

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities requires a structured approach that addresses their cognitive and emotional needs. These learners often struggle with memory, attention, and abstract thinking, making simplified and adaptive instruction essential. Methods such as co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and the use of visual media help bridge comprehension gaps and support engagement. Computers enhance motivation and enthusiasm to learn, especially when paired with tools like text-to-speech and multimedia.<sup>1</sup> In inclusive classrooms, such strategies not only improve understanding but also build confidence and participation. Therefore, adaptive and student-centered teaching is key to meaningful English learning for students with intellectual disabilities.

Educating students with special needs, especially those with intellectual impairments, requires not just academic adjustments but also emotional sensitivity. These students often have limited attention spans, lower working memory capacity, and difficulty in abstract reasoning. Therefore, instruction should not only be simplified but also engaging and multisensory. Teaching English to children with special needs must be highly interactive, including singing, playing, and drawing to

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<sup>1</sup> Anastasia-Kassiani Praskidou et al., "The Effect of Greek Traditional Dances, Songs, and Game-Based Activities on Anxiety and English Learning At School in Students With Intellectual Disability," *European Journal of Special Education Research* 10, no. 1 (2024): 102–16, <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejse.v10i1.5170>.

maintain their focus.<sup>2</sup> Thus, tailoring classroom activities to students' unique cognitive and behavioral profiles plays a key role in promoting language acquisition and retention.

Effective teaching strategies not only impact students' academic development but also significantly influence their affective domains such as motivation, confidence, and participation. These elements are particularly important for students with intellectual disabilities, who may experience repeated failures or social stigma, lowering their self-esteem. Greek traditional dances, songs, and game-based activities, not only improved English learning but also “significantly decreased anxiety” among students with intellectual disabilities.<sup>3</sup> Focusing on emotional and psychological factors alongside academic content helps foster a more holistic and positive learning experience for special needs students.

Based on the preliminary study conducted through interviews with several English teachers at the high school level, it was found that students with intellectual disabilities commonly face difficulties in several key areas of English language learning. According to the teachers interviewed, approximately **23%** of students struggle significantly with pronunciation, while around **54%** have difficulties in writing coherent sentences. Furthermore, **23%** of students reportedly have a limited vocabulary repertoire, which impacts their ability to comprehend and use English effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> Sabina A. Nowak, 'Teaching English to Children with Special Educational Needs: Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UP, 2020', *Neofilolog*, 3.58 (2022), 257–61.

<sup>3</sup> Praskidou et al., "The Effect of Greek Traditional Dances, Songs, and Game-Based Activities on Anxiety and English Learning At School in Students With Intellectual Disability."

These difficulties largely stem from the cognitive limitations that students with intellectual disabilities experience, which result in slower processing and understanding of information compared to their typically developing peers. Additionally, the lack of exposure to English outside of the classroom further exacerbates these challenges. Teachers emphasized that many students rarely hear or use English in their daily lives, making classroom learning the only real opportunity for them to encounter and practice the language. This limited exposure hampers the overall development of their English language skills.

To address these challenges, the teachers interviewed in this preliminary study suggested targeted instructional strategies. They stressed the importance of repetitive exposure to language, presenting material through a variety of media (multimodal inputs), and providing concrete and visual learning aids such as picture dictionaries or sentence starters. These strategies are expected to help students link word meanings with images or specific contexts, thereby gradually strengthening their comprehension and language use.

With the rapid advancement of educational technology, there is a growing interest in applying data-driven approaches such as Learning Analytics (LA) to monitor and improve learning outcomes for students with disabilities. Learning Analytics can be applied to analyze student learning data and develop more targeted interventions for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Johnny Daniel, 'Achievement Gaps for English Learners with Disabilities', *Learning and Instruction*, 96.November 2024 (2025), 102072.

Hence, technology can offer personalized support through progress tracking, adaptive content delivery, and immediate feedback, creating a more responsive learning environment.

While many studies focus on improving academic performance, fewer explore how to spark learning interest, especially in the context of special schools (SLBs) where students with intellectual disabilities are concentrated. Highlighted the potential of simple yet effective strategies: Read-aloud activities and literal questioning can support comprehension and engagement in students with intellectual disabilities. This suggests that maintaining student interest must be as much a priority as teaching content, especially when attention and motivation are fragile.

