



## Investigating Teaching English for Deaf Students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem: Procedures and Challenges

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### Abstract

*This study examines the procedures and challenges of teaching English to deaf students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem during the 2024/2025 academic year. Using a qualitative approach, it incorporates classroom observations and in-depth interviews with English teachers to analyze teaching methods, communication strategies, and lesson structuring. The findings reveal that teachers follow a structured nine-step procedure, including lesson preparation, clear visibility, structured speech, repetition, communication aids, visual reinforcement, written support, expressive communication, and comprehension checks. These strategies align with previous research emphasizing multimodal approaches in deaf education. Despite these structured methods, teachers face challenges such as limited student vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and low motivation due to the complexity of English. They combine sign language, visual media, interactive digital tools, and personalized learning techniques to address these issues and enhance engagement. The study underscores the importance of structured and adaptive teaching strategies in supporting deaf students' language learning. Additionally, it highlights the need for ongoing professional training for teachers in special education, equipping them with effective methodologies to improve instruction. These findings contribute to the broader field of special education, particularly in advancing English language teaching for students with hearing impairments.*

**Keywords:** Deaf Students; Teaching Challenges; Teaching English; Teaching Procedures

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### 1. Introduction

Special education is intended to accommodate children with impairments by integrating educational procedures with psychological support to facilitate learning (Maryanti et al., 2021). However, with the expanding trend of inclusive education, many children with disabilities are enrolling in public schools. According to research, Over 60% of students with disabilities now

spend 80% or more of their day in regular classes due to the specific education paradigm known as inclusion or mainstreaming, which has grown in popularity over the past ten years (Yuan, 2023). While inclusion promotes equal educational opportunities, it also presents problems, as many schools do not have enough specialized teachers to help kids with disabilities effectively. Research shows that students with special school needs and learning disabilities are at higher risk of being bullied compared to their peers without disabilities. Additionally, students with special educational needs often face challenges in social relationships and interactions with peers, further increasing their risk of being bullied. This highlights the importance of implementing targeted interventions and fostering inclusive school environments that promote social acceptance, empathy, and equal opportunities for all students.

The complexity of issues that could have been resolved with specific needs is gradually rising. Each class has different conditions or problems, including children with special needs. Children with special needs can be referred to as slow to learn or have mental disorders (retarded), usually characterized by academic abilities below the average of other normal children (Siahaan, 2022). Children with special needs have different characteristics based on their disorders. Of the various types of students with special needs, there are difficulties experienced by students with special needs and teachers in classroom learning activities. In Indonesia, there are several types of special needs schools, namely SLB A (for blind students), SLB B (for deaf students), SLB C (for autistic students), SLB D (for physically disabled students), SLB E (for ADHD students), and SLB G (for double disabilities students). Children with special needs have physical and emotional limitations that affect their growth and development. In dealing with students with special needs, teachers must be able to provide exceptional treatment, one of the conditions is deafness.

Deafness is a hearing disorder that causes a person to be unable to hear sounds perfectly or at all. According to Azahari et al. (2021) people who are deaf or hard of hearing are often considered a minority group with obstacles in the verbal communication system, including when translating to interpreting meaning when communicating. Deaf children cannot listen to voices or sounds well and need hearing aids or sign language to communicate. Deaf students encounter unique difficulties when learning a second language among students with disabilities. Moreover, deaf students who attend SLB/special schools are classified as deaf and deaf. Varshney, (2016) highlights that children with hearing loss face significant challenges in speech and language development, leading to delays in acquisition and affecting their overall communication skills. To assist language acquisition, deaf students need specific teaching methods that include sign language, visual media, and interactive approaches. However, studies show that deaf students frequently suffer with phoneme recognition, sentence construction, and vocabulary development because they rely primarily on visual signals rather than aural input (Tahang et al., 2023). Due to its intricate phonetic and grammatical patterns, this restriction makes learning English especially difficult.

SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem was chosen as the research site because deaf students in this school learn English from the junior high school level without any prior foundation. Their hearing difficulties and lack of experience with English make it challenging for them to improve their pronunciation, increase their vocabulary, and properly compose sentences. Based on preliminary observations and interviews with English teachers, students frequently consider English challenging, lowering their motivation and involvement. Additionally, a lack of specialized teaching resources and interaction barriers make it difficult for teachers to use effective teaching strategies. Classroom observations showed that interactive activities, visual aids, and sign language are essential for improving comprehension, but teachers are still struggling to modify lessons to meet the students' needs.

