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HOW EFL STUDENTS' ORAL PERFORMANCES ARE PROMOTED WITH TASK-BASED ACTIVITIES: AN INTEGRATION OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY

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Abstract. This study aims to investigate the effect of using a task-based training program as an application of Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) on developing speaking skills for EFL students. The experimental and controlled groups each consisted of thirty first-year students majored in English Language Education at Phu Yen University, Vietnam. The tools of the study included a speaking-training program based on MI-oriented task-based activities to improve students' speaking skills, a questionnaire, an interview, and twospeaking pre- and post- tests administered to the experimental and controlled groups. The experimental speaking-training program was taught to the students during a 15-week period. The participants' feedback from the questionnaire, the interview, and their academic scores from the pre- and post-tests were collected and analyzed. The results revealed that the program had great effects on improving the students' learning motivation and enhancing their speaking skills. The study also proposed some recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Keywords.*Task-based activities, oral performances, EFL students, Multiple Intelligences Theory*

1. Introduction

The major goal of implementing communicative activities in our daily life is to express our ideas as well as make ourselves understood. However, according to Sayed (2005), for most of the EFL students, oral performances are often regarded as one of the hardest to be trained and developed. Campbell (2003) pointed that in traditional language teaching and learning approaches for improving oral performances, much attention seems to be paid to verbal and reasoning abilities only, and such methods of training and assessment are perhaps not sufficient for the learners whose learning styles are not well-matched with those two verbal and reasoning skills.

Gardner (1983) proposed that schools and institutes usually deploy the classic approach of assessing intelligence quotient (IQ) in their language training programs. With the philosophy

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"Every learner is unique and intelligent", the Theory of Multiple Intelligences has proved to be a humanitarian and favorable premise to foster and promote learners' language skills. Armstrong (2017) remarked that while traditional language teaching and learning programs mainly focus on developing learners' linguistic and reasoning skills, Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) proposes that there are many other ways in which learners' language skills can be developed better. As the major aim of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is to enable students to promote their speaking skills to achieve progress in communicative competence, EFL instructors should create favorable conditions for each individual student to develop their speaking skills, in particular, and communicative competences, in general.

Therefore, the main goal of this research is to verify the effectiveness of integrating task-based activities as an application of MIT into the EFL speaking-training program. This research originates from a hypothesis that there issome significant improvement in the statistical results of the mean scores of the EFL speaking pre- and post-tests with better results for the experimental students regarding their oral performances. In other words, this research integrates task-based classroom activities as an application of MIT to explore the benefits that the MI-based approach could offer to both EFL teachers and learners.

2. Literature review

2.1. Speaking skills

Speaking is defined by Bailey and Savage (1994) as an "activity which requires a combination of various linguistic sub-systems, in which all of the linguistic factors are well mixed with each other to make this language skill a difficult task for EFL students. Speaking skills, according to Fauziah (2015), are also defined as the interaction process aiming at achieving communicative purposes. Such an interactive process relates to the concepts of delivering, repeating and treating the information. In this research, EFL speaking skills are defined as "the interaction and communication process in using EFL, consisting of the following four functional groups of speaking sub-skills: *(a) asking and answering personal interview questions; (b) making a conversation based on a ready-given situation; (c) describing a picture; and (d) making questions and answers about a given topic."*

2.2. Task-based activities

Leaver et al. (2004) defined task-based activities as the deployment of real-life communication language, which requires learners to perform meaningful interaction activities in which the target language is used. MI-based activities can be integrated into language instruction in various manners. Armstrong (2017) proposed that activity centers are an effective tool to promote language students' MIs. Thus, students can be grouped into MI centers according to their

MI profiles established at the beginning of the training program; or again, halfway of the training program when the students have been fully aware of their true MI profile structures. In this research, task-based activities are deployed as an MI tool, with an argumentation that task-based activities can involve and develop a diversity of students' MIs simultaneously, not just promoting only one type of intelligence at a specific point of time.

2.3. The Multiple Intelligences Theory

The Multiple Intelligences Theory proposes that the definition of intelligence as traditionally measured and stipulated in intelligent quotients (IQ) tests cannot cover sufficiently all types of competences an individual possesses. The Multiple Intelligences Theory argues that instructors should design and conduct classroom activities on the basis of the individual student's creativeness and favored learning styles. The eight types of intelligences in MIT are listed as follows:

1. *Linguistic intelligence*: the ability to use words to express ideas orally, make conversations, etc.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: delivering speeches, making conversations, role-plays, discussions, interviews, etc.

