



## Teaching Strategies Employed by English Teachers for Deaf Students at SD IT Baitussalam Prambanan

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**Abstract.** Inclusive schools are schools that accept students with certain special needs and implement a learning system by uniting students with special needs and normal students in one class. At SDIT Baitussalam, one of the inclusive schools in Prambanan, four totally deaf students have different learning abilities than normal students. This study aims to identify challenges, teaching strategies, and supporting factors for the success of English teaching strategies for deaf students in inclusive classes. This study used a qualitative descriptive method by interviewing three English subject teachers who had taught deaf students in inclusive classes. The results of the study found four main challenges in teaching, namely limited speaking ability, limited use of sign language, differences in cognitive development, and student learning motivation. In addition, there are six strategies applied in teaching English in inclusive classes, namely choral response, peer tutoring, visual representation and concrete objects, technology optimization, implementation of social interaction, and utilization of practice exercises. The success of implementing these strategies is supported by four main factors, namely support from educators and education personnel, parental support, availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, and support from friends and the surrounding environment. This research can help teachers find the right strategy for teaching English in inclusive classes, especially for deaf students, so that learning can take place more effectively and inclusively.

**Keywords:** Inclusive, School, Deaf, Students, Teaching.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education determines the future of a nation, making children an important asset for progress. The Indonesian government guarantees the implementation of education as stated in Law of Republic Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 on the Nasional Education System Chapter 4 Article 11 requires the government to provide quality education services, facilities, and funding without discrimination for citizens, especially those aged 7–15 years. This policy emphasizes that education is important in developing the nation's next generation. Regulation of the Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 of 2010 on the Management and Implementation of Education, ensures equal educational opportunities for students with special needs through inclusive schools. Unlike SLB, which serves only disabled students, inclusive schools welcome all students, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, or special talents. These schools help children with special needs integrate into society (Riehl, 2000). Inclusive schools provide equal education for all students, including those with special needs, with support from special assistant teachers. However, some schools lack adequate facilities for these teachers. Inclusive education boosts students' confidence and helps them integrate into society. SDIT Baitussalam, an accredited inclusive school in Prambanan, Sleman, supports students with autism, dyslexia, slow learning, and deafness. This study focuses on deaf students, who struggle with learning English due to challenges in

hearing-based comprehension. They require specialized, visual, and interactive teaching strategies to enhance their understanding and use of English.

Many subjects need to be taught such as general knowledge education, character education, to language education, one of which is English education (Kristiana, 2019). English is widely studied in almost all parts of the world in today's digital era. This is because English is a common language used in international communication (Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). English is not only used for communication, much science, technology, and information are also written in English. Indonesia as a developing country cannot avoid this progress, therefore mastery of English for Indonesian students will be a door to the development of science as well as an opener for interaction with world citizens. In fulfilling its obligation to educate all students, SDIT Baitussalam certainly provides English learning to students with special needs in the same class as other students. In every learning process, there were obstacles, including in learning English for deaf students. Various strategies are used to teach learning materials. Adapted teaching strategies are used in inclusive schools not only for typical students but also for students with special needs. Teaching strategies for students with hearing loss differ from typical methods due to their reliance on visual and tactile learning. Unlike typical students who learn through auditory input, deaf students require visual aids, sign language, written instructions, and interactive materials. They also need individualized attention and customized lesson plans. Challenges include difficulties in understanding verbal instructions and communicating in English (Khasawneh, 2021). Special strategies are needed for reading and writing, focusing on word recognition and sentence structure. A supportive environment, constructive praise, and active participation help deaf students learn effectively (Meyer et al., 2021).

The success of learning strategies is usually influenced by several factors, such as teacher competence, parental support, availability of learning resources, and the school environment. Initial observations at SDIT Baitussalam Prambanan showed that four deaf students in different classes had varying learning abilities—some were able to follow the lessons well, while others had difficulties. This prompted the study to identify teacher challenges, teaching strategies, and supporting factors for the success of English learning in inclusive classes.

