

TEACHING ENGLISH IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM AT A PRIVATE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN MALANG: A CASE STUDY

Lestari Setyowati, Adelia Anindita Sumantri, Afifah Adillah, Aulia Nur Arista, Hensa Pradianti,

Universitas Negeri Malang lestari.setyowati.fs@um.ac.id, adelia.anindita.2102216@students.um.ac.id, afifah.adillah.2102216@students.um.ac.id, aulia.nur.2102216@students.um.ac.id, hensa.pradianti.2102216@students.um.ac.id

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the teacher's challenges and strategies in implementing inclusive teaching for English subject. The study uses a case study design. The subject of the study was an English teacher at a private Catholic School in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The data were gathered through observation and semi-structured interviews. The findings highlighted deficiencies in inclusive classroom practice, including inadequate support for SEN students, lack of teacher training programs for inclusive teaching, and limited teacher collaboration. Additionally, the research identified several strategies employed by the teacher to enhance English language learning, such as encouraging positive feedback, proper seating arrangements, and using audio-video media for teaching, these insights offer valuable perspectives for educators seeking to enhance the implementation of inclusive education (IE) in Indonesia.

Keywords:

inclusive education; implementation; challenges; strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education holds a significant role in the well-being of every student, including those with disabilities, and in fostering inclusive, peaceful, and equitable societies (The United Nations Conventions, 2016). It improves the overall quality of education for every child and plays a vital role in changing discriminatory attitudes. By fostering social relationships and interactions, inclusive systems promote respect and understanding among students with diverse abilities and backgrounds (Anderson & Graham, 2016). Therefore, inclusive education establishes an atmosphere of respect, ensuring that each student has equal opportunities to engage and learn. This encourages the development of friendships and mutual respect between students and teachers (Moore, et al., 2017). In addition, it offers diverse learning opportunities and increased support for all students, helping them acquire the attitudes, values, and skills necessary for coexisting and collaborating in a diverse society. Ultimately, the goal of inclusive education is to create a space where every child can actively participate and learn, reflecting the principle that all children have the right to receive an equitable education. (Roldan, et.al., 2021)

In Indonesia, inclusive education has a legal foundation to support the implementation of inclusive education. Regulation No. 70/2009 on Inclusive Education defines inclusive education as a system that allows all students, including those with impairments and those who are gifted or have special talents, to participate in education alongside their peers. The 2019–2024 Master Plan on National Development of Inclusive Education views inclusive education as an approach addressing the educational and learning needs of all children, particularly focusing on vulnerable, marginalized, and neglected individuals, including those with special needs. According to Mulyadi, (2017), there are two goals of inclusive education in Indonesia: Firstly, the goal is to give all students, regardless of their deformities, prospective intelligence, or particular gifts, an opportunity to get an education that is appropriate for their needs. Mulyadi continued that the second objective is

realizing the application of education that respects diversity and does not discriminate against any student who has anomalies, potential intelligence, or unusual skills. This policy separates learners into abnormal and general categories while emphasizing the need for diversity and nondiscrimination. Instead, it primarily focuses on students with impairments. In the Circular Letter of Dirjen Dikdasmen Depdiknas No.380/C.66/MN/200, dated 20 January 2003 on Inclusive Education, it states that every district/town in all areas of Indonesia must have at least four inclusive schools, that is in the level of Elementary School, Junior High School, High School and Vocational High School, minimally one school for each level (Oktadiana & Wardana, 2019). It shows that Indonesia is very supportive of inclusive education.

One of the Indonesian inclusive schools is PGA (Pendidikan Guru Agama) which was eventually renamed as SMAK Bhakti Luhur. It is a Catholic High School that has been established since 1997. This school is under the ownership of a private foundation that accommodates an orphanage that was established 50 years ago. Bhakti Luhur institution holds kindergarten, elementary school, junior and also senior high schools, fostering an inclusive educational environment. Thus, orphans who commonly have special needs can study here with the help of this foundation who are mostly funded during their lifetime. However, regular students also have the same opportunity to register at this school. SMAK Bhakti Luhur was selected because there is limited existing research regarding inclusive education practices in Indonesian Catholic senior high schools (SMAK). Moreover, SMAK Bhakti Luhur is the first Catholic High School in Indonesia and the only one on Java Island until now that has local content for children with disabilities.

