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Optimizing The EFL Learning Through Individualized Education Programs for Intellectually Disability Students

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Abstract

Education in a broad sense should ideally provide learning facilities for students, both regular students and students with special needs. However in practice, this idea cannot fully occur because the education system is not yet comprehensive and several educational programs and policies have not been implemented in educational units fully and evenly throughout the region. This research aims to describe the English language learning process using Individual Education Program (IEP) in inclusion classes at elementary school level. This research used a qualitative approach with two students with special needs with intellectual disabilities (ID) as the subjects of this research. Three types of data collection techniques used were structured observation, structured interviews and document study. The result of this research indicated that even though the two research subjects have intellectual disability, they can still participate in learning with certain terms and conditions. Every class teacher and special assistant teacher must pay attention to students' learning needs that supports their learning development which must be in accordance with curriculum objectives. Therefore, teachers must be able to develop the Individualized Education Program (IEP) according to the special needs of students and carry out teaching according to plans that have been made previously.

Keywords: Individualized Education Program, Intellectual Disability, students with special needs

Introduction

Education is one of the basic needs for every individual. A country, including Indonesia, must guarantee that its citizen has the same right to achieve proper education since early childhood. It is because education is a basic human right. It is stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article 31 verse 1, "Every citizen shall be entitled to acquire education." Referring to this law, the government must provide qualified education for all citizens, including for the healthy and disabled population. Education implies guidance given to children. It allows children to acquire knowledge and abilities that will aid them to be successful members of society and grow into good and accomplished citizens later. Education is activity and human effort to improve his personality to foster the potential of personal including thought, initiative, creativity and kindness conscience) and physical including the five senses and skills (Yuliani & Hartanto, 2016). In society, education helps people to be more active in their struggle for a better quality of life. As a result, the well-educated people will not only ensure their lives independence but also brighter future carrier.

In order to actualize the goals of education, the government must ensure that both healthy and disabled children have the equal opportunities to access all the academic services and facilities not only in formal but also non-formal education. In this term, healthy children refer to the normal children who do not have any difficulties in learning since they were born as normal humans being without any disabilities. In contrast, disabled children are those who have a disability in terms of physical, intellectual, behavioral, and/or sensory impaired (Law Number 8 of People with Disabilities, 2016). The disabilities cause the children face learning problems or difficulties compared to most other children in their ages. In this term, disabled children refer to children with special needs. Children with special needs have a disability and learning problems that include dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), slow learner, autism, Down syndrome, and mild retardation (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Their learning characteristics are different in physical, intellectual, social, and personal dimension. They may be slower in their maturity development and intellectual functions. Further, their behavior is not in line compared to the normal children in their ages. However, they are still able to interact with their family members, educators, classmates, friends, and the broader society around them.

The intellectual disability children are those who have impaired thought functions because their intelligence is below the average level, such as slow learner,

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mental retardation, and Down syndrome. The Regulation of Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education and the Government Regulation Number 17 of 2010 concerning the Implementation and Management of Education refers a person with the intellectual disabilities as mental retardation. Mental retardation is a child experiencing difficulties or delays in mental development accompanied by an inability to learn and adapt to such an extent that it requires adjustment educational services. Based on the severity of the injury in the adaptive function, the intellectual disability person has different ranges including mild, moderate, severe and deep (Sadeqi, 2021). The characteristics of mentally retarded children are as follows: (1) having unbalanced physical appearance, for example too big or too small head size; (2) being unable to take care of themselves based on their actual ages; (3) experiencing delayed speech/language development; (4) having less or even having no attention to the environment; (5) experiencing difficulty in adjusting to or interacting socially with surrounding environment; (6) experiencing poor movement coordination (often moving without control); (7) discharging saliva (liquid) frequently from the mouth (drooling); (8) academically, still being able to read, write, and do simple arithmetic but still not reach the minimum requirements of passing grades for twice in a row; and (9) being unable to think abstractly (Badan Standar, 2022)

The mentally retarded children require special treatments, tools, and service to facilitate them in learning (Azzahra et al., 2022). Their class teacher has to provide learning guidance as a process of providing assistance to organize the material, arrange students and set the learning environment so that the students can focus in teaching and learning process (Haug, 2020). Through the learning guidance, students are expected to improve their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities. This guidance needs to be handled by the class teacher and implemented in integrated way along with the learning process. Teacher needs to be more patient and put more attention since the mentally retarded children are still able to follow the courses even though they need longer time compared to the normal students do. Further, the mentally retarded children need to use tools as their learning media (Widodo et al., 2019). The teacher could use and adapt it in teaching the materials to make the students easier in understanding the materials. The tools used should be the real objects or real situations, but if it is not easy to do, the teacher could use artificial objects/realia, or at least a picture showing the real things (Ramadanti, 2022).

