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Building the Foundations: Integrating Multiple Intelligences and Digital Literacy to Support Merdeka Belajar in Teaching English to Young Learners

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Abstract

The rapid development of globalization and digitalization has transformed education systems worldwide, demanding early English mastery as part of 21st-century skills. In Indonesia, the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum aims to foster independent, creative, and critical learners by integrating technology and constructivist learning principles in early childhood education. This study explores how teachers utilize digital literacy and the Multiple Intelligences (MI) framework to enhance Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in five Islamic kindergartens across Central Java. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Findings indicate that teachers integrate various digital tools—such as interactive videos, digital flashcards, and language learning apps—with MI-based strategies like musical storytelling, visual art creation, kinesthetic games, and interpersonal role plays. These combinations effectively increase learners' engagement, pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary retention, and confidence in using English. However, challenges remain in curriculum alignment with *Merdeka Belajar* standards, limited access to digital resources, and teachers' insufficient training in technology-enhanced pedagogy. The study concludes that the integration of MI theory and digital literacy fosters a more holistic, inclusive, and child-centered English learning environment in Islamic early childhood contexts. Pedagogical implications highlight the need for systematic teacher training, the development of culturally relevant digital resources, and curriculum refinement to better accommodate diverse learner intelligences within the *Merdeka Belajar* framework.



Keywords: Teaching English to Young Learners, Multiple Intelligences, Digital Literacy, *Merdeka Belajar*, Islamic Kindergarten

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of globalization and digitalization has transformed educational paradigms worldwide, emphasizing not only academic achievement but also creativity, technological competence, and adaptability to rapid change. Within this global context, English—as the world’s lingua franca—plays a vital role in fostering cross-cultural communication, access to global knowledge, and participation in international collaboration. Consequently, early English education has become a key focus in many countries, including Indonesia, where it is increasingly recognized as a means to strengthen both linguistic competence and 21st-century skills. Research indicates that early exposure to English enhances phonological awareness, metalinguistic knowledge, and cognitive flexibility, contributing to higher proficiency and long-term communicative competence (Hui, 2025; Tomora, 2026; Adisti et al., 2023). Early English learning not only supports linguistic development but also promotes cognitive and socio-emotional growth, including memory, problem-solving, collaboration, and confidence in communication.

In Indonesia, the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, represents a transformative approach toward holistic, student-centered learning. The framework encourages educators to create meaningful, contextual, and creative learning environments that foster autonomy, curiosity, and lifelong learning (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2025). Its philosophy resonates strongly with constructivist principles (Piaget, 1976; Vygotsky, 2010), which view children as active participants in constructing knowledge through interaction with their environment and social mediation. This perspective is further supported by recent research on scaffolding in early childhood education, which highlights how teachers’ guidance, questioning, feedback, and opportunities for exploration can support children’s active participation and learning development (Masoumi et al., 2024). Within this paradigm, teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but facilitators of exploration who create opportunities for children to engage with learning content actively, socially, and creatively.

Within this reformative context, the teaching of English to young learners (TEYL) in early childhood education, particularly in Islamic kindergartens (*Raudhatul Athfal*), has expanded significantly. These institutions integrate character-based and spiritual education, aiming to prepare children for global participation while maintaining moral and religious foundations. Teachers are expected to balance language acquisition,



cognitive development, and character building in their lessons. Despite growing enthusiasm, many educators encounter pedagogical and practical challenges. A preliminary survey conducted by the researcher in Central Java involving 50 preschool teachers revealed several key issues. First, there was frequent misalignment between English instruction and the national Early Childhood Education Development Achievement Standards (CPAUD), which emphasizes holistic development rather than subject-specific learning. Second, teachers reported limited access to engaging, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant teaching materials. Third, many teachers lacked sufficient training in child-centered English pedagogy and digital literacy, making it difficult to implement interactive and multimodal TEYL activities effectively. Finally, classroom observations indicated that existing instructional practices often relied heavily on rote memorization and teacher-centered approaches, failing to accommodate children's diverse learning styles and intelligences. These preliminary findings highlight the urgent need to explore effective strategies for integrating differentiated, interactive, and technology-enhanced approaches in TEYL, particularly within Islamic early childhood settings.

