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LEARNING ENGLISH FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS THROUGH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM PEDAGOGY-BASED JOYFUL LEARNING

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article info

abstract

Students with special needs have different characteristics from students in general. Their different characteristics require more specific teaching services adjusted to their capacities and potentials. Their emotional, mental, intellectual, or social characteristics require special attention and treatment to strengthen their understanding of the learning materials. This article aims to explain the implementation of English language learning to students with special needs using joyful learning based on social constructivism pedagogy. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method and was conducted at SADA Ibu Inclusion School and Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education. The findings of the research show that (1) the implementation of the joyful learning method encouraged students in English classes; (2) in combining joyful learning with a social constructivism pedagogy approach, the results had significant differences at the two schools. Joyful learning-based social constructivism pedagogy is more appropriately applied at SADA Ibu Inclusion School rather than in Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education.

INTRODUCTION

Anggraeni et al. (2019) stated that children with special needs get insurance in many aspects including education. This is stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 20 of 2003: (1) Article 5 verse 2 "citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social disabilities have the right to receive special education"; (2) Article 5 verse 4 "citizens who are gifted in intelligence and special talents have the right to receive special education"; (3) Article 15 " the types of education encompass general, vocational, academic, professional, vocational, religious and special education"; (4) Article 32 verse 1 " special education is education for students who have difficulties in following the learning process due to physical, emotional, mental, social disabilities, and/or are gifted in intelligence and special talents."

In order to ensure the education of children with special needs, the government has issued Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 70 of 2009 concerning inclusive education for students with disabilities and the potential for intelligence and / or special talents, to be able to attend education or learning in formal schools. When these rules were issued, these rules naturally posed challenges for children with special needs, as well as for teachers who would teach them. Children with special needs have their own difficulties and challenges in following the process of learning activities (Rahayu, 2013; Mutia, 2011; Daroni, 2018).

Every child has the potential to face problems in learning, however, there are several different levels of problems. There are students who do not need special sympathy from others because children have the ability to control their own problems, but there are also students who need special treatment, and need help from others. Children with special needs, for example, cannot automatically be judged as children who experience learning problems. However, when they are compared with other (normal) peers in the education system in general, of course there is a striking difference between the two. Therefore, mature readiness is needed in preparing learning strategies for teachers and schools to give special attention to these special children in order to obtain optimal learning outcomes (Dermawan, 2018).

The gap in physical terms and the level of intelligence between students with special needs and students in general is one of the problems that must be solved. The teacher as a learning facilitator must be able to create various learning activities that can be understood well by both; children with special needs and general students. For this purpose, teachers need a variety of teaching tools and strategies so that learning activities can run smoothly. One of the teaching strategies used is Joyful Learning Based Social Constructivism Pedagogy. The implementation of this strategy is used as one of the learning techniques in helping students with special needs participate in learning activities in formal classes.

On the other hand, the demands in this era of globalization make learning English as one of the primary needs in the world of education, including for children with special needs. English education that is learned in children with special needs is a companion element so that they do not feel too foreign when they join the surrounding environment, because at least they have been provided with prior knowledge.

Regarding learning English for students with special needs, many studies have been conducted. One of them is Bishaw's research entitled "Teaching English for Extraordinary Children" (Bishaw in Dewi, 2019). This study stated that the design in learning English for children with special needs must be designed by conducting prior analysis in order to make it easier to see what their needs and constraints are. After doing this, the teacher can begin to determine the learning design. With this technique, the learning process will be passed easily and learning objectives can be achieved optimally. Teaching English to children with special needs, especially in inclusive schools, where the school emphasizes complete integration by eliminating the labelling of children. It can be used as a guide on aspects that should be considered in teaching English to children with special needs in both inclusive and integrated schools.

Furthermore, research conducted by Sulaiman (2019) entitled "Development of English Teaching for Children Autism", stated that English as a foreign language makes many students face problems in learning the language at the beginning of their learning even up to there are some students who may take a long time to get used to it, especially for students with special needs who have anomalies such as in social, linguistic and intelligence aspects. They need special services, care and education. Therefore, the analysis of teachers in finding what they need really affects the success of learning.