Based on the pre-observation conducted at SDN Batuceper 1 Tangerang, it was found that the intellectual disability students' learning hours were the same as the normal students. However, after the class ended, they continued to have the extra time to learn in the learning guidance session in a special class designed to meet their needs. At that time, the researchers noticed that the students experienced different types of intellectual disability, such as slow learner and mentally retarded children. All of them tended to learn slowly and the teacher had to re-explain the materials over and over so that they could do understand the materials taught and do the tasks given by the teacher.

The aforementioned discussion above leads the researchers to believe that further research is necessary in order to assess or present the degree to which EFL learning has been facilitated using the IEP program for the intellectually disability students particularly in Tangerang City's elementary inclusive schools. Therefore, this research is formulated into two research questions, they are (1) How is the psychological description and language ability of the two students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID)?, (2) How do students learn English through Individualized Education Program?.

Research Methodology

The approach used by researchers is a qualitative approach with descriptive research methods. Qualitative research is that the research which the problems brought by researchers are still dim, even dark, complex about one's life, and dynamic (Sugiyono, 2011). Therefore, problems in qualitative research are still temporary, tentative, and will develop or change after researchers are in the field. By using a qualitative approach in this study, it is expected to obtain accurate, in-depth, and meaningful data so that the research objectives are achieved (Khoa et al., 2023). This research was conducted at SDN Batuceper 1, Tangerang City. The reason this place was used as a research location is because this school has become an inclusive school where the available facilities are said to meet inclusive school standards, but in its implementation, it is necessary to examine whether the school has carried out its role and function in maximizing student potential by disability. The subjects of this research are two students with special needs with intellectual disabilities (ID) classified in the type of mental retardation. Data collection techniques are the most important steps in research. Data is a source for solving research problems. Data collection is carried

out in natural settings, primary data sources, and data collection techniques are non-participation observation, in-depth interviews and study document (Sugiyono, 2011). In this research, the source validity test, technical triangulation, and time triangulation were tested. Triangulation is defined as checking data from various sources in various ways, and at various times. Thus, there is triangulation of sources to test the credibility of the data by checking the data obtained through several sources (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Psychological Description of Student QN

The first sample is QN, he is 11 years old and now he is third grade school student. He was tested at 2021 and got the psychological result from private psychological consultant. His general overall IQ (low average) is 86. He is diagnosed with Intellectual Disability (ID) with the type of mild mental retardation. Readiness in learning including problem solving, planning, priority, creativity, communication, memory, problem solving, knowledge, delf-development, and endurance are below in average of 52 (average). According to the examination result, it can be concluded that QN has the general IQ under normal average 86 < (90-110) which means his general ability is adequate to carry out learning tasks even with limited IQ score. The description of cognitive aspects in general has a fairly good level of learning mechanisms. The brain part of QN which is dominant is right brain functioning (processing information non-verbal and concrete things such as picture and color). His learning styles are audio and visual since audio materials is effective through sense of hearing. It can stimulate by listening to the pleasant sound and easiest way to comprehend by him. Another prominent learning style, namely the visual style, means that QN effectively learns through the senses of sight so that the media or teaching aids must be colorful and variety in different shapes.