2. *Logical intelligence*: the ability to understand abstract concepts, critical thinking and argumentation skills, thinking and expressing ideas orally in deductive and conductive methods, etc.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: making or filling in charts, giving directions, jig-saw activities, solving cross-work puzzles, etc.

3. *Visual-spatial intelligence*: the ability to use visual aids or real objects to demonstrate oral expressions and express ideas orally.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: using pictures and images, making stories on the basis of pictures and real objects, etc.

4. *Musical-rhythmic intelligence*: the ability to feel melodies and tunes, enabling a student to enjoy, imitate and invent the music.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: making chunks of "rap" songs integrated with vocabulary or contents of the topic, using the lyrics of the songs to illustrate for the ideas or contents of the oral topics, etc.

5. *Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*: the ability to use gestures, facial expressions or body language to represent the meaning and ideas to achieve communicative goals.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: story-telling or guessing the vocabulary on the basis of the cues expressed by gestures, facial expressions, or body movements, etc.

6. *Interpersonal intelligence*: the ability to work with other people in pairs, groups or teams to exchange and share information; it is also the ability to persuade other people to agree with a suggestion, or come to a final decision, etc.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: group-work and pair-work, jigsaw speaking activities, discussions, interviews, etc.

7. *Intrapersonal intelligence:* the ability to work on one's own and deploy individual reflections to make oral products for conversations, presentations, providing feedback, etc.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: doing personal project tasks, self-evaluation activities, creating individual oral presentations, etc.

8. *Naturalistic intelligence:* the ability to use the images or real things from the natural surroundings to support or illustrate for the oral expressions and presentations.

   Relevant speaking-training activities: making posters for common social problems, doing project-based tasks on realities and measures for improving a certain issue, etc.

2.4. Relationship between task-based activities and MI-based approach

The relationship between task-based activities and MI-based approach can be considered as that of a bi-directional one. Task-based activities, according to Leaver et al. (2004), enabled the speaking-training instructors to facilitate the students to practice their speaking skills by using the English language in meaningful contexts through a diversity of classroom activities originated from the students' knowledge and experience. Whereas, Salem (2013) proposed that while students' speaking-training process is integrated with diverse classroom activities in which their MIs such as interpersonal, bodily, logical and verbal intelligences are promoted, real communicative needs are established.

In addition, task-based activities, when applied in accordance with the principles of MIT, can promote students' learning motivation and maximize their interaction for oral practice. One of the similarities between the Learner-Centeredness approach and the CLT approach, as indicated by Fauziah (2015), students are the main focus of the teaching-learning process; the guideline running through these approaches is that through a diversity of classroom activities organized around the development of students' learning abilities, teachers can reach every student's learning styles and potential intelligences, thus, making teaching and learning activities more effective. Furthermore, Armstrong (2017) proposed that the advantages of implementing MI-based activities arethat when students work in MI centers, they all share the common interest and interact with each other in a more motivating and effective atmosphere. (This is in contrast with group work activities in CLT, in which students of different types of learning styles are randomly grouped with each other, and often do not show the same motivation and common

interest in their communicative and interaction activities.)

Therefore, it is obvious that the speaking-training lessons and programs should take into account the learners' diversity and individual differences in every single speaking-training activity which better their oral products for instructors' assessment. Students' speaking skills can be developed when their differential learning styles and favored types of intelligences are acknowledged and when they are given numerous opportunities to speak about the topics of their own interests, and also when they are encouraged to participate in interactive activities with their peers with similar learning styles and intelligences in separate intelligence centers.

2.5. Previous studies on the effectiveness of integrating task-based activities into developing EFL students' speaking skills

Shore (2001) found out that speaking self-efficacy is positively correlated with interpersonal and visual-spatial intelligences. The findings indicate that 90% of the teachers in the study tended to stress mathematical, logical, linguistic, and interpersonal intelligences more than others in the university classrooms. In addition, speaking self-efficacy was found to be positively correlated with interpersonal and visual-spatial intelligences.

