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VISUAL AIDS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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Abstract: English is a language that is used by people around the world. Hence, it is necessary for everyone to learn it, including the students with special needs. This study aims to review the use of visual aids in teaching English for students with special needs, especially Autism Spectrum Disorder. The study is a library study that focuses on collecting theoretical and empirical studies about the use of visual aids in teaching students with ASD. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological disorder that affects the function of the human brain. Visual aids are the tools or devices that are shown by the teacher in the classroom to help students understanding the learning materials. The study finds that the use of visual aids is effective for teaching English to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Therefore, teachers should consider using visual aids in teaching autistic students. This study is expected to give insightful information in educational fields.

Keywords: *ASD, English, visual aids*

INTRODUCTION

English is an important subject that should be comprehended since English is used in many educational documents and it is also used in many working fields (Nishanthi, 2018). Many companies, institutions, and organizations require their employees to be able to use English fluently. Hence, it is necessary for students with special needs, especially Autism Spectrum Disorder to learn it. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by having difficulties in doing social communication and repetitive behavior (American Psychiatric Association, 2018). Nall (2018) mentioned that some people with ASD might be showing the symptoms from birth, but some people show obvious signs when they are getting older. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder show different reactions and behaviors. They might be extremely selective, having limited interest, or over-obsessed with something (Ward, 2003). It means that the students with Autism Spectrum Disorder show different behavior and interests. Besides that, students with ASD will show different responses to

the sensory stimuli from other students. They like doing structured activities repeatedly and disturbing their behaviors can make them angry, cry, shouting, and others.

Teaching English to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder is not an easy thing because they are unpredictable. Students with ASD usually have inappropriate facial expressions, do limited eye contact, and do unusual gestures (Ward, 2003). The teachers have to structure the learning environment because autistic students tend to enjoy repeated and structured classroom activities (Ward, 2003). The things that happen in the classroom should be planned and communicated well. It means the teacher cannot give them an explanation, order, and instruction suddenly. Disturbing students' behaviors and giving sudden instructions might trigger students' negative responses. The teacher should explain and give examples clearly before asking the autistic students to do something. Ward (2003) mentioned that in teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder the teacher should emphasize the most important information and avoid explaining things that are not

related to the learning materials. It is because they have difficulties in focusing attention on the information from the environment. They also have difficulties in doing social interactions and communication.

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder need special attention and care (Padmadewi & Artini, 2017). It is because autistic students have difficulties in language communication. Puspita, Padmadewi, & Wahyuni (2019) mentioned that autistic students are visual learners. Visual aids can be defined as tools or devices that are shown in the classroom to encourage students in the learning process (Shabiralyani et al., 2015). Visual aids can be in the form of pictures, charts, maps, videos, real objects, and others. It helps teachers in explaining abstract things to be more concrete or real. Pateşan, Balagiu, and Alibec (2018) stated that using visual aids will attract students' attention and make them active and communicative in the teaching and learning process. It can improve students' creativity in writing, listening, speaking, and learning vocabulary. Visual aids help the students to think critically (Pateşan et al., 2018). It makes the learning

environment more attractive and interactive.

Visual aid in the form of power cards also useful for maintaining the students' behavior (Spencer, Simpson, Day, and Buster 2008). It is because in the power cards, there are instructions that should be followed by the autistic students. By following the steps in the power cards and seeing the pictures, the students will be trained to do certain activities. The other example of visual aid is a social story. The social story helps to maintain students' emotions (Riga, Loannidi, and Papayiannis 2020). It is because a social story contains a story that could influence students in controlling their emotions. For example, the social story tells about how to control their anger. The steps can be taking a deep breath and holding hands. The students will memorize it and train them to implement the steps in their real life.

