



**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON TEACHING ENGLISH TO  
STUDENTS WITH MILD MENTAL RETARDATION DURING  
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**THESIS**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

**Ula, Wafiyatul.** 2022. Teachers' Perception on Teaching English to Students With Mild Mental Retardation During The Covid-19 Pandemic. Thesis, English Language Teaching Study Program, Postgraduate Program, University of Islam Malang. Advisors: Prof. Drs. H. Junaidi Mistar, M.Pd., Ph.D

**Keywords:** mental retardation students, perception

The objectives of this research are to describe the implementation of teaching-learning activities for students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic and to identify teachers' perception on teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic of SMPN 6 Tuban. The method of this research was qualitative research. The subjects of this research were the English teachers of VIII C, IX B, and a special companion teacher of SMPN 6 Tuban. The instruments of this research were observation, interview, and documentation.

The result of this research can be described that this is a new challenge for them because learning activity is done online. Teachers are required to still be able to deliver material and accompany students in the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic. They use the media, method and also apply special principles for students with mild mental retardation. For special companion teachers, the limited face-to-face opportunity twice a week is an opportunity that must be utilized as well as possible because during online learning for students with mild mental retardation is too difficult to understand the material due to the absence of assistance and lack of attention from their parents. The teacher hopes that the students find happiness in learning through online learning classes they enjoy and can understand the material, especially for students with mild mental retardation. Based on the result of this research, the researcher found that in learning English, the activities that are more often used are the drilling method and copying simple words or vocabulary, so the materials and teaching methods used with students with mild mental retardation are different. The outcomes of teachers' perceptions of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the Covid-19 pandemic vary greatly, the section on teachers' perceptions reveals that teachers believe that learning English for students with mild mental retardation is difficult to do online because students with mild mental retardation face technological difficulties and obstacles. Because learning is done online, teachers find it more difficult to control the condition and development of students with mild mental retardation.

## ABSTRAK

**Ula, Wafiyatul.** 2022. Teachers' Perception on Teaching English to Students With Mild Mental Retardation During The Covid-19 Pandemic. Thesis, English Language Teaching Study Program, Postgraduate Program, University of Islam Malang. Advisors: Prof. Drs. H. Junaidi Mistar, M.Pd., Ph.D

**Kata kunci:** *siswa tunagrahita ringan, persepsi*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana pelaksanaan kegiatan belajar mengajar bagi siswa tunagrahita ringan selama masa pandemi covid-19 dan untuk mengetahui persepsi guru dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada siswa tunagrahita ringan selama masa pandemi covid-19 di SMPN 6 Tuban. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah guru bahasa Inggris kelas VIII C, IX B, dan guru pendamping khusus SMPN 6 Tuban. Instrumen penelitian yang digunakan adalah observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi.

Hasil penelitian ini dapat digambarkan bahwa ini merupakan tantangan baru bagi mereka karena kegiatan pembelajaran dilakukan secara online. Guru dituntut untuk tetap bisa menyampaikan materi dan mendampingi siswa dalam proses pembelajaran di masa pandemi Covid-19. Mereka menggunakan media, metode dan juga menerapkan prinsip khusus bagi siswa tunagrahita ringan. Bagi guru pendamping khusus, kesempatan tatap muka yang terbatas dua kali seminggu merupakan kesempatan yang harus dimanfaatkan dengan sebaik-baiknya karena selama pembelajaran online bagi siswa tunagrahita ringan terlalu sulit untuk memahami materi karena tidak adanya pendampingan. dan kurangnya perhatian dari orang tuanya. Guru berharap para siswa menemukan kebahagiaan dalam belajar melalui kelas pembelajaran online yang mereka nikmati dan dapat memahami materi, khususnya bagi siswa tunagrahita ringan. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, peneliti menemukan bahwa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, kegiatan yang lebih sering digunakan adalah metode drilling dan menyalin kata atau kosa kata sederhana, sehingga materi dan metode pengajaran yang digunakan pada siswa tunagrahita ringan berbeda. Hasil persepsi guru terhadap pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada siswa tunagrahita ringan selama masa pandemi Covid-19 sangat bervariasi, pada bagian persepsi guru mengungkapkan bahwa guru percaya bahwa pembelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk siswa tunagrahita ringan sulit dilakukan secara online karena siswa dengan keterbelakangan mental ringan menghadapi kesulitan dan hambatan teknologi. Karena pembelajaran dilakukan secara online, guru lebih sulit mengontrol kondisi dan perkembangan siswa tunagrahita ringan.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the research, formulation of the research, limitation of the research, objectives of the research, significances of the research, and definition of key terms.

