

Media for Teaching English to Children with Mental Retardation**Aulia Ramadanti***Universitas Airlangga*

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Abstract: Teaching English for children with mental retardation of course is a challenging experience. Even for the professional teacher, it is a challenge to teach English for children with mental retardation. This becomes an issue that teacher must provide good explanation especially the media. Media is considered as an important thing when teacher teach. Purpose of this study is to find out which media that could be the best media to teach English for student with mental retardation. Besides, there is no perfect media, the media could be different based on the class' situation. This research used a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research involves concern in analysis of data such as utterances, sentences, transcripts, notes, words, videos, pictures, recording, also audio-visual materials. This research concerned in describing the observation in the class and taking field notes what happened during the observation. The observation held in SMPLB (School for Children with Special Need) Aisyiyah Tulangan on 17, 18, 24 November and 1 & 2. Researcher found out that SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan still lacks of media for teaching English. English is a local content and subject which is not taught in schools every day. The school also does not have a special module for teaching English. The module for students is only limited to practice questions that are made independently by the teacher according to the existing curriculum, there are no supporting books such as textbooks for students. The lack of support from the school foundation to support learning in schools, even though the teachers have given their best for the students.

Keywords: TEF; children with mental retardation; special school

Abstrak : Bagi guru yang profesional, mengajar bahasa Inggris bagi anak tunagrahita merupakan tantangan tersendiri. Hal ini menjadi masalah bahwa guru harus memberikan penjelasan yang baik terutama media. Media dianggap sebagai hal yang penting ketika guru mengajar. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui media mana yang dapat menjadi media terbaik untuk mengajar bahasa Inggris bagi siswa tunagrahita. Selain itu, tidak ada media yang sempurna, media bisa berbeda tergantung situasi kelas. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian kualitatif melibatkan perhatian dalam analisis data seperti ucapan, kalimat, transkrip, catatan, kata-kata, video, gambar, rekaman, juga bahan audio visual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan observasi di kelas dan mencatat apa yang terjadi selama observasi. Observasi yang dilakukan di SMPLB Aisyiyah Tulangan pada tanggal 17, 18, 24 November dan 1 & 2. Peneliti menemukan bahwa SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan masih kekurangan media untuk pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Bahasa Inggris adalah muatan lokal dan mata pelajaran yang tidak diajarkan di sekolah setiap hari. Sekolah juga tidak memiliki modul khusus untuk pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Modul untuk siswa hanya sebatas latihan soal yang dibuat secara mandiri oleh guru sesuai kurikulum yang ada, belum ada buku penunjang seperti buku ajar untuk siswa. Kurangnya dukungan dari pihak yayasan sekolah untuk mendukung pembelajaran di sekolah, padahal para guru telah memberikan yang terbaik untuk para siswa.

Kata kunci: TEF; anak-anak dengan keterbelakangan mental; sekolah khusus

INTRODUCTION

Children with mental retardation based on Association on Mental Deficiency (1983) is a condition of below average intellectual followed by deficit in adaptive behavior during the developmental period. The World Health Organization (WHO) also states mental retardation as an incomplete development of intellectual that is easily noticed during the developmental period. Mental retardation can be noticed since baby and the first person who can recognized it is their parents. If parents know their children is children with mental retardation, they can give the best treatment for them, especially in education. Special schools for disability students with intellectual disorder are given autonomy to design a specific curriculum based on the students' needs and abilities.

Regarding language teaching methods that are suitable for children with special needs, in fact there is no method that really fits and can be applied. Teachers must be active in teaching, which must be able to try many teaching methods in order to get a teaching style or style for students (Robingatin et al., 2021). Teachers are expected not to give up in trying many teaching techniques and continue to innovate. However, in reality, most teachers are stuck in their comfort zone and only use methods according to the teacher which can be delivered well. Robingatin (2020) gets his students to talk by making videos about what they have learned in class. By making this video, the teacher can monitor the level of the student's language skills and finally find out what students need to develop their language skills.

