



Regular Class vs. Special Class: How Can They Differ in English Achievement and Technology Usage?

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Abstract: Providing educational programs provides specific opportunities for better student progress. MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali offers two kinds of programs that can be chosen according to the wishes, abilities, and goals. The two programs are the regular class program and the special class program. These two programs can highlight their technology usage and English learning achievement, considering they come from different programs. Therefore, this study aims to find out whether there are differences in English learning achievement or not between the two programs. This study uses a mixed method; statistically collecting and analyzing the students' final semester tests results, and interviewing the teacher and students to clarify some data. Besides, an additional interview investigates further technology usage during English learning. The data shows differences in English learning achievement and technology usage between students from regular and special class programs. The research is expected to be limited to find the differences between the two classes and to contribute ideas to all related education implementers. Ultimately, regular class students will have English skills that are not much different from students in special classes.

Keywords: English learning achievement; regular classes; special program classes; technology usage.

A. Introduction

The provision of a particular class program is one phenomenon promoted by several school institutions. The class program effectively develops students' academic achievement above average Fira et al. (2020) state that the students' ability can increase after entering a special class program with implemented activities. It is similar to MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali which provides several programs; there are the regular and special class programs. The special class program in MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali is divided into two: Science and the tahfidz special class program.

Kustanti & Prihmayadi (2017) states that English is the official language used by Commonwealth countries and is widely understood and used. As we know that English has developed into a world language, the development of the English language also

contributes to the learning and teaching process. [Lina \(2019\)](#) states most English learning situation uses the standard language. The aim is for students to learn a standard language style they can use in the academic context.

For several reasons, English learning achievement between regular and special grade students can experience differences. Students with regular class programs are classified as more heterogeneous, i.e., they have different potentials, talents, and IQs. Meanwhile, the special class is filled with students with an enriched curriculum and additional time following the functional academics. According to Bafadal in [Afiya \(Lastriawati, 2015\)](#), a superior class is a class for students with above-average intelligence in a specific group. It is under the institution that the writer will do the research; it is a special program. Usually, this class is also preferred to participate in various academic competitions as one of the goals of this program. In addition, [Panji \(2016\)](#) states that special programs have a limited number of students and better facilities to support teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

[Panji \(2016\)](#) indicates the differences in learning achievement between the students who come from regular classes and students who come from special classes by looking at the average of their learning results. His research shows that there are also differences in the implementation of learning as well as facilities and infrastructure. [Yunianti & Budiani \(2016\)](#) describe that the superior class had a developed curriculum and additional material on certain subjects. Suhartono and Ngadirun in [Hakim \(2021\)](#) state that the superior class curriculum was enriched with development and improvisation according to the needs and demands of learning. It is very different from the way of regular classroom learning found in schools in general.

Regular and special class students differ in several other aspects. [Santoso & Hidayati \(2021\)](#) state that self-confidence between regular and special class students is different. Special classes, with students who all have high self-confidence, are characterized by: when they are more active in the class, they are not shy to ask questions when allowed to. This condition is different from the regular class. In the regular class, there are children with superior intelligence, students who cannot tend to be silent.

[Muhid & Mukarromah \(2018\)](#) state that parental expectations and academic self-efficacy significantly affect the tendency fear failure in students. When compared between regular and special classes, they conclude that there is no significant difference between parental expectations, academic self-efficacy, and the tendency to fear failure after reviewing between superior and regular class students. Their opinion is slightly contrary to some previous studies.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali is experiencing online learning besides face-to-face learning. [Bahasoan et al. \(2020\)](#) state that some universities in Indonesia have implemented systems technology blended learning or hybrid courses, which are learning processes that integrate online learning and face-to-face learning between lecturers and students. It can be said that since online learning was first considered a flexible solution to allow students access to full-time

education, most Indonesian students from rural and urban locations learn and gain information through online learning (Sari & Oktaviani, 2021; Putro, 2020).

Besides, rapid changes brought on by scientific and technological advancements, notably information technology, describe the present era. Numerous new teaching and learning techniques, including e-learning and blended learning, were made possible by these advancements in science and technology. E-learning is regarded as one of the most cutting-edge teaching strategies and has several benefits (Oweis, 2018). These benefits include its capacity to address the issue of knowledge explosion and rising demand for education.

