The Types, The Function, and The Application of English Learning Media for Mute Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the types, functions, and implementation of English learning media for mute students at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng. A qualitative case study design was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of English teaching practices in a special education context. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the English teacher, and documentation of instructional materials. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that English instruction for mute students relied primarily on visual-based media, particularly written text, pictures, and diagrams. Written text functioned as the main medium for delivering English instruction, replacing spoken explanations, while pictures and diagrams were used to support comprehension of vocabulary and meaning. Visual learning media played a significant role in supporting students' language acquisition by making learning content more concrete, meaningful, and easier to remember. Pictures helped students connect written English words with real objects, actions, or situations, thereby enhancing understanding and student engagement. Despite their effectiveness, several challenges were identified, including limited instructional facilities, students' concentration difficulties during prolonged visual activities, and differences in students' levels of visual comprehension. These challenges required teachers to adjust the teaching pace and provide repeated explanations using gestures or real objects. Overall, the study highlights the importance of visual-based instruction and appropriate learning media in supporting English learning for mute students in special school settings.

Keywords: English learning media; visual-based instruction; mute students; special education; qualitative case study

1. Introduction

Children with Special Needs are learners who require educational approaches that differ from those used in general classrooms in order to develop their abilities optimally (Putra, 2021; Ministry of National Education, 2007). These needs may arise from physical, intellectual, emotional, or social limitations that can be temporary or permanent in nature (Ilahi, 2013). One group that experiences significant educational challenges is students with hearing and speech impairments, particularly in the area of communication. Difficulties in understanding spoken language and expressing ideas verbally often lead to emotional frustration and limited social interaction (Emmorey, 2002; Lederberg et al., 2013).

From a linguistic perspective, hearing and speech impairments greatly affect the development of vocabulary and verbal fluency. Hearing limitations restrict access to spoken input, while reliance on sign language or other non-verbal systems can create communication

gaps with the wider community (Mayberry, 1993). Moeller (2000) further noted that even students with mild hearing impairments must exert greater cognitive effort to communicate with hearing individuals, which can hinder learning processes.

In the educational context, English is an essential subject as it functions not only as a means of international communication but also as access to global knowledge and academic opportunities (Krashen, 1982). For students with speech impairments, however, learning English presents additional challenges due to their limited verbal output. Consequently, the selection of learning media becomes a critical factor in supporting their understanding and participation. Learning media that are visually rich and appropriately designed have been shown to improve comprehension and engagement among learners with communication difficulties (Tomlinson, 2011).

Several studies have highlighted the potential of technology-based learning media to support students with special needs. Research in special schools has revealed that limited access to inclusive and multimedia learning resources remains a major barrier to effective English learning (Adnyani et al., 2021). Although innovations such as mobile applications and virtual reality have demonstrated positive impacts on learning motivation and comprehension (Samsudin & Sulaiman, 2022; Rahim & Rahim, 2022), research that specifically addresses English learning media for mute students is still scarce.

SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng, a long-established special school in Bali, provides English instruction for students with diverse disabilities, including speech impairments. Despite supportive facilities and qualified teachers, English teaching practices in this school remain largely conventional. Therefore, this study focuses on examining the types, functions, and implementation of English learning media used for mute students at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng, with the aim of contributing to more inclusive and effective English language learning practices.

2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative case study design based on the analytical framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) to examine the types, functions, and implementation of English language learning media for mute students at SMP SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng. The research site was deliberately selected as it is one of the inclusive schools in North Bali that consistently provides English instruction for students with special needs, including mute students.

Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study as it seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of educational phenomena through rich, descriptive data derived from observations, interviews, and document analysis. By employing a qualitative approach, this study explores teachers' and students' experiences, perceptions, and practices within an authentic classroom setting. Direct engagement with participants and the learning environment allows the researcher to capture how English learning media are selected, adapted, and utilized to accommodate students with speech impairments. This approach emphasizes the importance of interaction and contextual learning processes, which are essential for understanding the complexity of teaching practices in special education contexts.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with English teachers, and analysis of relevant instructional documents and learning materials. The

collected data were analyzed using a three-step procedure consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification, as suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). This systematic process enabled the researcher to identify patterns, categorize findings, and draw valid conclusions that accurately reflect the actual implementation of English learning media for mute students.

