

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS WITH MILD MENTAL RETARDATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

In Indonesia, the spread of positive cases of Covid-19 has not shown a decreasing graph. Due to the constraints on interaction, the Indonesian Ministry of Education issued a policy, which included closing schools and replacing the Teaching and Learning Activities process with an online system. Online learning is not limited to ordinary students but is also carried out on children with special needs or students with mild mental retardation, which in this case indicates that a person experiences a special disorder that has different characteristics so that special attention and services are needed. In an inclusive school, services for children with special needs are not differentiated from normal students in their class, only learning material is differentiated. The objective of this study is to describe how teaching-learning activities for children with minor mental retardation are implemented. during the covid-19 pandemic and to identify teachers' perception on teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic of SMPN 6 Tuban. This study used qualitative research as its method. The English teachers from VIII C and IX B, as well as a special partner teacher from SMPN 6 Tuban, were the subjects of this study. The instruments of this research were observation, interview, and documentation.

The result of this research can be described that this is a new challenge for them because learning activity is done online. During the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers must still

be able to provide curriculum and support pupils throughout the learning process. They use the media, method and also apply special principles for students with mild mental retardation. For special companion teachers, the limited face-to-face opportunity twice a week is an opportunity that must be utilized as well as possible because during online learning for students with mild mental retardation is too difficult to understand the material due to the absence of assistance and lack of attention from their parents. The teacher hopes that the students find happiness in learning through online learning classes they enjoy and can understand the material, especially for students with mild mental retardation. Based on the result of this research, the researcher found that in learning English, the activities that are more often used are the drilling method and copying simple words or vocabulary, so the materials and teaching methods used with students with mild mental retardation are different. The outcomes of teachers' perceptions of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the Covid-19 pandemic vary greatly, the section on teachers' perceptions reveals that teachers believe that learning English for students with mild mental retardation is difficult to do online because students with mild mental retardation face technological difficulties and obstacles. Because learning is done online, teachers find it more difficult to control the condition and development of students with mild mental retardation.

Keywords: mental retardation students, perception

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the spread of positive cases of Covid-19 has not shown a decreasing graph. Based on January data from the Covid-19 handling task force 26, 2021, the total number of positive cases reached 1,012,350 with confirmed death cases totaling 28,468. Various policies have been issued by the Indonesian government to reduce the level of spread of the coronavirus, one of the policies is to work from home in various fields of work. This strategy is a community-wide initiative to do all tasks from home. The Covid-19 epidemic has had an impact on education in Indonesia as well.

In response to the lack of engagement, the Indonesian Ministry of Education issued a policy, which included closing schools and changing the Teaching-Learning Activities method with an online system. Online learning is not limited to ordinary students but is also carried out on children with special needs or students with mild mental retardation, which in this case indicates that a person experiences a special disorder that has different characteristics so that special attention and services are needed. No exception to special education which also implements online learning. Education for disabilities can be obtained from special schools (SLB), or regular schools that are inclusive based.

Children with autism or mental retardation come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of intellectual capacity, physical ability, family, habit, and emotion, all of which have an impact on the learning process and cause a variety of issues. Mental

retardation, according to Davison & Neale (1990), "is a severe global sub-average in intellectual performance that exists along with adaptive behavioral deficiencies and expressed during the developmental period." It is critical to relate "mental age" to "chronological age" as the years' pass; this relationship yields a measure known as the intellectual quotient as a result (IQ). In an inclusive school, services for children with special needs are not differentiated from normal students in their class, only learning material is differentiated. Because of these differences in abilities and services in the same class, there will be doubts about the success in developing the potential or abilities of children with special needs if they study together with normal children in general, in regular classes at inclusive schools. Each school has its own policy to implement inclusive schools. SMPN 6 Tuban is one of the schools that implements inclusive education and has been recognized by the department of education. And currently, SMPN 6 Tuban has one special companion teacher (GPK) and has five students with special needs with the classification of students with mild mental retardation.

Since the pandemic, the implementation of teaching-learning activities is no longer done face-to-face but has been done online classes application during this covid-19 pandemic. It is not too easy to shift our traditional habits to online. All this time, English teachers of SMPN 6 Tuban have used audiovisuals, interesting media, or online platforms for learning English for students with mild mental retardation. Technical difficulties, student conditioning, student engagement, students' response, and online teaching experience are four subthemes that teachers face in an online environment while teaching from home. Teachers were confronted with a number of difficulties as a result of the advent of technical issues.

The teaching and learning in the physical distancing and social distancing era are only able to be facilitated through the integration of technology. The same opinion is suggested by Al-Marroof & Al-Emran (2018). Distance, online, or blended teaching and learning, he claims, has several advantages over traditional classroom instruction. Accessibility, scheduling flexibility, and adaptation to working are the most important advantages. Therefore, it is important to know how the implementation of teaching-learning and to identify teachers' voices on teaching English to mental retardation students during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it is important to know the implementation of the teaching-learning process and teachers' perception about teaching-learning activities with students with mild mental retardation.