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

In Indonesia, the spread of positive cases of Covid-19 has not shown a decreasing graph. Based on data from the Covid-19 handling task force on January 26, 2021, the total number of positive cases reached 1,012,350 with confirmed death cases totaling 28,468. Various policies have been issued by the Indonesian government to reduce the level of spread of the coronavirus, one of the policies is to work from home in various fields of work. This policy is an effort applied to the community to complete all work from home. Education in Indonesia is also one of the areas affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the existence of restrictions on interaction, the ministry of education in Indonesia also issued a policy, namely by dismissing schools and replacing the Teaching and Learning Activities process by using an online system. By using this online learning system, teachers and educators as important elements in the teaching process are required to make a large-scale migration from traditional face-to-face education to online education or distance education (Bao, et al 2020) and the process of adjusting to changes in

the learning system sometimes raises various problems faced by students and teachers such as low knowledge of technology, inadequate technological facilities, and unfamiliarity with the online teaching and learning process.

Online learning is not limited to ordinary students but is also carried out on children with special needs or students with mild mental retardation, which in this case indicates that a person experiences a special disorder that has different characteristics so that special attention and services are needed. No exception to special education which also implements online learning. Education for disabilities can be obtained from special schools (SLB), or regular schools that are inclusive based. On average, students who are still allowed to enter inclusive schools are classified as students who have intelligence barriers. In special education science, it is called mental retardation.

The law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System provides another aspect of the provision of education for children with disabilities. In the explanation of provision 15 regarding special education, it is stated that special education is education for students with disabilities or students who have extraordinary intelligence which is held inclusively or in the form of special education units at the primary and secondary education levels. So as regular schools have the right to accept students with special needs, on the condition that students are still able to follow educational programs. Based on the Ministry of National Education Republic of Indonesia's statistics data in 2016, the total of

handicapped student in Indonesian special schools is 24.985 students in which intellectual disability has the most number of students with 1.489 students (Kemendikbud, 2016)

Children with autism or mental retardation have different backgrounds in intellectual ability, physical ability, family, habit, emotion affect the learning process which creates various problems. According to Davison & Neale (1990) mental retardation “is significantly a general sub-average in intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period”. With the years, it is important to relate “mental age” with the “chronological age”, this relation gives a measure as a result, which is called intellectual quotient (IQ). However, there is no exception for students with mild mental retardation to have the right to education. They have barriers and low development mental that they have difficulty in academic tasks, social, and also in communications, so they need education and services specifically in attending learning process.

In an inclusive school, services for children with special needs are not differentiated from normal students in their class, only learning material is differentiated. Because of these differences in abilities and services in the same class, there will be doubts about the success in developing the potential or abilities of children with special needs if they study together with normal children in general, in regular classes at inclusive schools. Each school has its own policy to implement inclusive schools. SMPN 6 Tuban is one of the schools that implements inclusive education and has been recognized by the

department of education. And currently, SMPN 6 Tuban has one special companion teacher (GPK) and has five students with special needs with the classification of students with mild mental retardation.

In implementing teaching and learning activities at SMPN 6 Tuban is different from SLB. By the needs of students with special needs, the school provides special companion teachers (*GPK*) to provide intensive services to help students with special needs in teaching and learning activities with their friends. For the learning that is carried out, students with special needs are accompanied by a special companion teacher (*GPK*). This is to make it easier for students to understand the material explained by the teacher. In teaching and learning activities to students with mild mental retardation, a special companion teacher will simplify the materials by adjusting the students' abilities. Besides, a special companion teacher provides services in the teaching and learning process by using visual media, for example, pictures, videos, and miniature tools.