Campbell (2003) highlighted studies on the effectiveness of teaching and learning through MIs. His research was specifically designed to measure the quality of students' oral products as a result of applying MIT. Hisresearch studies show positive results due to the application of MI-based activities.

Arnold (2004, p. 124) argued that "MIT integration proposes that language learning, including promoting student's linguistic intelligence in EFL learning, can become more effective with the use of a diversity of language activities to cater for various intelligences". Hence, language instructors should offer a variety of assignments to create favorable opportunities to deal with language problems in their most favorable manners and to develop their different MIs simultaneously.

Salem (2013) found that students who were taught using MI-based program scored higher on their final oral products. His research revealed that applying the MIT approach in EFL teaching and learning programs proves to be beneficial and effective in promoting students' oral performances as a different individual student has their own favored ways to expose to their language acquisition and dealing with their own tasks.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research questions

With an aim to investigate the effects of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities for

promoting the students' oral performances as well as to explore their responses to such an MI-oriented integration, the following research questions were established for the research:

What are the effects of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities into developing EFL students' speaking skills?"

What are the participants' responses to the integration of MI-oriented task-based activities into the EFL speaking training program?"

3.2. Research setting and participants

The current study was conducted at a first-year class majored in English Education at a university in Vietnam. The total number of students participating in this research was 60, divided into twogroups (the experimental group of 30 participants and the controlled group of 30 participants). The first-year students were selected as participants in this study because of their new experience in learning speaking as a separate school subject at the university. This speaking-learning experience was different from their high-school general English curriculum where much attention was paid to grammar and vocabulary knowledge. With such new research participants, according to McDonough and Shaw (2012), it was a favorable condition for them to be adaptive to the new teaching and learning method. Although the participants weretrained to become prospective teachers, in general, they are not confident and fluent speakers of the English language.

3.3. Research design

This research was implemented with an instructional intervention andonly deployed for the experimental participants; the controlled participants were trained with the regular speaking-training method for their speaking-skill development. This model of experimental design was adopted as the major objectives of the research. They were used to promote the speaking skills for thegroup of experimental participants by integrating MI-oriented task-based activities.

3.4. Research instruments

As this research deploys both quantitative and qualitative methods, and they triangulate and mutually complement each other. Therefore, the instruments used in this research included a speaking-training program integrated with task-based activities following the principles of MI-based approach, a questionnaire for the participants in the experimental group; and some interviews conducted for six students in the experimental group who were ranked with lowest, average and highest marks in the post-test for in-depth analysis of their reflections. All the participants took part in this research on their voluntary choices. The intervention was conducted in 15 weeks, with threecredit periods per week. The participants' anticipated speaking skill out-

comes were, to a large extent, similar to those of Level B1 – CERF, speaking proficiency.

3.5. Research hypothesis

This research adopted a quasi-experimental design to ascertain the authenticity of a hypothesis, namely: "There are some significant improvements in the statistical results of the mean scores of the speaking pre- and post-tests with better results for the experimental students regarding their oral performances."

3.6. Procedures of the intervention

3.6.1. Regular speaking-training method

For the participants in the controlled group, their speaking skills were guided and trained basically through the classroom activities specifically designed and implemented for promoting their verbal and reasoning skills. In the pre-speaking stage, they were introduced to the speaking topic by provoking their imagination, knowledge, and experience about the topic, and they answered some general questions that gradually led them to the main contents of the topic. The participants were guided to make some guesses about the contents of the lesson. Then, in the while-speaking stage, they were asked to work in pairs and interact with each other on the basis of their verbal and reasoning skills to find answers or build up their oral presentations on the given topic. Next, they could go on with pair-work or group-work activities (by randomly pairing or grouping the ones sitting next to or close to each other) to have interaction and discussion activities. (Such groups of participants, in this case, were normally formed by asking the students to turn to each other in groups according to their close positions in the classroom). In the post-speaking activity, the participants could be asked to write a report about the results of their discussions in the while-speaking stage.

