

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

In this era of globalization, English is one of the most critical languages for everyone to master. In the international world, proficiency in English is essential for individuals to engage in the broader job market. Communicating in a foreign language provides faster access to extensive information and knowledge. As stated by Nishanthi (2018), the advancement of technology has reinforced the role of English as a key language in various fields, such as medicine, engineering, and education. English holds great importance as it serves as a bridge between nations. Moreover, many Indonesians recognize that English, as a global language, is crucial and should be learned by everyone.

Teachers are central to the effective implementation of learning activities in class. If the teacher teaches students correctly, students will quickly understand the knowledge conveyed, and vice versa. Not only in mastering the material to be delivered, but the teacher must also have an exciting teaching method. High student achievement results from a well-structured learning process, which requires the use of teaching strategies that align with the class's needs (Nasution, 2017). Santosa et al. (2021) added that the role of teachers today is no longer just as a source of knowledge but as a facilitator who helps students explore and apply information meaningfully. This role is becoming increasingly important in special education, where learning strategies need to be tailored to the diverse learning approaches and

abilities of students. One thing a teacher can do is use various interesting methods to facilitate the delivery of learning materials, such as verbal explanations, pictures, and other media. Therefore, interesting teaching methods are essential to facilitate students' understanding of the learning material.

English is not only taught in regular schools but also to students with special needs. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum allows English to be taught more comprehensively at multiple levels of education, including in schools that serve students with special educational needs. According to Mulyani, Kurniawan, and Setyawan (2023), the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in English learning has a positive impact on students with special needs by increasing their participation, motivation, and understanding of the material. This curriculum also helps teachers design adaptive learning to provide equal learning opportunities for all students. According to Maryanti et al. (2021) special education is a type of education designed for children who have specific learning difficulties and needs. Students with special needs cannot be taught in the same way as general students. Therefore, special education provided to these students combines elements of pedagogy and psychology. Moreover, delivering lessons to students with special needs requires integrating teaching techniques with psychological approaches throughout classroom learning activities

One of the main challenges in education today is the growing number of children with special needs attending regular schools. Over 60% of students with disabilities now spend 80% or more of their day in regular classes under

an educational model that has gained traction over the past decade (Yuan, 2023). However, many schools are not adequately equipped to support this setup. Students with special needs often face various challenges in regular classrooms, including limited academic support and social difficulties. Research shows 19% of students with learning disabilities and 35.3% with behavioral or emotional disorders experience bullying, making them more vulnerable than their nondisabled peers (Iyanda, 2022). These issues highlight that regular schools may not always be the most suitable environment for all students with special needs. Consequently, special schools such as SLB (*Sekolah Luar Biasa*) play a crucial role in delivering personalised education and support tailored to each student's abilities and challenges. These schools offer a structured, supportive environment where students can learn, develop, and socialise at a pace and with strategies that cater to their individual needs.

Special Schools (SLB) are specialised schools designed to provide tailored support and instruction for students with special needs. According to (Padmadewi & Artini, 2017), SLB is a school designed for students with special educational needs, including those who have physical, behavioural, and emotional disorders. SLB provides a more focused and directed learning environment, particularly for students whose needs cannot be adequately met in traditional schools. In particular, special schools for Deaf students (SLB B) provide a learning environment that emphasizes communication methods such as sign language and visual media to support language acquisition and academic development. In Indonesia, there are several types of special education schools, including SLB A for visually impaired students, SLB B for

those with hearing impairments, SLB C for students with autism, SLB D for students with physical disabilities, SLB E for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and SLB G for students with multiple disabilities. These schools play a critical role in addressing the linguistic and cognitive barriers faced by Deaf students, ensuring that they receive equitable and adequate education tailored to their specific needs.

The complexity of issues related to students with special needs is increasing. Each class has different conditions or problems, including students with special needs. Children with special needs can be referred to as slow to learn or have mental disorders (retarded), usually characterized by academic abilities below the average of other children (Siahaan, 2022). Children with special needs exhibit diverse characteristics depending on their conditions, which in turn affect how they respond to learning activities. In the classroom environment, both students and teachers frequently encounter challenges during the teaching and learning process. These challenges require teachers to be equipped with the ability to provide appropriate and tailored support. One condition that requires special attention and teaching strategies is Deafness, where students require alternative communication and learning methods to access educational content effectively.

Deafness is a hearing disorder that causes a person to be unable to hear sounds perfectly or at all. According to (Desiningrum, 2016) Deaf children are those whose hearing does not function and therefore require special education services. Deaf students cannot hear voices or sounds well so they need hearing aids or use sign language to communicate. Iman (2024) explains

that the Deaf community has a unique culture and communication system, where sign language is not only a means of communication but also an essential part of their social and cultural identity. Therefore, education for Deaf students must consider equal access to information and respect for Deaf culture in the learning process.

