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ALIGNING RECOUNT TEXT INSTRUCTION WITH THE EMANCIPATED CURRICULUM: INCLUSIVE EFL STRATEGIES FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study explores the alignment of English recount text modules with the Emancipated Curriculum and investigates the instructional strategies and assistive support employed in inclusive EFL classrooms for visually impaired learners. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through document analysis and classroom observation at a special needs school. The findings indicate that the learning modules generally adhere to the principles of flexibility, inclusivity, and student-centered learning, though some elements require refinement to better promote collaboration and higher-order thinking. Instructional strategies such as Discovery Learning and multisensory input were implemented, alongside assistive technologies like screen readers and Braille resources, which supported the development of receptive skills. However, challenges were found in resource availability, teacher training, and integration of assistive tools. Student responses revealed increased engagement and progress when inclusive and adaptive strategies were applied. These findings highlight the need for continued curriculum improvement, enhanced teacher preparation, and institutional support to ensure equitable EFL learning experiences for blind students.

Keywords: Emancipated Curriculum, Visually Impaired Learners, Recount Text, Inclusive Education

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's Emancipated Curriculum *(Kurikulum Merdeka)* represents a transformative shift in the national education system, aiming to foster flexibility, inclusivity, and student-centered learning (Haleem et al., 2022). This curriculum was introduced in response to the growing need for adaptive and modern approaches that address the diverse needs of students. Central to this framework is differentiated instruction, which allows teachers to tailor content, methods, and assessments to accommodate varying learning abilities and preferences (Keengwe & Bhargava, 2014). Particularly in language education, the curriculum encourages the integration of digital tools, multimedia, and learner autonomy, supporting equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities (Bozalek et al., 2013).

Inclusive education within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context is especially critical for learners with visual impairments, who often encounter significant barriers due to the visual nature of conventional language instruction (Wong, 2016). These students rely heavily on auditory and tactile inputs, making the development of receptive skills—listening and reading—both essential and uniquely challenging (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2017). Assistive technologies such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, and Braille materials play a crucial role in providing access to learning materials and fostering student independence (Lacka & Wong, 2021). However, the implementation of inclusive practices in EFL classrooms remains uneven, often constrained by limited teacher

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training, inadequate resources, and lack of curriculum alignment (Tlili et al., 2021). Addressing these issues is vital to ensuring that all students, regardless of physical ability, receive equitable and meaningful language learning experiences.

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) poses unique challenges for blind learners, particularly in developing receptive skills such as listening and reading. Traditional EFL instruction heavily relies on visual materials—textbooks, worksheets, and visual cues—which are often inaccessible to students with visual impairments (Pacheco et al., 2018). Consequently, these learners depend predominantly on auditory and tactile inputs to receive language exposure. While listening becomes the primary mode for acquiring linguistic input, reading through Braille or audio formats demands a higher level of cognitive effort and specialized support (Hersh, 2018). The lack of accessible learning resources and appropriate instructional adaptations may hinder students' comprehension, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency (Lacka & Wong, 2021).

To overcome these barriers, the integration of assistive support systems has become increasingly essential in inclusive EFL settings. These tools offer alternative pathways for blind learners to access language input, supporting both independence and deeper engagement with learning materials (Evans & Nation, 2013). Within the framework of inclusive education and the Emancipated Curriculum, assistive solutions enable educators to deliver instruction in ways that align with diverse learner needs, particularly in fostering auditory and tactile language processing. However, the successful implementation of such supports requires not only adequate infrastructure but also teacher readiness and pedagogical adaptation to ensure that these resources are effectively integrated into classroom practice (Tlili et al., 2021). Without these systemic supports, the promise of equitable language learning for visually impaired students remains difficult to fully realize.

