

Verbal Communication of Indonesian Language in Students with Intellectual Disabilities at *SLBDN 1 Kabupaten Maros*

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study critically traces (1) verbal communication features in the Indonesian language of children, or this case, students with intellectual disabilities at *SLBDN 1 Kabupaten Maros* (State Elementary School for Special Education 1 of Maros Regency); and (2) language function in students with intellectual disabilities at *SLBDN 1 Kabupaten Maros* when communicating. The subjects were selected from third-grade students at *SLBDN 1 Kabupaten Maros* with special needs of mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. Data for this study were retrospectively collected from observation, note-taking, interviews, recording and documentation and resulted in the form of (1) a description of verbal communication features in the Indonesian language of the children specified with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities, namely pronunciation and clarity of speech; and (2) a description of language function in the children with intellectual disabilities when communicating which consists of labelling, interaction, and language transmission. Following this, the data source was directly observed from two students with the characteristics of mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. As for the study results, verbal communication features used by a student with mild intellectual disabilities are classified as good, ranging from two to three words where the articulation is clear, both vowels and consonants. While the student with moderate intellectual disabilities can only communicate with one to two words. The clarity of articulation is occasionally unclear where some of the words spoken are lacking letters. Before the function of verbal communication language for both of the students with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities in the function of labelling, they have met the indicators by answering questions, responding to calls, even recognizing people around them. On the part of the interaction function, both the students with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities were able to greet people they met, follow simple conversations, answer calls, but it was found that the student with moderate intellectual disabilities was unable to look at the interlocutor when interacting. The last is the function of language transmission, where the student with mild intellectual disability was able to convey her wishes and feelings, grasp certain words and phrases, but had not been able to remember events and was still difficult to respond to the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: *verbal communication, language function, children with intellectual disabilities.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the language ability of children with intellectual disabilities who have cognitive barriers. Their intelligence development does not reach an optimal stage where verbal and nonverbal stimulation from their environment is difficult for them to transfer properly. Things that seem simple often cannot be

comprehended fully. Not to mention their added physiological factors who tend to have difficulty in communicating verbally. This is the cause of the dependence of children with intellectual disabilities on others which is positively high.

Because most children with intellectual disabilities cannot use compound sentences, their daily conversations only use alternately single sentences. By and large, when compared to normal children, they

show several issues with an articulation disorder, voice quality and rhythm, difficulty in speech clarity, forming irregular sentences when speaking, along incomplete or word reduction. Preliminary work on it was undertaken by Mumpuniarti [1] that the problem which often occurs in children with intellectual disabilities is that they cannot get along or play with their peers because they have difficulties in communication such as in conveying messages or information from others due to language and speech disorders which make them baffled to memorize, master, pronouncing, and understanding words.

These days, communication and language disorders in children with intellectual disabilities are considered normal which lead parents' attention to them to appear to be lacking. Moreover, their position is marginalized socially by most people who assume that they will possess intellectual limitations for life which makes them useless to be educated or fostered. Even though, they have the potential to learn, especially in learning the Indonesian language. These children with special needs are particularly dependent on instruments used to assist them in learning and communicating with all their limitations.

Therefore, it is necessary to research to reveal the features of verbal communication and language function used in children with intellectual disabilities when communicating. It is because their language comprehension is limited, so special strategies are needed to cope with. This study only focuses on children with mild and moderate intellectual abilities. The important issue of this study makes it urgent to discover more because some consider intellectual disabilities are mere health conditions or disabilities commonly found in the fields of medicine, nursing, psychology, or special education. The field of linguistics also has a huge impact on children with intellectual disabilities. They still need language as a tool to communicate, convey ideas, or simply express things even though their cognitive capacity is below average which makes them deal with language disorders.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study takes the form of a qualitative descriptive design which its data are in the form of descriptions of (1) verbal communication features in the Indonesian language of the children specified with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities, such as pronunciation and clarity of speech; and (2) language function in the children with intellectual disabilities when communicating, that is labelling, interaction, and language transmission. Data obtained from the sources which also act as the subjects were two students with intellectual disabilities. One student with mild intellectual disabilities has the initials TV while the student with moderate intellectual disabilities is given

the initials NH. Both students were from third grade specifically Class III-C at *SLBDN 1 Kabupaten Maros*. The data were collected using observation, interviews, and documentation consisting of recording, note-taking, and transcription techniques. Then they were analyzed based on Miles and Huberman's analysis technique comprising data identification, data reduction, data display, and verification. In the same way, source and technique triangulations were conducted to test the validity.

3. DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

3.1. *The description on Features of Verbal Communication in Students with Intellectual Disabilities*

The features of verbal communication in students with intellectual disabilities are focused on oral communication with two observation indicators, in particular pronunciation and clarity of speech. Verbal communication is regularly done by teachers during the teaching and learning process due to its effectiveness in managing students' low responses so that it is carried out directly in person with students. It is also accompanied by gestures and body language and a variety of intonations.

3.1.1. *Pronunciation*

Students with intellectual disabilities have good communication and pronunciation fluency but sometimes can only form two to three words when speaking. As for children with moderate intellectual disabilities, he still struggles with speaking such as using hyponasal voice and uttering incomplete words at times.

3.1.2. *Clarity of Speech*

Students with mild intellectual disabilities express clear articulation of both vowels and consonants. The other one with moderate intellectual disabilities still has some unclear articulations, specifically, the words spoken are lacking letters.

3.2. *The description on Language Function in Students with Intellectual Disabilities*

With a view to the data form of verbal communication in students with intellectual disabilities, it includes three language functions, that is labelling, interaction, and language transmission. Those are found in several topics of communication that occurred in a classroom, canteen, and certain places which are described in the following description.

3.3. *Labelling*

3.3.1. *Recognizing Vocabularies*

G	: <i>Hari apa ini?</i>
SW	: (tidak merespon)
G	: <i>Ini bacanya apa?</i>

SW : (tidak merespon)
 G : *Ini huruf apa?*
 TV : *K (huruf K)*
 G : *Yang ini?*
 TV : *A (huruf A)... dan seterusnya.*
 NH : (tidak merespon)
(KODE DATA 24/PL.07)

(English Translation)
 G : *What day is it?*
 SW : (not responding)
 G : *Can you read this one?*
 SW : (not responding)
 G : *What letter is this?*
 TV : *K (letter K)*
 G : *And this one?*
 TV : *A (letter A)... and so on.*
 NH : (not responding)
(DATA CODE 24/PL.07)

In the labelling function, the student with mild intellectual disabilities was able to recognize letters but still unable to recognize vocabulary, while the student with moderate intellectual disabilities still needed guidance in recognizing vocabulary. When the teacher pointed the word 'Thursday' written on the blackboard, TV and NH were unable to read it, but when the teacher pointed to the word's letters one by one as 'K-a-m-i-s' (an Indonesian term for 'Thursday'), TV responded while NH did not show any response.

3.3.2. Answering When Asked

P : *Mana pensilnya?*
 TV : *Ini.*
(KODE DATA 15/PL.06)

(English Translation)
 P : *Where's the pencil?*
 TV : *Here.*
(DATA CODE 15/PL.06)

The context took place in the parents' waiting room which shows that the student with mild intellectual disabilities was able to answer questions when the researcher looked for the pencil fallen on the ground.

P : NH.
 NH : (menoleh)
 P : *Mau makan?*
 NH : (mengguguk)
(KODE DATA 08/PL.04)

(English Translation)
 P : NH.
 NH : (turning around)
 P : *Have some bite?*
 NH : (nodding)
(DATA CODE 08/PL.04)

The data context occurred outside a classroom on the first day of observation which shows that the student with moderate intellectual disabilities was also able to answer when asked although by mere nodding which means 'yes'.

3.3.3. Responding When Called

P : *TV.*
 TV : (menoleh)
 P : *Makan apa?*
 TV : *Nasi.*
(KODE DATA 13/PL.05)

(English Translation)
 P : *TV.*
 TV : (turning around)
 P : *What are you eating?*
 TV : *Rice.*
(DATA CODE 13/PL.05)

The context which took place in the school canteen shows the student with mild intellectual disabilities turning her head when called.

G : *Eh, NH.*
 NH : (melirik)
 G : *Sini pintar.*
 NH : *Mama.*
 G : *Adaji mama di luar.*
(KODE DATA 03/PL.02)

(English Translation)
 G : *Um, NH.*
 NH : (glancing)
 G : *Come here, sweetie.*
 NH : *Mommy.*
 G : *Your mommy is outside.*
(DATA CODE 03/PL.02)

In connection with the student with mild intellectual disabilities, he only responded by glancing when the teacher called his name and asked to do a test question. However, NH did not want to answer the question but rather search for his mother outside the classroom.

