

Educational Lessons from the “Dead Poets Society”: A Multiple-Intelligences View

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Abstract

The film "Dead Poets Society" (Weir, 1989), has sparked significant public discourse and resonated deeply with audiences due to its educational themes and portrayal of unconventional teaching methods. Analyzing the film through the compelling lens of Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory, proposed by Gardner (1983), this study explored the various intelligence types. Employing a qualitative content analysis, the researchers selected the main characters and scenes as units of analysis and then developed codes to categorize them, tracing the manifestations of MI. Findings portrayed eight intelligence types and indicated how society's conventions could heavily influence the activation of these intelligences. Codes for linguistic intelligence included verbal artistry, verbal inspiration, and phonological sensitivity; interpersonal intelligence involved social understanding, social feedback, and social bonding; spiritual intelligence focused on purposeful living and existential comprehension; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence related to physical performance, physical awareness, and physical expression; visual-spatial intelligence involved spatial awareness and multi-perceptiveness; logical-mathematical intelligence emphasized reasoning and hypothesis testing; intrapersonal intelligence centered on self-reflection, self-awareness, and personal growth; and musical intelligence encompassed musical literacy and musical passion. Bridging the gap between the MI and ELT contexts through film content analysis, this research contributes to the MI conceptualization, enriching individuals' comprehension of the theory, and the application of film-based tasks and MI-oriented activities in pedagogical institutes, particularly ELT contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Films have been an integral part of human existence for over a century. From the era of silent monochrome films in the early 1900s to the contemporary era of sophisticated cinematic spectacles, movies have consistently served as a medium of entertainment, inspiration, and

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enlightenment for individuals across various age groups. Films serving as a captivating subset of media possess a considerable capacity to serve as a potent instrument for elucidating course material and facilitating the visualization of intricate and theoretical concepts. Thus, rendering them more tangible to enhance student understanding, engagement, and critical thinking skills [Yakar \(2013\)](#) can help teachers lessen the cognitive and affective burden of the classrooms. When certain abstract notions are transformed into a screenplay within an efficient multimedia platform, research has shown that viewers experience a range of positive effects, encompassing psychological, social, and cognitive impacts. For example, movies like *Freedom Writers* ([LaGravenese, 2007](#)) enhance creativity, *Rear Window* ([Hitchcock, 1954](#)) stimulate curiosity, *The Imitation Game* ([Tyldum, 2014](#)) foster judgment and critical thinking, *Juno* ([Reitman, 2007](#)) boost social intelligence, and *Forrest Gump* ([Reitman, 2007](#)) promote self-regulation ([Niemiec, 2020](#)) as evidenced by various reports and studies.

The film titled *Dead Poets Society* ([Weir, 1989](#)) has garnered significant attention within the cinematic world, securing nominations and victories in various prestigious award categories such as best director and best actor. *Dead Poets Society*, directed by [Weir \(1989\)](#) and written by Tom Schulman, centres on a group of students at an exclusive all-boys preparatory school, ultra-traditional Welton Academy, where the four fundamental tenets of tradition, honor, discipline, and excellence are confirmed and conformed. In the present study, the film (*Dead Poets Society*) has been chosen to exemplify one of the most attention-grabbing educational theories, Multiple Intelligences (MI), providing a unique opportunity to illustrate and clarify the abstract concept introduced by [Gardner \(1983\)](#), a proposition that emerged during the same era as the film's release. Set in a post-World War II American society, the film highlights the pressing demand for students' logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences and clearly depicts evident bidirectional correlations between MI and sociocultural elements that play a significant role in stimulating certain intelligences over others. Gardner's elucidation of MI and the definition of intelligence underscored the notion that individuals inherently possess eight distinct forms of intelligence, each with the capacity to be harnessed within a given cultural environment for problem-solving or creative endeavors deemed valuable within that culture. Consequently, the presence of suitable resources and the societal norms of a specific context exert a notable influence on the extent to which intellectual capabilities are stimulated, honed, or ([Gardner, 1999](#); [Setyawaningsih et al., 2021](#)).

Some teachers frequently complain about heterogeneous classes where instruction is found to be a demanding challenge. Such heterogeneity might not be a matter of various capability levels, but rather a matter of different capability types. It seems that this so-called heterogeneity is most often misunderstood. This misunderstanding can have disastrous consequences. Thus, many students might lose motivation as the instructor fails to recognize their different abilities. In addition, students may not reach their full potential if their capabilities are not addressed ([Mahdavi Zafarghandi & Amini, 2019](#)). The primary importance of the implementation of the theory of multiple intelligences is that it gives students a chance to use their predominant strengths and capabilities. This will foster learning. In other terms, if teachers are acquainted with the intelligence profiles in a class, they can adapt or develop a variety of activities that can use students' intelligence to enrich the learning environment ([Ghaznavi et al., 2021](#)).

Referring to language instruction, intelligence, language, and the ability to learn are three important human traits. MI theory can propose an effective framework for language learning as it matches the complicated nature of language learning. According to MI theory, there is more than one way to be smart, because intelligence is not only dictated by genetics; cultural and social influences often affect the form and degree of intelligence individuals have. The multiple intelligences-based instruction (MIBI) provides a unique chance to increase the learning

experiences based on the abilities and traits of the learners (Weber, 2005). An instructional approach following multiple intelligences provides inputs for continuous monitoring and direct involvement with the material and objectives in an educational setting (Moran et al., 2006).

