



The Implementation of English Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom Context for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

This study explored the implementation of English learning for students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive classroom at SD Triamerta Singaraja, focusing on the inclusive classroom 2B with 24 students, including five with intellectual disabilities. The urgent need for this study arose from challenges faced in the inclusive education setting, such as these students' difficulty in absorbing lessons, rapid loss of interest, and behavioral issues like tantrums and mood swings, which complicated effective teaching and learning. The study centered on the role of the inclusive teacher, who supported these students during English lessons alongside the regular teacher. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were gathered through observation checklists and interviews over four weeks on Tuesdays during English classes. Findings revealed distinct teaching procedures for students with intellectual disabilities: they were taught in small groups led by the inclusive teacher to facilitate personalized guidance, which contrasted with the regular teacher's approach for other students. Inclusive teachers applied strategies tailored to students' specific needs, including simplifying learning stages, using the grammar translation method with tools like Google Translate, reading aloud, incorporating simple pictures on worksheets, and employing repetition and reinforcement techniques to enhance memory retention and engagement. These methods underscored the importance of flexible and empathetic teaching approaches in inclusive education. The findings implied that addressing the unique needs of students with intellectual disabilities through adaptive instructional strategies was vital for improving their English learning outcomes and fostering a more supportive inclusive classroom environment.

Keywords: English; Inclusive; Teaching; Students

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1. Introduction

Students come into the education system with a variety of unique characteristics, influenced by their backgrounds, life experiences, and personalities. 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 (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. 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 (Dharsana, 2025). 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.

According to Soffer and 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 (Nurkhamidah & Marleni, 2024). 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 and 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 et al., (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.

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. 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. This is because SD Triamerta has used the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), where teachers must be able to accompany and facilitate the student learning process. The Independent Curriculum provides equal opportunities for all students, including children with special needs, to receive proper education, support, and facilities (Yunus et al., 2023).

Based on primary observation conducted in class 2B at SD Triamerta Singaraja, some information has been obtained from English teachers in inclusive classes. The 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.

Previous studies have indeed discussed the implementation of English in inclusive classes (Padmadewi et al. 2024; Utami et al., 2021). In some of these studies, they did answer the challenges found and how teachers in the classroom solved them. But unfortunately, there has not been any found in Singaraja, Buleleng 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.

2. Method

This study employed a case study approach with a descriptive qualitative research design, suitable for exploring complex phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). The qualitative aspect focused on collecting rich descriptive data in the form of spoken and written language to gain deep insights into the learning process in an inclusive classroom setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted at SD Triamerta Singaraja, a private elementary school in Singaraja Regency, Bali Province. The school implements the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) and supports an inclusive classroom environment for English language learning, specifically accommodating students with intellectual disabilities. The participants included 24 second-grade students, among whom five were identified with intellectual disabilities. These participants were purposively selected due to their relevance to the research problem, focusing on students whose learning processes in English needed investigation within an inclusive framework.

To collect comprehensive data, multiple instruments were employed. First, direct observation enabled the researcher to witness behaviors, interactions, and teaching practices within the natural classroom environment—a well-established qualitative data collection method (Katz-Buonincontro & Anderson, 2020). Observations focused on classroom activities and the role of teachers during English lessons and were recorded systematically using an observation checklist to ensure accuracy and consistency. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the inclusive English teacher(s) to obtain detailed perspectives about



teaching strategies, challenges, and adaptations made for students with intellectual disabilities. Interviews helped gather nuanced data about teachers' intentions, feelings, and experiences, providing contextual depth (Dursun, 2023).

Data collection took place over a period of four weeks, during English classes on Tuesdays. The study sought both descriptive observational data and reflective interview data, enabling a well-rounded understanding of the teaching and learning process. For data analysis, the study followed Mezmur's (2020) four-stage qualitative data analysis model. Initially, data collection involved recording observations and conducting interviews using structured tools like checklists and interview guides. Then, during data reduction, irrelevant or redundant information was discarded, focusing on data directly related to learning procedures, strategies, and challenges for students with intellectual disabilities. The third stage, data display, organized the reduced data into clear formats including indicator tables summarizing observations and thematic categorizations of interview responses. Finally, conclusion drawing synthesized key patterns and insights to address the research questions, highlighting the unique dynamics of English language instruction in the inclusive classroom.

This study adhered strictly to ethical research guidelines to protect the rights and welfare of all participants, especially the vulnerable group of students with intellectual disabilities. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from the school administration, and inclusive classroom teachers. Clear explanations of the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, and potential risks were provided to ensure voluntary participation. To protect the students with disabilities during observations, the research avoided any intrusive or disruptive methods. Observations were conducted discreetly and respectfully to minimize stress or discomfort for the students. The researcher-maintained confidentiality by anonymizing all personal data and refraining from disclosing any identifiable information in reports or publications. Additionally, the wellbeing and dignity of students were prioritized, and any signs of distress during observations or interviews led to immediate cessation of the activity. The study upheld principles of respect, beneficence, and justice in all interactions with participants.

