

EXPLORING TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR TO STUDENTS OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English grammar to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents various instructional challenges for teachers in inclusive classrooms due to students' diverse learning characteristics and needs. This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences in teaching English grammar to students with ASD in an inclusive educational setting. The study employed a qualitative research design using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, with the English teacher serving as the key informant and supported by additional data sources. The findings revealed eight major themes: students found difficulty in understanding grammar, teachers applied face-to-face interaction, teachers needed additional instructional time, shadow teachers implemented teachers' instructions, shadow teachers communicated students' learning problems to teachers, differences in shadow teachers' firmness influenced students' learning, teachers taught students with different interests and characteristics, and teachers adjusted learning to students' capacities. These findings indicate that teaching English grammar to students with ASD requires instructional flexibility, individualized support, effective collaboration with shadow teachers, and continuous adaptation to students' diverse learning needs. The study concludes that understanding students' individual characteristics and adjusting instructional strategies are essential for creating a more inclusive and supportive English grammar learning environment.

Keywords: *teachers' experiences, English grammar teaching, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), inclusive education, thematic analysis*

A. Introduction

In an inclusive classroom, teachers are expected to possess adequate pedagogical and professional competence developed through teaching experience. According to the Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 Tentang Guru dan Dosen,

teachers are required to recognize students' learning needs and implement appropriate instructional strategies. Teaching experience enables teachers to adjust learning activities, select suitable methods, and respond to classroom situations effectively. Dewey explains that experience is formed through

continuous interaction with the environment, while Schön emphasizes that professional understanding develops through reflection during and after teaching. Likewise, Kolb argues that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, and Shulman highlights the importance of integrating subject matter knowledge with teaching practice. These perspectives indicate that teachers' experiences play an important role in shaping instructional decisions in the classroom.

The role of teaching experience becomes more important in teaching English grammar, particularly for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). English grammar requires learners to understand abstract language patterns and structures. Seidlhofer states that grammar teaching aims to help learners use grammatical forms accurately and meaningfully, while Harmer explains that teachers should guide learners in practicing language forms in context. Thornbury also emphasizes that grammar learning involves understanding the relationship between form, meaning, and use. Therefore, successful grammar instruction depends not only

on teachers' linguistic knowledge but also on their ability to adapt instruction to students' characteristics.

Students with ASD often demonstrate different learning characteristics from their peers. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5), ASD is characterized by persistent difficulties in social communication and repetitive patterns of behavior. Lord et al. explain that individuals with ASD often experience differences in language use and social engagement, while Baron-Cohen argues that they may have difficulty understanding other people's perspectives. Tager-Flusberg further notes that these characteristics can affect students' understanding of abstract concepts, including English grammar. Consequently, teachers are required to provide more structured explanations, individualized support, and appropriate learning adjustments.

However, the reality in inclusive classrooms often differs from these expectations. Teachers frequently experience difficulties when teaching English grammar to students with ASD, especially when students are required to understand and apply

abstract grammatical rules. During the researcher's teaching practicum, for example, a student with ASD produced the sentence "*I go to school yesterday*" instead of using the correct past tense form "*went*" and also showed confusion in using auxiliary verbs. This situation reflects the challenges teachers face in making grammatical concepts accessible to students with ASD. Previous studies have also reported that students with ASD often experience difficulties in generalizing grammatical rules.

Although many studies have discussed ASD and inclusive education, limited attention has been given to teachers' experiences in teaching English grammar to students with ASD. In addition, the role of shadow teachers in supporting grammar instruction remains underexplored. This condition indicates a gap between existing research and the need to understand how teachers experience, interpret, and manage English grammar instruction in inclusive classrooms.

Therefore, this study aims to explore teachers' experiences in teaching English grammar to students with ASD in inclusive classrooms. It focuses on how teachers deliver

grammar instruction, respond to students' learning needs, collaborate with shadow teachers, and adapt instructional practices to students' characteristics. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive English grammar instruction and provide insights for teachers who work with students with ASD. This study is guided by the following research question: What are teachers' experiences in teaching English grammar to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in inclusive classrooms?