The current study aims to derive practical implications for English language teaching (ELT) from the film-based analysis. Accordingly, this article follows the qualitative content analysis, deeply analyzing DPS as a case study to derive and transfer pedagogical implications of how multiple intelligences can be identified, comprehended, interpreted, and practiced in the context of English language teaching (ELT). Going beyond the dominant intelligence types, particularly linguistic intelligence, teachers in ELT can employ film-based analysis to broaden students' awareness of their multiple intelligences and inspire the ELT class's multi-tasking and activities to engage learners fully and passionately. Although numerous MI and film content analyses have been conducted in education, no existing studies have systematically applied qualitative content analysis to a film, specifically DPS, as a teaching case to extract MI-based pedagogical strategies in ELT.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple Intelligences Theory in Education

The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), introduced by Gardner (1983), revolutionized our understanding of individual strengths and learning capabilities (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2002). According to Gardner (1983), intelligence encompasses a person's ability to solve problems or accomplish tasks considered valuable in one or more cultures. This definition challenged the traditional psychological view of intelligence as a single capacity that drives logical and mathematical thought. Initially, Gardner identified seven distinct intelligences: verbal-linguistic (sensitivity to spoken and written language), mathematical-logical (ability to analyze problems logically and perform mathematical operations), musical (affinity for performance, composition, and appreciation of musical forms), visual-spatial (capacity to perceive and manipulate visual information accurately), bodily-kinesthetic (skill of using one's body adeptly to solve problems), interpersonal (ability to understand and interact effectively with others), and intrapersonal (self-awareness and the ability to use this knowledge to regulate one's life effectively). He later added two more, bringing the total to nine: natural (ability to recognize and categorize patterns in nature) and existential (pondering deep questions about existence, such as the nature of life and death) (Brown & Liepolt, 2004; Gardner, 2001). Some sources even suggest a possible tenth intelligence, spiritual intelligence (the capacity to ask questions about the ultimate meaning of life and the integrated relationship between us and the world in which we live) (Farnan, 2009).

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory highlights the idea that all students are unique and diverse. Gardner calls for a broader view of how the human mind is organized and how human learning takes place, moving far beyond traditional beliefs. That is, personal and academic development rests on education, and the latter requires innovation of methods and equipment. It also requires innovation of material and curricula, and reconceptualization of pedagogy by teachers (Marwaha & Nanda, 2017). MI theory challenges the traditional view of intelligence, which largely emphasizes linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. Instead, it asserts that educational approaches should recognize and cultivate a wider array of intelligences. This recognition allows educators to tailor lessons to meet diverse learning styles. For example, visual aids can cater to spatial learners, hands-on activities can engage bodily-kinesthetic students, and group discussions can benefit those with strong interpersonal skills. By fostering personalized and differentiated instruction, MI theory promotes a more inclusive learning environment where all students can

thrive based on their unique intelligences. Ultimately, this holistic approach enhances educational equity and effectiveness (Ghaznavi et al., 2021).

Therefore, an array of studies has been carried out to quench the thirst for a multiple-intelligence-based curriculum in education, in general, and ELT in particular. In English language teaching, concentrating on a more inclusive MI-based instruction creates a niche for learners to engage fully in the learning process and nurture their English skills and some other desired academic and non-academic features. Alqatanani (2017) designed different MI-enriched reading activities to investigate their effect on improving Jordanian tenth-grade students' critical reading skills in English. The results confirmed the effectiveness of an MI-based program on EFL students' skills. In another study, Ghaznavi et al. (2021) sought to explore whether the provision of an MI-integrated teaching approach could positively contribute to the activation of multiple intelligences and classroom engagement of physically disabled EFL learners. The results indicated significant improvements in the learners' multiple intelligences and their classroom engagement. Further, comparing the first language (Persian) and second language (English) MI-based instructions, the latter was more effective in fostering physically disabled learners' multiple intelligences and classroom engagement. In 2023, Hamzehnejadi et al. (2023) conducted research to investigate the impact of technology-integrated MI instruction on vocabulary learning and burnout of EFL learners. The results revealed the superiority of learners who were involved in the technology-integrated MI classroom compared to the traditional group in their English vocabulary development and burnout control. The findings suggest that nonhuman mediators (technology) are more effective than humans, possibly due to their enticing features that enhance learners' motivation and interest. A systematic review analysis by Hairudin et al. (2023) disclosed that MI-based instruction can improve students' interest in English learning to a certain extent. More recently, Gebremeskel et al. (2024) found that multiple intelligence-based reading tasks brought a significant difference in students' reading achievements compared to the conventional methods. In brief, a consensus has emerged among scholars on the importance of integrating MI-based instruction at different levels of education.

