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**Teaching English towards the Hearing-  
Impaired Students**  
(A Teacher's Lived Experience)

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**Abstract:** The EFL teaching is challenging. Moreover, teaching English towards the hearing-impaired students (hereafter HIS) must have its own uniqueness because of the greater challenges. The exploration in this phenomenological study goes with the teacher's lived experience in teaching English especially vocabulary towards the HIS. Telling narratively of the teacher's lived experience in teaching English towards the HIS is the purpose of this research. The descriptions go on the teacher's understanding, belief, feeling, intention, and action which are elaborated by the purpose of the teaching, the materials, the technique, and the achievement. According to the findings, the purposes of teaching vocabulary are to enrich their vocabulary mastery and to prove that the HIS can learn language. The teacher can only teach simple words because it takes time and lots of efforts. Visualization is the best teaching technique ever for the HIS because it helps better memorization since it gives emotional feeling for them. In conclusion, the HIS can learn simple vocabulary. Visualization helps them memorizing words better.

**Keywords:** *Hearing-impaired students, vocabulary teaching, visualization*

## INTRODUCTION

The EFL teaching is very challenging because the students do not accustomed to the target language. In order to make the students get accustomed to the new language,

they have to be taught vocabulary. Learning new language means learning the vocabulary and grammar (Harmer, 2001). In line with the previous theory, teaching vocabulary is important to teach English. Teaching English towards the hearing students is common. In contrast, teaching English towards the hearing-impaired students or *siswa tunarungu* (hereafter is called as HIS) must have its own uniqueness because of the greater challenges rather than teaching it towards the hearing one. The teacher must strive very hard to deal with the spelling, pronunciation, and meaning. What is supposed to be a simple teaching becomes complicated.

The HIS is separated from the hearing class by their hearing loss. The disability to receive several stimuli especially by their sense of hearing is an appropriate description by Somantri (2007) to describe the condition of the HIS. Nevertheless, another study from Marshack (2010) shows that linguistic information through nonverbal materials such as objects or pictures in memory can be retained. This study gives clue that there is a possibility that they can learn English. However, teaching it to the HIS is not easy. The teacher must have big obstacles to cope with the hearing gap to convey the words and its meaning. My previous study finds a delicate problem that the teacher has to deal with especially in conveying the meaning because the HIS have mastered a very limited vocabulary (Setyawan, 2013).

The challenges in teaching English towards the HIS are the concern of this research. Telling narratively of the teacher's lived experience in teaching English towards the HIS is the purpose of this research. The descriptions go on the teacher's understanding, belief, feeling, intention, and action which are elaborated by the purpose of the teaching, the materials, the technique, and the achievement. Those teacher's experiences become her lived experience which are going to be described narratively.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Teaching the HIS**

Hearing impairment is the condition where the students are losing their hearing ability significantly. It is the condition that they cannot hear sound less than 70 decibels (Widiyanto, 2008). This term is the special classification for educational purposes which

have been made by International Standard Organization to classify the HIS based on the level of the hearing-loss. As the comparison, normal hearing person can hear the sound between 20-30 decibels. In contrast, the HIS cannot. In the daily school life, their speech is hard to be understood by the teacher. Furthermore, they have difficulty to pronounce simple words. Sign language and gestures are the bridge of the grasped meaning in communication between teacher and the HIS.

Having HIS does not stop the teacher to teach English to them. Recent study shows that vocabulary can be remembered better by the HIS if it is presented with an emotional component (Kaczmarek in Zysk and Kontra, 2016). Theoretically, it means the HIS can still learn English. Another study shows that visualizing is the most effective way to teach ESL to deaf and hard of hearing students (Beata in Zysk and Kontra, 2016). In line with this study, Setyawan (2013) finds that visualization is important to help the HIS understand vocabulary. The triangulation of this importance is going to be discussed in the conclusion.

## **2. Lived Experience**

Lived experience is the essence of life experience. Referring to (Manen 1990), having lived experience means having reflexive awareness and immediate possessing in some senses which have become objective in thought; it does not confront as something perceived or represented. According to this, different people may react/ think differently even though they are facing similar situation. In relation with the English teaching towards the HIS, the teacher must have her lived experience since she has been teaching these kinds of students for three years. Another qualification for determining the subject is the educational background must be bachelor in English.

The subject of this research is has been chosen among the teachers. Those qualifications meet perfectly to the lived experience that covers two senses, namely past event and present event (Bradley, 2002). Three years of teaching and the educational background represent the past event. Meanwhile, the perceptions towards the purpose of

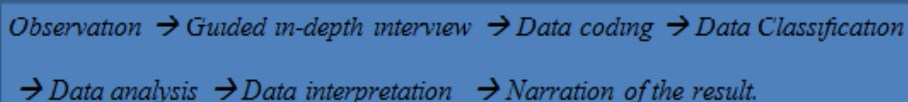
the teaching, the materials, the technique, and the achievement represent the present event. These are the requirements of having lived experience.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The framing of the teacher's lived experience in this study captures the teacher's understanding, belief, feeling, intention, and action which are elaborated by the purpose of the teaching, the materials, the technique, and the achievement. The subject of this study was chosen through purposive sampling. According to Lavrakas (2011) purposive sample refers to expert sample. The subject was considered expert because of her educational background and teaching experiences.

Lived experience is the manifestation of experienced meaning (Manen, 1990). This research on lived experience is a phenomenological study. In phenomenology, personal experience is the starting point since the description becomes the account of the lived experience (Manen, 1990). In-depth interview collects the personal experience. The interview guideline had been prepared after observation on the HIS, the teachers, and the school environment. The collected data were coded, classified, analyzed, and interpreted based on the teacher's perspective. They sharpen her point of views in setting the goal, choosing the materials, implementing the technique, and targeting the achievement.

The procedure of the research which has been simplified from Setyawan (2013) can be described as follow:



**Figure 1. Procedure of the research**

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Several findings have been found as the result of the research. The first finding is on the teaching. The teacher knows that the HIS can learn language. Otherwise, according to the teacher, many people think that they cannot learn language.

Nevertheless, previous studies show that the HIS can learn English. She has personal interest in teaching vocabulary. She is challenged to prove the HIS are not what many people think of them. So, the purpose of the vocabulary teaching is not only to enrich the HIS curiosity at the things around them. However, teaching them takes lots of time because of their low proficiency to retain language. Their hearing loss sweeps away that competence.

The second finding on the teaching materials, the teacher always realizes that she can only teach simple words because the HIS need to be taught basic life skills such how to tie their shoes, how to go to use the toilet properly, and many more. Since the school hours are limited, the teacher has to be very precise in allocating the time between teaching materials and teaching basic life skills.

The third finding is very interesting because the teacher has learnt that bringing realia in the classroom as a teaching media is very important. It develops better memorization. As the previous studies show, visualization is considered as the best technique to teach the HIS. Bringing realia into the HIS' hands stimulates their emotional feelings because they can touch, feel, and smell it. These students have lost their sense of hearing but the other senses are active.

The last finding concerns on the achievement. Here, the teacher sets a lower target than what is established in the curriculum. However, mastering several simple words such fruits and numbers is considered as a big achievement for both the teacher and the students. The teacher realizes that she needs to treat and love the students like a little child.

## **CONCLUSION**

Considering the HIS needs and abilities, the HIS can learn English but within their standard. Visualization plays the important role to bridge the gap on their hearing loss. Moreover, basic life skills are crucial to be taught because their parents keep feather bedding them. It blocks them to learn new things. If they never try they will never learn.

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