The pervasive transformation of Covid-19 has significantly impacted all facets of human life. Thus, online learning is currently one of the most popular teaching methods used by almost all teachers and students around the country (Marsudi, 2021). Many websites can help teachers with their classes, such as; web pages, YouTube, google classroom, zoom, and WhatsApp.

Most teachers at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali use WhatsApp and google classroom as learning media. In this Covid-19 epidemic era, WhatsApp Group is a popular choice as an online learning platform. It provides collaborative online learning facilities with various features between teachers and students at home and school, which are easily accessible, reasonably priced, and user-friendly (Lina, 2021; Susilawati & Supriyatno, 2020).

Habibi (2020) shows that online learning has been carried out well by utilizing various learning media so that it is more varied and makes students not bored and understand the material presented faster. The obstacles faced were that some students did not have cell phones, the signal was not reachable, and there was a lack of coordination between students and teachers. He focuses on using WhatsApp group, Google Classroom, and Zoom Meeting as digital platforms used in online learning.

The utilization of online learning facilities is carried out by using several digital platforms which are widely available with various features following the interaction objectives to be achieved. The most frequently used digital platforms in online learning include Whatsapp groups, Google Facilities (Google Classroom, Google Forms, and Google meet), and Zoom Cloud Meetings (Assidiqi & Sumarni, 2020).

In their research, Elisa et al. (2021) shows that most teachers utilize WhatsApp groups as a teaching tool. Because it doesn't require a robust network connection, the teacher views the Whatsapp Group as the most influential media in online learning. Additionally, the teacher clarified that additional online learning tools like Zoom Meeting or Google Classroom would exceed the student's internet allotment. Meanwhile, not all students can afford to purchase several internet quotas.

The research above has not discussed the differences in student achievement in English and technology in online learning in MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali. Therefore, the author put English subjects as the main focus of the research. This study was conducted to prove: (1) whether there is an achievement in learning English between students from regular and special class programs or not; (2) In addition related to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the writer also wants to know whether there

are differences in the use of technology or platforms during online learning. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the school so that the English learning achievement between students from the regular class program and the special class program does not differ too much.

B. Method

This research uses mix method. The researcher conducted this research in May 2022 by digging up several data and pieces of information. The researcher conducted two activities: documentation (quantitative method) and interview sessions (qualitative method) with the English teacher and the representatives (students) from the regular and special class programs. Thus, this research is conducted by 'statistically collecting and analysing the students' final semester tests' results. The quantitative analysis technique will operationalize the formula for comparing independent variables (t-test) for independent samples (uncorrelated) by using SPSS 26. Prerequisite tests that require calculations or tests to be discussed are normality and homogeneity tests. The additional interview investigated further technology usage during English learning to determine what difficulties they experienced during the teaching and learning process.

The samples of this study consisted of two parts: regular class students and special class students. The technique used in sampling is a simple random sampling that can be done by lottery. The samples or part of the population that the writer took in this study were 78 students (with details: 39 students from the regular classes program and 39 students from the special classes program) from 348 students. This sample was taken based on the Yamane formula. The tahfidz special class program students were not included as the samples because the researcher found that they are not much different from the students from regular classes. The tahfidz special class students do not have an additional hour to learn English as special class students do. Thus, there are just regular and science special program students who take part in this research.

The data used in this study is original data, and there is no data manipulation. Thus, the data obtained were analyzed as the actual condition from the beginning. It was also obtained from the curriculum data of MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali. Statistical tests are carried out by including all sample data obtained as a whole and without exception. In addition, there is also respect for human dignity, namely that researchers give freedom to subjects to make choices and are free from the compulsion to participate in research activities. Researchers respect the privacy and confidentiality of research subjects. In addition, researchers carry out this research following research procedures to obtain results that are as useful as possible for research subjects and can be generalized at the population level (beneficence).

