

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the research topic, including the background of the importance of inclusive education and the challenges in teaching English to students with special needs, especially for students with intellectual disabilities. This chapter also explains the identification of problems that occur directly in the field, the formulation of problems, the objectives of the study, theoretical and practical benefits, and the limitations of the scope of the study which focuses on the implementation of English learning in the inclusive classroom of SD Triamerta Singaraja

1.1 Research Background

Education is a systematic process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various instruction, training, and learning experiences (Murati, 2015). Education provides the knowledge, skills, and values needed to thrive in multiple aspects of life. Education is one of the main pillars of developing individuals and society for it has a very important role in increasing opportunities and changing lives for everyone. With education, individuals can understand the world around them, think critically, and make wise decisions. According to Lazar (2015), education fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, enabling individuals to grow intellectually and emotionally. Education lies in its ability to shape individual character and morals. Through education, values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and tolerance are instilled. Education not only teaches knowledge but also forms

a moral and ethical personality. Education is a key to preparing a skilled and competent workforce. In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, the need for a highly educated workforce is increasing. Education provides the foundation needed to master new technologies, adapt to change, and innovate. In today's technology-driven world, education equips individuals with the skills needed to adapt to and leverage new technologies effectively (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). In addition, education also plays an important role in reducing social inequality. According to Croizet et al (2019), education serves both as a potential equalizer and a mechanism for the reproduction of social inequality. By providing equal access to education, everyone, regardless of social, economic, or cultural background, has an equal opportunity to succeed. Education enables individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their lives and escape the cycle of poverty. It also helps create a more just and inclusive society.

Talking about education, of course, can't be separated from students. Students come into the education system with a variety of unique characteristics, influenced by their backgrounds, life experiences, and personalities. Bakker et al (2019) stated that understanding each student's background is crucial for effectively supporting their transition to higher education. These differences in character encompass aspects such as cognitive abilities, self-organization, independent thinking, engagement and motivation, and problem-solving skills. Characteristics of students are essential for fostering a productive learning environment that encourages independence among students (Mohidil Erkinovna, 2022). Understanding and appreciating these

differences in character is essential for educators to create an inclusive learning environment that supports the development of each individual. Understanding and appreciating the differences in character among learners allows educators to design more effective teaching strategies and create inclusive learning environments. Thus, each learner can develop according to their uniqueness and reach their full potential in education. Van der Kleij (2019) stated that individual characteristics contribute to the variability in feedback effectiveness and student learning experiences. Different characteristics of each student, such as learning style, motivation level, and interests, greatly influence how they receive and respond to feedback provided by the teacher. Students with more reflective characteristics may take longer to process feedback and tend to reflect on the message before making changes. In contrast, students who are more proactive or action-oriented may take immediate steps to implement the feedback. Characteristics such as mental toughness, independence, and learning preferences also play a significant role in how students absorb information and adjust their approach to learning based on the feedback they receive.

The characteristics of each student are very important because they can influence their learning experiences and outcomes (Kintu et al., 2017). Differences in these characteristics mean that each student's learning experience will be unique, and teaching methods that are effective for one student may not be equally effective for another. Understanding these characteristics also helps teachers in designing more specific learning strategies. By recognizing individual differences among students, teachers can adjust teaching methods to meet the needs of each student, for example by providing a variety of learning

activities or providing additional support for students who need it. According to Soffer & Cohen (2019), understanding student characteristics can help in designing learning systems, such as online courses that are effective and supportive of students, by recognizing differences in student engagement, motivation, and technology orientation, instructors can adjust their approach. This means that each student brings different abilities and learning styles to the classroom, and understanding this diversity in learning allows teachers to tailor teaching methods to be more relevant and engaging for all students. For example, more visual students may need graphic or video representations to understand a particular concept, while more kinesthetics students may learn better through activities that involve movement or physical manipulation. Teachers also need to understand the non-academic characteristics that affect students' learning performance, such as their emotional and social well-being. Even students with disabilities or special needs who feel socially isolated may show a decline in academic performance or changes in behavior in the classroom. By recognizing this, teachers can offer emotional support or direct the student to resources that can help them overcome the problems they are facing.

