

English Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusive Education at Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at: (1) describing the English teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education, (2) describing the English teacher's attitudes towards special education needs (SEN) students, and (3) exploring how the English teacher's attitudes affect SEN students' foreign language acquisition. This research applies a case study method as one of qualitative research. The subjects of the research were the English teacher and SEN students on the fourth grade of one elementary school in Surakarta. The data were collected through non-participant observation, interview, and documentation. In analyzing the data, the researcher used interactive model of analysis data by Miles and Huberman. The findings of the research revealed that the English teacher has shown positive attitudes towards inclusive education and SEN students. The English teacher's attitudes also bring positive effects toward SEN students' foreign language acquisition. It is hoped that the result can encourage English teachers in inclusive school to gain more positive attitudes in order to make successful inclusive education to SEN students.

Keywords: *teacher's attitudes, inclusive education, elementary school, case study, special education needs (SEN) students*

Introduction

The education for individuals with special needs has been in existence in Indonesia since before the country received its independence (Sunardi 1997). Pioneer Ch. A. Westhoff opened a sheltered workshop for the blind in Bandung in 1901. A school for the mentally retarded was opened by Vereniging Bijzonder Onderwijs in Bandung 1927, the school became known as the Folker School because promoted by Folker.

In 2003, inclusive education was initiated in Indonesia. Every district must operate at least four inclusive schools, one primary, secondary, general high and vocational higher type, based on the *Direction Letter of the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education* No 380/C.66/MN/2003, dated 20 January 2003, about *Special Education in Regular Schools*. The inclusive policy then received strong legal support by the *Decree of the Minister of Education* No 70-2009 concerning inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and

with Special Talents. It stated that every district must operate at least one inclusive high school and every sub district must operate at least one primary and one secondary inclusive school.

Inclusive education allows the inclusion with regular children and children with special needs by placing them together in mainstream classes, to be taught and instructed by mainstream teachers (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006). It is considered a way to create an environment that can give all children access to education. If teaching is effective and responds to both students' needs and strengths, there is a possibility for all children to learn (Lindsay, 2003). Academic success depends on how much a student learns from teachers, whether they have disabilities or not (Young, Wright & Laster, 2005).

In any educational change, teachers are considered to be the 'change makers' (Ertmer, 2005). This means that teachers are able to contribute to change in education. Changing teachers' attitudes to allow educational change

depends upon on some transformation in teachers' beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and practices (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). This suggests that the knowledge teachers acquire about inclusive education and the attitudes that they have may affect their ability to adapt, as well as their classroom performance. All children cannot be expected to learn the same way and regular education teachers cannot be expected to teach children with special needs without the needed training and support (Keenan, 1997).

There are many researchers reporting about teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, but it may differ from each condition to another, each place to another, or from different situation to another so with different side of the study, it will build different result of the study and it is still essential to do study pertaining to the issue. Costello & Boyle (2013) examined a sample consisting of 193 pre-service secondary teachers enrolled in secondary education courses at an Australian university were surveyed to determine their attitudes towards inclusive education, with a particular focus on attitudinal changes across the years of study. Results indicated that pre-service secondary teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusive education; however there was a significant decline in positive attitudes through the years of study. Pre-service secondary teachers enrolled in postgraduate programs were more inclusive than those enrolled in undergraduate courses.

Tara Ridarick (2009) looked at the attitudes of elementary special education teachers in a school district in the Southeastern United States that has been regularly including students with disabilities in general education classrooms for the past ten years. Teacher attitude has been shown to be an important indicator of the success of inclusion. However, students with disabilities as a group continue to not meet expectations on state standardized testing. The participants of this study were elementary special education teachers in the school district. Teachers' attitudes on inclusion varied when asked about specific disabilities. Participants strongly agreed that students with learning disabilities and physical disabilities should be included in general education classrooms. Attitudes were also favorable towards the inclusion of students with autism and intellectual disabilities. The mean score

for including students with emotional and behavior disorders was lower although still favorable. Students with severe to profound intellectual disabilities received the lowest mean score from participants ($M = 3.25$).