In general, with the above-mentioned regular speaking-training program, the participants really had opportunities to communicate and interact with each other in pairs and in groups in light of the CLT-based approach. However, such pairs and groups were established on a random basis, usually for the participants sitting closely with each other. Therefore, the members in each group might not share the same interest in the topic, and their learning styles within the same group or pair might also be quite different, and in some cases, they were even in conflict with each other. As a result, not all the participants in such a group could actively perform discussion activities. Another common problem often seen in these group work discussion activities was that some students were usually more dominating and influential than others, and some others even prove to be reluctant or unwilling to involve in such group work discussions.

3.6.2. MI-oriented task-based speaking-training method

The MI inventory for EFL students' speaking skills: In this research, aiming at improving the experimental participants' EFL speaking skills, an adapted Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS) with a refined version of 80 questions aiming at verifying the students' MIs regarding their EFL speaking skills only. Following were the results of implementing such an adapted MIDAS Inventory for the experimental participants (In Table 1, only the most dominant type of the participants' intelligences were calculated):

Table 1. Profile of the most dominant intelligences of the participants

No.	Types of Intelligences	Quantity	Rate (%)
1	Verbal Intelligences	0	0
2	Logical Intelligence	5	17
3	Interpersonal Intelligence	1	3
4	Intrapersonal Intelligence	4	13
5	Bodily Intelligence	1	3
6	Visual Intelligence	9	30
7	Musical Intelligences	3	10
8	Naturalistic Intelligences	7	23

On the basis of the above-mentioned statistics, MI-oriented task-based activities were implemented with the principles of promoting students' diversified learning styles and preferred MIs. In each EFL speaking training lesson, the students were grouped into separate intelligence centers (ICs) with their similar intelligence type within each IC.

The speaking-training activities were implemented aiming at promoting all the eight types of intelligences established in the participants' MI profiles: linguistic, visual, logical, bodily, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, and naturalistic intelligences. Both of the experimental and controlled groups were trained with the same speaking-training program.

However, MI-oriented task-based activities were applied tothe experimental group. By carrying out such speaking-training activities, the experimental participants benefited from various opportunities to promote their MIs in showing their oral performances originated from their favorite MIs, utilizing many visual aids in their classroom and testing activities, and integrating their most favored learning styles to improve their oral presentation skills. The MI-integrated EFL speaking tests were implemented prior to and after the intervention with the task-based activities.

3.7. Description of the speaking pre- and post-tests

Each speaking test comprised the assessment offour speaking sub-skills. They included-Part (1) – Asking and answering personal interview questions, Part (2) – Making a conversation on the basis of a ready-given situation, Part (3) – Describing a picture,and Part (4) – Making questions and answers about a given topic. (The total score of each test was 10 points. Each part has 2.5 points, see Table 2). Following are the most essential contents in the EFL speaking training program, Level B1 for the EFL students at the Foreign Languages Department, Phu Yen University. The designs of the EFL speaking tests were based on the consultancy of the Speaking Instructors Group and on the reference resources.

Table 2. Scoring scales for the EFL speaking tests

No.	EFL speaking sub-skills	Number of items	Score
1	Asking and answering personal interview questions	1	2.5
2	Making a conversation based on a ready-given situation	1	2.5
3	Describing a picture	1	2.5
4	Making questions and answers about a given topic	1	2.5
	Total scores:		10

To score the English-speaking pre- and post-tests, an identical scoring scale was used. The scoring scale used in this research with particular assessment criteria was originated from Cambridge English: FCE Assessment Commentary and Marking Guidance (UCLES, 2011). The purposes of adopting such a scoring scale are to obtain detailed data for diagnosing the students' oral performances in different aspects of linguistic competence assessment: linguistic accuracy, discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication competences. Each test had the total marks of ten, ranging from 1(minimum) to 10(maximum). Every participant was given their scores of the speaking pre-test and post-test separately by two different instructors to ensure the inter-rater reliability. The scores were recorded on separated record sheets and the two examiners were advised not to have any interference into the participants' English speaking performance so as not to affect the scores given by their partners. These scores were then processed withSPSS for data analysis.

