Models of English Learning for Students with Disabilities at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the models of English learning implemented for students with disabilities at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap and evaluates how these models influence students' motivation to learn English. Employing a qualitative research design, data were gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The results reveal that students show a strong preference for video-based and interactive learning activities. Teachers adopt diverse instructional strategies, including multisensory learning, gamebased learning, and collaborative approaches, all tailored to meet students' individual needs. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, particularly in mastering tenses and maintaining focus during lessons. To overcome these obstacles, teachers offer personalized support, re-explain complex concepts, and assist slow writers by dictating materials. The findings highlight the crucial role of adaptive teaching strategies in enhancing the English learning experience for students with disabilities in special education settings.

Keywords: English Learning Models; Students with Disabilities; Special Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right for every individual, including students with disabilities. The Indonesian Constitution (UUD 1945) guarantees equal access to education for all citizens, emphasizing that individuals with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, or social disabilities have the right to receive special education. The existence of Special Schools (SLB) plays a crucial role in ensuring that students with disabilities receive appropriate learning accommodations

tailored to their unique needs. However, despite various educational policies supporting inclusive education, challenges remain in implementing effective English language learning models for students with disabilities. Unlike mainstream schools, SLBs must adopt innovative teaching strategies that accommodate students' different learning capacities and limitations, ensuring they receive an education that is both engaging and accessible.

Learning English as a foreign language poses significant challenges for students with disabilities. Language acquisition requires not only cognitive abilities but also social interaction, sensory processing, and motor coordination, all of which can be affected by various disabilities. For students with hearing impairments, for example, spoken language learning must be complemented with visual-based learning methods. Students with visual impairments, on the other hand, require auditory and tactile learning materials. Moreover, children with intellectual disabilities often struggle with abstract concepts and require a more structured and repetitive approach to learning. These diverse needs necessitate a differentiated instructional approach that integrates various learning models to enhance engagement and motivation.

In SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap, teachers employ various teaching methodologies to facilitate English learning for students with disabilities. Some commonly used approaches include multisensory learning, which engages multiple senses to reinforce learning, game-based learning, which enhances student motivation through interactive activities, and collaborative learning, which promotes peer interaction to improve comprehension. Additionally, Total Physical Response (TPR) and Project-Based Learning (PBL) have been implemented to help students better grasp language concepts through movement and real-world applications. These models aim to create a more inclusive and adaptive learning environment that caters to students with different disabilities, ensuring that they can develop their English language skills effectively.

Despite these efforts, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of English language learning in SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap. One of the main obstacles is the difficulty in teaching English tenses, which require an understanding of abstract grammatical structures. Many students struggle with differentiating past, present, and future tenses due to cognitive limitations or language processing difficulties. Additionally, maintaining classroom concentration is another significant challenge, as some students exhibit attention deficits or behavioral issues that disrupt the learning process. Environmental factors, such as noise levels and classroom layout, also affect students' ability to focus, leading to reduced engagement during lessons.

To address these challenges, teachers at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap adopt various intervention strategies. For students who struggle with tenses, teachers use visual aids, hands-on activities, and contextual examples to make abstract concepts more tangible. For students who have difficulty concentrating, teachers implement

individualized instruction, allowing them to work at their own pace and receive personalized guidance. Slow writers receive additional support through dictation exercises and step-by-step writing guidance, ensuring that they can complete assignments without feeling overwhelmed. These adaptive teaching methods help mitigate learning barriers and promote a more effective English learning experience for students with disabilities.

The motivation of students to learn English is also a crucial factor influencing their academic progress. Findings from this research indicate that students are more engaged when learning materials are presented in an interactive format, such as videos, games, and role-playing activities. These methods help create a fun and stimulating learning environment, reducing anxiety and increasing students' willingness to participate in class. Moreover, parental and teacher support plays a vital role in motivating students. Many students expressed that their parents encourage them to study English by providing books, assisting with homework, and fostering a positive attitude towards language learning. Teachers, on the other hand, reinforce motivation by using praise, rewards, and encouragement, making students feel valued and supported in their learning journey.