In the general realm of education, other well-developed studies have been carried out across different disciplines that confirm Gardner's MI theory as a framework acknowledging that the diversity of human capabilities can significantly enhance teaching practices and foster a more equitable educational landscape. For example, Sword (2007) addressed MI in teaching literature. Sword refers to her use of MI theory as “Teaching in color”. She believed that teaching and learning can be somewhat messy, and mistakes will be made, but revising lessons and communication to appeal to more of the MIs can help a generation by transforming them into the risk takers and groundbreakers of tomorrow. Schrand (2008) explored how to use MI theory to promote active learning and focused on the use of interactive media. Schrand reported how the proper use of technology can engage a variety of MIs in a classroom setting. Abdi and Rostami (2012) indicated that the strategies based on MI theory were more effective in improving students' creative thinking ability than traditional ones. Kaewkiriya et al. (2016) examined the role of MI in e-learning systems. Their study proposed that as technology advances, MI theory and its applications in the classroom must keep pace with innovations. In 2023, Wijanarko et al. (2023) focused on the selection of minor programs based on related intelligence types. As they noted, students often enroll in minor programs to supplement their primary courses to become successful in today's competitive job market. These programs offer students an opportunity to acquire additional knowledge and skills in a field that differs from their major program. They found that understanding the potential of individual intelligence in every aspect of multiple intelligence types is helpful to assist minor program participants in determining their right career path.

Integration of Films in Education

Movie makers often have goals greater than merely entertaining viewers. Movies frequently contain themes and messages the moviemaker has included to stimulate viewers to think about how characters' personalities interact within the situations they find themselves in and then about the choices they make. Each film story, therefore, comes with an instructive message for the viewer, sometimes containing an emotional jolt. In addition, each story presents an opportunity for cinemeducation – which refers to the use of film for educational purposes – (Alexander & Waxmann, 2000) or cinematherapy (Wedding & Niemiec, 2003) in that instructors and practitioners can use these segments as a springboard to build rapport, discuss relevant research/practices with their students/clients, and provide insights in a novel way.

This pedagogical potential extends to English language teaching, where film provides an authentic context and input, challenging traditional teaching methods that are sometimes criticized for focusing on the training of learners' test-taking ability, leaving little room for the comprehensive cultivation of students' core literacy in English as a discipline. Therefore, research on English films as teaching materials has been prevalent to nurture the desired traits, language skills, and sub-skills. The findings have revealed a vast array of positive outcomes including the provision of authentic contexts as well as motivation to learn the language (Florence, 2009), arousing the students' interest in learning (Gao, 2014), the promotion of senior high school students' participation in their English classroom activities and thus improvement of their level of listening, and speaking, leading a way to know British and American culture (Chen, 2015), and the development of learners' English language skills, specifically the improvement of their words' pronunciation (Walay, 2022).

In the context of education, movies have also become an integral part of teaching as an engaging pedagogical tool illustrating course content, promoting a visualization of concepts and theory, increasing student involvement, promoting critical thinking and analytical skills, and being a platform to construct and reconstruct characteristic features and identities (Goodwin et al., 2021). Hence, regarding different disciplines, film has been used to explore different facets of mental health, with undergraduate nurses (McCann & Huntley-Moore, 2016), psychology students (Petkari, 2017), medical students (Datta, 2009), and arts students (Hankir et al., 2017). In relation to adolescents, film-based interventions have been used to explore various topic areas, including bullying (Burk et al., 2018), sexual health (Aventin et al., 2019), and smoking (Zhao et al., 2019). As it is evident, literature has shown that movies are an excellent tool for reducing anxiety, and increasing learning social skills (Martin & Jones, 1994), providing role models, identifying and reinforcing strengths, facilitating communication, and building hope (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008), promoting the type of engaged learning that is required in youth education (Blasco et al., 2015), and developing a variety of positive characteristics and behaviors (Smithikrai, 2016).

The film *Dead Poets Society* (DPS) has garnered considerable attention due to its profound content, which makes it a significant work in cinema. DPS has been referenced to exemplify teaching methodologies in sociology (Hayes, 1990), management (Serey, 1992), and mathematics (Su, 2010). Grant (2014) examined the film to illustrate the characteristics of effective teachers and the dynamics of successful classrooms. Anundson (2015) portrayed John Keating as a model of effective mentoring. Moran et al. (2006) demonstrated how the film advocates individualism. Muro (2018) concentrated on identity and discussed how the film fosters the development of masculinity. He concluded that Mr. Keating's greatest contribution to his students was liberating them from oppression and societal expectations, enabling them to discover their own voices. Tan and Koh (2018) utilized the film to assist pre-service teachers in comprehending classroom challenges and enhancing leadership skills. Holbrook and Stoner (2021) highlighted how the

classic 1980s American film, *DPS*, can serve as an educational resource for both in-person and online courses, offering students a platform for meaningful discussions regarding the concept of power (Power—The capacity to influence outcomes according to one's desires).