English Learning Teaching still focuses on performance based learning or task based learning, which is teaching based on the student's tasks or learning outcomes (Kumaravadivelu, 2005). The value of the assignment becomes a parameter for the student to be able to understand the learning that has been given. In fact, if we examine further, the learning process of each child is different. Some are actually in the learning process, have good performance, and actively answer the teacher's questions in class, but when the teacher gives them assignments or exams the student gets poor results. This could happen due to several factors, such as when the student was not feeling well, anxious and afraid to face the exam, or it could also turn out that the student was unable to understand the exam questions (Rizky Idhartono, 2020). This also applies to language learning for children with special needs. Most teachers only focus on the output or results of the learning. Even though the process is also very necessary, especially for children with mental retardation, teachers must really pay attention to the teaching and learning process. Children with mental retardation need special methods and guidance from the start, what they should learn, what they should prepare and what they should do. Unlike children who have normal intuition who can complete their own tasks, guidance is needed for children with mental retardation.

Learning English for mentally retarded students is expected to have speaking skills, able to convey their thoughts and able to communicate with others (Prayitno, 2007). However, one of the obstacles when teaching English to mentally retarded children and hindering their learning process is the lack of learning and teaching media. The use of English teaching media for mentally retarded children must be formulated and planned according to the material and condition of the child, in this case the planning and selection of teaching media must pay attention to the level of development and characteristics possessed by the child. Gerlack and Ely (2020) mention that there are 4 recommended steps in choosing teaching media; first write in objective, second determine the domain in which the objective can be classified such as cognitive, affective and psychomotor, third select an appropriate strategy within the domain which already determined, and the last is select the appropriate media. It seems clear that the steps in choosing media are aimed at achieving learning activities based on cognitive, effective and psychomotor aspects of students who are the subject of teaching.

The use of teaching media can increase the ability of independence in children with special needs (Nainggolan & Agung, 2016). The teaching process requires innovative and creative designs, both teaching methods, devices and teaching media so that the teaching process is variative. Learning

through media provides practical value, mastering the different abilities of each child, changing large objects into small ones and being able to bring them into the classroom (Amumpuni & Rahmasari, 2019). Teaching media applied to mentally retarded children must be adaptive. This is to support and motivate children to learn languages more easily and feel happier because there are minimal barriers to learning. Children with intellectual disabilities have difficulty getting opportunities to build social interactions so that positive activities are needed to fill spare time (Li, 2010). Students with intellectual disabilities have limitations in intellectual function (learning, giving reasons and solving problems) and behavioral adaptations, especially challenges to anxiety and self-confidence under the pressures of school assignments (Fatwikiningsih, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to explain English teaching media for mentally retarded children at SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan which was carried out by researchers for 6 meetings. This is done to evaluate whether the teaching media used are in accordance with the needs and are able to improve students' abilities in learning English. This research is also expected to help other researchers in finding new methods and new media designs in teaching English for mentally retarded children.

METHODS

Participants in this study were teachers of SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan at the junior high school level and specifically to teach mentally retarded. In this case, there is only 1 junior high school teacher at SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan because there are only 7 junior high school students in this school. SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan is a special school located on Jalan Kenongo, Tulangan, Sidoarjo. SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan accommodates deaf and mentally retarded students from kindergarten to high school. The author chose teacher with mental retardation at the junior high school level as participant because according to the author, junior high school students are students who have started to be introduced to English and are suitable for the purpose of this study, namely the use of English teaching media.

This research used a qualitative descriptive method. As stated by Wray and Bloomer (2006) qualitative method is the best method to describe and interpret data, not to calculate. This method is useful for present study to analyse, describe, explain, interpret, and validate the findings. Qualitative research involves concern in analysis of data such as utterances, sentences, transcripts, notes, words, videos, pictures, recording, also audio-visual materials. This research concerned in describing the observation in the class and taking field notes so the descriptive qualitative method was employed in this study. The researcher classified, described then explained the data of the research. Descriptive method was used in this research to describe the result of class observation and explain the data based on the field note that was taken on the day of observation. The researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In these field notes, the researcher records, in an unstructured or semi-structured way (using some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know), activities at the research site.

The procedure for this research began on November 10, 2021 when the author asked permission from the teacher at the school to conduct research in the SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan class. After obtaining the permission, the writer conducted observations on 17, 18, 24 November and 1 & 2 December 2021. Observations were made when the teacher was teaching English in her class. Writer asked teacher to teach English to their student in the class using teaching media which are they usually used in class. Observations were carried out to find out the result of using certain teaching media which provided by teacher in class by take field notes what happened during teaching process. It can be shown about the use of the teaching media to the student, whether it can help them to provide better learning or other reaction and learning result in student. Observations were only carried out for 5 days because the 2nd week of December was the final exam. Observations were carried out for 120 minutes of learning starting at 08.00-10.00. In class, the writer takes field notes and notes what happens in the class so that it can then be analyzed into research results.