Despite these legal provisions, Indonesia faces challenges in ensuring inclusive education for persons with disabilities. Efforts are needed to enhance access to justice, eliminate stigma, and develop policies and programs based on a human rights approach. Notoprayitno (2019) has identified weaknesses in the legal framework, impeding the government's ability to uphold the right to inclusive education for this demographic. He stated that the challenge in

effectively implementing inclusive education in Indonesia arises from issues related to the legal framework and legal practices. In smaller Indonesian towns, some schools face challenges in adopting inclusive education due to a lack of special assistant teachers, inadequate facilities, limited information, and insufficient support from education offices at the provincial and district levels. He also stated that, in a general sense, three main challenges arise in the execution of inclusive education. These encompass socio-cultural issues, such as societal and parental belief systems; regulatory challenges involving technical policies and the operational aspects of inclusive education; and the establishment of a robust support system (Suhendri, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves addressing teacher shortages, improving infrastructure, enhancing information dissemination, and fostering a more supportive administrative framework at both provincial and district levels. Therefore, this current research focuse on answerting what challenges and barriers exist in implementing and sustaining inclusive school environments for students with special needs and what strategies and practices are effective in promoting a more inclusive and supportive environment for students with disabilities in schools.

METHOD

Research Design

A case study design was employed in this research to get an in-depth exploration of the inclusive education practice at Catholic High School Bhakti Luhur Malang. According to Creswell (2014), a case study design involves investigating processes, activities, and events. Therefore, this design was appropriate to be applied, because it allows for a thorough depiction of the environment and individuals.

This research occurred at SMAK Bhakti Luhur, Malang, Indonesia. The subject of the study was one English teacher who works in this school named Mr. S. He served as an English subject teacher. He gained his associate's degree at IKIP Malang and then continued his bachelor's degree

in English Language Education at IKIP Budi Utomo Malang. He has been teaching English subjects in SMAK Bhakti Luhur for 37 years since this school was still called PGA. The criteria for choosing the subject was because of the teacher's exposure to working at an inclusive school setting and used to help students with special needs. The instruments used by the researchers were interview and observation. The researchers used semi-structured interviews and passive participation observation. The questions for the interview were related to the research questions, namely the challenges and strategies.

Table 1. Blueprint of interview

Aspect	Indicators
Challenges	 Support Class environment Collaboration (teacher and parents)
Strategies	Maintaining Positive Classroom environment Classroom management Instructional Media

In gathering the data, the first instrument used was class observation. The second instrument used was a semi-structured interview to delve into the teacher's experience and perception. There were 20 questions given to the teacher regarding inclusive education practice at SMAK Bhakti Luhur. The data was gathered on the first week of November in 2023. The researchers used an observation checklist adapted from https://inclusionexpert.com/

After conducting an observation and interview, the researchers analyzed the data through coding and analyzing the data for emerging themes. These are the steps in analyzing the data; (1) Familiarizing the data, which was examining the gathered information from interview transcripts and recording and fully engaging with the data to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. (2) Open coding, which recognizes and categorizes important phrases or sentences (3) Generating themes and categorizing, in which the data will be organized based on its similar phrases and meanings, then formed into several groups and named the categories according to the group's characteristics, and (4) interpreting and writing reports. The coding from the interview was written as (Eng Teacher/Ch//int). 'Eng Teacher' means the English teacher, 'Ch' means challenges, and 'int' means data from the interview. All data were coded the same way in accordance with the aspects relevant to the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher conducted an observation and interview in the second week of November 2023. There were twenty-two students in the class and one student named K had visual impairment and was categorized as total blindness. The class was taught by an English teacher, named Mr. S. The results were categorized into eight themes as presented in the following section.