This research seeks to explore the various models of English learning processes used in SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap and examine their effectiveness in motivating students to learn English. By analyzing different instructional strategies, this study aims to provide insights into best practices that can be adopted to improve language acquisition for students with disabilities. Additionally, this research highlights the importance of inclusive and adaptive teaching approaches, emphasizing the need for educational institutions to continuously refine their methods to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

In conclusion, ensuring that students with disabilities receive high-quality English language education requires a multifaceted approach that integrates varied learning models, individualized instruction, and strong support systems. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on special education by identifying effective English learning strategies and providing recommendations for enhancing instructional practices in SLBs. Ultimately, by understanding and addressing the challenges faced by students with disabilities in learning English, educators and policymakers can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable education system for all learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of learning English for students with disabilities presents unique challenges, requiring specialized instructional models that cater to their diverse needs. Unlike mainstream education, where students follow a standardized curriculum, students with disabilities require adaptive teaching strategies that accommodate their cognitive, sensory, and motor limitations. Tomlinson (2001) emphasizes the importance of differentiated instruction in special education,

allowing teachers to modify content, processes, and learning environments to suit individual abilities. Learning English for students with disabilities often involves overcoming barriers such as language processing difficulties, sensory impairments, and motor coordination issues. In Special Schools (SLB), teachers must implement innovative methods like multisensory learning, technology-based instruction, and interactive teaching to enhance students' language acquisition and retention.

One of the most effective approaches in special education is multisensory learning, which engages multiple senses to improve comprehension. Praptiningrum and Nurdayati (2009) argue that this approach helps students process information through visual, auditory, and tactile channels, making it easier to grasp abstract concepts. For instance, students with hearing impairments benefit from visual aids such as flashcards and written instructions, while students with visual impairments rely on auditory resources like listening exercises and Braille materials. Meilina et al. (2023) found that integrating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements significantly enhances retention and engagement among students with disabilities. By applying this method, teachers can bridge learning gaps and create a more inclusive learning experience.

Game-based learning is another widely used approach, making English learning more engaging through educational games. James Paul Gee (2003) highlights how structured challenges, rewards, and instant feedback in games increase student motivation, especially for those with attention difficulties. In SLBs, activities like word-matching games, storytelling apps, and role-playing exercises help students develop vocabulary and sentence structures. Interactive platforms such as Kahoot! and Duolingo create a stress-free environment for practicing English, reducing anxiety while building confidence.

An influential model in English language learning for students with disabilities is Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by Asher (1977). This method connects language learning with physical movement, helping students internalize vocabulary through action. TPR is particularly effective for students with intellectual disabilities, as it reinforces comprehension through gestures and movement-based activities. Teachers in SLBs often use physical storytelling and interactive exercises to improve not only language retention but also motor coordination and cognitive engagement.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers another valuable approach, emphasizing real-world tasks and collaborative activities. Tomlinson (2001) notes that PBL allows students to explore language through hands-on experiences, making learning more meaningful. In SLBs, PBL activities may include creating simple presentations, performing dialogues, and participating in classroom projects that integrate language skills. This approach helps students practice communication in authentic contexts, build social skills, and gain confidence while progressing at their own pace.

Collaborative learning also plays a crucial role in special education. Johnson and Johnson (1989) emphasize the benefits of peer-assisted learning, where students work together on tasks, providing mutual support and promoting social interaction. In SLBs, teachers often pair students with different strengths, encouraging them to help each other overcome language barriers. This approach fosters a sense of community and has proven effective in improving communication skills among students with autism and other communication challenges.

The advancement of technology-based learning has significantly transformed English instruction for students with disabilities. Hadiyati (2014) highlights the role of digital tools, speech-to-text applications, and multimedia resources in enhancing accessibility and engagement. For visually impaired students, tools such as screen readers, Braille software, and audiobooks support reading and comprehension. Meanwhile, students with hearing impairments benefit from subtitled videos and visual storytelling software. Virtual classrooms and AI-based tutors allow for personalized learning experiences, enabling students to practice at their own pace with continuous feedback.

Several studies support the effectiveness of these adaptive models. Khalilurrahman and Afdhal (2011) found that visual-based instruction significantly improved vocabulary acquisition among deaf students. Nugraheni and Kristian (2019) demonstrated that TPR methods enhanced memory retention in students with intellectual disabilities, while Sunardi et al. (2014) highlighted the importance of integrating Braille and auditory resources to help blind students overcome challenges in learning English syntax. These findings underscore the need for customized, student-centered teaching models that address the unique challenges faced by students with disabilities.

