

Deaf Students' Challenges in Learning English: A Literature Review

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Abstract

In language learning, the understanding towards the language usage which is appropriate with the grammatical rules is an important thing, because most of the students' tasks are dealing with writing, especially writing a scientific paper. In the writing process, Deaf students sometimes struggles with the writing issues. One of their writing issues is the difficulties in understanding the concept of a language which is suitable with the grammar rules, word order, etc. The type of this research is Literature review research, and the method or structure used in this research is Narrative literature review with chronological order. This research mostly discussing the difficulties and challenges faced by Deaf student and the teacher in the teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The data gained in this research is using the review from 10 journal articles. Thus, the goal of this research is to identify the challenge of Deaf students in learning English, especially at the university level.

Keywords: Deaf, Student, Inclusion, Education, Literacy

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1. Research Background

In doing communication with the other Deaf friend or hearing friend, Deaf students are always using sign language or sometimes using oral language. Sign language is a language formed by using the part of body (e.g.: lip, hand, or fingers), and sometimes also formed by a movement. (e.g.: when Deaf students feel hungry, they touch their stomach, etc.), so hearing person can easily understand what Deaf students are thinking about, rather than they communicate by using sign language. The use of sign language and oral language is also an example of effort from Deaf student to show that they also have language acquisition ability, and able to acquire and express a language in a different way. Sometimes Deaf students also can use the oral language to express their feeling. But when they expressing their feeling using oral language, they say the expression followed by hesitation because they did not fluent enough to communicate by using oral language.

2. Method

In the research methodology, the researcher using narrative literature review method, narrative literature review method is a research method which focusing on narrative review (using several scientific papers with similar topic to gain the data for the research and the data displayed narratively in form of table).

The methodology for this research is a data analysis following abroad narrative literature review with chronological structure. 10 articles published for the last 10 years were collected as seen in table 1.

Table 1. Research and Literature

Year of Publication	Author and author country	Title	Research participants	Key findings
20 April 2005	Joseph H. Bochner, Gerard G. Walter, United States of America (USA)	Evaluating Deaf Students' Readiness to Meet the English Language and Literacy Demands of Postsecondary Educational Programs	Deaf student in the school in United States of America (USA) who learn ESL and joining ACT assessment	From the article, it is found that neither the ACT assessment or the ESL are appropriate for the full range of Deaf student
26 March 2015	Gerald P. Berent, Czech Republic	English for Deaf Students: Assessing and Addressing Learners' Grammar Development	Deaf student from Charles university, Czech Republic	Deaf student generally experiencing a difficulty in acquiring spoken language, unlike their natural acquisition towards the sign language
January 2016	Nana Afia Amponsaa Opoku-Asare, Gideon Kwesi Obosu, Prosper Deku, Ghana	Access to English Language Acquisition in Ghana Schools for the Deaf: Are the Deaf Students Handicapped?	Deaf student from five school in Ghana	Most of Deaf student in the school in Ghana accessing the learning process through the English book, while Deaf student are not accustomed with English language learning

16 August 2016	Diane Corcoan Nelsen, Barbara Luetke, Meigan McLean, Deborah Stryker, United States of America (USA)	The English-Language and Reading Achievement of A Cohort Of Deaf Students Speaking And Signing Standard English: A Preliminary Study	Deaf student from a school in northwestern United States	The reason of Deaf students cannot enhance their ability in English is because they cannot hear grammatically accurate English
16 January 2018	Rohmani Nur Indah, Chanastalia, Indonesia	The Communication Methods in English Classroom for Indonesian Deaf Students	Deaf student from a special school in Malang	Deaf students do not learn English as their first language. It becomes difficult when deaf student communicates with hearing person in their daily conversation
May 2018	Adhika Irlang Suwiryono, Ellis R. Artyana, Indonesia	Sign Language Interpreting in English Language Teaching for a Deaf Student: A Case Study	Deaf student from a state university in Jakarta	The role of sign language interpreter in language class is important. But sometimes the interpreter also confuses when dealing with the difference of way in communication
February 2021	Suwandi, Deliana, Desri Maria Sumbayak,	English Inflectional Errors Made by Indonesian Deaf	Indonesian deaf community group from	There was an error in writing composition and English inflection

	Indonesia	People In Writing Composition	Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram	made by the Indonesian Deaf people
April 2021	Putri Yunisari, Usman Kasim, Saiful Marhaban, Indonesia	English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers Teach English for Deaf Students	Deaf students' community in Senior High School level in Aceh	The teacher revealed that the 2013 English curriculum cannot accommodate the needs of Deaf students in learning English because of English subject that are not included as the compulsory subject for Deaf students
August 2021	Mohamad Ahmad Saleem Khasawneh, Saudi Arabia	Problems Teaching English to Deaf Students	186 English teachers from a special school in Saudi Arabia country	The English teachers revealed that the problem in teaching English for Deaf student in Saudi Arabia is caused by the difference of curriculum which applied in the school
September 2021	Cihat Attar, Ozlem Aslan Bagci, Hakki Bagci, Turkey	Deaf Individuals and English Language Teaching	Deaf student from a school in Turkey	Having an education for individual with disabilities is more challenging because they are lack of circumstantial learning