3.3.4. Recognizing People Around

TV : *Ibu, Idham main.*
 P : *Eh, jangan main.*
 TV : *Jangan main Idham.*
 TV : *Nasi.*
(KODE DATA 05/PL.03)

(English Translation)
 TV : *Ma'am, Idham is not paying attention.*
 P : *You, pay attention, please.*
 TV : *Pay attention, Idham.*
 TV : *Rice.*
(DATA CODE 05/PL.03)

The context occurred in a classroom, indicating that the student with mild intellectual disabilities recognized the people around her when she reported to the teacher to watch over the other student who was not paying attention during learning.

G : *Halo.*
 NH : -
 G : *Mana Ibu guru?*
 NH : *Situ.*
(DATA CODE 01/PL.01)

(English Translation)
 G : *Hello.*
 NH : -
 G : *Where's your teacher?*
 NH : *Over there.*
(DATA CODE 01/PL.01)

The context took place outside the classroom, indicating that the student with moderate intellectual disabilities recognized the people around them when the researcher was looking for NH's homeroom teacher. NH also showed the position where the teacher was talking to other teacher.

3.4. Interaction

3.4.1. Greeting People Around

TV : *Eh mau?*
 Tmn : *Apa itu?*
 TV : *Coklat, bapak beli.*
(DATA CODE 19/ITR.06)

(English Translation)
 TV : *Um, want some?*
 Tmn : *What's that?*
 TV : *It's chocolate. My dad bought it.*
(DATA CODE 19/ITR.06)

The context of the interaction took place in the school canteen where the student with mild intellectual disabilities greeted her friend intending to share the meal that TV brought to school. This shows that TV only greets people she knows or in this case, her classmates.

M : *Itu ibu, bilang dulu selamat pagi.*
 NH : *Agih Ibu.*
 P : *Selamat pagi juga NH.*
(DATA CODE 21/ITR.07)

(English Translation)
 M : *Please welcome her, say good morning.*
 NH : *'Orning, Ma'am. (incorrect spelling of 'morning')*
 P : *Morning, too, NH.*
(DATA CODE 21/ITR.07)

The context of the interaction occurred at the school gate when the student with moderate intellectual disabilities had just arrived at school. His parents guided NH to greet the researcher who had also just arrived. This shows that the student only greets people he meets when guided.

3.4.2. Participating in Simple Conversations

TV : *Darimana Ibu?*
 P : *Dari WC.*
 TV : *Mauka juga.*
 P : *Mau apa ke WC?*
 TV : *Mau kencing.*
 P : *Iya ayo sini kutemani.*
(DATA CODE 06/ITR.02)

(English Translation)
 TV : *Where were you from, Ma'am?*
 P : *From the restroom.*
 TV : *I want to go there, too.*
 P : *For what?*
 TV : *I want to pee.*
 P : *Come on. I'll accompany you.*
(DATA CODE 06/ITR.02)

The context occurred in a classroom. It proves that the student with mild intellectual disabilities was able to participate in a simple conversation. Likewise, the student with moderate intellectual disabilities participated as well in the following context.

P : *Makan apa itu, NH?*
 NH : *Naci.*
 P : *Kalau itu apa?*
 Nh : *Upuk.*
(DATA CODE 11/ITR.04)

(English Translation)
 P : *What are you eating, NH?*
 NH : *'Ice. (incorrect spelling of 'rice')*
 P : *What is that?*
 Nh : *'Acker. (incorrect spelling of 'cracker')*
(DATA CODE 11/ITR.04)

The data context occurred during a break in the parents' waiting room when NH was having lunch. The researcher had a simple conversation with him regarding the meal he brought.

3.4.3. Responding to Calls

P : *Hai cantik*
 TV : *Hai (menoleh dan sambil melambaikan tangan)*
 P : *Siapa namata?*
 TV : *Cia.*
(DATA CODE 04/ITR.01)

(English Translation)

P : *Hi, sweety.*
 TV : *Hi. (turning her head around while waving her hand)*
 P : *What's your name?*
 TV : *Cia.*

(DATA CODE 04/ITR.01)

The context occurred in the canteen when the researcher was approaching TV, the student with mild intellectual disabilities while calling her name. TV turned her head around. This proves that the student can respond to calls by turning her head around and waving her hand.

P : *NH.*
 NH : *(menoleh)*
 P : *Tunggu Ibu.*
 NH : *(terus berjalan)*

(English Translation)

P : *NH.*
 NH : *(turning around)*
 P : *Wait for me.*
 NH : *(keep walking)*

This context occurred in the school field when the class was over. The researcher intended to chase NH by calling his name. It shows that the student with moderate intellectual disabilities or NH in data (13) still responded to a call by turning his head.

3.4.4. