

ENGLISH TEACHING STRATEGIES TO STUDENTS IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the teacher strategies in teaching English to children with special needs in Zonakata Inclusive School, Pontianak, Indonesia. This research was designed as qualitative case-study research. This design was chosen to help the researcher gain deep information about the phenomenon discussed and to explore the case intensively based on the real-life context. The research participants were two teachers in Zonakata Inclusive School who teach English to children with special needs in grade three. To get the data, observation, interview, and document review were used. The data collected was then analysed using thematic analysis. This study showed that the teachers used co-teaching and differentiated teaching strategies with the help of visual media to teach English to children with special needs. In conclusion, the participants' combination of those strategies was proven to be implemented and encouraged to be used to teach English to children with special needs.

Keywords: English teaching strategies; children with special needs; inclusive education.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui strategi guru dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada anak berkebutuhan khusus di Sekolah Inklusif Zonakata, Pontianak, Indonesia. Penelitian ini dirancang sebagai penelitian studi kasus kualitatif. Desain ini dipilih untuk membantu peneliti mendapatkan informasi yang mendalam tentang fenomena yang dibahas dan untuk mengeksplorasi kasus secara intensif berdasarkan konteks kehidupan nyata. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah dua orang guru di Sekolah Inklusif Zonakata yang mengajar bahasa Inggris untuk anak berkebutuhan khusus di kelas tiga. Untuk mendapatkan data digunakan observasi, wawancara, dan telaah dokumen. Data yang terkumpul kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa para guru menggunakan strategi co-teaching dan differentiated teaching dengan bantuan media visual untuk mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada anak-anak berkebutuhan khusus. Kesimpulannya, kombinasi strategi-strategi tersebut oleh para peserta terbukti dapat diterapkan dan didorong untuk digunakan dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada anak-anak berkebutuhan khusus.

Kata Kunci: strategi pengajaran bahasa Inggris; anak berkebutuhan khusus; pendidikan inklusif.



INTRODUCTION

English is an important skill to be mastered in this modern era. It is because English helps children to explore and learn many aspects of life such as education, culture, communication, technology, and many more. Moreover, English can help children to communicate with worldwide residents (Nishanti, 2018). This will help them to be exposed to the globalization world by communicating with people around the world. Therefore, teaching English to children is essential.

However, teaching English to young learners is difficult, especially for children with special needs. They have difficulties that need extra attention and special strategies to be taught. Thus, inclusive environment for these children to learn is suggested. According to Wiliyanto (2017), inclusive education is a form of implementation of “education for all” which means the education should be equal to each student and facilitate each individual's learning based on their needs and interests. This education system allows students with different needs and potentials to learn together in the same class. In another words, inclusive education supports and fights for the justice and equality of children and inclusive children in education (Rante, Helaluddin, Wijaya, Tulak & Umrati, 2020). Therefore, in the case of teaching children with special needs, considering the importance of inclusive education can help teachers to find the suitable strategies for the students and encourage them to provide the best teaching service. Thus, children can learn English in a less intimidating environment where they feel comfortable learning.

Although inclusive education is a good system, there are not many inclusive schools in Indonesia. Based on statistical data, Indonesia had about 28.778 inclusive schools between 2015 and 2020 (The World Bank, 2021) which is a minimal number compared to 148.600 Indonesian primary schools from 2011-2020 (Statista Research Department, 2021). Likewise, among 204 primary schools in Pontianak, West Borneo (Data Referensi Kementerian Pendidikan & Kebudayaan, n.d.), there are only 36 inclusive schools provided by Pemerintah Kota Pontianak, (2021). Based on this fact, schools that implementing inclusive education is still limited. Thus, studies in this field needs to be more investigated.

In this study, the focus was to find out the strategies of two teachers in teaching English to children with special needs in one of the limited inclusive school in Pontianak, Indonesia which is Zonakata Inclusive School. According to Jamaican Association for the Deaf (2015), children with special needs have one or a combination of disabilities that cause difficulties in learning or other activities in their daily life. Special-needs children include those who have mental retardation, speech and language impairment, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, or emotional disabilities. In this research, the children with special needs referred to two children from grade three in Zonakata Inclusive School who had mental retardation caused by autism and Down syndrome.

METHOD

To explore this topic intensively, a case study research was conducted in which observation, interview, and document review were applied. Case study was selected because it was in line with the purpose of this study in which to investigate a detailed, intensive, and in-depth analysis of a particular event, situation, organization, or social unit (Schoch, 2020).

