

Teacher's Roles in Implementing Multiple Intelligences in Inclusive English Education: A Case Study of a Kindergarten in Ende Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study is grounded in the need to address diverse learning needs in inclusive kindergarten English classrooms through the Multiple Intelligences framework. Drawing on inclusive education principles and the Kurikulum Merdeka enriched with the Nazareth Global Education curriculum, the research explores Multiple Intelligences based instructional practices, challenges faced by teachers, and perceived effects on students' motivation and English learning outcomes at Nazareth School. This qualitative case study examines the implementation of the Multiple Intelligences approach in inclusive English learning at a kindergarten in Ende Regency. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to explore instructional strategies, implementation challenges, and teachers' perceptions of students' motivation and learning outcomes, providing in-depth insights into inclusive English teaching practices in early childhood education. This study reveals that the Multiple Intelligences approach effectively supports inclusive English learning for kindergarten students at Nazareth School. Through multimodal instruction, digital platforms, and flexible learning environments, Multiple Intelligences enhances students' motivation, engagement, linguistic development, and social interaction. Despite challenges in activity design, classroom management, and time constraints, Multiple Intelligences fosters holistic learning outcomes in early childhood education. This study concludes that the Multiple Intelligences approach effectively supports inclusive English learning at Nazareth School through structured, multimodal, and collaborative instructional practices. Despite challenges in activity design, classroom management, and preparation, Multiple Intelligences enhances students' motivation, engagement, linguistic development, and holistic growth. The study offers practical recommendations for teachers, schools, parents, policymakers, and future research.

Keywords: *multiple intelligences; inclusive english education; kindergarten students; teacher challenges; learning outcomes*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of Multiple Intelligences (MI) has gained increasing attention in educational research for its potential to address the diverse learning needs of

students in inclusive classrooms. Gardner's (1983) theory proposes that intelligence is not a single, uniform construct but a combination of linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic capacities that shape how learners process information and engage with learning tasks. This perspective is particularly relevant in early childhood English education, where learners demonstrate varied cognitive, social, and emotional profiles that require flexible and responsive instructional practices.

Inclusive education in the Indonesian context emphasizes the right of all learners, including those with special educational needs and exceptional abilities, to participate in a shared learning environment without discrimination (Amiruddin, 2022; Regulation of the Minister of National Education, 2009). This policy framework highlights the importance of instructional approaches that recognize learner diversity while ensuring equitable access to meaningful learning opportunities. In early childhood settings, English language learning plays a critical role in supporting communication skills, social interaction, and cognitive development, making the need for inclusive and adaptive pedagogical strategies increasingly urgent.

Recent studies have documented the role of curriculum flexibility in supporting inclusive practices. Wardhani et al. (2022) and Kurniawati (2022) report that the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in inclusive kindergarten contexts involves systematic modifications in time allocation, learning materials, and instructional processes to accommodate individual learner capacities. Subsequent findings by Wardhani et al. (2023) and Kurniawati (2023) further emphasize that such flexibility aligns closely with the MI framework, as it allows teachers to tailor learning experiences to children's strengths and preferred modes of learning. Similarly, Kusumaningrum et al. (2022) demonstrate that inclusive kindergarten models integrating varied curricular approaches contribute to more diverse and meaningful learning experiences for children with different developmental profiles.

Empirical evidence also suggests that MI-based instructional strategies can enhance student engagement and classroom management in English language learning contexts. Ghaznavi et al. (2021) found that multi-intelligence teaching approaches increase learner participation and motivation, particularly when English is used as the medium of instruction. Hopkins (2022) reports that teachers who integrated MI strategies observed improvements in students' behavioral regulation and conceptual understanding, indicating that differentiated and intelligence-responsive teaching can foster more positive learning environments. Despite these contributions, existing research has largely focused on general or primary education contexts, with limited attention to the specific application of MI in inclusive English classrooms at the kindergarten level, particularly within local and rural Indonesian settings.

This research gap is especially evident in contexts such as Ende Regency, where Nazareth School represents one of the few kindergartens accommodating highly diverse learners, including children with special educational needs. Preliminary classroom observations indicate that MI principles have been systematically embedded in instructional practices; however, there is a lack of empirical analysis examining how

these strategies are implemented, the challenges teachers encounter, and the perceived effects on student motivation and English learning outcomes. Given that early childhood education plays a foundational role in fostering creativity, engagement, and holistic development (Suryana et al., 2022), understanding how MI can be effectively integrated into inclusive English learning environments is both theoretically and practically significant.

