



The Practice of Teaching English to Children with Hearing Impairment in A School for Students with Special Needs in Central Lombok: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

This study explores the practice of teaching English to children with hearing impairment in specialized schools in Central Lombok. Through observations, interviews, and document analysis at SLBN 1 Loteng and SLBN 2 Loteng, key findings regarding the challenges and opportunities for teachers were identified. The study highlights the need for specialized training, resource availability, and parental support to enhance the educational experience for students with hearing impairments.

Keywords: *Hearing Impairment; Challenges; Opportunities*

Introduction

Teaching English to children with hearing impairments is a vital and often overlooked aspect of education in Indonesia. Hearing impairment affects a significant number of children and can create substantial barriers to effective communication and language learning. According to data from Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (2020), approximately 2.4% of children aged 5 to 18 years' experience some form of hearing impairment. This statistic represents thousands of children who face unique challenges in their educational journeys, particularly in acquiring proficiency in foreign languages like English.

In response to the educational needs of children with disabilities, Indonesia has established specialized schools known as Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB). These institutions strive to provide appropriate educational programs and resources for students with hearing impairments and other disabilities. As mandated by legislation such as the Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional No. 20/2003 and the Undang-Undang No. 8/2016 tentang Penyandang Disabilitas, SLBs aim to dismantle barriers that have historically excluded students with disabilities from quality education (Yusuf & Nurmala, 2017). These laws advocate for the integration of students with disabilities into both mainstream and specialized schools, reflecting a commitment to fostering an inclusive educational environment that respects and nurtures the individual needs of all students.

Despite the positive legal framework supporting special education, the actual implementation within Indonesia remains inconsistent, especially in rural and underserved areas. Schools often lack the necessary resources, trained personnel, and institutional support to effectively cater to students with

hearing impairments. Rohmah (2020) highlights that in many cases, teachers feel unprepared to meet the diverse needs of their students, leading to suboptimal educational outcomes. This gap in support is particularly pronounced in regions such as Central Lombok, where educational infrastructure may be underdeveloped and access to specialized training for teachers is limited.

A key aspect of effective teaching for students with hearing impairments is the necessity of employing alternative communication methods and specialized teaching strategies. Hearing impairments can vary widely, from mild hearing loss to profound deafness, significantly affecting a child's ability to process spoken language (Marschark & Hauser, 2012). Consequently, traditional teaching methods that prioritize auditory skills can create substantial barriers to learning. Effective English instruction for hearing-impaired students must therefore incorporate non-verbal communication methods, such as sign language, visual aids, and adapted learning materials, which emphasize reading and writing over speaking and listening (Baharuddin, 2022).

Unfortunately, many English teachers in Indonesia's specialized schools lack the necessary training and resources to implement these effective strategies. A study conducted by Yusuf and Nurmala (2017) revealed that more than 60% of teachers reported feeling inadequately trained to teach English to students with hearing impairments. This gap in teacher preparation contributes to the educational challenges faced by these students, exacerbating their marginalization within the educational system. Many students with hearing impairment experience not only academic struggles but also social exclusion, which can adversely affect their self-esteem and future opportunities (Lestari, Erlina, & Saputra, 2022).

In light of these challenges, the Indonesian Ministry of Education introduced the Kurikulum Merdeka in 2020 as part of the broader Merdeka Belajar initiative. This curriculum aims to create a more flexible and student-centered learning environment, allowing teachers greater autonomy in adapting lesson content and instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). For students with hearing impairments, this curriculum represents an opportunity to receive a more inclusive and tailored educational experience that aligns with their unique learning needs. However, the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka requires that teachers be well-versed in special teaching practices and have access to the necessary resources and support systems.

Despite the potential benefits of the Kurikulum Merdeka, the implementation in rural areas remains uneven. Many teachers struggle to apply its principles effectively due to inadequate infrastructure and a lack of professional development opportunities (Baharuddin, 2021). Additionally, the societal context surrounding disabilities plays a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of hearing-impaired students. Prevailing attitudes toward disability often perpetuate stigma and discrimination, influencing how students with hearing impairments are perceived and treated by their peers, teachers, and communities (Rohmah, 2020). Such societal biases can lead to social isolation and lower expectations for academic success, which further complicates the educational landscape.

