CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The section introduces the background of the study, the research question, the purposes of the research, the significance of the research, the conceptual framework, and previous studies.

A. Background of the Study

Nowadays, English is one of the subjects that must be taught to students, including those with special needs. In learning English, there are four components of language skills that students must master, one of which is vocabulary. In particular, vocabulary is important for learning English because it helps students master language skills and roles. On the other hand, teaching English is a challenge for every teacher, especially in Indonesia, because English is a foreign language for Indonesians. Teaching English to students with special needs is quite difficult for teachers, especially for students with intellectual disability (ID) who have low IQs and have difficulty memorizing. Therefore, this study attempts to discover the difficulties and explores teachers' vocabulary teaching strategies to ID students.

For students with ID, managing the learning process in the classroom may be challenging. They would experience problems with learning materials and communication with teachers and other students. Therefore, teachers who teach ID students must have the right strategy and media to teach English, especially vocabulary, to ID students. Bryant, Goodwin, Bryant, and Higgins (2003) that teaching vocabulary to students with learning disabilities uses dolls and flashcards as media for teaching vocabulary to children with special needs.

Hallahan & Kauffman (2009) affirm that special education is an institution created specifically to meet the needs of children with disabilities, which are facilitated with particular teaching techniques, methods, strategies, special materials, and special equipment or facilities. Thus, education for students with special needs differs slightly from education for general students.

Thus, based on the preliminary research conducted by the researcher through an interview with a teacher at SLBN Cileunyi, the teacher said they had difficulty teaching English to students with special needs, especially ID students because they have a low IQ and are difficult to memorize. One class of 3-4 students with different characteristics when studying needs services that must be paid attention to. The researcher found something unique when conducting preliminary research: almost all teachers in special schools had no background in English education. Still, teachers are forced to teach English to students with disabilities because English has now become a language that must be taught to students in formal and non-formal schools.

In response to English teaching materials at the special school level, the teacher usually teaches basic vocabulary, such as colors, animals, introducing themselves, objects around them, etc. The teacher further confirms that it is unlikely that students with disabilities, especially ID students, should be taught heavy material such as narrative texts, etc. Therefore, only basic vocabulary is usually taught. English is a challenging language to teach, especially for ID students who have special learning needs. Thus, since teachers face challenges when teaching vocabulary to ID students, this study determines to explore the challenges the teachers may have experienced.

As a result, to overcome the problems that instructors have while teaching English, particularly vocabulary, to students with intellectual disabilities, teachers typically employ flashcards as teaching resources to assist students in explaining the terminology. With this medium, some students can repeat the teacher's words by showing the flashcard. Another strategy is that the teacher must show real objects so students can understand what the teacher is saying. For example, when the teacher says, "Open the door," the teacher must open the door in front of the students. In addition, the vocabulary is often made into songs and sung together in class. This is the strategy they like the most. Therefore, this study explores the difficulties teachers may have faced in teaching English vocabulary to ID students and the strategies they may have used.

Furthermore, Utami, Suharyadi, and Astuti (2021) revealed that teacher difficulties are related to the instructor's English skills, teaching techniques, media, and student learning abilities. This research focused on teacher problems and their solutions when teaching English to students with disabilities, especially intellectual development disabilities (IDD). The teacher utilizes repetition in learning and practice as a solution because students have difficulties comprehending and remembering their teachings. Additional options include YouTube videos, English learning applications, posters, and electronic school books (BSE).

In other research, Avianita, Asib, and Drajati (2018) describe several strategies for teaching English vocabulary to students with special needs, including students with intellectual disabilities. This research confirms that ID students frequently disrupt their classmates during teaching and learning activities. In addition, students also have difficulty writing and reading. The strategy used by the researcher to teach English vocabulary to ID students was to use flashcards and repeat the instructions vocally to help students learn.

Furthermore, this study modifies previous research. The participants in this study are two tenth and eleventh-grade teachers who have been teaching at the school for several periods and a new teacher. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore the difficulties and strategies experienced by teachers when teaching English to ID students, especially vocabulary, at a special school in Bandung.

