

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Teaching English to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents unique challenges for teachers. Several studies show that students with ASD experience difficulties in functional language use, especially in the context of social communication (Baek et al., 2024). These communication difficulties impact the ability of students with ASD to actively engage in conversation and follow the flow of learning in the classroom (Setiadi, 2017). Individuals with ASD often struggle to maintain attention and concentration, but they understand vocabulary and language patterns better when instructors actively engage them (Adnyani et al., 2024). Therefore, teaching students with ASD requires teachers to employ appropriate strategies and understand students' characteristics to support effective learning.

In many schools, English teachers are required to teach students with ASD in regular classes without adequate preparation or specialized training. Padmadewi & Artini (2017) noted a growing trend of parents choosing regular schools over special schools for their children, despite teachers preferring to separate them. For example, at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya, some English teachers teach students with ASD in regular classes, while other teachers provide additional private lessons at home. Furthermore, Lu et al. (2022) revealed that many teachers exhibit low confidence and inadequate preparation to meet the unique needs of students with special educational needs (SEN), including ASD, in an EFL setting, primarily due to a lack of training and expertise in special education.

Teachers in public schools are expected to provide appropriate learning opportunities for all students, including those with diverse learning needs. In the context of English language teaching, teachers need to understand the characteristics of their students, adapt their teaching strategies, and develop their skills in creating a learning environment that supports the participation of all students throughout the learning process. While implementing the FKIP EDU program at a public junior high school in Tasikmalaya, researcher observed a

student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) participating in learning with non-ASD classmates in a regular classroom. During the English language learning process, the teacher was responsible for teaching this student, taking into account the diverse abilities and learning needs of the class.

Based on the researcher's observations during her time at the school, the student with ASD exhibited distinct learning characteristics and needs compared to other students. In some teaching situations, teachers needed to provide extra attention and modify their teaching methods to help the students understand the material and participate in classroom activities. This situation illustrates that teaching students with ASD requires different considerations and strategies than teaching in general. Therefore, it is important to explore the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies they use in teaching students with autism spectrum disorder in order to provide a deeper understanding of learning practices in regular school contexts.

These conditions create various challenges for teachers. In classroom practice, teachers often experience difficulties in managing students' behavior and focus, as well as in sustaining effective communication during lessons (Van Der Steen et al., 2020). In addition, teachers are required to adjust learning materials to accommodate students' learning abilities. This challenge becomes more complex when teachers have limited guidance or resources to support instructional adaptation (Rusli & Kheng, 2025). Therefore, examining teachers' challenges and strategies can provide valuable insight into instructional practices in real classroom contexts.

Recent research has investigated the integration of a student with ASD into regular classrooms. White et al. (2023) emphasize a strengths-focused approach that highlights learners' abilities and passions rather than their limitations. Similarly, Cook & Ogden (2022), recommend that teachers use a variety of strategies to address the academic, behavioral, and social hurdles of students with ASD. In EFL settings Brahim (2022), conducted at a university in Algeria and pinpointed obstacles such as insufficient training, communication gaps, and sensory issues, with educators employing tools such as customized instruction, visual aids, social stories, and group activities. Meanwhile, Padmadewi & Artini (2017) studied

effective techniques at North Bali Bilingual School, including personalized plans with visual supports, adapted lessons, and peer partnerships, though they were limited to one classroom.

This study fills the gap by exploring the challenges faced by English teachers and the strategies they use in teaching a student with ASD in a regular public junior high school in Tasikmalaya. Previous studies have mainly focused on teaching strategies in special schools or inclusive settings, with limited discussion of teachers' real classroom challenges, instructional adaptation, and institutional support in a regular classroom. In addition, few studies have explored teachers' experiences that include both formal classroom learning and informal home tutoring contexts. Therefore, this study provides a deeper understanding of how teachers manage behavioral, communication, and instructional challenges while adapting their teaching strategies to support a student with ASD in different learning settings.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the researcher addressed the following questions as the formulation of the problem:

1. What are the teachers' challenges in teaching English to a student with ASD?
2. What strategies do teachers use to cope with challenges in teaching English to a student with ASD?

C. Operational Definitions

1. A Student with ASD

A student with Autism Spectrum Disorder, abbreviated as ASD, refers to a student attending regular classes at a secondary school in Tasikmalaya City who has a developmental condition characterized by difficulties with social communication, difficulty maintaining focus, and restricted and repetitive behavior.

2. Teaching English to a Student with Autism Spectrum Disorder

This process involves guiding an ASD student with diverse learning abilities to understand, remember, and use English vocabulary in accordance with their developmental characteristics. In the context of this study, teaching was conducted both in regular junior high school classes and in private lessons at home so that the

strategies used by teachers focused on adjusting the material, methods, and learning media to suit the needs of students with ASD.

3. Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching a Student with ASD

Teachers' perspective refers to how teachers perceive challenges and strategies in teaching an ASD student. In this research context, the challenges were found in the school classroom and also in the private tutoring context.

D. Aim of the Study

This study aims to gain insight and to highlight the following:

1. The teacher's challenges in teaching English to a student with ASD.
2. The teacher's strategies were used to cope with those challenges in teaching English to a student with ASD.

E. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This research will enrich the literature on the challenges and strategies in teaching English to students with ASD in regular classroom settings.

2. Practical Significance

This research will provide teachers with insights into effective strategies for addressing the challenges of teaching English to students with ASD in a regular classroom, particularly in the context of public junior high schools in Indonesia.

3. Empirical Significance

This research will provide empirical insights for researchers regarding teaching English to students with ASD and its challenges and strategies within a regular school setting.