Recognizing these challenges and opportunities, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on special education in Indonesia by focusing specifically on the experiences of English teachers in specialized schools for students with hearing impairment. The effective listening in language acquisition enhances starts by understanding spoken language, including different accents, colloquialisms, and contexts. It helps learners grasp the meaning of conversations, instructions, and presentations. However, for special schools, teachers can only teach reading and writing skills to the students with hearing impairment. Therefore, this study aims to explore the practice of teaching English to children with hearing impairment with a particular emphasis on the problems regarding the teachers' practice in teaching, including the method or strategy, experience, motivation, reaction and expectation. By investigating the teaching practice, method and strategy used in schools for special needs students, this

study aims to contribute to the development of effective teaching strategies to children with hearing impairment in English language learning and for teachers' further information to meet the best result for teaching English to students with hearing impairment. By understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing policies and practices that bridge the gap between the ideals of specialized education and the realities of its implementation in resource-constrained settings (Yusuf & Nurmala, 2017).

As we move forward, the following sections will outline the research questions, objectives, and methodology used in this study, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities involved in teaching English to students with hearing impairment in special schools in Lombok.

Method

The research design chosen for this study is a qualitative case study. A case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the teaching practices and experiences within a specific context. The case study addressed problems regarding the teachers' practice in teaching, including experience, motivation, reaction and expectation. By selecting two special Schools for Students with hearing impairment located in Central Lombok. The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' challenges and opportunities of English teachers in teaching English to students with hearing impairment. The method represents the data by collecting and analyzing the data and drawing a conclusion explored by description. As shown in the table below, there are instruments of collecting data.

The subjects of this study were two English teachers from two special schools in Central Lombok who taught English to students with hearing impairment in Senior High school. The Purposive sampling will be used to select participants of students who have a total hearing impairments and teachers who experienced of the English teaching for more than 10 years at special school and had a bachelor's degree in English education. The number of participants will be two English teachers in Central Lombok and eight students at Senior High School in those two special schools with a total hearing impairment.

Table 1: The name of the participants school in Central Lombok.

No	Name of Special School	Address
1	SLBN 1 Lombok Tengah	Jl.Basuki Rahmat Praya
2	SLBN 2 Lombok Tengah	Jl.Selong belanak, Penujak Praya Barat

A qualitative case study design was employed to investigate the challenges and opportunities faced by English teachers in two special schools in Central Lombok. Data collection methods included classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and document analysis. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework was applied to analyze the observational data and interpret key findings.

Result and Discussion

Multiple sources of data were gathered from multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents. The writer reviews all the data, makes sense of it, and organizes it and interpreting it all of which are sources of the two special school issues under study from two English teachers as respondents.

Result

The classroom observation data collected from specialized educational settings in Central Lombok were analyzed using Content Analysis and the UDL Framework. The UDL framework's three

principles—Multiple Means of Engagement, Multiple Means of Representation, and Multiple Means of Expression—serve as the basis for interpreting the effectiveness of the observed practices (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). This section provides a detailed interpretation of the observation results, categorized by each principle, and offers insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current teaching practices.

Observation Results Using UDL Framework

Table 1: Summary of Observation Data on Classroom Dynamics and Teaching Strategies Using UDL Framework

Category	UDL Principle Addressed	Key Aspects	Teacher 1 Score	Teacher 2 Score	Average Score	Themes Identified
Classroom Dynamics	Multiple Means of Engagement	Teacher-student interactions, Student engagement, Classroom atmosphere	3.5	3.0	3.25	Supportive environment, Moderate engagement
Teaching Strategies	Multiple Means of Representation	Use of visual aids, Gestures, Specialized teaching techniques	3.67	3.33	3.5	Effective non-verbal communication, Limited visual aids
Communication	Multiple Means of Communication and Expression	Communication methods, Clarity of communication, Assistive technology	3.0	3.0	3.0	Diverse communication, Minimal technology use
Student Participation	Multiple Means of Engagement and Participation	Student involvement, Contributions to discussions, Peer interactions	3.5	3.0	3.25	Willing to participate, Need for structured activities

This table outlines the scores for each category, with 1 indicating the need for significant improvement and 5 representing highly effective practices. The results provide a basis for identifying key patterns and challenges in teaching practices (Meyer et al., 2014).