Previous studies have highlighted the critical role of inclusive practices and assistive technologies in supporting English language learning for students with visual impairments. Lintangsari and Emaliana (2020) emphasized the importance of implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) frameworks in EFL classrooms to ensure accessibility, although challenges such as inadequate teacher training and limited resources persist. Fitria (2025) further illustrated how multisensory strategies, including the use of Braille, audio aids, and verbal activities, are essential for visually impaired students, yet the absence of inclusive curricula and lack of support often hinder effective instruction. Supporting this, Susanto and Nanda (2018) found that while students in special schools utilized screen reader technologies like NVDA and JAWS, instructional modifications remained insufficient to fully meet their learning needs. Meanwhile, Talafhah and Bataineh (2025) identified several institutional and technical barriers faced by visually impaired EFL educators when using assistive technology to foster receptive skills, including limited tool availability and lack of systemic support. These studies collectively affirm the potential of inclusive approaches and assistive tools in enhancing language learning, but also reveal the persistent gaps in curriculum alignment, resource provision, and teacher preparedness.

While these studies provide valuable insights into inclusive EFL practices and the use of assistive technology, they generally focus on broader instructional strategies and technological support. Despite growing attention to inclusive education and the use of assistive technology in EFL classrooms, there remains a lack of research that specifically examines how recount text modules align with the principles of the Emancipated Curriculum for blind learners. Most existing studies tend to focus on general accessibility issues or the effectiveness of technological tools in supporting language acquisition, without

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addressing the pedagogical and curricular aspects of specific text types. As a result, there is limited understanding of how instructional materials such as recount texts can be adapted to meet the receptive skill needs of visually impaired students within the framework of a learner-centered and inclusive curriculum.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the alignment of English recount text modules with the Emancipated Curriculum, particularly in supporting the development of receptive skills among visually impaired learners. It also seeks to explore how assistive support is integrated into instructional practices to facilitate listening and reading comprehension. By focusing on both curriculum design and classroom implementation, this research intends to provide insights into how inclusive pedagogical strategies can be effectively realized for blind students in EFL contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how recount text modules aligned with the Emancipated Curriculum are implemented in EFL classrooms for visually impaired learners. This design was chosen for its ability to capture detailed, real-life insights into inclusive teaching practices and the use of assistive technologies in supporting receptive skills such as listening and reading.

Participants included one experienced EFL teacher and five visually impaired students at Pajajaran School, selected through purposive sampling. The teacher was chosen for their expertise in inclusive education, while the students represented various learning experiences under the Emancipated Curriculum. All participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study.

Data were collected through two methods: document analysis and classroom video observations. The document analysis focused on one Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) and accompanying recount text modules, examining their alignment with inclusive curriculum principles. Classroom observations were recorded and transcribed to capture real-time teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, and the use of assistive technologies.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze both documents and observational data. Data were coded to identify key themes such as curriculum alignment, teaching adaptations, accessibility, and student engagement. These themes were then interpreted to assess the effectiveness of inclusive strategies and technological support in developing students' receptive skills.

The study adhered to ethical research principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity. All procedures were conducted with sensitivity to the needs of visually impaired learners, ensuring an inclusive and respectful research environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Alignment of Recount Text Modules with the Emancipated Curriculum

The analysis of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) reveals that it generally aligns with the core principles of the Emancipated Curriculum, which emphasizes inclusivity, flexibility, and student-centered learning. The RPP incorporates key features such as Discovery Learning and inquiry-based methods, which encourage active participation and foster the development of receptive skills among visually impaired learners. For instance, the use of audio-based storytelling enables students to engage with recount texts through listening, which is particularly relevant for learners who rely on auditory input.

Inclusivity is also evident in the RPP through the integration of Braille materials, tactile aids, and audio resources. These adaptations reflect the curriculum's aim to provide equitable access to learning, regardless of physical ability (Siu & Morash, 2014). However, despite these strengths, certain segments of the RPP remain overly reliant on lecture-based instruction, which contrasts with the curriculum's goal of promoting

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autonomous and interactive learning (Tomlinson, 2001).

Another strength of the RPP lies in the clarity and comprehensiveness of its learning objectives. These objectives are specific, measurable, and clearly targeted toward enhancing listening and reading comprehension of recount texts. For example, one objective aims to develop students' ability to identify main ideas and details from audio narratives, aligning well with inclusive and learner-centered practices.

However, some objectives could benefit from further refinement to incorporate more collaborative and critical thinking activities. Peters (2004) argues that inclusive education should not only focus on access and participation but also on promoting intellectual engagement and reflective thinking among all learners, including those with disabilities. Similarly, Kugelmass (2001) highlights that inclusive classroom practices should foster collaborative learning, where students can actively construct knowledge through interaction with peers. He emphasizes that successful inclusive settings are characterized by a culture of shared responsibility, mutual support, and pedagogical practices that encourage problem-solving and co-learning. In this context, while the RPP does include individual listening and reading activities, it lacks sufficient emphasis on peer interaction or collaborative tasks that could stimulate deeper cognitive and social engagement.

In terms of assessment strategies, the RPP effectively integrates both formative and summative methods adapted for visually impaired learners. Oral assessments, for instance, allow students to express understanding without relying on written tests, while Braille-based evaluations provide additional support for independent learning. Yet, some gaps remain in reinforcing higher-order thinking, particularly in the use of more interactive assessment formats.

These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the importance of differentiated instruction and adaptive curriculum for students with visual impairments. Lintangsari and Emaliana (2020) stressed the necessity of integrating frameworks like UDL and Differentiated Instruction to promote accessibility in EFL settings. Similarly, Susanto and Nanda (2018) observed that instructional modifications in special schools were often minimal, despite the availability of assistive technologies. The analyzed RPP in this study goes further by embedding accessible materials and varied instructional strategies directly into the lesson design, reflecting a more intentional and systematic approach to curriculum alignment.

Despite this progress, challenges remain—particularly in balancing teacher-directed and student-centered approaches, and in ensuring that all components of the lesson truly foster interaction, autonomy, and critical engagement. These limitations reflect a broader need for ongoing teacher training and curriculum refinement to ensure full alignment with the inclusive vision of the Emancipated Curriculum.

Instructional Strategies and Assistive Support

Classroom observations revealed that the instructional strategies employed were generally consistent with the approaches outlined in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), particularly Discovery Learning and inquiry-based methods. These strategies were implemented to promote student autonomy and deepen receptive skills through guided exploration of recount texts. For example, during listening activities, students were encouraged to identify main ideas from audio narratives, reflecting the curriculum's emphasis on critical thinking and independent learning. However, deviations were also noted. Teachers occasionally resorted to more direct instruction when students struggled with comprehension, suggesting a need for balance between student exploration and teacher support.

Adaptations in the delivery of instruction were essential to meet the needs of visually impaired students. Tactile aids such as Braille labels and textured maps were employed to

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support conceptual understanding. These were often paired with descriptive verbal explanations, aligning with inclusive pedagogical principles and enhancing engagement through multisensory input (Siu & Morash, 2014). Additionally, teachers modified inquiry-based tasks by incorporating guided questioning techniques, enabling students to develop critical thinking while ensuring the content remained accessible.

Assistive technologies were found to be integral in fostering receptive skills. Screen readers and text-to-speech tools enabled students to access digital materials through auditory input, while Braille displays allowed tactile interaction with text, promoting independent reading and comprehension. These tools supported dual-channel processing, a key component of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which states that information retention is enhanced when delivered through both auditory and tactile.

Despite their effectiveness, the use of assistive technologies was not without limitations. Students encountered technical issues such as software lag and incompatibility with materials, which occasionally disrupted learning. Furthermore, some learners required extended periods to adapt to the tools, and not all teachers felt adequately trained to troubleshoot problems or personalize support. These findings align with previous research by Lintangsari and Emaliana (2020), who reported that teacher readiness and institutional support remain persistent challenges in implementing inclusive EFL instruction.