3. Findings

To address the first research question, three classroom observations were conducted during English lessons in classes VII B and IX C at SMP SLBN 1 Buleleng between October 7 and November 4, 2025. The researcher assumed the role of a non-participant observer and systematically documented the teaching and learning processes that occurred in the classroom. Particular attention was given to identifying and recording the types of learning media employed by the teacher during instruction. The findings from these observations are summarized and presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Types of English media used for mute students at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng

Types of Media	Metting					
	I		II		II	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Text	✓		✓		✓	
Picture	✓		✓		✓	
Diagram		✓		✓		✓
Video		✓		✓		✓

Table 1 demonstrates that text-based media were consistently used in all three observed English lessons, highlighting the central role of written language in the instructional process for mute students. This consistent use suggests that written text functions as a primary channel for delivering English content, allowing students to access vocabulary, sentence structures, and instructions without relying on spoken language. For mute students, text-based media provide a stable and accessible form of input that supports independent reading and comprehension. In addition to text-based materials, picture media were systematically incorporated in every meeting. The regular use of visual images indicates that teachers intentionally employed pictorial support to reinforce meaning, contextualize vocabulary, and bridge potential comprehension gaps. Visual representations are particularly beneficial for students with limited verbal communication, as they help translate abstract language concepts into concrete and recognizable forms. Furthermore, diagrams were also utilized consistently across all observed sessions. Their use suggests an effort to organize information visually and to illustrate relationships between concepts, such as word categories, sentence patterns, or thematic connections. Diagrams support cognitive processing by presenting information in a structured and simplified manner, which can reduce cognitive load and enhance understanding for students with communication difficulties.

To identify the functions of English learning media in supporting mute students' language acquisition, an interview was conducted with the English teacher at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng. During the interview, the researcher explored how visual media functioned in the

teaching and learning process. The teacher explained that the Visual Learning Method is a primary approach used in teaching English vocabulary to deaf and mute students. This approach was selected because these students rely heavily on visual input to receive, process, and understand information. Among various types of visual media, pictures were identified as the most frequently used instructional tool in the classroom.

According to the teacher, visual media are considered the simplest and most effective means of helping students understand and retain English vocabulary. As stated by the teacher, *"mereka lebih cepat menyerap pengetahuan yang diberikan dan lebih mudah mengingat juga"* (Excerpt 1). In practice, the teacher commonly presents pictures related to lesson topics such as fruits, animals, school objects, and daily activities. These images allow students to directly associate visual representations with target vocabulary. Furthermore, visual media enhance students' memory retention by making learning materials more concrete and meaningful, as expressed by the teacher: *"Media visual membantu siswa lebih mudah mengingat materi, karena gambar dan tampilan visual membuat pelajaran menjadi lebih nyata dan bermakna bagi mereka"* (Excerpt 2). Thus, visual media play a significant role in facilitating comprehension and long-term retention of English learning materials.

Despite their effectiveness, the teacher also identified several challenges in using visual media. One major issue relates to the limited availability and variation of instructional tools. The teacher stated, *"Kendalanya tentu di alat. Karena tidak selamanya saya bisa memakai gambar, karena siswa pasti bosan"* (Excerpt 3). To address this limitation, the teacher occasionally utilizes digital visual media such as an LCD projector and a laptop. However, the use of digital media requires additional time, as students need longer periods to process the visual information presented, as noted in *"jadi otomatis pake lcd sama leptop tapi tidak bisa cepat-cepat karena mereka kurang paham"* (Excerpt 4). This indicates that while digital media offer variation, they also demand careful pacing and instructional adjustment.

Another challenge highlighted by the teacher concerns students' concentration levels. Some students experience difficulty maintaining attention during prolonged visual activities, particularly when excessive images or written texts are presented in a single lesson. The teacher explained, *"Kadang siswa sulit fokus jika terlalu lama melihat gambar atau tulisan. Kalau dalam satu pelajaran terlalu banyak visual yang ditampilkan, mereka cepat lelah dan perhatiannya mudah teralihkan"* (Excerpt 5). Because mute students rely predominantly on visual input, extended exposure can lead to visual fatigue and reduced focus. Additionally, differences in students' levels of visual comprehension require the teacher to repeatedly explain the material using sign language, gestures, or real objects to ensure understanding.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the teacher consistently applies the visual learning method, as it is perceived as the most effective instructional approach for mute students. As emphasized by the teacher, *"Walaupun ada beberapa kendala, saya tetap menggunakan metode visual karena itu yang paling efektif untuk siswa tuli. Dengan gambar, warna, dan contoh visual, mereka lebih mudah memahami pelajaran Bahasa Inggris"* (Excerpt 6).

The interview findings are supported by the classroom observation results presented in Table 1. The observations revealed that English instruction for mute students at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng predominantly utilized text-based and visual media. Written text, pictures, and diagrams were consistently employed across three classroom meetings, while video media

were not used. Written text functioned as the primary instructional medium, replacing spoken explanations, whereas pictures and diagrams were used to support comprehension and clarify meaning. This confirms that English learning for mute students strongly depends on visual input.