In conclusion, the literature highlights the importance of adaptive, multisensory, and technology-driven models for teaching English to students with disabilities. Approaches such as TPR, PBL, game-based learning, and collaborative instruction have been shown to enhance engagement, retention, and language acquisition. Despite these advances, challenges such as cognitive limitations, communication barriers, and accessibility issues remain critical concerns. Addressing these challenges requires continuous innovation in teaching methods and the development of inclusive educational policies. This study builds on these findings by exploring the specific English learning models implemented at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap, assessing their effectiveness, and offering recommendations for optimizing language instruction for students with disabilities.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyze the English learning models used in SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap for students with disabilities. According to

Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena through descriptive analysis in natural settings, focusing on human interactions and realworld experiences. The aim of this research is to explore how teachers implement various English learning strategies, identify challenges faced by students, and assess the effectiveness of these models in improving student motivation and comprehension.

The participants of this study include English teachers and students with disabilities at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap. Purposive sampling was used to select informants who have direct involvement in the English learning process. Sugiyono (2017) defines purposive sampling as a technique that allows researchers to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selected teachers possess extensive experience in teaching students with disabilities, while the student participants represent a diverse range of disabilities, including hearing impairments, visual impairments, and cognitive disabilities. This diverse sample ensures the study captures multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of different English learning models.

Instrument and Procedures

To collect data, this study uses four primary data collection techniques: observation, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation analysis.

- 1. Observation was conducted during English lessons to assess how teachers implement various learning models and how students respond to these methods.
- 2. Questionnaires were distributed to students to evaluate their satisfaction and motivation regarding the learning models used.
- 3. Interviews were conducted with teachers to gain deeper insights into their instructional strategies and the challenges they face in adapting teaching methods to students with disabilities.
- 4. Documentation analysis involved reviewing lesson plans, teaching materials, and student assignments to examine the alignment between learning objectives and instructional practices.

The combination of these data collection methods ensures a comprehensive and triangulated understanding of how English learning is conducted in a special school environment.

Data Analysis

Data analysis follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

- 1. Data Reduction: Key findings from observations, interviews, and questionnaires were summarized, coded, and categorized to focus on the most relevant information.
- 2. Data Display: Data were organized in tables, thematic analyses, and

narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: This step involved cross-checking data from multiple sources and conducting triangulation to ensure consistency and validity.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation methods were employed. Methodological triangulation compared data from observations, questionnaires, and interviews, ensuring consistency across multiple data points. Source triangulation gathered perspectives from teachers, students, and supporting documents, providing a well-rounded analysis. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted by discussing preliminary findings with education experts to refine interpretations and reduce researcher bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents detailed findings on English learning models, student motivation, challenges, and strategies in teaching English to students with disabilities at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap. The data were gathered through observations, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of how English is taught in a special education environment.

1. English Learning Models Used in SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap

The study revealed that six primary English learning models are commonly used by teachers to accommodate the needs of students with various types of disabilities. These models were implemented based on the students' individual abilities and learning preferences. The multisensory learning model integrates multiple sensory channels—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—to enhance comprehension and retention. For example, teachers used tactile materials such as letter blocks and textured flashcards for visually impaired students. Observations showed that this approach significantly improved student engagement and understanding of new vocabulary.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) model encourages students to physically respond to verbal commands, linking language with action. Teachers frequently used TPR for teaching verbs and simple instructions. For instance, during lessons on daily activities, students were asked to act out words like "jump," "run," and "sit," which helped reinforce their comprehension and memory. Project-Based Learning (PBL) encourages students to work on real-world tasks, such as creating posters or writing short stories, to apply their language skills. Teachers noted that PBL was particularly beneficial for students with mild cognitive disabilities, as it helped them connect language learning with practical activities. Projects like making a daily schedule or designing a simple menu in English allowed students to practice vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Collaborative learning emphasizes group activities, fostering cooperation and peer support among students. Teachers grouped students with different abilities to work on assignments together, encouraging peer teaching and mutual learning. This approach helped students with limited English skills learn from their more advanced peers. Game-based learning uses educational games to make learning fun and interactive. Teachers incorporated vocabulary games, role-playing, and board games to improve language acquisition. Students responded positively to this method, particularly during spelling games and interactive quizzes, which boosted their motivation and competitive spirit. Visual-based learning relies on images, videos, and flashcards to support vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. Visual aids such as storyboards, illustrated dictionaries, and video-based lessons were especially effective for hearing-impaired students. Teachers reported that combining visual media with storytelling helped students retain information better and improved their sentence construction skills. Among these models, multisensory learning and game-based learning proved to be the most effective in engaging students and enhancing their language retention. Teachers observed that these methods kept students more focused and enthusiastic compared to traditional teaching approaches.