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 The article information

The researcher who contributes to this research were come from several country. Most of the researcher were come from Indonesia. And the other researchers were come from United States of America (USA), Czech Republic, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Most of article written by those researchers were focusing on the difficulties and challenge in teaching and learning English faced by the teacher and Deaf students. Despite most of the articles have the same focus, but the article also discussing different topics. At least 80 % of the article were discussing about the challenges and difficulties faced by Deaf student in learning English language. While the other article (20% of the article) are discussing the topic about the challenges and difficulties faced by the teacher in teaching English to Deaf students.

3.2 Deaf students' challenges in English learning

In the process of teaching and learning English, especially English learning for Deaf student, Deaf students also found some challenge and difficulties. The challenge faced by Deaf students in English language learning are dealing with the difficulties in understanding English language because English language is not their first language. In learning English, Deaf students also facing difficulties in word processing and write a text. As stated by Fabbretti, D. et.al (2015) that the sentence production of Deaf student tends to be simpler, and they also produce low vocabulary item. Deaf students also have difficulties and challenge in the production of lexical inflexibility. It is proven by the research conducted by Prevost & White (2000) that "The production of lexical inflexibility is something difficult for Deaf students." Deaf students also have difficulties in understanding grammar when they learning English. Stated by Quigley & King, (1980), that "Sometimes Deaf students are in the slower rate in acquiring a language". not only about grammar, Deaf students' challenges and difficulties in English learning also dealing with reading achievement. Since Deaf student cannot read because they did not get enough of language exposure, it is caused a problem for Deaf students, especially in reading class because Deaf students did not achieve the same reading level like the other hearing peers (Spencer & Marschark, 2010).

3.3 Strategies used in teaching English for Deaf students

There are many strategies can be used in teaching English for Deaf students. One of the strategies is the use of sign language to engage the learning process in the classroom. "The use of sign language in teaching English to Deaf students is important because English is not the first language of Deaf student". Humphries et al. (2014). Since Deaf student do not use English as their first language, when Deaf student learning English, they need several communication methods to help them communicate with their hearing pers in daily conversation. Hernawati, (2007) stated that "Since Deaf student have hearing disabilities, Deaf student also struggling with the difficulties in acquiring a language."

Additionally, Mellon et al., (2015) stated that “One challenges for Deaf students in English learning is because of the late of language acquisition.” This situation appears to the Deaf student because their parents are less proficient in interpreting sign language, while linguist suggest that sign language is the best language for Deaf students.

The implementation of sign language practice, especially for the interpreter is also an effort to help and facilitate Deaf student in English learning. Sign language interpreter is also one important role in supporting Deaf students, English learning process. (Roy, 2000, p. 101) stated that the role of sign language interpreter is not only helping Deaf students in learning English, but also contribute the process of exchanging message from sign language into spoken language.

4. Conclusion

In the modern era, English language has become a global language. English has been used by most of people, community, and country around the world. In global era, English also can be learned by several communities, especially Deaf students. In learning English, Deaf students need some special treatment. Special treatment here means they need the accessible material, some assistive technology, and a language interpreter. Language interpreter is also an important part in learning English for Deaf students. Deaf students need the help from the interpreter because they have difficulties in understanding foreign language, especially English. in this situation, the interpreter has role to interpret the spoken language into sign language. So, in the process of teaching and learning English will occur a communication between the teacher and Deaf students. Deaf students also need an accessible material for learning English because sometimes they can easily understand the material by visual. They also can explore and learn more about English language through the book with simple image or picture.

Meanwhile from the teachers' point of view, sometimes they still have difficulties in handling Deaf students in learning English in the classroom. There are some factors that caused this situation happen to the teacher. Most of the factors are because the teacher did not know how is the best way to handle Deaf student in learning English. This situation happens because the teacher have different educational background with the needs of Deaf student, where the teacher did not have experience in teaching English for Deaf student, but in the other hand they (the teacher) should teach Deaf students.

The difference of curriculum which use to teach English language to Deaf students also become the difficulties that are faced by the teacher. The teacher feels difficult in teaching English for Deaf students because Deaf students need a special curriculum, and the curriculum should be adjusted to the needs of Deaf students in order to they can learn English, same like non-Deaf students. But it also causes another problem for the teacher. The teacher feels difficult to adjust the suitable material for teaching English to Deaf students with the curriculum.

Not only challenges and difficulties, teaching English to Deaf students also have positive effect. There are some positive effects from teaching English to the Deaf students. (1) Deaf students can broaden their knowledge and more aware with the language and culture, and (2) Deaf students can grow their awareness towards the use of English language as the global language, so Deaf students can start to learn English language.

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