

IMPROVING ENGLISH LITERACY THROUGH THE USE OF BILINGUAL STORYBOOKS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY-BASED GAMES AT SLB B YAKUT PURWOKERTO

Laxmi Mustika Cakrawati^{*}, Weksa Fradita Asriyama, Slamet Riyadi

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman

Jalan Dr. Soeparno No. 60, Purwokerto Utara, Banyumas, Indonesia

Email: laxmi.mustika@unsoed.ac.id

Abstract

Students with disabilities have the same right to access education. Although in reality, teaching students with disabilities presents many challenges, teachers are still expected to facilitate students' learning needs so that students can get the best education. Teaching English to students with hearing disabilities presents its own challenges. Not only does English have different word and sentence structures from Indonesian, but the sign language used in Indonesian and English is also different. Due to these obstacles, English language learning at SLB B Yakut Purwokerto is not yet optimal. Therefore, through a program to improve English literacy through the use of bilingual storybooks and digital technology-based games, it is hoped that teachers can improve students' ability to acquire English vocabulary and use it in appropriate everyday contexts. The objectives of this community service program are 1) to describe the use of teaching media in English learning in the classroom, and 2) to identify the impact of the use of teaching media in improving the English literacy of students with hearing disabilities at SLB B Yakut Purwokerto. The methods used in this community service program included 1) coordination with the school through observation and discussion and 2) implementation of the community service program, which included the socialization of the community service program, discussion on the use of teaching media to optimize English language learning, practice in using teaching media, and program evaluation. The results of the activities showed positive responses from both teachers and students.

Keywords: Bilingual Storybook, English, Digital Technology-Based Games, Literacy, Special Needs Education

INTRODUCTION

Special Needs Schools (SLB) are educational institutions that provide special education services for children with special needs. One category of special needs is deafness. Students categorized as having this type of disability usually have hearing impairments, making it difficult for them to communicate verbally. This greatly affects how these students acquire language. This challenge becomes even greater when students learn English. Teaching English in SLBs for the deaf certainly poses a major challenge. Putri, Zaim, & Asri (2020) state that

reading and writing skills are difficult for deaf students to master. This may be due to inadequate learning resources at school and students' motivation to learn English. In addition, the difficulties students face in learning English are certainly inseparable from the fact that English is not the first language for students with hearing disabilities. This causes students to experience difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension (Nugroho & Lintangari, 2022).

Meanwhile, apart from the importance of English language skills, every student has the right to access education that will open up many opportunities for individuals to develop further. Therefore, it is hoped that SLBs will continue to be able to provide optimal support and access for their students. Zahro, Islami, & Hamdani (2023) explain that with the existing limitations and challenges faced, teachers at SLBs are expected to be able to create strategies that are in line with the abilities and needs of students, including the use of vocabulary for simple communication.

SLB B Yakut Purwokerto is an educational institution that serves children with hearing disabilities from kindergarten to high school. SLB B Yakut Purwokerto plays a very important role in providing inclusive and quality education for its students. Students at SLB B Yakut Purwokerto certainly face various challenges in their learning process, especially in mastering English. Until now, English language learning in this school is still very limited and focuses on the introduction of basic vocabulary in English. The books and learning materials available often do not optimally accommodate the specific needs of students with hearing disabilities.

The condition English language learning at SLB B Yakut Purwokerto is caused by several factors, including:

1. Limited access to English teaching materials and media

One of the obstacles faced by SLB B Yakut is limited access to English teaching materials that are suitable for deaf students. Currently, English language learning is still limited to very basic vocabulary acquisition. In addition, teaching materials that combine text with visualizations and sign language are very rare. In fact, this multimodal approach is very important to help deaf students understand concepts and vocabulary in English.

2. Inadequate teacher training in teaching English to deaf students

Teachers at SLB B Yakut Purwokerto have not received optimal training in teaching English. In addition, another obstacle in teaching English is the difference between the sign language used in Indonesia, namely Bisindo and SIBI, and English-based sign languages, namely ASL (American Sign Language) and BSL (British Sign Language).

