

Teachers' Strategies in Teaching English for Children with Special Needs at *SMP Luar Biasa* in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English to children with special needs is not easy. There are many problems during the teaching and learning process. Teachers need to use a variety of strategies. The objectives of this research: 1) to describe the strategies used by teachers in teaching English to children with special needs, their problem and their solution in teaching English for children with special needs.

This study was descriptive qualitative. The respondents were 5 English teachers from the seventh-ninth grade at SMP Luar Biasa in Yogyakarta. Interview was conducted to collect the data. The validity was obtained by member check. In this study, the researcher used three stages to analyze the data: 1) data condensation, 2) data display, and 3) interpreting the data and drawing conclusions.

The result shows that there are seven strategies in teaching English to children with special needs. They are: contextual strategy, active learning strategy, verbal communication strategy, hypnosis strategy, expository strategy, cooperative strategy, using learning media or interactive video. Further, there are eleven problems faced by teachers of children with special needs. The problems are: the condition of students, the difficulty of the teacher to organize the students to learn, limited time, students' characters, students' focus in learning, students' interest, position of English not as a mandatory lesson, a small class with many students, English not as a communication tool, and learning media. The solution includes joint discussions, access for the teachers to receive training and books to serve the students academically, psychologically and pedagogically. The need for teacher professional development can be achieved through education, training, and certification.

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1. Introduction

Education is one of the most important basic elements in building a nation. For that reason, Article 31 paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution states that all Indonesian people have the right to get a proper education, including children with special needs.

The importance of learning English in today's times cannot be underestimated or ignored seeing English as the language spoken in most parts of the world. English does not only play a role as a communication tool but can also make it easier to adapt to the environment and work in the present and future.

According to Darajat and Putra (2018), there are several special schools that apply English as a basic subject, this means English is defined as a supporting element for children with special needs to be involved in everyday social life. However, teaching English to children with special needs is a challenge that requires the cooperation and participation of all parties. Even though it could be that the idea of teaching English to children with special needs is very difficult or even impossible, this is part of the responsibility in education to be accepted as increasing the activity of new mindsets, exploring, discovering, expressing feelings, and providing opportunities to socialize with the environment.

In teaching English, it is very important for teachers to choose effective strategies to teach English for children with special needs. Harmer (2007) said that a strategy is an action that the teacher takes to attain one or more teaching-learning goals. Furthermore, during the teaching and learning process, children with special needs require a unique strategy according to their individual need and creative ways to provide effective stimulation so that children more easily understand the purpose of the learning process. Majid (2013) explained that the learning strategy can be interpreted as any activity chosen that can provide facilities or assistance to students towards the achievement of certain learning goals.

English teachers might apply different strategies to make children with special needs understand the lesson easier and more effectively. Teachers could use various combinations of those strategies to find the appropriate strategies that are suitable for children with special needs. The children can be developed as much as possible to achieve their goals. The learning ability of students with special needs can be maximized by teachers who have the necessary skills in using appropriate teaching strategies, materials, and media. Therefore, it can be said that the strategy used, has an impact on student goals as student success in achieving the English learning process.

Based on research conducted by Widya (2019) on "Teaching English for Children with Special Needs", there are strategies that can be used in teaching English, especially for children with special needs, i.e. using various teaching methods in direct form and appropriate assessments not only oriented towards language competence but also language skills that will be able to encourage children with special needs to be able to use English functionally and contextually. Meanwhile, the present study explores the strategies used by English teachers in teaching English to children with special needs studying at *SMP Luar Biasa* in Yogyakarta, the teachers' problems and their solutions to overcome the problems in teaching English for children with special needs.

2. Method

This study was descriptive qualitative focusing on the teachers' strategies in teaching English at *SMP Luar Biasa* in Yogyakarta. The subjects in this research were five English teachers (2 males and 3 females) of the seventh to ninth graders in the academic year 2022/2023. The object of this research is the strategies used by the teacher in teaching English for children with special needs.