The interesting thing at this school is that when teaching and learning activities begin, students with mild mental retardation attend regular classes inclusively accompanied by a special companion teacher. After attending regular class learning, students with mild mental retardation need to get a deeper understanding of the material that cannot be understood during the learning process in class with regular friends, students with mild mental retardation are given special guidance in the resource room. In addition to deepening the material, students are also given some exercises that are still

hampering them. Such as motoric development when writing, thickening, cutting, and self-development for students with special needs.

Since the pandemic, the implementation of teaching-learning activities is no longer done face-to-face but has been done online classes application during this covid-19 pandemic. It is not too easy to shift our traditional habits to online. All this time, English teachers of SMPN 6 Tuban have used audiovisuals, interesting media, or online platforms for learning English for students with mild mental retardation. The challenges that teachers face in an online environment during school from home include four subthemes, namely, technical obstacles, student conditioning, the participation of students, students' response, and online teaching experience. Teachers faced several challenges related to the emergence of obstacles associated with technical issues. Not all parents have cell phones/laptops, and internet signals are poor, especially in the suburbs.

The teaching and learning in the physical distancing and social distancing era are only able to be facilitated through the integration of technology. The same opinion is suggested by Al-Marroof & Al-Emran (2018). He says that the distance, online, or blending teaching and learning style offers many advantages over the traditional classroom teaching style. The most influential advantages lie in its accessibility, students' scheduling flexibility, and adaptability for working.

To find out the implementation of teaching and learning for students with mild mental retardation researchers used observation techniques with an



observation process. The observation method carried out by the researcher aims to find out how the implementation of English learning for students with mild mental retardation during the pandemic. And to find out the teacher's perception of the response and the obstacles faced in implementing learning during the pandemic, the researchers used interview techniques. The researcher conducted interviews with 3 subjects, namely two English teachers and a special companion teacher (*GPK*).

From the observation and interview of one of the teachers, the researcher found that some teachers face difficulties in teaching during this pandemic era, especially English teachers of students with mild mental retardation. The experience of the teachers would be very beneficial to improve the current learning and teaching process.

Therefore, it is important to know how the implementation of teaching-learning and to identify teachers' voices on teaching English to mental retardation students during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it is important to know the implementation of the teaching-learning process and teachers' perception about teaching-learning activity with students with mild mental retardation.

## 1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The problems of this research would be formulated as follow:

1. What teaching and learning activities were implemented to the students with mild mental retardation at SMPN 6 Tuban during the covid-19 pandemic?

2. What are teachers' perceptions on teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are:

1. To describe the implementation of teaching-learning activities for students with mild mental retardation at SMPN 6 Tuban during the covid-19 pandemic.
2. To identify teachers' perception of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic.

### 1.4 Limitation of the Research

Based on the background of the study, the researcher limited the problem area to the more specific one. The researcher intends to conduct a research "Teachers' Perception on Teaching English to Students With Mild Mental Retardation during the Covid-19 Pandemic." This research is focused on what teaching and learning activities were implemented to the students with mild mental retardation at SMPN 6 Tuban and what teachers' experiences in teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic.

### 1.5 Significances of the Research

The researcher hopes this research can give many benefits in helping the process of an English learning classroom. There are two benefits of this research, theoretical and practical benefits:

- 1) Theoretically

The result of this research can be used as input in identifying teachers'

perceptions.

2) Practically

The results of this research aimed to give a contribution to other researchers, the teachers and the researchers themselves, as followed.

a) Other researchers

The researcher hopes that other researchers can take benefit or provide information for further research regarding teachers' perception of teaching English using those strategies to students with mild mental retardation.

b) Teachers

The researcher hopes this research can be useful for the teachers especially in facing this pandemic era and choosing suitable technology, media, and strategy in teaching students with mild mental retardation using online platform tools.

c) The researchers themselves

Hopefully, the researchers can take benefit from this research and also can know the teachers' perception and choose suitable media and strategy as learning for teaching English during the pandemic era, especially for mental retardation students.