In this study, the researcher focused on teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education at elementary school, especially for teaching and learning English process to the special education needs students. Therefore, it was hoped that the result of this study provide better consideration for best practices of teaching English to special education needs students considering the teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education at elementary school. It is expected that the result can encourage English teachers in inclusive school to gain more positive attitudes in order to make successful inclusive education to special education needs (SEN) students.

Research Methodology

Research site in this study took place in one of elementary school Surakarta in the first semester of the 2014/2015 academic year from November to January 2014. This school is chosen because it was one of participant inclusive school since 2006. The researcher considered that the school is potential to be studied. Besides, the researcher obtains quite wide access into this school compared to other schools.

The design of this study was a qualitative case study in nature, since it dealt with a small-scale case; interpretation as its main method; and put emphasis on the development process in which events and actions took place (Maxwell, 1996: 71). Thus, this study used qualitative case study research method in collecting and analyzing data.

Research data were collected in this study in the form of information about teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education. Data largely shape in these words will be extracted from the following three sources: (1) events: In this study, the events were the activities during English teaching and learning processes in the third grade of the elementary school. The events were all activities during teaching and learning process of English; (2) participants: In this study, the informants were the fourth grade of the SEN students at the elementary school. The researcher was diged up some information from SEN students such as the opinion about

the responses on English teacher's attitudes. The other informants were the headmaster, English Teacher of fourth grade students, and also the special guidance teacher of fourth grade of Special Education Needs students of the elementary school; and (3) the document: The sources of data was taken from the document such as: the syllabus as the followed guides, the lesson plan of English subject matter, mid-test score of the students etc. The data for this research are collected using qualitative research method.

In collecting the data, the researcher conducted three techniques: (1) observation;

(2) interview, and (3) document analysis. For each observation, the researcher recorded students' activities when completing the given tasks. The researcher further examined the recording to support the findings of the observation. This document is necessary to complete the data obtained in the classroom.

Research Findings

Each of the finding is described in more detail in table 1 summarizes issues arising from research questions in the chapter one of this study.

Table 1. Issues Arising from the Research Questions

| Research Question | Issues Arising |
|--|---|
| 1. What are English teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education at SD Lazuardi Kamila-GIS of Surakarta? | a. English Teacher's Opinion about Inclusive Education b. English Teacher's Emotion towards Inclusive Education c. English Teacher's Readiness towards Inclusive Education |
| 2. What are English teacher's attitudes towards special education needs (SEN) students at SD Lazuardi Kamila-GIS of Surakarta? | a. English Teacher's Opinion about Special Education Needs Students b. English Teacher's Emotion towards Special Education Needs Students c. English Teacher's Readiness towards Special Education Needs Students d. English Teacher's Performances towards Special Education Needs Students |
| 3. How does the English teacher's attitude affect special education needs (SEN) students' foreign language acquisition? | The extent of English teacher's attitudes in affecting Special Education Needs (SEN) students's foreign language acquisition. a. SEN Students' progress report b. Relationship between English Teacher and SEN students |

1. The English Teacher's Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

In the area of inclusive education, attitudes play a key role in achieving successful social interaction among teachers and students and win their attention in favor of the required educational modality. Teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education appeared to be very much affected by their knowledge of inclusive education. There are several aspects to consider in relation to the English

teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education at SD Lazuardi Kamila-GIS Surakarta. Based on the data collected through observation and interview, there are three important terms in this study; (a) English teacher's opinion towards inclusive education, (b) English teacher's emotion towards inclusive education, and (c) English teacher's readiness towards inclusive education.

Teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education appeared to be very much affected

by their knowledge of inclusive education. Teachers' knowledge is the key to successfully implementing any educational program. The result of the interview conducted with Teacher N who teach grade four as respondent reveals her opinion about Inclusive Education. She conceptualized that inclusive education as a system of education for all. She said that inclusive education means that all students, including special education needs students, should be taught in the same class. She explained that inclusive education as the first step to give spaces for SEN students. Based on the result of interview, Teacher N agreed that inclusive education brings benefits in the learning process. She explained that regular students can be role models for SEN students. Regular student can give more empathy to SEN students.