The challenges faced by teachers in teaching children who are classified as disabilities, can refer to cases involving children with special needs. A special needs child is a child who requires additional support due to physical, emotional, behavioural, or learning challenges (Maryanti et al., 2021). Children with special needs have varying characteristics depending on the type of needs they have. Some common characteristics include difficulties in learning or

understanding information, delays in language development, difficulties with social interactions, and problems regulating emotions and behavior. This special need can also be called Intellectual Disability. Kuntz & Carter (2019) stated that, intellectual disability is a condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. Intellectual disability refers to individuals who have limitations in intellectual development or below average cognitive abilities. These special needs affect their ability to function in daily activities, including learning, communicating, and interacting socially. Recognizing intellectual disability is important to provide appropriate support and educational approaches so that they can reach their full potential. One of the biggest challenges in teaching children with intellectual disability is creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Often, these children require more attention in various aspects, such as adjustments in teaching methods, learning materials, and the use of assistive technology. Teachers must be able to recognize and overcome the obstacles these children may face and ensure that they have equal opportunities to develop and learn alongside their peers. Based on previous research conducted by Jariono & Kurniawan (2021), the need for collaboration between teachers and parents is crucial to provide tailored support and guidance. In this case, the role of parents is also needed. Because children with special needs must be accompanied by parents to train their mentality so that they do not feel inferior to their peers at school. Integrating intellectual disability into regular classes often creates an additional workload for teachers (Saloviita, 2020). This can cause stress and reduce the quality of teaching. With

collaboration with parents, at least the teacher's task in handling intellectual disability students becomes lighter. In this case, it is not only the teacher who faces a challenge in teaching children with special needs but also the parents of the students. The main concern of the parents is whether the school chosen has the facilities and staff trained in dealing with children with special needs. They are looking for a school that not only understands the individual needs of the child but is also able to provide a customized learning approach. Parents are concerned that if the child's needs are not met properly, this can hinder the learning process and even affect the child's self-confidence. Apart from academic aspects, parents also feel anxious about how their children will be accepted by their peers and the school community.

In this problem, the Indonesian government should be able to provide inclusive education that can accommodate students with special needs, specifically for students with intellectual disabilities. Inclusive education aims to create an inclusive learning environment, where all individuals can learn together, support each other, and achieve their maximum potential (Juntak et al., 2023). Inclusive education plays a crucial role in developing each student's potential to the fullest by providing equal access and opportunities to obtain quality educational services. With an inclusive system, schools are not only places to transfer knowledge but also become a forum for character formation and social values oriented towards justice and equality. However, in practice, the implementation of inclusive education faces various challenges, one of which is dealing with students with intellectual disabilities. Students with intellectual disabilities tend to require a more specialized and adaptive learning

approach due to limitations in cognitive understanding, communication, and social skills. Furthermore, students with intellectual disabilities have lower IQ levels than other normal students. According to the Kemdikbud (2022) in *Badan Standar, Kurikulum, Dan Asesmen Pendidikan*, students with intellectual disabilities have an IQ of 70-55 at the highest, and less than 25 at the lowest. Therefore, the success of inclusive education depends heavily on the readiness of appropriate teachers, appropriate learning strategies, and the support of the school environment to adapt the learning process to their needs. Without adequate adjustments, students with intellectual disabilities are at risk of being left behind in the learning process, so the goal of inclusive education is to create equity.

Due to the problem of parents' concerns about their children with intellectual disability, several schools have provided an educational service called an inclusive classroom. According to Lindner et al (2019), An inclusive classroom is an educational setting that accommodates and supports the diverse needs of all students, including those with special educational needs, disabilities, and varying backgrounds. In an inclusive classroom, students learn to work together with others who may have different backgrounds or abilities, thus developing a sense of empathy, understanding, and tolerance from an early age. Teachers must have an open attitude be ready to accept differences and be able to manage this diversity effectively. Understanding and accepting differences among students is also crucial; effective teachers recognize that not all students learn the same way and make necessary accommodations (Connor & Cavendish, 2020). In an inclusive classroom, understanding and accepting student

differences is a key foundation for creating an equitable and empowering learning environment. Every student comes to school with different backgrounds, experiences, and abilities, whether academic, social, emotional, or physical. This is also found in one of the schools in Bali, precisely in Singaraja, namely SD Triamerta. This school provides an inclusive classroom that helps students with special needs get the same education as other students. Based on the primary observation that was carried out in 2nd grade, there were 23 students and 5 of them had intellectual disabilities. In the learning process, teachers accompany students directly, facilitating learning, such as providing visual images to make it easier for them to learn.