3.8. Reliability and validity of the speaking pre- and post-tests

As a pre- and post-test is regarded as an effective tool for measuring what the students have achieved after participating in a specific training program, this study adopted the pre-test and post-test design. To prove that the students' progress in their oral performances was gained from their attending a speaking-training program, the post-test scores were assumed to be higher than the pre-test score. Firstly, the two tests were piloted to ensure their validity and

reliability. Fiveparticipants were selected randomly from each of the twogroups. Then, the results of the piloted tests were analyzed with SPSS to establish some more proper changes if applicable. The Cronbach Alpha co-efficiency of the piloted pre-test was 0.72 and of the piloted post-test was 0.76, indicating reliable results. The administration of the two pilot tests also aimed toensure the clarity of the directions, to stipulate the time limits relevant to each testing item, and also to establish the validity of the two tests.

3.9. Data collection and analysis

The results of implementing the speaking pre- and post-tests were treated to measure the effectiveness of integrating the MI-oriented task-based activities to develop the participants' speaking skills.

Statistical procedures

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23.0) was deployed to treat the data. The *t*-test verification formula was also established to analyze the scores of the participants' EFL speaking tests prior to and after the intervention.

Validity of the study hypothesis

In order to verify the validity of the research hypothesis, firstly, the researchers set up the data tables to establish the twocolumns of scores of the EFL speaking tests administered before and after the interventionandthe twocolumns of scores of the required regular EFLspeakingtests for the controlled group. Then, these data tables were put into the SPSS to compute the required statistics. From the results obtained in this research, a chart of statistics (Table 3) was established to describe and compare the mean scores and the standard deviation between the two studiedgroups.

After that, the *t*-test values were computed to compare the means scores ofspeaking pre- and post-tests of the two studiedgroups. On the basis of this comparison, the effectiveness of the intervention was identified, confirmed and concluded. To ensure the differences between the mean scores obtained from the statistics originated from the intervention, some calculations and analysis on the effect size were also implemented.

4. Research findings

4.1. Findings related to the main hypothesis of the research

"There are some remarkable differentiations in the statistical results regarding the mean scores of the test marks for the EFL speaking tests before and after the intervention compared with the test marks of the controlled group." Table 3 shows the results of the computation of the

test scores of the EFL speaking tests prior to and after the intervention. Such comparisons of participants' test marks were calculated for both groups.

Table 3. Comparisons of test marks of the EFL speaking tests prior to and after intervention between experimental and controlled groups

	Number of students in experimental group (N= 30)		Number of students in controlled group (N=30)		$p$value of t-test	The effect size
	Mean score	Standard deviation	Mean score	Standard deviation		
Speaking pre-test	5.75	0.50	5.75	0.50	0.05	0.22
Speaking post-test	6.62	0.47	6.12	0.47	0.01	0.37

From the statistical results presented in Table 3, the significant differences among the mean scores of the EFL speaking tests conducted prior to and after the intervention can be seen obviously. There is no difference between the mean scores of the 2 groups in the EFL speaking (both of them were 5.75), indicating that the experimental group had the same mean score as the controlled group regarding the results of the pre-test before the intervention was implemented. Such results changed considerably in the scores of the EFL speaking post-test, with the result of 0.50 (6.62–6.12), which means that the EFL speaking training program with task-based activities offered considerable benefits to the EFL students.

Thus, the hypothesis was verified. That is to say, there were some significant improvements in the mean scores ofthe pre- and post-EFL speaking tests. Such finding was also well-matched with that found by Shore (2001), Campbell (2003), Arnold (2004) and Salem (2013). All of these studies indicated that integrating task-based speaking activities had great effectiveness in developing EFL students' oral performances.

4.2. Findings from the questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 62 items, all of which were also categorized into 6 themes. The results of the data collection and analysis of all the items and themes in the questionnaire arepresented in Table 4.

Table 4. Grouped data for the 6 themes in the questionnaire

No.	Theme	Mean	SD
1	Students' awareness on how MI-oriented task-based activities are integrated into their speaking training program: Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	4.51	0.223
2	Students' responses to the integration of MI-oriented task-based activities in the speaking program: Items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17	4.40	0.239

3	Benefits of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities into the speaking training program: Items 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28	4.39	0.246
4	Problems of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities into the speaking training program: Items 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37	4.14	0.230
5	Students' preferred MI-based activities integrated in their speaking lessons: Items 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53	4.18	0.172
6	Frequency of teachers' using teaching aids in their speaking training lessons: Items 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, and 62	4.47	0.225

The results indicated that after the implementation of the experimental study, the participants highly appreciated the effects of integrating the MI-based classroom activities into the instructional intervention for developing their English-speaking skills. The data were also subjected to SPSS Program for the mean scores (Table 5).