According to Tissot and Evans (2018), using visual aids in teaching the students should be with some briefs explanation. The explanation emphasizes the meaning of the aids. Visual aids have to be seen as temporary instruments. When the students already comfortable with the learning environment, the use of the

visual aids should be decreased gradually (Tissot and Evans, 2018). There are no exact visual strategies that fit every student. It was because not all students have the same characters and needs. The teachers have to try some strategies before finding the most appropriate strategy for the students' needs and characters. According to Setiadi (2017), teachers' talk also should be followed with the appropriate mimics and gestures. It was for stimulating the students to give appropriate responses to the teachers' explanations and instructions.

Some researchers conducted a study on the use of visual aids in teaching English to autistic students. Neviyanti, Arifin, and Novita (2013) investigated the effectiveness of pictures in teaching vocabulary and investigate students' achievement between the experimental and control group. The participants of the study were 25 fourth-grade students in Cahaya Bangsa Elementary School. A quasi-experimental with non-equivalent control group design was used in the study. The data were collected using multiple-choice items since autistic students had difficulties in understanding verbal instructions. The study found that the student's

achievement in the experimental group was higher than in the control group. Students' score before using pictures was 59.17 and after the treatment, the students' vocabulary score was 77.50. This indicated that the use of pictures in teaching vocabulary to autistic students was effective. It was because teaching because of autistic students like colorful objects (Neviyanti et al., 2013).

Research from Asik and Humaerah (2016) explored the effectiveness of the word wall pictures in teaching English to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This was pre-experimental research. The participants of the research were 3 autistics students in Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri Pembina. A multiple-test was used in the pre-test and post-test for gathering the data. Students' pre-test results showed that the students' vocabulary was categorized as poor with a score of 51-60. After that, the researchers explained the vocabulary with the help of word wall pictures. Then the result of the post-test showed that the score of the students were 76-90 and 91-100 that classified as good to very good. It indicated that the use of word wall pictures in teaching English vocabulary to students with

ASD was effective for improving their achievements. Using word wall pictures in the classroom create an enjoyable and interesting environment for autistic students (Asik and Humaerah, 2016)

Padmadewi & Artini (2017) investigated the appropriate strategies for teaching English to an autistic student in a regular school. The study was involving a 10 years old student with Autism Spectrum Disorder in North Bali Bilingual School. The data were collected through observations and interviews and then it was analyzed descriptively. The North Bali Bilingual School involved an autistic student in a conventional classroom and provided a shadow teacher. Padmadewi and Artini (2017) found that visual aids and differentiated teaching instruction with the help of a shadow teacher were appropriate for teaching English to a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Visual aids helped the teacher to give clear information to the autistic student.

Meydianda, Salam, Rezeki (2018) designed EDUcards (a visual media) for teaching autistic students in West Kalimantan. Three phases, namely analyzing, designing, and developing were done by the researchers. The

participants were the 9th - grade students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in West Kalimantan Autism School. The material focus of the EDUcards was procedure text. The visual aid developed by the researchers was completed with the instructions for the students. It contained the recipes of fried banana with coconut egg jam and ice mixed fruit with sweetened condensed milk. A manual book was provided to help the teachers in using the media. The researchers found that EDUcards fitted the student's and teachers' needs in teaching and learning procedure text. It was easy to use with the help of the manual book and clear instructions (Meydianda et al., 2018).

A study from Puspita, Padmadewi, and Wahyuni (2019) described the types of instructional media used by the teacher in SLB Negeri 2 Singaraja to teach an autistic student. This descriptive study was involving a teacher and an autistic student in SLB Negeri 2 Singaraja. The data were collected through observation, interview, and document study. The teacher in SLB Negeri 2 Singaraja used visual aids such as videos, pictures, matching exercises, and real objects for teaching an autistic

student. Those aids had different purposes and effective for the autistic student to learn English. Puspita et al. (2019) found that visual aids were more effective than the teacher's talk. It was because the visual aids could make abstract concepts became more concrete to the student with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Research from Wahyuni (2019) explored the use of puppets and flashcards to teach vocabulary for the students with special needs, especially Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in SLB Widya Bhakti Semarang. The participants were 6 students in 8th grade. A test and questionnaire were used as the instrument for collecting the data. The research found that the use of puppets and flashcards was effective for teaching autistic students.

