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Redesigning English Learning through Multiple Intelligences and Local Wisdom-Based Expeditionary Approach

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Abstract:

This study presents a redesigned model of English language teaching that integrates Expeditionary Learning (EL) with Multiple Intelligences (MI) and Local Wisdom to create more inclusive and culturally resonant classrooms. Conducted in Batang Regency, Indonesia, the research involved 25 English teachers from both senior and vocational high schools. The study explores how EL units can be structured to engage learners' varied cognitive strengths while embedding local cultural elements—such as traditional arts, folktale integration, cultural role-playing, and local-themed vocabulary—into project-based English instruction. Through qualitative case study methods, including interviews, classroom observations, and teaching materials analysis, the study reveals that this integrated model promotes learner engagement, contextual understanding of language and cultural awareness. Teachers highlighted improvements in students' critical thinking, collaboration, and emotional connection to learning. They also noted how integrating local wisdom allowed students to express identity and foster pride in their cultural heritage through English. Nevertheless, implementation was challenged by rigid curricula and limited pedagogical resources. This paper advocates for a shift in English education toward culturally responsive, MI-informed frameworks that reflect both global language demands and local realities, offering practical insights for teacher educators and curriculum designers in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Keywords: Expeditionary Approach, Multiple Intelligences, Local Wisdom, Student Engagement

Introduction

In the last two decades, education in Indonesia has faced various significant transformations along with the growing demands of globalization and technological advancements. One of the main responses to this change is the emergence of learning innovations by redesigning the emphasis on real experiences, in order to equip students with critical, adaptive, and contextual thinking skills. Expeditionary Learning (EL) is present as one of the design of the Experiential Learning approach that has proven to be effective in increasing student involvement and understanding through direct interaction with the surrounding environment (Holliday, 2023). EL emphasizes collaborative project-based innovation learning, field research, community visits, and authentic product presentations rooted in the realities of students' daily lives (Ikpeze, 2013). Thus, EL is able to create learning that is not only cognitively meaningful, but also shapes the character and social skills of students (Udoewa, 2022).

However, the reality on the ground shows that experiential learning innovations alone are not enough if they are not able to accommodate the diversity of individual intelligence. In this context, the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) pioneered by Howard Gardner became particularly relevant. Gardner emphasized that each individual has a unique spectrum of intelligence, ranging from linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, to existential intelligence (Aditama et al., 2023). To maximize the potential of all students and avoid bias towards certain talents or interests, the learning strategies adopted must be personalized, responsive, and inclusive (Patras et al., 2020). The integration between EL and MI is an innovation step so that learning is not only active and contextual, but also respects and develops the diversity of students' intelligence (Wardhani, 2022).

Redesigning learning by integrating MI and EL in learning practice has been carried out by 25 English teachers at the high school and vocational school levels in Batang Regency. The application of this strategy not only accommodates the unique intelligence of students, but also stimulates them to learn actively, collaboratively, and reflexively through environmental exploration and real-world problem-solving (Rismawati & Paais, 2024). This approach is enriched with the basis of local wisdom, where the exploration carried out by teachers is sourced from the potential and values typical of Batang Regency. This region has a rich topographic range from the coast to the mountains, which gives birth to a variety of cultural characteristics, natural resources, and community identities (Endarini, 2018; Adam et al., 2024). This condition reinforces the relevance of contextual learning that is not only knowledge transfer, but also builds cultural identity and diversity character of students (Khairunisa et al., 2023; Mulyangga et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the redesign of learning through MI-based EL and local wisdom is in line with the concept of Deep Learning that is currently developing in the Indonesian education world. Deep Learning emphasizes the importance of exploration and real experience so that the learning process is not only oriented towards mastering content, but also deep meaning and character development (Wijaya et al., 2025). In addition, the policy direction of the Independent Curriculum requires teachers to design contextual learning that is culturally based and relevant to the lives of students. Thus, the integration of EL-MI-Local Wisdom not only answers the needs of learning innovation, but also supports national policies in creating inclusive education that is rooted in the nation's culture.

