



TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS WITH EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS: POLICY ANALYSIS, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teaching English to students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in inclusive classrooms is a challenge for lecturers as they must take into account a variety of factors, including the type of disability students have, students' English proficiency level, and effective learning strategies. Educational institutions may not provide adequate resources to support the teaching process, including adapted textbooks, learning software, or other instructional aids. Although there are several books and articles that focus on teaching English to students with SEN, most of the resources are not available to teachers who do not have institutional access to academic literature or funds to purchase them. Therefore, there is a need for adequate literature and preparation programs that provide lecturers with practices and strategies to teach English to SEN students. This qualitative study aims to analyze the practice of teaching English in inclusive classrooms at the university level by exploring the policies and challenges faced by lecturers who teach students with SEN. In addition, this study also aims to explore the approaches or strategies used to overcome the challenges that arise. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that although inclusive policies have been generally adopted, their implementation still faces various obstacles, such as limited resources, lack of lecturer training, and minimal adaptation of the curriculum and teaching materials. On the other hand, various strategies have been developed, including differentiated learning approaches, the use of adaptive media, and active involvement of lecturers in designing learning strategies that suit students' needs. This study concludes that effective and inclusive English teaching requires synergy between institutional policies, lecturers' readiness, and ongoing support systems.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, English Language Teaching, Inclusive English Classroom, Students with SEN, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

As an international language of instruction, English is the most widely studied foreign language for many reasons. One of them is stated by Harmer (2001) that the majority of students in the world learn English because it is integrated into the education curriculum.

Indonesian government has made English a compulsory subject for all students in higher education (Arianti, 2017). All study programs offer English course for one or two semesters even though students take disciplines that are not related to English (Arini, 2019). This means that there is no exception for English learning even for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Dhermawati et al., 2019). Students with SEN must take English courses as a requirement to graduate from university (Arini, 2019). The aim is to give students the English language proficiency they need for global communication, the workplace, and academic settings. This is challenging and not easy for course lecturers (Lu et al., 2022 & Al Siyabi et al., 2024). Lecturers have to take into account various factors, including the types of disabilities students have, students' level of English skills, as well as effective learning strategies for them in an inclusive classroom (Lu et al., 2022; Lintang Sari & Emaliana, 2020; Martínez-Hernández & Bellés-Fortuño, 2021).

Students with SEN refer to the condition of students who are different from other students in their functioning/abilities physically, mentally and psychologically which can hinder the learning process (Lowe, 2016). In similar vein (Adi et al., 2017) argue that students with SEN refer to students who experience learning difficulties or disabilities that make it much more difficult for them to learn or access education compared to regular students. There are several categories of special needs including Dyspraxia (characterized by movement and coordination disorders caused by abnormalities in the development of the nervous system), Dyslexia (a disorder that affects spelling and reading skills), Dyscalculia (difficulty understanding numbers), Auditory processing disorder (difficulty recognizing and interpreting sounds), ADHD (attention and hyperactivity disorder, characterized by difficulty in controlling behavior), Autism spectrum disorder, Visual impairment and Hearing impairment (Peer & Reid, 2012). However, according to (Lowe, 2016) the recognition of which conditions constitute a category of special needs will differ from country to country. For instance, dyslexia and ADHD could not be regarded as special needs in some countries' educational systems (Lowe, 2016).

SEN is now becoming more relevant to many English educators in the world but they might not know much about it. It is because in English language teaching field, less attention is given to students with SEN (Ahmadi et al., 2022). Unlike the general education system, English language learning programs do not address the issues of learners with SEN in detail, or even at all (Lowe, 2016 & Nijakowska, 2022). As a result, many lecturers do not yet have the knowledge or skills to implement inclusive learning strategies. English teaching in university usually covers four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Adi et al., 2017). Teaching these four skills of English to students with SEN is a challenge for the lecturers because the learning process of regular students and students with SEN is not the same. Cawthon (2001) claims that deaf students have hearing and speaking difficulties so learning English tends to be quite difficult for them as they might show significant delays in phoneme production, vocabulary, and syntax. They cannot fully process information in the form of sounds which may affect their reading and speaking skills because their lack of vocabulary of sounds that they cannot process (Adi et al., 2017). Visually impaired students have visual impairments and they should be encouraged to use their residual vision, if needed, by using optical aids and necessary adaptations (Carney, et al., 2003). In language learning, regular students acquire language from hearing, reading, imitating someone's voice and seeing movements, facial expressions, gestures and body language. Whereas visually impaired students are limited to hearing and imitating sounds. Although it is difficult to do visual activities, they are able to do activities using other senses. To support their lack of visual activity, they need other senses such as hearing, movement, or touch (Agris et al.,

2020). Students with intellectual disability who refer to someone that has low intellectual functioning (Takriyanti et al., 2022) accompanied by behavioral adjustment problems and symptoms that appear during growth, can read long phrases long but they have difficulty identifying consonants and forget how to write letters such as A, B, C, and so on in articles in English language learning (Rohmah et al., 2020).

Therefore, more inclusive teaching strategies are needed to ensure their optimal engagement and learning achievement. English lecturers need a suitable strategy in delivering learning materials, especially for students with SEN based on student disabilities. In addition, a lecturer also needs media as a means of connecting a message or speech so that students can more easily understand the material being taught. Otherwise, students with SEN attending higher education institutions will continue to experience barriers to English language learning. SEN students' opportunities to improve in learning English occur when they are engaged in a supportive learning environment and collaborate with educators who see the potential for their contribution, rather than simply magnifying their limitations (Ahmadi et al., 2022). Additionally, Reed (2013) and García & Tyler (2010) state that in order to properly accommodate students with SEN in an inclusive setting and to make education individualized with respect to students with SEN, teachers must make the necessary adjustments to their lesson plans and schedule interventions. These goals cannot be accomplished without knowing the inclusive techniques used in inclusive English settings (Ahmadi et al., 2022). It is necessary for teacher training programs to give English teachers techniques and strategies to apply in inclusive English classroom (Ahmadi et al., 2022 & Lowe, 2016). However, (Lowe, 2016) argues that English language learning programs do not address the issues of students with SEN in detail or not at all. In similar vein, (Ahmadi et al., 2022) states that there are inadequate programs for preparing English teachers to help their students with SEN to reach higher learning goals in the English language.

Furthermore, many English language teaching contexts do not support students with SEN (Ahmadi et al., 2022). Educational institutions may not provide adequate resources to support the teaching of English to students with SEN including adapted textbooks, learning software, or other instructional aids (Lowe, 2016). Not all universities provide disability services units or support resources such as sign language interpreters, assistive technology, and inclusive learning spaces (Lowe, 2016). This is in contrast to the general education system, which usually has support to help teachers implement the principles of inclusive classroom practices (Adams & Hord, 2023). Apart from that, although students with SEN have become an important part of educational research, there is little literature focusing on teaching English to adults students with SEN because research is more often conducted on children with SEN than adults (Takriyanti et al., 2022). In addition to being few in number, the literature on English language teaching for students with SEN is less comprehensive than for general education (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). Although some books and articles concentrate on teaching English to students with SEN, most resources are unavailable to teachers who lack institutional access to academic literature or the financial means to buy it (Lowe, 2016). This often makes it difficult for teachers who teach students with SEN to find references (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014).

Based on the background description above, this qualitative research aims to address two research questions. First, the research analyzes how are university policies regarding teaching English to students with SEN in inclusive classes designed and implemented. Second, the research explores what are the challenges faced by lecturers in teaching English to students with SEN in inclusive English classes? and what strategies are implemented by lecturers to overcome challenges that arise in teaching English to students with SEN in

inclusive English classes. Data were collected through interviews, observation and documentation. This is important to improve lecturers' knowledge and skills regarding practices and methods that can facilitate learning and educational development for students with SEN in inclusive classrooms.