Table 5. Mean score of the questionnaire

	n	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
MEANPOST	30	4.06	4.61	4.33	0.14
Valid *N* (listwise)	30				

As presented in Table 5, the descriptive statistics showed that the mean scores of the questionnaire and the standard deviation were M =4.32 and SD = 0.142. This revealed that generally,the respondents agreed that they really had higher learning motivation and stronger support regarding the changes in their attitudes in improving their speaking skills after participating in the experimental study. This conclusion was statistically proved by the following results:

Theme 1 (the students' awareness on how MI-oriented task-based activities were integrated into the speaking training program) is the main factor leading to the students' higher learning motivation and improvement in performing their speaking skills. The students indicated their better awareness on their intelligences profiles and their strong support on the diversity of classroom activities and the use of visual aids to support their speaking skills both in the speaking-training lessons and in the speaking tests.

Theme 6 (the frequency of teachers' using teaching aids in their speaking-training lessons) has the second highest mean score with M = 4.47. All the participants showed their agreement on the fact that their teachers used various types of teaching and learning materials, such as pictures, charts, video clips, to support their speaking skills. Particularly, the students had many chances to apply their information technology skills to support their oral presentations.

Theme 2 (the students' positive attitudes towards the method of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities into the speaking-training program) has the third highest mean score (*M* = 4.40). The students expressed their strong interest to the use of a variety of learning materials, working in pairs or in groups with randomly-chosen partners with the same learning styles or with different levels of linguistic competences, use of visual aids to support their oral performances in the speaking tests.

Theme 3 (the benefits of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities into the speaking-training program) is ranked nearly at the same level as Theme 2 with a relativelyhigh mean score (*M* = 4.39). All the participants showed their supportive attitudes towards all the items in this theme: higher learning motivation, better classroom interaction, more involvement in classroom activities, and better oral performances.

Theme 4 (the problems of integrating MI-oriented task-based activities) has the lowest mean score (*M* = 4.14). The participants' concerns for the development of their speaking skills are as follows: the crowded number of students in the class, their limited vocabulary, their lack of confidence, and the inflexibility in the structure of classroom facility.

4.3. Findings from the interviews

As mentioned previously, the interviews conducted with severalrandomly-selected experimental participants (twostudents with the highest post-test scores, two in the middle and two with the lowest) aimed at consolidating the results of the data statistical analysis from the questionnaire and the pre-post tests, simultaneously seeking for further qualitative comments on the data on which some participants still showed some uncertainty. In general, the findings from the students' interviews were in conformity with those mentioned and discussed in the questionnaire, as well as the results of the pre-test and post-test. Particularly, most of the interviewees showed a high degree of their positive responses to the integration of MI-oriented task-based activities, as well as a strong confirmation on their gradual changing trend in the structures of their MI profiles with more and more emphasis on linguistic, visual-spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

All of the six students expressed in their answers to the interview that at the beginning of the experimental speaking-training program, they really had many difficulties regarding their lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and particularly, their weaknesses in verbal and logical reasoning skills. A student with a low test score stated:

> *When my intelligences profile were first established, my verbal-linguistic and logical intelligences were ranked at the bottom with the lowest scores. I did not know what I hadto do to improve my verbal intelligence, a type of linguistic skills which are really necessary for a language student like me…*

However, when the participants were grouped in separate intelligence centers according to their most favored intelligence types and work with their partners with similar intelligences, they became more interested and engaged in the speaking-training classroom activities. A student with a high test score remarked:

> *Pair-work and group-work discussion to brainstorm the topic would likely generate a variety of ideas from which I could benefit for my speaking. I also felt proud of myself when my ideas were appreciated by my partners in the intelligence center.*

In general, all the interviewees expressed their positive responses to the integration of MI-oriented task-based activities into the experimental speaking-training program. A student with an average test score expressed his view-point:

> *I can speak English relatively more fluently now. I feel less nervous and anxious when I stand in front of the class to perform an oral presentation or expressing my opinions on a particular topic…*

And another student with a low test score concluded in his answers to the interview that:

