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Teaching English to Students with Hearing Impairments and Anxiety Disorders: Strategies Used in Kerala's Special Schools

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Abstract

This study examines the teaching strategies used by teachers in English language instruction for students with disabilities in Kerala. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, as the information required for the study is gathered in the oral form. The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with six teachers from two special schools in Ernakulam and Kottayam districts. Three teachers work with students who have hearing impairments, while the other three teach students with anxiety disorders. All participants have more than years of exposure to students with disabilities and disorders. The findings reveal that teachers use various strategies to support language learning. The different teaching strategies and their application at the classroom level are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Teaching Strategies, English Language Instruction, Students with Disabilities, Kerala Schools, Special Education.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for all individuals, regardless of their background, financial status or abilities. The students with different kinds of disorders and disabilities often require additional assistance such as specialized schools and creative teaching methods. Among the major aspects of learning English in schools, acquiring vocabulary is important for the language development of students. As English is an important global language, all students including those with any kind of disabilities and impairment, should be given the chance to learn. Teachers in special schools need to adopt practical strategies to teach English vocabulary to students with disabilities. The selection of apposite strategies can help students improve their vocabulary in the classroom. The teachers can select suitable teaching methods after examining the different learning phase of students with disabilities. Teachers, especially language teachers should implement strategies that accommodate the varied characteristics of their students.

This study aims to examine the strategies used by six experienced teachers in special schools in Kerala to teach English vocabulary to students with disabilities. The study focuses on teachers with teaching experience and exposure to students with special requirements. The findings of the present study can act as valuable information for both teachers and policymakers. The study also suggests that future research could explore the comparisons of teaching strategies in other special schools or conduct classroom action research.

Literature Review

Students with disabilities may experience short-term, recurring or long-term challenges that affect their learning. Some disabilities are visible, while others are not very evident. Teachers may not always be aware of these disabilities unless the student discloses it or it becomes observable in a classroom situation. Invisible disabilities can be difficult for students to disclose, as they may appear physically healthy to others. In some cases, students may make specific requests such as asking for additional time to take notes due to conditions like dyslexia, which affects their ability to process written material efficiently (Chandra, 2021).

The identification of functional teaching strategies is important to help students with disabilities in classrooms. Teachers can use various strategies to address the learning needs. but they should be careful to choose the potential method. The selection of the correct teaching strategies is central to teaching students with special needs. Since there is no universal teaching strategy that provides success for all students, teachers need to adopt creative approaches that can address the diverse needs of their students (Suborna, Masud, Mensah, Joshua, Mahmudul, Tania, 2022).

In the context of Kerala, teachers in special schools adopt a variety of strategies to teach students with disabilities. These strategies include individualized instruction, multisensory teaching methods and the use of assistive technology to facilitate learning. Individualized instruction helps to address the unique needs of students, while multisensory approaches engage students through visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles (Renelle, Jones, 2022). The use of assistive technology, such as speech-to-text software and audiobooks, helps students in overcoming learning challenges (Soman & Sudhier, 2021). Teachers in Kerala's special schools point out the importance of adaptability in their teaching methods. The process of engaging students through interactive and participatory activities encourages their active involvement in the learning process. The requirement for more research studies to explore the intense of specific teaching strategies on students with different types of disabilities is clear.

Problem Statement

This study aims to analyze the strategies used by language teachers for students with anxiety disorders and hearing impairments in schools in Kerala. The study aims to trace the problems faced by the teachers while engaging students with disabilities.

Objective

The focused objective of the present study is to identify the techniques teachers employ to teach English to students with disabilities in Kerala schools and to understand how these strategies help in their learning.

Methodology

The study follows a descriptive qualitative research design to identify the teaching techniques used by teachers for students with anxiety disorders and hearing impairments in Kerala schools. Qualitative research helps in gathering detailed data through words rather than numerical data. Interviews were used as the core tool to collect information from teachers based on a structured

set of questions. These questions focused on the teaching strategies employed in English language classrooms. The responses were analyzed to understand the strategies used by teachers for students with different disabilities. The study included six teachers from special schools in the Ernakulam and Kottayam districts of Kerala. Three teachers selected for the study work with students who have hearing impairments, while the other three teach students with anxiety disorders. All of them have enough experience in dealing students with different disorders and disabilities.