Challenges in Inclusive Education

The Absence of Shadow Teacher Assistance

From the class interview, it is evident that K was not accompanied by a shadow teacher. She was helped by her friends in the class. K asked them several times for information during the viewing section using YouTube. From the interview, Mr. S confirmed:

"K was never accompanied by a shadow teacher." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

During the exam, no shadow teacher was helping K. She was helped by T, her friend. So, K must wait for her friend to finish her exam to assist K in reading the questions. Mr. S said:

"During the exam, one of the students named T would read out the questions and options one by one." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

It can be seen that shadow teacher assistance is paramount in inclusive education practice. It is supported by Hamid (2020), who states that a shadow teacher is responsible for supporting students who require assistance in various activities which involves addressing gaps in the learning process and providing overall support to help them develop academic and social skills.

Also, a shadow teacher must have qualifications and exposure in dealing with students' diverse needs. Sulaksono (2007) stated that a shadow teacher should possess an educational background, exhibit an open and cooperative character, demonstrate strong dedication and persistence, impart valuable lessons in good manners, mutual respect, tolerance, and empathy, and serve as a positive role model for all students. In this case, the school should consider providing a shadow teacher since K possesses severe blindness, so she should be accompanied by a specialist shadow teacher and not her friend, named T. T is one of the mainstream students in K's class who was willing to help K. Because of that T's learning was often distracted because K could not do her tasks independently. Having a shadow teacher would enable T to focus more on her own learning instead of helping K most of her time. It is indeed a good thing for T to accompany K in the classroom, but it would be better if K is assisted by a shadow teacher who has more understanding of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) students' condition like K.

Lack of Inclusive Teaching Training

Teachers who are assigned to teach inclusive classroom should have adequate training. The training can enhance the teacher's ability to deal with inclusive teaching. Moreover, the training can expand the teacher's knowledge and practical skills in designing curriculum in inclusive classrooms (Ismiatun & Atika, 2020) and how to help SEN students when they have problems during the teaching and learning process.

If there is a new curriculum, I will always attend the teacher training that is held at the beginning of each year or at the beginning of learning. All teachers in the school are always included. But for special training for Inclusive teaching and learning, I have never attended, only general training. (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

The result of the interview shows that the English teacher never had a chance to join a training in inclusive teaching. Small-scale research conducted by Ismiatun and Atika (2020) reported that teachers need some training to deal with SEN students. Additionally, as reported by Hata, et al., (2021) lack of teachers' training in inclusive education becomes a major

challenge both in quantity and quality in Indonesia.

No extra time during exam

The school provides a similar examination set for all students, regardless of their visual abilities, encompassing both those with visual impairments and those without, who are in the same grade level. It does not provide extra time for students with disabilities. Mr. S explained:

"K was not given extra time to take the exam. The time given is the same as other students. If the allotted time is 90 minutes, then K must be able to complete the exam during the allotted time limit without any extras." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

However, in an inclusive classroom setting, particular attention should be directed towards visually impaired students, both in the overall classroom environment and especially during examinations, to ensure their academic success (Belay & Yihun, 2020). Students who have visual impairments require additional time to finish assignments and examinations (Harley, 1984). In this case, K, a student with visual impairments may need more time to access and gather information from various sources because they often rely on alternative formats such as Braille, audio materials, or electronic texts, which may take longer to navigate and comprehend. Moreover, time constraints can create stress and anxiety for K, which can negatively impact performance because she will not be able to read as quickly as sighted individuals can process visual information. Inclusive schools must consider accommodations for all students without exception. Therefore, providing additional time, especially in examinations for students with visual impairments, is essential for creating an inclusive educational environment that supports their unique needs and allows them to demonstrate their abilities on an equal footing with their peers.