## **2. METHOD**

Qualitative research allows researchers to get to know subjects and understand what they experience in everyday life. Creswell and Creswell, J. D. (2017), stated that this method identifies real-world phenomena, which allows for a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions. This study used semi-structured interviews as a data-collecting technique and interview guides as instruments. Interviews were conducted in-depth with English teachers for deaf students to collect data on their opinions, abilities, and knowledge. To ensure validity, the researcher used documentation and member checking. Documentation involves recording and transcribing interviews to increase credibility and replicability. Member checking, or participant validation, ensures accuracy by allowing participants to verify the researcher's interpretations, which strengthens the credibility of the study.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

English learning is challenging for deaf students because aspects of phonology, pronunciation, and intonation depend on hearing. Teachers in inclusive classrooms must have creativity, patience, and special skills so that deaf students can learn effectively and confidently. Research has found four main challenges in teaching deaf students: limited spoken language, limited use of sign language, differences in cognitive development, and student motivation to learn. Limited spoken language in deaf students causes difficulties in understanding, processing, and expressing spoken language. They face obstacles in accessing sounds, understanding verbal instructions, and participating in discussions. They find it easier to understand information presented visually or through direct experience. The study also showed that deaf students use simple signs and gestures more often than official sign languages such as SIBI or BISINDO. Teachers' limitations in sign language also make it difficult to communicate with deaf students. Hearing loss does not directly affect deaf students' cognition, but limited access to spoken language can hinder abstract concepts. They often have difficulty understanding metaphors, implied meanings, grammar, and complex syntax. Deaf students' learning motivation decreases when the material is too difficult to understand, causing a lack of interest in learning. Lack of confidence and feeling different from peers also affect their enthusiasm, despite support from teachers and parents. Some students still have difficulty maintaining their learning motivation. The results of the data are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Challenges in Teaching English for Deaf Students**

No	Challenges	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
1	Limited Spoken Language Ability	✓	✓	✗
2	Limitations in the Use of Sign Language	✓	✗	✓
3	Differences in Cognitive Development	✓	✓	✓
4	Difficulties in Reading and Writing	✗	✗	✗
5	Limitations in Social Interaction	✗	✗	✗
6	Limitations in the Use of Technology	✗	✗	✗
7	Students' Learning Motivation	✓	✗	✓

English teaching strategies for deaf students are tailored to improve their comprehension and engagement. The study found six strategies implemented by teachers in inclusive classrooms: Choral Response, Peer Tutoring, Visual Representation & Concrete Objects, Optimization of Technology, Social Interaction, and Practice Exercises. A choral response strategy is implemented by teachers using both body language and written text. Students are instructed to read words written on the board, then write them down, and finally follow the teacher's instructions. Peer tutoring strategy utilizes student-to-student interaction, where more advanced students serve as mentors for deaf peers. They help with vocabulary, sentence structure, and everyday English usage, while also increasing the deaf student's confidence and motivation. Visual representation and concrete objects strategy use images and real objects to help deaf students understand English concepts and structures. This approach makes it easier for them to grasp abstract concepts and connect words to their meanings. The use of technology creates interactive and engaging learning for deaf students. Technology helps them understand the material, develop language skills, and improve communication through visual media, text, and interactive multimedia, which are tailored to their needs. The social interaction strategy emphasizes social interaction and cultural understanding in English language learning. Through group discussions, role-playing, and collaboration, deaf students can practice communicating in real contexts, strengthen language skills, and build positive relationships with classmates. The practice exercises strategy uses games, songs, and visual media to engage students and accommodate a variety of learning styles. This method includes word puzzles, role-playing, quizzes, and text exercises, designed to enhance vocabulary, understand simple sentences, and basic dialogues. Teachers also implement exercises such as

multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank questions, as well as picture support and vocabulary lists to help students. The results of the data are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. The Strategies in Teaching English for Deaf Students**

No	Strategies	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
1	Choral Response.	✓	✓	✓
2	Response Cards	✗	✗	✗
3	Peer Tutoring	✓	✗	✗
4	Visual Representation and Concrete Objects	✓	✗	✓
5	Technology Optimization	✓	✓	✗
6	Implementation of Social Interaction	✓	✓	✗
7	Utilization of Practice Exercises	✓	✓	✓