Although various benefits have been identified, the integration of local wisdom in English learning through the MI-based EL approach has not been explored in depth in Indonesia. The research gap is evident, both in terms of pedagogical design,

implementation model, and impact evaluation on strengthening students' character and improving students' English language competencies (Hidayati et al., 2025). Previous studies have tended to focus on the application of EL or MI separately, so studies that combine all three in local contexts are still very limited. In fact, the development of a learning model that integrates the three has the potential to make a significant contribution to educational innovation and the preservation of local culture. This is an innovative learning design that can answer the challenges of today's times.

Finally, this research is expected to make a real contribution to a more innovative design of English learning. As well as being a way for the preservation of local culture and the achievement of 21st century competencies for students. By developing a learning design that integrates EL, MI and local wisdom for students, this research is expected to be able to answer the challenges of Indonesian education in the era of globalization and strengthen the identity and character of the younger generation.

Methods

This study applies a qualitative approach with phenomenological design, aiming to in-depth examine the application of learning design by 25 English teachers at the high school and vocational school levels in Batang Regency which integrates Expeditionary Learning (EL), Multiple Intelligences (MI), and local wisdom in order to increase learning effectiveness. The selection of phenomenological design is based on the need to explore and understand the essence and variations of teachers' real experiences in applying experiential learning models, responsive to multiple intelligences, and relevant to local contexts, as explained by Badil et al. (2023) that phenomenology emphasizes on understanding the essence of participants' life experiences.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely observation, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews with 25 teachers who had previously participated in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activities and the implementation of EL in their respective schools. The data collected included interview results, questionnaire responses and analysis of learning methods used by the research subjects. Each data obtained was then grouped based on the categories of Multiple Intelligence and Local Wisdom studied, such as the dominant multiple intelligence and the model of the application of EL by teachers.

The data analysis in this study follows a phenomenological procedure that focuses on the interpretation of the meaning, perspective, and experience of the participants, as explained by Sugiyono (2022) and Aditama et al. (2022). The analysis process includes three main stages: (1) data reduction, namely the selection process and identification of relevant data that has been collected; (2) data presentation, by classifying the types of students' multiple intelligences and EL learning strategies implemented by teachers; and (3) drawing conclusions, by formulating findings based on the classification of data and other supporting information obtained during the study. The entire research process is carried out by paying attention to ethical principles, including maintaining confidentiality and privacy of participants.

Results and Discussion

This research was carried out in Batang Regency, Central Java, which is known for its local cultural diversity, ranging from coastal to mountainous areas. The research subjects consisted of 25 English teachers at the high school and vocational school levels who were involved in designing and implementing expedition-based learning (EL) that integrates the Multiple Intelligences (MI) approach as well as local wisdom. The teachers

come from various schools that represent the diversity of the environment and culture in Batang Regency.

Analysis of Multiple Intelligences

Each student has unique intelligence characteristics. This intelligence underlies how the students learn, some understand quickly through words, others more easily grasp information through pictures, music, or physical activity. As the Theory of Multiple Intelligences introduced by Howard Gardner emphasizes that human intelligence is not only limited to logical and linguistic abilities as the conventional view (Widiana et al., 2021), but also includes various other realms, such as musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential.

In the context of education, understanding of multiple intelligences is important. Teachers cannot generalize students' learning styles, but need to adjust the learning approach to the potential of each individual. One way that can be done is through the implementation of multiple intelligence tests in the classroom. These tests can be the basis for the development of curriculum and teaching methods that consider a wider spectrum of cognitive capacity to optimize their learning potential (Almunadi & Azhar, 2023).

In this study, to design English teaching methods, each teacher first conducted a mapping of students' intelligence through the Multiple Intelligence Test, which consisted of a questionnaire that measured eight aspects of intelligence according to Howard Gardner, namely: (A) Verbal-Linguistic, (B) Logical-Mathematic, (C) Visual-Spatial, (D) Musical, (E) Kinesthetic, (F) Interpersonal, (G) Intrapersonal, and (H) Naturalist, which were coded A to H. Results of this test used to identify the three dominant intelligences in each student in his or her class. The data is then recapitulated to obtain collective trends at the grade level. Test results help teachers design more varied and adaptive learning strategies and support more comprehensive assessments, which focus not only on written test scores, but also on other skills that students have.