In this study, the researchers used a semi-structured interview to collect the data. The validity was obtained by member check. The researchers used three stages to analyze the data: 1) data condensation, 2) data display, and 3) interpreting the data and drawing

conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The results of this interview were checked and confirmed by the research subjects to ensure the data were valid.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. The Strategies Used by the Teachers to Teach English for Children with Special Needs

Various kinds of strategies are used by teachers when teaching English for children with special needs at *SMP Luar Biasa*. The first strategy is contextual strategy. It is the strategy that connects the material to be studied with students' lives or the real world. The strategy encourages students to actively engage with the material being taught and connects it to real-world situations, thereby empowering them to make meaningful contributions to their own lives. According to Johnson (2007: 67), an educational process that aims to help students in understanding the meaning in the academic material they study by connecting these academic subjects to the context of their daily lives, namely the context of personal, social, and cultural circumstances.

"[...] contextually connect to children's daily lives, so it is easier between learning or material to everyday life, so children don't forget easily"

The second strategy is the active learning strategy emphasizing on students' participation in the learning process both mentally and physically to achieve learning goals maximally. It is the most successful strategy implemented by the teacher because it can accommodate their needs in learning. even though children who have mild mentally retardation unable to reading-writing, and moderately mentally retarded children are only able to practice but with this strategy they can still receive the learning and become more active.

"[...]I use active learning strategies... (physical and mental) for example introducing objects around us in English, I mention the objects and students look for the objects."
"active learning because it can accommodate the needs of the students in learning. And all students become more active."

The third strategy is verbal strategy. In the verbal strategy, there is spoken communication with others, this is different from the non-verbal one which uses body language, sign language and written language (Moravkova, 2011). The verbal strategy helps children with special needs and teachers in communicating with hard hearing students. According to Gumperz (1970), the teacher had to know the extent of the child's ability to interact and more optimally use verbal strategies in communicating and using media, real objects that are the easiest for students to understand.

The next strategy is hypnosis strategy which is also known as hypnotherapy. It is a therapeutic method that will make students in a relaxed and calm state so they can more focus-concentrate on their own thoughts, then the person concerned tends to be easier to accept the suggestions given by the teacher. Usually, this method involves repeating certain words and asking you to imagine something. Hypnosis strategy is also used in teaching English for children with special needs, it aims to make students in a relaxed and calm state so that they can more focus-concentrate on their own thoughts, then the person concerned tends to be easier to accept the suggestions given by the teacher (Drigas, Mitsea, & Skianis, 2021).

" I use the Hypnosis strategy, which is also known as the hypnotherapy method which will put students in a relaxed and calm state so they can focus and concentrate more. That way, the children with special need will to be more focus on responding to"

suggestions given by the teacher who help in the learning process. Usually, this method involves repeating certain words and asking you to imagine something. ”

Expository is the following strategy, focusing on a teacher to a group of students in learning process with the intention that students can master the subject matter optimally. According to Sanjaya (2006: 177), expository learning strategy is a strategy that emphasizes the process of conveying material verbally from an educator to a group of students with the aim that students can understand the lesson material optimally. In expository learning strategies, media such as educational videos and verbal additions with visual aids are used to support the explanations given by educators which will increase the effectiveness of storing information in long-term memory. According to Bransford (1999), the advantages of using learning media in learning will bind concepts and ideas to be conveyed to students, so that the learning process will run in two directions, not just one way.

“Expository learning strategy is a learning strategy that emphasizes the process of delivering material verbally from a teacher to a group of students with the intention that students can master the subject matter optimally. ”

The seventh strategy is cooperative strategy. It is the strategy that focuses on learning to students as members of small groups with different ability levels. In completing their group assignments, each student member of the group must work together and help each other to understand the subject matter. The strategy can be applied to any type of classroom, including those designed specifically for children with special needs, those for teaching special education, and especially those that are needed in heterogeneous classrooms with a range of skill levels. Because schools are shifting to a more diverse learning system, collaborative learning is becoming increasingly important. According to Slavin (1985), cooperative learning is a well-known model of education in which teachers encourage students to work together on specific projects, such as discussions or peer education in small groups collaboratively whose members are 4-6 people with heterogeneous group structures. Cooperative learning can assist in transforming differences into learning materials and preventing them from becoming a problem. In this way, the feeling of wanting to move forward together becomes increasingly ingrained in each child.

