

# Innovative strategies for teaching English in special school: Teachers' experiences and voices

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# Introduction

## Background:

- Education in Special Needs Schools (SLB) is crucial to meet the diverse needs of students with special needs.
- SLB faces unique challenges such as social stigma, varied student needs, and curriculum adaptation.
- Teaching English in SLB requires methods tailored to the unique characteristics of students.
- Previous research has focused more on broader educational practices in special schools, with limited attention to the dynamics of English language teaching.
- There is a gap in lack of focused inquiry into how English language instruction is planned, delivered, and adapted by teachers working directly with students with special needs

# Research Question

- How do teachers design and implement English language teaching methods for students with special needs at SLB-AC Dharma Wanita Sidoarjo?
- What challenges do teachers face in teaching English at SLB-AC Dharma Wanita Sidoarjo?

# Method

- Type of Research: Qualitative with an interpretive and naturalistic approach.
- Location and Time: SLB-AC Dharma Wanita Sidoarjo, East Java, from October to December 2023.
- Participants: English teachers at the junior high school level (grades VII, VIII, and IX).
- Data Collection Techniques: Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.
- Data Analysis: Transcription, thematic analysis, and interpretation/validation.

# Results

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

- curriculum, adapted combination of K-13 and Independent curriculum (kurikulum Merdeka)
- Teaching method, mild: reading and writing. Severe: matching and object pointing. Special: Object pointing only
- Repetition, used frequently- one topic could last a full semester

# Results

## TEACHING CHALLENGES

- Managing students' moods and motivation
- Designing differentiated test materials
- Communication barriers with students in the severe category
- Need for visual and verbal media support

# Discussion

- Teachers at SLB-AC Dharma Wanita implement diverse and adaptive English teaching strategies based on student categories (mild, severe, special).
- Instruction is tailored to individual learning needs, using repetition, object recognition, and simple vocabulary.
- The study shows a clear contrast between teaching in SLB and regular schools — SLB requires personalized curriculum modification, not just standard lesson delivery.
- Teachers face unique challenges such as managing student emotions, designing custom materials, and handling varied learning paces.
- These findings reinforce the importance of inclusive, flexible pedagogy and the need for continuous professional development for special education teachers.

# Key findings

- Teachers adapt strategies to three student categories:

Mild: reading & writing

Severe: object matching & pointing

Special: pointing only

- Repetition is important – sometimes one topic is repeated for an entire semester.
- Teachers combine K-13 and Independent Curriculum flexibly.
- Emotional state of students significantly affects learning success.
- English teachers in SLB face both instructional and emotional-labor challenges.

# Research benefits

## A. For Teachers:

- Provides insight into effective English teaching strategies in SLB contexts.
- Encourages teachers to be flexible and student-centered.

## B. For Schools & Stakeholders:

- Helps improve inclusive learning environments.
- Supports curriculum development tailored for students with special needs.

## C. For Policy Makers:

- Emphasizes the need for professional development in inclusive education.
- Highlights the urgency of psychological and pedagogical support systems for SLB teachers.

# Conclusion

- Diverse and adaptive strategies are necessary in special schools
- Teachers should receive regular training in inclusive education
- Collaboration between school, family, and community is key
- Government should ensure access to inclusive learning resources

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