> *Now, I feel quite confident and relativelyeasy to speak English better. I support the ideas of combination of my MIs to develop my strong points in learning how to speak.*

5. Discussion

With p = 0.01for the EFL speaking post-test, the disparities of the mean scores between the experimental and the controlled groups weresignificant. Such differences show that this finding obtained from the process of data analysis could not happen randomly. They all were the results of integrating task-based activities into the intervention. Therefore, the hypothesis was demonstrated and accepted. In other words, the integration of task-based activities obviously offered positive impacts regarding promoting the participants' oral performances in terms of doing the EFL speaking tests. To calculate the effect size, the standard deviation (SD) was established and this would enable the researcher to define the effect size of the experimental program between the mean scores (MS) of the two research groupsregarding the results of the post-test. The effect size ofthis research was computed in accordance withCohen's formula as follows:

$$\text{Effect size} = \frac{\text{MS}_{\text{Experimental}} - \text{MS}_{\text{Controlled}}}{\text{SD}_{\text{Controlled}}}$$

Therefore, based on the above-mentioned formula, the computation results of the effect size was 0.3. Stipulated in Cohen's scale, the scope of effect size is classified from a very small to a very large degree depending on the real value of the effect size. The effect size value in the EFL speaking post-test shows the effect size of the intervention of 0.3 which means a large de-

gree in Cohen's scale. The aim of this study was to explore the impacts of integrating task-based activities in the EFL speaking training program to improve the participants' motivation and also to develop their EFL oral performances.

Regarding the participants' learning motivation, all the participants in our experimental intervention expressed their same ideas that most of the task-based activities implemented really promoted their high motivation as well as the proportion of their involvement in the speaking training activities. All of the experimental students strongly agreed that the EFL speaking program integrated with task-based activities really offered them good chances to improve their oral performance regarding their greater self-confidence in demonstrating their EFL speaking skills and also promoting their most favored intelligences and learning styles.

The findings of the research also indicated that there wereseveral remarkable differences in the statistical figures at the significance level (0.01) between the mean scores of the students from the EFL speaking pre- and post-tests with the latter being better. This might come from the positive impacts of integrating the task-based activities into the EFL speaking training program, which really created significant progress in the participants' oral performances in doing their EFL speaking tests. These performances are (1) asking and answering personal interview questions, (2) making a conversation on the basis of a ready-given situation, (3) describing a picture, and (4) making questions and answers about a given topic.

Furthermore, the findings of this study were also well-matched with some previous studies with MIT application in promoting EFL oral skills in the field of EFL teaching in general (Shore, 2001 and Campbell, 2003), as well as in English Language Teaching, particularly in developing EFL speaking skills (Arnold, 2004 and Salem, 2013). Such a finding was in conformity with the study implemented by Salem (2013), aiming at investigating the advantages of utilizing a speaking development program in which MI activities were deployed to promote the preservice English teachers' speaking skills. The findings of Salem's research indicated that the intervention had some significant influence on his students' EFL oral performances.

According to the results of this research, the participants achieved significant progress in their EFL test scores. Such an achievement was brought about by the experimental intervention. The participants' oral performances were trained to be adapted with their diverse learning styles and favored MIs in fulfilling task-based speaking activities. The participants also exploited the effective use of pictures and real objects, together with various information technology applications to support their oral performances. These techniques really enabled the participants to become competent communicators, both in the classroom and also in their daily life communicative situations outside the classroom.

Generally speaking, the EFL speaking pre- and post-test scores indicated that the students' EFL oral performances have been remarkably improved as the verification of the hypo-

thesis described at the beginning of this study. The participants achieved significant achievement in their EFL oral performances, which, in turn, reflectedthe benefits of integrating task-based activities into the intervention. One possible explanation for the development of the participants' oral performances could relate to their more focus on both accuracy and fluency. Via activities such as brainstorming, taking notes on main ideas, and giving feedback on the oral presentations, the integration of MI-oriented task-based activities in the study focused on the expressions of the participants' messages in their oral products rather than producing fluent oral products regardless of the principles of standard linguistic forms. These activities are compatible with what El Naggar (2000) and Salem (2013) perceived that taking into account the individual differences among the learners could result in enhancing the students' accuracy in their oral performances, and what Campbell (2003) and Arnold (2004) proposed for non-native speakers that linguistic accuracy should be logically catered for in such a way that there areno impacts from such interferences on the students' learning motivation.