3. Findings

English learning in the inclusive classroom 2B is structured to address the diverse needs of all students, including those with intellectual disabilities, across three stages: pre-activity, while-activity, and post-activity. This study was conducted over four weeks with weekly Tuesday English lessons. Each session involved two teachers: a main teacher who led the lesson and an inclusive teacher who provided targeted support.

In the first observation, the observation was divided into three phases: pre-activity, while-activity, and post-activity, with two teachers involved—a main teacher leading the lesson and an inclusive teacher assisting students with intellectual disabilities. The session began with a joint prayer and singing of the national anthem and a spiritual song. Student attention varied, prompting the teacher to use an English song as an ice-breaker to re-engage the class. During



the main lesson, the topic "Parts of the Family" was taught using the Grammar Translation Method. The main teacher led the class with a teacher-centered approach, while the inclusive teacher provided focused support in small groups for students with special needs. Students completed a worksheet identifying family members and some presented their answers in front of the class. The lesson ended with review questions and praise for correct answers, followed by a closing prayer, highlighting a structured and supportive inclusive learning environment.

The second observation maintained the same lesson structure as the previous week, starting with a joint prayer, singing the national anthem "Indonesia Raya," and a Christian spiritual song. While some students, especially those with intellectual disabilities, were distracted during singing, the teacher restored focus with verbal reminders. The ice-breaking activity featured the song "If You're Happy and You Know It," engaging all students enthusiastically through interactive actions. In the main lesson, the focus was on developing speaking skills related to the topic "Parts of the Family," taught using the Grammar Translation Method. The main teacher explained how to construct English sentences about family members, while the inclusive teacher provided focused support to students with intellectual disabilities at the back of the class, using repetition to reinforce previous material. Students practiced speaking for 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for the special needs group, and all took turns presenting in front of the class accompanied by support as needed. The session ended with the teacher praising correct responses and motivating the students, followed by a closing prayer, reflecting a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

The third observation began with a joint prayer, singing the Indonesian national anthem "Indonesia Raya," and a Christian spiritual song, with the classroom showing improved order and focus. The icebreaker was an engaging animal guessing game, where students earned praise for correct answers. The main lesson focused on "Animals," with the main teacher introducing animal names and characteristics, which students copied into their notebooks. The inclusive teacher provided personalized support to students with intellectual disabilities, helping them write and pronounce the vocabulary accurately. Students then completed a worksheet with multiple-choice and essay questions, receiving extra time and individual assistance as needed. To conclude, the teacher administered a memory quiz without notes, followed by a group prayer, reinforcing both learning and a supportive classroom atmosphere.

The fourth observation began with a joint prayer, singing the Indonesian national anthem "Indonesia Raya," and a Christian spiritual song, with the classroom atmosphere notably calmer and more orderly. A question-and-answer review on the previous topic, "Animals," helped reinforce learning and support students with intellectual disabilities through repetition. The main lesson focused on animal characteristics, with the main teacher explaining traits and students copying notes. The inclusive teacher provided personalized support to students with intellectual disabilities, assisting with writing and clarifying instructions using the Grammar Translation Method. Students completed a worksheet matching animals to traits, with extra time and individual help for those needing it. Class discussion followed, where students answered questions from the worksheet, receiving praise and encouragement. Students



with intellectual disabilities also participated with guided support. The lesson ended with a puzzle activity related to animal names, submission of worksheets for grading, and a closing prayer.

Based on the observations conducted from the first to the fourth session, it can be concluded that the teaching procedures in the inclusive classroom were consistent and well-structured. Each session began with a pre-activity that included a class prayer, singing the Indonesian national anthem and a Christian spiritual song, followed by an ice-breaking activity that varied each week. Although the songs or games used for the ice-breaking changed from week to week, the main purpose remained the same: to create a positive learning atmosphere and build student enthusiasm before entering the core learning material.

In the interview, it was found that teaching students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms presents complex challenges that extend beyond cognitive differences. Teachers must manage behavioral issues such as tantrums, boredom, mood swings, and lack of focus, which disrupt learning and require flexible, empathetic classroom management. Both main and inclusive teachers often struggle with maintaining classroom order when students express frustration or disengage, sometimes needing to remove students temporarily to restore a conducive atmosphere. Despite efforts to adapt lesson content using simple language, visual aids, and personalized encouragement, sustaining students' engagement remains difficult. Another major challenge is addressing the diverse learning needs and styles within the classroom. Students with intellectual disabilities typically require more concrete, repetitive, and structured instruction, while other students may thrive with abstract thinking and faster pacing. This diversity forces teachers to continuously adjust methods and materials to effectively reach all learners. Balancing these varied needs is essential but challenging and can affect overall student participation and achievement.