METHOD

This study that aims to describe the implementation of English language teaching for students with SEN by exploring the policy, lecturing process, challenges and strategies of lecturers when teaching English in inclusive classrooms. This study was conducted using qualitative descriptive method. As explained by Bryman (2021), qualitative descriptive method refers to a method of conducting social research in which no quantitative data is gathered or produced. In similar vein, according to As'ari et al. (2023), quantitative descriptive research is a non-experimental methodology that falls under the quantitative paradigm. Typically, it prioritizes language above numerical data. This research began with formulating research problems including identifying topics to be researched and formulating research questions. Next, the researcher chose the appropriate research method and approach. Then the researcher determined observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. After that, the researcher identified relevant samples. The final part of the initial stage was to develop interview guides, observation checklists and schedule the location, time and subjects of the research. Two English classes in the Special Education study program that accept students with SEN every semester were observed. The data sources were the head of the Special Education study program, the Head of the English Education study program, four English lecturers and two teaching assistants with experience of teaching at least 10 students with SEN over the past two years. They were interviewed to get more information.

The process began with observation. Observations were carried out in two English classes in the Special Education study program. From observation activities, researchers got data in the form of lecture activities for students with SEN in English courses. Given that observation has a weakness, namely the tendency of subjects who are being observed to behave as expected by the observer as they know that they are being observed, which results in the possibility of missing important data, data was also obtained through interviews (Bryman, 2012). Interviews were conducted with parties related to the implementation of teaching English for students with SEN, including the head of the Special Education study program, the head of the English Language Teaching study program, four English lecturers and two English teaching assistants. From this interview activity, the researcher got data about the planning of English lectures (which includes the preparation of the semester lesson plan and syllabus); the implementation of lecture activities (which include assistance, classroom settings, learning media and material delivery); and learning evaluation (which includes the assessment system, assignments, midterm examinations and final Semester examinations). The interview processes were conducted using recordings and notes important points at various times and places according to the opportunity and agreement of the subject. They were conducted separately to provide a sense of comfort in providing information. Researchers used in-depth interviews while confirming with observation data and document analysis. Documentation techniques were used to investigate the results or documentary evidence of the implementation of English language teaching.

The analysis technique refers to Miles and Huberman which includes data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing and data verification (Miles & Huberman, 2014). At the data reduction stage, researchers sorted data, coded data, arranged categories, selected

key data and summarized data to make it easier for researchers to prepare themselves for a more in-depth analysis stage to answer research questions and develop significant findings. At the data presentation stage, researchers described the characteristics of the data found during the analysis in the form of quotations. At the stage of drawing conclusions and verifying data, researchers synthesized the findings and made conclusions based on the data analysis that has been carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Policy

Based on the results of interview with the head of the Special Education study program, the government stipulation of making English a compulsory subject for all students in higher education (Arianti, 2017) which requires all study programs to provide English courses for one or two semesters even though students take disciplines that are not related to English (Arini, 2019) also automatically applies to students in the Special Education study program. It was further explained by the head of the study program that students are required to take English courses for 2 semesters which are described as English I and English II with a weight of 2 semester credit units each. This is in line with Dhermawati et al. (2019) who states that there are no exceptions to English learning even for students with special needs such as the deaf, blind, disabled and others. They must attend English courses as a requirement to graduate from college (Arini, 2019). The courses will then be taught by English lecturers from the English Language Teaching study program who are specifically assigned by the head of the study program.

In the interview with the head of Special Education and English Education study program, the researcher found statements that, in the context of the Special Education study program, the majority of individuals with any kind of severe disability are included in regular English classes, and lecturers are not authorized to prohibit students with SEN in their regular classes. In the academic year 2024/2025, when this research took place, lecturers taught regular students in the same class with 3 deaf students, 1 blind student, 1 student with low vision, 2 disabled students and 1 student with learning delays. They follow the same curriculum structure set by the study program. This is certainly in line with the principle of inclusive education where education is organized for all learners without exception (Lu et al., 2022). The goal is to organize education that does not discriminate against learners and respects differences by providing opportunities for all learners including those with special talents, intelligence potential and/or mental, emotional, social and physical abnormalities to receive quality education according to their abilities and needs (Al Siyabi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, in the interviews with the lecturers that was matched with the lesson plan and syllabus, it was found that teaching English for students with SEN in the Special Education study program was carried out through the lecture planning stage (which included the preparation of the lesson plan and syllabus), the implementation of lecture activities (which included assistance, classroom settings, learning media and delivery of material); and learning evaluation (which included an assessment system, giving assignments, midterm examination and final semester examination).