Discussion

The data required for the present study were occupied through structured interviews conducted with six teachers. They work with students having different disabilities in schools in Kerala. The study aimed to examine the teaching strategies employed in ELT for students with hearing impairments and anxiety disorders. The following section presents and discusses the findings based on the strategies identified during the interviews.

Teaching Strategies for Students with Hearing Impairments

Table 1 presents the strategies used by teachers to strengthen the language learning skills for students with hearing impairments. The primary strategies identified include explaining the subject matter, utilizing flashcards and encouraging students to color pictures to aid comprehension and retention.

- Strategies
- Explaining the subject matter
- Using flashcards
- Encouraging students to color pictures

Table 1. Teacher's Strategies in ELT for Students with Hearing Impairments

Teachers depend on visual aids and multisensory approaches to ensure constructive learning for students with hearing impairments. Research suggests that visual reinforcement such as flashcards and pictorial representations increases the engagement of students with hearing difficulties.

Explaining the Subject Matter

Teachers should explain the subject matter in a clear and structured way to the students with hearing impairments. It will help the students to get the idea quickly. Teachers can support clear communication through visual aids and written instructions. This strategy is helpful for students to follow lessons.

Using Flashcards

Teachers should use flashcards to make classrooms a creative learning space for students. Flashcards can help to build vocabulary through visual representation. Teachers can give interactive tasks by using flashcards. As it is interesting, it helps students to identify the words quickly. This strategy makes sure that students are more engaged in the classroom. It supports their learning through repeated visual exposure.

Encouraging Students to Color Pictures

The activities related to picture coloring help to develop the cognitive skills of the students with disabilities. It is useful to support language concepts through connecting it with visual elements. The picture coloring activities provide a creative space to the students. It makes them connect words with corresponding images. It makes learning meaningful. This strategy also supports the development of concentration.

Teaching Techniques used for Learners with Anxiety Disorders

Table 2 presents the teaching techniques used for learners with anxiety disorders. The findings suggest that teachers utilize repetition of material, provide concrete examples, incorporate songs in teaching and offer rewards to motivate students and alleviate their anxiety.

- Strategies
- Repeating the material
- Providing examples
- Using songs
- Offering rewards

Table 2 Teacher's Strategies in ELT for Students with Anxiety Disorders

The teachers should use strategies that focus on repetition and positive reinforcement for students with anxiety disorders. The previous studies point out that structured repetition and reward based learning create a supportive system for students experiencing anxiety.

Repeating the Material

The repetition of the material helps students with anxiety disorders to build their confidence level. The usage of the same content allows students to process information according to their cognitive ability. It reduces the fear of making mistakes among them.

Providing Examples

The teachers use examples as a potential strategy. Providing concrete examples helps students with anxiety disorders relate theoretical concepts to real life situations. This approach makes learning easy and it reduces uncertainty.

Using Songs

The usage of songs in teaching can create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment for students with anxiety disorders. Music helps in reducing stress levels and to improve focus and make language learning more interesting and less intimidating.

Offering Rewards/ Words of Encouragement

Teachers should give students rewards and appreciation to keep them motivated. It serves as positive reinforcement. Teachers can make students with anxiety disorders to participate actively in learning activities with their words of encouragement. Rewards can encourage the students to put consistent effort. It leads to improved academic performance.

Conclusion

The study finds the need to modify teaching strategies to address the varied needs of students with different kinds of disorders and disabilities in Kerala schools. Teachers should give importance to use appropriate instructional methods, such as visual aids for students with hearing issues and reinforcement techniques for those with anxiety disorders. These methods can help to improve language learning of the students with disabilities. More studies are required to understand the long term impact of these strategies in different classroom environments. Teachers must use effective methods in the teaching process. The strategies used for students without disabilities differ from those required for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities need specific teaching approaches that address their individual needs. Teachers can identify suitable strategies only after understanding the abilities and requirements of their students.

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