“Cooperative Strategy; each student member of the group must work together and help each other to understand the subject matter. ”

3.2. The Problems Faced by the Teachers in Teaching English for Children with Special Needs

The problems encountered by teachers when teaching and learning process for children with special needs are the need for patience, because students with special needs are difficult to concentrate in learning, lack in remembering, are slow to understand learning so teachers must be more patient. Teachers also have to repeat the delivery of learning materials and the difficulty of explaining learning materials, due to intellectual limitations, learning difficulties, emotional or behavioral problems, communication disorders, hearing problems that have a significant effect on the growth or development process compared to other children of the same age.

One of the problems faced by the teachers when teaching English for children with special needs are those conditions that affect, or appear to affect, the mental or physical development of individuals (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2017). Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory

impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

“The actual condition of the students. students with special needs are not the same as normal students in general, so when they leave the house their bodies are actually not fit or maybe their emotions are unstable.”

According to Huzaemah (2010), children with special needs especially children with autism focusing only on themselves makes it difficult for them to concentrate on one thing and easy to switch when during the teaching-learning process. Pratiwi (2021) said there are various characteristics of children in class. Therefore, the teacher finds this diverse characteristic as a problem because finding one suitable way to teach may be difficult.

“[...] varied, each student has a different character. Incidentally, I tutored 3 students: 1 student with mild ID (intellectual disability) could read and write, 1 student with mild ID had reading and writing difficulties, 1 student with moderate ID was only able to practice.”

Cruickshank, et al. (2013) have mentioned there are sixty common problems that fall into five large categories called “areas of concern”. (1) Affiliation. These problems also come from an inability to interact effectively. The teacher’s need to establish and maintain good relationships with others in the school, such as relationships with students, fellow teachers, staff, and administrators. (2) Control, because the teachers’ need to have students behave well or appropriately. Teachers sometimes make mistakes while defining terms. They imply that students should be reasonably quiet, orderly, courteous, and truthful, as well as demonstrate respect for others and property. (3) Parental Relationships and Home Conditions. Teachers recognize the important role of parents and that the conditions in students’ homes impact school success. (4) Student Success. Student success is defined as the need teachers have to help learners achieve both academically and socially. Unfortunately, many teachers struggle with student success, including those related to insufficient student interest, working with students who have special needs, and a teacher’s own instructional shortcomings. (5) Limited time represents a serious problem for teachers. The teachers find it difficult because of sufficient time to prepare for classes, complete the planned work, and diagnose and evaluate learning. Furthermore, constraints on time have increased because of large classes, the number of classes teachers are required to teach.

“My focus is for mentally retarded children, more on self-development such as toilet training, they don't know which is dangerous or not. My obstacle is that it is not yet fully for the child to train independently so that it is maximal, it must also be continuous between me teaching at school and both parents at home.

“[...] Yes, usually I have tricks and provide motivation like I teach while standing and then instructing something and when the child answers then I will say wow this is good to the child and while saying you are a great child while clapping hand.

“The students often get bored easily while in their class are no longer interested in the learning process and are more interested in just one subject continuously or they lose their intention to study they prefer to work because many of them study while working.”

“As for another problem, namely the small number of teachers in schools, because of that because there are few teachers, one class is held by 1 homeroom teacher who oversees all fields of study, except for arts and sports skills, there is already a teacher.”

“[...] I teach 1 class. Usually in SLB 1 the room is 4x6 in size, but my classroom is only 3x3 in size for 6 students, it's too tight and cramped.”

" The lack of learning media in English itself is a difficult lesson. "

" for English lesson it is very limited is only 2 hours or an estimated 70 minutes on Tuesday and even then sometimes the learning is not optimal. "

One of the compulsory subjects is English at school, because English is an important lesson. But, teaching English is not easy. The teachers need much effort to make the teaching and process become fun and the students motivated at once. So applying various strategies in presenting the materials, it can make the learners become attracted and mastered the subject. Although it will require a lot of time and effort because English is not their first language or second language. Besides, the students only use English at school, when at home they only use their mother tongue, it was stated by Widodo and Dewi (2018) because English is not a tool of communication for them.