A central pedagogical challenge in TEYL is addressing the diversity of children's learning styles, interests, and intelligences. Young learners exhibit wide-ranging cognitive, emotional, and social profiles, and a one-size-fits-all teaching approach often fails to maximize their learning potential. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory (1983) provides a powerful framework for differentiating instruction to match children's individual strengths. MI-based teaching allows children to express understanding and engage with content through varied modalities, including singing English songs (musical intelligence), storytelling or drama (linguistic and bodily-kinesthetic), collaborative games (interpersonal), visual arts (spatial), and exploration of nature (naturalistic). Integrating MI into TEYL enables teachers to design engaging, inclusive, and developmentally responsive activities that resonate with children's strengths and preferences (Kumar, 2024; Yulidawati et al., 2026).

The rapid digitalization of education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has further transformed early English learning. Digital literacy—the ability to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information through digital technologies (Georgopoulou et al., 2025)—has become essential for both teachers and young learners. Studies suggest that technology-enhanced learning improves motivation, interactivity, multimodal engagement, and creativity (Dzikri et al., 2025; Adisti & Rozikan, 2024). When combined with MI-based instruction, digital tools function as scaffolds that accommodate different learner potentials, such as interactive songs for musical learners, digital storytelling for linguistic learners, or gamified movement activities for kinesthetic learners (Pitychoutis & Al Rawahi, 2024). Digital media also



allow teachers to extend learning beyond the classroom, offering visual, auditory, and interactive experiences that reinforce concepts, vocabulary, and moral values simultaneously (Staneviciene & Žekienė, 2025; Suresh & Muthyala, 2025).

Despite these promising intersections, empirical research exploring how preschool teachers in Islamic educational contexts integrate digital literacy with MI-based pedagogy remains limited. Most studies have focused on elementary or secondary education, leaving a gap in understanding how these frameworks are applied in early childhood classrooms (Bangun, 2025; Farisia & Syafi, 2024). Additionally, little is known about how such approaches are operationalized under the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, particularly in schools balancing national curricular goals with spiritual and moral education.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how preschool teachers in five Islamic kindergartens in Central Java conceptualize, implement, and reflect upon TEYL practices using MI-based and digital literacy strategies. It examines how teachers address learner diversity, navigate practical challenges, and innovate pedagogically. By situating this inquiry at the intersection of constructivism, scaffolding, and Multiple Intelligences, this research provides insights into how national policy, pedagogical theory, and classroom practice intersect in early English education. The study contributes theoretically by integrating MI, constructivism, and scaffolding into a coherent framework, contextually by exploring Islamic early childhood education settings, and pedagogically by offering practical strategies for inclusive, meaningful, and technology-enhanced English learning that fosters holistic child development and aligns with the *Merdeka Belajar* philosophy.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how preschool teachers conceptualize and implement early English instruction by integrating Multiple Intelligences (MI), Constructivism, and Scaffolding within the *Merdeka Belajar* framework. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to capture the richness and complexity of teachers' lived experiences, pedagogical reasoning, and classroom realities (Creswell, 2014). Rather than testing hypotheses, this design seeks to interpret how meaning is constructed through teachers' everyday teaching practices as they translate national policy ideals into localized early childhood education contexts. In line with the interpretive paradigm, qualitative descriptive research acknowledges that educational phenomena are socially constructed, context-bound, and dynamic.

The study was conducted in five Islamic kindergartens (*Raudhatul Athfal*) located in Salatiga, Central Java, representing diverse institutional characteristics—urban,



semi-urban, and rural contexts. These sites were chosen through purposive sampling to reflect a variety of teaching environments and resource availabilities, particularly in the integration of English instruction and digital tools. The participants consisted of ten preschool teachers (two from each institution) who were actively engaged in English teaching for children aged 4–6 years. Their teaching experience ranged from three to ten years, and all were certified early childhood educators under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The participants' educational backgrounds varied from diploma to bachelor's degrees in early childhood and Islamic Education. The key inclusion criterion was their consistent implementation of TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) practices that aligned with the principles of *Merdeka Belajar*.