The success of English learning for deaf students is influenced by several factors. Support from teachers and teaching staff, such as extracurricular programs with inclusive teachers, helps understand students' needs through direct observation and interaction. Inclusive teachers also share effective teaching strategies, such as the use of visual media and interactive methods, to improve students' understanding. The role of parents is very important as a liaison between school and home. Good communication with teachers allows parents to monitor their child's development, provide emotional support, and provide additional learning resources, including additional classes or extracurricular activities. Active parental involvement increases children's motivation and confidence in learning. Adequate facilities such as visual media (projectors, diagrams, videos) help deaf students understand the material better. Concrete aids also clarify the concepts being taught, create a more interactive learning environment, and encourage active student participation. Support from friends and the surrounding environment plays a role in creating a sense of security and comfort for deaf students. Social support from peers increases their participation in learning activities and helps develop social skills. The results of the data are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Supporting Factors Strategies in Teaching English for Deaf Students**

No	Factors	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
1	Support from educators and teaching staff	✓	✓	✓
2	Parental support for students	✓	✓	✓
3	Sufficient facilities and infrastructure	✗	✓	✗
4	Support from friends and the surrounding environment	✓	✓	✓

## **Discussions**

Marschark (2003) stated that language limitations hinder the language development of deaf students, while Mayberry (2002) highlighted that they cannot absorb language naturally like children with normal hearing, causing vocabulary limitations that impact reading, writing, and speaking skills. Therefore, learning must be more visual, and interactive, and support non-verbal communication such as sign language. However, not all students and teachers have access to or skills in official sign languages such as SIBI or BISINDO, so communication in the classroom is often hampered (Padden & Humphries, 2006). Lack of teacher training also worsens communication, making it more difficult for deaf students to understand the material (Swanwick & Marschark, 2010). Therefore, teacher training and provision of resources are essential to support the development of deaf students. In terms of cognitive development, limited language access impacts the understanding of abstract concepts. Piaget (1952) stated that cognitive development depends on language skills, so deaf students who are less exposed to language from an early age tend to have difficulty understanding concepts such as time and cause-effect relationships. Marschark and Hauser (2012) emphasized that communication limitations hinder abstract thinking and problem-solving. Teachers need to adjust teaching strategies, such as multiple-choice questions or matching pictures to text, not to lower standards, but to make learning more inclusive. In addition, motivation to learn is a major challenge. Difficulty understanding the material can lower students' enthusiasm, even though they receive support from teachers and friends. Maslow (1943) explained that motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of basic needs such as safety and social support. Deci and Ryan (2012) added that a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness increases motivation to learn. Students who feel incompetent tend to be less motivated, while those who are confident are more active in learning. Therefore, teachers need to create an inclusive environment with positive feedback, celebration of small achievements, and supportive social interactions to increase the motivation of deaf students.

The strategies used in this study, namely the Choral Response strategy, in learning English for deaf students combines verbal and nonverbal communication to improve student understanding and engagement. Repeating phrases in unison helps recognize English intonation and rhythm. Teachers use spoken and written language so that students understand even though they cannot pronounce it. Herring and Woolsey (2020) stated that this strategy is effective in improving the understanding, memory, and engagement of deaf students. Teachers also use manual communication, gestures, and facial expressions to introduce new vocabulary