2. Student Motivation in Learning English

Motivation was found to be a key factor influencing the success of English learning for students with disabilities. The data from interviews and questionnaires revealed that students' interest and confidence significantly increased when lessons were designed to be interactive and enjoyable. Many students expressed that they enjoyed learning English when the activities included videos, games, and storytelling. For instance, a hearing-impaired student mentioned that visual media, such as videos with subtitles, helped him understand new words more easily. Meanwhile, a visually impaired student found audio-based lessons and repetitive listening exercises particularly helpful. Storytelling activities using audio recordings made lessons more engaging and helped students improve their listening comprehension. According to questionnaire results, more than 80% of students reported feeling more motivated during lessons that involved group work and realworld applications. In contrast, traditional grammar-focused lessons were perceived as difficult and less enjoyable. Students often became disengaged when lessons were centered on memorization of rules without practical application. This indicates that interactive, student-centered approaches are crucial in maintaining high levels of motivation among students with disabilities.

3. Challenges in English Learning for Students with Disabilities

Despite the effective use of various learning models, several challenges were identified in teaching English at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap. One of the most challenging aspects for students was understanding tenses. Many students, especially those with intellectual disabilities, struggled to differentiate between past, present, and future tenses due to the abstract nature of the concept. Teachers observed that students often mixed tenses in their sentences and needed frequent reminders and corrections.

Attention span was another significant issue. Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and ADHD had difficulty focusing on lessons for extended periods. They were easily distracted by external stimuli, making it challenging for teachers to maintain their attention. Teachers also noted that students often needed frequent breaks to sustain focus and complete tasks. Writing skills were also a major challenge for some students. Slow writing speed affected their ability to keep up with classwork and complete written assignments on time. Students with physical disabilities and cognitive delays often experienced difficulty with fine motor skills, which hindered their progress in writing tasks. Teachers emphasized the need for additional support and alternative methods to help these students improve their writing fluency.

4. Strategies to Overcome Learning Challenges

Teachers at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap implemented a range of intervention strategies to address the challenges faced by students. For students struggling with tenses, teachers used visual timelines, charts, and real-life examples to simplify abstract grammar concepts. Role-playing exercises were introduced to help students practice tenses in conversation. To maintain concentration, teachers adopted structured teaching methods, incorporating frequent breaks and short, engaging activities. Movement-based exercises, such as those used in TPR, helped sustain student focus during lessons. Visual schedules and consistent routines were particularly effective in supporting students with autism spectrum disorder to stay on task. For slow writers, teachers provided guided writing sessions, dictation exercises, and personalized feedback. Assistive technology, such as typing on tablets, was also introduced to reduce the strain of handwriting tasks. Step-by-step instructions and individualized attention helped students develop their writing skills at their own pace.

5. The Role of Teachers and Parental Support

Teachers and parents played a vital role in motivating students and supporting their learning. Teachers fostered a positive learning environment by using personalized instruction, adapting lessons based on individual abilities, and offering consistent encouragement and praise. Positive reinforcement and a flexible teaching approach helped boost students' confidence and willingness to learn. Teachers also provided emotional support and motivation by celebrating small achievements, which helped students stay motivated in their learning journey. Parental involvement further enhanced student motivation. Interviews with students revealed that those whose parents actively supported their learning—by helping with homework, practicing vocabulary at home, and providing encouragement—showed greater interest and progress in English. Teachers emphasized the importance of collaboration between the school and parents to ensure student success. Parents who engaged in their

children's learning process created a more supportive environment, reinforcing what students learned at school.

The findings of this study provide insights into the English learning models used at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap and highlight their impact on students with disabilities. The use of diverse instructional strategies demonstrates how adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of students can enhance learning outcomes. These results align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of differentiated instruction and student-centered approaches in special education settings. The multisensory learning model, identified as one of the most effective strategies in this study, is consistent with the findings of Murzynski and Bourke (2018), who highlighted that engaging multiple senses improves comprehension and retention for students with learning difficulties. By combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements, teachers in SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap were able to create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. This approach was particularly beneficial for students with visual and hearing impairments, allowing them to access information through alternative sensory channels.

