CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of this research. It includes the background of the research, research questions, aim of the research, scope of the research, significances of the research, key terms of the research, organization of the paper, and concluding remarks.

1.1 Background of the Study

Proficiency in the English language, defined as a high level of competence or mastery, is increasingly recognized as an essential skill in the contemporary global landscape. It encompasses a broad range of abilities, including specific language tasks and functions, and serves as a crucial facilitator for international communication, collaboration, and access to diverse opportunities (Wyatt & Faez, 2024; Nunan, 2022; Kramsch, 2014). In Indonesia, the imperative to teach and learn English is closely linked to the country's aspirations to achieve international competitiveness, economic progress and educational excellence. The significance of knowing English as a second language is highlighted in the Emancipated Curriculum, a comprehensive education reform initiative introduced to improve the quality and relevance of Indonesia's education system (Oktavia. et al., 2023). Within this framework, English is recognized not only as a valuable global communication tool but also as a key driver for accessing knowledge, technology and opportunities on the international stage (Rao, 2019).

English language teaching is also mentioned in *Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 56/M/2022* concerning Guidelines for Implementing Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery. English is one of several compulsory subjects in this curriculum. This recognition is based on the understanding that English language proficiency is a gateway to abundant academic resources, cutting-edge scientific and technological advances, and participation in the global economy. As Indonesia strives to position itself as a regional and global player, cultivating a generation that can speak English is important in achieving this goal.

The significance of English extends beyond the general student population to include students with special needs. English lessons are a mandatory part of their curriculum as well. Based on *the Indonesian legislation no. 20/2003 concerning the National Education System Article 5 Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4* there are various categories of students with special needs in the education system in Indonesia, including *Autistic Spectrum Disorders* or ASD, *Intellectual Disability*, *Hearing Impairments*, *Visual Impairments*, *Motor-physical Disability*, *Students with Multiple Barriers*, and *Special Intelligent and Talented students*. According to Martin et al (2020), special needs students encompass a diverse range of individuals with different disabilities, such as *Learning Disability*, *Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder* or ADHD, *Autism Spectrum Disorders*, *Speech and Language Disorders*, *Intellectual disability*, and *Physical Disabilities*. These students often require individualized and adaptable instructional approaches to maximize their learning potential (Collins, 2023). Teaching English as a Foreign Language might provide difficulties in addressing the unique requirements of learners with special needs. This task requires combining principles of language learning with specialized teaching practices from the area of special education.

One of the predominant categories among learners with special needs within the Indonesian educational context is the students that characterized by intellectual disabilities, as substantiated by data from the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2021). Intellectual disability is characterized by limitations in cognitive and adaptive abilities as a result of deficiencies. Furthermore, during the developmental stage, people with intellectual disabilities demonstrate deficits in general mental abilities that impact a variety of areas, including judgment, abstract thought, planning, reasoning, problem-solving, and academic learning (APA, 2013). Consequently, students grappling with intellectual disabilities encounter challenges in the learning activities, moving more slowly than their age-appropriate classmates and finding it difficult to understand new abilities (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability, 2011).

This subgroup introduces a layer of complexity that necessitates nuanced and tailored approaches to English language education (El-Koumy, 2020; Abdallah, 2015; Padurean, 2014). English classes need to be highly engaging, with a focus on singing, playing, dancing, and painting, according to Padurean's explanation. According to Sánchez-López et al. (2019), physical

engagement is consistently linked to enhanced cognitive abilities. Nguyen (2024) further emphasizes that integrating physical activities into learning methods effectively enhances students' cognitive development. This approach recognizes that such activities involve not only physical movement but also active listening, thereby fostering comprehensive engagement that supports learning outcomes. These findings underscore the integral role of physical engagement in optimizing cognitive function and educational effectiveness. In order to be successful in this process, educators must carefully examine, create, and put into action various methodologies, tactics, procedures, and tools and materials that support students in meeting their educational goals (Ilmiddivovich, 2020).

The Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD) suggests specialized ways of teaching English to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Teachers are recommended to employ concise words, deliver information in a sequential manner, reorganize work, simplify assignments, and allocate extra time for completion (AHEAD, 2011). Furthermore, it is imperative for educators to arrange and execute instructional materials and assignments in the classroom based on the specific requirements and capabilities of learners (Otanjac, 2016). Ultimately, with adequate assistance and customized strategies, children with intellectual disabilities can nonetheless achieve exceptional proficiency in acquiring their native language.

Despite the challenges faced in the learning activity, learners with intellectual disability possess the potential to successfully acquire language skills. This potential becomes evident through the implementation of suitable educational strategies and supports that emphasize tailored instruction and the cultivation of a supportive learning environment (Dewi & Kurniawan, 2017). Rondal (2000) suggests that intellectual disability children, particularly those who were raised by parents who speak two languages, have the potential to acquire bilingualism to certain levels. Additionally, Krapez (2010) notes that mild intellectual disability students may achieve skill in a foreign language through professional teaching methods. Based on research conducted by Utami et al (2021), it was found that the biggest challenges faced by teachers in teaching English to intellectual disability students are related to the proficiency of the teacher in English language, the pedagogical techniques and resources employed in instruction, and the aptitude of the pupils for acquiring knowledge. According to them, effective communication is crucial in any teaching

context, but it becomes especially challenging when teaching students with special needs. Teachers may face difficulties in adapting their language and communication style to cater to the diverse needs of students with various learning abilities and disabilities. Limited proficiency in English may hinder the teacher's ability to convey information in a way that is accessible and understandable for learners with special needs.

Additionally, the choice of teaching methods and instructional media is critical in engaging students with intellectual disability. Teachers might encounter challenges in selecting and implementing methods that are inclusive and accommodate the varied ways of learning and abilities of their learners, and access to suitable teaching aids and technology may be limited, impacting the effectiveness of the instructional process. In order to accommodate the diverse needs of disabled learners, educational institutions must allocate resources and establish appropriate infrastructure when teaching English as a foreign language. (Mosquera Montaluisa & Vega, 2023).

The study conducted by Rapti, Koukou, and Soulis (2021) revealed significant the difficulties encountered by English teachers in assisting the education of children with special needs, including those with intellectual disability. The research identified a notable deficiency in EFL teacher training, specifically in terms of preparing educators to address the unique linguistic and cognitive needs of students with diverse learning abilities. Teachers reported difficulties in adapting standard EFL approaches to cater to the challenges posed by intellectual disabilities, emphasizing the need for specialized training in foreign language teaching methods tailored to this student population. Moreover, the study highlighted a deficiency in the training of instructors to successfully utilize digital technology in English instruction for pupils with special needs. This limitation hampers teachers' ability to make optimal use of technological resources. The findings suggest a crucial need for improvements in teacher training programs, with a focus on enhancing educators' abilities to adapt language teaching techniques, specifically for students with intellectual disabilities, and incorporating training on the integration of digital technology to enrich the language learning experience.

Padurean (2014) suggests that using play can be a great way to instruct those with exceptional needs in the English language. The approach of using play as a teaching method for

EFL special needs students finds support in a research conducted by Saridaki and Mourlas (2013). According to them, game-based learning emerges as one of the most effective strategies for teaching learners with special needs. The concept of incorporating games into the educational process is grounded in the recognition that play not only engages students but also addresses their unique learning requirements (Saridaki & Mourlas, 2013). Game-based learning provides a dynamic and interactive platform for EFL instruction, fostering motivation and participation among students with special needs. The immersive nature of games can cater to various learning styles, offering a multi-sensory experience that helps reinforce language acquisition. Additionally, games often create a positive and enjoyable learning environment, contributing to increased motivation and sustained interest in language learning (Şentürk. et al, 2023; Kang. et al, 2021).

In accordance with research from Saridaki & Mourlas (2013), the investigation conducted by Subasno et al (2022) provides insights into the efficacy of using games as a method for teaching vocabulary to students with special needs. The research provides compelling evidence that learning through games is highly impactful, as indicated by the impressive success rates in vocabulary memorization among the students involved. Specifically, the study reveals success percentages ranging from 66.7% to an impressive 100%, underscoring the substantial positive outcomes associated with this instructional approach. The use of games in vocabulary learning for special needs students aligns with the broader educational trend of incorporating interactive and engaging methods to improve the learning achievements. Games, with their inherent element of fun and interactivity, offer a dynamic and stimulating environment for students, fostering a more enjoyable and effective learning process. It becomes especially essential to learners with particular requirements, as it accommodates a variety of learning styles and provides a multisensory approach to language acquisition (Subasno et al, 2022)