Regarding the theory of multiple intelligences, [Simanjuntak et al. \(2023\)](#) analyzed "An Education," a drama film released in 2009. The film's central character is Jenny Mellor, a diligent 16-year-old student. By employing Gardner's theory, which recognizes various forms of intelligence beyond conventional academic criteria, this research examined the portrayal of Jenny's intellectual, social, emotional, and creative abilities within the film. The results indicated that Jenny exhibited strengths in linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences, in addition to showing talent in other areas such as musical and visual-spatial intelligences. Moreover, the study highlighted how Jenny's varied intelligences affected her decision-making, relationships, and overall growth. This research enhances the understanding of the complex nature of intelligence and sheds light on Jenny Mellor's character development through the perspective of Howard Gardner's theory. [Fadhil and Prastiwi \(2024\)](#) examined the indicators of multiple intelligences theory as represented in the film *The Karate Kid* ([Lerner, 2010](#)). The findings revealed that six of Gardner's nine intelligence indicators were depicted across various scenes: spatial (visual) intelligence, musical (audio) intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence. These results emphasize the various ways in which multiple intelligences can be illustrated and acknowledged within cinematic narratives, offering a significant framework for educational and psychological applications. The study underscores the potential of films as effective instruments for illustrating and teaching the principles of multiple intelligences, thus enhancing educational practices and fostering holistic development. Despite the documented benefits of MI-based instruction in ELT and the growing body of MI-oriented film analyses, there is a notable lack of qualitative content analyses that apply film as the primary medium to explore MI manifestations with the explicit aim of deriving pedagogical strategies tailored to ELT.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The approach employed in this research was a qualitative content analysis. [Zhang and Wildemuth \(2009\)](#) defined content analysis as an approach to analyzing documents and texts to quantify content based on predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable manner. This study utilized two data sources, namely primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of the movie "Dead Poets Society" and direct observations made by the researchers while watching the film. Secondary data was drawn from various sources, including research findings, agency data, and relevant documented articles or journals, to complement and reinforce the primary data.

Content analysis serves as a research method employed to identify the occurrence of specific words, themes, or concepts within qualitative data. By utilizing content analysis, researchers can measure and examine the presence, significance, and connections of these specific words, themes, or concepts. Hence, to obtain the necessary data, the researcher must first view the movie, carefully observe the actions that unfold throughout the film, and diligently perceive the verbal and visual messages conveyed. The researcher subsequently proceeds to the following procedural stages, which involve determining the unit of analysis, formulating categories and code schemes, coding all textual information, extracting conclusions from the coded data, documenting the research methods employed, elucidating the findings, and finally, arriving at a conclusive statement. Four researchers independently coded all identified scenes using the MI-based codebook. Coder agreement was checked, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Throughout the process, an audit trail was maintained, including scene timestamps, coding rationales, and analytic memos, to ensure transparency and methodological dependability.

The approach used in this study was Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner developed the multiple intelligences theory in 1983, based on his research in developmental and cognitive psychology. The main reason for the selection of this movie was the fact that it portrays multiple intelligences theory through an educational lens. In addition to illustrating various examples of different intelligences, it also highlights the pedagogical tasks that activate these intelligences. While other films, such as *An Education* (Simanjuntak et al., 2023) and *The Karate Kid* (Fadhil & Prastiwi, 2024), have been used to illustrate multiple intelligences in character development, they are not set within a formal academic context where MI principles are explicitly mobilized for instructional purposes. *Dead Poets Society*, however, is centered on an English classroom and portrays a broad spectrum of intelligences within a tightly defined pedagogical environment, making it uniquely suited to deriving ELT-oriented educational insights.

In the current study, the initial codebook was derived from Gardner's eight intelligences, operationalized into observable indicators within the film. Codes for linguistic intelligence included verbal artistry, verbal inspiration, and phonological sensitivity; interpersonal intelligence involved social understanding, social feedback, and social bonding; spiritual intelligence focused on purposeful living and existential comprehension; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence related to physical performance, physical awareness, and physical expression; visual-spatial intelligence involved spatial awareness and multi-perceptiveness; logical-mathematical intelligence emphasized reasoning and hypothesis testing; intrapersonal intelligence centered on self-reflection, self-awareness, and personal growth; and musical intelligence encompassed musical literacy and musical passion. These operational definitions were refined during initial viewing and piloted on selected scenes before full coding.

4. RESULTS

The findings of this research and the related discussions are articulated through the scenes and narratives of the film "Dead Poets Society" (Weir, 1989). Below are some insights gathered by researchers concerning the indicators of multiple intelligences theory as depicted in this film. In reference to the movie, DPS, the value system inherent in the context is distinctly apparent. The film opens with a welcoming ceremony that presents the four pillars of Welton Academy's Values: tradition, honor, discipline, and excellence. Consequently, the intelligences anticipated in such a highly traditional environment are logical-mathematical and linguistic, both of which are celebrated and embraced by society at large and Welton Academy specifically. As the narrative unfolds under these prevailing conditions, the students' understanding of their talents and skills, their strengths and weaknesses, and their overall passive and active intelligences are shaped by the dominant value system of their parents, Welton Academy, and the broader society, where these values are both affirmed and adhered to. When Mr. Keating enters the classroom whistling, takes the class outside its conventional setting, introduces himself with the line "Oh captain, my captain," and begins the first session from page 542 of the textbook, he undeniably challenges the values and prevailing educational framework of Welton, effectively capturing the students' attention and fully engaging them. He encourages his students to discover their own voices, pursue their aspirations, and appreciate their active intelligences that have been stifled by the system. The following section presents the description of the intelligence types in the characters of Dead Poets Society. Characters are selected according to the roles they fulfill in the film, and they represent the primary members of the Dead Poets Society community.