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore teachers' experiences in teaching English grammar to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in an inclusive classroom. The research was conducted at an Islamic Integrated Senior High School that implements inclusive education. The participants consisted of one English teacher as the key informant, who had five years of teaching experience, and two shadow teachers as supporting informants. The data were collected

through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information about the teacher's experiences in teaching English grammar, while the shadow teachers provided supporting perspectives regarding their roles in assisting students with ASD. Classroom observations were carried out to examine the implementation of English grammar instruction, and document analysis was conducted by reviewing the teacher's lesson plans (RPP). The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns and themes related to the teacher's experiences. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were applied by comparing data obtained from different participants and different data collection methods. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining participant confidentiality.

C. Findings and Discussion

After analyzing the data regarding teachers' experiences in

teaching English grammar to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), eight major themes were identified. These themes illustrate the teachers' experiences in addressing students' difficulties in understanding grammar, implementing face-to-face instruction, allocating additional teaching time, collaborating with shadow teachers, responding to differences in shadow teachers' guidance, teaching students with diverse interests and characteristics, and adjusting instruction to students' learning capacities.

1. Teacher's Difficulty in Teaching English Grammar

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in facing difficulties when teaching English grammar to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The findings indicate that students experienced challenges in understanding grammatical concepts, leading the teacher to adjust the instructional focus according to the students' learning abilities.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Nah, selama ini, kalau untuk yang kelas inklusif ya, untuk yang siswa berkebutuhan khusus, kalau grammar

agak kesulitan sih mereka. Lebih saya fokuskan ke vocabulary saja. Kalau grammar lebih menitikberatkan ke kosa kata kepada mereka, bukan ke grammar karena kalau grammar saya lihat mereka masih kesulitan. Tapi kalau untuk menghafal kosa kata itu mereka lebih mampu. Sebenarnya untuk bisa berbicara bahasa Inggris, grammar tidak terlalu penting. Yang penting dia paham kosa kata beberapa." (KI-I-EX-SMG)

The data show that the teacher experienced difficulties in teaching English grammar because students with ASD had limited understanding of grammatical concepts. As a result, the teacher prioritized vocabulary learning, which was considered more suitable for the students' abilities and could still support basic communication.

Another experience related to this challenge is reflected in the following statement.

"Kalau dari ekspresinya kayaknya nggak ya. Berarti ya sudahlah, asal ngerti yang disampaikan ya sudahlah kita maklumi." (KI-I-EX-SMG)

This statement indicates that the teacher adjusted instructional expectations according to the students' capacities. Instead of

emphasizing grammatical accuracy, the teacher focused on helping students understand the meaning of the lesson.

These findings support Ellis (2006), who argues that grammar instruction should be adapted to learners' needs and learning contexts to facilitate meaningful language learning. This finding is also consistent with the American Psychiatric Association (2022), which explains that individuals with ASD often experience difficulties in communication and behavioral regulation that may influence their academic learning process. Therefore, teachers need to modify instructional strategies to accommodate students' learning characteristics.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that teaching English grammar to students with ASD was challenging because of the students' limited understanding of grammatical concepts. Consequently, the teacher adjusted the instructional approach by emphasizing vocabulary learning and accepting learning outcomes according to the students' individual capacities.

2. Teaching Without Shadow Teacher

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) without the assistance of a shadow teacher. The findings indicate that the absence of a shadow teacher required the teacher to provide direct instruction and individual assistance to help the student understand the lesson.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Yang paling saya ingat, menurut saya itu yang paling berkesan itu ketika saya mengajar siswa berkebutuhan khusus dalam hal ini yang autis. Tapi dia tidak memiliki shadow teacher. Itu menurut saya lebih terasa mengajar inklusifnya. Jadi ketika saya sudah memberikan materi ke teman-temannya yang tidak berkebutuhan khusus, kemudian saya secara khusus memanggil anak ini. Saya face to face, tatap muka dengan dia, saya menyajikan materi yang memang sangat berbeda secara signifikan dari teman-temannya dan juga memberikan perlakuan yang khusus itu." (KI-I-EX-PPI)

The data show that the teacher experienced greater responsibility

when teaching a student with ASD who did not have a shadow teacher. After teaching the whole class, the teacher provided face-to-face instruction and adapted the learning materials to meet the student's individual needs.