First, the lecture planning stage (which includes the preparation of the lesson plan and syllabus). The lecturers admit that at this stage, there are no adjustments for students with SEN including the lesson objectives, basic competencies, learning indicators, materials and the number of lesson hours. In addition, there is no special additional program outside of class hours for students with SEN. Meanwhile, Lintang Sari & Emaliana (2020) argues that

English learning design for students with SEN should be designed based on analyzing their needs and disabilities. Curriculum development and learning design should consider flexible teaching methods and adapt the teaching environment to the needs of students (Martínez-Hernández & Bellés-Fortuño, 2021). By determining the right learning design, the learning process will be more focused and the learning objectives can be achieved well and the goals of inclusive education are achieved (Lintangsari & Emaliana, 2020; Martínez-Hernández & Bellés-Fortuño, 2021).

Second, the implementation stage of lecture activities (which includes assistance, classroom settings, learning media and material delivery). Based on the results of observations, at this stage, researchers found several adjustments and special treatment for students with SEN in the form of adjusting teaching methods according to disability such as the use of sign language and sticking hands to the throat for deaf students, repetition of material for students with disabilities, giving additional assignments by allowing the use of learning aids and additional learning hours for students with SEN. These supports one of the important practices in inclusive classrooms, which is using inclusive teaching strategies such as adjusting learning media, teaching methods and ways of delivering material (Ahmadi et al., 2022).

The researcher then confirmed the adjustments found in the observation through interview. A lecturer said that

I initially implemented a class rule that all students must use English to confirm their attendance when filling in the attendance list and to ask permission when leaving the class. However, deaf and mentally disabled students need time to pronounce English words, so I decided to discontinue the policy so as not to disrupt the learning process". During the interview, another lecturer mentioned that "I also make adjustments but limited to certain disabilities. Students with physical disabilities and visual impairments do not get any adjustment in terms of speaking in English especially if they are not intellectually challenged and do not take a long time to pronounce something in English". Another lecturer on the same occasion stated "I use additional learning tools besides the blackboard. I use supporting teaching aids such as pictures, videos and pointers although it takes time to provide them".

But there are also lecturers and teaching assistants who do not use supporting facilities because the study program does not provide them and it is quite difficult for them to procure them.

Third, the implementation stage of lecture activities (which includes the assessment system, assignments, midterm examination and final semester examination). Based on the results of the interview with the head of the study program, it is known that at this stage, there are adjustments. This effort is part of policy fulfillment as stated in regulation number 46 of 2017 issued by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education where universities must facilitate the learning process and assessment methods that suit the needs of students with SEN without reducing the quality of learning (Lintangsari & Emaliana, 2020). In the interview with lecturers, they stated that they are given the flexibility to design the assessment process for students with SEN where the form of tasks, the process of working, the level of difficulty of tests and the submission can be adjusted to the student's disability. They are also given the freedom to consider the strengths and weaknesses of students with SEN in the evaluation of lectures where the assessment is not only in the

cognitive domain and also does not only focus on products such as tests, but also the development process of learning English.

A lecturer admitted that he lowers the midterm and final examination test difficulty level several times by reducing the number of questions and change the form of the test even though the assessment standards applied were the same. There is also a lecturer who gave a statement

"During assignments, midterms and final exams, I allow deaf students to retell the content of the text with sign language and then I give progress notes in a daily journal or portfolio to find out the progress of mastering the content of the text". However, this adjustment is only limited to students who do not have intellectual disabilities while it is normal for students with physical disabilities".

In general, they believe that assessment should not only cover language competence but also language skills considering that the function of language is as a means of communication and expression so that the assessment given can also develop learners' abilities functionally and contextually (Lowe, 2016). One type of assessment in language learning that has been used by one lecturer is informal observation notes in the form of short comments, which describe the language development, social development and strategies used by the learner (Adams & Hord, 2023).

2. Challenges and Strategies for Teaching English in Inclusive Classrooms

Although the lecturers agreed with the existence of inclusive English classes, they also acknowledged that implementing an inclusive approach in their classrooms is not an easy task as it requires extra effort and energy. From the interviews, the teachers identified various challenges in the context of teaching English for students with SEN in an inclusive classroom in this case in Special Education study program.

2.1 Training and Professional Development

The first challenge faced by the lecturers is the lack of knowledge, understanding and training about students with SEN. In teaching students with SEN, a lecturer of any course must have knowledge of disabilities, the causes, assessments and procedures (Takriyanti et al., 2022). This enables the lecturer to design appropriate learning approaches, learning models and learning strategies (Takriyanti et al., 2022; Adams & Hord, 2023). However, unlike the general education system, English language learning programs do not address the issue of learners with special needs in detail, or even at all, so English language teachers may lack information and experience (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). Therefore, the lecturers admit that there are still many things they do not know such as knowledge about teaching methods, teaching materials, knowledge about SEN, teaching aids, and many other things because of their lack of knowledge and experience in providing inclusive education.

The researcher then confirmed the adjustments found in the observation through interview.

A lecturer said that

"We are not equipped with the knowledge of teaching English to students with SEN so I don't really understand the types of special needs and how to teach them. I do not know how to adjust teaching methods or choose media that are suitable for students with special needs So far, I have only relied on the general teaching methods that I usually use." Another lecturer said that, *"I have never studied inclusive learning methods formally. So, when dealing with students with SEN, I am often confused about where to start. Sometimes, I feel like I am not competent enough to*

meet their needs fairly. I think many of my fellow lecturers and I still need to learn a lot about it."

This challenge creates obstacles in the preparation of the lesson plan and syllabus, the implementation of lectures and the assessment process for students with SEN. In the preparation of lesson plan and syllabus, adjustments need to be made in basic competencies, indicators and materials tailored to the needs, obstacles, and abilities of students. Lecturers do not understand well the characteristics of students with SEN so it is difficult to make adjustments to the lesson plan and syllabus. In addition, they also have difficulty determining assessment and evaluation standards because standard assessment methods may not accurately reflect the abilities of students with SEN (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). Alternative assessment techniques need to be developed to effectively measure their understanding and skills (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). Therefore, the development of continuous professional development is needed to equip English lecturers with the knowledge and skills to support students with SEN. So far, some lecturers have participated in workshops, trainings, seminars and independent lesson studies both online and offline to gain knowledge about teaching English to students with SEN. They hope to gain more knowledge through these activities. In addition, they also hope to get support and recommendations from the study program and faculty to participate in more workshops, trainings, seminars, or lesson studies in the future.

A lecturer in the interview admitted that

"I think training is very important, especially for English lecturers. Without training, we are just guessing. In fact, the approach to students with SEN cannot be the same as others. I personally have attended seminars on inclusive education, but the material is still very general. We need more focused technical training, for example how to compile teaching materials or assess students with dyslexia or autism". In the same occasion, other lecturer mentioned that *"If I join a training, it is usually on my own initiative, not because of a campus program. I hope that institutions can be more active in facilitating special training for us. We also need ongoing training, not just a one-time workshop. Because every semester the challenges are different, and the types of student needs are also diverse".* There is also lecturer who participated in online training said that *"I have participated in online training, but it was general in nature. There should be special training for us who teach English, because the challenges are different. However, I just learned about the term 'differentiated instruction' from the online training I attended. But I don't know how to apply it in English classes. So, I hope I could participate in more training both online and offline to get more information".*

2.2 Diverse learning needs

The second challenge faced by lecturers is the diverse learning needs of students. In inclusive English classes in higher education, lecturers are faced with the reality that normal students and students with SEN have different learning needs. SEN students themselves have needs that vary based on their disabilities such as learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, and physical disabilities. The teaching process in an inclusive classroom requires a variety of teaching methods. Learning preferences and learning styles also affect students' academic performance (Lintangsari & Emaliana, 2020). For example, for students with hearing or speech impairments, effective communication can be a challenge. Educators must use a variety of communication strategies, including sign language interpreters or alternative communication devices.