C. Result and Discussion

The researcher researched MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali and obtained several data to be used. In [Table 1](#) is a list of eighth-grade students' scores from the report cards of the regular and special class programs in odd semesters in the academic year of 2021/2022.

Table 1. Eighth-grade students' scores

No.	Regular Class Students		Special Class Students	
	Score	Initial	Score	Initial
1	77	SA-1	75	NAM
2	78	SN	92	NAP-1
3	80	NPM	80	KZN
4	77	AAM	86	RZA
5	80	TRAP	77	AS
6	81	AHP	82	ALL
7	77	NCM	76	ANA
8	79	AGS	88	CBCP
9	77	WNS	90	DRA
10	78	RWZZ	84	FAN
11	81	KWKD	79	UDN
12	85	ASA-1	82	NAA
13	75	JKM	86	NMD
14	77	MAP	82	MCK
15	75	SODA	76	AAAF
16	77	SA-2	76	FTF
17	78	AADQ	80	HAN
18	78	SOP	85	NSP-1
19	75	DNR	84	DCYS
20	77	APS	76	IFS
21	75	LP	95	GHKIH
22	78	ASA-2	92	NAP-2
23	75	RJ	80	PNR
24	78	FREE	78	SBK
25	83	TM-1	86	NA
26	80	TM-2	82	VFS
27	77	CRS	80	MNR
28	78	KM	81	RZ
29	77	YA	79	WM
30	77	KNI	88	LRM
31	78	AA-1	83	MFF
32	77	MTP	80	MNJ
33	75	MAK	86	NSP-2
34	77	AA-2	80	ECD
35	81	EPC	80	AFN
36	77	IIF	82	AR
37	79	HLA	77	HAP
38	80	RH	84	PHH
39	80	SPR	88	HI

An Independent t-test is used to test the hypothesis. The independent t-test technique operationalizes the comparison formula for the independent sample variables. Before carrying out this analysis technique, it is necessary to do a prerequisite test; there are normality and homogeneity tests.

To find out whether the data taken is normally distributed or not, it is necessary to do the normality test. The normality test is one of the requirements that must be done before testing the hypothesis using the independent t-test. This study's normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical technique.

The number of Kolmogorov-Smirnov observations in this study is 78. The test shows that the variable has a distribution value of 0.000 which means the data is not normally distributed because the significance value is less than 0.05. The following action is obtaining the unstandardized residual value to normalize the data so that the normality test can be repeated to produce normally distributed data. The unstandardized residual value will be exact, as well as selecting the option of Monte Carlo in the homogeneity test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test at this stage shows a significance value of 0.058. This significant value is more than 0.05, meaning the data is normally distributed.

Before the data is processed, it is necessary to do a homogeneity test first because the samples taken must be completely homogeneous. The homogeneity of variance test is necessary before comparing two or more groups. So that the differences are not caused by differences in the primary data (inhomogeneity of the groups being compared). The test shows that the significance value obtained is 1.000. The significance value obtained is more than 0.05, meaning the data has the same variance.

After the data were tested with the normality and homogeneity tests, the next step was analyzing the data using the independent t-test. In this study, the researcher used the formula for comparing independent variables (t-test). In the t-test, there must be an average or a mean of each variable to be distinguished. This data analysis technique is used to test whether the hypothesis proposed by the researcher will be accepted or vice versa.

Based on the independent t-test, it shows that the significance value obtained is 0.000. The significance value of 0.000 obtained is less than 0.05, meaning there are differences in English learning achievement in the regular and special classes.

The researcher also conducted the interviews to strengthen the research results above. This interview was also conducted to know how the use of the technology in the regular and special class programs during online learning since there was Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews, and the interviews were unstructured. [Sugiyono \(2019\)](#) explains that unstructured interviews are interviews that are free by not using interview guidelines that are arranged systematically and thoroughly. In conducting interviews, the researcher interviewed an English teacher and the students as the representatives from regular and special class program.

From the interviews with the English teacher of the eighth-grade classes, several pieces of information are obtained about the English learning process in regular and special classes program in the odd semester in the academic year of 2021/2022. The

English learning activities combine online and face-to-face learning systems because the Covid-19 pandemic has not been finished perfectly. The series of English learning processes that the English teacher held in the regular and special classes were carried out in a way that is not much different from conveying the material and giving assignments to the students.

