

## Teacher`s Challenges and Efforts in Teaching English Vocabulary for Deaf Students (A Case Study of Non-Certified Special Education English Teacher at SMALB-B Dharma Asih Pontianak)

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in order to find out the challenges faced by non-certified special education English teacher in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students and the teacher`s efforts to face those challenges. This was a case study design which used qualitative method as the methodology. The data were taken from the interview and observations of the non-certified special education English teacher who taught English at the X grade of SMALB-B Dharma Asih Pontianak. The result of the study showed that there were several challenges such as students` misinterpretation of words from teacher`s similar lip movements, students` less attention, delivering the meaning of the words, students` lack of articulation, comprehension, and remembering English vocabulary, little experiences of the teacher in using sign language, and the needs of repetition. There were also several efforts to face those challenges such as providing different English vocabulary in each meeting, using picture as a media, using sign language as an alternative communication, drilling, and waving either patting on deaf students` shoulder to get their attention.

**Keywords:** *Deaf Students, English Vocabulary, Non-Certified Special Education English Teacher, Teacher`s Challenges, Teacher`s Efforts*

### INTRODUCTION

Taking a look in the educational field, English becomes one of the compulsory subjects to be taught. Teaching English as a second language has been a common issue in Indonesia where English is not their first language, especially when it comes to teach student with special needs such as deaf students. Therefore, all of deaf students have a proper education in special school. It is known as Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) in Indonesia which is specifically designed for students with special needs to provide and support the needs of special education for them. According to Redbridge (2014), "Special education need (SEN) refers to an education for students with special needs with an environment that could facilitate the students with special needs." One has to understand that students with SEN have special needs in terms of education. In Indonesia, the government establishes

special schools for students with special needs, according to Law No. 72 of 1991 where it is stated that every child with disability has the right to go for an education. The special school will help to provide all the facilities for the students with disability and help them to learn. The curriculum of special school is similar as regular school`s curriculum with adapting based on the needs of the students with special needs. Thus, special school is the school which is specifically purposed to give motivation for the special student with special education needs such as deaf students.

Deaf students are students with hearing impairments that make it hard for them to perceive information in the form of sounds, and usually exhibit some form of articulation difficulty. Birinci (2014) stated that the deaf students are who have chronic hearing loss outside of normal limits. Therefore, they have struggled in learning especially in learning English vocabulary. They face difficulties to understand new skills and study slower compared to other students of the same age. Domagala-Zyks and Kontra (2016) strongly stated that some problems for deaf students are poor vocabulary and mistake in matching words. They also have some problems in learning foreign language vocabulary, and it`s connected with the difficulties to master their national spoken language. Thus, teaching English vocabulary to deaf and hard-of-hearing students is not an easy job because they need several repetitions to understand lip movements and utilize words appropriately (Birinci, 2014). They have difficulties in following verbal directions and the inability to hear, which leads them to being unable to understand things that are communicated verbally. They cannot grasp certain words and their meaning because some words have similar lip movements that might cause them to misunderstand several ideas. The issues affecting their language development in sense that they have less input for the language acquisition device (LAD) compare with the hearing students. Therefore, the language characteristic is usually different; the sentence structure of deaf students is usually different from regular students. Often the only input deaf students can understand when people talk or sign to them directly, one-to-one (Deaf Children Australia, 2012).

Furthermore, there are several previous studies investigated on teacher`s challenges in teaching English for deaf students with different focuses such as challenges in teaching English lessons for deaf students; challenges of educating deaf student in learning English (Ristiani, 2018; Adi et al., 2017; El-Zraigat & Smadi, 2012). The differences of this study focused on the challenge and effort in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students because the teaching of English vocabulary is compulsory for deaf students same as regular students who required learning English at the same level and curriculum. Meanwhile, as deaf students have a hearing problem, they need a particular way to learn and particular English teacher to teach. But in this case, the English teacher has no such a special education background and experiences or called as non-certified special education English teacher. Thus, the researcher was inspired to investigate the challenges faced by non-certified special education English teacher in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students and the teacher`s efforts to face those challenges by conducting qualitative case study using interview and direct observations to collect the data and analyzed by using Miles & Huberman (1994) theory which consist of data condensation, data display, and conclusion

drawing/verifying. In addition, the researcher also utilized the data triangulation to cross-check the validity and trustworthiness of the data.