### 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The terms used in this research were students with mild mental retardation and perception. The meanings of those terms are explained below.

1) Students with mild mental retardation are students with low IQ,

with an intellectual coefficient between 0.56 and 0.70, belong to this level and act like normal people but they need more effort to understand the material in learning and others.

- 1) Perception is how the teachers give a judgment about students' responses and the obstacles faced in implementing teaching and learning activities to students with mild mental retardation during the covid-19 pandemic.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusion and suggestions regarding the results of the research. The conclusions are drawn from the findings and discussions of the previous chapter.

#### 6.1 Conclusion

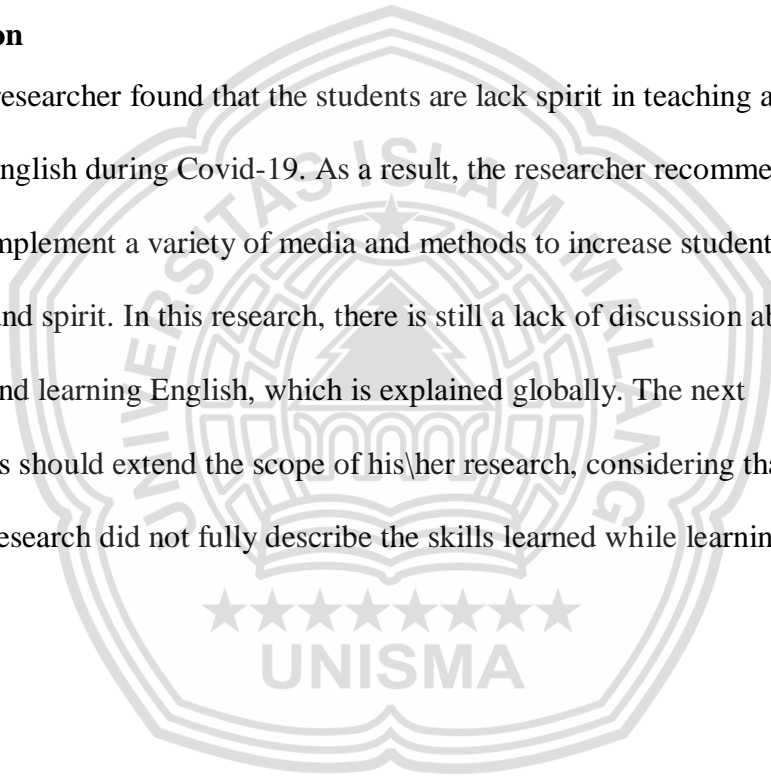
Based on the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded as follows: The implementation of teaching-learning English for students with mild mental retardation is not much different from regular students learning. What distinguishes it is the collaboration system in one class between subject teachers and a special companion teacher. Often the teachers practice reading by dictating little by little, giving examples of writing to be copied back according to the instructions, and listening to videos from the teacher, sometimes the teacher also gives some simple quizzes for students with mild mental retardation. In learning English, the activities that are more often used are the drilling method and copying simple words or vocabulary.

The outcomes of teachers' perceptions of teaching English to students with mild mental retardation during the Covid-19 pandemic vary greatly, the section on teachers' perceptions reveals that teachers believe that learning English for students with mild mental retardation is difficult to do online because students with mild mental retardation face technological difficulties

and obstacles. Because learning is done online, teachers find it more difficult to control the condition and development of students with mild mental retardation. This finding is similar to Hannele Marjata Niemi & Paivi Kousa (2020) in their research entitled “A Case Study of Students’ and Teachers’ Perception in a Finnish High School during the Covid Pandemic” that teachers were also worried about students’ progress.

## 6. 2 Suggestion

The researcher found that the students are lack spirit in teaching and learning English during Covid-19. As a result, the researcher recommends that teachers implement a variety of media and methods to increase students' attention and spirit. In this research, there is still a lack of discussion about teaching and learning English, which is explained globally. The next researchers should extend the scope of his\her research, considering that the previous research did not fully describe the skills learned while learning English.



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