3. Inadequate support for digital technology in learning

The use of digital technology in learning can increase student motivation and make learning more interesting. In English language learning at SLB B Yakut, the integration of digital technology is still limited and has not been used optimally.

Therefore, considering the above factors, an English literacy improvement program is needed to optimize English language learning and improve the English language skills of students with hearing disabilities. Through this program, it is hoped that students will have broader access and opportunities to learn English. In line with this, Nugroho, F.A., and Lintangari, A.P. (2022) emphasized that teaching English to deaf students has certain beneficial impacts. (1) Deaf students may widen their knowledge and become more conscious

of the language and culture; (2) Deaf students can increase their awareness of the usage of English as a global language, allowing them to begin learning English.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The community service activities in this program were carried out through lectures, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and workshops on the use of bilingual storybooks and digital technology-based games for students with hearing impairments at SLB B Yakut Purwokerto. The community service activity began with observation and coordination with the school. Interviews were conducted with the principal to identify the obstacles and problems faced by both teachers and students at SLB B Yakut in learning English. Then, the community service program continued with the dissemination of teaching media in the form of books and games to improve students' English vocabulary acquisition. Lectures were conducted through discussion on the use of bilingual storybooks and flashcards, speech-to-text applications, and digital technology-based games. Subsequently, a focus group discussion was held with school teachers on the results of the counseling, as well as practical use of storybooks, speech-to-text applications, and digital technology-based games involving junior high school students in English classes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program involving three lecturers from the English Language Education study program was carried out in several stages, as follows:

1. Providing Teaching Materials and Media

The first step was to get the teaching materials. The team got media that was specially designed for students with special needs. Flashcards with clear pictures and contrasting colors were picked to make it easier to identify stuff. All the media was picked based on how kids have limited attention spans and tend to respond better to visual and auditory stuff. The team also prepared several bilingual storybooks. These books contain short stories with texts in Indonesian and English side by side, accompanied by narrative illustrations that help children understand the context. It is said that children with hearing impairments have delays in a variety of areas, including the development of spoken language and literacy abilities. As a result, the instructor may present the lesson more effectively by using a visual aid such as picture cards. The picture cards might be sketches, magazine cutouts, or photographs. It is simplest to separate the image cards by size: large ones for class work, and tiny ones for individual/pair/group work (Scott & Ytreberg, 2001).

The selection of bilingual storybooks is made by considering many factors, namely the suitability of the language used for the students' age, the quality of accurate translation, attractive and colorful illustrations, the suitability of the story theme to the students' interests, additional activities available in the book, as well as the moral values and messages that can be learned by the students. The team also provided a collection of digital technology-based games, which were the result of a third-semester project assignment for students in the English Language Education study program. These teaching media were then handed over to the school

From discussions during the training for teachers, the teachers acknowledged that this training opened up new insights, because so far they had relied more on textbooks. Adi, Unsiyah, and Fadhilah (2017) discovered eight obstacles and techniques utilized by English teachers to address the difficulty of teaching English to deaf pupils. First, the instructors' issue of modifying the content and media for teaching deaf students was overcome by researching various types of media to educate deaf students and learning from the teacher's personal experience. Second, the challenge is locating the proper media so that the instructor may use pictures, videos, and prototypes in the classroom. Third, a difficulty resulting from pupils' errors in interpreting and predicting words. The problem was solved by writing the English vocabulary on the whiteboard and employing alphabetic sign language. Fourth, the problem is to capture the pupils' attention. The instructor deals with this issue by pounding on the table to get the kids' attention, walking around the room, and asking for assistance from the pupils in front. Fifth, issues relating to kids' limited vocabulary. The teacher fixed it by asking them to bring dictionaries. Sixth, the pupils' prior knowledge. To deal with this challenge, the teacher assigns homework and provides several examples. Seventh, the problem is that kids have difficulty distinguishing between similar terms. This problem is tackled by giving students with examples and comparing the meanings of the words in context. Eighth, teachers must use repetition to communicate what they are teaching. It is solved because the teacher is patient in instructing the kids. However, as noted by Andrews et al. (2004), teachers of children and teens with hearing impairments must comprehend their characteristics, needs, and talents in order to provide suitable classroom activities. Ristiani (2018) also mentioned that teachers must adapt the material and media suitable for teaching, students perform mistakes in understanding words because of their lack of vocabulary mastery, teachers struggle to get students' attention, students have limited vocabulary mastery, teachers are unprofessional, and repetition is required in delivering the material taught to deaf students.