Lack of Teacher Collaboration

Mr. S did not collaborate with other teachers. However, He pointed out that he had an experience in working with a sports teacher when he taught at a vocational school. Mr. S spoke out: "For English subjects, I have never collaborated with other teachers." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

Subject teachers cannot work alone in the field of inclusive education. Galkienė and Dudzinskienė (2004) said that the effectiveness of teaching students with disabilities depends not only on individual specialists but also on fostering purposeful and constructive collaborative relationships. They continued that comprehensive support for SEN students can be achieved through coordinated actions and collaboration among teachers.

Fostering purposeful and constructive collaborative relationships among teachers is essential in achieving comprehensive support for students with SEN. Teachers can complement each other's efforts by sharing their experiences and knowledge. This can lead to better outcomes for students with SEN. Collaboration among teachers is a crucial aspect of inclusive education. Teachers who work together can share their knowledge and expertise to create a more effective learning environment for students with special educational needs (SEN). Collaborative teaching is used in inclusive classrooms where special education and general education teachers share responsibility for teaching the same group of students. When working in this way, the teachers are often referred to as co-teachers. In addition, fostering purposeful and constructive collaborative relationships among teachers is essential to providing comprehensive support for students with SEN. Teachers can complement each other's efforts by sharing their experiences and knowledge. This can lead to better outcomes for students with SEN.

Inadequacy of Teacher-Parent Relationships

Based on the interview result, Mr. S also claimed that he rarely communicated with K's parents. He said:

"I rarely communicate with parents, but when there is a report card collection activity for parents, I always report that K is a good student, diligent, and has character. I like and appreciate these traits." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

The insufficiency of communication can affect the overall support and academic progress of students. Teachers and parents need to maintain regular

communication to keep families informed about their children's educational experiences, advancements, and any specific requirements. A collaborative approach between teachers and parents is based on its efficiency in decision-making and its potential to produce high-quality student outcomes. Teacher-parent collaboration will optimize students' monitoring and learning which leads them to achieve their full potential and achievement (Lee et al., 2008; Reed, et al., 2012). According to Lee and Low (2013), establishing effective communication between teachers and parents is crucial for collaboration and information sharing.

Furthermore, successful communication occurs when both parties are transparent and provide support for each other's respective roles and responsibilities (Unger, et al., 2001). In this case, Mr. S should not only communicate with K's parents when the report card is distributed. For example, it is necessary to schedule a routine teacher meeting with K's parents once a month. From their discussions and meetings, both the teacher and K's parents would have some information on how well K was in the classroom, her needs, behavior, friends, and environment. Mutual understanding and continuous communication between the teachers and parents would help the teacher apply suitable strategies not only for K but also for other mainstream students.

A Small Circle of Friends

A crucial component of inclusive education is friendship. The development of meaningful social relationships and friendships is crucial to the achievement of both students with and without disabilities. Everyone values friendship, and fostering strong peer relationships is essential to achieving the first three behavior, intellectual, and communication goals. However, according to Schwab et al (2022), Each student with SEN may have conditions very different from others, which could hamper their ability to make and maintain friendships. K was selective in trusting people, she only had a small group of trusted friends because she is introverted and found it challenging to trust others even though many of her friends in the class were

always ready to help her. Mr.S explained:

"K does not interact with all of her friends, but only with a few who she considers caring and concerned about her." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int) He continued:

"If I change the seating to random, I am not sure if the other friends will behave like T because not all friends have the same attitude and character." (Eng Teacher/Ch/int)

He mentioned randomized seating arrangements which may not be effective for K. K's tendency to be in a small group of friends suggests a reliance on specific relationships, limiting her ability to handle challenges independently. Concerns about how other friends might react in new social situations indicate potential difficulties for K in adapting to change. In this case, recognizing and addressing K's social and emotional needs is crucial to effectively navigate these problems. To address these issues, teachers can work together to create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. This can be achieved through collaborative teaching practices, such as coteaching, which can help to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed. Teachers can also work together to develop strategies to help students like K build social skills and confidence, such as through peer mentoring programs or social skills training.