Another possible reason for the contribution to the participants' positive awareness on the integration of MI-oriented task-based activities could be due to their recognition of strong points of this speaking-training approach. During 15 weeks of the intervention program, the participants' visualization of learning how to speak gradually changed because learning how to speak with MI-based activities took place in the context of rapport between the instructor and the learners, and with good interaction among the students of the same interests and learning styles within each of the eight intelligence centers. In such a harmonious speaking-training environment, the participants perceived that this active and friendly learning environment created good opportunities for them to have ideas to develop their oral products and to overcome their difficulties (for example lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence) in speaking them out. These participants also stated in their interview that the speaking-training lessons designed in light of the MI-based approach facilitated their speaking strategies as they could get help not only from their peers within their intelligence centers but also from their English speaking instructors.

Regarding the external factors such as the out-of-class exposure or extra-curricular activities which may influence and contribute to the results of this research, McDonough and Shaw (2012) emphasized that the research reliability and validity are highlighted and maintained in an experimental study when similar conditions of conducting the study are applied for different groups. The findings of the participants' responses to the Introductory Part of the Questionnaire indicated that the students participating in this study did not have much out-of-class exposure such as participating in conversations with foreign speakers of English, joining in online speaking-training programs, attending English-speaking clubs, and the like. As the participants in this research were all first-year students, according to the results of data analysis from the questionnaire, for their first academic year at the university, they put priorities on familiarizing themselves with the student's life and showing their efforts in completing the new academic

subjectswell. Some experimental participants (eight out of thirty) expressed their plans to improve their oral performances by attending English-speaking club activities held by themselves in the coming time.

6. Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

With the philosophy "Every learner is unique and intelligent", the Theory of Multiple Intelligences has proved to be a humanitarian and favorable premise to foster and promote learners' language skills. On the basis of the findings of this research, it can be concluded that integrating task-based activities following the principles of MIT has proved to be of great effectiveness in developing EFL students' oral performances. It is proposed that applying MI-oriented task-based activities in EFL speaking-training classrooms has brought about various conveniences for both EFL teachers and students in terms of maximizing the students' learning outcomes by facilitating them to mobilize their most favored learning styles in demonstrating and developing their oral products. The results from analyzing the participants' responses from the questionnaire and interview also confirmed the fact that their better learning outcomes were contributed by the positive effects of the MI-oriented task-based integration into their speaking-training program, not from the impacts of any out-of-class speaking-practice activities.

In short, the application of MI-oriented task-based activities in the speaking-training program has brought about a variety of advantages for both EFL teachers and students. When task-based activities are integrated into the EFL speaking training program following the principles of MIT application, students are encouraged to work with their peers with similar types of intelligences in their favorite intelligence centers. By integrating MI-oriented task-based activities into the speaking-training program, students are provided with more learning instruments for developing their speaking skills both in their speaking-training lessons and the speaking tests. It is undoubtedly that with MI-oriented task-based speaking-training activities, language students are able to use various supporting instruments to promote their oral performances, especially visual aids like pictures, real objects, posters, and information technology means and products.

6.2. Limitations

This research, like many other research works, cannot avoid having its shortcomings and limitations. Firstly, this researchwas limited to only 60 EFL students majored in English Education at a local university in Vietnam, which apparently is quite a small sample of a population to generalize the research scope of Vietnamese EFL learners. Secondly, it was limited to only four speaking skills for first-year students' speaking-training program at the Foreign Languages Department at Phu Yen University: (1) asking and answering personal interview questions; (2)

making a conversation based on a ready-given situation; (3) describing a picture; and (4) making questions and answers about a given topic. And last but not least, the results of this study are confined to the Vietnamese EFL environment and the social and cultural background of the Vietnamese students within such a local university.

6.3. Recommendations for further studies

In an attempt to maximize the potential findings of this research, more in-depth studies should be carried out to investigate the impact of integrating task-based activities into the students' four-skill communicative competences. Furthermore, this study only focussed on EFL learners in the Vietnamese context. Future research may also be implemented on a larger scale of subjects, such as EFL learners in a regional or an international context.

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