the lessons, learners may gradually become used to such unique concepts and may assimilate these strategies in their own communication skills when using English (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004; Spirovska-Tevdovska, 2017; Montgomery, McCrimmon, Climie & Ward, 2018). The use of visual materials such as flashcards, short videos, or funny demonstrations and role-plays that offer practical experience ensures understanding of the pragmatic depth of English-related EQ (Gershon & Pellitteri, 2018). However, when using the aforementioned tools, it should be avoided to identify certain behaviours as 'right' or 'wrong'.

To clarify existing foreign culture or language based differences, educators should draw attention to 'this is how people do in other countries'. By this, students' own cultural preparedness and emotions are acknowledged and validated, yet, it is emphasized that different approaches are acceptable when speaking a foreign language. Such strategies may positively affect learners' motivation, engagement and relatability to the language and communication success (Muijs,

Reynolds & Kyriakides, 2016; Shao, Pekrun & Nicholson, 2019; Schäfer, Pels & Kleinert, 2020; Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019, 2020b).

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Balancing Act: Using Multiple Intelligences Theory to Inform Activity/Task Design in the L2 Classroom

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1. What is the Theory of Multiple Intelligences?

The theory of multiple intelligences (MI) was put forward by Howard Gardner in 1983. Howard felt schools were heavily slanted towards developing and fostering a mind capable of doing well on standardized IQ tests, which tends to emphasize linguistic and logical-mathematical skills, and therefore are not fair to other ways of being smart (Gardner, 2006). Hence, Gardner's vision embraces "a pluralistic view of mind, recognizing many different and discrete facets of cognition, acknowledging that that people have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles" (Gardner, 2006, p.5). As a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, and dynamic set of abilities, talents, and mental skills, integrating aspects of Gardner's MI theory can assist educators in designing activities and tasks that acknowledge different kinds of "smart" and thus extend and support ways of using our brains.

2. Why Should We Think About MI in L2 Classes?

As educators, we need to instill an awareness, understanding, and acceptance of diversity in our students. Diversity not only includes gender and culture, but also different ways to be "smart". School subjects and Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) often naturally support one type of intelligence, yet it is possible to incorporate a balance of the eight types of intelligence into general L2 classes by making conscious decisions about task and activity design.

I am sure that we as teachers have all realized that certain activities work well with some students but not with others, and utilizing MI theory when planning lessons is one way of ensuring a balanced approach. Furthermore, MI theory supported project-based learning may have a positive effect on student attitudes and motivation in L2 classes (Bas & Beyhan, 2010). In addition, elements within the MI are found and valued across individual cultures (Armstrong, 2017), giving us the opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity through MI theory in L2.

3. What Are the Eight Intelligences? What Activities Foster or Support the Eight Intelligences in the L2 Classroom?

The eight intelligences are present in all of us and interrelate in complex ways. The initial 1983 MI set comprised seven types of intelligence, with Gardner adding naturalist intelligence after ten years to bring the total number to eight (Gardner, 2006).

3.1 Linguistic-Verbal Intelligence: Word Smart

While humans have an innate capacity for acquiring a language, people who possess strong linguistic-verbal intelligence tend to enjoy writing, reading, and doing presentations or participating in a debate. A focus on oral traditions including storytelling and riddles in addition to other linguistic-verbal skills may also be present depending on norms within a society.

Activities and strategies include:

- storytelling
- (extensive) reading
- diaries, essays, reports, publishing (e.g. class newspaper)
- grammar and vocabulary exercises (e.g. gap-fill, sentence rearranging or paragraph completion)
- brainstorming
- using audio recorders etc. for interviews

3.2 Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: Number Smart

This MI is often referred to as scientific thinking. People are good at making deductions, observations, recognizing patterns, puzzles and analyzing problems logically. Individuals tend to think conceptually about numbers, relationships and patterns.

Activities and strategies include:

- tasks involving calculations, classifications and categorizations (e.g. working out logistics for what to take on a picnic or classifying words into groups)
- tasks related to science(e.g. reading/watching science fiction and discussing whether the technology is feasible or not, or thinking of solutions to social issues that require some scientific knowledge)
- tasks focused on finding contradictions in sentences (e.g. “There are no adjectives in this short sentence.”
- asking focused, open-ended questions that encourage reflection (Socratic questioning) for problem solving (e.g. environmental issues) with higher level students

3.3 Visual-Spatial Intelligence: Picture Smart

People who have a strong visual-spatial intelligence are good at forming mental images to solve a problem or achieve a result. Individuals are usually good at directions, interpreting visuals, playing games such as shogi or chess, and the visual arts.

Activities and strategies include:

- highlighting or color-coding text
- using picture metaphors (e.g. understanding culture as an iceberg, and sketching and drawing pictures to explain a concept)
- using games involving pictures, e.g. Pictionary, dominoes or memory
- using visualization techniques in the classroom, whether for motivation (e.g. What do I want to be?), visualization of text or creation of mind maps
- using visuals, colors, and shapes in handouts
- setting poster/multimedia projects

3.4 Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: Body Smart

This intelligence relates to physical movement and its control. Individuals usually have excellent hand-eye coordination, and may solve problems or remember by doing, i.e. through movement.

Activities and strategies include:

- encouraging students to use parts of the body or facial expressions to communicate in class (e.g. counting with fingers or frowning when not understanding something)
- encouraging use of movement i.e. actions, dance etc. in (role) plays
- using movement related games (e.g. charades, making a letter using the body or hands, and shadow plays)
- using tactile/hands-on activities (e.g. black box, craft activities such as making letters or more complex concepts out of clay/paper/*nendo*/pipe cleaners etc.)
- using total physical response (TPR) teaching strategies

3.5 Musical Intelligence: Music Smart

Musical Intelligence relates to an understanding, recognition and sensitivity of tonal and rhythm patterns. Individuals usually enjoy music related activities, can remember songs and tones, and understand musical structure.

Activities and strategies include:

- using L2 specific songs to teach language (e.g. Super Simple English songs: *Walking, Walking*)
- using songs to learn about and discuss different issues (e.g. Black Eyed Peas: *Where is the love?*; Def Leppard: *From the inside*; Michael Jackson: *Earth song*)

- using songs to predict words or sentence structures, or as a listening activity (e.g. Beatles: *Hello/Goodbye*)
- using syllable stress dots and/or tapping out the syllables to remember the rhythmic pattern of words

3.6 Interpersonal Intelligence: People Smart

Interpersonal Intelligence operates through relationships. Individuals are good at relating to and working effectively with others by means of understanding and assessing their desires, emotions, intentions, and motivations.

Activities and strategies include:

- encouraging peer support, sharing, and evaluation
- making people sculptures, people words and sentences (each person is a letter or word)
- using any style of collaborative learning (e.g. group work or team work)
- using board games or team games
- setting tasks in which the completion is dependent on considering others
- setting simulation tasks (e.g. Let's time travel: What would life in 2060 be like?)

3.7 Intrapersonal Intelligence: Self Smart

Intrapersonal intelligence deals with the self. Individuals have a strong awareness of self and their own desires, emotions, intentions and motivations. Their strengths include self-reflection, self-recognition, introspection and metacognition.

Activities and strategies include:

- encouraging students to make personal connections to topics (e.g. How does this article relate to me?)
- offering activity choices or differential learning handouts
- using activities that are completed individually (e.g. language-based activities including coloring-in, tracing, reading, writing, and grammar exercises or motivational and reflective activities)

3.8 Naturalistic Intelligence: Nature Smart

Naturalistic Intelligence was a later addition to the MI set. Individuals have a keen awareness of nature and the ability to recognize, distinguish, and categorize items and assess their relationships. In addition, people who are nature smart often exhibit an interest in environmental issues. Gardner

(2006, p.19) argues that our consumer culture draws on naturalist intelligence in terms of how we choose one item rather than another when shopping.

Activities and strategies include:

- any study related to the environment or nature
- collecting and using natural objects for show and tell, black box etc.
- going on nature walks, story-telling walks, and field trips
- making a nature-based video
- planting vegetables, trees, and flowers or keeping an animal at school and making a class roster to take care of them
- using animals and plants to encourage language production related to body or plant parts, colors, numbers, measurements, etc. or to shift the focus of communication from people
- using the view outside for discussion starters

This section introduced each of the eight intelligences and gave some suggestions for possible (L2) activities. Many of these require interaction between intelligences, thus one activity can support and foster multiple intelligences. On the other hand, some individuals may exhibit a preference for using and applying certain intelligences to complete tasks. For example, some students may greatly enjoy and respond well to an activity that incorporates music and actions, whereas others may find it challenging to complete (Armstrong, 2017). Hence, it is important to balance activities across the eight types of intelligence. For further details and activity ideas, please see Armstrong (2017), Bas and Beyhan (2010), Hoerr (2010), Gardner (2006), and Puchta and Rinvolucri (2005).

You can introduce the concept of MI theory to your students by asking them who they think are skilled in these eight areas in the class, school, and among famous people. Subsequent discussion and reflection could also highlight the existence of different types of diversity to promote inclusion in the school and local community. The picture book by Massey (2016) is useful for explaining MI to younger learners.

4. What Are We Doing in L2 Classes Already?

We may ourselves promote and foster certain intelligences over others. The rubrics in Table 1 and Table 2 offer a useful starting point to verify whether there is a tendency to favor intelligences when planning our classes or activities. Choose one of your L2 classes and some frequently used activities. Is there a balance of activities? Do the activities tend to cluster around particular intelligences? Which intelligence does not feature heavily in your lesson plans?

Table 1

Overall MI Rubric

Intelligence	*Today's class*	*Classes this week*	*Monthly curriculum*	*Full Course*
Linguistic-Verbal				
Logical-Mathematical				
Visual-Spatial				
Bodily-Kinesthetic				
Musical				
Interpersonal				
Intrapersonal				
Naturalistic				

Table 2

Individual Task/Activity Rubric

Intelligence	*Task(s)/activity(ies) clustered around a topic or project (e.g. poster presentation/ film)*
Linguistic-Verbal	
Logical-Mathematical	
Visual-Spatial	
Bodily-Kinesthetic	
Musical	
Interpersonal	
Intrapersonal	
Naturalistic	

By analyzing the results in Table 1 and Table 2, we can establish the extent to which our classes support each intelligence, in other words to ascertain whether our classes bolster MI diversity.

5. Conclusion

Diversity comes in many forms. As showcased in this article, there are myriad ways to apply MI theory in the L2 classroom to ensure different ways of being smart are accepted and promoted through purposeful design and selection of tasks. Echoing the words of Gardner, I hope that this article has

encouraged you to (re)consider a more "nuanced view of intelligence" (Gardner, 2006, p.255). Let us support and celebrate various types of diversity in our L2 classes.

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Using MI-based Language Activities to Enhance Learning Motivation in EFL Young Learners

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Abstract

Multiple Intelligences theory shows many educational implications that are interesting for educators to considerate (Christison, 1998). This study aimed to explore how classroom activities designed on Multiple Intelligences Theory can enhance learning motivation in EFL young learners. The research participants included 101 young learners at Binh Thuan Province Vocational College in Phan Thiet City, Binh Thuan Province. One class was treated as the experimental group (EG) and the other as the control group (CG). A series of MI-based activities and games drawn from Multiple Intelligences were incorporated into 8 units in the textbook, *English for Vocational school, Intermediate level* during the experimental teaching and a questionnaire survey was conducted to get the students' feedback on motivation after engaging in these activities and games. The findings substantiated the benefits of MI-based activities and games in increasing motivation in young learners.

Keywords: EFL young learners, MI-based activities, motivation

Introduction

Multiple Intelligences Theory is one of the noteworthy innovations in language teaching over the course of years (Botelho, 2003). Teachers can meet the wide diversity in learners with the help of this theory with designing teaching activities to motivate learners (Christison, 1996). However, little concern has been displayed to this theory in Vietnam (Tran, 2009). This led the researcher to conduct this study to explore whether MI classroom activities can encourage young learners in the learning process. Guiding this study is the research question: To what extent do MI activities improve learners' learning motivation?

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory

Gardner's proposed Multiple Intelligences Theory was originally sketched with seven intelligences: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1999). In the late nineties, naturalist intelligence was added (Botelho, 2003). Gardner stated "multiple" to emphasize various human capacities and "intelligence" as "the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (Gardner, 1983, p.11).

The description of eight intelligences

Following is the description of each intelligence combined from Shaw & Hawes (1998), Gardner (1999), Smith (2003), and Tran (2009).

Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence: The ability to use language in speaking and writing. It is also the capacity to understand patterns of a language, to remember information and to use language to convince others. People possessing a strong verbal-linguistic intelligence are fond of reading books and have a wide range of vocabulary.

Logical -Mathematical Intelligence: The ability to think about problems logically and to use numbers effectively. People with this kind of intelligence often do well on standardized written language tests.

Visual-Spatial Intelligence: The ability to visualize things. It also involves the sensitivity to shape, color, and space. People who use this intelligence prefer drawing a picture to writing a paragraph.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: The ability to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions through body language and movements. People with this intelligence have a good body control and sense of touch. They like physical movement rather than just sitting still.

Musical Intelligence: The ability to convey feelings through music. It also includes the ability to recognize and use pitch, rhythm, melody. People who are musically intelligent can remember songs well or play some music instruments.

Interpersonal Intelligence: The ability to involve the sensitivity to other people's moods, feelings, thoughts, and needs. It is also the ability to understand, and to empathize with others in a suitable way. People with a high preference for this intelligence are good at persuading, negotiating, and team working.

Intrapersonal Intelligence: The ability for self-analysis, self-reflection, and self-consciousness. It consists of the capacity to understand oneself and then regulate one's own life. Those who are strong on this intelligence are good at handling their own feelings.

Naturalist Intelligence: The ability to recognize and classify species in the natural world. People with an excellent naturalist intelligence can distinguish harmful species from beneficial ones in many situations.

Multiple Intelligences Theory and learners' motivation

Motivation is considered as an internal force that activates a behavioral pattern, thought process, action or reaction. Two kinds of motivation are extrinsic and intrinsic. The learners will be more successful when they have strong intrinsic motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Learners have chances to develop their confidence, allow themselves risk taking and become engaged in the learning process with MI-based activities (Greenhawk, 1997). Emig (1997) said that MI-based activities can develop engagement, improve participation, and raise confidence and interest in learners. Multiple Intelligences theory was applied in a lesson on rain forests to boost motivation. Learners at Westmark School in Encino California were asked to decorate their classroom like a rainforest when studying about rainforests. They were also asked to gather photos about rain forests, and they learned about forest animals by touching an iguana and a monkey. Learners were immersed in such exciting and practical activities which enriched their learning motivation (Wagmeister & Shifrin, 2000).

In order to "identify, document, and disseminate practices that are employed in schools that link Multiple Intelligences theory with benefits for learners" (Kornhaber, Fierros, & Veenema, 2004, p. 11), Project Zero, a Howard Gardner's research group, carried out a three-and-a-half year study. The data was collected from 41 diverse schools from 18 different states through telephone interviews, school visits, classroom observations, and conversations. The data revealed that approximately 80 percent of schools reported improvements in learning motivation for learners with learning disabilities.

Research Methodology

Research design and instrumentation

In order to find out the answer to the above research question, an experimental method with data from questionnaire survey was employed in this study. Nunan (1992) defined the experiment as "a procedure for testing a hypothesis by setting up a situation in which the strength of the relationship between variables can be tested" (p. 230). Because this study explores the impact of MI classroom activities on learning motivation, an experiment was reasonably implemented. Moreover, questionnaires are a universal way to collect data since it is fairly convenient and easily quantifies the data obtained (Kumar, 1996). Therefore, questionnaires were supposed to be useful in collecting the data on learning motivation after applying MI-based classroom activities in the current study. The questionnaires on learning motivation were written in Vietnamese to ensure that investigated learners would have precise understanding of the questions. They were delivered to two groups at the end of the course. Data were processed and analysed using Microsoft Office Excel. The study employed quantitative methods, described by Aliaga & Gunderson (2002), by gathering data in numerical form

and analyzing it through statistical analysis. Additionally, Williams (2011) stated that quantitative research can "employ strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collect data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data" (p. 18). In the other words, this research method was suitable to be used in this study.

Participants

The study was implemented at Binh Thuan Province Vocational College, Phan Thiet city, Binh Thuan province, Vietnam. The participants were young learners at the age of about 15 in two classes. One class (C1) was the control group and the other class (C2) the experimental group. The total number of young learners in the experimental and the control group was 47 and 54 respectively. In the time of experimental teaching, learners of both were taught 8 units in the same course book, *English for Vocational school, Intermediate level*. The control group learnt through the Communicative Approach while the experimental one was taught with the ideas drawn from Multiple Intelligences. All learners have 2 classes of English a week and each class lasts nearly 4 hours. Although attendance is obligatory, learners are allowed to be absent below 20% of the total classes of the course.

MI-based classroom activities used in the teaching period

In order to increase learners' motivation, these following MI-based classroom activities and games adapted from Christison & Kennedy (1999), Gardner (1999), Puchta & Rinvolucri (2005), and Tran (2009) were flexible to be used in the teaching period. In this study, MI-based activities were used in the language learning activities, which were supposed by Richards & Lockhart (2002) including presentation activities, practice activities, memorization activities, comprehension activities, application activities, strategy activities, affective activities, feedback activities, and assessment activities. For instance, the teacher may use charts as the first activity to present grammar patterns in a grammar lesson, learners were asked to summarize a passage after listening to it, to perform a role play after practicing a dialogue, to keep a journal about their feelings, fears, satisfactions that they have in the class then share these with their classmates and the teacher. Learners were taught all the main contents of the course book via MI-based activities which were chosen to suit each unit in the textbook. In every class meeting, activities related at least two intelligences were flexibly combined and displayed.

Activities based on Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence

- Reading short funny stories and paragraphs
- Telling jokes
- Writing instructions and lists
- Playing word games and puzzles

- Giving very short speeches
- Translating some short sentences

Game: Who can remember best?

1. Choose a reading passage of the previous unit and ask students to read this passage in silence within two minutes
2. Ask students to close the books and write down words from this passage in 2 minutes
3. Students mark each other's work, and then count the number of correct words.
4. The student remembering the most words will get the highest score and win.

Activities based on Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

- Sequencing events into a story
- Organizing with Venn diagrams, classifying, symbols using
- Following directions to accomplish a product
- Code making, code breaking

Game: A trick

1. Tell students this riddle:

There were twenty-six sheep on the farm. Two died. How many left?

(When saying it, be sure to run "six" and "sheep" together, so that the sentence could equally well be heard as: "There were twenty sick sheep on the farm".

2. All thoughtful answers are accepted. Students figure out how this can be so.

Activities based on Visual-Spatial Intelligence

- Working on jigsaw puzzles
- Using pictures to create, and illustrate stories
- Drawing tables and pictures
- Making mind maps with images
- Watching videos, and slides

Game: The secret suitcase

1. Ask students to design and draw a suitcase with items by their own imagination.
2. Students then work in pairs and describe their suitcases to each other.
3. Students write a list of objects, swap the list and memorize the objects.
4. Students in turn check the number of objects that their partner remembers.

Activities based on Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

- Incorporating movement into the lessons
- Mimes and role-plays
- "Simon says" type games

- Cooperative group rotation

Game: Camera

1. Students work in pairs: A is the photographer and B is the "camera". A stands behind B with their hands on B's shoulders, B stands up with eyes closed.

2. A selects the space available to take photographs by pressing B's shoulder. B opens eyes for five seconds and remembers exactly what they can see.

3. Swap roles after taking 2 photos using B as camera.

4. Students come back and draw rough outlines on paper of the two pictures they took when they were cameras.

Activities based on Musical Intelligence

- Turning some parts of lessons into a song or rhythmic chant
- Using raps and chants to memorize lesson materials
- Making musical instruments
- Creating songs or tunes

Game: Making a dialogue musical

1. Ask students to listen carefully to a dialogue twice, books closed.

2. Tell the students to open the books and read the dialogue again.

3. Students make the dialogue musical in groups.

4. A representative of each group performs to the whole class.

Activities based on Interpersonal Intelligence

- Group problem solving
- Project work
- Pair work, group discussion
- Peer teaching and peer editing

Game: Dynamic questions

1. In groups, students write 8 open questions they would like to be asked on 8 pieces of paper.

2. Put all the paper slips of all groups in a box which is then given to a certain learner who picks one paper slip up and reads the question.

3. The group who wrote this question gives the answer.

4. Continue to pass the box on

5. The group that has the most chances to answer the questions is the winner.

Activities based on Intrapersonal Intelligence

- Diary keeping
- Writing about personal goals and hopes for the future

- Recording thoughts and feelings
- Self evaluation

Game: Ten minutes of yesterday

1. Asking students to close their eyes 20 seconds to think of what happened yesterday.
2. Tell students to write down what they felt, thought or did within 5 minutes.
3. Call volunteers to read aloud what they wrote.
4. Students listen and choose the piece of writing which is the funniest, the most profound, the saddest, etc.

Activities based on Naturalist Intelligence

- Talking about pets to classmates
- Collecting leaves and flowers to show and describe to others
- Showing slides, clips that features nature
- Plant watching within schoolyard
- Growing a plant and describing the developing process

Game: Secret bags

1. Gather natural objects such as a shell, a flower, a feather and put each in a bag.
2. Select one bag for the first round.
3. Select one student in each group.
4. The representatives come to the front of the class and silently look into the bag without revealing clues about its content.
6. After the group guesses the object, a new observer is selected and the next round begins with the new object.

Results and Discussion

Following is the analysis of the data collected through responses to the questionnaire survey on learning motivation.

Item 1: How often did you go to this class?

Responses	Control group		Experimental group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	12	22.22	19	40.42
Often	13	24.07	22	46.80
Rather often	16	29.62	5	10.63
Sometimes	6	11.11	1	2.12
Seldom	7	12.96	0	0.0
Total	54	100.0	47	100.0

Table 1: Learners' class attendance

The data showed that, in the control group, the percentage of learners who rather often went to class was higher (29.62%) than that of those who attended class very often (22.22%) or often (24.07%). The attendance rate was not generally high. Learners shared that they could imagine what would be carried out in the class meeting without attending the class because there was no much difference between what were in the course book and what were held by the teacher.

Meanwhile, in the experimental group, the majority of learners went to class very often and often (87.22%). Classroom activities showed their attractiveness to learners, so the attendance rate was higher than that in the control group. Learners said that they attended classes to get chances to enjoy activities that did not appear in any class meeting at their full time school. Hence, although they were allowed not to attend under 20% of the periods during the course, they went to class regularly. In short, there was a distinction in learner retention between the two groups.

Item 2: How much did classroom activities interest you?

Responses	Control group		Experimental group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very much	7	12.96	18	38.29
Much	8	14.81	26	55.31
Rather much	12	22.22	2	4.25
A little	10	18.51	1	2.12
Not at all	17	31.48	0	0.00
Total	54	100.0	47	100.0

Table 2: Interest of activities for learners

During the course, in the experimental group, classroom activities were designed based on The MI Theory while in the control group, activities were carried out following primarily the text book instructions.

The results shown in Table 2 revealed that while over 90% of learners in the experimental group found the activities very much and much interested them, just 27.77% of the learners in the control group did. Besides, learners who responded "not at all" to this question were the most numerous learners in the control group while no learners in the experimental group chose this option. In short, the MI-based classroom activities were strong enough to pull learners toward learning.

As far as what the researcher got from short talks with learners during the break time, in the experimental group, learners were keen on activities like singing or moving around the classroom, and even sometimes out of the classroom to school hall. They said that these activities created interest, relaxation, and joy for learners during the class meeting.

Item 3: How often did you take visual aids to class as your teacher's request?

Responses	Control group		Experimental group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	9	16.66	15	31.91
Often	8	14.81	31	65.95
Sometimes	9	16.66	1	2.12
Seldom	17	12.96	0	0
Never	11	20.37	0	0
Total	54	100.0	47	100.0

Table 3: Learners' taking visual aids to class

The teacher required learners to bring to class pictures or visual aids which were easily found in learners' families such as a picture or a simple drawing of a family member, a picture of food or drink, or real household objects such as a tablespoon, a teaspoon, a plastic bottle. These items were related to the lesson topic.

It can be seen that a greater number of learners in the experimental group brought visual aids to class when they were asked to do. In particular, 100% of the learners in the experimental group often or very often prepared visual aids for class whereas just 31.47 % of the learners in the control group did. In the control group, the number of learners who seldom took things to class as requested was the highest (12.96%) while in the experimental group, most learners (65.95%) often brought visual aids to class and, notably, 31.91% of them did it very often.

In the control group, the learners who did not take pictures or objects to class explained that they did not have what requested to bring, or they forgot them at home. Meanwhile, learners in the experimental group indicated that they had fun when taking visual aids to class because this made them relax and helped the release stress in learning.

Item 4: How often did you speak English in class?

Responses	Control group		Experimental group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	8	14.81	12	25.53
Often	10	18.51	23	48.93
Sometimes	18	33.33	9	19.14
Seldom	12	22.22	3	6.38
Never	6	11.11	0	0
Total	54	100.0	47	100.0

Table 4: Learners' speaking English in class

In the control group, the learners did not speak English in class much. In detail, 33.33% of the learners sometimes did, 11.11% of the learners just listened to others and refused to speak when invited, and only 18 out of 54 learners (33.32%) often or very often spoke English in class. However, in the experimental group, the number of learners who often spoke English in class was the highest (48.93%) while 25.53% of the learners did very often, and all students were ready to speak English. Some learners, at the beginning of the course spoke little in class; however, when the activities emerged, they found them joyful, started and got used to speaking English in the classroom. The learners in the experimental group were found to "compete" to speak. The positive noise prevailed in the classroom. In other words, the activities donated the learners' interests and motivated them to speak English in class.

Item 5: How often did you use English outside the classroom? (For example, used English to talk to someone else)

Responses	Control group		Experimental group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	6	11.11	11	23.40
Often	7	12.96	18	38.29
Sometimes	12	22.22	10	21.27
Seldom	13	24.07	5	10.63
Never	16	29.62	3	6.38
Total	54	100.0	47	100.0

Table 5: Learners' use of English outside the classroom

In the control group, 29 learners (53.69%) seldom or never used English outside the classroom while in the experimental group, only 8 learners (17.01%) did. Furthermore, only 13 learners (24.07%) often or very often used English in the control group. In the experimental group, by contrast, 29 learners (61.69%) often or very often did, over twice as much as that in the control group. Using English in class frequently in the experimental group perhaps made learners get used to and love speaking English. However, the chances to speak in class must be shared with other classmates so learners in the experimental group tended to use English more outside the classroom. Clearly, the intrinsic motivation was found in the experimental group.

Item 6: While attending this course, how often did you try to explore English words that you came across? (For example, English on products)

Responses	Control group		Experimental group	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	4	7.40	9	19.14
Often	7	12.96	20	42.55
Sometimes	10	18.51	11	23.40
Seldom	5	9.25	3	6.38
Never	28	51.85	4	8.51
Total	54	100.0	47	100.0

Table 6: Learners' exploration of English words

It is clear that a small percentage of learners in the control group (7.4%) very often tried to explore English words, and nearly half of the learners in the experimental group (42.55%) selected "often", while only 12.96% of the learners in the control group did. In the control group, 51.85% of the learners never explore English words that they come across while in the experimental group, this option was chosen by only one learner (8.51%). Thus, by involving learners in classroom activities, the teacher can increase their learning motivation. Sometimes, learners in the experimental group posed the researcher questions on words or phrases they saw on the products. They said that they were so curious with these words and wanted to know more about them. It was obvious that learning motivation was improved enough for learners to widen knowledge themselves.

Discussion

In short, the learners' responses to the questionnaires on learning motivation denoted the effectiveness of MI-based activities in the classroom. The constructive impacts of MI-based activities could be seen in the greater satisfaction in the learners of the experimental group. The learners in the experimental group were more motivated in learning activities. In particular, learner retention in the experimental group was much higher than that in the control group. Learners showed their interest in activities which activate their learning engagement and they were ready to participate in learning process including preparing and bringing visual aids to class. Furthermore, learners in the experimental group tended to use English not only in the class but also outside the classroom.

Conclusion

All in all, MI-based classroom activities and games undertaken in the study were successful in increasing learners' motivation. As a result, several major pedagogical implications arise. It cannot be denied that the more interesting the activities are, the more teachers can motivate young learners. Thus, one of the effective solutions is to design activities so that young learners can use their individual intelligence strengths which may promote learners' motivation including both their retention and participation. Besides, young learners should be not only encouraged to join MI activities, but also to modify and create their own learning activities. Having chances to build up their own ideas will push their learning motivation. Last but not least, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences is among ways to enhance learners' learning motivation through classroom activities in which teachers and learners can be regarded as a dynamic community.

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APPENDIX E

PHIẾU KHẢO SÁT VỀ ĐỘNG LỰC CỦA NGƯỜI HỌC

Vui lòng cho biết ý kiến của con về khóa học này bằng cách đánh dấu (✓) vào lựa chọn mà con đồng ý nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi.

1. Con đến lớp học thường xuyên như thế nào?

A. Luôn luôn ☐

B. Thường xuyên ☐

C. Khá thường xuyên ☐

D. Thỉnh thoảng ☐

E. Ít khi ☐

2. Các hoạt động và trò chơi làm con thích thú đến mức độ nào?

A. Rất nhiều ☐

B. Nhiều ☐

C. Khá nhiều ☐

D. Một chút ☐

E. Không chút nào ☐

3. Khi được giáo viên yêu cầu mang một số thứ đến lớp, con có thường mang không?

A. Luôn luôn ☐

B. Thường xuyên ☐

C. Thỉnh thoảng ☐

D. Ít khi ☐

E. Không bao giờ ☐

4. Con có thường nói tiếng Anh trong lớp không?

A. Luôn luôn ☐

B. Thường xuyên ☐

C. Thỉnh thoảng ☐

D. Ít khi ☐

E. Không bao giờ ☐

5. Con có thường sử dụng tiếng Anh ngoài lớp học không? (ví dụ dùng tiếng Anh để nói chuyện)

A. Luôn luôn ☐

B. Thường xuyên ☐

C. Thỉnh thoảng ☐

D. Ít khi ☐

E. Không bao giờ ☐

6. Trong khi tham gia khóa học này, con có thường tìm hiểu các từ tiếng Anh vô tình nhìn thấy (ví dụ ở trên các sản phẩm)?

A. Luôn luôn ☐

B. Thường xuyên ☐

C. Thỉnh thoảng ☐

D. Ít khi ☐

E. Không bao giờ ☐

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONNAIRE ON LEARNERS' MOTIVATION

Please show your opinions about this course by ticking (✓) the option that you agree most for each item.

1. How often did you go to this class?

A. Very often ☐

B. Often ☐

C. Rather often ☐

D. Sometimes ☐

E. Seldom ☐

2. How much did activities and games interest you?

A. Very much ☐

B. Much ☐

C. Rather much ☐

D. A little ☐

E. Not at all ☐

3. How often did you take things to class as your teacher's request?

A. Very often ☐

B. Often ☐

C. Sometimes ☐

D. Seldom ☐

E. Never ☐

4. How often did you speak English in class?

A. Very often ☐

B. Often ☐

C. Sometimes ☐

D. Seldom ☐

E. Never ☐

5. How often did you use English outside the classroom? (For example, used English to talk to someone else)

A. Very often ☐

B. Often ☐

C. Sometimes ☐

D. Seldom ☐

E. Never ☐

6. While attending this course, how often did you try to explore English words that you came across? (For example, English on products)

A. Very often ☐

B. Often ☐

C. Sometimes ☐

D. Seldom ☐

E. Never ☐

Childhood Education and the Question of Language of Instruction: The Case of Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà Children in Epòró-Èkìtì, Nigeria

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Abstract

The choice of language for early childhood education has remained contentious among policymakers in Nigeria. The focus has been on the language of the immediate environment, usually, the dominant indigenous language spoken within the community where the target children reside. This study examined the case of Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà native speakers who were primary school pupils in Epòró-Èkìtì, a rural community in southwest Nigeria where Yorùbá is the language of instruction. The pupils scantily understand Yorùbá while their second language is Èkìtìì, a Yorùbá dialect which is the language of their immediate environment. Different languages i.e. medium of instruction were used by teachers of the two groups. The Ìdomà children were taught mainly in Yorùbá while the Èbìrà children were taught in Èbìrà but the explanations were done in Èkìtì and Èbìrà. The Èbìrà children leant Yorùbá as a subject just like English. Findings revealed that the Èbìrà pupils performed better than the Ìdọ́mà pupils at the end of the year examination in all the subjects including English and Yorùbá. The result established that the issue of mother tongue is a contextual one depending on the children in focus. It also revealed that the mother tongue is the most effective in teaching young children. The language of the immediate environment would be relevant only if it is understood and used by the target children.

INTRODUCTION

Sooter (2013) observed that teaching and learning are important complementary tasks to the cognitive foundation of children because they involve articulation and comprehension of ideas both socially and mentally. Since both tasks are carried out with a language, the choice of language employed as the medium of instruction for children is very vital. Therefore, the right language must

be employed to lay a good foundation for a child's education. Following the multilingual nature of Nigeria, the issue of the best language for this purpose has remained controversial (Bagudo 2008, Obidike 2012). While the Nigerian government via the National Policy on Education (2004) legislated that the language of the immediate environment should be employed, some educators and experts have insisted that the mother tongue (native language) should be employed. Also, the issue of which language captures the term "immediate environment" in each teaching and learning context has not been "fully" identified and established (Dada 2010). This study examined this issue with data from two groups of young learners in a local setting in Nigeria who reside in an environment where their mother tongue is neither the language of the immediate environment nor the approved language of instruction in the region. The aim is to identify the challenges being faced by these sets of learners concerning the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment with regards to which language would be more effective in teaching them.

THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION STRUCTURE AND POLICY ON EDUCATION

According to Eberhard et al (Ethnologue 2019), there are over one thousand languages in Nigeria. However, the official language is English. In 1976, Hausa, Ìgbò, and Yorùbá were declared national languages. The three national languages are restricted to the three main regions, Hausa to the North, Ìgbò to the East, and Yorùbá to the West. The National Policy on Education (NPE 2004), Section 4, Paragraph 19 (e) and (f) as it affects childhood education is cited below:

> ***The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject***. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.

There are some salient issues in the national policy on education in Nigeria as shown above. It shows that Nigeria operates a multilingual pattern of education. A look at the content of the above policy shows that apart from English, there are no specifics regarding any other language. The italicized sentence confirms the complexity associated with what the particular language of instruction should be for children in the first three years. The policy says 'language of the immediate

environment" which is a bit complex within the Nigerian linguistic context because there is a distinction between a native language and the language of the immediate environment. This, in fact, is one of the major theses of this study.