Another experience related to this situation is reflected in the following statement.

"Selama ini saya sering memanggil anak yang berkebutuhan khusus itu ke depan kelas, jadi face to face dengan saya. Kemudian saya langsung memberikan materinya, biasanya saya menuliskan langsung di buku dia. Kalau misalnya kita berikan instruksi untuk teman-teman yang lain, dia tidak akan paham. Jadi dia butuh instruksi yang bersifat satu arah. Kita langsung ngomong ke dia, menatap matanya langsung tanpa berinteraksi dengan orang lain. Jadi fokus ke dia, baru dia bisa paham." (KI-I-EX-PPI)

This statement indicates that the teacher implemented direct communication, one-way instruction, and face-to-face interaction to support the student's understanding. These strategies were considered necessary because general classroom

instructions were often difficult for the student with ASD to follow.

These findings are consistent with Pozas et al. (2020), who state that effective teaching should accommodate students' diverse learning needs through differentiated instruction. Similarly, Sandra and Kurniawati (2020) found that adapting English instruction to the characteristics of students with ASD can improve students' participation and understanding during the learning process. In this context, the teacher's direct involvement became an important strategy to compensate for the absence of a shadow teacher.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that teaching students with ASD without a shadow teacher required additional effort and individualized support. Face-to-face interaction, direct instruction, and adapted learning materials became important strategies to help students participate in English grammar learning.

3. Time Management in Teaching Normal and Autism Students

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in managing instructional time when teaching both

regular students and students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in an inclusive classroom. The findings indicate that students with ASD required additional attention and support, leading the teacher to allocate extra time during the teaching process.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Perbedaan yang paling terasa itu adalah selain materi dan metode, juga di manajemen waktu. Karena bagaimanapun kalau di kelas itu terdapat siswa berkebutuhan khusus, maka kita sebenarnya perlu menyisihkan waktu untuk mereka. Karena mereka juga butuh diperhatikan secara khusus. Jadi tidak bisa digeneralkan seperti itu." (KI-I-EX-TPG)

The data show that the teacher experienced challenges in managing classroom time because students with ASD required individual attention during English grammar instruction. The teacher had to divide instructional time between regular students and students with ASD to ensure that both groups could participate in the learning process.

Another experience related to this challenge is reflected in the following statement.

"Yang paling menantang di kelas inklusif itu adalah bagaimana kita bisa membuat siswa yang berkebutuhan khusus itu bisa menyerap materi secara optimal sesuai dengan kapasitas dia dan bagaimana caranya agar dia tidak merasa bosan atau tidak merasa terintimidasi." (KI-I-EX-TPG)

This statement indicates that time management was closely related to the teacher's effort to adjust learning according to the student's capacity while maintaining the student's motivation and emotional comfort during classroom activities.

These findings are consistent with Pozas et al. (2020), who state that effective teaching should accommodate students' diverse learning needs through differentiated instruction. The findings also support the American Psychiatric Association (2022), which explains that the learning characteristics of individuals with ASD often require additional support and adjustments during the instructional process. Therefore, teachers need to manage classroom

time flexibly to provide appropriate learning opportunities for all students.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that teaching regular students and students with ASD simultaneously required careful time management. Providing additional instructional time and special attention became important strategies to support students with ASD while maintaining the overall learning process in the inclusive classroom.