The English teacher also states that student learning achievement is strongly influenced by motivation. Motivation is the urge to do something. Motivation can come from the students or their environment, such as the family environment. In addition, the motivation and support of the family also have a significant impact on student learning motivation and academic achievements they get. As delivered by the English teacher at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali, support in the form of parents' attention in motivating their children to learn has different levels. Parents of special class students tend to pay more attention to their children's learning importance. Parents of special class students are more aware of their learning activities, such as accompanying their children continuously in studying particular fields, supporting their children fully to join a competition, etc. Meanwhile, parents of regular class students are also aware of their children's education, but it is more general. Supporting their children's academic achievements in certain fields is not too specific.

In addition, the students' participation in the learning activities among regular and special class students is also different. The percentage of students' participation in taking English lessons in special classes program is 80 %. This percentage is superior to the level of regular students' participation in English learning, which is as much as 50 %. From this information, the writer can describe that the learning motivation of special class students is superior to the learning motivation of the regular class students. Regular class students state that English is easy and enjoyable to learn. Conversely, regular class students tend to consider English subjects as complex because they have to memorize many vocabularies.

The teacher also explained the students' learning facilities' differences between regular and special class programs. In addition to the infrastructure of special class students who are more supportive, there are also differences in the duration of the learning activities. Special class students have an additional hour which does not possess by regular class students for several subjects, such as Mathematics, Natural Science, Indonesian, and English. It is to prepare for the Olympics so that it can be described that special class students will be far more profound in understanding these materials.

Then, relating to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, many teachers used several platforms as online learning media. In MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali, the selection of platforms and online learning media depends on each teacher. Most teachers in MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali used WhatsApp and Google Classroom as the online learning media. Nevertheless, the teacher in the special class program has done online learning by using Google Meet as the learning media. The implementation of online learning with Google Meet aims to deliver learning materials well so that students' levels of understanding can be obtained optimally.

On the other hand, Google Meet itself has never been used in online learning in regular classes. The regular class students interacted more often through WhatsApp in the online learning session. Thus, it can be seen that there are also differences in the selection of platforms as the media in online learning between the students from the regular and special class programs.

1. Students' English Learning Achievement

The analysis used in comparing learning achievement in this study is the independent t-test. This analysis technique aims to determine whether there is a difference in the mean between the two independent groups or not, where the data sources come from different subjects and are not paired. Normality and homogeneity tests need to be done before doing an independent t-test. It is because in conducting an independent t-test, the data must first be normally distributed and homogeneous. The normality test shows that the significance value obtained is 0.058, which is higher than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, so the data obtained is normally distributed. Then, in the homogeneity test, it can be seen that the significance value obtained is 1.000, which is higher than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, so the data obtained have the same variance.

After confirming that the data is normally distributed and has the same variance, the next step is to do the independent t-test. According to the independent t-test, it can be seen that the significance of the independent t-test has a value of 0.000, where this value is less than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$, then the hypothesis is accepted; namely, there is a difference in learning achievement between the eighth-grade students in the regular and special class programs in English subjects at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali in the academic year of 2021/2022.

The results of the interviews also show that there are differences between regular and special class students, which then causes differences in English learning achievement. The difference in facilities in the form of additional hours is one of the factors that cause English learning achievement for regular and special class students to be different. Special classes with additional hours will be superior in understanding the material compared to regular students. Students' self-confidence in-class participation will certainly affect students' understanding ability, so there can be differences in learning competencies between regular and special class students. Likewise, the expectations of parents influence students' learning motivation. Based on interviews that have been carried out with English teachers, parents of special class students have higher expectations of the success of their children's learning.

This study aligns with the comparative study of student achievement in special and regular classes by [Panji \(2016\)](#). Students from regular and special class programs have differences in learning achievement. Some of them are caused by differences in facilities of learning activities. This is evident in the students' English learning achievement in higher special classes because they get additional hours for several subjects, including English. Additional hours of study that regular class students do not obtain certainly make their level of understanding of the material lower than the level

of understanding of particular class students, which is much higher and more profound.