2. The English Teacher's Attitudes towards Special Education Needs Students

There are several aspects to consider in relation to the English teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education at SD Lazuardi Kamila-GIS Surakarta. Based on the data collected through observation and interview, there are three important terms in this study; (a) English teacher's opinion towards SEN students, (b) English teacher's emotion towards SEN students, (c) English teacher's readiness towards SEN students, and (d) english teacher's performance towards SEN students.

The result of the interview conducted with the Teacher N who teach grade as respondent reveals her opinion about Special Education Needs students. She mentioned there are some qualification of SEN students. Other than that, Teacher N said that there are SEN students in her class, especially grade four. There are three SEN students with different qualifications.

The result of the interviews conducted with the Teacher N as respondent reveals her emotion, especially feeling about special education needs students. She mentioned that the existences of SEN students in the classroom did not burden her as a teacher. She felt happy with the existences of SEN students in her class.

The role of the Teacher N was very important in designing the sequences of teaching and learning English. The Teacher N was the person who prepared the teaching material before giving the lesson to the

students. Teacher N teaches the students start from the beginning until the lesson was finished. Furthermore, the students, especially SEN students like cartoon pictures. The materials are arranged in a good sequence, because it easy to understand. Teacher N varies the teaching material type which consists of printed, audio, and video based materials. Teacher N indicated trying to be creative in providing materials to teach and emphasize the language function to the SEN students.

Trainings about special education are important factors in gaining knowledge on how to properly handle students with special needs. Trainings offered in teacher education institutions that the teachers enrolled in are also important factors in handling students with special needs that are included in a regular classroom. Teacher N believed that training helped her much to teach special education needs students. Yet, Teacher N realized that she needed more training to teach SEN students. Besides, Teacher N explained that the collaboration with special guidance teachers and parents help her to gain information about the needs of SEN students. She also be able to come up with teaching and behaviour management strategies that are essential to the progress of SEN students.

The results of observation reveal the English teacher's performances in the teaching and learning process. The result of observation showed that the Teacher N teaches the SEN students with full of spirit in the teaching and learning process. Teacher N always teach the SEN students enthusiastically and happily. When the Teacher N enters the classroom, she directly greets the students. After greets the students, she explains about the activity and material would be learnt at that lesson. Teacher N started the lesson by showing her appreciation to students' presence with a polite greeting and takes students' attention through various activities which loved by students.

Based on the observation, Teacher N establishes a positive relationship with students in order to overcome the boredom of learning and increase students' interest in learning. It also can be proven from the following activities. The situation when the Teacher N walks to all students one by one. She guides the SEN students to interpret the instruction of the task. She sits beside the students enjoying the task. Some students

talked to her. The Teacher N listens and answers the students' opinion. She spends much time for accompanying and guiding the students in the lesson activity.

3. The Extent of English Teacher's Attitudes in Affecting Special Education Needs Students's Foreign Language Acquisition

There were three written sources of data for describing students' development in SD Lazuardi Kamila-GIS Surakarta (observation book, student workbook, and student's progress report) which are noted during and after the study. However, not all of those documents provide the description for the students' language acquisition. These data were mostly collected through the analysis on the student's progress report, the observation, interview, and other personal communications with the teachers. The evidences were noted in the field note and reflective note.

From the analysis on the student's progress report, there is an important thing to highlight. Most of the SEN student's progress report shows that students could do the English task and examination well. It might be caused by the teacher's explanation before they did it. After the teacher had explained, the students would work themselves. They were allowed to ask for help from their friends or teacher while finishing the task; however, SEN students need more help than the others. It also might be caused by the teacher's attitudes towards SEN students. All SEN students were agree that their English teacher help them in the teaching and learning process with the result that they can get good mark in English lesson.

Other than that, evidence was noted that the SEN students were felt happy when the English teacher communicate with them in the English class. They also said that the English teacher help them when they have difficulties in the class. They mentioned that they get good mark because their English teacher help them in the teaching learning process.

Discussion

The findings described previously will be discussed in this section compared to the relevant references dealing with the English teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education at elementary school. It covers three main results: (1) the English teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education, (2) the English

teacher's attitudes towards special education needs (SEN) students, and (3) the effect of the English teacher's attitudes towards special education needs (SEN) students' foreign language acquisition.