Education for Deaf students must consider not only accessibility but also respect for the identity and culture of the Deaf community. Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for Deaf students requires strategies that are tailored to their visual communication needs. In Indonesia, EFL subjects have been implemented in SLB since the seventh-grade level (Adnyani et al., 2024). However, most EFL teachers do not receive specialized training in teaching Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) students, so the teaching approaches used are often suboptimal. Pratama & Mulyani (2024) emphasized that Deaf students require a visual-based approach, including the use of images, videos, simple text, and sign language in the learning process. In addition, challenges in promoting learner autonomy are a significant concern. Wiraningsih & Santosa (2020) identified that EFL teachers face various obstacles, including limited knowledge of teaching strategies that can encourage learner autonomy, as well as differences in student characteristics. In the context of Deaf students, these challenges become more complex due to the need for a more adaptive and visual approach. Therefore, teachers need to develop more adaptive teaching methods specifically designed for Deaf students in special education to ensure they can effectively understand English materials and have an equal learning experience with their hearing peers.



SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem was chosen as the research location because it provides a relevant context to examine the processes and challenges faced in English learning activities for Deaf students. In this school, English is taught starting from the seventh grade of junior high school, so that students in grades VIII B and IX B, who were the subjects of the study, have received a basic introduction to English for one to two academic years. However, they are still classified as early learners who face many obstacles in understanding the material, mainly due to hearing limitations. Most Deaf students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem have severe to profound hearing loss, with a range of 70–90 decibels (dB), and some have total Deafness with a hearing threshold of more than 90dB. With this condition, students cannot perceive sound effectively, even with the help of hearing aids, so they rely heavily on sign language and visual approaches in the learning process.

The combination of hearing impairment and unfamiliarity with English makes it difficult for students to understand pronunciation, recognize vocabulary, and construct sentences. This gives rise to the perception that English is a complex subject, which has an impact on low learning motivation and academic outcomes for Deaf students. Based on initial observations and interviews with English teachers of grades VIII B and IX B at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem, it was found that students often showed reluctance to participate in the learning process. They felt insecure because they had difficulty understanding the meaning of words and sentence structures in English. The teacher also mentioned that one of the main challenges was pronouncing

words that they could not hear or imitate correctly, which hindered vocabulary mastery.

Classroom observations also showed that teachers need to work harder to adjust teaching methods so that the material can be understood visually by students. The use of visual media, clear and concise writing, and the incorporation of sign language are essential components of the learning process. Teachers often use visual aids and repeat movements or expressions to ensure that students understand the meaning of words or instructions. Interactive activities, such as visual games and group assignments, are also implemented to enhance student engagement in the learning process. Given these challenges, SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem is an ideal setting to explore the procedures and strategies used by teachers to overcome these difficulties and improve English language learning for Deaf students. With these challenges, SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem is an ideal setting to explore effective teacher strategies for overcoming obstacles and enhancing English learning for Deaf students.

Despite growing attention to the education of students with special needs, studies that specifically discuss teaching procedures and the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English to Deaf students in special schools (SLB) are still minimal. Previous research (Tahang et al., 2023) has emphasized that teaching English to Deaf students requires different methods compared to regular students due to their disabilities in processing auditory information, which significantly affects their vocabulary acquisition, syntax development, and reading skills. While several studies have explored the role

of visual media and sign language in teaching Deaf students, there is still a gap in understanding the step-by-step teaching procedures followed by teachers to ensure effective learning. Furthermore, challenges related to communication barriers, student motivation, and instructional adaptations have not been studied extensively in the context of special schools such as SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem. Most of the existing research focuses on general strategies for teaching students with hearing impairments but has not provided a detailed examination of the procedures used by teachers in actual classroom settings. Furthermore, the challenges faced by teachers, such as the need for innovative teaching methods, the limitations of standard textbooks, and the need for individual attention, need to be further explored. Given that Deaf students have difficulties in phoneme production and understanding sentence structure, teachers must use specific strategies to facilitate comprehension and engagement. However, research on how teachers systematically address these issues in everyday teaching practice is lacking. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the teaching procedures and challenges faced by English teachers at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem, providing valuable insights into effective teaching approaches for Deaf students.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in finding out the teaching methods and challenges faced by teachers in teaching English to Deaf students. The researcher is interested in conducting research entitled **“Investigating Teaching English for Deaf Students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem: Procedures and Challenges”**