The participants taking part in this study were two teachers of Zonakata inclusive school Pontianak who taught children with special needs caused by Autism and Down syndrome in grade three. Both teachers were graduated from English Education study program in IKIP Pontianak. According to the school principal, the teachers were teaching the most complicated class in the school because the children with special needs in this class were frequently threw tantrums.

In order to get the data, observations, interview, and documents were used. In the observation, field notes were used to record the teaching activities by the teachers in the class. The activities included pre-teaching, whilst, and post-teaching activity. Meanwhile, the interview were used to get a deeper data to clarify the data gotten from the observations. To conduct the interview, predetermined open-ended questions were provided.



Table 1 Specifications for interview questions

Questions	Indicator	Questions Item
Opening	The teachers condition or background	1, 2
Differentiated teaching strategy	Different instruction for students based on their needs and interests	3
Co-teaching strategy	There is a collaboration with a colleague (teachers, therapists, or parents) in teaching	4, 5
Ways to calm tantrums	Ways like actions or treatment to stop and calm the students who get tantrums	6
Teaching media	Mentioning media that are used for teaching	7
Closing	Additional Information that has not been covered yet	8

Furthermore, documents were also reviewed to see what kind of teaching media that was used to support the participants' English teaching to children with special needs. The documents being reviewed were the students' worksheets and the media used for teaching. The documents were used to verify and strengthen the data from the observations and interview, as well as acted as the evidence of conducting the research.

To collect the data, the researcher contacted the two teachers whether they would like to participate in this research or not. After getting their approval, the researcher did a pre-observation and two main observations to see how the teachers teach in the class. Moreover, documents such as students' worksheets and media was also being reviewed. When the observations and document review were done, the researcher contacted the participants to make an appointment for a group interview. To record the interview, voice recorder was used.

After all the data has been collected, the data was analysed. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the methods of analysing qualitative data. It is good in helping the researcher to find out something about the participants' views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or values including the interview transcript (Caulfield, 2019). In analysing the data, the researcher followed the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). There were six steps in conducting thematic analysis which is familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. In transcribing the data, the researcher followed these steps.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To get the results, eight questions were asked as stated in Table 1. From the first and second questions, it was found that the teachers hold bachelor of education degrees and had been teaching for two semesters at Zonakata. It was also found that the teachers received special training on how to teach children with special needs before teaching at Zonakata. The training was hugely beneficial for the teachers to teach and prevent serious challenges in the class. This is in line with research that found teachers who were not well trained before teaching Learners with Disabilities (LwDs) or Others with Special Needs (OSNs) faced serious challenges in teaching (Yuwono & Okech, 2021). Thus, the participants were credible in terms of teaching children with special needs.

The answer to the third question is there were different instructions for children with special needs and regular students. The participants mentioned that "...We facilitate them with different things, for sure". The participants found to use several activities in the worksheets of every student. The activities were multiple questions, fill-in-the-blanks, crossword puzzles, and cut and glue. For the children with special needs, the participants reduced the activities due to their ability and focus factors. This finding connects to a study conducted by Kurniliawati (2016) that teaching using various activities is suggested to create enjoyable learning, make students interested in learning English, and avoid monotonous teaching.



Moreover, the fourth and fifth questions were aimed at answering questions related to the collaboration of the teachers. It was found that there was collaborative work between the two teachers in the class that indicated the use of co-teaching. Based on the observation and confirmed through the interview, the main teacher explained that they collaborated in creating the worksheets and splitting roles in the class. The main teacher acted to be the leader who led the class activities and taught the materials. Meanwhile, the assistant teacher had roles in adjusting the students' learning attitude, and to disciplining them. This finding is in line with Ford (2013), who said that a co-teaching strategy is suggested to be used for teaching children with special needs in an inclusive school.

Furthermore, the sixth question of the interview was to find out the ways to calm and handle tantrums students while learning. In this phase, co-teaching was seen to be crucial. The participants split roles to calm the tantrum student while the other continued the teaching process. The tantrums happened when they could not get what they liked. Barsolo (2021) stated that tantrums may happen when a child cannot express his feelings and did not get what they wanted. Thus, the participants would give the things they wanted to handle the tantrum students. They also used short verbal instructions, gestures, and eye contact as ways to give the students understanding and stop them from tantrums.

The seventh question of the interview is also crucial to obtaining data about the teaching media used by the participants to support the teaching and learning process. The result showed that the participants used visual and audio-visual media such as worksheets with colorful pictures and music videos. These media are found to be effective in creating fun learning and helping students to focus. Although a study conducted by Zhang et al. (2020) found that children with special needs with Autism have poor visual or spatial skills relative to their peers, the result of this study showed the opposite. In this case, all children with special needs in the participants' class were found to be visual learners and have no problem with their visuals. Therefore, visual media was used to support the students considering their learning style and conditions. This finding is in line with Bidari and Yanti (2021) in their study that the use of visual aids is effective in teaching English to students

with Autism Spectrum Disorder. In conclusion, teachers should consider using visual aids in teaching autistic students.