1) Analysis of Classroom Dynamics

The observation results for classroom dynamics revealed an average score of **3.25**, suggesting a generally supportive atmosphere for children with hearing impairments. Teacher-student interactions were positive, promoting a welcoming environment. However, student engagement was rated lower, at 3.0, reflecting that while the atmosphere was inclusive, there were limitations in maintaining consistent student involvement. This aligns with the UDL principle of Multiple Means of Engagement, which highlights the importance of providing varied ways to capture and sustain student interest (Meyer et al., 2014).

- **Theme: Engagement Barriers** The moderate engagement score indicates that the current teaching methods may not fully engage all learners. Teachers need to incorporate more interactive and differentiated strategies, such as peer-assisted activities and visual aids, to address diverse engagement needs (Keiny, 1994).

2) Analysis of Teaching Strategies

The average score for teaching strategies was 3.5, highlighting effective use of non-verbal communication techniques such as gestures and body language. However, the use of visual aids was limited, scoring 3.67 for Teacher 1 and 3.33 for Teacher 2. This suggests a gap in utilizing varied visual resources, which are essential for making complex information more accessible.

- **Theme: Limited Visual Representation** Effective teaching should involve multiple means of representing information, such as visual and multimedia elements (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008). The lower score for visual aids indicates a need for more diverse visual materials like diagrams, videos, and graphic organizers to support comprehension and engagement for children with hearing impairments (Meyer et al., 2014).

3) Analysis of Communication Methods

Communication methods scored 3.0, indicating that while a variety of communication techniques (spoken language, sign language, and basic visual prompts) were used, the integration of assistive technologies was limited. Assistive technologies, such as FM Systems (scored 2.0), were rarely used, creating a significant barrier to effective communication.

- **Theme: Technological Barriers** The lack of assistive technology reflects a need for better integration of tools such as FM systems and speech-to-text software (Nugent & Richlin, 2004). These tools are critical for bridging communication gaps, especially in inclusive settings (Meyer et al., 2014).

4) Analysis of Student Participation

Student participation scored 3.25, indicating that while children with hearing impairments were generally willing to contribute when prompted, their overall involvement in group activities and independent tasks was limited. Contributions to discussions were rated higher at **3.5** for Teacher 1 and **3.0** for Teacher 2, suggesting that when structured opportunities were provided, students engaged actively. However, overall involvement was hampered by a lack of structured activities that promote active participation.

- **Theme: Social Inclusion Challenges** The discrepancy between high contributions to discussions and moderate participation in group activities suggests that while children with hearing impairments have the capability to engage, barriers to full social inclusion remain (Linusi & Amin, 2022).

5) General Interpretation of Data Using the UDL Framework

The overall results indicate that while teachers in Central Lombok's specialized schools are making efforts to implement some inclusive practices, there are critical gaps in engagement, representation, and communication methods. Applying the UDL framework systematically would address these gaps by promoting multiple means of engagement (interactive activities), representation (visual aids and multimedia), and expression (assistive technologies) (Meyer et al., 2014). Expanding the use of visual supports, enhancing engagement strategies, and integrating communication technologies would ensure a more inclusive learning environment for children with hearing impairments.

Interview Results: Teachers' Perception of Teaching English to students with hearing impairment

This study aimed to explore teachers' perception or expectation of teaching English to students with hearing impairment in special schools in SLBN 1 and SLBN 2. Through qualitative interviews and observation, three predominant themes emerged: lack of special training support, lack of parental support, shortage of school facilities. These findings highlight the challenge and opportunities available in the practice of teaching English for students with hearing impairment. From the data analysis, the researcher classified the findings into three major categories: (1) Teachers' lack of training, (2) Shortage of School Facilities, (3) Lack of Parental Support. The following is an explanation of these three findings.