"[...] students learn English only as a subject, not as a means of communication. So at home they never use English language because it's not their first language, so they only use Javanese and Indonesian languages at home. "

Another problem faced by teacher English when teaching most teachers experience difficulties in modifying the curriculum and conducting academic and non-academic assessments (Harijanto, 2011). In teaching children with special needs, it would be different with other children in general school. The teachers should give special attention to them.

"[...] The curriculum adjusts the KI KD modifies from the curriculum book and every period there is a change policy in the learning curriculum > for example: when it was still a curriculum policy 13 he tried to use the curriculum but the trials for children were not finished, meaning I had not finished new material, how many chapters had been replaced back to the independent curriculum. So this independent curriculum book generalizes the abilities of students (children with special needs) both from the characteristics and class level categories. even though the way of teaching for each child is different according to the needs and characteristics of the child. Therefore, with this new curriculum, it is a little difficult for me to modify the learning material to make it simpler to suit the needs of children but still use the curriculum. "

The next problem that is often encountered by teachers in teaching English education is the different character of each child with special needs. English for children with special needs have different characteristics from one another (Mulyono.1999. Delfi, 2006).

"[...] the characteristics of the students themselves, from one student to another student it must be different. By coincidence, my class is mentally retarded. SLB-C are related to intellectual barriers but each child also has their own different abilities, such as some who can verbalize, this one is still in the thickening stage, this one has not yet been able to thicken it, in an extraordinary school like that. "

"every children with special need has different characteristics. Coincidentally, there are two students that I teach: the first mild mental retardation children she can reading-writing, it's just that the ability to receive and understand the material presented is slow because the level of cognitive intelligence is also different from other children of the same age "

3.3. The Teachers Solution to Overcome the Problems in Teaching English for Children with Special Needs

The problems faced by English teachers when teaching English for children with special needs are various. These are the teacher explanations for the solution of the problem. The solution for school includes: there needs to be activities or activities aimed

at increasing teachers' understanding in educating children with special needs (ABK). Some activities that can be carried out are by holding training delivered by professional services or providing books related to crew handling and other lessons.

The solution for the teachers includes the need for teachers to hold joint discussions regarding experiences and obstacles in teaching English for children with special needs at SMP Luar Biasa in Yogyakarta. The solution for the government includes: The government is expected to facilitate access for inclusive school teachers to receive training and books on Understanding Teacher Pedagogy in Teaching English language education for Children with Special Needs. The solution for parents includes: Parents play an active role in helping children learn. Parents can continue the learning provided at home according to the learning carried out at school. Practical suggestions for the community include that the community is expected to accept the existence of crew members. Community acceptance can help optimize the development of crew members.

“[...] more training for educators and training to be able to teach maybe from others or there are other ways”.

The government's long-running program for compulsory schooling has to be welcomed by increasing the quantity and caliber of educational services for children with special needs. As a way of embodying our duty for education in Indonesia, we are simultaneously working to improve the standard of educational services. Numerous aspects, such as the curriculum, the caliber of the teaching personnel, the facilities, the funding, the management, the environment, and the learning process, have an impact on the general quality of education. Here, educators (teachers) play a significant part in ensuring the overall quality of education.

In carrying out teaching and learning activities in inclusive schools, class teachers, subject teachers, and special education teachers (GPK) are needed who serve as companions to class teachers and subject teachers in serving children with special needs so that their potential develops optimally. In connection with the lack of subject teachers to their fields and the lack of class teachers who have adequate competence, especially in teaching English, it is necessary to seek professional appointment and coaching according to school needs.