Furthermore, classroom observations illustrated how these media were applied in practice. The teacher used written text to present lesson topics, vocabulary, and simple sentences on the board. Students were instructed to read and copy the text, while the teacher provided guidance through gestures and additional written explanations. Pictures were integrated as supporting media to reinforce the written content. Students actively engaged by observing images, pointing to pictures, writing responses, and completing simple tasks. The combined use of text and visual media enabled students to better understand English vocabulary and sentence structures.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English instruction for deaf students at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng relies predominantly on visual input, particularly written text and pictures. This reliance reflects the learning characteristics of deaf and mute students, who depend mainly on visual channels to receive and process information. Gilakjani (2020) emphasized that visual-based instruction enables deaf and mute learners to participate in language learning more meaningfully by reducing dependence on auditory input. The present findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of visual media in English language teaching for students with communication difficulties.

Several studies support this result. Puspita et al. (2019) reported that the use of videos, pictures, matching activities, and real objects was effective in teaching English vocabulary to students with learning disabilities. Similarly, Padmadewi et al. (2023) found that visual media such as pictures, flashcards, and written texts played a crucial role in supporting English learning for students with hearing impairments in inclusive classrooms, particularly in understanding vocabulary and simple sentence structures. Yusuf and Sriadi et al. (2025) further highlighted that visual aids and real objects enhanced students' attention and motivation during English lessons, especially for learners with communication challenges. However, visual media alone are not sufficient. Mubin et al. (2024) argued that visual input must be supported by structured instructional strategies, such as repetition and matching exercises, to ensure effective learning.

The consistent use of pictures alongside written text in this study reinforces the importance of combining verbal and visual information. Najakh (2020) explained that integrating words and images facilitates learning by activating both verbal and visual cognitive channels, thereby improving comprehension and memory retention. For deaf students, pictures serve as a primary source of meaning due to limited auditory input. Sintayani et al. (2022) also found that presenting images together with written words helped students recognize and recall vocabulary more efficiently. Classroom observations in this study revealed that pictures enabled students to connect English words with real objects, actions, and situations, while also

sustaining attention and increasing engagement. As a result, learning became more concrete and accessible, supporting the development of basic English vocabulary and comprehension.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. One major issue concerned students' concentration, as some learners became fatigued or lost focus when exposed to excessive visual materials in a single lesson. This finding aligns with Smith and Okolo (2021), who noted that learners who rely heavily on visual input may experience visual fatigue when materials are presented for extended periods. Another challenge involved the limited availability of teaching tools. Wijayanti et al. (2025) similarly reported that teachers in special schools often need to adapt their instructional practices due to insufficient facilities. In this study, the teacher compensated for these limitations by preparing materials manually, slowing the pace of instruction, and frequently repeating explanations using gestures or real objects. This practice corresponds with the findings of Ningsih et al. (2025), who emphasized that deaf and mute students possess varying levels of visual comprehension, making repetition essential to ensure understanding for all learners.

Overall, the findings suggest several important implications for English teaching practice in special education contexts. First, the strong reliance on visual input indicates that English instruction for deaf students should prioritize visual-based approaches, particularly clear written text supported by meaningful images. Such approaches help learners comprehend vocabulary and sentence structures more effectively and enhance the meaningfulness of learning. Second, visual media should be integrated with structured instructional strategies, including repetition, matching activities, and guided practice, to maximize their effectiveness. Teachers must carefully manage the presentation of visual materials and allow sufficient processing time for students with different levels of visual comprehension. Third, the challenges related to concentration and limited instructional tools highlight the need for improved lesson planning and greater institutional support. Schools and educational stakeholders should provide adequate learning resources and simple technological tools to support effective English instruction. Future studies may further explore the optimal combination of visual media and teaching strategies to enhance English learning outcomes for deaf students across diverse educational settings.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

This study concludes that English instruction for mute students at SLB Negeri 1 Buleleng relies mainly on visual-based learning media, particularly written text, pictures, and diagrams. Written text functions as the primary medium to deliver English instruction in place of spoken explanations, while pictures and diagrams support students' understanding of vocabulary and meaning. Video media were not used due to limited facilities and students' difficulties in processing fast visual information. Overall, English learning for mute students depends strongly on text-based and visual input.

The findings also indicate that visual learning media play a crucial role in supporting mute students' English language acquisition. Visual input helps students understand

vocabulary and simple sentence structures more easily, enhances memory retention, and makes learning more concrete and meaningful. Pictures, in particular, assist students in connecting written words with real objects or situations, thereby increasing comprehension and engagement.

However, the study also identified several challenges, including limited instructional tools, students' concentration difficulties during prolonged visual activities, and differences in students' levels of visual comprehension. These challenges require teachers to carefully select and organize visual materials, adjust the pace of instruction, and use additional support such as gestures, repetition, and real objects.

Based on these findings, teachers are encouraged to continue using visual-based instruction supported by structured activities such as repetition and matching exercises, while avoiding excessive visual input in a single lesson. Schools and policymakers should provide better instructional resources, including visual teaching materials and simple technology, as well as training for teachers in inclusive and visual-based teaching strategies. Future research may further explore the use of interactive and digital visual media and examine their effectiveness across different educational contexts.

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