Despite increased studies on inclusive education, studies examining the procedures and challenges of teaching English to deaf students are limited. While previous research Tahang et al., (2023) has investigated the significance of visual media and sign language, there is a gap in knowing the step-by-step instructional procedures teachers employ in practical classroom situations. Furthermore, there has been little research into specific challenges English teachers encounter when

teaching deaf students in special schools such as SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem. Addressing this research gap is critical for enhancing English instruction for deaf students and providing educators with practical techniques to improve teaching efficacy. Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the teaching procedures and challenges English teachers face at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem.

## **2. Method**

### **Design**

This research used a qualitative approach based on the Miles et al. (2014) interactive analysis model to explore the procedures and challenges English teachers face in teaching deaf students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem. A qualitative approach was chosen because it thoroughly investigates teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and teacher experiences. This research followed a sequential approach, consisting of data collection, condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification to ensure the findings were continually refined throughout the research. This approach allowed the researcher to understand how English is taught to deaf students and what challenges arise in the process.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were teachers and students. The researcher interviewed English teachers and observed the learning activities of students and teachers in the classroom. The criteria for selecting participants were based on a preliminary study conducted by the researcher on English teachers who faced challenges in teaching deaf students. Therefore, the researcher used English teachers and all students in the class as participants.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The researcher conducted three classroom observations using a structured guideline based on Thompson's (2012) framework, focusing on teaching strategies, student engagement, and challenges that arise during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to understand the challenges of teaching English to deaf students. Documentation in the form of audio recordings and photographs was used as supporting data.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using Miles et al. (2014) interactive model, which consist of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, the researcher filtered out relevant information, focusing on teaching procedures and challenges. The data display involved organizing the information into thematic descriptions, table form. Finally, conclusion was drawn and verified through a process of data triangulation which was used to increase data validity by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure the accuracy of the research findings.

## **3. Findings**

The research findings are divided into two parts. The first part explains the procedures of teaching English to deaf students. The second part discusses the identification of challenges experienced by teachers in teaching English to deaf students.

### **The procedures of teaching English to deaf students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem**

**Table 1. Findings from Observation**

Object of Observation	Practice Checklist					
	Meeting I		Meeting II		Meeting III	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Preparing lessons with students' needs in mind before teaching.	√		√		√	
Ensure students can clearly see the teacher when giving explanations in front of the class.	√		√		√	
Speaking clearly, slowly and in a structured manner.	√		√		√	
Repeating explanations and instructions as necessary, along with writing key words on the board.	√		√		√	
Integrate communication aids, such as sign language and electronic devices.	√		√		√	
Utilizing visual aids in the presentation to provide clearer explanations of tasks.	√		√		√	
Writing important information on the board to clarify the material.	√		√		√	
Using facial expressions and body language to support verbal communication.	√		√		√	
Ensures students understand the material by asking questions to check understanding.	√		√		√	

### First Observation

The first observation highlighted effective teaching strategies for deaf students. Before teaching, the teacher prepared the Objects in the Classroom lesson by creating a structured lesson plan, using visual aids, and preparing worksheets. To ensure clear visibility, the teacher stood before the class and used hand gestures to maintain students' attention. During the lesson, the teacher spoke clearly and slowly, repeating instructions several times in both Indonesian and English while using sign language. Key questions, such as "*Apa saja benda-benda yang ada di kelas ini?*" ("What are the objects in this class?"), were repeated in sign language to enhance understanding, and essential vocabulary such as marker, pen, and eraser were written on the board for reinforcement. Visual aids, including projected images and real objects, helped clarify concepts, while facial expressions and body language enhanced communication and engagement. The teacher assessed understanding by asking questions and encouraging sign and spoken language responses, providing positive reinforcement to motivate students. Interactive activities, such as writing on the board, vocabulary review, and translation exercises, kept students engaged. The lesson ended with a review, where the teacher confirmed students' understanding before ending the class.