NATIVE LANGUAGE VERSUS LANGUAGE OF THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

According to Bloomfield (1933), "a native language is one learned on one's mother's knee". The first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language" (1933: 43). In other words, a native language is one acquired effortlessly usually from infancy because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives. It is also known as a mother tongue, first language, or arterial language. According to UNESCO (1953:689-90), Mother Tongue is "the language which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes his natural instrument of thought and communication." This definition is germane to this study as we shall see in subsequent sections.

According to Adeyemo (1998), a language of the immediate environment is the major language spoken natively within a particular linguistic context. The context could be a community, a town, a state, or a region. However, it may also be a non-native language to some of the inhabitants of such a context. The implication of this is that it is possible for children who speak language A as a native language to reside in a community where language B is the language of the immediate environment.

PREVIOUS STUDIES ON MOTHER TONGUE IN CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Several studies have examined the role of language in childhood education. They include Fafunwa (1975), Taiwo (1976), Fafunwa (1977), Olagoke (1979), Fafunwa et al (1989), Chumbow (1990), Bamgbose, (1992), and Abidogun and Adebule (2013). These studies have all focused on the role of mother tongue in childhood education in Nigeria.

The most popular among these studies is Fafunwa (1975). It was a longitudinal study carried out as a project with a focus on Yorùbá. In this project, Yorùbá was used as a medium of instruction

throughout the six-year primary course for a set of primary school pupils. It was predicted and hypothesized that children tend to benefit culturally, socially, linguistically, and cognitively through native-language instruction and that they stand a better chance of gaining a good command of English if it is taught as a separate subject by a specially trained teacher. At the end of the sixth year, it was discovered that the children who were taught exclusively in Yorùbá performed creditably well across subjects including the English language better than children who were taught using Yorùbá and English. The findings supported the fact that the mother tongue (native language) is the most effective medium of instruction in early childhood education. The other studies have leveraged this claim to either support or modify the assertion of Fafunwa (1975). However, there is the issue of establishing what truly constitutes a mother tongue and the language of the immediate environment. For example, since the language of the immediate environment is contextually determined which is not so for the mother tongue which is usually determined by people within a close circle e.g. family and community, what would be the implication on a set of children if the official language of instruction is neither the language of their immediate environment nor their mother tongue? This is another issue that would be addressed in this study.

PRESENT STUDY

This study just like previous studies attempts to identify the most suitable language of instruction for childhood education. However, this present study is unique because unlike previous studies, neither of the two groups examined speak the language of the immediate environment as a native language. Also, the actual language of the immediate community of the participants is a dialect of the major language spoken in the region. These are factors that were not considered in any of the previous studies. Furthermore, the study was also a mini project which ran for a year. The pupils were interviewed at the beginning of the term and were also examined orally at the end of the term.

THE SETTING OF THE RESEARCH

The data were collected in Epòró-Èkìtì, a rural community in Emùré local government area in Èkìtì state, south-west Nigeria. Èkìtì is one of the six states where Yorùbá is the major language spoken by the inhabitants. Following the National Policy on Education (2004), the language of the immediate environment which is the language of instruction in Èkìtì is Yorùbá. However, in the true sense of it, the language of the immediate environment in Epòró-Èkìtì is Èkìtì dialect. It is the lingua franca of the various ethnic groups in the community.

The Epòró community is an interesting setting. It developed as a farm settlement by people from Emùré-Èkìtì. Over time, however, it is now inhabited by a lot of non-Èkìtì indigenes who speak different languages. The two major non-Èkìtì settlers are the Èbìrà and the Ìdọ́mà. Èbìrà (a Nupoid language spoken by around a million people in Kogi State, Northcentral Nigeria) is spoken among Èbìrà settlers while Ìdọ́mà language (under the Akweya subgroup of the Idomoid languages spoken in Benue, Nasarawa, and Northern Cross river states) is spoken among Ìdọ́mà settlers from Benue state, Ìgbò is spoken by few settlers from the eastern part of Nigeria who are all traders and Èkìtì (a dialect of Yorùbá) is spoken by people who came from Emùré-Èkìtì mainly to farm and they are in the majority. Very few people speak Yorùbá and they are usually visitors who come to the community to trade on market days. It is important to state that there are more Ìdọ́mà speakers than Èbìrà in Epòró-Èkìtì.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Thirty participants took part in the study. They were divided into two groups based on their mother tongue. Fifteen were native speakers of Èbìrà while the remaining fifteen were Ìdọ́mà.native speakers. They were between five and six years old and were all in primary one which is the first year of the elementary classes. The Èbìrà pupils had both parents as Èbìrà native speakers. They communicate in Èbìrà with their parents, siblings, extended family members and other native speakers within the community. Apart from Èbìrà language, they spoke Èkìti dialect fairly well but spoke

Yorùbá scantily. The Èbìrà pupils were in a private school established by a Yorùbá man. Their teacher was a native speaker of Èbìrà who also spoke Èkìti and Yorùbá fluently.

For the Ìdọ́mà pupils, they also had both parents as Ìdomà native speakers and it is the only language through which they communicate with their siblings, parents, extended family members as well as other Ìdọ́mà native speakers within the community. They also spoke Èkìtì dialect fairly well but spoke Yorùbá scantily. The Ìdomà pupils were in a public school. Their teacher was a native speaker of Èkìtì dialect who also spoke Yorùbá natively. All the participants were bilingual (they spoke Èkìtì dialect alongside their mother tongue). For example, while interacting informally at home during playtimes, the Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà children communicated in Èkìtì dialect.

Two different teaching patterns were adopted for the two groups. For the Ìdómà students, they were taught exclusively in Yorùbá which is the regional native language in the south-western part of Nigeria where Epòró is located. Thus, it is the officially approved medium of instruction for childhood education in all public primary schools in the whole region. In reality, it would have been difficult to use any other language. Aside from the fact that the teacher did not speak Ìdomà language, some pupils spoke Èkìtì and Ìgbò in the class as well.

However, for the Èbìrà students, it was an unconventional method. They were taught in Èbìrà while the explanations and examples were done and given in Èkìtì and Èbìrà simultaneously. This was the pattern used in teaching all the subjects. For English and Yorùbá languages which were taught as subjects, examples were sometimes given in Èkìtì and Èbìrà for easy understanding.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected through oral interviews and oral tests. One set of data were collected at the beginning of the session when the students resumed and the other set of data were collected at the end of the session. The same sets of questions were given to all the participants. The first set of data collected involved asking general questions from the participants and their teachers to have valid information about the participants' native background/linguistic competence

as well as those of their parents. This was to determine their suitability for the project. The data were collected with the help of their teachers.