It was because through the flashcards the students will be able to memorize the words and familiarize themselves with. In teaching vocabulary with these instruments the teacher should start from the simple ones, such as animals, colors, and others (Wahyuni, 2019). The research also found that flashcard was more effective than puppets because it was more applicable than puppets.

Fatmawaty, Setyaningrum, and Faridah (2021) developed image-based vocabulary material for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder at MTs Sunan Drajat Sugio Lamongan. The research and Development (R and D) method was used in this research. Interviews, questionnaires, and observation were used for gathering the data. Pictures that developed by the researchers were categorized as "very good" with a mean score of 3.9 inappropriateness of the content material, 3.5 in language material, 3.8 in presentation, and 3.7 in layout. Hence the total mean score of the developed media was 3.7. The researchers found that pictures were appropriate for teaching vocabulary to autistic students. It was because pictures helped the students to focus. The pictures should be clear and contain the words' meaning. Pictures with attractive colors made the students learn in a fun way (Fatmawaty et al., 2021).

Research from (Galazka and Bursztyn, 2020) investigated the most appropriate teaching strategies for teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in primary school. An interview was conducted for gathering the data. The participants

were 10 teachers from 5 different primary schools. The researchers found that the most successful strategy was routine-based activities such as welcoming, warming up, and others. The use of an interactive whiteboard from a mobile device was the other successful teaching strategy. Using a game like “wheel of fortune” and “who wants to be a millionaire” was also recommended by the teacher to be used for teaching autistic students. The most inappropriate strategy was teaching pronunciation with the imitation technique. Besides that, asking the students to present something also did not recommend by the teachers (Galazka and Bursztyn, 2020).

A study from Najakh (2020) investigated the types of visual media that were used in teaching students with special needs. There were 12 students with special needs in SMKN 13 Malang that participated in this study. Observation and interviews were done for obtaining the data. The visual media that were used by the teacher were still pictures, posters, real objects, and slides. The teachers used almost the same steps in using each media. The teachers should explain the activities that will be done

in the classroom before spreading the media. The teachers also had to explain it gradually (Najakh, 2020).

Zohoorian, Zeraatpishe, and Sadr (2021) conducted research for investigating the use of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) in teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This was an experimental study with a total of 15 sessions. The participants of this study were 2 autistic students between the age of 9 and 12. The researchers found problems in doing the research, especially in the second phase because the students had a lack of attention and did not want to cooperate well. The study found that students' performance was improved with the use of PECS. The researchers also found that the use of the Pictures Exchange Communication System for teaching autistic students was effective in improving the students' vocabulary in the early stage. It was because in the early stage the students were only asked to do simple conversations (Zohoorian et al., 2021). The most recommended instrument for teaching English vocabulary for autistic students were flashcards and realia.

Those previous studies show that the use of visual aids in the classroom

is effective for teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Students' difficulties in communicating can be facilitated by using appropriate visual aids. Therefore, this study aims to explain the use of visual aids for teaching English to students with ASD. This study is a literature review study. Various studies related to the use of visual aids in teaching English to students with special needs, especially Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The studies were gathered from online publishing research. The focus of the study was to find out the effectiveness of visual aids in teaching autistic students.

BODY

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that affects people in understanding things that they see, hear, and feel (Ward, 2003). Students with ASD have difficulties in communicating and doing social interactions. They enjoy doing repetitive and structured routines. Breaking their routines can make them angry, frustrated, or sad. People with ASD have difficulty focusing their attention on something, but they are also often obsessed with

certain things (Ward, 2003). They have difficulties in doing communicating with other people. They also show unique gestures, mimics, and responses. Since they have difficulties in communicating, the teachers should avoid explaining things with complex words. Teachers that teach students with ASD should find appropriate and extra strategies to make the students enjoy the learning. The teacher should explain the activities that they will do in the classroom before giving an explanation since the students like doing planned things.

