

Communication Methods of Muhammadiyah Gamping Special School (SLB) Teachers In Delivering Material to Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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ABSTRACT (10PT)

Keywords

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Children with intellectual disabilities often face difficulties in communication and learning due to weaker intellectual functioning. SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping, located in the Sleman district of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, is one of the special schools in Jogja dedicated to educating children with special needs. The use of various communication methods in learning is essential for fostering effective teacher-student interactions. This qualitative descriptive research was conducted using interviews to collect data. The study found that Muhammadiyah Gamping Special School employs repetitive communication methods, supported by media tools such as Assmblr Edu, to enhance teaching and learning activities.

1. Introduction

Children with special needs (ABK) are individuals who experience limitations in various aspects of life, including physical, mental, intellectual, social, and emotional domains. These limitations can adversely affect their growth and development compared to their peers. This concept is regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, Number 10 of 2011, which provides a policy framework for addressing the needs of ABK. This policy recognizes 12 different categories of children with special needs, including those with visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders, multiple disabilities, learning difficulties, communication disorders, and children with exceptional intelligence and/or special talents. Careful investigation and management of children within these various categories are essential to ensure appropriate and inclusive support for their growth and development (Gumelar, 2021).

Children with intellectual disabilities generally face significant difficulties in intellectual functioning, which includes challenges in communication and learning. These children often struggle to understand instructions and acquire new knowledge, impacting their social interactions and their ability to engage in conventional educational settings (Setiawan, 2020). Despite their limitations, children with intellectual disabilities possess abilities that can be optimized to help them navigate daily life. The optimization of these abilities is highly dependent on the role and support of parents (Harmuna, 2020). Early detection of disabilities and prompt intervention can mitigate the adverse effects and challenges associated with these disabilities. In the context of education and care for

children with intellectual disabilities, it is crucial to adopt appropriate strategies to facilitate their communication and learning, while providing a supportive environment for their optimal growth and development.

An optimal environment for children with special needs, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, can be fostered both within families and educational settings. Special Schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa, or SLB) offer educational opportunities tailored to the unique needs of children with special needs. These schools cater to various categories of disabilities and employ specialized teaching aids, strategies, and services to effectively address the needs of their students (Nasution et al., 2022).

One such institution in Jogja is SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping, located in the Sleman district of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping caters to children with special needs across several categories, including visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, moderate disabilities, severe disabilities, HIV & AIDS, and autism. The school currently has 40 students, 17 of whom have intellectual disabilities. As the only SLB under the auspices of Muhammadiyah in Sleman district, SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping emphasizes both academic and religious education. This institution is one of Muhammadiyah's charitable ventures in the field of education for children with special needs..

No	Wilayah	%	Total Sekolah
1	Kec. Berbah	100%	2
2	Kec. Cangkringan	100%	1
3	Kec. Depok	100%	5
4	Kec. Gamping	100%	2
5	Kec. Godean	100%	1
6	Kec. Kalasan	100%	2
7	Kec. Minggir	100%	1
8	Kec. Mlati	100%	1
9	Kec. Moyudan	100%	1
10	Kec. Ngaglik	100%	5
11	Kec. Ngemplak	100%	1
12	Kec. Pakem	100%	2
13	Kec. Prambanan	100%	1
14	Kec. Seyegan	100%	1
15	Kec. Sleman	100%	1
16	Kec. Tempel	100%	2
17	Kec. Turi	100%	1
Total		100.00%	30

Figure 1. Sleman Regency SLB data (dapo.kemdikbud.go.id)

Educators at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping often encounter challenges in teaching communication skills to students with intellectual disabilities. Teachers recognize that their methods have limitations in effectively communicating with these students, who typically struggle to comprehend verbal instructions and lesson content. This necessitates a more creative and adaptive communication approach (Hanun, 2013). Due to their limitations in memory retention, students with intellectual disabilities require repeated communication from educators.

The method of repetition in communication involves reiterating information in various contexts to reinforce understanding (Pakula, 2019). Repetition can enhance student engagement and participation in both classroom and conversational settings, making it a viable strategy for instruction. Atoofi (2018) supports this, demonstrating how repetition can facilitate teaching and learning. For students with intellectual disabilities, repetitions can occur immediately or after a delay, and may involve repeating entire phrases or parts thereof. This practice can aid in mastering multiword speech, as evidenced by its frequent use among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Repetition in oral communication involves consciously or unconsciously producing repeated utterances—words, phrases, or clauses—multiple times, which can reflect grammatical and lexical relationships (Karim & Baa, 2022).

