English Language Teaching in Inclusive Class: a Challenge

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Abstract

Inclusive educational opens the door of the regular classrooms for the learners from different backgrounds. It gives students with special needs opportunity to learn equally as the other students. They also need to learn English as their foreign language. However, teaching inclusive classroom is not that easy. A number of challenges are faced by the English teachers during the teaching learning process. As teachers, they should realize their challenges and find the ways on how to overcome it, especially dealing with students with special needs. The aim of this paper is to determine the challenges faced by the English teachers. It also gives some insights on how to surmount the problems. It employs a qualitative study. This article argues that the English teachers have some challenges in teaching students with special needs. Thus, they need to concern in identifying the challenges they got and figure out the ways to solve it.

Keywords: *inclusive education, students with special needs, challenges, teaching English*

Introduction

Since the early 1990s the movement to have education for all was launched at the World Conference that involved various international organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Students's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank. The main agenda for this conference was Education for All in the entire world. Education should be given to everyone equally. It is stated by the United Nations in Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It says that one of the human rights is getting appropriate education. The Decree of 1945 also states that everyone should get their rights in education. Thus, Indonesia proclaims some kinds of educational system for students with special needs. One of them is inclusive education. Based on the Decree of Indonesia number 20 of 2003 about National Educational System, it is said that citizens who have special needs should get special education.

Moreover, it also says that special education is an education for students who have difficulties in learning process because of physic, emotional, mental, and social disorder; also special shrewdness and talent potential (Decree of National Education System number 20 in 2003 article 32, verse 1). Based on *Direktorat Pembinaan Sekolah Luar Biasa* in Ilahi (2013:26), the schools who offer the special education are asked to integrate the curriculum, the education system, and the teaching learning based on the students' needs.

Special Needs Education is education for students with disabilities. The aim of this education is to develop the special need students' capabilities, independence, and social participation. Special Needs Education is carried out in various forms, including in resource rooms, in special classes (both are in regular schools; inclusive class), and in special schools named "Schools for Special Needs Education". Formerly, special schools had been established separately by types of disabilities, as "Schools for the Blind", "Schools for the Deaf" and "Schools for the Intellectually Disabled, the Physically Disabled and the Health Impaired".

Schools for Special Needs Education are schools for students with comparatively severe disabilities. Those schools comprise four levels, for instance kindergarten, elementary, junior high and senior high education. In Schools for Special Needs Education, students learn by special curriculum, being surrounded by rich number of teachers and various facilities and equipment which meet the needs of those students. Therefore, the expense per student in Schools for Special Needs Education is more expensive than the regular schools.

Special Needs Education is provided also in regular schools. It is called as inclusive school. Special classes are small classes for students with comparatively mild disabilities that may be established in elementary, junior high and senior high schools. Inclusive school provides resource rooms where students with disabilities who are enrolled in and studying most of the time in regular classes may visit few times a week to receive special instruction. The disabilities covered in this program are speech impairment, autism, emotional disturbance, low vision, hard-of-hearing, Learning Disabilities (LD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and others. In addition, various efforts are made in regular classes, such as instruction in small groups, team-teaching, instruction according to different achievement levels and the use of support assistants

A student has special educational needs if they have a learning problem or disability that makes it more difficult for them to learn than most students at their age. They may have problems with schoolwork, communication or behavior. Thus, students with special educational needs (SEN) have special attention in education. Inclusive education tries to integrate these students in

mainstream education. All students are welcomed in inclusive school – regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background or educational need. They learn, contribute to, and take part in all aspects of school life.

Inclusive education offers some benefits not only for the students but also for the family. The students will learn meaningful friendships, respect, better appreciation and understanding of individual differences, and being prepared for adult life in a diverse society.

Furthermore, the students are expected to be better in their social lives. They can create lasting friendships that help them navigate relationships later in their lives. In an inclusive classroom, they get to see how different people interact. It also give the students chance to meet higher expectations – both from their peers and their teachers. They may also see positive academic role models in their classmates.

Their students with SEN's families can get the impact of the inclusive program. The students with SEN are only children, whose parents are worry for their children's lives, when they be unable to fit in to the community, unless the student is in an inclusive school.