The personality characteristic that must be trained is initiative so it can develop his personality to be better and easy to get along with his peers. The two temperaments that emerge and develop are steadiness and influence. QN steadiness Relaxed personalities need to be sparked to communicate and need to be motivated and disciplined while influence requires more attention, approval, affection and acceptance more intense than other children. QN developmental disabilities include

speech delay and cerebral palsy. Speech delay has problems in communication, social interaction and behavior, although there are also those who speak a little late. Often, they have a standard way of speaking and grammar and don't use body language when communicating. His expression is less likely than the children his age. The next limitation is cerebral palsy, namely the existence of abnormalities in movement, attitude, or body shape, impaired coordination and can be accompanied by psychological and sensory disorders, which are caused by damage or defects during the development of the brain.

Psychological Description of Student RK

The second sample is RK, he is 15 years old and now he is sixth grade school student. He was tested at 2021 and got the psychological result from private psychological consultant. His general overall IQ is 40 according to Binet Test. He is diagnosed with Intellectual Disability (ID) with the type of mental retardation with moderately delayed level. Even though RK's student is 15 years old, his mental age is 5 years old. This shows that there is a difference of around 10 years between RK's chronological age and his actual mental age. In general, the ability of RK is low. His comprehension is also low, several times he needs to be reminded of instructions or questions and given concrete examples to understand what is expected. When compared with other abilities, RK's most prominent ability is numerical reasoning which is equivalent to a 6-year-old child. He is able to count the number of objects below 10. However, for larger numbers he tends to find it more difficult to calculate objects correctly and tends to continue counting up to 10 without ensuring whether the objects counted have been used up or not. RK tends to be unmotivated in learning, they also often make mistakes in recognizing letters. RK also seems to be silent when asked to read or asked questions by the teacher. Developmental aspects of RK according to his examination report including language ability, memory, conceptualization, reasoning, numerical reasoning, visual-motor coordination, and social understanding are in very low level.

First of all, RK's learning attitude including concentration is adequate, accuracy in low, and endurance is adequate. RK visual motoric ability is equal to 5 years old children. He has hand and eye coordination that allows him to copy squares, circles and straight lines as well as fold triangles, and build shapes according to simple examples with cubes. RK is estimated to be able to do manual work that requires hand-eye coordination as long as it is simple enough and the teaching must be done

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repeatedly. RK has pretty good non-verbal reasoning skills. He can use pictures and distinguish shapes, pictures, and perform simple synthesis analysis to transform a form into a new form. Despite this, he still had difficulty performing in-depth analysis on the image to determine the missing parts. RK's verbal reasoning abilities are also still limited. Compared to other aspects, RK language skills tend to be the lowest and the most difficult to develop. RK language skills are still somewhat inconsistent. Even so, he is still able to recognize familiar objects and their functions. However, what RK lacks is that his vocabulary is still limited. Several times he uses the same vocabulary to describe different objects. Understanding of instructions and questions is also quite low. RK needs repetition, changes in word order, or examples to help him understand a word. In addition, RK's articulation is still a bit unclear so that his speech is still difficult to understand. Another ability of RK that is classified as low is memory. RK is pretty good at remembering familiar pictures, but has trouble remembering instructions given to those pictures orally. The ability to remember instructions is limited to two things at a time. So, it can be concluded that learning in RK needs to be done repeatedly and it is better if it involves pictures or examples of real objects in front of him to help remember. Apart from that, RK's conceptual thinking ability is still relatively low. He knows some simple verbal analogies or concepts of opposites such as boy and girl, day and night, and slow and fast. However, he is still unable to understand the concepts of differences and similarities between two objects conveyed verbally. His understanding of similarities and differences is limited to visual objects. In terms of interaction with other people, RK is able to answer or respond to people's conversations. However, social understanding is still limited. He has not been able to understand what needs to be done in various social situations, identify awkward situations based on pictures, and recognize social constructs such as neat ones based on pictures. RK is able to understand the function of some limbs as well as familiar objects. This social understanding must continue to be improved so that it is able to adapt and behave in accordance with environmental demands. Lastly, in terms of learning attitude, RK has adequate concentration. He has the desire to do the tasks given to him from the beginning to the end of learning. He also made an effort to respond whenever asked or given instructions. He has enough resilience when doing difficult tasks, a little encouragement helps him keep trying however, his accuracy is still not optimally developed.