Strategies in Inclusive Education

Maintaining Positive Relationships (SEN student vs Teacher, and SEN student vs mainstream students)

Based on the observation results, it was revealed that the teacher fostered a welcoming classroom atmosphere and a positive learning environment to manage the students' mental states. This made K feel valued and included, as her presence was acknowledged without any differentiation from the other students. This positive dynamic was facilitated by the teacher's thorough understanding of each student. Throughout the session, the teacher consistently showed appreciation for each student, employing praise and applause. Furthermore, during the interview, it becomes clear that the teacher

also provides verbal support and motivation to encourage K. He stated that he consistently expresses appreciation for and supports K throughout her learning sessions.

".. I appreciate her efforts and try to provide materials that suit her abilities. I did not find any obstacles or problems in teaching English to K." (Eng Teacher/Ch/Str)

An essential aspect within the classroom is the presence of a positive relationship between teachers and students Sánchez, et al. (2013). Moreover, Piechurska-Kuciel (2011) also emphasizes the vital role of teacher assistance in L2 learning, suggesting that achieving successful and effective acquisition of a foreign language would be challenging, if not unattainable, without the generous and active support of teachers. Hence, recognizing the significance of the teacher-student relationship, educators should acknowledge that students must experience a sense of comfort and confidence with their teachers for successful learning. The teacher also encouraged other students to have a positive relationship with K. He often reminded the students to appreciate and respect one another.

Before starting the lesson, I always remind students that character is important. It is not enough to have good English skills, but also to have a good character. I share my experience that being kind, helpful, and not becoming a bully are things that must be done. Once the character is established, then English skills can be developed. Because if we have high skills but low character, then it will be useless. (Eng Teacher/Ch/Str)

The support and encouragement provided by teachers contribute to an enriched learning experience, may influence students' motivated learning behavior. As a result, students who are motivated and eager to invest effort in learning and classroom tasks are likely to be more actively involved in their learning.

Classroom Management

In terms of classroom management, based on the observation, the teacher grouped the seating into sets of four in a circle to ensure fair distribution. Additionally, the teacher strategically positioned student K next to student T to foster a supportive learning environment. The teacher also consistently circulates the classroom, actively monitoring students' work and assessing their engagement. The learning outcomes can be enhanced by a learning environment that aligns with the requirements of both teachers and students, fostering a conducive atmosphere and complementing classroom activities (Puteh, et al., 2015).

Picture 1 Seating arrangement





Picture 2 Seating arrangement during grouping

The teacher also walked around the classroom to monitor students' progress. Sometimes the teacher asked the students about the vocabulary and the comprehension of the text they were listening to. The teacher also repeated some instructions to make sure that the students understood what they were expected to do. Making a seating arrangement in small circles in the class ease the teacher to control the students' progress when doing the task because it was easier for him to walk around.

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Instructional media

Teaching inclusive classroom was not easy. The teacher needed to decide what instructional media to use so that it worked best for all students, both the mainstream and SEN students. Wirawan (2020) stated that media was commonly used by English teachers in the learning process. It can be the link or key to transfer teachers' concept of certain material to students' understanding. By the time the data were collected, the students were learning a procedure text. To help achieve the objective of learning, the teacher used a video. The video presented by the teacher was aimed at identifying the characteristics of a procedure text. The video discussed procedure text on how to use a camera. It also discussed the definition of a procedure text and the example. Using the video, K could listen to the material by the audio. Moreover, the teacher stated in the interview that he told K to listen to English songs. Songs allowed K to learn English.