B. Research Questions

This study explores teachers' difficulties in teaching English vocabulary and the strategies used to solve the difficulties in the context of special students with ID. Therefore, this research formulates two questions, presented as follows:

1. What are the difficulties teachers face when teaching vocabulary in class to ID students?

2. What strategies do teachers use when teaching vocabulary in class to ID students?

The first research question requires interviews to collect data to determine the teachers' difficulties in teaching English, especially vocabulary, to ID students. For the second question, the researcher enters the classroom and observes the teachers' teaching practices to see what strategies the teachers use and what strategies the teacher uses to overcome these difficulties. Thus, the second research question uses observation.

Moreover, teachers who work with students who have difficulty learning a foreign language confront several problems. Otanjac (2016) affirms that training and education for foreign language teachers often prepare them for the "ideal student," who is expected to master language skills (pronunciation, reading, writing, speaking, and listening) through posture and practice. They emphasize the need for increased training to fulfill special students' needs. Foreign language teachers should learn to evaluate the most advantageous adjustments for their students and to detect students at risk of acquiring a foreign language learning disability (Otanjac, 2016).

C. Research Purposes

This study aims to determine the difficulties experienced by teachers when teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities in grade eleven at a special school in Bandung. These two focuses of the study derive from observation and an interview. Before an observation is conducted to explore the teachers' strategy in teaching vocabulary, the difficulties that the teacher experienced in teaching vocabulary should first be explored in depth using qualitative methods through semi-structured interviews.

Furthermore, the second study aims to find out what strategies teachers use when teaching vocabulary to ID students as a solution to their difficulties. After determining the obstacles encountered by the teachers through interviews, the second goal attempts to describe how vocabulary teaching is presented in classroom activities. In particular, a teacher certainly has his own strategy for teaching his students, especially those with special needs that need to be considered while

studying, one of which is students with ID. Therefore, the researcher uses observation and recording during learning activities for data collection.

D. Research Significances

English is a difficult language to teach, especially for students with special needs, including an intellectual disability. Students with intellectual disabilities can study math, English, and science. However, they need to be taught differently. Therefore, the teacher must have a particular strategy to convey the materials. This investigation explores teachers' difficulties in teaching English vocabulary to ID students and the strategies to overcome them. Moreover, the results of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical benefits.

First, this research provides information on teaching vocabulary to students with disabilities, namely ID students at the special school level. Secondly, this study becomes the reference for pre-service students to conduct their teaching experiences in English for special needs students. This study may also imply that non-special education graduates may be prepared to teach students with ID. As a result, this study gives insight into teacher issues in teaching English, particularly vocabulary, and the solutions instructors employ to tackle the problems.

E. Theoretical Framework

This study examines teachers' difficulties and strategies used to overcome them. It also sets the conceptual framework for this research. This conceptual framework connects the teacher's difficulties in teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities and the teacher's strategies. Figure 1.1 illustrates these variables.
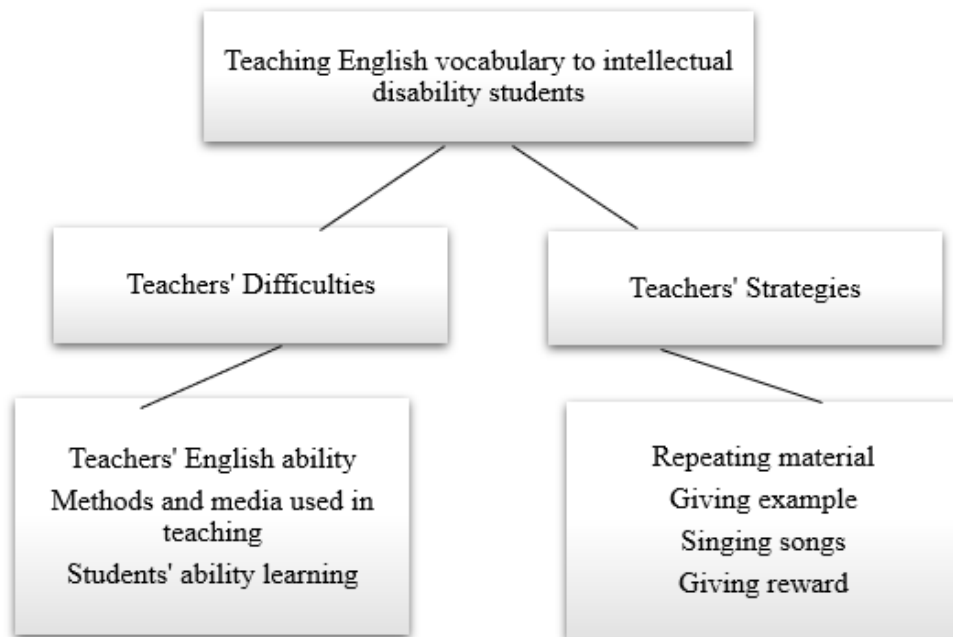
Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework

The figure above provides a summary of the conceptual framework of this research. The picture illustrates the relationship between English vocabulary teaching and ID students. This also includes the teachers' difficulties with their English skills, the teaching methods and media, and the student's learning abilities. Therefore, the teacher repeats materials, gives examples with real objects, turns vocabulary into songs and sings them together, and gives rewards for overcoming the problems.

English is taught to make it easier for students to obtain information from other countries in Indonesia. In other words, by learning English, they are expected to absorb and keep abreast of developments in science, technology, and the arts. In order to achieve those goals, students learn English based on its four skill components: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. In addition, these four language components are supported by four other language learning elements, such as structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. Therefore, this research chooses vocabulary as one of the most important aspects of learning English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, a preliminary interview with teachers at SLBN Cileunyi showed that students with ID are not learning complex English materials. For that reason, Dalilan, Sartika, and Lestari (2021) confirm that they will not understand complicated materials. The students just learn English introduction, which is basic vocabulary.

According to Shree & Shukla (2016), the nature of people with intellectual disabilities can affect their academic learning. Hornby (2014) adds that this child typically struggles with independent academic learning. They could not focus, follow proper directions, or grasp reading, writing, and math concepts. They also experience difficulties with their speech and language. Al Hazmi & Ahmad (2018) state that this causes problems with the ability to think logically, understand, speak, remember things, and find solutions to problems. Because they experience difficulties in these aspects, learning and understanding English may be difficult. Thus, teachers must use appropriate learning strategies when teaching English to ID students.

Furthermore, special schools cater to students with special needs. One of which is concerned with intellectual disabilities. Vasconcelos (2004, p. 71) defines "intellectual disability" or "tuna grahita" (Indonesian) as a neurodevelopmental disease. Students with intellectual disabilities have poor adaptive behaviors, diminished cognitive function, and an IQ of less than or equal to 70. These factors influence everyday social and practical skills (Vasconcelos, 2004).

On the other hand, Utami et al. (2021) discovered that teachers who teach English to ID students have several problems and difficulties when teaching, including the teacher's English ability, the methods and media used in teaching, and the student's learning abilities. With these problems, the teacher must have strategies to solve them. For example, they can follow strategies such as repeating materials, giving examples, singing songs, and giving rewards for teaching English to ID students (Dhermawati, Astuti, Windiarti, and Ahsani, 2019).

Finally, ID students are not exposed to complicated content due to their limited attention spans. Because English is a difficult subject to teach, pupils often only gain basic vocabulary resources. Considering the constraints, appropriate learning media and methodologies must be employed to convey the teachings.

F. Previous Studies

This research is conducted to discover teachers' difficulties in teaching English, especially vocabulary, and to explore strategies for teaching students with intellectual disabilities. Several previous studies related to research on students with special needs in Indonesian and non-Indonesian contexts.

The current study relates to three previous studies conducted in the Indonesian context. Firstly, Dalilan et al. (2021) uncover practices and obstacles to learning English in intellectual disability classes. The case study method was used in this study. Two teachers at SLB-C Tuna Grahita Palembang became research participants. The study results showed that teaching English in ID classes is similar to regular learning but more oriented toward students' needs. Meanwhile, barriers to teaching English were influenced by the limitations of ID students in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and heterogeneous abilities. This research relates to current research identifying the learning of English for ID students. The difference is that this research focuses on finding teachers' difficulties when teaching English vocabulary and the strategies teachers use as a solution.

Secondly, Irawati (2022) reveals the teacher's challenges in teaching deaf students in one of the special schools in East Java. The case study methodology was used in this study with one teacher as a participant. As a result, the teacher experienced several challenges, such as students not speaking English well, difficulty teaching speaking and reading skills, forgetting English material quickly, and difficulty getting videos in Indonesian with good-quality subtitles. To solve the problem, the teacher used IPA to show the pronunciation of English vocabulary, faced the students and pronounced the vocabulary with clear articulation, went to the student's seat and repeated the instructions, repeated the same material,

connected the previous material with new material, and provided subtitles on the blackboard or laptop. This research aligns with current research because it discusses the difficulties and strategies teachers employ. Thus, the difference is that the current research was on ID students at a Bandung, West Java, special school. In contrast, the previous research was on deaf students and was carried out at a special school in East Java.

Thirdly, Aznyatul (2022) explains strategies for teaching English to ID students. This study used a qualitative research methodology with one teacher as a participant. Because ID students have an IQ below the average, the teacher must use the right strategy to convey learning material. The results revealed that a direct learning strategy is suitable for teaching English to ID students. Apart from that, the lecture, practice, and task methods are all used for learning. The teacher used letter cards and pictures as learning media as an additional strategy. Previous research relates to this research because both discussed English learning strategies for ID students. This study focuses on teacher strategies for ID students at the SMPLB level in Purwokerto. Meanwhile, this research is conducted at the SMALB level in Bandung with two teachers as participants and is specific to vocabulary learning. Consequently, these become research gaps for current research.

Furthermore, there is research on students with special needs, including students with intellectual disabilities, presented in a non-Indonesian context. Lindström & Lemons (2021) discussed teaching reading to ID students. This study aimed to describe the content and quality of the reading given to ID students from kindergarten through grade 3 in elementary school. This study used a qualitative research methodology with seven special education teachers and seven students as participants. The teacher's perspective was observed through observational surveys and interviews. The study suggests the need for a greater systematic investigation of content and methods related to reading instruction for students with ID, instructional quality and engagement, and connections to student outcomes. There is a gap between current research and previous research. The study focuses on teaching reading to students with ID by observing the teacher's perspective with

seven teachers and seven students as participants. In contrast, the current research focuses on teaching vocabulary, difficulties, and teachers' strategies. Using interviews and observations, two teachers are involved in the present study as research participants.

Lastly, Hofmann & Müller (2021) look at the challenging behaviors of students with ID. This study found that children and adolescents with ID are at higher risk of developing challenging behaviors. Challenging behaviors can be partly explained by low individual communicative competence. This research method used quantitative analysis with a longitudinal design and two measurement points in one academic year. Meanwhile, to test the hypothesis of this study, the researchers used 16 special schools to serve children and adolescents with ID in Switzerland. This research shows that higher individual communication skills in the first measure were significantly associated with a decrease in general challenging behaviors during the school year.

The distinction between this study and prior research is that previous studies in Switzerland focused more on analyzing behavioral issues in intellectually disabled pupils' capacity to communicate with classmates. In contrast, this research investigates the difficulties and strategies instructors use when teaching language, specifically vocabulary. Furthermore, the prior study employed a quantitative methodology using a post-test research design. Data were gathered by visiting 16 special schools dedicated to ID pupils. In contrast, this research employs a qualitative technique using a case study research design in one of the special schools in West Java, Bandung, Indonesia, with two teachers serving as participants.

In conclusion, the four previous studies above were conducted in the context of learning English, similar to the present research. However, the focus is somewhat different since this study is concerned with teaching vocabulary, not teaching English in general. In particular, the teachers' difficulties and strategies toward English vocabulary teaching specify the present project to ID students in one special school in Bandung.