The results of the interviews, which were also used in this study, are also in line with a comparative analysis of self-confidence in students' confidence in special and regular classes by [Santoso & Hidayati \(2021\)](#). This research shows differences in students' confidence in special and regular classes. They state that the academic environment and atmosphere greatly influence students' self-confidence. The difference in treatment in special and regular classes in creating an academic atmosphere in the learning process is the cause of differences in students' confidence levels. This is also seen in the results of interviews conducted by the researcher. The participation of special class students is higher than that of regular class students.

Furthermore, this study is slightly contrary to the research on the effect of parental expectations and academic self-efficacy on superior and regular grade students by [Muhid & Mukarromah \(2018\)](#). Their research shows that parental expectations and academic self-efficacy can predict the tendency of fear of failure in students. However, it does not prove a difference in parental expectations, academic self-efficacy, and a tendency to fear failure between superior and regular class program students. Their research is slightly contrary to the results obtained by the writer through the interview process. The expectations between parents of regular and special class students are indicated by their high and low awareness of their children's learning development will significantly affect the student achievement outcomes.

2. Technology as Online Learning Medium

Many technologies are engaged in education, one of which is an online application or platform that can be used as a distance learning medium (online) in several educational institutions worldwide. In response to the spread of Covid-19, MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali applies blended learning. In online learning, most teachers at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali use WhatsApp and google classroom as online learning media, as well as in the implementation of learning English. This situation is slightly contrary to research conducted by [Elisa et al. \(2021\)](#) which shows that WhatsApp is the only media that is often used. They mention that Google Classroom is one of the platforms that is not often used in learning.

Teachers at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali assess Whatsapp groups as a platform that is easy to use and affordable in various aspects, such as easy to use, and the quota used is relatively low compared to other platforms. Whatsapp groups are the primary interaction medium between teachers and students at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali. In addition, Google Classroom is used to deliver learning material to make it more varied. Anyone can access or download material that has been posted on Google Classroom. This situation is in line with [Habibi \(2020\)](#) that WhatsApp group and google classroom are often used as the online learning platform. This opinion is also supported by [Assidiqi & Sumarni \(2020\)](#), which show that Whatsapp and Google Classroom falls into the digital platforms most often used in online learning. As experienced by students and teachers at MTs Negeri 1 Boyolali, online learning is carried out using WhatsApp

groups and google classroom as a medium for delivering materials and assignments. These two platforms are equally used by both students and teachers in regular and special classes. WhatsApp group and Google Classroom convey material, assignments, and questions. Both platforms have the advantage of delivering more material in a long time. Those two platforms seem one-way, so students experience a decrease in interest in learning. Besides, zoom meetings are used for practical learning because they can interact directly between teachers and students. However, zoom meetings are more expensive because the required quota is larger. On several occasions, virtual meetings in the form of Google Meet have been carried out by students and special class teachers. Several obstacles in the form of signals and quotas make students and regular class teachers not use google meet or zoom meetings. Thus, it can be seen that there are differences in using the platform as an online learning medium between students and teachers in regular and special classes.

Based on the things that the researchers found above, the results of this study are expected to be taken into consideration for parties engaged in education to equalize the learning achievement of students from regular class programs and students from special class programs so that students from regular classes do not differ too much from special programs students.

E. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis on the value of student learning outcomes from regular and special class programs in odd semesters in the academic year of 2021/2022, it is found that (1) there are differences in learning achievement between students from regular classes and special classes. (2) Then, by looking at the results of the interviews that have been carried out, it is also can be seen that there are differences between regular and special classes in using technology as an online learning medium.

This research is expected to contribute to schools and teachers to improve the quality of student achievement in regular classes by developing materials and tools that can be used in learning activities. In addition, teachers need to try again to support parents of regular class students about the importance of supporting their children in learning activities at school. Then, regular class students also need to have high enthusiasm in participating in learning activities so that their learning achievement is not much different from the learning achievement of special class students. Thus, the results of this study are also expected to contribute to other researchers who will carry out similar research with different variables and locations.

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