Linguistic Intelligence

Verbal Artistry

- Mr. Keating’s use of metaphor: “Oyster”/ “Oh captain, my captain.”
- Mr. Keating’s use of simile, personification, metaphor, and hyperbole: “We didn’t just read poetry; we let it drop from our tongues like honey. Spirits soared, women swooned, and gods were created, gentlemen”/Mr. Keating’s description of Walt Whitman as a “sweaty-toothed madman.”
- Mr. Keating’s recitation of different poems
- Neil’s talent for storytelling
- Todd discovers his ability to connect language with significant life issues and reflects them in his poetry
- Todd’s drafts and his efforts to craft a well-structured poem reveal his careful selection of words to direct attention to deeper spiritual themes. In his attempts to compose the poem, we see that each line begins with the phrase “we are”, indicating his reference to humanity as a collective. Additionally, terms such as “New Day”, “Battle”, and “Salvation” suggest that Todd grapples with more profound existential dilemmas, encouraging a contemplation of life’s spiritual dimensions.
- Mr. Keating challenges Knox to find a more sophisticated word than “very sad” to describe a man, and Knox responds with “morose”. This word adds depth and nuance, conveying meanings like unhappy, bad-tempered, and silent, which align with the portrayal Mr. Keating aims to highlight.
- Knox’s initial struggle to express his feelings becomes evident when he reads his poem in Mr. Keating’s class: “I see a sweetness in her smile...”. This heartfelt expression reveals his depth and longing, showcasing how he integrates his linguistic intelligence with intrapersonal awareness, ultimately seeking a way to reach Chris.

Verbal Inspiration

- Mr. Keating’s ability to impart wisdom is evident when he emphasizes the significance of self-acceptance. He asserts, “We all have a great need for acceptance, but you must trust that your beliefs are unique, your own”.
- Mr. Keating recites the poems, “Gather your rosebuds while you may, Old time is still a flying; And this same flower that smiles today, Tomorrow will be dying” to conceptualize “Carpe diem” (seize the day)/ or “...that the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse” to provoke his students to reconsider their interests, wants, and wishes, that has a meaning to each person, and it is the mission of everybody to discover and contribute their own verse.
- Mr. Keating’s deliberate choice of the word “herd” underscores the dangers of collective conformity and elevates the importance of independent thought.

Phonological sensitivity

- Mr. Keating recites some lines of Shakespeare in different voices, including Marlon Brando and a cowboy accent of John Wayne.
- As Mr. Keating introduces the concept of “Carpe Diem”, he deliberately alters his voice from whispering influentially to calling out dramatically.
- Neil demonstrates exceptional phonological awareness—an ability that requires dedication and practice. Neil’s reciting a horror story shows his sensitivity to the sounds and rhythms

of language, enhancing his performance. His storytelling prowess shines in the final scene of the play, where he captivates the audience, resulting in enthusiastic applause.

- Neil’s vocal expression, as seen in lines like “waxen in their mirth and swear.”

Interpersonal Intelligence

Social Understanding

- Mr. Keating exemplifies the essence of interpersonal intelligence by forging genuine connections with his students, grounded in a profound understanding of their desires, fears, limitations, strengths, and unique life contexts. For example, he recognizes Todd's fears and uses this insight to guide him in realizing his untapped potential.
- Mr. Keating is attuned to Neil's moods and motivations and encourages him to foster open communication with his parents.
- Through empathy and understanding, Mr. Keating not only helps his students navigate their difficulties but also inspires them to embrace their true selves.
- Neil's interpersonal intelligence finds resonance in his personal interactions. This is vividly illustrated in a pivotal scene when Neil encounters Todd Anderson, who finds himself isolated on his birthday. By empathizing with Todd's struggles, Neil gains insight into his own situation. Todd feels the pressure to conform to his deceased brother's legacy, paralleling Neil’s own battle to meet his father's expectations in pursuing a career in medicine. Through these moments of connection with Todd, Neil not only strengthens their bond but also reflects on his own desires and aspirations.
- Meeks succinctly states, “Pitts and I are working on a Hi-fi system. It shouldn’t be that hard to put together”. This highlights how essential interpersonal skills are among individuals who must collaborate across various institutions and systems to achieve their shared objectives. The success of Meeks and Pitts is inherently tied to their ability to interpret and understand each other's behaviors effectively.

Social Feedback

- Taking students to the courtyard and asking them to march, Mr. Keating constructively criticized the matter of social conformity and its unconscious occurrence and internalization.
- By intentionally pointing out Todd’s fear of failure and judgment, Mr. Keating pushed him to throw away his fear and shyness to compose his poem.
- Pointing out to the fact that “there is a time for daring and there is a time for caution, and a wise man understands which is called for”, Mr. Keating expressed his disapproval of Charlie’s action of mocking the head, emphasizing the essence of knowing when, where, and how of acting or not acting.

Social Bond

- Neil’s cleverness is evident in his various extracurricular activities; he serves as the assistant editor of the school annual and takes summer classes in chemistry, reflecting a proactive engagement with his education and interests.
- Neil embodies reconciliation by revitalizing the Dead Poets Society after learning about it from Mr. Keating, as he works to unite his peers and restore their shared passion for poetry. These actions underline Neil's capacity to establish deep interpersonal connections.