The second set of data were collected as an oral examination. Here, the focus was on three teaching subjects; English language, Yorùbá language, and General Knowledge. The tests were administered by their teachers in the presence of the researcher. These were later assessed and scored. The English language question was a short story that was read to the pupils from which questions were asked from them. For the Yorùbá question, the English passage was translated to Yorùbá which was read to the students and questions from it were also asked from them. It was done individually for each of the pupils. While for General Knowledge, pictures of some objects, animals, and other physical things were presented and the pupils were asked to name them. For the Ìdọ́mà pupils, the tests were administered exclusively in Yorùbá which was the language of instruction employed for them while for the Èbìrà pupils, the questions were administered in Èbìrà (the language of instruction employed for them) but were sometimes interpreted to the pupils in both Èkìtì and Èbìrà. The pupils were expected to provide answers to the questions orally. Because all the participants were in their first year of elementary school, very simple, short, and direct questions were asked from them.

RESULTS

In the results, our focus was on the performances of the two sets of pupils in the oral examinations conducted at the end of the session i.e. the last examination conducted after over eight months of teaching and learning. This particular one is important because it usually serves as the promotion examination to the next class. The results for each group were first presented and later compared and presented in a simple percentage with a focus on correct answers. The results were calculated based on the overall collective performance of each group and not on an individual basis. Also, the results for both groups were compared to determine the group with a better performance. The results are presented below:

Table 1. Results of English language question (Èbìrà pupils)

Question	*Answer (Èkìtì)*	***Answer (English)***
i. Where was Òjo going to?	ọjà	market
ii. Who did Òjó see?	yèyé arígbó	woman
iii. What did the old woman have in her basket?	ògòlòmàṣí, kpúrù,	----
iv. What did the old woman hold in her hands?	àkìkọ	cock
v. What did the cock do?	òkùlẹ	*shit
vi. What did the old woman do to Òjó?	àdúà	prayer

Table 2. Results of English language question (Ìdọ́mà pupils)

Question	*Answer (Èkìtì)*	*Answer (**English**)*
i. Where was Òjó going to?	ọjà	market
ii. Who did Òjó see?	yèyé arígbó	woman
iii. What did the old woman have in her basket?	----	----
iv. What did the old woman hold in her hands?	----	----
v. What did the cock do?	òkùlẹ	----
vi. What did the woman do to Òjó?	----	----

Table 3. Results of the Yorùbá language questions (Èbìrà pupils)

Question	*Answer (Èkìtì)*	***Answer (Yorùbá)***
i. Ibo ni Òjó ń lọ?	ọjà	ọjà
ii. Tani Òjó rí́?	yèyé arígbó	ìyá arúgbó
iii. Kíni ìyá arúgbó náà fẹ́ lọ tà?	ògòlòmàṣí, kpúrù,	ìbẹ́pẹ, àgbon
iv. Kíni ni ìyá arúgbó náà mú dání?	àkìkọ	àkùkọ
v. Kíni àkùkọ náà ṣe?	òkùlẹ	----
vi. Kíni ìyá náà ṣe fún Òjó?	àdúà	àdúrà

Table 4. Results of the Yorùbá language questions (Ìdọ́mà pupils)

Question	*Answer (Èkìtì)*	***Answer (Yorùbá)***
i. Ibo ni Òjó ń lọ?	ọjà	Ọjà
ii. Tani Òjó rí́?	----	----
iii. Kíni ìyá arúgbó náà fẹ́ lọ tà?	Ògòlòmàṣí, kpúrù	ìbẹ́pẹ, àgbon
iv. Kíni ni ìyá arúgbó náà mú dání?	----	----
v. Kíni àkùkọ náà ṣe?	òkùlẹ́	ìgbé
vi. Kíni ìyá náà ṣe fún Òjó?	----	----

Table 5. Results of General Knowledge questions (Èbìrà pupils)

Word	***Answer (Èbìrà)***
i. snake	ewu
ii. coconut	atahuneva
iii. orange	oromi
iv. groundnut	ẹtupa
v. cow	unọ
vi. antelope	akono
vii. goat	evu
viii. mosquito	opari
ix. pig	ura
x. cockroach	ahihi
xi. pawpaw	irengwa
xii. hoe	edu
xiii. yam	enu
iv. ant	ihine
v. knife	uhuo

Table 6. Results of General Knowledge questions (Ìdọ́mà pupils)

Word	*Answer (Ìdọ́mà)*	*Answer (Èkìtì)*	***Answer (Yorùbá)***
i. snake	egwa	ejo	ejo
ii. coconut	----	----	----
iii. orange	----	ọsàn	ọsàn
iv. groundnut	----	----	----
v. cow	ena	ẹrẹnlá	mààlu
vi. antelope	owi	----	----
vii. goat	----	ìdérègbè	ewúrẹ́
viii. mosquito	----	----	----
ix. pig	okome	èsì	ẹlẹ́dẹ̀
x. cockroach	akpanga	----	----

xi. pawpaw	àpè	òg̀òlòmàṣí	----
xii. hoe	enu	ọkọ́	----
xiii. yam	ihi	uṣu	----
iv. ant	ilu	erìrà	----
v. knife	ewa	ọ̀bẹ	----

In tables (1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) above, the sign (---) indicates that nothing was supplied in the context while the (*) indicates the wrong suppliance of the required item. The English language questions were expected to be answered in English while Yorùbá language questions were expected to be answered in Yorùbá. The answers presented in Èkìtì in tables (1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) were meant to show the relationship between language and the cognitive capacity of the pupils with a focus on how the actual language of the immediate environment affects their thinking ability and its subsequent impact on their education.

Table 7. Comparison of Total Results for Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà Pupils (English language)

English language	*Total questions*	*Incorrect*	***Correct***	*% (correct)*
Èbìrà	90	28	**62**	**68.9**
Ìdọ́mà	90	65	**25**	**27.8**

Table 8. Comparison of Total Results for Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà Pupils (Yorùbá language)

Yorùbá language	*Total questions*	*Incorrect*	***Correct***	*% (correct)*
Èbìrà	90	35	**59**	**65.5**
Ìdọ́mà	90	30	**55**	**61.1**

Table 9. Comparison of Total Results for Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà Pupils (General Knowledge)

General Knowledge	*Total questions*	*Incorrect*	***Correct***	*% (correct)*
Èbìrà	225	0	**225**	**100**
Ìdọ́mà	225	146	**81**	**36**

DISCUSSION

A look at the results of the Èbìrá and Ìdọ́mà pupils in tables 1-6 revealed some very interesting things about the importance of the mother tongue and the language of the immediate environment in childhood education. For the English language results in table 1, based on their classroom experience,

the Èbìrà pupils first answered the answer in Èkìtì and then proceeded to give the right answer in English (in instances where they got the answer correctly). They were not penalized, instead, their teacher encouraged them by asking them to give the English version which they did correctly. For the Ìdọ́mà pupils as observed in table 2, there were instances where they first gave the answers in Èkìtì but they were penalized because the answers were expected to be given in English. As revealed in table 7 for the overall percentage of correct answers provided in English language, the Èbìrà pupils had a **68.9%** correct rate while the Ìdọ́mà pupils had a **27.8%** correct rate.

The same pattern observed in the English language results was also observed in the results for Yorùbá language for both sets of pupils. As shown in table 3 with the encouragement of their teacher, the Èbìrà pupils first provided the answer in Èkìtì and then proceeded to give the right answer in Yorùbá which in most cases were the correct answers. For the Ìdọ́mà pupils, as shown in table 4, they also gave some answers in Èkìtì which were considered incorrect because the answers were expected to be provided in Yorùbá. In table 8 which shows the overall percentage of correct answers provided in Yorùbá language, the Èbìrà pupils had a **65.5%** correct rate while the Ìdọ́mà pupils had a **61.1%** correct rate.