Based on the finding above, the result of the observations, interview, and document review lead to the result that the participants taught English to the children with special needs using strategies namely co-teaching and differentiated teaching with the help of visual media.

Co-Teachings

Co-teaching is a strategy that is marked by the cooperation of a teacher with another teacher in teaching. This is in line with Ranjeeta (2018) who states that co-teaching involves the cooperation of a team responsible for the development of students with special needs. The team could consist of the teacher with other colleagues such as other teachers, school principal, inclusion specialists, health therapists, and or parents.

In this case, the participants used this strategy for teaching English to children with special needs. As the children with special needs in the class frequently threw tantrums, the teachers needed a colleague or assistant in teaching. Thus, the participants needed to collaborate with each other to make the teaching process possible and conducive. In English teaching, the goal was to teach vocabulary as the building block of language and to support the students speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills. Hence, co-teaching strategy helped the participants to deliver the material easily due to the facilitation they gave to the students for learning English. For example, in this study it was found that when the children with special needs did not understand the lesson, the assistant teacher would help to re-explain it and assisted them to do the assignments in their worksheets. Moreover, co-teaching helped the teachers to focus on giving their maximal teaching service to each individual students to achieve the goal of inclusive education that the school used whenever the children with special needs threw tantrums. This allowed the regular students in the same class to get equal service by having two teachers in the class. Thus, co-teaching was used because it was helpful to teach English.



Based on the discussion in the previous section, it was fundamental for the participants to use several strategies that could help them in teaching children with special needs. There are several strategies that are recommended by Ford (2013) for teaching children with special needs. The strategies are co-teaching, differentiated instruction, peer-mediated instructions, and interventions. Therefore, the result of this research supported this theory. Based on the result of this research, two out of four strategies recommended by Ford were used, which are co-teaching and differentiated instruction or differentiated teaching.

Co-teaching was used by the participants in teaching English in the class. There were several models of co-teaching used. Based on the previous section, it was found that the teacher used a co-teaching strategy. This finding is in line with Ford (2013), who said that a co-teaching strategy is suggested to be used for teaching children with special needs in an inclusive school. In this research, co-teaching was used by the participants to achieve the objectives and targets for English lesson that the children with special needs learned. In the context of teaching English, the result of this study is also correlates with a previous study by Padmadewi and Artini (2017). They stated that co-teaching is one of the strategies found to be used by the teachers who teach a student with Autistic Spectrum Disorder in an inclusive school in North Bali. Because of this similarity, it can be concluded that co-teaching is suggested to be used as a strategy for teaching English to children with special needs.

Moreover, using co-teaching as a strategy to teach English is also supported with a study conducted by Boland, Alkhalifa, and Al-Mutairi (2019). They stated that co-teaching is promising to be used for EFL teachers. It was found that well-planned co-teaching programs could lead to better student support, consequently leading to EFL learning improvements. Their study showed that the students in a class where co-teaching was implemented showed significant impacts on their academic skills compared to the class with one teacher only, which leads to the betterment of English learning for the students. This showed a good connection of using co-teaching in an EFL class.

In implementing co-teaching, the participants used a model where one teacher became the main teacher and was assisted by another teacher who gave additional instructions. It was also found that the participants used another model of co-teaching, which is parallel teaching, where the two teachers plan and design the lessons together before the class is split into two groups, each of which is handled by each teacher. It shows that the teacher used the same model proposed by Vaughn et al in 1997.

Besides the two models, the participants were also in the same classroom. Based on the conversation in the interview, the participants take turns to do instructions for the students. In other words, each can assist students while the other gives instructions to other students.

Furthermore, co-teaching also needed to be implemented by the participants due to the conditions of the children with special needs in their class that often threw tantrums while learning. In this condition, some children with special needs would throw tantrums. Tantrums happened when they could not get what they liked. In this situation, the teachers separate their roles. One teacher would take care of the student who threw a tantrum, and another teacher handled the other students so that they could maintain their focus. In order to take care of the children who got a tantrum, the participants sometimes gave what they liked, calling their names with a firm tone and serious look while making eye contact, holding their hand, or just ignoring them but still looking after the student. While the teacher took care of the child who threw a tantrum, the other teacher taught the other students. Thus, co-teaching was essential for the participants to run the lesson. It showed that co-teaching was implemented to create the best environment that worked to facilitate the students learning of English.