I used the strategy of listening to songs in English to support K. With this strategy, K can choose songs that match her interests and the theme of the material being studied. For example, if the material is about Narrative Text, K can listen to a song that talks about fairies or fairy tales, and then she can retell the content of the song. I find this strategy effective as it stimulates K's interest and willingness to learn, who is an audio-visual student. (Eng Teacher/Ch/Str)

The teacher suggested K to select songs appropriate with her preferences, and any relevant materials to the subject matter she was learning. In addition to incorporating songs, another method employed by the teacher involves listening to English videos via YouTube application.

Besides songs, another strategy I use is listening to videos in English through the YouTube app. With this strategy, K can learn English materials by following the audio presented in the video. K is an obedient student and eager to learn more in understanding the learning, despite her visual impairment. I always provide support and motivation to K in the learning process. K also always prepares Braille stationery to write down the material learned. I appreciate K's willingness and effort in dealing with her own learning, which I think is better than other friends. (Eng Teacher/Ch/Str)

Due to their limited abilities, visually impaired students are unable to acquire knowledge on their own; therefore, they depend on their auditory senses for learning. Ito (2002) supported that in comprehending and producing sounds, children with visual impairment utilize prosody in which rhythmic and melodic patterns are sensitive for them in terms of language acquisition. According to Kusumastuti and Supendra (2020), this circumstance encourages teachers to design media that integrate with audio. Video and songs are viewed as effective media for students with visual disabilities since it provides an audio-based system. It can be seen through the audio narration feature which makes this media accessible for them. Additionally, videos and songs are not only educational but also highly entertaining, offering an engaging and enjoyable learning experience for students with visual disabilities. Bulan, et al., (2022) noted that pleasure activities contribute to the key factor in enhancing students' learning interest.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, we can draw the following conclusions:

(1) Inclusive education in SMAK Bhakti Luhur faces challenges with inadequate support for visually impaired students, such as lack of communication and collaboration among teachers as well as teachers and parents. Other challenges include a lack of collaboration among teachers, a noticeable communication gap between teachers and parents, and a need for training programs focused on inclusive education practices for some teachers.

(2) The teacher employs various strategies to support English language learning, such as recommending English songs that align with students' interests and the material. The English teacher often stressed the importance of having a good character, being kind and helpful, and discouraging bullying. Overall, the teacher encouraged all students to learn with their peers and consistently appreciated and supported their learning journey.

Based on our research, the practical implications are addressed to the teachers to be flexible, creative, and prepared to teach a diverse group of students with different learning needs and styles. The inclusive class setting allows teachers to gain valuable experience in being more attentive to students with special needs and in creating an environment that is conducive to the learning of all students without any form of exclusion. Additionally, teachers need to be aware and provide diverse solutions to the social and emotional needs of their students and provide a safe and supportive learning environment without isolating them from the rest of the class. Moreover, how teachers discover adaptive teaching strategies plays a crucial role in personalizing learning, meeting diverse needs, and enhancing student engagement in modern classrooms. Inclusive teaching involves creating a learning environment where all students, regardless of their background or identity, have equal opportunities to succeed. Embracing inclusive education can contribute to the creation of a more equitable and just society by providing all students with the opportunity to learn and grow. In addition to concentrating on pedagogical methods, teachers should actively participate in professional development opportunities that emphasize inclusive teaching strategies. This might involve attendance at workshops, seminars, or training sessions. Collaborating with special education professionals and experts could also enhance teachers' ability to adjust their teaching methods to meet the needs of all students. Moreover, teachers should actively seek feedback from students, parents, and colleagues to gain valuable insights into the efficacy of their inclusive teaching approaches. Continuous feedback can assist teachers in making necessary adjustments and improvements, ensuring that their classrooms remain inclusive and supportive.

This research, however, has some limitations. Firstly, it did not explore what kind of instructional media and materials that are specifically needed by the blind student in English classroom. Future researchers can conduct a research and development design to identify the kind of materials and media appropriate for them. Future researchers can also examine how teacher training programs impact the success of inclusive education in the country. An in-depth investigation into the effectiveness of professional development

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initiatives in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to address diverse learning needs would provide valuable insights.

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