For the General Knowledge results as shown in table 5, the Èbìrà pupils got all the questions correctly because the answers were provided in Èbìrà. However, as shown in table 6, the Ìdọ́mà pupils provided some answers in Ìdọ́mà and Èkìtì which were considered incorrect because only those provided in Yorùbá were considered correct. In table 9 which reveals the overall percentage of correct answers provided in General Knowledge, the Èbìrà pupils had a **100%** correct rate while the Ìdọ́mà pupils had a **36%** correct rate.

FINDINGS

Some outstanding facts were discovered in this study concerning the issue of the mother tongue and the language of the immediate environment in early childhood education. These findings are highlighted and discussed below.

1. It was revealed that the mother tongue may not necessarily be the language of the immediate environment. In most cases, the concepts must be contextualized to capture the target children. This is because, in some contexts, the mother tongue of the inhabitants may neither be the language of the immediate environment nor the native language of the region approved as the language of instruction in early childhood education. This is the case for Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà children in Epòró-Èkìtì.
2. Since the teaching and discussions were done in Èbìrà and Èkìtì for the Èbìrà native speaking participants, they showed more interest in learning than the Ìdomà students who were taught exclusively in Yorùbá. The Èbìrà pupils participated more in the classroom activities with enthusiasm and were very expressive. This was not so for the Ìdọ́mà pupils who were withdrawn and most times appeared to be lost in thoughts during classes.
3. Also, the simultaneous teachings and discussions in Èbìrà and Èkìtì allowed the Èbìrà pupils to create a natural learning context. They transformed the classroom environment into a natural L1 setting where true learning took place. The opposite was the case for the Ìdọ́mà pupils who struggled most times to grasp what the teacher was saying.
4. The Èbìrà pupils were very creative during Yorùbá classes. They came up with examples in Èkìtì and Èbìrà anytime the teacher gave examples in Yorùbá. They learned a lot of words and concepts in Yorùbá through this process. The Ìdọ́mà pupils never had the opportunity to do this since the teachings and discussions were done in Yorùbá, a language they scantily understood.
5. The method adopted in teaching the Èbìrà pupils assisted them in improving their Yorùbá. The method encouraged a form of bilingual learning approach as the students got to know a lot of Yorùbá words in the course of learning. This is because once an idea was expressed in Yorùbá, it would be explained in Èbìrà to the pupils which improved their knowledge in Yorùbá. This

is definitely why the Èbìrà pupils performed better than the Ìdọ́mà students in the Yorùbá language examination despite having Èbìrà and not Yorùbá as the medium of instruction.

6. The exclusive use of Yorùbá in teaching the Ìdọ́mà students harmed their learning process. For example, there were instances where the answers they gave in Ìdọ́mà though correct were adjudged wrong. This had an effect not only on their learning process but also affected their cognitive ability in other tasks since they were being forced to reason and express themselves in an unfamiliar language.

The issue of cognition and individual brilliance may be raised as factors that affected the results of both the Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà children as against the language of instruction as propagated in this study. However, the fact that some of the Ìdọ́mà pupils provided some answers in Ìdọ́mà and Èkìtì particularly to the General Knowledge questions clearly showed that it was an issue of language and not cognition or individual brilliance. Also, that all the Èbìrà pupils got all the General Knowledge questions that require naming objects in the picture correctly confirms that they were aided by the use of their mother tongue since they do not all have the same cognitive ability and individual brilliance. Also, all the answers provided in Ìdọ́mà and Èkìtì by the Ìdọ́mà pupils were correct but were considered incorrect because the answers were meant to be given in Yorùbá. Based on this fact, it is certain that the Ìdọ́mà pupils would have performed better in the examinations if they had been taught in Ìdọ́mà (their mother tongue) alongside Èkìtì (the language of their immediate environment) just like the Èbìrà pupils. This confirms that they had a good knowledge of the questions but were hindered by the educational system which forced the language of instruction/expression on them without taking their age, immediate environment, and linguistic competence (native language) into consideration.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study have again confirmed that the native language is the most effective in the teaching of young learners. Though, as shown with the Èbìrà pupils in the Epòró context, using the mother tongue (Èbìrà) was unconventional, the results as reflected in their performances in

comparison with those of the Ìdọ́mà pupils at the end of one calendar school year affirmed that it was a worthy venture. It confirms that a child's mother tongue should be used as the language of instruction in childhood education. It is therefore recommended that the context of learning must be carefully considered in choosing the language of instruction for children. This is because, in certain contexts like the case of the children examined in Epòró-Èkìtì setting where neither the children's mother tongues (Èbìrà and Ìdọ́mà) nor their language of the immediate environment (Èkìtì dialect) is the officially recognized language of instruction (i.e. Yorùbá), such children would be forced to learn in the official language of instruction in such a context which tends to have serious negative effects on them as evidence in the performance of the Ìdomà children in comparison with the Èbìrà children. Thus, policymakers should make concerted efforts to produce language teachers in all the indigenous languages in Nigeria to guarantee effective and impactful teaching in early childhood education irrespective of the community where the target children reside.

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The English language question (A short comprehension passage)

One day, Ojo was going to the market. He saw an old woman going to the market too. She carried a basket on her head. The old woman was going to the market to sell pawpaw and coconut. She also held a cockerel. Ojo ran after the old woman and assisted her. When they got to the market, the old woman discovered that the cockerel had defecated on her. She brought out a piece of cloth and used it to clean herself. The old woman was very happy with Ojo and gave him a coconut but Ojo refused to accept it. The old woman prayed for Ojo and Ojo was very happy.

Ìbéèrè lórí èdè Yorùbá (Àkàyé kékeré kan)

Ní ọjọ kan, Òjó ń lọ sí ọjà. Ó rí ìyá arúgbó kan tí ó gbé apẹ̀rẹ̀ lórí. Ọjà ni ìyá náà ń lọ. Ó fẹ́ lọ tajà ni. Ìbẹ́pẹ ati àgbọn ni ìyá arúgbó náà kó sínú apẹ̀rẹ̀. Ó tún mú akùkọ kékeré kan dání. Òjó sáré tẹ̀lé ìyá arúgbó náà ó sì gba ẹrù náà lórí rẹ̀. Nígbà tí wọ́n dé ọjà, àkùkọ kékeré tí obìnrin arúgbó náà mú dání ti ya ìgbẹ́ síi lára. Ìyá arúgbó náà mú aṣọ kékeré kan jáde, ó sì fi nu ìgbẹ́ náà. Inú ìyá arúgbó náà dùn púpọ̀ fún ìrànlọ́wọ́ tí Òjó ṣe fún un. Ó fún Òjó ní àgbọn kan, ṣùgbọ́n, Òjó kò gbà á lọ́wọ́ rẹ̀. Ó ṣe àdúrà fún Òjó inú Òjó náà sì dùn pẹ̀lú.

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