The author also interviewed the teacher to find out more about teaching and learning English activities in the classroom. Some questions such why did they use that media, what are other media that they usually use to teach English are asked to the teacher to find out more about English teaching media which is affect student's understanding of English. After making observations, field notes and teacher interviews to collect the data needed by the author which are result and student's habit of using certain teaching media provided by teacher. Besides, interview with teacher will support the data about the use of teaching media in the class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As explained above, the existence of media for teaching English is one of the efforts to improve learning abilities and accelerate student understanding. The use of media can increase the ability of independence in children with special needs (Nainggolan & Agung, 2016). The teaching process requires innovative and creative designs, both teaching methods, devices and teaching media so that the learning process is varied. Teaching through media provides practical value, mastering the different abilities of each child, changing large objects into small ones and being able to bring them into the classroom. Media for teaching English applied to mentally retarded children must be adaptive. This is to support and motivate children to learn languages more easily and feel happier because there are minimal barriers to learning.

During the 3 weeks of observation, there were 5 meetings for English lessons which were held every Wednesday and Thursday. Although lessons are conducted on Wednesdays and Thursdays, children do not always fully learn English. This is because mentally retarded children are very difficult to learn English for two hours straight, so they must be interspersed with playing or telling stories with their friends or their teacher. This is also one of the factor's why mentally retarded children are more difficult and tend to take longer to understand English. Class hours at school are only one hour to two hours, which is not only filled with English lessons every day. Teachers should pay more attention to the ability and understanding of students in learning English, as the teacher of SMP SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan did. In the results of the writer's observations, the teacher always sees what the student does not understand and what they need, so that the teacher can develop media and teaching methods. When students cannot pronounce well, the teacher will help students by giving examples until students can follow the lessons given. However, it is still difficult for them to pronounce because they are not familiar with the language. Another observation from the author is that when students experience learning difficulties, the teacher will come directly to the student and help them by looking closely at the student so that students also have an inner closeness with the teacher and are expected to be easier to understand the lessons. The teacher will not issue judgmental words which can make the child's mental down like "how can you did not do it, this is easy", on the contrary the teacher will say words that motivate and praise them such as "good job" and "smart child", so students understand that they can be succeed and feel motivated them to learn more.

The phase of learning of mentally retarded children is very dependent on the media used. The teacher will do more drawing than writing or dictating lessons. The media used can be in the form of blocks, puzzles, or hand drawings by the teacher. As already done by SLB teacher Aisyah Tulangan who used magnetic blocks of the A-Z alphabets that were pasted on the blackboard, then students could make sentences based on the alphabets that had been pasted on the blackboard. These colored magnetic blocks are proven to make it easier for students to learn the alphabet better. One of the reasons is that bright colors make students more interested and it is easier to understand what the teacher is telling them. Besides blocks, the teacher also uses flashcards when learning numbers. The flashcards used are colorful and made of thick cardboard, making it easier for students to read and hold the flashcards. Judging from its function and shape, Flashcards can be developed into teaching media for mentally retarded students because students can use their sense of sight in understanding

the message of the material contained in the flash card media. In addition, flash cards can change its functions as a playing media such as playing cards. The use of flash cards as playing media is associated with the habits of children who like to play, including children with mild intellectual disabilities. Their study stated that children with intellectual disabilities can play various kinds of toys in their spare time, including playing cards such as UNO, Solitaire and so on (Yucesoy-Ozkan et al., 2018). To strengthen the statement above, other research result by Maulana (2017) conclude that the use of punctuation cards is effective in improving the simple writing skills of mild mentally retarded children, this is because the use of card media can increase children's focus through playing activities using cards.