Data were collected using three main techniques—semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to uncover teachers' pedagogical beliefs, instructional decision-making, and reflections on integrating MI, digital literacy, and constructivist approaches. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Classroom observations were carried out over a two-month period, focusing on real-time English teaching sessions. The observations documented how teachers designed MI-based activities, scaffolded learning interactions, and incorporated digital media to enhance engagement. Document analysis was then used to triangulate the findings by examining lesson plans, instructional materials, and school documents that demonstrated how English instruction was planned and implemented within the *Merdeka Belajar* framework. All data were gathered in natural classroom settings to preserve authenticity and ecological validity.

Data analysis followed Miles et al., (2013) interactive model, encompassing data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the condensation phase, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded and categorized into themes reflecting MI-based strategies, scaffolding practices, digital integration, and pedagogical challenges. These data were then displayed through matrices and narrative summaries to identify relationships among teachers' beliefs, observed behaviours, and instructional choices. Finally, the process of conclusion drawing and verification involved iterative reflection and comparison with theoretical constructs from MI theory, Vygotsky's constructivism, and scaffolding frameworks to ensure conceptual alignment.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the research, the study employed member checking, where participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of interpretations, and peer debriefing, which involved critical discussions with fellow researchers to refine emerging insights. Data triangulation was also applied across interviews, observations, and documents to ensure validity and credibility. Ethical considerations



were observed throughout the study, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for institutional and cultural norms within each Islamic kindergarten.

Through this methodological design, the study sought to generate a deep, contextually grounded understanding of how Islamic preschool teachers in Indonesia navigate the intersection of Multiple Intelligences, constructivist pedagogy, and scaffolding-based teaching, thereby offering practical and theoretical contributions to the evolving discourse on TEYL within the *Merdeka Belajar* era.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The findings of this study reveal how preschool teachers in Islamic early childhood institutions interpret, adapt, and implement English language learning within the *Merdeka Belajar* framework by drawing implicitly and explicitly on the principles of Multiple Intelligences (MI), constructivism, and digital literacy. Through observations and interviews, it became evident that teachers' pedagogical practices are gradually transforming from traditional, teacher-centered instruction toward child-centered, experience-based learning that values diversity, creativity, and contextual engagement.

Teachers generally demonstrated an emerging awareness that every child learns differently and possesses unique potentials. While not all teachers explicitly mentioned Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, they consistently recognized the diversity of children's ways of learning. One teacher expressed this belief through everyday classroom practice, saying, "*Some children love to sing when learning English, while others prefer moving around or drawing pictures. So, I try to mix songs, gestures, and games in one session.*"

This statement encapsulates the intuitive understanding that learning should appeal to multiple modalities—linguistic, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and spatial—reflecting Gardner's (1983) central claim that intelligence is not a single entity but a constellation of abilities. Teachers thus naturally engaged MI principles in their teaching, even when they lacked formal theoretical vocabulary to articulate them.

The classroom observations supported this perspective. English lessons in Islamic kindergartens were often multimodal, involving a variety of sensory and participatory experiences. Teachers combined singing, storytelling, drawing, and movement games to engage different intelligences simultaneously. Such practices fostered both engagement and retention, particularly for young learners whose attention spans are limited. The atmosphere of play and exploration encouraged



children to make meaning through action rather than memorization, resonating with Vygotsky's and Piaget's constructivist ideas that children actively construct knowledge through social and physical interaction with their environment.

A prominent feature of the observed lessons was the emphasis on *meaning-making through play*. Teachers regarded play not merely as a fun activity but as a central pedagogical tool to help children internalize English vocabulary and expressions. One teacher explained, "*Children remember English words faster when they experience them directly. When we play 'shopping,' they can say 'apple,' 'banana,' or 'buy' naturally.*"

Such remarks reveal the constructivist orientation in their pedagogy: knowledge emerges from experience and interaction rather than rote repetition. Teachers positioned themselves as facilitators who design learning situations—contexts in which children can explore, observe, and experiment with language.

Another significant finding concerns the integration of digital tools to support MI-based learning. Teachers used simple platforms such as YouTube Kids, Canva slides, or Android phonics applications to create multimodal English experiences. They found that digital storytelling, animated songs, and short educational videos captured children's attention and enhanced pronunciation accuracy. A teacher from RA Miftahul Ulum reflected, "*We use animated videos and simple songs in class. Children love repeating the sounds and words from the screen. It's easier to catch their attention than only using flashcards.*"

This use of technology illustrates Meyer's (2010) notion of *scaffolding*, where digital media provide temporary support structures that assist learners in making sense of language input. The visual and auditory cues from digital content function as cognitive bridges that help children comprehend meaning before achieving full linguistic mastery. Furthermore, these digital resources created emotionally engaging contexts—combining entertainment with moral and linguistic learning—which aligns with the affective dimension of Gardner's intelligences.