Table 1. Language and Communication Ability of Student QN and RK

No.	Indicators	Student QN		Student RK	
		Able	Unable	Able	Unable
1.	Can pronounce simple phonemes (ma, gi, gu, ba, bu).	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	
2.	Listen when given orders.	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	
3.	Imitating someone else's voice.	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	
4.	Understand some simple instructions (for example: look!).	V		$\sqrt{}$	
5.	Saying words that are very familiar in your own words that are easy to pronounce (for example body parts, family members).	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	
6.	Says the name of an object while showing it.	V		V	
7.	Use verbs when speaking (e.g., sleep, sit).			V	
8.	Using emotional expressions and movements for emphasis when explaining something (for example looking at shoes, pointing at them, and shouting).	V		V	
9.	Able to use simple interrogative sentences (for example, has the picture been colored?).	V		V	
10.	Understand single words and combinations of two words (for example, black-board).	V		V	
11.	Understand negative sentences (for example, don't color that book!).	V		V	
12.	Mimics more sounds (e.g., animal sound, vehicle sound).	V		V	
13.	Explain the events in the picture.		V		√
14.	Explain the objects in the picture.		V		√
15.	Can sing simple songs.		V	V	
16.	Can construct sentences using causal patterns (for example, I'm hungry because I haven't eaten).		V	V	
17.	Able to state the characteristics or synonyms or definitional function of an object (for example, a sharp knife is used for cutting or for cooking in the kitchen).		$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	
18.	Understand figurative words that have abstract meanings.		$\sqrt{}$	V	
19.	Understand indirect assessment (e.g., when the teacher says the picture is not big, the child deletes or corrects it).	V		√ 	
20.	Able to say words of satire, sarcasm and use a different tone of voice.		$\sqrt{}$		V
21.	Sentence grammar is getting better and can use complex sentences.				V
	1109				

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Total	14	7	17	4
	21	21	21	21
Percentage (P=F/N x 100%)	66,7%	33,3%	76,5%	23,5%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the two students QN and RK have different result of language and communication ability. From the 21 indicators above, QN is able to accomplish 14 aspects (66,7%) and unable to conduct 7 aspects (33,3%). While RK is able to accomplish 17 aspects (76,5%) and unable to conduct 4 aspects (23,5%). Before dealing with children, of course the school must be more open and accepting of children with special needs. School must promote attitude of openness from a sense of acceptance of all students' current conditions. From this open attitude, schools must find appropriate ways to teach students with special needs. Children with special needs certainly need more motivation, attention, and guidance compared to regular children. With great and intense attention and motivation, of course, children can develop to be better, one of which is by implementing individual education program in each inclusive class.

Discussion

The EFL Learning Through Individualized Education Programs

English has become a lingua franca or international language, used as a mother tongue and official language. Therefore, the ability to speak English is a basic requirement that must be possessed by all Indonesian students. In line with the Government's commitment to developing every dimension in the Pancasila student profile which includes global diversity, strengthening English education is a priority in the Merdeka Curriculum. In English at elementary school level, students are expected to achieve intermediate level competency with a strong foundation (Phase A-C), but many students' basic language skills are still inadequate, especially for students with special needs, making it a difficult lesson for them to follow. As a result, mastery of English is still relatively low. English Proficiency Index Report for Indonesian students with a score of 469 Indonesia is ranked 81st out of 111 countries or level B1 when referring to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) framework. To overcome this gap in competency attainment, the chosen solution is to provide basic level English education at the elementary school level. Currently, English is included in the Independent Curriculum structure only as an elective subject for two hours (70 minutes) per-week.

In the inclusion class, namely third grade, where QN student conduct his daily learning activity, it has been observed that QN took small part in learning with his classmates. In terms of concentration, QN was be able follow the classroom learning for about 30 minutes without any distraction even though he often complained during the lesson. QN's accuracy in conducting the test were frequently made mistakes and seemed not really understood about the lesson being taught by teacher. QN was able to answer only small and simple question assigned to him, but in terms of English subject, he was too slow to keep up with the class. QN's articulation are quite clear, and very precise in pronouncing several words according to the lesson. For example, "day and night" vocabulary lists such as "sun", "moon", "sleep", "go", and "sleep". For English materials of day and night vocabulary and pictures given by teacher, QN was able to identify them all.