Based on primary observation conducted in class 2B at SD Triamerta Singaraja, some information has been obtained from shadow teacher that is assigned to teach English in inclusive classroom. The shadow teacher stated that students with Intellectual Disabilities have difficulties in learning. For example, difficulties in reading, writing, and memorizing the learning materials they absorb. Therefore, the teacher directly guides students with Intellectual Disabilities by using visual media or images to make it easier for students to understand the learning. In addition, the teacher also stated that students with Intellectual Disabilities are easily distracted or have difficulty focusing on learning. Various factors in class 2B can affect their attention, such as noise around the classroom, interactions between peers, or even small changes in the learning environment. These disturbances can cause them to lose concentration and have difficulty understanding the material being delivered by the teacher.

Difficulty in maintaining focus also affects the speed and effectiveness of students in completing academic tasks. They may take longer to understand instructions, work on problems, or complete learning activities compared to their friends. Therefore, teachers need to implement specific strategies, such as providing clear directions, creating a learning environment with minimal distractions, and using interactive and interesting teaching methods so that students can stay focused on learning. Based on what was done by the English teacher in class 2B, the teacher formed a small group specifically for students with intellectual disabilities at one table. That way, the teacher will be the main center for students in explaining the learning material. Unfortunately, SD Triamerta uses the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in its learning system. This curriculum is still general and not inclusive. Therefore, it appears there is no specific approach to addressing the learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities. One example found at SD Triamerta is the absence of a teacher assistant who does not have an English language qualification.

Previous studies have indeed discussed the implementation of English in inclusive classes. In some of these studies, they did answer the challenges found and how teachers in the classroom solved them. But unfortunately, there has been no research at the elementary school level, specifically in Singaraja, Bali, specifically to discuss this. Therefore, this study aims to identify the implementation of English learning in Singaraja, Buleleng Bali to Increase research sources for the next research. Which is one of the inclusive schools located in Singaraja. More deeply, this research will observe the teachers'

learning procedure, the challenges during the English learning process and the teachers' overcome students with intellectual disabilities.

1.2 Problem Identification

It is generally understood that not all children have the same cognitive level, especially for children with intellectual disability. Children who have a general intellectual disability tend to have intellectual and cognitive abilities below average compared to other children. This is one of the challenges for teachers in learning English to be able to adjust in one class with the abilities of normal students and students with intellectual disabilities. Zudeta & Fitriani (2023), state that learning English for children with intellectual disabilities requires special approaches and methods to overcome their intellectual and developmental barriers. Based on the statement, teachers find challenges when teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities because they need more support than other normal students.

Actually, previous research on this topic has been conducted, but most of the research focused on individual researchers and only examined the challenges faced by teachers, without explaining the strategies used. In addition, there has been no research that discusses students with intellectual disabilities at the elementary school level. However, this study will take a different approach by conducting direct observation of English teachers at SD Triamerta Singaraja, precisely in class 2B in the practice of teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities. Unlike previous studies, this study will focus on the teacher's own experience as the main subject of analysis, in creating

strategies used when teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, similar studies often require updates or new case studies to further develop future research.

1.3 Research Question

This research will discuss in detail the research question below:

1. How is the English teaching procedure for students with intellectual disabilities conducted in an inclusive classroom in SD Triamerta Singaraja?
2. What are teachers' challenges in teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive classroom at SD Triamerta Singaraja?
3. What are strategies that the teacher uses to cope with these challenges in inclusive classroom at SD Triamerta Singaraja.

1.4 Research Objective

From the research question explained above, this research has purpose as below:

1. To explain the English teaching procedure to students with intellectual disabilities conducted in an inclusive classroom in SD Triamerta Singaraja.
2. To classify the teachers' challenges in teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive classroom at SD Triamerta Singaraja.
3. To identify the teachers' strategies to cope with these challenges in inclusive classroom at SD Triamerta Singaraja.

1.5 Research Significance

This research has the following significance as below:

Theoretical Significance:

The theoretical significance of this study is in the form of new understanding obtained when applied to this study. The results of this study will be a contribution to this study itself before later becoming a benefit for other studies.

Practical Significance:

1. This research will provide practical benefits to teachers. By reading this research, teachers will have insight into self-development as English teachers in inclusive classes.
2. Provide practical benefits for government. Give contribute to the government in raising awareness of the importance of developing a special inclusive curriculum that can accommodate the learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities.
3. In the future, further researchers will have more references from this research to develop similar research.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The limitation of this research is only focused on the implementation of English teacher teaching in inclusive classes at SD Triamerta Singaraja, specifically for students with Intellectual Disabilities. This research only focuses on how teachers teach English to students with Intellectual Disabilities and how to overcome the challenges faced by teachers.