From a theoretical perspective, MI-based inclusive instruction contributes to broader discussions on holistic education by linking cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of development with language learning processes (Thambu et al., 2021; Devaki, 2025). Practically, insights into teachers' instructional strategies and professional challenges can inform the design of more responsive pedagogical models, professional development programs, and curriculum adaptations that support equitable learning opportunities for diverse learners. By addressing these dimensions, this study seeks to strengthen the alignment between educational theory, classroom practice, and inclusive education policy in early childhood English instruction.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how teachers implement Multiple Intelligences-based strategies in inclusive English classrooms at Nazareth School, identify the challenges they face in integrating MI into daily instructional practices, and examine their perceptions of the effects of the MI approach on students' motivation and perceived English learning outcomes. Based on this focus, the study is guided by the following research questions: How do teachers implement Multiple Intelligences-based strategies in inclusive English classrooms for diverse kindergarten students at Nazareth School? What challenges do teachers encounter in integrating MI into English language learning for diverse kindergarten learners? How do teachers perceive the influence of the MI approach on students' motivation and English learning outcomes?

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to explore the implementation of the Multiple Intelligences (MI) framework in inclusive English education for diverse kindergarten students at Nazareth School in Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. A qualitative design was considered appropriate for examining complex and context-bound educational phenomena, as it enabled an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and instructional practices within their natural settings (Tracy, 2024). The case study design allowed the research to focus on a bounded system, namely a single inclusive kindergarten, in order to capture the dynamic interactions among teachers, school leaders, and the institutional context that shaped the integration of MI in early childhood English learning.

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that all informants had direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and supervision of MI-based instruction. The participants consisted of three English teachers who regularly taught in inclusive classrooms, the school principal, and a head supervisor responsible for overseeing the inclusive education program. These participants were chosen to

provide multiple perspectives on instructional strategies, leadership support, and institutional policies related to the use of MI in English language learning. Their combined roles offered a comprehensive understanding of both classroom-level practices and school-level decision-making processes.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis in order to achieve methodological triangulation and enhance the credibility of the findings. The interviews were designed to elicit participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the integration of MI in inclusive English classrooms, particularly in relation to student motivation, learning engagement, and perceived learning outcomes. Classroom observations were conducted over a two-week period to capture the real-time application of MI-based strategies, focusing on teacher practices, student interactions, and the incorporation of various intelligences such as linguistic, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and visual-spatial intelligences during learning activities. Document analysis was carried out on lesson plans, teaching materials, assessment tools, and relevant school policy documents to examine how MI principles were systematically embedded in instructional planning and aligned with inclusive education guidelines.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed, including data triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the research setting. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and returned to participants for verification to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and representations of their views. Observational field notes and documentary evidence were cross-checked with interview data to strengthen the consistency and credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining confidentiality by using coded identifiers for all informants.

Data analysis was conducted inductively using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes related to the implementation of the MI approach in inclusive English education. The analysis began with open coding, in which meaningful units of data from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were labeled according to key concepts such as instructional strategies, student engagement, teacher challenges, and institutional support. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding to establish relationships among themes. Finally, selective coding was applied to identify the central themes that explained how MI-based practices were systematically integrated into classroom instruction and how they influenced teachers' perceptions of student motivation and learning outcomes. Qualitative analysis software was used to organize and manage the data systematically, supporting transparency and rigor in the analytical process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings and critically discusses them in relation to recent literature on Multiple Intelligences (MI), inclusive education, and early childhood English language learning. The discussion contrasts the empirical evidence from Nazareth Kindergarten with previous studies to highlight both convergences and contextual distinctions in the implementation of MI-based instructional practices.

a. Implementation of Multiple Intelligences in Inclusive English Classrooms

The findings indicate that teachers at Nazareth Kindergarten systematically integrate Multiple Intelligences theory into daily English instruction through a combination of differentiated learning activities, multisensory materials, and flexible classroom arrangements. Teachers employed storytelling, role-play, music, movement-based tasks, visual aids, and hands-on learning centers to address diverse intelligence profiles, including linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. This pedagogical design allowed children to access language input through modalities aligned with their individual strengths, fostering both engagement and comprehension.