Likewise research conducted by Mustopa et al. (2019) with the title "The Application of Joyful Learning in English Language Learning", states that teachers are learning facilitators. They are at the forefront of the success of teaching strategies when the joyful learning method takes place. Mastery of science and understanding the relationship between language and behavior must be mastered properly by the facilitator. The joyful and happy atmosphere is not sufficient to be applied in this joyful learning method of learning activities, the facilitator must still be able to transfer learning material to students, so that students can apply the material that has been taught properly. The facilitator is an important component in

language learning which is required to be able to determine the direction, materials or teaching substance, design, appropriate assessment of the psychological conditions of students and an understanding of educational ethics.

The previous studies above indicated that a more specific strategy was needed in teaching children with special needs. The success of learning is in the hands of the educator, by maximizing preparation before determining the strategy to be applied. Some of the studies mentioned above are different from this study which uses a joyful learning method based on social constructivism pedagogy. This study aims to explain the implementation of joyful learning based on social constructivism pedagogy in learning English for children with special needs. This research is expected to be an input for teachers in enriching learning methods for children by adapting to the characteristics of children with special needs who have many limitations. Choosing the right learning method can affect children's learning motivation and help children with special needs understanding about learning English.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method and collected data at the research site (Moleong, 2010). The research was conducted at SADA Ibu Inclusion School and Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education. The research instrument of this study was the researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The data were collected using two techniques: observations and interviews (Arifin, 2020). Observations were used to find the data on the process of teaching and learning English for students with special needs through social constructivism pedagogy-based joyful learning, while in-depth interviews were conducted on several key persons: teachers and students of both schools. The data were then analyzed with the content analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Joyful Learning

Joyful learning is a learning strategy that involves various aspects and tastes. During the learning process, teachers and students should feel joyful, happy, and comfortable. Mulyasa (2006) defines joyful learning as a learning process in which there is a strong bond between educators and students, without feeling forced or depressed. Joyful learning combines various learning strategies, concepts and practices. The combination consists of meaningful learning synergy, contextual learning, constructivism theory, and active learning to develop students' psychology.

Joyful learning in English classes is also combined with various strategies to create an effective learning environment, apply curriculum, deliver material, facilitate the learning process, and improve students' learning achievement (Hasan et al., 2015). Building students' happiness at class is one of the characteristics of this learning because students know the meaning and use of learning.

Learning using the Joyful Learning approach must pay attention to several factors such as meaning, reinforcement, and feedback. Meaning means increased understanding of new information in accordance with the ideas and knowledge that students have mastered. If terms and concepts are difficult to understand, then this understanding needs to be explored through the student's experience. Reinforcement is repetition by the teacher and exercises performed by students. In this Joyful Learning approach, reinforcement is something that must be considered carefully by the teacher. Feedback on learning activities will be effective if

students receive the material being taught quickly. Simple feedback can be in the form of correcting student answers to teacher questions during the lesson or correcting assignments performed by students (Dermawan, 2018).

Social Constructivism Pedagogy

Constructivism is a learning approach which emphasizes that the process of acquiring knowledge begins with the occurrence of cognitive conflicts which can only be resolved through self-knowledge, and at the end of the learning process, knowledge will be built by students through their experiences from the results of interactions with their environment (Karli & Yuliariatiningsih, 2003).

Constructivism assumes that knowledge is the result of human construction through interaction with objects, phenomena of experience and their environment. The principles of constructivism that are generally adopted in learning are knowledge built by students themselves, both personally and socially. Knowledge is not transferred from teachers to students; however, the students actively build their reasoning by continuously constructing more detailed, complete, and scientific concepts. The teachers provide facilities and set situations to allow the students' construction process to run smoothly (Suparno, 2001).