However actually flashcard media alone is not enough to make students fast to understand the material presented by the teacher. In addition to the factor that mentally retarded students are indeed difficult to understand quickly the knowledge conveyed, the lack of teaching media is also one of the problems that must be faced by teachers in schools. Even for learning numbers (1-10) in English, they have to go through 5 meetings to really get to know and understand. Even in these 5 meetings students still forgot or could not pronounce the pronunciation correctly. The teacher also does not clearly provide pronunciation training to students. According to observations, the teacher only sticks to the flashcards which have been prepared and students are left to spell the flashcards without clearer direction from the teacher. It is better before entering the material to be delivered, the teacher prepares a lot of teaching media that will be delivered to students. If students find it difficult with English pronunciation, songs can be a way for students to hear more clearly what is being said. This is actually based on observations in class, students have good motor and sensory abilities such as writing, reading, remembering and even drawing. Students' social skills are also very good, it can be seen during their break time they are busy chatting with each other and asking about their recent hobbies such as playing games or just watching videos on YouTube as entertainment. It is just that they tend to be slow in the academic field or slow learner. Therefore, the teaching media is highly recommended in the learning of mentally retarded students.

When the author made observations for 5 meetings at SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan, the teacher only used flashcards and magnetic alphabet blocks as media for teaching English in class. However, after the lesson was given, the teacher gave practice questions 3 times. This is also to train students' motor skills, namely writing. Students are asked to repeat and match them so that they understand better. There are some things that are very unfortunate in giving evaluations by the teacher, the teacher only makes assignments with writing, there are no interesting pictures or colors and helps students to do assignments. In student evaluation, the teacher only relies on practice questions such as matching and rewriting with the aim that students will remember more quickly because they continue to repeat what they have written. In fact, by giving practice questions in the form of pictures and colors, students can learn more besides English, they also learn to recognize colors.

In addition to the teaching media used in the classroom, the school also provides modules made by the teachers at the school themselves. Modules are made based on the existing curriculum and adapted to the abilities of students. Because the school foundation does not provide facilities in the form of textbooks or practice questions, teachers are forced to make their own modules that have been adapted to the existing curriculum. The module created by the teacher is designed to be carried out with parents at home. Therefore, this is also an effort to improve the understanding of mentally retarded students' lessons. Parental involvement when they do the homework allows parents to understand their child and understand their development. The role of parents is also very important for child's development. In addition to teaching media that have been designed by the teacher, parents must also support them by giving more attention to their children

The media used by the teacher is less varied, this could be due to the lack of teaching English by the teacher. The module used does not include practice questions in English. Based on the teacher's confession, this can also be influenced by students who find it difficult to understand English lessons.

In addition, English is also a local content in Indonesia so that teachers are not too focused on developing students' English skills. In a week it could even be that English lessons are not taught in class. Teachers pay more attention and train children's motor skills, so children will usually be given puzzles or blocks to play with their friends. As explained above, teachers prefer to see interactions between students rather than during lessons. During breaks, students will chat and communicate with others to ask what they did yesterday, their hobbies and others.

The English teacher who is also the homeroom teacher at the school admits that the lack of teaching media in schools can hinder the teaching and learning process of students. Therefore, teachers make their own teaching media by relying on the creativity of each teacher. Teachers can use flashcards, alphabet blocks, and even teachers often draw on the board to explain lessons. The importance of support from the foundation regarding the procurement of teaching media is also a factor, such as providing textbooks and practice books that support student learning. Of course, the textbook is in accordance with the teaching curriculum for mentally retarded students. That way students also become more advanced because they can understand English and become an additional skill for them. Although one of the obstacles for mentally retarded students when learning English is those who have difficulty pronouncing the pronunciation in English, it would be better if the teacher also provided appropriate teaching media. For example, providing songs and dances or even videos to watch together.

CONCLUSION

The use of English teaching media in SLB Aisyiyah Tulangan is still limited. It can be shown based on the observation, their teaching and learning media just limited to flashcard and block which they had in the school. Teacher did not use technology as their teaching method because they did not want their student addict to gadget. Besides, teacher can control the use of gadget in the class and make students understand that they cannot use their gadget unless for learning. The non-existence of textbook and practice book as teaching and learning media also showed that the school lack in teaching media and they admit their lack. The importance of support from the foundation regarding the procurement of teaching media is also a factor, such as providing textbooks and practice books that support student learning.

The use of English teaching media for mentally retarded students is very necessary for the development of students' English skills. However, this must also be considered with the availability of existing media and support from the school. Teachers must also be creative and innovative people to create teaching media so that students become more motivated and more enthusiastic to learn English.

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