The legislation says about inclusive education. It refers to students with SEN in mainstream education. A lot of questions arise from the teachers and parents of regular students. They doubt whether it is beneficial or not. Students with SEN struggle to fit in an environment where they are being mocked by their surroundings. Some students are be reluctant to include their peers in conversations or in playground activities. A lack of understanding can result in hurtful remarks or bullying. Therefore, it is a need to plan for each stage of school, to make sure the atmosphere is supportive and that everyone feels included and understood.

Moreover, students with SEN have to make effort in learning something new. Therefore, they need teachers who are properly trained to handle these situations and offer them the best educational support. On the other hand, teachers feel uncomfortable working with them because they feel the pressure. They think that they cannot cover the curriculum with the regular students. They get some difficulties in delivering the materials to students with SEN. It is time consuming since the teachers need much time in the attempt to explain the materials to them. Parents of regular students and the students argue that there are so much time wasted with these students and even do not know anything in the end.

The education provides opportunity to enhance teachers' ability to teach students with SEN. It also creates awareness of the society to accept students with SEN. Therefore there is a need to introduce comprehensive special needs education in all teacher professional development-programs.

However, students with SEN need some extra attention in terms of curriculum adaptation, teaching methods, and availability of teaching and learning materials, assistive technology, assessment systems, as well as resources and funds for more assistance in adapting the school environment.

Based on the 2013 Curriculum, one of the foreign languages that students should be mastered is English. English has already been established as one of the subjects in a regular school in Indonesia from the junior high school level (Ministry of Education and Culture, Article No. 060/U/1993, cited in Suyanto[1] Since inclusive education is based on the regular curriculum, it means that students with SEN should follow it. Thus, students with special educational needs (SEN) also should learn English besides the other lessons. Teachers need to make an appropriate lesson plan for them. The lesson plan should be planned based on some criteria:[1]

a) the methodology used in teaching English should be made appropriate for students with SEN

b) the teaching material should be catchy and attractive, but also appropriate

c) the teacher should plan extra working time with the child

d) the curriculum should be adapted for students with SEN (namely, the pressure to cover the entire curriculum should be excluded and the focus should be on developing a few skills)

e) the teacher along with the inclusive education specialist should draw up an individual study plan for students with SEN The English lesson should be very interactive; emphasis must be placed on singing, playing, dancing, drawing.

Movement activities are useful for students with SEN as they hard to stay focus or sit down. The atmosphere also should be pleasant as students feel uncomfortable working under pressure, in stressful situations or in a boring activity. Abstract concept, rules, grammar rules should be avoided as they bring about tension. It is better to avoid correcting mistakes too often because it can demotivate students. A foreign language is learnt by direct exposure to it, therefore students with SEN should be familiarized with English by listening and reading activities. Students have different learning styles, even the healthy ones. For this reason, it is advisable for teachers to be familiar with the SEN child`s learning style. Kinesthetic students prefer movement while learning, visual students prefer reading and pictures,

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[1] Suyanto, Kasihani E. *Pidato Guru Besar Prof. Kasihani E. Suyanto*. Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Dasar. Retrieved November 21, 2018 from http://www.library.um.ac.id/stories/pidato_guru_besar.html

interpersonal learners like group work and classroom discussions while intrapersonal students prefer working individually. It is very important that teachers adjust their specialty.

In fact, the teachers found some problems during the teaching learning process. Therefore, this study addresses the challenges in teaching English to students with special needs. It examines the challenges faced by teachers who teach students with SEN and how they try to overcome these challenges.

Method

This study employed qualitative research. It focused on the teaching of English. It designed to describe the teachers' difficulties in teaching English for students with special education needs (SEN). Since people have different ways of seeing and perceiving the world (Creswell, 2003), it was essential to find different views from the teachers' regarding their challenges they found. It also defined on how the teachers overcome their problems during the teaching learning process.

The data gained from the observation. One of the limitations of observation is that participants might act differently knowing that they are being observed, thus this could lead to a lack of important information needed as respondents act differently with the observer around (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the data also were gathered from teachers' interview and some researches. The data of the interview was collected from different level of teachers. They were from elementary and high school level of education.