Document analysis of lesson plans, AMCO digital book, and Tangram instructional guides indicated that MI principles were systematically embedded in learning objectives, activity sequencing, and assessment planning, ensuring alignment between instructional design and classroom implementation. This instructional approach was further reinforced at the supervisory level, as the head supervisor emphasized the intentional design of learning activities to highlight dominant intelligences while maintaining inclusivity for all learners. As explained by the head supervisor:

The instructional methodology is designed to highlight one or two dominant intelligences in each learning activity through varied instructional strategies, ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities to engage with and understand the material. The greater the variety of learning experiences provided, the more likely students are to successfully grasp the learning content. (Interview HS, 18 October 2025)

These findings align with Gardner's theoretical framework, which emphasizes the plurality of human intelligence and the need for instructional practices that extend beyond traditional linguistic and logical-mathematical domains. Similar patterns were reported by Ghaznavi et al. (2021), who found that MI-based strategies increased student engagement in English-medium classrooms, particularly among learners with diverse cognitive and socio-emotional needs. In the present study, teachers' use of movement and music-based activities was particularly effective in sustaining attention and reducing off-task behavior, supporting Hopkins' (2022) observation that MI-oriented instruction can mitigate classroom behavioral challenges.

Classroom observations, supported by classroom documentation revealed that flexible classroom arrangements, including reading corners, art stations, and role-play

areas, functioned as integral components of MI implementation. These learning spaces enabled differentiated instruction and encouraged student autonomy, allowing children to select activities that matched their preferred learning styles. Learning spaces were also intentionally designed based on Thornburg's four learning metaphors: the campfire, watering hole, cave, and life space. The campfire area facilitated storytelling and whole-group instruction, the watering hole encouraged peer collaboration and informal knowledge sharing, the cave provided a quiet and reflective environment for individual learners, and the life space supported dynamic, movement-based, and social activities.

This spatial configuration created a flexible learning environment in which children engaged with English content through spaces that resonated with their cognitive and emotional needs. This finding corroborates Yesil and Aras (2024), who emphasized the role of student-centered learning environments in supporting inclusive pedagogical practices and fostering active participation among young learners. Before presenting the summary of instructional practices observed, Table 1 provides an overview of how different types of intelligences were addressed through specific classroom strategies.

Table 1. Integration of Multiple Intelligences in Classroom Practices

Type of Intelligence	Observed Instructional Strategies	Pedagogical Purpose
Linguistic	Storytelling, vocabulary games, guided reading	Development of oral and early literacy skills
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Action songs, movement-based tasks, role-play	Enhancement of physical engagement and memory retention
Musical	Songs, rhythm clapping, musical cues	Support for pronunciation and listening skills
Visual-Spatial	Picture cards, drawing tasks, visual mapping	Strengthening of visual comprehension
Logical-Mathematical	Pattern games, counting activities, simple problem-solving tasks using numbers and shapes	Development of early numeracy, reasoning, and analytical thinking
Interpersonal	Group discussions, pair work, collaborative games	Promotion of social interaction and communication
Intrapersonal	Reflection tasks, individual worksheets	Development of self-awareness and independent learning
Naturalistic	Nature-themed vocabulary activities, outdoor observation	Enhancement of environmental awareness and

tasks, classification of objects (plants, animals, colors)	contextual vocabulary development
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b. Teachers' Challenges in Implementing MI-Based Instruction

Despite the positive outcomes of MI-based instruction, the findings indicated that teachers encountered several pedagogical and structural challenges in its implementation within inclusive English classrooms. One of the most prominent challenges concerned time management. Data from interviews and document analysis revealed that designing differentiated activities to address multiple intelligence profiles required extensive preparation, while classroom implementation frequently exceeded the time allocations outlined in lesson plans. This discrepancy was influenced by classroom dynamics, including variations in students' learning pace, the need for individualized assistance, and the flexible nature of inclusive learning environments. As one teacher explained:

Sometimes the activity takes longer than planned because some students need more time and support, so we cannot stop the activity immediately. (Interview T3, 14 October 2025)

Document analysis of weekly lesson plans and MI-based activity schedules further showed that although teachers systematically planned intelligence-oriented activities, the estimated duration often underestimated actual classroom needs, particularly when accommodating students with attention-related or communication difficulties. In several cases, activities were intentionally extended to maintain students' engagement and learning continuity, although this occasionally limited the completion of all planned tasks within a single session.

To address this challenge, teachers adopted collaborative time management strategies during instruction. Classroom documentation and interview data indicated that team-teaching arrangements enabled one teacher to monitor instructional time while others focused on supporting students' learning needs. As noted by another teacher:

One of us always reminds the others about the time, so that lessons can stay on schedule. (Interview T1, 16 October 2025).

This collaborative approach supported a balance between instructional flexibility and time control, allowing teachers to remain responsive to students' needs while maintaining lesson structure. These findings align with Devaki (2025), who emphasized that while MI-based instruction enhances learner engagement, its sustainability depends on adequate institutional support and coordinated teaching practices. Similarly, Solone et al. (2020) highlighted the role of collaborative school structures in facilitating shared responsibility and pedagogical consistency among teachers.

Another significant challenge involved addressing the wide range of students' cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, including those with special educational

needs. Interview data indicated that teachers faced ongoing difficulties in sustaining students' focus, managing behavioral regulation, and encouraging participation among learners with diverse profiles. One teacher described these challenges as follows:

I face challenges in dealing with students with diverse needs, such as students who live in their own world and are unable to cooperate, students who have difficulty focusing, students who are passive but can participate in activities even though they have difficulty staying calm, and students who are very visual but hyperactive and easily lose focus. These conditions require me to constantly search for learning strategies that suit each child's characteristics. (Interview T3, 14 October 2025)

Classroom observations and photographic documentation corroborated these reports, revealing that teachers frequently modified activities during instruction, repeated explanations, and adjusted task complexity to accommodate students' attention span, behavioral responses, and communication abilities. Such adaptive practices reflected the dynamic nature of MI-based instruction in inclusive classrooms, where teaching strategies were continually refined in response to students' observed needs.

These findings support Rajak and Dey's (2025) assertion that differentiated instructional and assessment practices are essential in inclusive settings to recognize students' strengths and guide responsive pedagogical adjustments. Overall, the challenges identified underscore the demanding nature of implementing MI-based English instruction in inclusive kindergarten contexts, requiring sustained professional collaboration, reflective practice, and institutional support.

c. Impact of MI on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes

The findings indicate that MI-based instruction positively influenced students' motivation, confidence, and engagement in English learning. Classroom observations revealed increased participation during MI-integrated activities, particularly among students who previously demonstrated low attention spans or reluctance to communicate in English. Students became more actively involved in role-play, group discussions, songs, and movement-based tasks, which provided multiple entry points for participation aligned with their dominant intelligences.

Evidence from teacher interviews further supports these observations. One teacher explained that students showed greater enthusiasm and willingness to participate when learning activities matched their individual strengths, noting that:

Students who were usually passive became more confident when they could express understanding through movement, pictures, or songs rather than only speaking. (Interview T2, 17 October 2025).

This indicates that MI-based practices reduced anxiety and encouraged risk-taking in English use, particularly in inclusive classroom settings. Document analysis also revealed consistent improvements in students' learning outcomes. Portfolio records, including worksheets, reflection notes, and AMCO activity logs, showed gradual progress in students' vocabulary use, listening comprehension, and simple sentence

production. Teachers' anecdotal notes documented that students increasingly used English expressions during daily routines and classroom interactions, suggesting that learning was internalized and transferred beyond structured lesson activities.

Documentation from classroom observations further illustrated the positive impact of MI-based instruction on students' socio-emotional development. Observational records indicated that students appeared more confident, expressive, and emotionally regulated during English learning sessions. Activities that integrated visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs helped sustain attention and supported deeper cognitive processing, contributing to improved language retention. These findings align with Eviaa and Alvarez (2021), who emphasize the effectiveness of multimodal learning approaches in enhancing comprehension and memory.

The use of collaborative tasks, such as group work and role-play, also fostered interpersonal intelligence and meaningful language use in social contexts. Students interacted more frequently with peers, practiced turn-taking, and demonstrated improved cooperation during group activities. This outcome supports Jabbarov's (2025) argument that social interaction-based strategies enhance both interpersonal intelligence and communicative competence in EFL learners.

The findings demonstrate that MI-based instruction supports not only linguistic development but also students' motivation, self-confidence, and emotional growth. By acknowledging individual strengths rather than emphasizing academic limitations, MI-oriented practices created a supportive and inclusive learning environment. This holistic impact reflects Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2024) perspective that instructional practices grounded in the science of learning and development significantly influence students' cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes.

Teachers also reported improvements in students' self-confidence and emotional regulation, particularly when learning activities acknowledged individual strengths rather than emphasizing academic deficits. This holistic impact reflects Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2024) perspective that teaching practices grounded in the science of learning and development can significantly influence students' cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the broader applicability of Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory in inclusive education while highlighting contextual nuances specific to rural and semi-urban Indonesian settings. While studies by Wardhani et al. (2023) and Kurniawati (2023) focused primarily on curriculum flexibility and policy adaptation under the Merdeka Curriculum, the present research extends this discussion by illustrating how MI principles are enacted at the classroom level through daily instructional practices and teacher-student interactions. Unlike urban-centered studies that emphasize technological integration, the Nazareth Kindergarten context demonstrates that effective MI implementation can be achieved through low-cost, teacher-designed materials and community-supported resources, offering an alternative model of inclusive English education adaptable to resource-limited environments.