1. Lack of Training for Teaching Students with Hearing Impairment

The teachers said that the training that they acquired when the new curriculum Merdeka was applied was less than the previous curriculum. The practice of the teaching method they currently have does not suit the learning expectation. The new curriculum required them to prepare the syllabus by themselves and they did not comprehend well enough how to make it since the previous curriculum already prepared the study plans and for the book to teach English to the students. There is a need for more specific training for teaching students with hearing impairment, as most teacher education programs focus on general teaching methods or graduated from an unrelated field to teach students with disabilities especially for students with hearing impairment. The results above already translated into English.

Mr. R stated, "*We don't know much about how to teach English to students with hearing impairment because we are lack of training, we only had 2 trainings in these past two years.*"

Because of this, he found it difficult to make good lesson plans. the two teachers said that they would like to learn more on how to teach English to students with hearing impairment and not only taking some random materials from the internet. In this case, Mr. Y said, "*I think it's really important to get more special training to improve our ways of teaching students with hearing impairment.*"

He stated that the teachers should have the opportunity for having special trainings, seminars or courses that provide appropriate methods and strategies in teaching students with hearing impairment.

Mr. R agreed by saying: "*One of the biggest problems is that we teachers design the study plans by ourself and take whatever we want to teach to the students from the internet. when I started working here, I was never prepared to be a teacher for special students.*"

Mr. Y said: "*Our strategy is only in the beginning of the class, we pray and then we repeat the previous material.*"

Overall, these teachers talked about how hard it was to keep students with hearing impairment to stay focus and control them. The above problem is worsened by a lack of training in how to teach students with hearing impairment in ways that are appropriate for their abilities and needs. The participants said that their trainings before the curriculum changed did not prepare them well enough to teach English to students with hearing impairment. Mr. R said that most of his training had been in general teaching methods or teaching disabilities students, so he did not have much training on how to teach students with hearing impairment specifically. Miss Y agreed and said that his training did not specifically teach him how to teach English to students with hearing impairment. Mr. Y talked about the need for professional development and how important it was to have trainings on how to teach English to students with hearing impairment.

2. Shortage of School Facilities for Teaching Students with Hearing Impairment

All the teachers interviewed reported that their schools are lack of sufficient technological resources, such as computers, projectors, and visual aids, which are essential for teaching students with hearing impairment.

"The facilities are limited,"

Miss Y said.

“Computers and projectors are technology tools that we really need, we only have 1 projector in school and we don't have computers so we only can make random lesson to teach to our students.”

He explained that the teaching tools were old and inappropriate for students with hearing impairment.

"It's hard to keep the kids interested with such few resources, we only make flash card for teaching by ourself that we took from internet and print it."

These teachers also stated out the scarcity of appropriate teaching materials such as visual book, colorful graphics to present information visually and flashcards. Those are really important for teachers in order to capture students' attention and enhance understanding.

3. Lack of Parental Support for Students with Hearing Impairment

Participants reported that many parents were not actively involved in their children's educational support. This lack of support can reduce students' motivation, as the reinforcement of psychological support at home is crucial for students with hearing impairment.

Mr. R said,

“Many parents don't seem to understand the importance of learning English for children even when they have hearing impairment.”

In the same way, Mr. Y added,

“Parents often ashamed to send their children to school because of their disabilities of hearing impairment.” These comments indicate that some parents do not fully understand the importance of learning English for children even when they have disabilities, leading to a lack of motivation for their children.

4. Teachers' Challenge of Teaching Students with Hearing Impairment

Related to this study, the opportunity refers' to teachers' perception or expectation in teaching English with hearing impairment. From the data gathered, these few things are mentioned:

A. The Students' Characteristics.

The challenge is related to the students' characteristics, where the teachers should learn how to make English as an interesting subject. Mr. R explained that students with hearing impairment often get distracted. He considered that without proper training in special teaching techniques, it would be difficult to find ways to maintain their interest throughout the lesson. Mr. Y added another factor,

“The classrooms are often not conducive. There were only 4 students with hearing impairment in the classroom, and they got distracted easily because of the other friends with different disabilities. This makes the implementation of interactive activities difficult. And it's only 25-30 minutes session for the class and they often got distracted for half of the class session.”