Findings and Discussions

Based on the interview, there were some challenges found by the teachers. It was said that teaching with SEN needed special treatments. They agreed to attend workshop, seminar or lectures on working with students with SEN. They believed that someone should teach them on how to teach English for special educational needs. Special methods and techniques should be presented during the workshops so that teacher could apply the best suitable methods with them.

The lack of teaching materials was also one the challenges they found. The teachers explained the materials from the books on the board. They said that it was associated with the budgetary of the schools. They were eager to have interesting and more advanced teaching materials such as video and audio for teaching. Thus, the teachers suggested that government support the schools by allocating sufficient budget for students with SEN.

Classroom and poor learning environments were the other challenges for the teachers. Some of the students did not want to sit on the chair as their friends did. Vygotsky (1978) views that only a truly differentiated learning environment can fully develop a child with developmental disability through higher psychological functions and overall personality. He further implies that students with SEN should attend the same school as their ordinary peers; he insists on creating a learning environment which would supply a special educational need learner with alternative means of communication and development.

The teachers argued that teaching English in inclusive class was not really effective. They thought that regular students are sometimes affected by the indiscipline of students with SEN. They had difficulty of understanding the concepts. Thus, the curriculum was not completely achieved since the lesson needed to be repeated several times. On the other hand, some students with SEN were demotivated. They lost their self-confidence. It was because they were discriminated. Thus, it caused to low self-esteem and loneliness (Bullock, 1992). These negative interactions may contribute to "less favorable perceptions of school, higher levels of school avoidance, and lower levels of school performance" (Kemple, 1991, p. 48). It can be concluded that the acceptance of the students with SEN in a society was poor. They deserve to be loved and cared in the community as the other students. However, the exclusion reduced their opportunities to grow, learn, and develop themselves in the society. They are disadvantaged from attending local school which is the main way of ensuring that all students are included in society (Bricker, 1995).

One of the other problems found was some of the teachers less motivated. One of the reasons was poor salary. Recently, there have been demonstrations about the teachers' salary. Most of them were non-civil servant teachers. The lack of motivation can lead to the lack of commitment among teachers. They wished the government act on this problem. On the other hand, they realized their jobs. They need to lead the students as the examples.

There are some ways on how to overcome the challenges. The teachers agreed that their problems can be solved not only by the teachers but also by integrating the parents and the government. Thus, they tried hard to overcome the challenges to make sure the students are attending school. Regarding the poor teaching materials, they made their own media as their teaching materials. Although it was very limited, they were happy since it made the teaching materials varied. However, sometimes it did not motivate students during the teaching learning process.

The teachers teach students to ask questions. They can work in peers. The key is to be considerate and respectful of when, where, and how those questions are asked. Everyone wants to be understood, and talking helps students see beyond the mystery of a disability. They also encourage students to get involved and show responsibility, by working with their peers. At our school, the teachers pair students with different needs with each other, and give them hands-on assignments to complete together.

The teachers are the examples for the students. Their actions and words tell the students how to communicate with, accept, and respond to other students. They need to encourage the students to respect each other and look for each person's unique strengths. They do not limit the inclusion to the classroom. All students can join dancing, singing and acting performances and others. They rehearse together and support each other.

The structure of the curriculum from the Ministry of Education as another challenge faced by the special needs teachers. The curriculum described the activities to be offered by the school to the students with special needs, was too rigid not letting them adjust to the environment they are working within. The findings moreover revealed that the curriculum was top-bottom structure, meaning that the special needs teachers got instructions regarding what to teach from the top authorities who prepared the curriculum. For this fact teachers were quit bond to teach what was presented in the curriculum, the teachers wanted the curriculum to be more flexible according to learner's interest. The teachers concluded that they cannot avoid the challenges; the best way to minimize it was to make sure that the students are not affected to a great extent.

The findings revealed that special needs education teachers used various approaches and methods teaching the students depending on the subject. For example the teachers used pictures, songs, role play, and team teaching in the classrooms. According to Vygotsky (1978), students learn through their interactions with more knowledgeable peers and adults. Even though, during the interviews, many insisted that they were using methods such as team teaching, role play and songs. However, from the study it was observed that many of these methods and approaches were not applied in the class. In other words what was said during the interviews was somehow different from what was observed during the classes.