Therefore, the solution is that the teacher gives children understanding, gives enthusiasm and strong motivation to children, and provides flexible time in carrying out learning activities, especially since children with special needs require more attention and effective, creative, and appropriate strategies according to the needs of each child

4. Discussion

In this study, the teachers in this study have implemented various learning strategies used in teaching English to children with special needs and are able to understand the various needs of students with special needs so that they are able to design, implement and evaluate the education process for children with special needs properly in accordance with the existing theory. There is, stated by Widya (2019), in teaching English a teacher, especially an English teacher, must be able to know the goals or targets of learning English that will be given to students with special needs. By knowing the learning targets, the teacher will be able to design appropriate learning approaches, learning models and learning strategies. With a good learning design, it is expected that children with special need can learn optimally.

The problems faced by English teachers when teaching English for children with special needs are various. One of the problems faced by the teachers when teaching English for children with special needs are those conditions that affect, or appear to affect,

the mental or physical development of individuals (National Center for Learning Disabilities 2017) and Widodo and Dewi (2018). Limited time, Another problem faced by the teacher is the status of English as only a complementary subject (Anggraini, 2018). According to Huzaemah (2010) children with special needs, especially children with autism focusing only on themselves makes it difficult for them to concentrate on one thing and easy to switch when during the teaching-learning process. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. and the class size are also problems for English teachers, this is in accordance with Abrar (2016), Cruickshank et al. as cited in Nurasiah (2017).

Besides, the students only use English at school, when at home they only use their mother tongue, it was stated by Widodo & Dewi (2018) because English is not a tool of communication for them. Another problem faced by teacher English when teaching most teachers experience difficulties in modifying the curriculum and conducting academic and non-academic assessments (Sutji Harijanto, 2011). English for children with special needs have different characteristics from one another (Mulyono, 1999 and Delfi, 2006). Pratiwi (2021) said there are various characteristics of children in class, for example, there are those who are overactive, quiet, unable to stay still, always moving and many more.

Therefore, the teacher finds this diverse characteristic as a problem because finding one suitable way to teach may be difficult. In overcoming these problems, there are teachers who have the same solution and there are also different. The teachers in this study have solutions to overcome the problems in teaching English and the learning process which tend to be the same in improving teacher standard of education Service, especially in teaching English to children with special needs. ith the aim that every teacher can improve the standard of educational service in teaching English and can apply English in everyday life both at home or school and become a provision for the future.

The solution for the teachers includes the need for teachers to hold joint discussions regarding experiences and obstacles in teaching for children with special needs. This is necessary so that teachers can share information with each other. The solution for the government includes: The government is expected to facilitate access for inclusive school teachers to receive training and books on Understanding Teacher Pedagogy in Teaching English language education for Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Schools. Especially for educators in inclusive schools where there are children with special needs they must be able to serve them academically, psychologically and pedagogically. With regard to the capacity development needed in inclusive schools, the need for professional development of personnel can be achieved through education, training, and certification.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that the researchers described in the previous chapter, the researchers concluded that the teacher's strategy in teaching English to children with special needs at SMP Luar Biasa in Yogyakarta consists of seven strategies. The first teacher uses contextual strategy. The second teacher uses an active learning strategy. The third teacher uses verbal communication strategy. The fourth teacher uses hypnosis strategy. Another teacher uses an expository strategy, cooperative strategy, and the other teacher uses media or video in learning. Each strategy used has its own purpose. Some have a goal of improving their memory skills.

There are strategies that aim to accommodate their needs and students are more active. Another strategy aims to increase children's stimulus so that children can more easily understand it because learning to use concrete media can accommodate children with

special needs. other strategies aim to attract students' interest in learning so students don't get bored easily, there are also strategies for students' communication skills. And another strategies that aim to improve students' skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The problems faced by teachers when teaching English to children with special needs are almost all the same. Such as the actual condition of the students, children with special needs are more difficult to focus, limited time, different student characters, students are less focused, the student easily loses their interest in learning, integration of knowledge, English is not a mandatory lesson for children with special needs, a number small class and many students, English is not a communication tool, and learning media. The solution includes joint discussions, access for the teachers to receive training and books to serve the students academically, psychologically and pedagogically. The need for teacher professional development can be achieved through education, training, and certification.

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