- Neil fabricates a letter from his father to gain permission from Mr. Nolan, showcasing his ability to navigate the expectations imposed on him.
- The scenes depicting the collaborative efforts of Meeks and Pitts reveal the essence of interpersonal intelligence.
- By leveraging their collective knowledge and skills, Meeks and Pitts enhance their ability to work together throughout their project. The demonstration of interpersonal intelligence is evident in their interactions, as both students foster a mutual understanding that promotes cooperative learning and teamwork.

Spiritual Intelligence

Purposeful Living

- Mr. Keating encourages the students to pursue their passions and reach greatness. By standing on his desk, he underscores the importance of perspective and urges students to challenge the status quo. His rallying cry, “Don't resign to quiet desperation, break out”, exemplifies how he guides them to seek meaning and fulfillment. Through his teachings, Keating advocates for a transformative approach to life, inspiring his students to aspire to a higher state of existence. He reiterates the importance of self-discovery and growth, encouraging them to embrace a spiritual awareness that encompasses their thoughts, bodies, and connections to nature and the universe.
- By effectively harnessing linguistic and spiritual intelligences, Mr. Keating stands out as a character who profoundly influences the lives of his students, encouraging them to adopt new ways of thinking and to aspire to their fullest potential.

Existential Understanding

- Todd utilizes his formidable linguistic intelligence to cultivate his existential reflections. This young poet's remarkable ability shines through in his use of metaphor, where he likens a “blanket” to an encompassing concept like truth. He emphasizes that this truth, while significant, can never fully envelop us; it serves only to cover our faces, much like a blanket. In the second part of Todd Anderson's poem, written in class, this idea is articulated with clarity:

“Truth, like a blanket that always leaves your feet cold.
 You can push it, stretch it, but it'll never be enough.
 You kick at it, beat it, and it will never cover any of us.
 From the moment we enter crying,
 To the moment we leave dying,
 It'll just cover your face,
 As you wail and cry and scream.”

Through these lines, Anderson captures the essence of human existence and the inherent inadequacy of truth in providing complete comfort or understanding.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Physical Performance

- Neil's portrayal of “Puck”, where he employs gross motor skills to engage effectively with Titania's fairies.

- Neil showcases fine motor skills when he skillfully squeezes love juice from a flower, demonstrating precise control as he interacts with the audience

Physical Awareness

- Charlie’s playing the saxophone shows his precise control over his body and fingers; each hand must delicately balance its movements to create the right musical patterns.

Physical Expression

- Gerrard Pitts & Steven Meeks, as two amateur engineers who deal with the manipulation of physical objects, constantly have the capacity to manipulate physical objects and control their bodily motions to handle objects skillfully for their functional or expressive purposes.

Visual-Spatial Intelligence

Spatial Awareness

- When Todd is asked to engage with the concept of the “sweaty-toothed madman,” this task calls upon his ability to perceive and interact with forms in space, which is the foundational aspect of visual-spatial intelligence. Under Mr. Keating's guidance, Todd is motivated to mentally manipulate this object—essentially, he is guided to “make it do something.”
- In the final scene, Todd stands on his desk, honors Mr. Keating by proclaiming, “O Captain! My Captain!” and inspires his classmates to follow suit in this symbolic act of defiance and affirmation. Todd's transformation underscores the profound connection between visual-spatial intelligence and personal growth within the framework of community and self-expression.
- Meeks assists Charlie with English and Trigonometry. This suggests that Meeks has developed a strong understanding of Trigonometry, which indicates his proficiency in visual-spatial intelligence. This ability allows him to comprehend spatial relationships and apply them effectively.
- Pitts demonstrates essential skills in the spatial domain as well. He meticulously organizes each component of a system, whether it is a machine or a Hi-Fi setup, to ensure everything functions harmoniously.
- Neil imagines himself as Puck.

Multi-Perceptiveness

- As Todd contemplates the madman's form, he begins to consider different perspectives, imagining how it would appear if viewed from various angles or altered in shape.
- Mr. Keating stands on the desk to introduce the concept of taking multiple perspectives on events, individuals, and surroundings.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

Reasoning

- Through his understanding of geometry, Meeks can correlate the realm of visual representations with symbolic expressions, enabling him to make various transformations and use his reasoning abilities.
- Pitts increasingly recognizes the effects of his actions on physical objects and the interconnectedness of those actions. As he develops his understanding, he seeks to uncover

the reasoning behind his actions and the propositions he can make about them. This understanding of the relationships among his actions is pivotal to his success as an engineer.

- When Richard Cameron contemplates joining Neil on a risky expedition to the Indian cave, he emphasizes the need for caution, articulating, “Look, all I’m saying is we have to be careful. We can’t get caught”. This statement reflects his ability to foresee the implications and consequences of their actions, indicating his capacity for logical reasoning.

Hypothesis-Testing

- Cameron's logical-mathematical mindset allows him to anticipate potential outcomes, which makes him more cautious than others regarding the consequences they might face. For example, he expresses concern about the possibility of being tested in Mr. Keating's class, simply asking, “Think he will test us on that stuff?”
- Cameron demonstrates this ability by formulating hypotheses and inferring their consequences through structured reasoning. His explanation to Neil about substituting variables, “Just replace these numbers here with x for x and y”, showcases his skill in symbol manipulation.