### Second Observation

In the second observation, the teacher implemented effective teaching strategies to support deaf students in learning Fruit Names. The lesson began with a greeting and questions to activate prior knowledge. To ensure visibility, the teacher stood before the class and used hand gestures to

maintain students' attention. During the main activity, picture cards with fruit names in English and Indonesian were used to provide visual support, and sign language was included to spell out the words. Key vocabulary was written on the board, and students actively participated by writing the fruit names in both languages. The teacher used facial expressions and body language to increase engagement. To assess comprehension, students completed exercises such as completing words, matching, and choosing the correct answer. Clear instructions were given, and the teacher monitored progress while addressing difficulties. Afterwards, students wrote their answers on the board and received praise for their efforts. The session ended with a review, an opportunity for students to ask questions, and a closing statement reminding them to be careful. This structured and interactive approach ensured an inclusive learning environment, helping deaf students understand the lesson effectively.

### **Third Observation**

In the third observation, the teacher implemented various strategies to support deaf students in learning English. The lesson began with a greeting and review of previous material about fruits before introducing a new topic, Transportation. The teacher ensured all students could see her clearly and used sign language with precise lip movements to reinforce the explanation. During the main activity, the projector displayed pictures of various modes of Transportation, such as cars, bicycles, and planes, with their names in Indonesian and English. Key vocabulary was written on the board, and the teacher demonstrated the spelling using sign language. Students practised by writing the names of the Transportation in their exercise books and translating them into Indonesian while receiving guidance and encouragement. To make the learning interactive, a quiz using the Wordwall application was conducted, where students matched the pictures with the English words and received feedback on their answers. The session ended with a review, where the teacher checked for difficulties and clarified any questions before ending with a farewell. This structured and engaging approach helped deaf students better understand the material while increasing their confidence in learning English.

English learning for deaf students requires a special approach to suit their learning needs (Prasetya et al., 2023). This study found that the teaching method at VII and IX deaf classes in SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem followed a structured approach proposed by Thompson (2012), with nine main steps, including material preparation, visual clarity, repetition, use of communication tools, and evaluation of understanding. Material preparation is essential in visual media, interactive activities, and digital technology. Teachers also ensure visual clarity and speech structure with strategic positions in the classroom so students can see their lip movements and gestures. Repetition and reinforcement of concepts are carried out through the whiteboard and written materials to increase student retention, which aligns with previous studies (Suharsih, 2022; Prasetya et al., 2023). Communication tools such as sign language, written notes, and digital technology such as Wordwall quizzes provide a more interactive learning experience. Visual media such as word cards and digital slides also strengthen students' understanding. In addition, facial expressions and body language are key strategies in conveying meaning and emotion. Teachers actively evaluate students' knowledge through interactive questions, ensuring their engagement in learning. This strategy supports a multimodal approach to teaching English to deaf students. This study also highlights technology integration as an innovation in deaf education, showing potential for further development in the Indonesian context (Juhaeni et al., 2022).

This study presents several important implications for educators and curriculum developers in deaf education. Multimodal communication, which combines sign language, visual materials, written reinforcement, and digital tools, enhances learning. Lesson adaptations should prioritize visual learning and interactive activities to meet student's needs while integrating digital learning

tools such as Wordwall quizzes can improve student engagement. Additionally, regular comprehension checks through interactive questions helped ensure adequate learning retention. Overall, this study reaffirms that structured, multimodal instruction which combines clear speech, sign language, repetition, and digital aids can significantly improve the quality of English education for deaf students. The findings emphasize the importance of teacher adaptability and student-centred learning and offer practical strategies for creating more inclusive and effective learning environments in special education.