This approach encourages students to be actively involved in learning activities, so the learning environment must be democratic; learning activities take place interactively and students become the centers of learning; educators encourage students to learn independently and be responsible for their learning activities (Nurhidayati, 2017). According to Adams (2006), the pedagogy of social constructivism emphasizes the conceptions that underlie social constructivism, govern teaching beliefs, design learning environments, and challenge of approaches in practice.

The Implementation of Learning English through Social Constructivism Pedagogy-based Joyful Learning for students with special needs

Equitable education should be carried out properly, regardless of status, race, ethnicity and religion. Every individual needs sufficient educational provision to be able to increase their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual potentials in order to achieve a better life. Likewise education for children with special needs who deserve the opportunity to be able to study any subject including foreign language lessons (English), as a provision and introduction that there are various languages in the world, not just one language that they will know later but there are languages other than their mother tongue/first language as well. This is as confirmed in Article 4, 5, 15 verse 2 and Article 32 verse 1 in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning education for children with special needs (Anggraeni et al., 2019).

The government's goal in combining students with special needs with other students in formal schools through inclusive schools is so that children with special needs are accustomed to interacting with their social environment (Triyanto & Permatasari, 2016). However, one of the weaknesses experienced by students with special needs is that they find it difficult to enter the social environment (Idris & Fitriani, 2018). Learning activities at SADA Ibu School, Cirebon did not separate students with special needs from students in general to allow interaction and communication between them. Hence, tolerance and care were nurtured between the two. In contrast to the Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Special Education, children with special needs had no interaction and communication with non-special-need students.

Special education schools and inclusive schools are different from ordinary formal schools because the teachers in the former schools interact with students with special

conditions that require special actions. Students with special needs are different from students in general in terms of physical function, and intellectual and emotional levels; therefore, their learning activities require different methods or techniques (Dermawan, 2018).

In learning activities, students with special needs require more attentions. Therefore, teachers teaching students with special needs must have a level of emotional and psychological stability as well as sufficient experience in guiding students (Cahyaningrum, 2012). Teachers are expected to establish good communication with students with special needs so that the material can be understood and learning objectives can be achieved (Mutia, 2011; Rofiah, 2015). For this reason, the function of variation and innovation in learning methods is very important as a tool in teaching and learning activities (Timban et al., 2018).

The professionalism of the teachers in making appropriate learning strategies so that they can be applied properly to children with special needs is an important point here, in order to achieve optimal learning. As has been confirmed by previous opinions (Sufirmansyah & Prameswati, 2020; Munggaraning Westhisi, 2020), which say that every teacher in any field of learning for children with special needs is required to have adequate knowledge, sensitivity to the problems the child is facing, as well as an assessment of the progressivity of the material presented on the child's absorption. Teachers, especially English teachers, must be able to know the purpose or intent of teaching English to be conveyed to students with special needs (Hallahan et al., 2005; Dewi, 2019).

In addition to innovations in the learning strategies pursued by teachers, on the other hand, the school must also take part in providing appropriate educational facilities for students with special needs so that educational goals can be achieved and learning activities can run well (Wardhani et al., 2020).

The results of observations and interviews showed that students at SADA Ibu Inclusion School and Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education faced similar obstacles in participating in English learning. The students with special needs found it difficult to correlate between the English spoken sounds and what was written.

In this context, teachers have a very big role in bridging students by providing motivation (Huda et al., 2017). To overcome the difficulties of students with special needs in participating in learning activities, English teachers must use various strategies and facilities that can help them understand the lesson well. One of the strategies applied in this research is joyful learning strategies. With various joyful strategies, students with special needs are expected to feel comfortable and enthusiastic in learning (Azzahra & Hasan, 2018).

Likewise in learning English at SADA Ibu Inclusion School, and Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education, teachers were able to use a variety of methods and various techniques. They started to get used to fun learning strategies, which were introduced either in the form of games during brainstorming or ice breaking in the middle of delivering material.