## **METHOD**

This study categorizes as a case study which was conducted by applying the qualitative method with a purpose to understand social phenomena and the description in the form of words. It belongs to qualitative because it produces descriptive data which are appropriate to the characteristic of qualitative research. Dawson (2002) stated that qualitative research attempt to describe a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or program in a systematic way, or includes information on, say, community living conditions, or reflects attitudes toward an issue. This method observes the field in real-time and under actual condition. Although the subject is not as much as other research, this method could analyze deeper and more detailed about the specific issue. This method also requires the researcher to interact with the social conditions of the field. Thus, it can bring up the subject's background and behavior during the process.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Result of teacher`s challenges and efforts in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students**

| The Result of Interview  | The Result of Observation  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | The Challenges   | The Efforts  |
| 1. The teacher had to adapt the method and material in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students.  | 1. There was a sign of adapting the method and material. Yet, there was no sign of the teacher faced difficulties in adapting the method and material in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students. The teacher already prepared before the class started. | 1. The teacher gave English vocabulary in each meeting for warming up before getting into the material which followed the specific book designed by government and delivered by lip-reading and gesture; sign language (alternative).        |
| 2. The teacher found difficulties to get varieties of media in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students such as hearing aids, LCD projector, etc. | 2. There was no sign of the teacher faced difficulty finding certain media in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students.   | 2. The teacher only used whiteboard and picture in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students.  |
| 3. The teacher found that deaf students misinterpreted the words because of teacher`s similar lip movement to other words.                             | 3. There were several times deaf students misinterpreted the words because of the teacher`s similar lip movement to other words.   | 3. The teacher wrote down the words on whiteboard and used lip-reading and gesture; sign language (alternative) to clear up the deaf students` misinterpretation.  |
| 4. The teacher could not get deaf students` attention by instruction or command.   | 4. There was several times the teacher needed to get deaf students` attention while they were focus on writing or worked on their assignment.  | 4. The teacher walked around and pat on her students` shoulder or knocked the table or the teacher waved her hand and asked one student to get their attention.  |
| 5. The teacher found difficulties to teach the meaning of English vocabularies to deaf students.   | 5. There were several term of English vocabularies which were confused by the deaf students even after being translated to Indonesia.  | 5. The teacher used pictures and drilling many times to provide the meaning of the words for making deaf students understand the context of the words.   |
| 6. The teacher found deaf students have lack of articulation, comprehension, and remembering English vocabulary.                                       | 6. There were several times deaf students took more times to understand and remembering the words because of their lack in receiving the words and their ability to comprehend the words.  | 6. The teacher reviewed the English vocabulary as taught in the previous meeting and provided more examples and pictures. Also the teacher gave homework for memorizing those English vocabularies and would be checked on the next meeting. |
| 7. The teacher had little experiences in teaching English vocabulary by using sign language as visual communication.                                   | 7. There was several times the teacher made mistake in using alphabet sign language as an alternative for transferring the words to deaf students.   | 7. The teacher always prepared to practice sign language every morning before the class started. Also, the teacher looked for certain references for practice sign language.   |
| 8. The teacher had to repeat the words in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students.   | 8. There were times when the teacher had to repeat the words because of the previous challenges appeared.  | 8. The teacher was patience in repeating the words twice or even more.   |

The data was collected from the non-certified special education English teacher as an informant who taught English subject for deaf students at grade X of SMALB-B Dharma Asih Pontianak. The schedule was on every Monday, at 9 a.m. This study was done for one month started from August 03, 2022 to August 22, 2022 for interview and observations. From the result of the interview, there were eight challenges and efforts faced by non-certified special education English teacher in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students at SMALB-B Dharma Asih Pontianak. Yet, after the data triangulation process there were only six challenges and efforts which were valid after the process of cross-checking the data from the interview with the data from the observation and vice versa.

The first challenge was the teacher found that deaf students misinterpreted the words because of teacher's similar lip movement to other words. The teacher's effort was to write down the words on whiteboard and used lip-reading and gesture; sign language (alternative) to clear up the deaf students' misinterpretation. Relating to this, Bedoin (2011) stated that one of approach in teaching methods is learning to lip reading. Yet, sometimes mistaken words because of similar lip movements with other words may arise. Therefore, the teacher needs to speak clearly without exaggerating lip movements or volume. The teacher also should be aware that moustaches, beards, hands, books, or microphones in front of their face can add the difficulties of lip reading for deaf students. (Mpofu & Chimenga, 2013).