### **The Challenges the Teacher Experienced in Teaching English to Deaf Students at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem**

Based on the interview results, the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English to grades 8 and 9 at SLB N 1 Karangasem are as follows:

#### **Access all communication presented in the classroom**

*“Karena saya bukan basic guru SLB khususnya guru tuli saya masih tidak begitu hafal bagaimana isyarat setiap kata atau benda sehingga saya harus kembali lagi menuliskan kata atau kalimat di papan dan mencari gambar atau ilustrasi yang sedang saya bahas atau ajarkan ke mereka. Selain itu kendala komunikasi sangat sering saya alami karena mereka tidak mendengar otomatis pengetahuan mereka jauh di bawah seusianya, sehingga saya harus mencari gambar atau ilustrasi yang menggambarkan kata atau kalimat yang disampaikan.” (T-1)*

Teachers face communication and instruction challenges because they lack specialized training in teaching deaf students. They rely on written and visual aids to compensate for their limited knowledge of sign language, especially for certain words or objects. These communication barriers affect students’ learning, requiring extra effort to find appropriate visual supports. This underscores the need for continuous learning and adaptation to ensure effective and inclusive education.

#### **The difficulty in understanding the learning materials**

*Siswa tunarungu memiliki kemampuan berfikir di bawah siswa mendengar sehingga sulit bagi mereka untuk memahami materi pembelajaran dengan cepat. Terkadang materi yang baru di sampaikan hanya dalam hitungan menit mereka sudah lupa sehingga saya harus mengingatkan mereka lagi. (T-1)*

Deaf students face cognitive differences, requiring frequent reinforcement and repetition for better understanding. Adaptive teaching strategies, ongoing review, and multisensory learning approaches are crucial for their retention.

#### **The difficulty in grasping new information real time**

*“Dengan keterbatasan kemampuan mereka dalam menerima informasi baru menjadi tantangan bagi guru. Butuh waktu yang lebih lama, visual yang lebih menarik dan memberikan informasi secara berulang ulang pada siswa tuli agar mereka mampu memahami informasi baru yang diberikan oleh guru di kelas.” (T-1)*

Due to their hearing impairments, deaf students face learning challenges, necessitating more time, visual media, and repeated presentations. Adaptive teaching strategies, prioritizing visual learning and reinforcement, can help them better understand and retain class material.

#### **The difficulty in understanding lip movements**

*“Iya, bahkan sangat sering. Dalam belajar kosa kata bahasa inggris siswa sangat sering melakukan kesalahan saat menyebutkan kata sehingga solusi yang saya lakukan yaitu meminta siswa mengeja satu huruf dengan di barengi oleh bahasa isyarat. Sehingga mereka bisa membaca huruf dapat dengan tepat.” (T-1)*

Deaf students often make mistakes in pronouncing English vocabulary. Teachers use strategies like spelling words letter by letter while using sign language to improve their reading and articulation skills. This structured learning process enhances their understanding of English vocabulary.

### **The difficulty in getting students' attention**

*“Iya. Sehingga saya harus menepuk punggung mereka atau membuat gerakan yang bisa di lihat sehingga saya bisa mendapatkan perhatian mereka kembali. Biasanya anak tuli mereka akan larut dalam obrolan mereka masing-masing, karena sepanjang saya perhatikan mereka seperti memiliki dunianya sendiri. Terkadang sulit bagi kita memahami komunikasi atau percakapan yang mereka bicarakan sesama penyandang tuli” (T-1)*

Teachers must use physical gestures and effective strategies to maintain deaf students' attention in the classroom. Communication between deaf students can be challenging to interpret, making classroom management more challenging. Teachers must develop effective strategies to engage students and ensure smooth communication during the learning process.

### **Deaf students' limited vocabulary in communicating**

*“Saat mengajar bahasa inggris pada siswa tunarungu sangat sulit bagi saya memberi tahu kosa katanya dalam bahasa inggris karena mereka saja jarang mengucapkan kosa kata bahasa Indonesia. Sehingga mereka hanya sebatas tau dalam belajar kosa kata bahasa inggris dan belum pada fase penggunaan dalam kalimat atau percakapan itu belum. Cara guru mengajarkan kosa kata pada siswa tunarungu yaitu melihat objek atau gambar secara langsung. Saat mengajar saya memberikan banyak contoh gambar yang dibawahnya terdapat kosa kata dalam bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa inggris. Saya juga mengeja huruf demi huruf dengan bahasa isyarat” (T-1)*

Teaching English vocabulary to deaf students is challenging due to their limited use of Indonesian vocabulary. To overcome this, teachers use visual aids like objects and pictures, Indonesian and English words, and sign language spelling to reinforce learning. These strategies emphasize the importance of visual and kinesthetic methods in supporting deaf students' language acquisition.