4. Subject and Shadow Teachers Relationship

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in building a collaborative relationship with shadow teachers during English grammar instruction for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The findings indicate that the cooperation between the subject teacher and shadow teacher helped facilitate communication and supported the learning process in the inclusive classroom.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Jadi, instruksi saya ke murid itu kan disampaikan kembali oleh shadow teacher ke siswa yang berkebutuhan

husus. Sejauh ini, shadow teacher-nya itu ketika misalnya ada instruksi atau arahan dari saya yang mereka paham, dia akan tanya ke saya." (KI-I-EX-DST-KGS)

The data show that the teacher and shadow teacher worked together during classroom instruction. The shadow teacher helped deliver the teacher's instructions to the student with ASD and clarified information whenever further explanation was needed. This interaction enabled the learning process to run more effectively.

These findings support Pozas and Letzel-Alt (2023), who emphasize that collaboration among educational professionals strengthens inclusive education through shared responsibilities and coordinated support. Similarly, Indah Hapsari and Sanoto (2025) argue that effective cooperation between classroom teachers and shadow teachers contributes to a more supportive learning environment for students with special educational needs.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that a good relationship with the shadow teacher played an important role in supporting English grammar instruction. Effective

communication and collaboration between both parties helped students with ASD receive clearer guidance and better learning support.

5. Student's Problems Communication

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in receiving information from shadow teachers about the learning problems encountered by students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The findings indicate that communication between the subject teacher and shadow teacher helped the teacher understand students' difficulties and determine appropriate instructional support.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Kemudian bentuk kerjasamanya yang lain adalah shadow teacher akan menyampaikan kepada guru tentang tantangan atau masalah yang dihadapi oleh siswa inklusif itu ketika belajar. Sehingga terjadi komunikasi atau diskusi antara guru dengan shadow teacher." (KI-I-EX-DST-KGS)

The data show that the shadow teacher played an important role in communicating the students' learning

problems to the subject teacher. Through discussion and information sharing, the teacher gained a better understanding of the students' difficulties during the learning process and was able to adjust instructional practices accordingly.

These findings are consistent with Pozas and Letzel-Alt (2023), who explain that collaboration among educational professionals contributes to the successful implementation of inclusive education through coordinated support. Likewise, Indah Hapsari and Sanoto (2025) argue that communication between classroom teachers and shadow teachers helps create a more supportive learning environment for students with special educational needs.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that communication about students' learning problems was essential in English grammar instruction. Information provided by the shadow teacher enabled the teacher to recognize students' challenges and provide more appropriate learning support.

6. Differences in Shadow Teacher's Rigidity

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in observing differences in the firmness of shadow teachers when assisting students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The findings indicate that different approaches used by shadow teachers influenced students' participation and engagement during English grammar learning.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Kalau shadow teachernya tegas memberikan penegasan kerjakan ini dia pasti kerjakan. Tapi seringnya shadow teachernya juga kurang mengarahkan. Tapi kalau yang satunya lagi shadow teachernya lebih tegas. Ketika anaknya mungkin mulai jalan-jalan, shadow teachernya bakal marah, bakal mengingatkan. Kalau kita kasih tugas, dia arahkan murid yang berkebutuhan khusus itu untuk mengerjakan tugas." (KI-I-EX-DST)

The data show that the teacher observed differences in the ways shadow teachers guided students with ASD. Some shadow teachers were more assertive in giving instructions and maintaining students' focus, while others provided less direction during classroom activities. According to the teacher's experience, students tended

to complete learning tasks more consistently when they received firm guidance.

These findings support Pozas and Letzel-Alt (2023), who emphasize that educational support personnel play an important role in facilitating inclusive learning through coordinated instructional practices. The findings are also in line with Indah Hapsari and Sanoto (2025), who argue that effective assistance from shadow teachers contributes to better student participation and engagement in inclusive classrooms.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that differences in the firmness of shadow teachers influenced the learning process of students with ASD. Clear guidance and consistent supervision helped students remain focused and encouraged them to participate more actively in English grammar learning.