One of attitudes' components is cognitive component. The cognitive component consists of one's knowledge and views about a particular issue (Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education appeared to be very much affected by their knowledge of inclusive education. Teachers' knowledge is the key to successfully implementing any educational program. In this study knowledge was defined as the way teachers conceptualise inclusive education. Hodkinson (2005) strongly believes that the implementation of inclusive education is dependent upon the way individual teachers conceptualise an idea or concept such as inclusive education. The result of the interview showed that the Teacher N conceptualized that inclusive education as a system of education for all. Education For All (EFA) is an international commitment to the idea that every individual can receive quality education. Education For All is based on concepts of human rights and on the belief that education is the central part of both individual well-being and the well-being of the development of the nation as a whole (Miles & Singal, 2010). Education is the right of all children, and inclusive education aims to ensure that all children have access to an appropriate, relevant, affordable and effective education within their community.

The findings show that teacher N agreed with the concept of inclusion. The attitude of the teachers who are expected to implement inclusive practices is one of the most important determining factors of successful inclusion. A teacher's attitude and beliefs will influence his or her expectations and instructional decisions for students with disabilities (Sze, 2006). Teacher N thought inclusive education means that all students, including special education needs (SEN) students, should be taught in the same class. it is supported by Ali, Mustapha & Jelas (2006) who state,

"Inclusive education allows the inclusion with regular children and children with special needs by placing them together in mainstream classes, to be taught and instructed by mainstream teachers."

Based on the result of interview, Teacher N agreed that inclusive education brings benefits in the learning process. She explained that regular students can be role models for SEN students. Regular students can give more empathy to SEN students. According to Deng and Guo (2007), inclusion is beneficial for all students and children without disabilities can have the opportunity to help and care for others. In elementary age children, Hunt et al. (2000) noted that inclusive educational programming helped students become more accepting of each other and helped them to be more familiar with individual differences. However, when friendships were formed, particularly during non-instructional times, the majority of students in one study took on the role of caretaker rather than peer-friend (Staub, Schwartz, Galluci, & Peck, 1994).

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Teachers are the key service providers in teaching students with special needs in the inclusive classroom, their attitude towards inclusion is a contributing factor to its success or failure. The knowledge, skills and experiences gained through training are central to creating an inclusive classroom. The knowledge gained may enable teachers not to be confined to one teaching style, and allow them to adapt the curriculum and instruction to fit all the learning styles of all children (Kugelmass, 2004). The finding shows that the English teacher has good knowledge about the special education needs students. The English teacher said that there are SEN students in her class, especially grade four. There are three SEN students with different qualifications.

The results of this study showed when the Teacher N enters the classroom, she directly greets the students. Research on

teaching suggests that the opening is to focus the students' attention in teaching and learning aims. Opening or "entry" generally occupies the first five minutes and can have an important influence on how much students learn a lesson (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 114). After greets the students, she explains about the activity and material would be learnt at that lesson. Teacher N started the lesson by showing her appreciation to students' presence with a polite greeting and takes students' attention through various activities which loved by students. Teacher N varies the teaching material type which consists of printed, audio, and video based materials. Available resources and materials that can help in handling students with special needs are also a key factor in the readiness of teacher. They need enough resources and materials to accommodate the students with exceptionalities (Kohaneck & Buka, 1999). Problems such as lack of resources and large number of students in the inclusive classroom can stun the readiness of teachers (Eloff & Kguet, 2007).

Furthermore, general education teachers need to be qualified in regard to educating a child with disability, and teachers need extensive knowledge about different pedagogies applicable to each disability (Bryant et al., 2008). Trainings offered in teacher education institutions that the general education teachers enrolled in are also important factors in handling students with special needs that are included in a regular classroom. The teacher will be more ready to handle these kinds of students if they received topics and courses that are related to special education (Winn & Blanton, 2005). They should receive not only introductions about concepts related to special education but also trainings and topics about strategies in handling these students (Turner, 2003). The results of the study show that the English teacher believed that training helped her much to teach special education needs students. Yet, Teacher N realized that she needed more training to teach SEN students.