In addition to repetition, employing diverse communication methods that involve more visual interaction, the use of concrete and visual learning aids, and educational technology can significantly enhance the effectiveness and interactivity of teaching. Teachers must also develop their ability to build strong relationships with students with intellectual disabilities to create a supportive and motivating learning environment. Through these efforts, educators can better address the communication and learning challenges faced by students with intellectual disabilities, thereby providing more effective support for their optimal development and progress (Suprayitno, 2020).

One needs to note that teachers at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping face challenges in delivering material to students with intellectual disabilities and have chosen to use the Assemblr Edu application as a learning aid. This application supports teachers in developing more inclusive and engaging learning methods for these students. Assemblr Edu's interactive visual features, such as 3D animations and images accessible through digital devices, allow teachers to present information in a visually appealing and effective manner, capturing students' attention (Sagirani, 2015). Additionally, this application offers flexibility in presenting learning materials, enabling teachers to tailor their methods to the needs and understanding levels of students with intellectual disabilities.

Relevant studies have informed this research. For instance, Gina Gantini Evarahma's study, "Communication for Children with Special Needs," found that communication with children with special needs must be tailored to their specific challenges. Special treatment and services, including non-verbal aids such as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), are essential to meet their communication needs (Gantini et al., 2022). Similarly, Saihu's research, "Communication of Educators to Children with Special Needs in Special Schools Ash-Syifa Ban," highlighted the importance of individualized communication strategies due to varying abilities and understanding levels among students. An individual approach that acknowledges each child's characteristics is crucial (Saihu, 2019). Another study by Nuryani SP, Purwanti Hadisiwi, and Kismiyati El Karimah, titled "Teacher Communication Patterns in Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Vocational High Schools," identified factors influencing communication in learning, such as teacher competence, student readiness, environmental support, and parental involvement. They found that effective communication in teaching involves both group and individual interactions, employing techniques such as lectures, Q&A sessions, discussions, and demonstrations (Nuryani et al., 2016).

Based on this background, this study is titled "Communication Methods of Muhammadiyah Gamping Special School Teachers in Delivering Material to Students with Intellectual Disabilities." The research aims to investigate the communication methods employed by teachers at Muhammadiyah Gamping Special School in delivering material to students with intellectual disabilities. The specific problem addressed is how these teachers adapt their communication methods to effectively teach these students.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology within a postpositivistic paradigm. In qualitative research, the focus is on understanding the problem in depth rather than viewing it broadly (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021). Data for this research were collected through interviews. In qualitative research, interviews must be structured and clearly written before being conducted to ensure that the questions are easily understood by respondents, who may have difficulty comprehending the researcher's inquiries (Rita Fiantika et al., 2022). The primary informant for this research was Wulan Noviani, Deputy Head of Curriculum and Teaching Staff at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping.

During data analysis, the researcher arranges, sorts, groups, codes, marks, and categorizes the data to derive meaningful conclusions regarding the research problem (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021). Effective data analysis involves capturing, recording, interpreting, and presenting information accurately. It is essential to perform data analysis promptly after data collection, as it is an integral part of the qualitative research process (Fadli, 2021).

To ensure data validity, triangulation was used. According to Moelong (Nugrahani, 2014), triangulation is a technique for validating data by comparing it with other sources outside the research. This method enhances the credibility of the findings by cross-verifying the data. The objective of this research is to identify the communication methods employed by teachers at Muhammadiyah Gamping Special School in delivering material to students with intellectual disabilities.

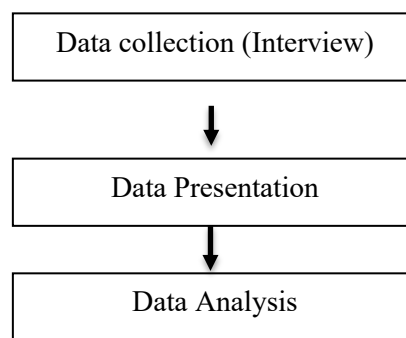


Figure 2. Qualitative research methods

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Presenting the Results

Researchers obtained data from interviews with informants that explain the communication methods used by SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping with students. According to Wulan Noviani, Deputy Principal for Curriculum, educators for children with special needs must prepare appropriate teaching materials, select suitable media, and prepare worksheets before interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. She stated:

"Make preparations before learning, such as arranging teaching materials, media, and worksheets for learning. In one class, understand the characteristics of students because the characteristics of students are very different from one another, especially since one class is filled with students with different categories, especially since the vocabulary of mentally disabled children is limited, so they need to use clear sentences and need repetition and use language that is used every day, such as Javanese. The modules used are adjusted to students' needs for preparation when graduating. Apart from that, we also use supporting media such as Assemblr Edu and other media before and after learning to measure students' level of understanding."