Customizing teaching to meet these diverse needs requires resources and flexibility. Not all institutions have the necessary resources, such as specialized materials, supporting technology, or trained teachers (Lowe, 2016). Many English language teaching contexts do not support students with special needs (Ahmadi et al., 2022). Educational institutions may not provide adequate resources to support the teaching of English to students with special needs including adapted textbooks, learning software, or other instructional aids (Lowe, 2016). This is in contrast to the general education system, which usually has support to help teachers implement the principles of inclusive classroom practices (Nijakowska, 2022).

Furthermore, although students with special needs have become an important part of educational research, there is little literature focusing on English language teaching for students with special needs because research is more often conducted on children than adults (Takriyanti et al., 2022). In addition to the small number, the literature on English language teaching for children with special needs is less comprehensive than for general education (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). While there are some books and articles that focus on teaching English to learners with special needs, most resources are not available to teachers who do not have institutional access to academic literature or the funds to purchase (Lowe, 2016). Limited access can hinder the effectiveness of teaching methods designed to support students with special needs (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). This often makes it difficult for teachers who teach students with special needs to find references (Veronika, 2019).

Lecturers' behavior in accommodating this challenge is that they create their own media to be used as teaching materials in response to the lack of teaching resources. Some of these efforts include learning and using basic sign language, speaking with slower lip movements, putting their hands to the students' throats, verbalizing the visual concepts they show in slides, providing lecture hand-outs.

In the interview, one of the lecturers said that

“Students with low vision often have difficulty reading slides or English textbooks. I try to enlarge the font, send materials in digital format, and use a screen reader, but not all of my materials are prepared in an accessible format”. Another lecturer who has deaf students in the class also said “teaching listening to deaf students is very challenging. I ended up not being able to rely on audio alone, so I provided transcripts, reading texts, and visuals. But it still felt lacking because I only understand basic sign language”. Additionally, “I once had a deaf student who had difficulty following class discussions. I tried to write clear instructions and use videos with subtitles, but I felt like the two-way communication was still not optimal”. In teaching vocabularies and speaking, I put my hands in the student’s throats, once the student knows that certain sounds produce certain vibrations, they can try to imitate how to pronounce them more accurately, using the help of kinesthetic feedback from me. Apart from the two lecturers, one of the lecturers who had taught in an inclusive class and had students with learning delays admitted that “My Reading class consists of regular students and students with learning disabilities. Their reading speeds vary greatly. I want to help everyone, but time and resources are limited. Because of the different reading speeds, I sometimes give the students the key vocabulary and guiding questions before they read. This helps students with learning disabilities be more prepared and less anxious when reading”.

The lecturers have done this so that every student, including those with special needs, can access the learning well. They are happy because this adds variety to learning materials and

methods even though there are limitations, requires a lot of time and sometimes fails to inspire students during the teaching and learning process.

2.3 Facilities

Apart from books, the third challenge faced by English lecturers in the Special Education study program is infrastructure. Classrooms, desks, chairs and campus facilities that are difficult for students with SEN to access physically. This includes ensuring buildings, classrooms and learning materials meet accessibility standards. For example, classroom tables and chairs that are too small cannot be utilized by visually impaired students to place their learning support devices such as laptops. In addition, classrooms that are too small and crowded limit the space for blind students to move when there is mobility for group assignments. In order for every student to participate in class, all limitations and barriers must be detected and resolved (Azimi et al., 2021).

In terms of facilities within the scope of the physical environment, lecturers admitted to trying to create a supportive classroom environment.

One of the lecturers admitted that:

“Sometimes the space is narrow and inflexible. For group activities, blind students have difficulty moving, so I have to help facilitate or change the activities to be more stationary”.

Regardless of the type of disability, most lecturers prefer to seat students with SEN in the front row of the class and present instructions when the class is quiet to ensure their understanding. Lecturers then arrange their seats so that students, including those with disabilities, can see each other and move around easily. Placing them in specific rows allows them to more easily access the lecturer's information and explanations. However, some lecturers interviewed also stated that they did not design specific seating positions for students with SEN because they themselves chose to sit in the front row.

“I usually let students with SEN sit in the front row so they can more easily understand the instructions, especially when the class is quiet”.