Picture 2. Teachers Workshop

3. Digital Technology Support

As an innovation, the team presented a collection of simple games developed by students on platforms such as Wordwall, Genially, Carrd, Quiz.zep, and Quizalize. These games are designed with attractive displays, relevant stories, and activities that are easy for children to follow. Some of the games introduced included matching games (matching pictures and words) and guessing games (guessing the names of animals or objects). Trials of the games in the classroom showed very positive responses. The children were interested when the screen displayed the visuals from the games and they enjoyed trying out the games. Teachers assessed

that these games were an effective way to maintain the attention of students.



Picture 3. Digital Technology-based Games



Picture 4. Guiding Teachers to Practice the Games

4. Learning Practice using the Media

After the session with the teachers was over, the team and students conducted teaching practice with 30 junior high school students. The students were divided into small groups, and the volunteer team and the college students tried to read stories from bilingual books. In addition, to support the story reading, the team showed flashcards containing vocabulary related to the story being read. The storytelling technique used was visual storytelling, which involved rich and detailed illustrations as a means of communication, animations to clarify the storyline, and visuals to bridge the gap in understanding. Simple sign language with facial expressions and gestures was also used to provide a more immersive experience. The students appeared enthusiastic when they saw the flashcards and bilingual storybooks. They demonstrated sign language after they learned new vocabulary. Some of them also tried to pronounce the words. In addition, the students also tried to read several sentences in the storybook independently. In line with this, a research conducted by Kurniawati (2017) indicated that the use of Media Fun Thinkers, visual teaching media, improves the English vocabulary mastery of deaf children in grade VII of SMPLB-B at SLB Wiyata Dharma 1 Sleman, where deaf children have a preference for visual instruction and are very excited about and engaged in things that captivate their visual attention, such as Media Fun Thinkers, which present pictures. In addition, Yunisari, Kasim, Marthaban (2021) added that teachers should clarify the meaning of words based on context and presenting visuals of nouns being thought so that students understand the term and its form.

In carrying out the community service activities, the team faced several obstacles that affected the implementation process, although they did not prevent the activities from being successful. One of the main obstacles was the difficulty of students with hearing disabilities in understanding English sentence patterns. Their hearing limitations meant that they needed a more visual and repetitive learning approach, which took longer to achieve optimal understanding. This required the team to adjust their teaching methods to be more inclusive and easier to understand. In addition, the community service team faced obstacles in communication because the team had not yet fully mastered sign language. This lack of fluency slowed down the process of delivering material and interacting with students, especially when explaining complex concepts in English. To overcome this, the team used visual aids and eventually learned simple sign language from the students. Although these obstacles slowed down some

stages of the activity, overall they did not pose a significant barrier. The activities were still carried out well through strategic adaptation and intensive collaboration with relevant parties. The enthusiasm of the students and the cooperation of the volunteer team were key to overcoming challenges, ensuring that the objectives of the volunteer program were achieved with satisfactory results. Teacher techniques for teaching English to deaf students. Zahro, Islami, and Hamdani (2023) highlighted that the teacher used five strategies to teach deaf students: (1) refrain from pressuring students to master grammar, (2) teach with simple conversation, (3) write down the phonetic transcription of each word taught, (4) use various media, and (5) speak slowly and clearly to the students and use sign language to give instructions.



Picture 5. Using Bilingual Storybook

CONCLUSION

Overall, the community service activities at SLB B Yakut have gone according to plan, although the desired outcomes have not yet been fully achieved. The provision of teaching materials, especially bilingual storybooks, has proven to have a positive impact on student engagement. Teachers have also benefited from training that has enriched their teaching strategies. Meanwhile, digital games show great potential in improving concentration and motivation to learn, although device constraints remain a challenge. With improvements in the next phase, this program is expected to deliver inclusive, innovative, and sustainable English literacy practices and become a model that can be replicated in other special schools.

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