Intrapersonal Intelligence

self-reflection

- Under the influence of the first session with Mr. Keating, Todd wrote down “Carpe Diem; Seize the day”. However, he quickly changed his mind, crumpled the paper, and started reading chemistry.

Self-awareness

- Neil’s confession of his profound desire to become an actor: This revelation highlights his awareness of his aspirations, strengths, and limitations.
- Despite the constraints, Neil ultimately realizes the importance of pursuing what genuinely brings him joy, even if it conflicts with his father's expectations. His assertion, “I was good, I was really good”, highlights Neil's self-awareness and his understanding of his acting talents.

Personal- growth

- Standing on his desk, Todd externalizes his personal development by throwing away his self-doubt, fears, and shyness, and becoming aware of his wants, wishes, and values. He courageously says, “O Captain, My Captain”, regardless of the negative consequences awaiting him. Finally, his intrapersonal intelligence leads to his interpersonal growth, inspiring others to follow his lead.

Musical Intelligence

Musical Literacy

- When Mr. Keating is whistling an excerpt from Beethoven's symphony, he demonstrates an innate understanding of musical rhythm, even if his rendition is incomplete.
- Mr. Keating’s approach reflects a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of musical and linguistic intelligences, underscoring the vital role they play in nurturing students’ growth and autonomy.

- Through his early exposure to music, Charlie has developed a keen awareness of music, rhythm, and the various elements that contribute to musical expression.

Musical Passion

- Through his use of music as both a teaching tool and a personal expression, Mr. Keating fosters an environment that celebrates creativity, individuality, and the transformative power of art.
 - Mr. Keating often integrates music into students’ learning experiences, such as when they read poems or pursue goals, suggesting that he recognizes music as a powerful spiritual medium, enhancing their engagement and comprehension.
 - As a composer, Charlie juggles tones, rhythms, and structure, carefully determining the right balance of repetitions and the necessary variations—be harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, or contrapuntal—to bring his vision to life.
 - The Dead Poets Society, which aims to savor the richness of life, typically spends afternoons wrapped up in poetry. However, Charlie manages to elevate spirits in less than a minute with his unique approach, which he dubs “poetrusic,” a fusion of poetry and music that he has created.

Concerning the application of DPS in this cinematic content-analysis study, it is important to highlight that the significance and worth of this film stem from the extensive recognition it has garnered, not only within the realm of cinema, evidenced by its numerous nominations and victories in prestigious categories such as best director and best actor, but also in various academic fields, including education, psychology, sociology, literature, and philosophy, among others (Holbrook & Stoner, 2021; Muro, 2018; Niemiec, 2020; Taufiq & Islam, 2021). Our paper, in line with other scholarly research, demonstrates that this movie possesses a rich and multi-faceted narrative that transcends the 1980s, with its impactful and inspirational message resonating daily with everyone, especially parents and educational systems, which serve as vital micro-societies in shaping and nurturing individual personalities, identities, and intelligences. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), this research aligns with the findings of Alqatanani (2017), Ghaznavi et al. (2021), and Gebremeskel et al. (2024), who highlighted the effectiveness of Multiple Intelligences (MI)-based instruction as a significant asset for enhancing the quality of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and achieving the desired outcomes. However, in contrast to their implementation of classroom-based interventions that concentrate on comprehensive MI-English integrated strategies and tasks, this study utilized film, specifically DPS, as a multi-modal resource, showcasing MI expressions through narrative-driven experiences, enabling learners to immerse themselves in authentic contexts, thereby enhancing their English proficiency, gaining insights into various intelligence types, and benefiting from both personal growth and English language development. Furthermore, our research aligns with the contributions of Hamzehnejadi et al. (2023), Florence (2009), and Gao (2014), affirming and proposing the significant impact of technology-integrated mediators, particularly films, within the ELT framework by enhancing learners’ motivation and engagement.

Regarding the field of education, it is evident that the movies have been warmly welcomed by educational scholars and researchers, offering numerous opportunities to illustrate and explore all aspects of teaching and learning process including the teachers, the students, and the settings (Bluestone, 2000; Jaranovic, 2013; Kirsh, 1998; Niemiec, 2020; Niemiec & Wedding, 2008; Su, 2010; Tan & Koh, 2018; Taufiq & Islam, 2021). Aligning with the findings of Goodwin et al. (2021), the present research highlights the essence of employing films to conceptualize the abstract theories, carving out a niche for individuals to raise their awareness and comprehension of

academic and theoretical constructs. With respect to the film content analysis through the eyes of MI theory, the current study in line with [Simanjuntak et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Fadhil and Prastiwi \(2024\)](#), sheds light on MI manifestations represented by film characters; however, in contrast to their studies that identified respectively 4 and 6 intelligences by analyzing merely one main character, the researchers of this study portrayed eight out of nine intelligence types, analyzing eight characters to draw valuable educational lessons on the importance of MI integration in ELT context.