Mr. Y concluded,

“I think that training from Diknas is crucial to improve our teaching methods .”

B. English Curriculum for Students with hearing impairment.

Teachers' difficulty in adapting to the English curriculum for students with hearing impairment. Mr. Y stated that he felt stressed by an unrestrained curriculum that did not prepare the lesson plan or

book for the teachers. He said, *“It is not enough to prepare the lesson plan by ourself without having guideline and book for students.”*

But Mr. R added: *“I find it really challenging to make the media for the students such as visual aids for the students but it is not proper one to bring to the class and we cannot use several method of teaching because the facilities are not enough.”*

For the same reason, Mr. R and Y expressed different difficulties in implementing the teaching practice for students with hearing impairment using several medias.

Miss Y added,

“I struggle with understanding and implementing the new curriculum effectively because I have little training and guideline.”

Mr.R said similary: *“The previous curriculum had prepared anything for us such us lesson plan and books. Therefore, we are not used to apply the new curriculum”*

Mr. Y and Mr. R have the same difficulties teaching students with hearing impairment because of the displacement of the new curriculum.

C. Students' low motivation

The challenges faced by Mr. Y and Mr. N, who stated that students' low motivation was the main factor that influenced the implementation of teaching English for students with hearing impairment. Mr. Y said.

“It's hard to build students motivation if we are unable to make our lesson interesting and motivate them that English is very important for their future.”

This statement is consistent with Mr. R,

“I have difficulties to make lessons consistently interesting, sometimes the flash cards that I made are boring for them.”

The challenges encountered by Mr. R and Mr. Y underscore the intricacies of teaching English to students with hearing impairments. These issues are multifaceted, involving classroom management, student engagement, language abilities, resource availability, parental involvement, and curriculum settings. Tackling these challenges necessitates focused professional development, improved resources, and enhanced support systems both inside and outside the classroom. The teachers also hope that the government will provide a special guideline and more trainings for all the teachers in rural are especially Central Lombok.

Discussion

This section provides a discussion of the findings from both classroom observations and interviews in SLBN 1 Loteng and SLBN 2 Loteng, specialized schools in Central Lombok. The findings are analyzed in light of existing research and educational theories to draw meaningful interpretations of teaching English to children with hearing impairments in these settings. This discussion focuses on three main themes: Teacher Preparedness and Training, Resource Availability and Utilization, and Student Engagement and Participation. Each theme is supported by references from relevant studies and frameworks to contextualize the findings within broader educational discourse.

Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development

A lack of specialized training was a recurring theme identified in interviews with teachers at both SLBN 1 Loteng and SLBN 2 Loteng. Teachers such as Mr. R and Mrs. S consistently highlighted the absence of targeted professional development opportunities that would equip them to teach English effectively to children with hearing impairments. They expressed a need for training in inclusive pedagogies, the use of assistive technologies, and strategies to differentiate instruction based on individual learning needs.

This aligns with the findings of Smith and Tyler (2010), who emphasize that inadequate training is a significant barrier to implementing inclusive educational practices. When teachers lack the necessary skills and knowledge, they are more likely to rely on traditional methods that may not be effective for children with disabilities. In the context of SLB 1 Loteng and SLB 2 Loteng, this training gap is evident in the observational data, where teachers predominantly used simple visual aids and repeated verbal instructions, scoring an average of 3.67 for Teaching Strategies. This score indicates moderate effectiveness but suggests that more advanced methods could be employed if teachers were adequately trained.

Furthermore, the findings reflect a broader issue in specialized education in Indonesia, where training programs tend to be generic and do not cater specifically to the needs of teachers working with students with hearing impairments. This is consistent with the research by Westwood (2018), which argues that specialized training is crucial for teachers in inclusive settings to adopt evidence-based practices. Teachers in SLB 1 and SLB 2 reported feeling overwhelmed by the lack of support and guidance, which in turn affected their confidence and efficacy in the classroom.