METHOD

This research used qualitative research, especially case study. A case study allows a researcher to collect and analyze data in a specific situation or event. People, students, or school staff members who are members of a school community can be chosen as

cases (Creswell, 2011). The research used this design which was to know and describe the implementation of teaching and learning English for students with mild mental retardation and to identify teachers' perception of teaching English to mental retardation students during the covid-19 pandemic. According to Arikunto (2010: 174), the sample is a portion or representative of the population that has to be investigated. The sample of this research was three teachers, are English teachers of VIII C, IX B, and a special companion teacher of SMPN 6 Tuban.

According to Sugiyono (2015), research is about measuring, hence good measuring equipment is required. The research instrument used by the researcher was an interview. The technique for gathering data by the researcher is defined as data collection. The researcher employed observation, interview, and documentation as data collection techniques in this study. According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis activities are carried out interactively and continue until the data is saturated. Based on the description above, it can be concluded that data analysis is the process of systematically compiling data obtained from observations, interviews, documentation, and other field notes. The compilation of data is based on certain categories so that it can be easily understood by oneself and others. The data analysis approach of Miles and Huberman was employed in this qualitative study, and it consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section may be separated into results/findings and discussion, In the finding of the implementation of teaching and learning activities to students with mild mental retardation during covid-19, the researcher found that basically, students with mild mental retardation are students who are still able to practice and participate in activities in the academic field. Teaching and learning activities applied to students with mild mental retardation are very diverse, such as identifying, recognizing, imitating, and practicing. Based on the results of observation, the teacher applies various learning models and activities for students with mild mental retardation, a special companion teacher serves as a mentor and companion during the learning process. During the teaching and learning process, a special companion teacher always provides subtle motivation to students with mild mental retardation regarding students to be more enthusiastic in participating in the teaching and learning. Often the teachers practice reading by dictating little by little, giving examples of writing to be copied back according to the instructions, and listening to videos from the teacher, sometimes the teacher also gives some simple quizzes for students with mild mental retardation. The learning activities implemented by the teacher were felt to be very helpful for mild mentally retarded students in participating in English teaching and learning.

In addition, students with mild mental retardation also carry out offline learning activities with special companion teachers. English learning activities carried out offline together with special companion teachers during the pandemic include: watching videos, imitating and reciting simple vocabulary, copy some words or sentences in the book, match vocabulary with pictures. In learning English, the activities that are more often used are the drilling method and copying simple words or vocabulary.

Based on the results of interviews from several English teachers and a special companion teacher for students with mild mental retardation at SMPN 6 Tuban, the three teachers interviewed were initial Mrs. F, Mrs. D, and Mrs. A. From the results of interviews, it can be described that this is a new challenge for them because learning activity is done online. Teachers must also maximize teaching and learning activities in English to students with mild mental retardation without forcing the results. Maximum effort, trying to provide knowledge of English easily so that they can understand the material easily.

Besides founding how was the implementation of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation, the researcher is also found how the teachers' perception from the result of observation and interviews about the responses of students with mild mental retardation, the difficulties, some problems, and experiences that the teacher found in teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during covid-19 pandemic at SMPN 6 Tuban show that the students tend to be passive during the learning process and delivery of material. Students with mild mental retardation are more interested and active when the teacher gives quizzes and asks students to answer because it is interesting and does not make students easily bored, especially when the learning process is done online. In addition, assistance from parents is also very much needed in the current situation, but in practice, parents are felt to be less attention and play a role in assisting students, this causes students with mild mental retardation to become less disciplined in the learning process, they often do not do the tasks that have been assigned that given by the teachers.

Furthermore, there are also obstacles experienced by teachers, namely, they have not found applications or other interesting media that can be used to help students understand the material presented in addition to video and picture media. Teachers also find it more difficult to control the condition and development of students with mild mental retardation because learning is done online. The finding of this research is also Teachers were concerned about students' achievement, according to Hannele Marjata Niemi & Paivi Kousa (2020) in their study "A Case Study of Students' and Teachers' Perception in a Finnish High School During the Covid Pandemic." Teachers failed to identify students' severe workloads and motivation issues as students described them.

For special companion teachers, the limited face-to-face opportunity twice a week is an opportunity that must be utilized as well as possible because during online learning for students with mild mental retardation is too difficult to understand the material due to the absence of assistance and lack of attention from their parents. The teacher hopes that the students find happiness in learning through online learning classes they enjoy and can understand the material, especially for students with mild mental retardation.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded as follows: The implementation of teaching-learning English for students with mild mental retardation is not much different from regular students learning. What distinguishes it is the collaboration system in one class between subject teachers and a special companion teacher. Often the teachers practice reading by dictating little by little, giving examples of writing to be copied back according to the instructions, and listening to videos from the teacher, sometimes the teacher also gives some simple quizzes for students with mild mental retardation. In learning English, the activities that are more often used are the drilling method and copying simple words or vocabulary.

The outcomes of teachers' perceptions of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the Covid-19 pandemic vary greatly, the section on teachers' perceptions reveals that teachers believe that learning English for students with mild mental retardation is difficult to do online because students with mild mental retardation face technological difficulties and obstacles. Because learning is done online, teachers find it more difficult to control the condition and development of students with mild mental retardation.

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