4. Discussions

Each stage of the learning procedure in inclusive classroom 2B is systematically designed to create an environment that is supportive and encouraging for all students, especially those with intellectual disabilities. The pre-activity segment typically consists of group prayers, singing, and ice-breaking activities aimed at generating positive emotions and building a sense of community. The main lesson or while-activity is led by the main teacher who delivers the core content, while the inclusive teacher simultaneously provides more individualized assistance to students with intellectual disabilities. Finally, the post-activity serves to consolidate the learning through review sessions or quizzes. This structured approach aligns well with Hidayah and Morganna (2019), who emphasize the importance of a well-organized learning sequence in inclusive education for enhanced student engagement.

Despite this systematic framework, teaching students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms poses notable challenges, primarily due to the limitations these students face in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior (Kuntz & Carter, 2019). Effective teaching requires flexibility in methods, including the use of visual aids and simple, clear language to convey academic concepts (Rapti et al., 2023). However, in classroom 2B, teachers



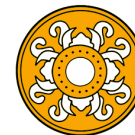
find it difficult to simplify learning materials sufficiently or adapt teaching methods effectively to meet the broad spectrum of learners' needs, reflecting a gap between theory and practice in inclusive instruction.

A critical issue highlighted by Utami et al. (2021) is the necessity to adapt all aspects of learning materials—including content, language, and presentation style—to the unique needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Despite this knowledge, classroom 2B utilizes the same worksheets for all students, revealing a lack of individualization and differentiation in teaching resources. This shortfall significantly affects students with intellectual disabilities as they struggle to understand instructions and complete assignments independently, leading to lower participation and engagement levels during lessons. Additionally, the limitations in learning media further hinder student motivation and retention. Research by Anggani and Bharati (2020) shows that Picture Mnemonic media can improve vocabulary retention and increase motivation in students with intellectual disabilities. Dakhiel and Abu Al Rub (2017) explain that linking pictures with vocabulary enhances memory recall. Unfortunately, classroom 2B only uses static images embedded in worksheets without employing mnemonic aids, contributing to a less stimulating learning experience that reduces students' motivation and retention of lesson content.

Behavioral challenges also frequently disrupt learning in inclusive classrooms, as reported by Shabina et al. (2023), who identified tantrums, boredom, mood swings, and attention difficulties as common among students with intellectual disabilities. Such behaviors demand patient and adaptable classroom management. Teachers face the dual task of managing these behavioral issues while designing instructional strategies that suit cognitive levels, employing simplified sentences and direct communication to encourage active participation (Puspitasari, 2019). This balanced approach helps students with intellectual disabilities better access and engage with English learning material, improving their academic experience despite inherent challenges.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The study conducted in inclusive classroom 2B at SD Triamerta Singaraja revealed distinct English learning procedures for students with intellectual disabilities compared to their typically developing peers. Inclusive teachers grouped five students with intellectual disabilities at one table, providing focused supervision to ensure intensive guidance and minimize distractions, thereby maintaining a conducive learning environment. The collaborative teaching model involves both a regular teacher for the entire class and an inclusive teacher dedicated to supporting students with special needs. Despite these tailored procedures, teachers encountered challenges such as tantrums, mood swings, and fluctuating student interest, necessitating continual adaptation of teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning abilities. Additional difficulties arose from students' occasional unresponsiveness and reluctance to engage, which could disrupt class dynamics. To address these challenges, inclusive teachers employed specialized strategies aligned with the unique

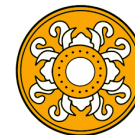


needs of their students. These included simplifying instruction through the Grammar Translation Method aided by Google Translate, incorporating visual aids like pictures on worksheets to boost engagement and reduce negative behaviors, and using repetition and reinforcement techniques such as reading aloud to enhance vocabulary retention. Overall, the findings emphasize that teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive setting demands differentiated approaches and flexible strategies. Inclusive teachers must possess the skills to tailor instruction effectively, ensuring that the educational needs of all students are met with sensitivity and expertise.

Based on the study results, it is recommended that teachers continue to develop responsive learning procedures tailored to students with intellectual disabilities, utilizing visual aids, repetition, reinforcement, and small group instruction while exercising patience and creativity to manage behavioral challenges and diverse learning abilities, with close collaboration between regular and inclusive teachers. Schools should maintain strong support for inclusive education by providing well-trained staff, adaptive resources, and a welcoming environment that promotes academic and social growth for all students. The social environment, including parents and community members, plays a crucial role by offering emotional, moral, and communicative support to children with special needs and partnering with schools to foster optimal development. Finally, future research should expand to different grades and school contexts to further investigate effective teaching strategies for improving English language learning outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities, thereby contributing to the advancement of equitable and sustainable inclusive education practices.

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