In the inclusion class, namely fifth grade, where RK student study every day, it can be seen that RK student was able to adapt to their surroundings. RK is able to enter class independently without the help of parents or companions. RK dresses neatly and shows a cooperative attitude during the lesson. RK was able to follow the teacher's instructions even though in a simple way but he looked a bit less confident because of the low volume when answering and was reluctant to answer again when the teacher asked him to repeat the answer. RK can communicate and answer simple questions related to the learning theme, and everyday questions, such as what's for breakfast. However, articulation tends to be less clear, and it is difficult to pronounce some letters, for example the letter "r". For example, the word "read" becomes "lead", and "ng" or the word "sing" becomes "sin". Simple precise articulations were found in words he was sure he answered correctly, such as "plane", and "hat". Several times he just repeated the questions asked to him and answered things that didn't quite match his question. He also needs repetition of instructions or clearer examples of words to be able to follow the pronunciation.

There are several ways for teachers to optimize the classroom English learning activity. First of all, teacher must present the material repeatedly. The mentally retarded children are struggling to take care of themselves; they are susceptible to peer pressure, prefer to play with younger students, and find it challenging to comprehend and follow classroom rules and instructions. These factors make it difficult to teach mentally retarded children (Huda, 2021). They are unable to independently apply all information, lessons, and discipline used in schools under the supervision of

teachers, thus teachers must repeat the concepts and procedures previously taught. Repeating lessons can help students understand material more deeply. Apart from that, as a teacher, repeating material can also help to find out which material has been completely understood, which material still requires additional explanation, and which material students have not yet understood at all. Secondly, the English materials being taught must be as simple as possible. Students with intellectual disability or mental retardation are those whose intellectual functioning are below average and also experiencing obstacle in learning process (Juhanaini et al., 2022). Based The level of depth and flexibility of learning material is cumulative, meaning that the material will always be additional; occurs in the classroom and can be adapted in certain ways, as well as being integrative, meaning that the explanation of the material must be a unified whole or unified material or integrated with each other but must still be guided by the students' basic abilities.

Thirdly, teacher must teach the mentally retarded students in short time. The duration of learning in inclusive classes is also a big challenge (Lissa et al., 2020). The way the teacher conveys the material so that it is easy to understand is key master. But material or content should not be the teacher's only priority. Teachers do not pursue material completeness, but focus on competencies or skills that must be mastered by students because once again what they teach are students with special needs. Fourth, teacher is encouraged to use many different teaching methods and techniques that suit mentally retarded students' need. Teaching method and techniques must be varied and attractive. The thinking ability of mentally retarded children and speech functions will develop very slowly without special training and support (Shukhratovich, 2022). Students with mental retardation who get special teaching treatment will get used to learn and exercise their mental process including conscious recall, generalization, and knowledge comparison in addition to basic skills and talents. Last, teacher must give rewards every time students with mental retardation can do a task even it is a little longer. One thing that cannot be forgotten is how teachers can give appreciation to students. Teachers can give rewards to children with special needs in oral form or in the form of symbols or gestures. In the learning process, form enthusiasm or encourage positive social responses and avoid negative ones (Özokcu et al., 2017). Students can learn and make connections with other people more easily with the help of these abilities. Additionally, teachers must support them in giving reward and keeping friends.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on this research, it can be concluded that the teaching and learning process in the classroom, teachers should teach English to be appropriate and able to meet the needs of students with special needs, especially students with intellectual disabilities. Every student with special needs, especially those who are mentally retarded, has a different IQ level and level of disability, therefore teachers and parents must provide treatment according to their needs. For QN students, the aspects are 66.7% have completed learning aspects and 33.3% have not yet completed them, while for RK students, 76.5% have completed and 23.5% have not completed learning aspects. The Individualized Education Program is presented as a solution in providing teacher assistance from the design process, implementation of the teaching process, and assessment so that all stages of learning are more focused and learning objectives can be achieved optimally.

However, this study still has many limitations, including only involved two participants since not every class has the students with special needs. Furthermore, this study focusses only in describing the language and ability of these two students with intellectual disability barriers and does not generalize the abilities of students with special needs at the school as a whole. Each student who suffers from intellectual disability has limitations that cannot be compared to other students.

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