7. Different Student's Interests and Characteristics

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who demonstrated different interests and personal characteristics during English

grammar instruction. The findings indicate that each student responded differently to learning activities, requiring the teacher to understand and accommodate their individual preferences and behaviors.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Beda-beda siswa ya kayaknya. Kalau yang hobi nyanyi itu kayaknya memang dia ya kalau kita paksakan kayaknya dia stres. Dia itulah salah satu butuh refreshing dia, dia butuh nyanyi, butuh melukis. Tapi kalau yang lain, justru ketika saya lupa memanggilnya untuk mempertanggungjawabkan tugas mereka, dia mendatangi saya. Berarti dia juga mau mempertanggungjawabkan hasil kerjanya. Dia juga mau membaca apa yang ditulisnya di buku. Kalau saya lihat, dia tidak tertekan. Justru dia termotivasi dengan teman-temannya."
(KI-I-EX-RSP)

The data show that the teacher observed different interests and characteristics among students with ASD. One student preferred activities such as singing and drawing to reduce stress, while another showed responsibility and motivation to complete classroom tasks. These

differences influenced how the teacher managed the learning process.

Another experience is reflected in the following statement.

"Yang paling berkesan menurut saya adalah meskipun dia berkebutuhan khusus, dia autis, tapi tetap dia memiliki tanggung jawab yang sangat tinggi. Jadi ketika saya memberikan penugasan kepada dia, dia itu tidak akan tenang sebelum tugasnya itu selesai. Ketika saya berikan deadline, tugasnya selalu diselesaikan on time. Dan dia cukup perfeksionis." (KI-I-EX-RSP)

This statement indicates that students with ASD may also possess positive characteristics that support their learning process. According to the teacher's experience, the student demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility, discipline, and commitment to completing learning tasks.

These findings are consistent with Sandra and Kurniawati (2020), who explain that students with ASD have diverse learning characteristics and therefore require flexible instructional approaches. This view is also supported by Nurohmah et al. (2025), who found that differentiated

learning enables teachers to accommodate students' individual needs and create more inclusive learning experiences.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that students with ASD had different interests and characteristics that influenced their participation in English grammar learning. Understanding these individual differences helped the teacher provide more appropriate support and create a more inclusive learning environment.

8. Learning Adjustment

This theme refers to the teacher's experience in adjusting the learning process to the capacities of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The findings indicate that the teacher needed to consider the students' learning abilities and emotional conditions to ensure that they could participate in English grammar learning without feeling pressured.

The finding is proven by the following data.

"Yang paling menantang di kelas inklusif itu adalah bagaimana kita bisa membuat siswa yang berkebutuhan khusus itu bisa menyerap materi

secara optimal sesuai dengan kapasitas dia dan bagaimana caranya agar dia tidak merasa bosan atau tidak merasa terintimidasi." (KI-I-EX-TPG)

The data show that the teacher experienced challenges in adjusting learning activities according to the students' capacities. The teacher attempted to help students understand the lesson at their own level while preventing them from becoming bored or feeling intimidated during classroom instruction.

These findings are consistent with Pozas et al. (2020), who state that effective teaching should accommodate students' diverse learning needs through differentiated instruction. Similarly, Sandra and Kurniawati (2020) explain that adapting learning activities to the characteristics and abilities of students with ASD can improve their participation and engagement in the learning process.

Based on these findings, the teacher experienced that learning adjustment was necessary to support students with ASD in English grammar instruction. Adapting learning activities to students' capacities and emotional needs helped create a more

supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

D. Conclusion

This study revealed that teachers experienced various challenges and adaptations in teaching English grammar to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in inclusive classrooms. The findings showed that students often experienced difficulties in understanding grammar, requiring teachers to provide individualized instruction, manage instructional time, adjust learning to students' capacities, and respond to their different interests and characteristics. The study also highlighted the important role of shadow teachers in supporting classroom instruction and communicating students' learning problems.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that successful English grammar instruction for students with ASD depends on teachers' ability to adapt instructional practices, collaborate with shadow teachers, and accommodate students' diverse learning needs. These experiences contribute to the development of more

inclusive and supportive English learning environments.

It is recommended that schools strengthen collaboration between classroom teachers and shadow teachers and provide professional development opportunities related to teaching students with ASD. Future studies may involve broader educational settings and participants to obtain a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences in teaching English grammar to students with special educational needs.

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