Furthermore, the research conducted by Ramadhana et al (2023) discovered that using games as a learning tool can significantly help children with mild intellectual disabilities improve their expressive language skills. The researchers discovered that games become an enjoyable and useful tool for kids to learn and express themselves when they are included into the educational process. The idea is to make learning enjoyable by turning it into a game, motivating kids to use more words and, as a result, improving their ability to express themselves verbally. This research

suggests that teachers and caregivers can use game-based learning to create a lively and effective environment for improve language abilities to learners with mild intellectual disability. This research is in accordance with research conducted by Peter and Banciu (2013) in their research on the problems of students with intellectual disabilities experiencing problems in communication, interpersonal relationships, and showing their emotions. In this research, they conducted experiments using game media in the learning activities and found that learning using game had positive results, students communicated more often with each other and played together (Peter & Banciu, 2013).

Using games to learn English has become popular not only for regular learners but also for those with special needs (Marinelli et al., 2023). One of the special schools that has implemented a game-based learning method in teaching English to students with special needs is the special school in Parepare. Based on the preliminary observation at that special school, it was found that English learning carried out at the school used the Game-Based learning (GBL) method using several games such as Flashcards, Puzzles, and the UNO card game as a media of teaching. Implementing Game-Based Learning as an instructional approach has the capacity to enhance learner involvement throughout the process of learning (Sugiani, 2023). The integration of the GBL approach in English language instruction aims to evaluate its efficacy and efficiency, thereby enhancing the value and interaction in educational environments (Pan et al., 2021).

Pre-research also found that the English learning process at that special school also had several challenges in the teaching and learning activities, some of the challenges mentioned by the EFL Teacher included the difficulty of getting students' attention in the learning process and students' motivation and mood which sometimes changed. As educators strive to navigate these intricate challenges, the integration of innovative and inclusive approaches gains significance. Game-based learning, recognized for its ability to create dynamic and engaging learning environments, is explored as a pedagogical strategy (Pan et al, 2021; Seaborn & Fels, 2015). Although game-based learning is becoming recognized in regular schools, its implementation for children with special needs is still an area that has not been thoroughly researched (Tlili et al, 2022; Stančin et al, 2020).

Therefore, it is suggested that EFL teachers prepare and implement learning methods that involve activities such as games for students with intellectual disabilities. However, there is still a lack of research discussing the implementation of game-based learning for students with intellectual disabilities, especially in the Indonesian context. Existing studies predominantly emphasize the advantages and effectiveness of game-based learning methods, as well as the challenges encountered. Nonetheless, the specific steps that teachers must follow to implement games into the teaching process have not been adequately explored. In response to this gap, the present research aims to investigate the steps necessary for teachers to implement game-based learning methods in teaching English to students with Intellectual disability. Furthermore, the research seeks to identify the challenges encountered by EFL teachers when instructing English using the Game-Based Learning method. This study is a case study that examines how EFL teachers implement the Game-Based Learning method for students with intellectual disability. The aim of this study is to provide additional resources and insights into EFL teaching and the challenges associated with implementing the Game-Based Learning method for students with intellectual disabilities.

The choice to prioritize the teaching of English to students with intellectual disability is driven by multiple factors. Among the four groups of students with special needs, namely Intellectual Disability, Deaf, Physical Disability, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, the group of intellectual disabilities has the highest number at the school. Following statistical data from the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia in 2021, there are a total of 144,621 students with special needs in special schools across Indonesia. Among them, the largest group consists of 80,837 students with intellectual disabilities (Kemendikbud, 2021). To clarify, intellectual disability is the most common occurrence in special schools in Indonesia. The aim of this research is to concentrate on students with intellectual disabilities in order to enhance the effectiveness of English language learning for students with special needs in future studies.

1.2 Research Questions

Considering the background information provided, this current study aims to answer the following research problems.

1. How does the English teacher implement Game-Based Learning in teaching English to students with intellectual disability?
2. What challenges are teachers facing in implementing Game-Based Learning in teaching English to students with intellectual disability?

1.3 Aim of the Research

The objectives of the present study were as follows.

