

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Education is a right that must be obtained by all people, including people with special needs¹. As stated in Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System article 32 paragraph 1 which reads "Special education is education for students who have difficulty in following the learning process because of physical, emotional, mental, social, and/or special intelligence and talent potential"². However, in Indonesia, education for children with special needs is still in doubt due to a lack of approaches and knowledge for parents. This lack of knowledge makes children who have different mechanisms vulnerable in learning certain subjects at school, even some of them are excluded by the education system, especially children with autism.

An autistic child is a condition where a person has difficulty in relating socially and communicating normally since birth³. Dysfunction in the brain tissue causes difficulties in communication, social interaction behavior, even sensory problems, and thinking ability. These factors cause people with autism to have difficulty in receiving learning compared to other normal children. Behind these shortcomings, autistic people tend to have a sharp and detailed memory. This is because autistic children tend to focus only on something that they find enjoyable, and that also gives them an influence so that they are more eager to learn something.

However, when it comes to learning, some students will excel in one subject that they find particularly interesting, while others will excel in other subjects. This makes student learning outcomes unstable and not optimal, one of which is

¹ 'Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 After Amendment', Article 31 § 1 and 2 (n.d.).

² Republik Indonesia, 'Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional' (n.d.).

³ Mujahiddin, S.Sos, *Memahami dan Mendidik Anak Autisme Melalui Perspektif dan Prinsip-prinsip Metode Pekerjaan Sosial* (Mataniari Publisher, 2012).

in English language learning. Of the four skills in English, the most difficult to learn by students with autism is speaking. They may understand the meaning of vocabulary with the memory they have, but it will be difficult if they have to read the letter or pronounce it correctly according to the pronunciation of English vowels.

From the limitations of autism sufferers, a medium is needed to facilitate them both in communication and the learning process. With the media in learning they will not be easily bored and feel depressed. The use of media should also be varied so that it can reduce the level of emotion that exists in students with autism. This media can be an application or something made by parents or accompanying teachers.

In this modern era, there are many technological advances that can help facilitate human needs. Parents and teachers can use applications to help conduct therapy or facilitate communication with students with autism⁴. Various applications are already available on various platforms, both paid and unpaid. There are also similar games that will make the learning process more varied so that students do not feel bored.

For example, teachers or parents can provide English learning support applications, especially to hone their pronunciation skills with digital games applications both online and offline. An example is Preschool English game application, this game can be used as one of the student's learning support so that the learning process is not boring.

Of course, this game media can only be used as a form of introduction to English to students with autism. This is due to the difficulty of communication between teachers and students and the limited features in the application. In addition, some autistic students learn English based on the memory of what has been taught by their teachers or parents because it is difficult for them to read.

In providing this kind of application, of course, it must be accompanied by parents or accompanying teachers. This is

⁴ Florence D. DiGennaro Reed, Sarah R. Hyman, and Jason M. Hirst, 'Applications of Technology to Teach Social Skills to Children with Autism', *Elsevier Ltd*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2011.01.022>.

because students with autism have emotional instability and are prone to tantrums. Not only that, they also have other behaviors such as aggressive behavior, self-injury, rigid routines, self-stimulation, and fixations (Interest in a Certain Object)⁵. Fixation behavior is what will make him become addicted if given gadgets without assistance and supervision.

Preliminary research has demonstrated that Talenta Inclusive Elementary School implemented Preschool English application as an innovative learning media to teach basic English to autistic students. Teacher use this app to increase students' knowledge about several vocabulary. Apart from vocabulary, teacher also uses the app to correct students' pronunciation.

The foundations above need research to improve autism students' mastery of vocabulary and pronunciation for autism students. This is because vocabulary and pronunciation is important to teach as foundation for learning basic English to autistic students through the Preschool English game application.

B. Research Focus and Scope

The focus of the research in this thesis is that the researcher chose the Talenta Inclusive Elementary School as the research subject because this location has implemented English classes for students with autism which are supported by the use of electronics such as computers, and the teacher who accompanies English language learning has implemented the use of electronic media as a learning medium. The focus of English language learning for autistic students is only to introduce foreign languages using digital game media, namely Preschool English game application to train students' basic English language skills especially in animals topic's mastery.

C. Research Problems

Referring to the research background, the formulation of the research problem is:

⁵ Mujahiddin, S.Sos, *Memahami dan Mendidik Anak Autisme Melalui Perspektif dan Prinsip-prinsip Metode Pekerjaan Sosial*.

1. How is the use Preschool English game application to improve students' mastery in vocabulary and pronunciation at Talenta Inclusive School?
2. What are the obstacles in the using Preschool English game application to improve students' mastery of vocabulary and pronunciation at Talenta Inclusive School?

D. Research Objective

As the above is the case, the objectives of this study are:

1. To know the using Preschool English application to improve students' mastery of vocabulary and pronunciation at Talenta Inclusive School.
2. To describe the obstacles faced in the using Preschool English application to improve students' mastery of vocabulary and pronunciation at Talenta Inclusive School.

E. Research Significances

This research is expected to provide various benefits to teachers and autistic students, both in the practical and theoretical realms. The benefits that can be achieved are:

1. Theoretical significance
 - a. This research is expected to be able to provide thought assistance to the world of education, especially about the importance of English teacher creativity in using digital media, especially the Preschool English application in the learning system. As a reference for further research, especially for English teachers who teach autistic students.
 - b. As a reference and for further research, especially for English teachers in maximising digital media in an increasingly advanced modern era.
2. Practical significance
 - a. For schools, provide policy considerations. Schools in determining and utilising educational technology, especially media in the form of game Preschool English game application in order to improve the quality of learning and reduce student boredom in learning and to achieve competencies and learning objectives that have been set and expected.

- b. The benefits for researcher, researcher increase knowledge about the use of Preschool English game application as a learning media so that it can increase provision when later becoming a teacher if you want to choose learning media.
- c. For teachers to provide correct information about the application of using *Preschool English* game application features in learning so that it becomes a positive consideration in maximising the teaching and learning process and is able to redesign the use of games towards a more positive, creative, and dynamic approach rather than an approach that is only a static approach.

F. Definition Key of Terms

To avoid misunderstandings, the researcher provides an explanation of the keywords used:

1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important part of learning basic English. Before proceeding to higher learning stages, students must master at least enough basic vocabulary as a provision both in speaking skills and other skills such as reading, listening, and writing.⁶

2. Pronunciation

Equally important, pronunciation also needs to be taught early on as basic English to students so that mistakes do not occur when practicing and can more easily understand further learning⁷.

3. Preschool English game application

Preschool English game application is one of the digital media that allows users to learn basic English. It can be used as an innovative new teaching and learning tool because there is a feature where users can listen to the right pronunciation with a lot of vocabulary for beginners.

⁶ Mofareh Alqahtani, 'The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught', *International Journal of Teaching and Education* III, no. 3 (2015): 21–34, <https://doi.org/10.20472/TE.2015.3.3.002>.

⁷ Luciana Pedrazzini, 'The Principle of "Correct Pronunciation": Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Early Twentieth Century', *Language & History* 59 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17597536.2016.1176292>.

Preschool English game application can also be used to deepen the understanding of English because it is considered as a digital media source that provides opportunities for students to learn when at home with parental assistance. In addition, Preschool English game application can help attract students' attention with pictures and games according to the vocabulary provided. Recently, new research on the potential of game applications has also shown that games can support student learning, and can also be used as a new learning medium for autistic students.

4. Autism Student

Students on the autism spectrum (ASD - Autism Spectrum disorder) are children with special needs who are actually very difficult to enter in regular schools, except for ASD with mild conditions⁸. Autism has a wide spectrum of conditions, ranging from mild to severe with a variety of developmental barriers. Educators, both teachers and parents, need to understand what the goals of interventions for ASD students (both in regular schools and special schools) include improving children's cognitive functioning, helping the development of children's language areas (including thinking about and developing interventions for children with non-verbal), encouraging children's social interaction skills, and teaching children to manage controlled behavior.

G. The Organization of Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction. It consists of research background, research focus, research questions, research objectives, research significance and the organization of the thesis.

⁸ Chantelle Makin, Vivian Hill, and Elizabeth Pellicano, 'The Primary-to-Secondary School Transition for Children on The Autism Spectrum: A Multi-Informant Mixed-Methods Study', *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments* 2 (2017).

Chapter II: Review of related literature. It consists of a theoretical description, theoretical framework and review of previous studies.

Chapter III: Research methodology. It consists of research methodology, research setting, research participants, data collection instruments and techniques, research data validity, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter IV: Research findings and discussion. It consists of the research results and discussion.

Chapter V: Conclusions and recommendations. It consists of conclusions and recommendations.