Table 1. Diagnostic and Mapping Results of Students' Dominant Multiple Intelligences

NO	CODE	MI DOMINANT		
1	Teacher 01	E	B	F
2	Teacher 02	E	B	A
3	Teacher 03	C	A	F
4	Teacher 04	C	E	D
5	Teacher 05	E	C	F
6	Teacher 06	B	H	E
7	Teacher 07	E	A	H
8	Teacher 08	C	D	G
9	Teacher 09	A	F	H
10	Teacher 10	E	D	A
11	Teacher 11	E	B	A
12	Teacher 12	E	B	A
13	Teacher 13	C	A	F

14	Teacher 14	E	B	F
15	Teacher 15	C	E	D
16	Teacher 16	B	H	E
17	Teacher 17	E	A	H
18	Teacher 18	E	C	F
19	Teacher 19	C	D	G
20	Teacher 20	E	D	A
21	Teacher 21	E	B	A
22	Teacher 22	A	F	H
23	Teacher 23	E	B	A
24	Teacher 24	H	F	D
25	Teacher 25	A	E	C

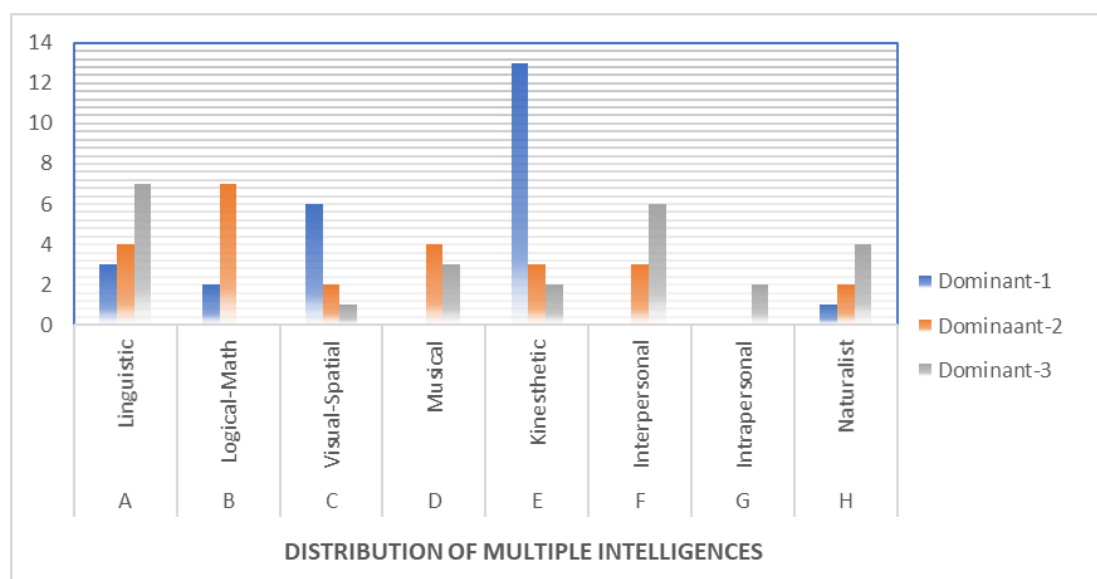


Figure1. Distribution of Multiple Intelligence

The table and figure above show the tendency of the majority of students to dominate the initial dominance of kinesthetic, visual-spatial, and linguistic intelligence. This reflects the importance of learning designs that are varied in modality and contextual according to the dominant intelligence in the classroom. For example, in classrooms with visual and kinesthetic intelligence dominance, teachers use more visual media, teaching aids, project-based learning, and physical activity. Teachers can also get projects such as designing posters and role-playing. Therefore, after this mapping, teachers will try to analyze local wisdom to plan learning methods that will be carried out later.

Analysis of Local Wisdom

Batang Regency, located on the northern coast of Central Java, has a wealth of local wisdom that is not only a cultural heritage, but also the foundation of the social, economic, and educational life of its people. Local wisdom which is these values or knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through stories, traditions, and real practices that are relevant to this day.

In the world of education, teachers must be able to determine learning themes that are relevant to local wisdom, such as regional tourism and folklore. This ability not only enriches academic content for teachers but can also develop students' intelligence through the exploration of cultural identity and social interaction (Wijaya et al., 2025).

There are a lot of local wisdom in Batang district that teachers can use as expedition learning. This local wisdom can be in the form of regional tourism, local industries and products, cultural festivals, folklore, and traditional games. The expedition-based learning project is designed in the following stages:

1. Students are divided into heterogeneous groups based on the results of the Multiple Intelligence Test, so that cross-intelligence collaboration can occur.
2. Each group member is assigned a task according to the dominant intelligence with different roles according to the intelligence tendencies of each student. For example, kinesthetic students lead field observations, visual students create posters, and linguistics students create narratives.