The readiness of general education teachers in facilitating inclusion services can depend on his collaboration with the parents, special education teacher, school administrators and other professionals (Refice, 2006). Parents are the most knowledgeable individuals when it comes to their children.

That is why regular classroom teachers must work in partnership with them to get information in educating the students. This information can be about the child's needs, accommodations and other services relevant to the disability of the child. Teacher N explained that the collaboration with special guidance teachers and parents help her to gain information about the needs of SEN students. She also be able to come up with teaching and behaviour management strategies that are essential to the progress of SEN students.

Domains of children's development—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive/linguistic—are closely related and that development in one domain influences development in other domains" (McCloskey, 2003). In other words, students' foreign language acquisition goes along with their first language development and other developmental fields. Goodluck (1993) mentions at least four stages of acquisition starting from the acquisition of phonemes, morphemes, syntax, and semantics. However, the results of findings do not really reflect those stages, unless the fact that the SEN students are able to use English for short utterances in making permission. It was found that the English teacher's attitudes affect students' foreign language acquisition in some ways.

The English teacher believes that SEN students' interest and motivation plays an important role to their learning success. Further finding shows that that the SEN students are also able to use English in replying the teachers. The learning materials are repeated in almost every subject, yet the focuses of learning are different. Supporting to this, the students also have the opportunity to develop their cognitive by the materials repeated. This is in line with what García (2005: 39) states that "as children develop their ability to use language, they absorb more and more understanding of social situations and improve their thinking skills". Besides, Lefever (2006) states that success language learning will result in children's self-confidence and their participation in society. It can be concluded that the English teacher's attitude has attracted the students' interest so that they can experience foreign language acquisition in more natural context.

According to Kemp and Carter (2006), a positive relationship exists between the

academic performance of students with disabilities and the teacher's perceptions of the student's academic skills. When it comes to the academic skills of students with disabilities, teachers often rely on their perceptions rather than the actual performance or achievement of those students. Teacher N establishes a positive relationship with students in order to overcome the boredom of learning and increase students' interest in learning. Teachers who had more positive attitudes toward inclusion had students with better academic achievement (Monsen & Frederickson, 2004). Special Education Needs students, like their peers without disabilities, perform better in classrooms where the teacher has high expectations and expects all students to learn.

Based on the research findings and its discussion, there are several things to conclude. First, teacher's attitudes play a significant role in inclusive education. The English teacher has shown positive attitudes towards inclusive education. An effective implementation of inclusive education depends upon teachers having adequate knowledge of it through training as well as positive attitudes towards it.

Second, the English teacher has shown positive attitudes towards special education needs students. Teacher's knowledge, emotion, readiness, and performance can be expected to be successful in educating special education needs students. Yet, the English teacher needs more training to teach special education needs students.

Third, the English teacher's attitudes bring positive effects toward the special education needs students' foreign language acquisition. Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the English teacher's attitude has attracted the special education needs students' interest so that they can experience foreign language acquisition in more natural context. Finally, the English teacher's attitude has encouraged their enthusiasm in learning English

SUGGESTIONS

1. For Elementary School

Teaching English to special education needs students need a lot of considerations. The school must have prepared for the curriculum of the English program, the supporting staffs, the supporting facilities, and

good cooperation with parents. All of those factors should appropriately set to meet the students' needs and their level of development. Besides, the school must provide teachers proper trainings such as hands-on experience in handling SEN students.

2. For teacher

Teachers must be open to involve themselves into various professional trainings, seminars and workshops. It is to increase their knowledge and improve or develop their skills and abilities in handling SEN students in regular classrooms. The teacher should not only has positive attitudes, but also should have a good English ability due to being a good model for the learners.

3. For Students

Everyone is smart in different way to learn, students need to be more active in trying more ways in learning English. Students need to practice English at school and home because English is a useful subject for the future.

4. For Parents

Parents play important roles in child education. Their support will bring benefits towards SEN students' development and so does in SEN students' learning of English. Besides, they should be more aware about the importance of learning English as an international language, so that their child will be well prepared to join the global community in the near future.

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