Traditional research tends to emphasize instructional tools without fully considering how these methods interact with students' emotional needs. Interactive and direct methods were the most effective instructional procedures for teaching adaptive skills to students with intellectual disabilities.<sup>5</sup> Thus, engagement and affective response should be at the center of instructional design to foster not just knowledge acquisition but also emotional security and motivation.

Despite curricular reforms and inclusive education mandates, many special schools continue to struggle with low engagement levels in English learning. A major systemic barrier: “many students with disabilities have not yet fully benefited from digital learning approaches due to limitations in learning data accessibility”.<sup>6</sup> This indicates that

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<sup>5</sup> Hayford Kwame Ampadu, “University of Cape Coast,” no. November (2017): 9–10.

<sup>6</sup> Gemma Testerink and others, ‘Snoezelen in People with Intellectual Disability or Dementia: A Systematic Review’, *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*, 5.August (2023), 100152.

technical innovations must be accompanied by structural improvements to ensure equal access and utility across different educational settings.

There is still no unified agreement on the best teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities. Some researchers advocate for visual and kinesthetic methods, while others support verbal and repetitive approaches. Teachers must adjust their methods according to students' interests and traits in order to maintain motivation.<sup>7</sup> Thus, teaching must be dynamic and flexible, continuously evolving in response to individual learner feedback and contextual demands.

This research aims to analyze English language teaching strategies designed to enhance learning interest among students with intellectual disabilities, particularly at SKH Harapan Bunda. Positive reinforcement and effective classroom management can significantly impact the motivation of students with disabilities.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, structured classroom routines, along with praise and goal-setting, can create a secure and encouraging environment that fosters student enthusiasm.

In contrast to prior studies that focus solely on instructional tools or techniques, this research emphasizes the integration of affective and motivational aspects. Variety in instructional strategies helps maintain student engagement and prevents boredom.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, teachers must maintain diversity in instructional design through games, stories, music, and hands-on tasks to keep learners involved and emotionally invested.

Ultimately, this research is expected to serve as a practical reference for educators, institutions, and policymakers in enhancing English

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<sup>7</sup> Testerink et al.

<sup>8</sup> Testerink et al.

<sup>9</sup> Ampadu, "University of Cape Coast."



- The Red Cluster focuses on children's education, autism spectrum disorder, inclusive education, and teaching. This cluster shows attention to inclusive education practices and children with special needs.
- The Blue Cluster covers reading, writing, special education, and disorders, which are relevant to the topics of reading skills and learning disorders.
- The Green Cluster illustrates the linkages between artificial intelligence, higher education, systematic literature review, and impact, signifying technological trends in higher education.
- The Yellow cluster relates to instructional methods, systematic review, and effectiveness, indicating a focus on teaching methods and strategy effectiveness.

This mapping illustrates that instructional strategies, inclusive education, and writing skills are frequently discussed and strongly connected in existing literature. Thus, this study aims to explore in greater depth the implementation of English writing teaching strategies to enhance learning interest among students with intellectual impairments, contributing to the advancement of effective and inclusive instructional practices.

## **1.2 Identification of the Study**

Based on the background of the study, the problems faced by students in learning English writing can be identified as follows:

1. Many students with intellectual impairments show a lack of interest in learning English writing due to difficulties in understanding vocabulary, constructing sentences, and organizing their ideas coherently.

2. English teachers at special needs schools often struggle to select and implement effective writing instruction strategies that align with students' cognitive abilities and literacy levels.
3. There is a lack of sufficient teaching materials and writing-focused media tailored specifically for students with intellectual impairments, which results in repetitive, less engaging writing activities.
4. The absence of research-based best practices in English writing instruction for students with intellectual impairments leads to inconsistent teaching methods and varied learning outcomes across different special schools.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the identification of the study above, the researcher proposes the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that influence the learning interest in English writing among students with intellectual impairments at the senior high school level of SKH Harapan Bunda?
2. What English writing teaching strategies are applied by teachers to enhance learning interest among students with intellectual impairments at the senior high school level of SKH Harapan Bunda?

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

In accordance with the problem statements, this research aims to:

1. Identify the factors that influence students' interest in learning English writing at the senior high school level of SKH Harapan Bunda.

2. Analyze the teaching strategies used by English teachers to enhance the writing interest of students with intellectual impairments at SKH Harapan Bunda.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to provide valuable insights and contributions for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the field of special education, particularly in the area of English writing instruction.