At Nazareth School, MI is embedded as a school-wide philosophy, integrating instructional design, pedagogy, learning environments, and multimodal media to create equitable and developmentally responsive learning experiences. Digital platforms such as AMCO and the Tangram Learning System provide structured, multimodal frameworks that incorporate intelligence-oriented activities, interactive e-books, and MI-labeled exercises, supporting learners with diverse profiles, including students with ADHD, speech delays, or limited independence (Lazou, 2025; Rachmatsyah, 2024). Complementing these platforms, teachers employ varied pedagogical strategies, including project-based, cooperative, arts-integrated, storytelling, and game-based learning, facilitated by six co-teaching models. Flexible learning spaces designed according to Thornburg's metaphors (campfire, watering hole, cave, and life space) reinforce MI principles by addressing different learning preferences and promoting self-regulation (Rudd et al., 2022).

Despite these strengths, teachers face notable challenges in MI integration. Designing activities for heterogeneous classrooms, preparing varied materials, sustaining attention, and addressing absenteeism demand considerable time, creativity, and classroom management. Kinesthetic, exploratory, and collaborative tasks may overstimulate some children if not carefully structured, while irregular attendance disrupts the sequencing of intelligence-oriented activities (Belguendouz, 2021; Hartati & Utami, 2024). These challenges highlight the need for institutional support, sufficient resources, and ongoing professional development to maintain effective MI-based instruction.

MI-based instruction significantly enhances students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. By activating diverse cognitive strengths through linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal modalities, learners access language in meaningful and enjoyable ways (Gardner, 1983). Students demonstrated improved listening and speaking skills, metacognitive awareness, and active participation in authentic communication tasks. High engagement in role play, thematic games, music, movement, and digital activities sustains motivation, while fine and gross motor skill development reflects the integration of MI with Kurikulum Merdeka principles and the Nazareth Global Education curriculum (Shechtman & Al-Qudah, 2020).

Assessment practices aligned with MI including portfolios, ongoing observation, and reflective feedback ensure a comprehensive understanding of each child's learning profile and outcomes, with collaboration with parents further strengthening the evaluative process. Consequently, MI enhances academic achievement while fostering creativity, empathy, self-reflection, collaboration, and environmental awareness, demonstrating its value in inclusive early childhood English education (Zufar et al., 2025).

The implementation of MI at Nazareth School illustrates a mature and holistic model in which digital tools, multimodal pedagogy, flexible environments, and differentiated instruction converge. While challenges such as material preparation, attention management, and absenteeism require ongoing support, the approach

effectively promotes inclusive, engaging, and developmentally responsive learning experiences. These findings confirm that MI-informed practices, when applied comprehensively and adaptively, strengthen inclusive education and enrich early childhood language development, offering a viable model for resource-limited educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses its research objectives by demonstrating that the Multiple Intelligences (MI) framework functions as an effective pedagogical model for structuring inclusive English learning in early childhood education. The findings establish that MI-based instruction enables teachers to design learning experiences that accommodate linguistic, cognitive, social, and motor development simultaneously, allowing diverse learners to access English through multiple sensory and cognitive pathways. This confirms the role of MI as a practical mechanism for operationalizing inclusive education principles at the classroom level rather than as a purely theoretical construct.

The study further clarifies that the successful enactment of MI in inclusive settings depends on teachers' capacity to engage in continuous pedagogical adaptation, reflective practice, and collaborative planning. By aligning instructional strategies with students' dominant intelligence profiles, teachers are able to sustain learner motivation and foster meaningful participation, positioning student diversity as a resource for learning rather than as a barrier.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the field of educational psychology and applied linguistics by extending the Multiple Intelligences framework into the domain of inclusive early childhood English education within a resource-limited context. It highlights how MI principles can be systematically translated into classroom practices through multimodal learning environments, team-based instructional design, and differentiated engagement strategies. Practically, the study underscores the relevance of MI-oriented pedagogy in promoting holistic learner development, including language competence, socio-emotional growth, and self-confidence, thereby reinforcing the value of inclusive, learner-centered approaches in contemporary English language education.

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