ELT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE BOUNDARIES AND BEYOND

Challenges of Teaching English to Students with Special Needs During Pandemic Covid-19 in Indonesian School Based on Teacher's Experience

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Abstract

This study is intended to examine the portrait and the challenge of teaching English to students with special needs in Indonesian school during pandemic Covid-19 based on teacher's perspective and experience. This study uses narrative inquiry design of qualitative method that involves a practitioner who was experienced in teaching English for students with special needs to get in touch in learning process. In this study, the selected participant is an English teacher who is selected from her place of teaching. In the data collection process, the researchers conduct face-to-face virtual interviews and chatting via WhatsApp with the intended participant and also asks for photos of activities carried out by the participant with the students. This study shows a result that there are several challenges faced by an English teacher who teaches English to children with special needs. First challenge is the varies of special needs condition require different treatments. Second challenge is distance weakens teacher's control of students' learning development. Third challenge is English learning via virtual meeting is ineffective. Fourth challenge is parents' perception of their children condition. In conclusion, the finding shows that by applying some activities referenced by the English teacher, it can be suitable solutions to overcome those challenges. Nevertheless, teaching English to students with special needs always has a chance of being better.

Keywords: challenge; English teaching; special needs students; pandemic Covid-19

Introduction

Indonesian citizens are given the same rights by the government in getting service of education. The Government guarantees the implementation of equitable education for all Indonesian people with no restrictions on class, social or economic background. In fact, proper education is also entitled to be enjoyed by children with special needs. The necessity of making the educational process manageable and successful for every single student, regardless of his or her individual learning abilities and styles is one of a big challenge for Indonesian educational system. One part of the educational system which is on an important position and meaningfully functioned is teacher's role in its services. The main aim for teachers must be to ensure that all children can learn to their full potential. Therefore, one of the most

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important areas in pedagogical studies is methodology of teaching. Teachers should become used to various methods of teaching in order to deal with diversity in the classroom and the teaching method ought to be individualised so as to take into account the students' needs.

Teacher's attention on students with special needs is important as Marianna (2017) stated that students with special needs need more attention to make them more that will make them able to adapt and familiarize themselves after previously confining themselves (Chrysostomou & Symeonidou, 2017). Whereas, Bita, et al. (2020) stated that learning foreign languages difficult for students with special needs. However, the study of different researches in this area showed that for each group of students that there are specific strategies and methods for teaching foreign language. When it comes to teaching foreign language students with special needs, it should be noted that learning another language can provide a wide range of experiences for the individual (Sabokrouh & Abbaspour, 2020). This experience affects the child's social interaction, personal development, creative exploration, and intellectual and skill development. In fact, knowing another language provides a person with special needs, value and social identity beyond "special needs" (Arries, 1999). The education of children with special needs requires good theoretical and practical training of teachers, motivation for work, and extensive educational and socio-therapeutic practice (Zheleva, 2019, p. 75). According to Pratama (2020) stated that there are several problems faced by an English teacher who teaches a school for children with special needs.

COVID-19, the most catastrophic global pandemic of the 21st century, has caused unbelievable disruption in various sectors, such as education, business and commerce, and tourism. This shocking condition requires teacher to be ready to face any challenges in English teaching during pandemic Covid-19 especially to students with special needs. Generally, challenges in teaching English by online were students' attendance checking, students' English skills and internet connection (Asmara, Rekha, 2020). The most troublesome challenges the teacher faced were platform limitations, internet connection and human resources' unpreparedness for online education (Shirvan, et al., 2021). Another finding by Carvajal, Martinez (2021) stated that teaching English online to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Down Syndrom (DS) students requires knowledge of their conditions and suitable strategies from an eclectic instructional approach.

However, this study is different from previous research. While previous research centres on the curriculum and the new method, this research focuses on the teacher's perspective, implementation, and the students' responses to the teacher teaching implementation in pandemic Covid-19 specific situation.

Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative observational design was used to examine the portrait and the challenge of teaching English to students with special needs in Indonesian school during pandemic Covid-19 based on teacher's perspective and experience. Connelly & Clandinin in Writing at CSU (2021) mentioned that by using qualitative observational research, the researchers are better able to

observe the study group or culture and identify specific patterns of behaviour. In addition, narrative inquiry is also applied in this study. According to Writing at CSU (2021), narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling. The researchers then write a narrative of the experience. The participant is an English teacher in one of the schools in Tangerang, Indonesia. She has two years of teaching experience in her school. She took a short course in special needs education before she worked with students with special needs. The data were collected by doing in-depth interview. Interview is a purposeful engagement in which a researcher attempts to obtain information from the subject who agrees to participate in the study.[2] Moreover, they stated that the interview is a discussion aimed at gaining insight into certain issues using a semi-structured interview guide. The researchers used an interview technique that was semi-structured and captured on the Zoom. With semi-structured interview, it was possible to ask follow-up questions to in order to get richer information. This statement is strengthened by Freebody (2003) mentioned that semi-structured interview chose as they gave the researchers and the interviewee some versatility. An interview was carried out with the teacher selected to participate in the study. The time arranged for an interview was approximately 30-45 minutes.

The interview questions were translated from English to Bahasa for better communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. The recorded interview data from the Zoom meeting were transcribed. Transcription is the process of transforming interview notes and audio recording into texts (Johnson & Christiansen, 2012). The data collected were transcribed from Bahasa to English. Then, thematic analysis was used to organize the transcribed data. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis follows six basic steps. Thematic organization and analysis are the process of identifies analysis and report the occurrence of themes in the data collected from the research areas. Six basic steps of thematic data based on Braun & Clarke (2006) as follow: a. Familiarizing with the data through thoroughly reading the transcriptions, b. Generation of initial codes, c. Searching for the themes, d. Defining and naming themes developed, e. Producing a report.

Result and Discussion

The researchers found that there are several challenges faced by an English teacher who teaches English to children with special needs. First challenge is the varies of special needs condition require different treatments. Second challenge is distance weakens teacher's control of students' learning development. Third challenge is English learning via virtual meeting is ineffective. Fourth challenge is parents' perception of their children condition.

In addition, virtual classroom and distance poor learning environments identified in this study. According to Vygotsky in Udoba (2014) viewed that only a truly differentiated learning environment

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[2] Malik & Hamied, *Teachers' Attitudes to Special Needs Students in English Language Teaching, Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* vol.8, 2

can fully develop a student with special needs. It is in line with the English teacher who stated that the teacher can manage the students by controlling their classwork activity. However, by using virtual and distance learning, there will be a gap between the teacher and students, so that weakens teacher's control of students' learning development. In this case the school is provided the shadow teacher as the assistant in managing the virtual and distance learning. Hassan et al. (2015) stated that Assistant teachers are indispensable in inclusive classrooms that aim to facilitate the learning process in the classroom, especially for students with special needs. The role of shadow teacher (assistant teacher) is very important in the inclusive class (students with special needs).

Furthermore, common problems in this group of students include issues such as limited vocabulary range, limitations in understanding complex and long sentences, understanding of abstract language, speaking, reading and writing skills. Foreign language teaching technique and learning approaches for students with special needs include:

Communication approach, since the students with special needs have limitation with understanding capability. So, the English teacher use simple communication approach. This statement is strengthened by Sabokrouh and Abbaspour (2020), a correction of linguistic errors is less important, since communication and expression of the police is more important than perfect use of language.

Pattern, in this 'teacher-centered' technique, the teacher is like the model that the students imitate. This patterning can be done either explicitly or implicitly. Explicit patterning is when the teacher utters a word or phrase quite clearly and asks the language learner to repeat that word or phrase after him/her. This can be done in word training with the use of educational cards. The teacher shows the card to the learners, utters a word, and then asks them to repeat it individually or in groups. The teacher can also do this by pointing at objects or pictures in the classroom.

Interactive communication, means that the teacher uses all media/figures for learning English. It is in line with Sabokrouh & Abbaspour (2020), the speaker uses all communication codes, such as speech, body language, sign, gestures, symbols, text, images, and objects to communicate to the students with special needs. Usually, the speaker uses images and objects. The teacher can use total communication techniques to communicate with the students, and the students can learn what they want to say in English. Language learners may be able to find and interpret English words.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The study revealed four challenges faced by the English teacher and some activities referenced by the English teacher; so, it can be concluded that by applying those activities, approaches, techniques and methods can be suitable solutions to overcome those challenges. Nevertheless, teaching English to students with special needs always has a chance of being better.

Teacher ought to give motivating attention for the students with special needs to help them understand English lesson. It is recommended that the teacher should be trained well to teach the

students with special needs. He/she needs to prepare their materials and innovative teaching method in English lesson. The collaboration between the teacher, school and the parents will be great in order to reducing parents' perception about their children condition.

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