“Some students with SEN immediately choose to sit in the front without me asking. But I still make sure they have enough space for their learning devices”.

Lecturers also provide larger tables or additional chairs for students with SEN so that they can place and use learning support devices more easily. The classrooms and chairs are also designed for quick and easy grouping so that students can easily move around if there is a grouping session.

“The tables and chairs in some of our classrooms are too small, so blind students have difficulty placing their laptops and learning aids. I have to provide additional tables so they can study comfortably”.

In short, lecturers change and rearrange the environment to ensure that students can sit comfortably in a good position.

2.4 Stigma and Social Isolation

Students with SEN may face social stigma or isolation from their peers, which can affect their academic performance and participation. They may experience higher levels of anxiety or low self-esteem. Mixing normal students and SEN students in the same English class is not an easy task. Students with SEN can experience a sense of failure if they are expected to

follow the lectures of normal students because they have to deal with their disabilities and at the same time develop their English language skills (Guanoluisa et al., 2022). This makes educators, the main pillar of inclusive education, have to modify their teaching practices. In interviews with lecturers, they admitted that they often face difficulties when dealing with SEN students, especially those with low self-esteem, as they are forced to make additional efforts and provide separate explanations for the same material.

“Students with learning disabilities sometimes feel inferior. They are often quiet in class and reluctant to ask questions. I need to approach them personally and re-explain so they don't feel left behind”.

“At the beginning of the semester, I often encounter SEN students who seem isolated. But when they are given roles in groups or involved in language games, they start to feel confident and more active”.

Creating an inclusive and supportive classroom environment is essential to mitigate these issues (Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024; Orosco & O'Connor, 2014; Chanturia, 2023). Providing adequate emotional and psychological support is critical to their success in an academic environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed in their English language learning (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). In the observation, the researchers saw that the lecturers tried to make English learning fun and comfortable through learning activities that engaged students to increase their confidence. For example, on the English learning material with the theme of introductions, the lecturer provided opportunities for deaf students to introduce themselves and introduce others using sign language. On the same occasion, the lecturer gave the opportunity to teach sign language introductions to other students so that they could respond to their friend's introductions. In addition, the lecturer also gave positive feedback such as *"very good, well done, great job"*. From the point of view of English teaching, this not only benefits students with SEN but also improves communication and interaction skills between students with SEN and normal students (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the implementation of teaching English to students with SEN in inclusive classrooms in higher education, focusing on policy analysis, challenges faced, and strategies implemented. The study results show that despite inclusion policies and efforts to create inclusive English classes in Special Education study program, the implementation of responsive learning strategies for students with SEN is often limited. The study program still faces various challenges in the readiness of lecturers, the availability of supporting facilities, and the suitability of the lesson plan and teaching materials. There are no clear technical guidelines, adequate resources, and special training for lecturers in addressing the diversity of student needs, especially students with SEN who are also identified as English language learners.

In terms of challenges, the main obstacles faced include the lack of understanding of lecturers regarding the types of special needs, the lack of adaptation of the curriculum and teaching materials, and the limited supporting facilities and infrastructure such as assistive technology and support services. In addition, the lack of literature and research on teaching English for SEN students in higher education environments hinders the implementation of a comprehensive and sustainable support system. However, a number of strategies that have been implemented show potential for improvement, such as the use of a differentiation-based learning approach, the use of adaptive digital media, and the active involvement of

lecturers in designing learning strategies that are appropriate to student needs. Increasing inclusive awareness and special pedagogical training for lecturers are also much-needed strategic steps.

Students with SEN have the same potential as other students in learning English, as long as they get the right support, such as modification of teaching materials, use of adaptive learning media, and individual mentoring. In addition, training for lecturers and academic staff is needed to increase awareness and competence in dealing with the diversity of student needs. Overall, the success of teaching English for students with SEN depends heavily on collaboration between institutions, teaching staff, and support from higher education policies that support inclusivity. This study recommends the development of more adaptive, participatory, and individual needs-based teaching policies and practices to realize truly inclusive and equitable higher education. Thus, inclusive English teaching in higher education can truly be realized.

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