Therefore, this study makes a novel contribution by bridging three strands of research that have rarely intersected: multiple intelligences (MI), film content analysis, and English language teaching (ELT). Regarding the previous MI–ELT studies that have implemented MI-integrated instructions ([Alqatanani, 2017](#); [Ghaznavi et al., 2021](#); [Hamzehnejadi et al., 2023](#)), there is no research to employ film to demonstrate the benefits of MI-based classrooms. Similarly, prior MI-based film analyses ([Fadhil & Prastiwi, 2024](#); [Simanjuntak et al., 2023](#)) have been conducted to indicate MI; however, there is no reference to ELT outcomes or pedagogy. Providing a comprehensive representation of Gardner’s MI theory with the help of cinematic narratives, the analysis of DPS, this study uniquely revealed the potential of film as an enriched, authentic, and emotionally resonant platform to develop linguistic and non-linguistic skills as well as awareness of intelligence types and cognitive abilities, thereby extending both MI scholarship and ELT practice.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article examines the film “Dead Poets Society” ([Weir, 1989](#)), as a compelling lens for exploring the concept of Multiple Intelligences (MI), proposed by [Gardner \(1983\)](#). Utilizing qualitative methodology, content analysis in particular, this study explores and portrays eight intelligences: linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, spiritual intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and musical intelligence.

The present study can shed light on the implications of analyzing film content, DPS, with a theoretical perspective, MI, for the process of teaching and learning. The findings of the current research provide theoretical support for Gardner’s theory of MI. Therefore, it is helpful for all people, especially those who have accountability in the education system, educators, parents, and learners, to become aware of the fact that every human being is intelligent in different ways, and each of them has the potential to be activated. Moreover, analyzing the movie, DPS, justifies [Gardner \(2001\)](#) assertion that intelligence types are context-bound, revealing the fact that the dominant socio-cultural factors and expectations can facilitate or debilitate the intelligence type activation. Therefore, it is vital for all educational institutes in general and ELT contexts in particular, to provide an environment in which individuals with different intelligences are warmly welcomed and are given the chance to develop their latent and hidden potential intelligences as well as nurturing their active ones.

Providing insights into the significance of film content analysis, this study has numerous implications for teachers, learners, and their parents. Film analysis through the eyes of MI theory can function as a great means to broaden individuals’ horizons on the new definition of intelligence, its multifaceted nature, and how its different types can be recognized, encouraged, integrated, and nurtured in pedagogical contexts, especially TEFL. By integrating MI theory with cinematic narratives, this work offers a fresh pathway for practitioners, curriculum designers, course book writers, and teachers to take a new perspective and gain a deeper appreciation and perception of employing and integrating multimodal learning methods for more learners’

engagement, understanding, and awareness. Therefore, this work can help them make informed pedagogical decisions with respect to the effect of adopting and supporting multitasking on the activation and progression of learners' different intelligences. The present study also illuminates the remarkable role of the teachers in helping individuals raise an awareness of their intelligence types to fulfill their potential intelligences. Hence, those who oversee teacher training and developing programs can take advantage of this research to plan workshops with the aim of raising teachers' awareness of MI, its significance, effects, and outcomes. To develop multiple intelligences, individuals must be exposed to a variety of tasks and inputs. This exposure subsequently results in numerous achievements and successes, all of which should be recognized and validated by society, the educational system, teachers, parents, and learners.

To implement the MI theory effectively, particularly in the context of time-constrained and exam-focused ELT classes, the researchers of this study advocate for the adoption of a flipped learning approach. Flipping a classroom entails reorienting the traditional classroom structure (Güler et al., 2023). This means that outside of class, students are provided with and exposed to the necessary input, including relevant MI scenes, to facilitate active learning and analysis. The selected scenes can range from musical animations to documentaries and series, tailored to the learners' age, English proficiency, gender, and interests. For instance, a nature documentary may be utilized to subconsciously stimulate or enhance the learners' natural intelligence and visual-spatial intelligence. Subsequently, during class time, students are encouraged to engage in discussions about the scene's topic using film-related vocabulary (which activates verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, and intrapersonal intelligences unconsciously), synthesize and connect what they have learned with new information (unconsciously activating logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, and interpersonal intelligences), and collaboratively participate in and complete problem-solving tasks (unconsciously activating logical-mathematical, interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, and verbal-linguistic intelligences), all conducted in English. While working on the film scenes, learners receive scaffolding and guidance from the teacher. The flipped learning approach optimizes class time and allows teachers to implement formative assessment, which is an ongoing evaluation throughout the term, to track learners' progress in both English and their MI. It is essential that the problem-solving tasks incorporate each type of intelligence consistently to activate and nurture all forms of intelligence.

Ultimately, the inclusion of film content analysis in the educational environment paves the way for better comprehension of abstract concepts and theories like MI. It also fosters the process of teaching and learning by provoking individuals to think critically and creatively and bridging the gap between what they already know and what they are exposed to. Analyzing the movie content, DPS, the MI theory was put into practice through inferring and interpreting the signs of intelligence type presented by the characters, hence, making the theory more concrete and understandable. Endeavoring to analyze DPS with the lens of MI, one is encouraged to think in a higher order, reflecting on her or his own thought process and thereby improving cognitive abilities.

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