(Udjijanti & Purbaningrum, 2017). Although not all students can imitate pronunciation, this strategy still helps them get used to English in an inclusive and fun learning environment. Peer tutoring strategy improves students' understanding, communication skills, and self-confidence. More advanced students act as tutors, helping their peers understand vocabulary and sentence structure. Herring and Woolsey (2020) emphasize the effectiveness of this strategy through interaction and repetition, while Hartinah and Hendriani (2022) state that this method also strengthens social skills and learning motivation. To be effective, teachers must carefully select tutors, provide training, and monitor interactions to ensure effective learning. Visual media and concrete objects help deaf students understand the material better. Hallahan and Kauffman (2006) explained that deaf students rely more on visual and kinesthetic information, so images are easier to understand than videos. Gonzales et al. (2024) emphasized that visual aids increase learning motivation, while Kurniawati (2017) stated that visual media makes it easier to understand abstract concepts. The use of real objects also enhances a more interactive learning experience (Harahap et al., 2022). Technology enriches learning by providing interactive media, such as text, animation, and songs. Nathan et al. (2010) showed that computer-based applications increase interaction and adaptation in deaf students' learning. Marschark and Hauser (2012) added that technology helps develop language and communication skills. Baker (2011) also mentioned that technology provides more effective communication tools, making learning more inclusive and adaptive. Social interaction through group discussions, role-playing, and collaboration on language tasks helps students practice speaking and listening. Berent (2001) stated that this strategy is effective in understanding language in real contexts, while Vygotsky (1978), in his view cited by Wardani et al. (2023), emphasized that social interaction plays an important role in cognitive development. Marschark et al. (2017) added that social support improves deaf students' academic and language skills. In addition, teachers apply various types of questions, such as multiple choice, matching pictures with vocabulary, and fill-in-the-blanks. This strategy utilizes visual aids to improve understanding (Berent, 2001). Learning is carried out individually, in pairs, or in small groups to create a supportive learning environment, in line with the findings of Marschark et al. (2017) on the importance of social support. With the right combination of strategies, English learning for deaf students becomes more interactive and effective.

Support from educators and teaching staff plays a major role in increasing the learning motivation of deaf students. Teachers not only guide but also encourage students to continue practicing and developing (Ayu, 2017). As motivators, teachers must be innovative in building

interest in learning, creating a pleasant atmosphere, giving appreciation for student success, and encouraging competition and cooperation (Gurney, 2007). In addition, the principal has an important role in designing professional learning activities that are following the needs of students and teachers (Karacabey, 2021). In addition to the role of teachers, parental support is also very influential in increasing the learning motivation of deaf students, especially in learning English. Parents who are actively involved in their children's education can create a supportive learning environment at home. Parents' understanding of inclusive education and effective learning strategies can help their children practice English skills through written communication, sign language, or visual media (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012). Providing additional learning resources, such as picture books, educational applications, or videos with subtitles, as well as creating a comfortable learning atmosphere without distractions, can increase students' learning motivation. Adequate facilities and infrastructure are also important factors in supporting inclusive learning. Facilities such as digital whiteboards, interactive projectors, videos with subtitles or sign language, and vocabulary cards and picture books greatly help students' understanding (Cele, 2016). In addition, inclusive classroom design with good lighting, appropriate seating arrangements, and an environment with minimal noise can create a conducive learning atmosphere. Additional facilities such as consultation rooms, speech therapy, and multimedia rooms are also needed, as well as training for teachers in the use of assistive technology and appropriate teaching strategies. With adequate support, deaf students can be more motivated and active in learning.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study that the researcher described in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that the challenges in teaching English to deaf students at SDIT Baitussalam include limited oral language skills, limited use of sign language, and differences in cognitive development. In this study, the researcher found a new challenge that had not been mentioned in the theoretical discussion chapter, namely learning motivation. The new findings in this study indicate that the level of involvement and enthusiasm of deaf students in learning English is greatly influenced by people in the surrounding environment and also the students' learning motivation. The problems faced by teachers are almost all the same. Such as the lack of students' ability to communicate, students' limitations in understanding the material, and also low student learning motivation. This study also concludes various teaching strategies that can be applied to improve the understanding and English skills of deaf students. These strategies

include choral response strategies, peer guidance, visual representation and concrete objects, optimization of technology, and the application of social interaction. The findings related to teaching strategies, namely the use of various practice questions, indicate that a variety of practice strategies can help deaf students to better understand the material being taught and significantly improve their language skills. The strategies applied by teachers are almost all the same. In the learning process, teachers still use spoken language but collaborate with body language and facial expressions. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of adapting teaching strategies that are appropriate to the needs of deaf students and school involvement, as well as implementing programs that support the development of deaf students' learning. Educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment by understanding the challenges faced and implementing innovative teaching strategies. This will not only improve the English skills of deaf students but also support their cognitive development and learning motivation so that they can actively participate in the learning process.

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