Teachers also employed *project-based play* as a means of integrating linguistic, interpersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. Activities such as "English Market Day" or "My Favorite Animal" required collaboration, creativity, and communication in authentic contexts. In these projects, children not only practiced English vocabulary but also developed social interaction skills, moral reasoning, and confidence—an embodiment of holistic learning envisioned by both Gardner's MI framework and the *Merdeka Belajar* philosophy. Such practices align with the goal of Islamic early childhood education to balance cognitive, social, and spiritual development.



However, the findings also reveal several persistent challenges in the implementation of MI-based and digital-supported English instruction. Many teachers expressed limited digital competence and uncertainty in selecting age-appropriate media. Some mentioned difficulty aligning English activities with the *Capaian Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini* (CPAUD) standards, which emphasize holistic development rather than linguistic performance. As a result, teachers often had to integrate English naturally into thematic learning areas—such as moral stories or environmental topics—rather than teaching it as a standalone subject. This integration required creative adaptation but also caused some inconsistency in planning and assessment.

Resource and infrastructural limitations further constrained digital innovation, particularly in rural Islamic schools. In classes with limited internet access, teachers relied more on low-tech approaches—songs, flashcards, and role-plays—yet continued to apply MI principles through sensory-rich activities. These low-tech but high-engagement strategies demonstrated the teachers' adaptability and contextual intelligence, reflecting Vygotsky's concept of *situated learning*, where pedagogy adapts to the cultural and material realities of the learners' environment.

Despite these challenges, teachers displayed strong professional agency and collaborative spirit. They often shared lesson ideas, digital materials, and reflections through informal WhatsApp groups, building small peer-learning communities. This peer exchange served not only as a means of resource sharing but also as a reflective space for professional growth—illustrating the social dimension of constructivism, where knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and collaboration.

Overall, the findings portray a dynamic transformation in early English learning in Islamic kindergartens. Teachers are gradually internalizing MI principles by designing diverse, experiential, and spiritually grounded English learning experiences. They are also using technology as a scaffold to enhance engagement and comprehension, while embodying the constructivist role of facilitator rather than transmitter of knowledge. The essence of their practice lies in recognizing the child as an active, creative learner whose intelligence manifests in multiple forms—and in seeing language learning as both a cognitive and moral-spiritual journey. This synthesis of MI-based pedagogy, constructivist learning, and digital scaffolding demonstrates that even within resource-limited Islamic educational contexts, teachers can nurture meaningful, joyful, and inclusive English learning—precisely the kind of transformation envisioned by *Merdeka Belajar*.



3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the complex yet promising landscape of early English learning in Islamic preschool settings under the Merdeka Belajar framework. Teachers' practices, though emergent and often intuitive, reveal a meaningful convergence between the theoretical constructs of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983 ; Maslo, 2023), Constructivism (Piaget, 1976; Vygotsky, 2010), and Scaffolding (Meyer & Turner, 2002). This convergence underscores that effective early language education is not a matter of method alone, but a multidimensional process grounded in cognitive diversity, social interaction, and contextual adaptation. Teachers engaged children through diverse sensory and creative modalities, demonstrating a practical embodiment of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory. Although most teachers did not formally reference MI terminology, their use of songs, gestures, drawing, storytelling, and role-play indicates an intuitive awareness of children's varied learning strengths. Such multimodal learning fosters both engagement and retention, especially for preschoolers whose linguistic and cognitive capacities are still developing. When children sang songs, played games, and dramatized stories, they not only acquired vocabulary but also associated English words with emotions, actions, and moral meanings. This affective-cognitive integration aligns with Gardner's assertion that intelligence operates as a system of capacities involving perception, emotion, and creativity, and it corroborates previous studies showing that MI-oriented English instruction enhances motivation, confidence, and creativity among young learners (Morgan, 2021; Qasserras & Qasserras, 2023).