From the results of this study, the expedition activities carried out by teachers include direct visits to locations related to culture and tourism, local industries, observation of festivals or folklore, as well as recording and documentation through photos or videos. The results of the expedition were then processed into authentic projects in the form of promotional leaflets/booklets, drama simulations and traditional games, which integrated English language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and cross-cultural understanding. The chart of expedition learning activities is as follows:

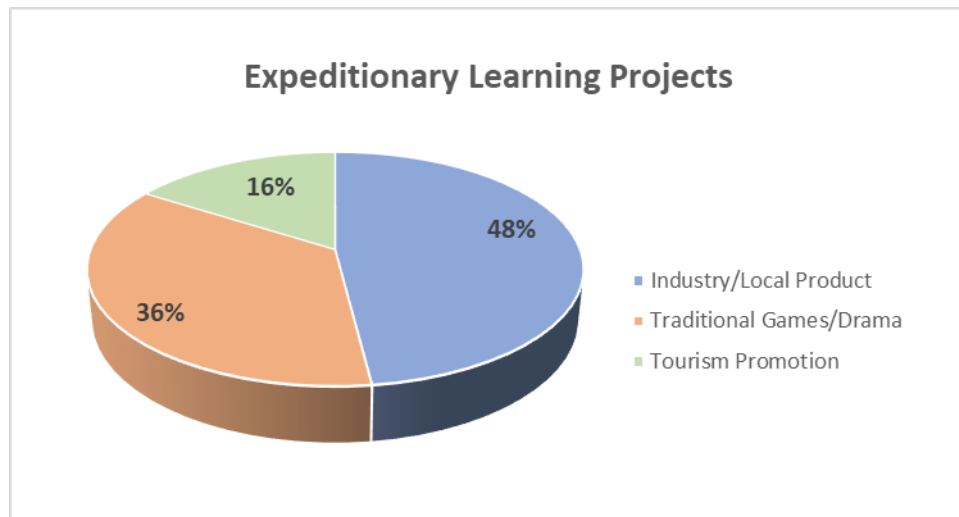


Figure 2. Distribution of Multiple Intelligence

In the graph above, it can be seen that almost half of the expedition learning, 48% focused on local or industrial product promotion projects. The project is in the form of leaflets and booklets promoting local products such as Nasi Megono. These findings show that students are encouraged to relate academic knowledge to real practices in the local business world so that learning becomes more meaningful.

Then, the second category that is widely applied by expedition learning teachers is cultural preservation through traditional games and drama. This significant percentage shows the school's efforts to internalize local cultural values in learning. The last category is tourism promotion, which despite a smaller percentage, still has strategic value. This initiative is important because it relates to the promotion of regional potential, especially in the tourism sector. This project encourages students' skills in the fields of communication, digital literacy, and foreign languages.

Some direct contributions were also felt by the teachers, this was illustrated by the response of several teachers including Teacher 08 who gave a Jodo Beach tourism promotion project saying, "*this EL strategy builds student creativity in promoting Batang tourism*". Likewise Teacher 10: "*It's a lot of fun... can add vocabulary...*". The same thing was also conveyed by Teacher 15: "*It provides a real experience and improves the quality of learning*". After visiting local products 'sego Megono' and making promotional leaflets.

Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of Expeditionary Learning based on Multiple Intelligences and local wisdom is able to create a more adaptive, contextual, and culture-based English learning process. This is part of redesigning better learning strategies, where English is no longer taught separately, but is connected to the real life, culture, and intelligence of students. The strategy supports a more comprehensive assessment, as student success is not only measured through written tests, but also through creativity, collaboration skills, and presentation skills.

Of course, there are still obstacles in the form of limited resources, time, and the need for continuous training for teachers to optimize the implementation of MI-based EL and local wisdom. At least this research will be the first step to answer these obstacles, so that in the future it will be more optimal. But overall, this research can be an alternative to innovative English teaching strategies. This strategy not only improves language competence, but also fosters cultural sensitivity, critical thinking skills, and social skills that are essential for the development of students in the 21st century.

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