Differentiated Teaching

Another strategy that was found to be used was differentiated teaching. According to Scruggs, Mastropieri, and Marshak (2012), differentiated instruction or differentiated teaching supplies the students with diverse learning needs with instructional methods and materials that are matched to their individual needs. In this case, this strategy was used to teach English in the participants' diverse class



that had children with different needs and interests. In specific, this strategy was used in whilst teaching activity.

The differentiated strategies was marked by the different worksheets of the children with special needs to each other and to the regular students. The student with Autism or will be refer as A, was found to be not really good at English writing but good at pronunciation, and the child with Down syndrome who will be refer as B, had no problem with English writing. He could write neatly without any guidance. Thus, the teachers facilitate student A with boxes to guide him to spell the English words and write it down on the worksheet. Meanwhile, student B and the regular students did not given the boxes in their worksheets. Moreover, the assignments in the worksheets of student A and B were less than the worksheets of regular students. The children with special needs only had three to four assignments activities while the regular students got four to five activities. This was adjusted to the students' condition.

This study also found that differentiated teaching strategy mentioned by Ford (2013) was used by the participants. Based on the observations, conversation in the interview, and the documents that has been reviewed, the researcher found that differentiated teaching was crucial to facilitating the children with different special needs to learn English. This result is in line with a study conducted by Morina (2019). She stated that differentiated teaching is the priority strategy for teaching students with special needs. She further argued that the learning of children with special needs should be differentiated. By differentiating the instructions, the children's diversity will not be disregarded. For example, student A was not good with writing. Therefore, to facilitate him in learning English writing, the participants provided boxes to guide him. However, these boxes were only provided for student A. It was because the other students could already write in English. Hence they did not need boxes to guide them write the words. On the other hand, student B was good with writing. Thus, the instructions for him were different. He was not instructed to write the answers in the boxes but directly write the answers without boxes. Although student A was not good at writing, he was good at speaking pronunciation. He also understood English. Therefore, the

instructions were mostly given in English, whereas for student B, it was more like a mix of Indonesian and English. Not only that, the instructions for the children with special needs and the regular children were also different. The participants gave fewer instructions to the children with special needs than the regular students. Regular students had about four tasks or instructions, while children with special needs had three. Seeing this, it concludes that the participants considered the needs and conditions of each individual student by giving them different instructions.

Visual Media

In teaching children with special needs, the participants used visual media as the media for teaching English. It was because the children tend to be visual learners. This shows a correlation with Tissot and Evans (2003) and Stein (2011) who stated that children with special needs, especially children with autism and Down syndrome benefit from the visual media for learning a language. Therefore, the participants were required to use visual media to teach English. By looking at this fact, this study is contrary to the study proposed by Zhang et al. (2020) who stated that autistic children have poor visual skills.

Moreover, the visual media used in teaching were pictures, body language and music videos from YouTube. The pictures used to introduce the vocabulary as the English material so that they could remember the vocabulary easily by connecting it with the picture. Moreover, body language used to explain the instructions or material to the students. Finally, the music video from YouTube was also used to warm up the students before learning. The music video was gotten from Cocomelon Channel. By using these media, the teachers could help the children to learn easily and set their mood in a good condition for learning English.

In implementing the strategies, the teachers used visual media for supporting the English learning. This is relatable with a previous related study from Padmadewi and Artini (2017). They revealed that differentiated teaching, co-teaching, and a visual media called “Buddy Program” were used in English teaching. Likewise, this study results showed that visual media was also used to



help children learn English. The media used in the pre-teaching activities to warm up the students, and in whilst teaching on their worksheets. The visual media helped children to memorize the English vocabulary by connecting it to the pictures they saw. It is also supported by Tissot and Evans (2003), who stated that visual media help Autistic students to understand the language better. Another child with Down syndrome was also found to be a visual learner. This is in line with Stein (2011) and supports the study by Nuriyanti, Yuliawati, and Rohaniyah (2021) using visual media is helpful for teaching children with Down syndrome.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results in the previous discussion, it was concluded that the teachers of Zonakata inclusive school used several teaching strategies in teaching English to children with special needs. The strategies that the participants used were co-teaching and differentiated teaching with the support of visual media. Co-teaching was used due to the condition of the children with special needs who frequently throwing tantrums which required them to have two teachers in the same class. Differentiated teaching was also used to facilitate the different needs and conditions of the students to help them learn English. Furthermore, the visual media is also essential to support the participants in explaining the materials and help the children with special needs learn easily.

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