Since autistic students have difficulties to communicating verbally, therefore they tend to be more visual learners. The teacher can use visual aids to help them in explaining the learning materials. Showing visual aids such as pictures, videos, and real objects is more effective than the teachers' verbal explanation (Puspita et al., 2019). Teaching English with the help of visual aids is effective to explain words or vocabulary to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It makes the teachers' explanation more concrete and real. The students could relate the visual aids that are shown to them into real objects that they see in real life. The colorful and attractive

object attracts students' attention and made them focus on that object, therefore they will enjoy the learning process and understand the explanation from the teacher (Neviyanti et al., 2013). Learning a foreign language in a fun way is really helpful for students with special needs. Fatmawaty et al. (2021) stated that the visual aids that are used in teaching autistic students should be clear. Ambiguous aids will make the students confused and it will be harder for them to understand it. The visual aids that are shown to the students should be explained in a very simple way. It will be better if the visual aids are completed with the name of the things that appeared.

The implementation of visual aids in teaching English to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be more effective with the help of a shadow teacher. It is for helping the main teacher (Padmadewi and Artini, 2017). A shadow teacher is a teacher that helps the main teacher to give more explanation for the autistic students. A shadow teacher usually accompanies the students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the classroom. The example of the implementation steps of visual aids and shadow

teachers that explained by Padmadewi and Artini (2017) can be seen as follows:

1. The teaching and learning process can be started by introducing them to the material that will be discussed since autistic students like doing structured activities. The introduction can be in the form of videos with fun music. The explanations from the teacher should be clear and simple. The teacher should avoid explaining with complicated or difficult words.
2. After that when the main teacher explains a certain thing, the shadow teacher will repeat it and show the visual aids that are suitable for the material. For example, when the main teacher teaches about color, the shadow teacher will show papers with different colors then tell the autistic students the name of the color, and then asks them to repeat it.
3. Then, the teacher gives a simple question to the autistic students. For example, the students are asked to point the color and mention the name of

the color. When the students are able to mention the name and the object correctly, the teacher has to appreciate it such as by clapping hands loudly or giving thumbs up.

4. Then the main teacher asks the students to work in pairs or groups to do a simple exercise. An example of the exercise can be matching the color and its name. But before that, the teacher should give an example of how to do it.
5. When the students with autistic students look tired during the teaching and learning process, the shadow teacher has to bring them into a different room or at least separate them from other students. It was because students' conditions might impact other students' feelings. The shadow teacher has to make them relax by giving a game or the other ice breaker activities before continuing the teaching and learning process. When the students feel better, then the teacher can bring them back to the classroom.

It should be noted that teaching students with the help of visual aids also should be followed by a simple and clear explanation from the teachers. The teachers need to show appropriate expressions and gestures during teaching the students in the classroom (Setiadi, 2017). The teacher also has to encourage and motivate the students to respond appropriately.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, learning English is an important thing for everyone since English is a language that is used by people around the world. It is also necessary for students with special needs to learn English. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder need special and extra attention from the teachers. It is because autistic students enjoy doing structured activities repeatedly. They also have different ways to respond to something. Autistic students have difficulties in understanding information verbally. Thus, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder tend to be visual learners. It is because the autistic students will be able to process and understand the information that they get through the visualization. Colorful visual aids can

attract students' attention and make them focus on learning the materials. Visual aids also make the teacher's explanation clearer and more concrete. It makes the teaching and learning environment more attractive and enjoyable for students with ASD. But the teachers also have to make sure that the aids are fit the needs of the students. Besides that, the teachers also should give simple explanations and instructions when teaching English to autistic students. Thus, visual aids are effective media for teaching English to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder as long as it is already based on the characteristics and needs of the students. The teacher also has to maintain the condition of the autistic students in the classroom.

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