Given the diverse characteristics of students at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping, teachers must recognize each student's unique needs. A single class may include students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and other categories. Students with intellectual disabilities, in particular, struggle with memory retention, especially concerning learning material. To facilitate understanding, teachers must repetitively present the material to ensure comprehension.

The limited vocabulary of students with intellectual disabilities poses a significant challenge to effective communication between students and teachers. Therefore, communication must be adapted

to the students' daily language, employing short and clear sentences to enhance comprehension. The learning materials at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping are adapted to students' daily lives, covering topics such as time management, familial relationships, and basic commerce. These adjustments ensure that the knowledge gained is practical and beneficial for students outside school.

Technological advancements have enabled teachers to find suitable learning media for students. Before adopting Assemblr Edu, teachers relied on observational methods, which were less efficient as they required extensive movement to provide explanations. In addition to Assemblr Edu, teachers use various media, including YouTube, Quizziz, number boards, and dioramas, tailored to the activities and material being taught. Understanding the characteristics of children and the content is essential for effective teaching, allowing students to process the information provided. To assess the understanding of SLB students, evaluations are conducted at the beginning and end of each learning session. Student comprehension is measured through both written and oral assessments.

3.2. Create a Discussion

The communication method is a technique used to convey messages to communicants so that the conveyed message can be understood, ensuring an effective communication process. However, the communication process often encounters obstacles or noise that can hinder its effectiveness. These barriers can include internal disturbances within the sender or receiver, language disturbances due to different meanings, and external or environmental disturbances (Sokowati, 2021).

When communicating with children with special needs, these obstacles become particularly significant. Physiological challenges in individuals can complicate the communication process. For children with intellectual disabilities, who often have difficulty remembering information, communication methods that facilitate memory retention are essential. Communication methods are needed that to help them remember a word, sentence, or command described.

The repetition communication method involves reiterating information to reinforce the message in the recipient's mind. This repetition can be both verbal and nonverbal. Teachers at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping aim to create a pleasant learning atmosphere by providing information using clear vocabulary and supporting it with rhythm, movement, touch, color, shape, smell, expression, texture, symbols, and games that students enjoy (Ayudia Faizzah & Desvita Putri, 2023).

Mark L. Knapp (Harapan & Syarwani, 2014) describes five functions of nonverbal messages in relation to verbal messages, including the function of repetition. Repetition strengthens verbal messages through nonverbal cues, such as using head-shake gestures to reinforce a verbal rejection. Nonverbal messages have a metacommunicative function, providing additional information to clarify the intent and meaning of the verbal message (Abidin, 2022).

Children with intellectual disabilities often struggle to process and retain information related to language or complex communication, such as speech and writing (Nida, 2013). The choice of image or nonverbal media is another way that can be used. Action research by Eny Indriani (Nida, 2013) on the use of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) in mentally retarded children who experience communication disorders as an auxiliary medium is proven to improve expressive aspects of communication skills.

In its implementation, the use of Assmblr edu media, YouTube, Quizziz, number boards, and dioramas at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping is one form of nonverbal repetition media used as learning media. Repetition occurs when the same message is sent in both verbal and nonverbal forms. Communication models carried out on children with special needs contribute to shaping their communication skills.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the communication methods employed by SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping teachers are crucial for enhancing understanding in learning activities for students with special needs. Effective preparation before interaction, strategic communication of material, and the use of appropriate learning media are meticulously planned to support teaching and learning activities. It is essential to comprehend the unique characteristics of each student, as these can vary significantly. This understanding is particularly important for students with intellectual disabilities, who often have difficulty retaining information. Consequently, a suitable communication method is necessary for delivering material to these students.

The repetition communication method has been selected as the primary approach in learning at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping. Repetition helps teachers reinforce information for students with intellectual disabilities, aiding their memory retention. The limited vocabulary of these students often hinders effective communication between them and their teachers. Therefore, it is important to use short, clear sentences to facilitate comprehension. For students with intellectual disabilities, information must be repeated, not only verbally but also through nonverbal means. Teachers at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping are adept at creating an engaging and varied learning environment that incorporates not just vocabulary but also rhythm, movement, touch, color, shape, smell, expression, texture, symbols, and play.

At SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping, technological advancements are leveraged to develop visual-based learning media such as Assemblr Edu, YouTube, Quizziz, number boards, and dioramas. These tools are tailored to the activities and materials being taught. The use of such media complements the repetition communication method, providing additional support to help students with special needs effectively understand and retain the material.

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