The teachers' emphasis on learning through play, exploration, and experience reflects core principles of constructivism. Activities such as "shopping" simulations or project-based play demonstrate that children construct knowledge through active engagement with their environment, transforming experiences into internalized concepts. Teachers acted as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge, allowing learning to be socially mediated as Vygotsky proposed. Through group activities and peer collaboration, children acquired English not as isolated vocabulary but as part of meaningful communication, which aligns with research emphasizing that effective TEYL requires social participation and guided discovery (Washington-Nortey et al., 2022). Within the Merdeka Belajar context, this constructivist orientation is particularly significant, as the policy's emphasis on autonomy, creativity, and contextual learning finds realization in these play-based, child-centered classrooms. Teachers successfully localized these ideals by integrating spiritual and moral dimensions into English learning, turning language education into a medium for both linguistic and character development.



Digital media integration emerged as an important pedagogical evolution in these preschools. The use of YouTube songs, animated storytelling, and phonics applications functioned as scaffolds mediating learning between children's prior knowledge and new linguistic input, supporting Meyer's definition of scaffolding as temporary guidance until learners achieve independence. Digital tools provided cognitive, linguistic, and affective scaffolding: visually rich media offered contextual clues, auditory repetition reinforced pronunciation, and entertaining content sustained attention and joy. These outcomes reflect concept of digital literacy as multimodal learning, where technology enhances engagement and supports differentiated instruction. However, disparities in digital access and teacher competence persisted, particularly in rural settings where connectivity was limited. Teachers adapted by using low-tech alternatives such as songs, picture cards, and physical games, demonstrating Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development by providing culturally situated support bridging learners' current and potential abilities.

Despite resource constraints, teachers exhibited resilience and professional agency by forming informal learning communities via WhatsApp groups to share lesson plans, media, and reflections. This collaborative practice illustrates collective constructivism, through which teachers co-construct pedagogical knowledge based on shared experiences. Such communities operationalize the *Merdeka Belajar* spirit of autonomy and reflection, positioning teachers as active innovators rather than passive curriculum implementers. Nonetheless, findings indicate the need for systemic support. Teachers' intuitive understanding of MI and constructivist principles requires reinforcement through continuous professional development focused on digital literacy, pedagogical design, and curriculum alignment to ensure MI-based instruction is theoretically coherent and developmentally appropriate.

The intersection of MI, constructivism, and scaffolding represents a synthesis of global pedagogical paradigms with Indonesia's educational reform. Teachers' practices reflect the essence of *Merdeka Belajar*—autonomous, contextual, creative, and value-based learning. Within Islamic early childhood education, these approaches are enriched by moral and spiritual dimensions, emphasizing gratitude, cooperation, and respect as integral to English learning. This synergy affirms Gardner's concept of education for understanding, which connects cognitive skill with ethical and aesthetic awareness, and supports Adisti and Rozikan (2024) findings that technology-enhanced digital literacy, grounded in constructivist pedagogy, promotes engagement and meaningful learning outcomes.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative framework bridging Multiple Intelligences, Constructivism, and Scaffolding within the socio-religious context of Islamic early childhood education and the *Merdeka Belajar* policy framework. Prior



studies often examined these frameworks in isolation; this study demonstrates their synergistic potential to inform holistic, child-centered, and spiritually grounded English instruction. Empirically, it addresses gaps in TEYL research in Islamic preschools in Indonesia, offering insights into how teachers navigate the interplay of policy ideals, pedagogical innovation, and local realities. Theoretically, it extends MI and constructivist discourse to culturally responsive contexts that integrate digital literacy as scaffolding. Practically, it provides a model of reflective, inclusive teaching that honors children's diverse intelligences while fostering linguistic, moral, and creative growth. In essence, effective early English education in Islamic settings is not merely about language acquisition but about cultivating whole learners—children who think, feel, and act intelligently across multiple dimensions. This vision, aligned with Gardner's educational humanism and the Merdeka Belajar philosophy, positions early English classrooms as spaces for joyful, meaningful, and transformative learning.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study explored how teachers in five Islamic kindergartens in Central Java conceptualized and implemented English learning through the integration of Multiple Intelligences (MI), Constructivist learning, and Digital Literacy within the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum framework. The analysis of interviews and classroom observations generated several key findings.