Discussion of these findings underscores the dual importance of both pedagogy and technology in inclusive classrooms. As emphasized by Haleem et al. (2022), technology integration should complement—not replace—adaptive teaching strategies. Teachers must be empowered through ongoing training to modify instructional pacing, adjust questioning techniques, and provide scaffolded support in tandem with assistive tools. Furthermore, embedding flexibility into lesson planning allows educators to make real-time adjustments based on learners' needs, a critical factor for the success of inclusive education initiatives under the Emancipated Curriculum (Somekh, 2004).

Challenges and Student Responses

Observations revealed that visually impaired students faced various challenges in acquiring receptive skills during English recount text lessons. The primary barrier stemmed from the heavy reliance on visual materials in conventional EFL instruction, such as diagrams and written worksheets, which were inaccessible without adaptation. Although the use of assistive technologies provided significant support, issues such as inconsistent access to resources, technical glitches, and unfamiliarity with tool functions limited their effectiveness. Some students experienced difficulty adjusting to the speed of screen readers, while others struggled to comprehend abstract language features, such as idioms and figurative expressions, even when content was delivered in audio form.

Teachers responded to these issues by modifying their instructional approaches. Strategies included repeating instructions, using simpler vocabulary, and incorporating more pauses during audio playback to aid comprehension. While these accommodations were helpful, their effectiveness varied depending on students' individual learning styles and familiarity with assistive tools. Student engagement was notably higher when lessons integrated multisensory elements, such as text-to-speech apps and Braille materials, but waned during teacher-dominated instruction or repetitive oral drills.

Despite these difficulties, many students demonstrated progress in listening and reading comprehension, particularly in identifying main ideas and recalling details from recount texts. Positive responses were also observed when students were encouraged to explore content independently using accessible materials, suggesting that autonomy played a role in boosting motivation and learning outcomes.

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These findings mirror challenges noted by previous studies, particularly the limited availability of accessible resources and teacher readiness. Pacheco et al. (2018) emphasize that traditional language teaching practices—centered on visual input—exclude learners who depend on auditory and tactile modalities. Moreover, Lacka and Wong (2021) point out that gaps in material accessibility hinder vocabulary growth and overall language acquisition for blind learners. Even though assistive tools such as screen readers and Braille displays can reduce these barriers, their integration into instructional routines requires teacher proficiency, which remains a persistent issue (Tlili et al., 2021).

Student responses to assistive technologies also reflect broader findings from Talafhah and Bataineh (2025), who reported that visually impaired EFL educators encountered similar obstacles related to tool compatibility, speed control, and institutional support. Their study underscores the need for technical consistency and training to enhance user experience and instructional outcomes. Additionally, as noted by Alemdag and Cagiltay (2018), successful learning through assistive technology hinges on dual-channel processing—balancing tactile or auditory inputs with meaningful content delivery strategies.

Ultimately, while the integration of assistive tools and adaptive instruction fostered improvement in receptive skills, the overall success was moderated by infrastructural, pedagogical, and personal readiness factors. Addressing these areas through targeted teacher training, better access to inclusive resources, and learner-centered adjustments remains crucial for realizing the full potential of inclusive EFL instruction for visually impaired students.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study shed light on the practical implementation of inclusive English instruction for visually impaired learners within the framework of the Emancipated Curriculum. The analyzed RPP demonstrated a commendable effort to incorporate flexible, student-centered strategies, though some instructional elements—such as peer collaboration and critical thinking—remain underdeveloped. Teachers adopted a variety of adaptive methods and utilized assistive technologies that proved effective in supporting receptive skills, yet their efforts were often constrained by limited training and inconsistent access to resources. Despite these obstacles, students showed meaningful engagement and progress, particularly when instruction allowed for autonomy and multimodal interaction. These findings emphasize the ongoing need to refine curriculum materials, provide targeted professional development, and enhance institutional support to ensure that inclusive education for blind students in EFL contexts becomes more than a policy ideal, but a classroom reality.

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