1. To investigate the implementation of Game-Based Learning in teaching English for students with intellectual disability
2. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Game-Based Learning in teaching English for teaching students with intellectual disability.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research aims to comprehensively explore the practices and challenges faced by EFL teachers when delivering English language teaching to students with special needs through Game-Based Learning method. There are many categories of learners with special needs such as *Intellectual Disabilities, Sensory or Physical Disabilities*, *Emotional and/or Behavioural Disorders*, *Communication Disorders*, and *Students encountering challenges in the learning process*. This research focuses on Students with Intellectual disability.

1.5 Significances of the Research

This study aimed to provide both theoretical and practical insights into the implementation of Game-Based Learning in teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities.

1. Theoretical Significance

    Due to the growing efficacy of learning English among students with special needs, game-based learning methods are frequently employed in teaching. Game-based learning is an instructional approach that seeks to enhance the educational setting by integrating elements of play, making it more interesting for pupils. This could reduce students' stress

and anxiety while they are engaged in the learning process. Hence, the expected result of this study was to offer insights and additional understanding into the implementation of game-based learning as a method of teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities.

2. Practical Significances

The study held practical significance for students with special needs, educators, and prospective researchers.

For Students, This study was beneficial for students with intellectual disability as it gave additional information about an efficient and effective learning method for students with intellectual disability in learning English.

For Educators, This study was valuable for teachers who teach special needs students, specially students with intellectual disability in implementing Game-Based Learning method in teaching English for students with intellectual disability.

For Prospective Researchers, The results of this study provided empirical data on teaching English for students with intellectual disability that can be developed and refined for future research.

1.6 Key Terms of the Research

There are some terms in this research that need to be clarified to avoid misinterpretation and unnecessary misunderstanding of the terms used in this research. Some terms are classified as follows:

1. Game-Based Learning

Game-based learning (GBL) is a pedagogical method that incorporates both digital and non-digital games to impart knowledge and skills (Kapp, 2014). Within this instructional approach, games serve as instruments for delivering educational content across various subjects (Mz & Sy, 2008). GBL is strategically designed to facilitate the acquisition of essential learning objectives, ensuring that learners grasp the necessary content to meet their educational goals (Pho & Dinscore, 2015). In this research, Game-based learning is

an English learning method used by teacher in teaching students with intellectual disabilities.

2. Teachers' Practice

Teachers' Practice refers to the methods, strategies, and actions employed by educators in the classroom to facilitate learning and support student development. It encompasses a wide range of activities and decisions made by teachers in their roles as instructors and mentors. Teachers' practice includes how they plan and deliver lessons, manage classroom dynamics, assess student progress, provide feedback, adapt to the needs of diverse learners, and continuously reflect on and refine their teaching techniques. In this research, teaching practice is focused on teaching practice using game-based learning method with flashcard.

3. Teaching Challenges

Teachers' challenges refer to the difficulties, obstacles, and issues that educators face in their professional roles as they strive to provide quality education and support student learning. These challenges can vary depending on factors such as the educational context, students, grade level, subject matter, and location. In this research, challenges are focused on teachers' challenges in the implementation of game-based learning method.

4. Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs are individuals who face challenges in education or learning due to various internal and environmental circumstances (Forbis, et al., 2016). Students with special needs encompass a diverse range of individuals who have different disabilities, such as learning disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders, speech and language disorders, intellectual disabilities, and physical disabilities (Martin, et al., 2020). This research specifically targets students with special needs, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. Intellectual disability refers to persons who possess below-average intellectual and cognitive abilities in comparison to the general population.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

Chapter I: Introduction. This chapter presents an overview of the linked study, which includes the study's background, research questions, objectives, scope, importance, clarification of associated words, and the organization of the paper.

Chapter II: Literature Review. This chapter encompasses the theoretical frameworks of the study, knowledge related to the study, and previous studies.

Chapter III: Research Methodology. This chapter presents the methodology that will be used in the study. It presents how the data will be collected and analyzed by the author.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussions. This chapter explains the results and discussion regarding the research to answer the research questions.

Chapter V: Conclusions, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations. This chapter covers conclusion, implication, limitation, and recommendations for further study.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the study's background, research questions, objectives, scope, significance, and clarification of terms, as they are organized within the paper. The upcoming chapter will provide an overview of the pertinent theories and literature related to the topic, as well as some important previous research.