First, the study found that teachers possessed an implicit yet growing understanding of MI-based and constructivist pedagogy. Although most teachers did not explicitly refer to Gardner's theoretical terminology, they recognized the diversity of children's learning styles and potentials. English lessons were designed through songs, storytelling, drawing, role-play, and movement games—activities that naturally activated linguistic, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and spatial intelligences. Teachers positioned themselves as facilitators, creating environments where children learned English through play, experience, and interaction rather than memorization. This reflects a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction consistent with *Merdeka Belajar* and constructivist principles.

Second, the findings showed that digital tools played a crucial scaffolding role in enhancing English learning. Teachers used animated videos, simple applications, and digital storytelling to capture children's attention and reinforce pronunciation and vocabulary comprehension. Digital media functioned as multimodal scaffolds—combining visual and auditory stimuli that strengthened learning retention and motivation. Importantly, technology was not used to replace traditional methods, but



to support engagement, creativity, and meaning-making. This practice aligns with Vygotsky's view of mediated learning and Mayer's (2005) multimedia learning theory.

Third, the study revealed several contextual challenges, including limited teacher competence in digital literacy, restricted technological access in rural schools, and the difficulty of aligning English learning with the *Capaian Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini* (CPAUD) standards. Teachers often merged English instruction with thematic and moral learning, embedding Islamic values such as cooperation, gratitude, and respect. Despite these limitations, teachers displayed adaptive and reflective practices, such as peer collaboration through WhatsApp groups and context-based innovation using low-tech resources. These strategies reflect the essence of *Merdeka Belajar*—empowering educators to act creatively within their constraints.

In conclusion, this study affirms that the integration of MI, Constructivism, and Digital Literacy provides a robust pedagogical foundation for Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in Islamic early childhood contexts. Teachers in this study demonstrated that meaningful English learning emerges when instruction is multimodal, contextual, and value-based, bridging modern pedagogy with local and spiritual dimensions. The *Merdeka Belajar* philosophy thus serves as a dynamic framework that allows teachers to balance freedom, creativity, and faith in nurturing holistic child development.

4.2 Implications

The findings of this study carry important theoretical, pedagogical, and policy implications for early English education within Islamic preschool contexts in Indonesia. Theoretically, the research reinforces the interrelationship between Multiple Intelligences, Constructivism, and Digital Literacy as mutually supportive frameworks for young learners' language development. The study illustrates that Gardner's MI theory can be operationalized through Vygotsky's concept of social constructivism, where knowledge is co-constructed through interaction, and Mayer's multimedia learning theory, where meaning is built through multimodal engagement. The integration of these perspectives shows that intelligence is not a static attribute but an evolving capacity that flourishes when children are exposed to diverse, contextual, and digitally enriched learning experiences. In Islamic early childhood classrooms, this theoretical synthesis also expands the notion of constructivism to encompass moral and spiritual dimensions, positioning learning as both a cognitive and value-oriented process.

Practically, the study underscores the need for continuous teacher empowerment in implementing MI-based and digitally integrated pedagogies that align with the *Merdeka Belajar* philosophy. Teachers should be supported not only in using



technology but in designing learning experiences that activate multiple intelligences while nurturing moral, emotional, and linguistic growth. Professional development programs that emphasize reflective practice, digital literacy, and contextual innovation are essential to enhance instructional quality in both urban and rural settings. Moreover, the creation of collaborative teacher communities, sharing digital materials and best practices, will foster sustainable peer learning ecosystems that reflect the collaborative spirit of *Merdeka Belajar*. Integrating English learning with Islamic moral education and national early childhood standards (CPAUD) will further ensure that teaching remains holistic, inclusive, and culturally grounded.

From a policy standpoint, the results suggest that greater alignment is needed between *Merdeka Belajar* policies and early English education goals, especially in faith-based institutions. Policymakers should incorporate digital literacy competencies into early childhood learning indicators and ensure equitable access to technological infrastructure across regions. Strengthening collaboration between universities, teacher training centers, and government institutions can facilitate the development of TEYL programs and learning modules that are both pedagogically sound and contextually appropriate.

Finally, the findings open new directions for further research, including longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of MI-based digital approaches on children's linguistic and cognitive growth, and comparative studies across different educational contexts. Such efforts would deepen the understanding of how integrated pedagogical models—rooted in MI, Constructivism, and Digital Literacy—can transform early childhood English learning into a process that not only builds language skills but also nurtures creativity, faith, and humanity.

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