The second challenge was the teacher could not get deaf students' attention by instruction or command. The teacher's effort was to walk around and pat on her students' shoulder or knocked the table when she closed to the student or the teacher waved her hand or asked one student to get their attention. Mpofu and Chimenga (2013) stated that there are several ways to get the attention of deaf students considering their deafness. One of them is to pat on their shoulder or wave to them, the teacher also needs to walk around. Based on the theory by the experts, the researcher believes that the teacher had done a good job in maintaining deaf students' attention. Also, the effort was showed by the teacher was quite similar to the experts' theories.

The third challenge was the teacher found difficulties to teach the meaning of English vocabularies to deaf students. The teacher's effort was using pictures and drilling many times to provide the meaning of the words. The researcher believes that the teacher's effort was already valuable. Yet, the researcher would like to suggest even deaf students could not hear any information in form of sound but they could provide meaning or context in form of written information or text. So it was better to ask deaf students to bring their dictionary which provided text, even picture.

The fourth challenge was the teacher found deaf students have lack of articulation, comprehension, and remembering English vocabulary. The teacher's effort was reviewing the English vocabulary as taught in the previous meeting and provided more examples and pictures. Also the teacher gave homework for memorizing those English vocabularies and would be checked on the next meeting.

For both third and fourth challenges, these concerns were related to the expert theories. Cawthon (2001) stated that it is quite difficult for deaf students to learn English

because children with hearing impairment often show significant delays in phoneme production. Therefore, it was understandable if deaf students had limited vocabulary compare with the regular students because they could not access information in form of sounds which automatically affect to their background knowledge.

The fifth challenge was the teacher had little experiences in teaching English vocabulary by using sign language as visual communication. The teacher's effort was to prepare and practice sign language every morning before the class started. Also, the teacher looked for certain references for practice sign language. The writer believes if only the school gave permission to use sign language in delivering the material. It would be easier for teacher and deaf students in the process of teaching and learning. Based on the observation, the teacher sometimes used sign language as an alternative if the deaf students could not understand her lip-movements and gesture. It showed that the process of transferring English vocabulary was easier to understand the words even the meaning of the words. Yet, the school principal did not tend the teacher to use sign language more often because deaf students were expected to understand lip-reading and gesture in case they lived in a community where people do not use sign language for communication.

The last challenge was the teacher had to repeat the words in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students. The teacher's effort was the matter of patient in repeating the words more often to deaf students. This concern related with all of the previous challenges explained above. It was acceptable and eventually important for the teacher to repeat several things and made sure the students understand the English vocabulary. This challenge was a concern relating with the teacher's patient and efforts to face the challenges. The researcher believes that the patience of the teacher was really important in the process of delivering the English vocabulary for deaf students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result it showed that there were six challenges faced by non-certified special education English teacher in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students at SMALB-B Dharma Asih Pontianak. The first challenge was the teacher found deaf students misinterpreted the words because of teacher's similar lip movement to other words. The second challenge was the teacher could not get deaf students' attention by instruction or command. The third challenge was the teacher found difficulties to teach the meaning of English vocabularies to deaf students. The fourth challenge was the teacher found deaf students had lack of articulation, comprehension, and remembering English vocabulary. The fifth challenge was the teacher had little experiences in teaching English vocabulary by using sign language as visual communication. The last challenge was the teacher had to repeat the words in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students. The teacher also faced those challenges with several efforts. The teacher gave English vocabulary in each meeting by providing more example such as picture as media and drilling many times to provide the meaning of the words. She also used visual communication (lip-reading and gesture; sign language (alternative)) for transferring the words. The teacher also waved either pat on deaf students' shoulder to get their attention.

In the spite of the fact, the result of this study could not be used as a generalization for all English teachers in special schools, although this study provided the information about challenges and efforts in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students. But, the results of this study might show some differences compared to other special schools. Therefore, the writer hoped that these findings could be useful for English teachers especially non-certified special education English teacher in teaching English vocabulary for deaf students in better way despite on the many challenges that probably appeared.

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