There are some teaching strategies and approaches for students who have special needs in one or more of four areas (cognition and learning needs, behavior, emotional and social development needs, communication and interaction needs and sensory and/or physical disability needs). There are

three principal theoretical perspectives. These are behavioral, social constructivist, and ecological perspectives.

First is behavioral model of learning. It focuses on observable outcomes of learning as influenced predominately by the key principles of reinforcement theory in different learning contexts. This theory considers all behavior is learned according to rules which shape, change or sustain it. Cognitive-behavioral approaches take account of the capacity of individuals to understand and reflect on their behavior. The advantages of this model lie primarily in the positive, practical outlook, the clear signs of success, and the ways in which the setting of specific targets allows all those involved in teaching and learning to understand the goals and expectations for individuals and groups of students. However these approaches have been criticized for an overly narrow focus on measurable learning outcomes, when it is known that many aspects of knowledge and understanding are not directly observable and measurable in the required form. There is also an acknowledged danger of students' coming to rely on extrinsic rewards for achieving success.

Constructivist models of learning are those in which students are seen as active participants in the processes of seeking out knowledge, making sense of their experiences and gaining intrinsic satisfaction from learning and solving problems. Constructivist learning is seen to be a transformative experience which opens up opportunities for further learning as students gain greater depth of understanding and increasingly flexible ways of representing their knowledge and dealing with new information. Related to this approach is social constructivism or sociocultural theory. Here students' active role in learning is set in the context of their membership of social groups and communities (such as classrooms and schools) which jointly create knowledge through their engagement in purposeful and valued activities.

Ecological models of learning focus less on the individual learner and more on the interaction or 'goodness-of-fit' between the learner and his or her environment. Ecological models operate within a concept of 'nested systems' or 'levels' often referred to as bio, micro, meso, macro exo, chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In such a model the learner is situated in the centre of the system interacting at various levels each of which are part of a larger system, for example, the level of the classroom (micro level), the level of the school not involving the child directly (macro level) and society (macro level). Teaching strategies and approaches often focus at a micro level but acknowledge or incorporate activity at broader levels. The mesosystem refers to the relationships between two or more settings in which the child participates. Such an approach allows consideration of the role of such things as school or community culture in learning.

Varying the approach of learning not only help the special needs students in the class but also the standard of students as well. By demonstrating that there is more than one way to solve a problem or learn a concept, the teachers prepare students for life beyond school, where thinking outside the box can reap huge rewards. There are some methods in teaching them.

First, it uses visual aids. It is used to enhance their understanding. Moreover, the teachers can supply the regular feedback for their students. It can boost their motivation. The teachers also can engage students with open-ended questions. The teachers apply behavior model and provide some learning methods. In addition, by teaching using these methods and patience, teachers can provide every student in their classroom with the high-quality education they deserve. An effective plan will prepare them for a time when they will have to make their own way in the world beyond the safety of the school's walls.

Conclusion

The study investigated universal challenges in teaching students with SEN. The study establishes that students with SEN pose challenges to special needs education teachers. In this study, teachers said about the need to reduce the size of the class, modern teaching materials, the motivation of the teachers, and additional support services from the government. Most teachers who teach students with SEN did not receive any special needs education training from the government. They argue that they do not have qualified skills to teach the students with SEN. This study found out that the classrooms for students with SEN at large have poor learning environment to support the students with SEN. It could be concluded that placement of students with SEN in an inclusive classrooms with ordinary learners is not enough. It is important to make sure that students with SEN receive all the necessary support and services for accessing the curriculum facilities. It is also a need for the teachers to develop their skills in teaching English for students with SEN. They need to get special training in the teaching method and materials for special education sufficiently. All in all, teaching students with special needs is not only the teachers' job. It needs the cooperativeness of all the elements; teachers, schools, parents, and the government).

Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal that the government should give priorities to special case such as students with SEN .The study also reveals

that collaboration between special needs education teachers and parents for students with SEN is necessary for the wellbeing of their students. It also suggested conducting the research in a wider scope. In order to improve the poor learning environment for special needs educational for students with SEN, there are four aspects which are recommended. They are 1) providing specialized training facilities, 2) educating special needs education teacher, 3) developing human and material resources, and 4) future research in this area should involve systematic, long-term development work across a range of sites and settings, which also allows for the examination of the impact of the innovations upon achievement.

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