The application of the joyful learning method in teaching children with special needs at SADA Ibu Inclusion School, and Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education encouraged students to response positively to the English classes because they enjoyed the learning (Bhakti et al., 2018). This is in accordance with the students' ability to comprehend and to shape their character and self-identity discovery using active, artistic but also fun learning methods. As has been confirmed by Wei, C. W., & Hung (2011) that "pleasant learning" is a type of learning process or event that beatify students in the scenario/learning process.

In combining joyful learning with a social constructivism pedagogy approach, the approach is based on the principle that human knowledge comes from the knowledge they get

in the surrounding environment (Ningsih, 2018). The source of knowledge is what they have been through before (experience), as confirmed by the opinion expressed by (Komalasari, 2011). The principle in this theory is that teachers and students are not a central source of learning, but both (teacher-student) occupy an equal position in the learning process so that a reciprocal interpretation process is created between fellow students in search of knowledge, while the teacher is the moderator. The principles and concepts applied in this theory are to build new knowledge in the surrounding environment so that it becomes a meaningful experience, so that it can be stored well in students' memories (Utami, 2016).

At SADA Ibu Inclusion School, and Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education had significant differences. The social constructivism pedagogy carried out by teachers in Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education had not been able to optimally motivate students to be involved in the process of learning English. This was because as understood in the expert opinion described earlier, the concept of learning in the social constructivism pedagogy approach gives students the freedom to do what they want to express in the learning environment, so that understanding and skills can be formed. Besides that it will trigger children's interest to know more about the material being taught in more detail.

After conducting a deeper study of the social constructivism pedagogy approach, an assessment can be made that this approach is more appropriate to be applied to SADA Ibu Inclusion School. Because in the learning process and the principles of this approach, the experiences they learn are the basis of the sources of understanding they get with the children in their environment (fellow children with special needs).

Something different happened in Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education. Students with special needs experience faced obstacles because in addition to their limited vocabulary, they had difficulty imitating the proper learning behavior of their classmates. Students with special needs absorbed more of any learning behavior including inappropriate behaviors in learning from their peers that they did not previously have and then they apply. Because it was more difficult for students with special needs to assess something well and changed it to fix it again than normal children could do. As stated by Dewi (2019), children with special needs are children who have abnormalities from normal children in general. There are various factors that a child has a special disability, namely physical condition, health, intellectual capabilities, functional, social, comprehension disorders, motor (movement) disorders, neurological disorders of the brain and others. These things are strong reasons why children with special needs will be more easily affected by what is around them, the worse is that they are not good at implementing it.

In other words, if we want to continue to apply the joyful learning method based on social constructivism pedagogy to children with special needs, this method should be applied to children with special needs who study in inclusive schools where in these schools they can receive educational services that include all children, more to be precise, the school is a formal school for normal children but has an admission service for students with special needs in the same learning space without class distinctions. This can be the best solution if the application of this approach is applied, but not if it is applied to children with special needs who are in special/ Special Educations (SLB). That is why this method is more appropriate to be applied at SADA Ibu Inclusion School rather than in Cirebon Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Joyful Learning method is a fun method of teaching, which can build students' confidence. Through this method, students dare to try, ask, express opinions, and defend their opinions without worrying about the fear of being wrong, laughed at, belittled, and depressed. Combined with a social constructivism approach, the goal is that students learn to adapt to their surroundings in recognizing each other's thoughts.

Joyful learning methods can be considered appropriate to be applied in learning English for children with special needs, but not with a social constructivism pedagogy approach. Social constructivism pedagogy allows the students to learn from their surroundings, but it was not applicable to Pancaran Kasih Perjuangan Special Education as all the students have the same learning conditions. For example, students might imitate improper learning behavior of other children with special needs with different characteristics. On the hand, at SADA Ibu Inclusion School, students with special needs can follow proper English learning behavior by imitating normal children studying at the school. The research result suggests that the joyful learning method work on both schools while the social constructivism pedagogy approach needs more adjustment when applied to special education shools.

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