Resource Availability and Utilization

The observations in both schools showed that resource constraints are a significant challenge. Classrooms at SLBN 1 Loteng and SLBN 2 Loteng were sparsely equipped, with limited use of digital tools or assistive technologies. Teachers such as Mrs. S stated that they often had to create their own teaching materials, which were time-consuming and not always effective. The shortage of resources was most apparent in the Communication Methods category, which scored an average of 3.0 in the observational data, indicating that the current tools and resources are insufficient to meet the communication needs of children with hearing impairments.

The lack of appropriate resources aligns with the findings of Nugent and Richlin (2004), who emphasize that resource availability is a critical factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Without the necessary visual aids, assistive technologies, and adaptive materials, teachers are unable to provide the multiple means of representation recommended by the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). This gap is particularly problematic in settings like SLB 1 and SLB 2, where students rely heavily on visual and tactile inputs to compensate for their auditory limitations.

Moreover, the absence of assistive technologies such as FM systems and speech-to-text software was frequently cited in interviews as a barrier to effective communication. Mr. R shared:

“We know these tools exist, but we don’t have access to them, and even if we did, we don’t know how to use them properly.”

This statement underscores the dual challenge of limited resource availability and the lack of training on how to integrate these technologies into everyday teaching. Research by Burgstahler and Cory (2008) supports this finding, indicating that even when resources are made available, they must be accompanied by adequate training and support to ensure effective utilization.

Student Engagement and Participation

The findings on student engagement and participation in both SLB 1 Loteng and SLB 2 Loteng reveal moderate levels of involvement, with an average score of 3.5. Teachers at both schools noted that while students are generally willing to participate, there is a noticeable decline in engagement during complex tasks or when the lesson content is presented in a predominantly verbal format. This issue was observed in both schools, where the lack of interactive and diverse instructional activities limited students' ability to fully engage with the content.

According to Lopez-Pastor and Sicilia-Camacho (2015), effective student engagement in specialized settings requires structured activities that promote active learning and social interaction. The observations in SLB 1 Loteng and SLB 2 Loteng showed that group activities and peer collaboration were infrequently utilized, which may have contributed to the low levels of engagement observed. Teachers often resorted to direct instruction methods, resulting in passive learning environments where students were less motivated to contribute actively.

In the interviews, Mrs. S mentioned that structured peer activities are rarely implemented due to the difficulty of managing group dynamics in a class with diverse needs. This finding aligns with research by Smith et al. (2016), which suggests that teachers in specialized settings often struggle to implement interactive and collaborative learning strategies without adequate support and resources.

Additionally, the lack of structured social activities and opportunities for peer interaction was reflected in the Student Participation category, which scored 3.5 on average in both schools. This suggests that while students are capable of engaging actively when given the opportunity, the current classroom practices do not consistently provide such opportunities. Implementing more structured social activities and incorporating visual and multimedia elements could potentially enhance student participation and motivation, as suggested by Keiny (1994) in his constructivist approach to inclusive education.

Conclusion

Through the observation, interviews, and document study, the understanding, challenges, and opportunities related to the practice of teaching English to students with hearing impairment at SLBN 1 Loteng and SLBN 2 Loteng were examined in this study. The results set the viewpoints and experiences of English teachers who work in these current educational curriculum, as follows:

1. Teachers' perception of teaching English to students with hearing impairment: the lack of special training support for new curriculum Merdeka, lack of parental support to motivate the students, shortage of school facilities for the school, which highlights the need for specialized training programs and professional development to enhance the learning process.
2. the challenges for English teachers available in teaching students with hearing impairment: The challenges identified through observation, interviews, and document analysis included the diverse students' characteristic, English Curriculum for students with hearing impairment, and students' low motivation.
3. Opportunities for teachers of teaching English to students with hearing impairment: The study found multiple opportunities for English teachers in teaching English for students with hearing impairment. These include motivation for professional development, collaborative learning environments, teachers' openness to feedbacks on teaching, and graduate students with a major in education.

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