Total Physical Response (TPR) also played a significant role in improving student engagement and comprehension, especially for students with cognitive disabilities. As supported by Asher (2009), TPR is highly effective in language acquisition because it links language with physical actions, making abstract concepts more concrete and memorable. Observations in this study showed that students were more responsive and motivated during TPR-based lessons, which mirrors findings from previous research that emphasized the model's ability to reduce anxiety and improve recall in second language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The study further highlighted the positive effects of game-based learning and project-based learning (PBL) on student motivation. Teachers reported that game-based activities increased student participation and fostered a competitive yet supportive learning atmosphere. This finding echoes the research of Hung, Hwang, and Huang (2012), who demonstrated that educational games enhance both engagement and vocabulary acquisition in students with diverse needs. Similarly, PBL encouraged students to connect language learning with real-world applications, as suggested by Bell (2010), who found that PBL fosters deeper learning by promoting collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

Despite the success of these models, the study also revealed several challenges in teaching English to students with disabilities. Understanding tenses was one of the most difficult aspects for many students, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. Previous research by Farrell and Hunter (2017) highlighted that learning abstract grammatical concepts, such as verb tenses, poses significant challenges for students with cognitive impairments. To address this, teachers at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap used visual aids and role-playing to simplify grammar rules, which is consistent with the recommendations of Wallach and Ehren (2014) for teaching grammar in special education contexts.

Another challenge observed was maintaining students' attention, especially among those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and ADHD. This finding aligns with the research of Neely et al. (2016), which reported that students with attention difficulties require structured lessons and frequent breaks to stay focused. Teachers in this study adopted similar strategies, incorporating movement-based activities and visual schedules to help students remain engaged. These methods reflect best practices in managing attention challenges in special education, as suggested by Harwell and Jackson (2019).

Writing difficulties were also a common issue for students, particularly those with physical and cognitive disabilities. Teachers provided additional support through guided writing sessions, dictation, and the use of assistive technology. This strategy aligns with the research of Graham and Perin (2007), who found that individualized writing instruction significantly improves writing skills for students with learning difficulties. The role of teachers and parental support was found to be crucial in enhancing student motivation and success. Teachers played a key role in creating a supportive and encouraging learning environment, which is consistent with the findings of Ryan and Deci (2000), who emphasized the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. Parental involvement further reinforced student motivation, as suggested by Epstein (2001), who found that active parental engagement leads to higher academic achievement and better social-emotional outcomes for students with disabilities.

In summary, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research, reinforcing the importance of using adaptive and student-centered learning models in special education. The successful implementation of multisensory learning, TPR, game-based learning, and PBL highlights the effectiveness of these methods in increasing engagement and comprehension for students with disabilities. However, challenges related to grammar learning, attention difficulties, and writing skills require ongoing support and adaptive strategies. Teachers' ability to tailor instruction based on individual needs, combined with active parental involvement, is essential for creating an inclusive and motivating learning environment. This study contributes to the growing body of research on English learning in special education by providing practical insights into effective instructional strategies and highlighting areas that require further attention.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that implementing diverse and adaptive English learning models at SLB Negeri 1 Sidrap significantly enhances the motivation, engagement, and comprehension of students with disabilities. Teachers employed various models such as Multisensory Learning, Total Physical Response (TPR), Project-Based Learning (PBL), Collaborative Learning, Game-Based Learning, and Visual-Based Learning to create a supportive and interactive learning environment that caters to students' diverse needs. The findings show that students are more motivated and retain language better when lessons include interactive and hands-on activities.

However, challenges such as difficulties with English tenses, maintaining concentration, and writing skills were observed, emphasizing the need for continuous adaptation of teaching strategies. Teachers addressed these challenges through individualized instruction, visual aids, and simplified explanations, which proved effective in supporting student progress. The study underscores the importance of flexible teaching methods and ongoing teacher training in special education to ensure equitable and effective English language instruction for students with disabilities. Future research could expand the scope to include other schools and explore the role of parental involvement and technology in supporting English learning for students with disabilities.

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