### **Frequently Displaying Aggressive Behavior**

Deaf children often display aggressive behaviour due to their difficulty in understanding spoken language. They usually respond enthusiastically to classroom questions, causing a noisy environment. Impaired hearing function leads to communication challenges with hearing individuals, causing deaf students to be expressive and sometimes appear aggressive. This frustration often leads to exaggerated gestures and facial expressions to convey intentions. The main trigger for aggressive behaviour is difficulty conveying and interpreting messages, often leading to frustration among deaf students.

## **4. Discussions**

Teaching English to deaf students presents various challenges, ranging from communication barriers to vocabulary limitations. This study confirms previous findings (Suharsih, 2022; Susiloadi et al., 2017; Apriliyanti, 2023; Juhaeni et al., 2022; Prasetya et al., 2023). This study reinforces and builds upon these findings by identifying similar challenges at VII and IX classes in SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem, specifically related to communication difficulties, limited student vocabulary, and the additional effort needed for comprehension.

One of the main challenges is communication. This barrier causes deaf students to lag behind in understanding the material. Teachers must use sign language, written instructions, and visual cues to make the delivery of the material more effective (Suharsih, 2022; Susiloadi et al., 2017). In addition, students' understanding of the material takes longer, due to cognitive limitations which are generally lower than hearing students (Apriliyanti, 2023; Apriliyanti, 2023). Therefore, strategies such as visual media and interactive methods are crucial. Limited social experience also affects the speed of students in understanding new concepts. To overcome this, teachers use pictorial illustrations, videos, and written summaries as aids (Juhaeni et al., 2022). Difficulty in lip

reading is also a challenge because the similarity of lip movements in certain words can cause misunderstandings. Therefore, a holistic communication approach with a combination of sign language, clear lip movements, and written keywords is needed (Prasetya et al., 2023).

Maintaining students' attention is another challenge because they do not respond to vocal cues. Teachers must use visual gestures such as waving or patting the shoulder to get their attention (Thompson, 2012). In addition, limited vocabulary is an obstacle to understanding the material, because sign language does not always use complete sentences. Teachers overcome this by writing keywords on the board and using pictures as visual supports (Suharsih, 2022; Susiloadi et al., 2017). Aggressive behavior that often occurs in deaf students is more due to frustration in communicating than hostile intentions. Difficulty understanding spoken language and expressing oneself can lead to excessive gestures or interactions that seem rude (Nofiaturrehman, 2018; Prasetya et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers play a role in managing classroom interactions with visual communication strategies and reinforcing positive communication habits (Juhaeni et al., 2022).

The level of student dependence on teachers is also a significant challenge. Students often require constant guidance in completing tasks, even when instructions have been given in writing. This suggests the need for teaching strategies that encourage independence, such as gradual practice, interactive activities, and collaboration with peers (Apriliyanti, 2023; Susiloadi et al., 2017). Overall, these findings underscore the importance of a multimodal approach in teaching English to deaf students. By adopting the right strategies, teachers can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment, so that deaf students can develop better English skills.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The study emphasizes the significance of a structured and multimodal approach to teaching English to deaf students, as implemented at SLB Negeri 1 Karangasem. Teachers follow a nine-step procedure based on Thompson's (2012) framework, incorporating lesson preparation, clear visibility, structured speech, repetition, communication aids, visual reinforcement, written support, expressive communication, and comprehension checks. Key strategies include using sign language, visual aids, digital tools like Wordwall quizzes, and interactive teaching methods to enhance engagement and understanding. Despite these structured approaches, teachers face several challenges, including communication barriers, limited vocabulary, comprehension difficulties, and students' high dependence on teacher guidance. Deaf students often require repeated explanations, visual reinforcements, and written instructions due to cognitive processing limitations and a lack of social and auditory experiences. Additional challenges include difficulties with lip reading, reliance on sign language, classroom management issues, and aggressive behaviour from communication frustrations. The study concludes that while structured teaching methods create an inclusive learning environment, continuous adaptations are necessary to address these challenges. Flexible and student-centred teaching approaches, incorporating digital tools and interactive strategies, can help improve English instruction for deaf students while fostering greater independence in learning.

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