1. This research will help teachers understand the key factors affecting learning interest in English writing and provide them with practical, adaptive strategies to increase students' engagement.
2. By implementing the recommended writing strategies, students will benefit from more interactive and individualized learning experiences that can foster their confidence and writing skills.
3. The findings can serve as a guideline for schools to design inclusive and student-centered writing curricula that accommodate learners with intellectual impairments.
4. Parents may also benefit from this study by gaining awareness of effective writing support strategies, thus enabling them to assist their children's learning process at home more effectively.

### **1.6 Previous Studies**

To support this study, several previous studies have been reviewed to understand the context of English writing instruction for students with intellectual impairments and the strategies used to improve their learning interest. These studies serve not only as a theoretical basis but also as a comparative framework that underlines the relevance and urgency of the current research. By analyzing different perspectives, methods, and findings

from past research, this study positions itself within a broader academic discourse on inclusive language education and differentiated teaching.

The first relevant study is conducted by **Setiawan (2020)**, who investigated the use of **picture series as a visual aid** to enhance narrative writing abilities in students with special needs. The study, conducted in a special education classroom setting, found that the integration of sequential images into writing lessons provided a structured and engaging stimulus for students with intellectual impairments. These students, who typically face challenges in organizing ideas and maintaining coherence in their writing, were better able to construct sentences and develop stories when guided by visual cues. Setiawan's findings highlight the importance of visual scaffolding in reducing cognitive load and making the writing process more manageable. The implication for current research is clear: integrating visual materials such as picture series can be an effective tool in English writing instruction, especially when the goal is to increase clarity, motivation, and engagement among learners with cognitive limitations.

The second study, carried out by **Lestari & Pramudita (2021)**, focuses on the implementation of **multisensory learning approaches** in inclusive English classrooms. Their findings revealed that engaging students through multiple sensory pathways—such as combining visual (pictures, colors), auditory (songs, verbal instructions), and kinesthetic (movement-based activities) resulted in significantly improved engagement and writing performance. For students with intellectual impairments, who may process information differently and require repeated, varied exposure to new material, this approach proved beneficial. The researchers argue that multisensory learning not only strengthens comprehension and memory retention but also reduces boredom and anxiety related to academic tasks,

particularly in writing. Furthermore, their study noted increased classroom participation and a more positive attitude toward English writing tasks among students with special needs. This aligns with the objectives of the current research, which aims to explore how adaptive and interactive teaching strategies can foster sustained interest in writing activities.

The third study reviewed is from **Rahayu (2019)**, who explored the relationship between **task simplification and student motivation** in the context of English writing instruction for learners with intellectual disabilities. Her qualitative research emphasized that students exhibited higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm when writing tasks were designed to match their individual cognitive abilities and personal experiences. By simplifying language, reducing the number of writing steps, and incorporating familiar topics such as family, hobbies, or school activities, teachers could lower the affective filter and allow students to feel more confident in expressing themselves. Rahayu also found that personalization of writing prompts led to greater emotional connection with the task, making the learning experience more meaningful. This is particularly important in special education, where emotional and behavioral factors can strongly influence learning outcomes. The study provides substantial support for the present research, which seeks to identify which instructional adaptations especially in writing most effectively stimulate student interest and encourage continuous participation.

Collectively, these studies highlight various effective strategies visual support, multisensory instruction, and task personalization that have been shown to improve writing performance and engagement in learners with intellectual impairments. While each study offers valuable insights, they also reveal a gap in the specific examination of these strategies at the senior high

school level, especially within formal institutional settings like SKH Harapan Bunda. Therefore, the current study intends to fill this research gap by focusing on real-world teaching practices and their impact on students' interest in English writing.

### **1.7 Organization of Writing**

This thesis is systematically structured to present a comprehensive analysis of English writing teaching strategies aimed at increasing the learning interest of students with intellectual impairments.

#### **a. Chapter I: Introduction**

This chapter outlines the background of the study, research problems, research questions, objectives, significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and the thesis structure.

#### **b. Chapter II: Literature Review**

This chapter provides an overview of related theories on English writing instruction, learning interest in special education, previous relevant studies, and the conceptual framework that guides the research.

#### **c. Chapter III: Research Methodology**

This chapter explains the research design, research setting, participants, data collection instruments, techniques of data gathering, and methods of data analysis.

#### **d. Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion**

This chapter presents the research findings and discusses the results in relation to the research questions, supporting theories, and previous studies.

#### **e. Chapter V: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This final chapter summarizes the key findings, outlines the

implications, identifies limitations, and provides recommendations for future research and practical applications in the field of inclusive English writing education.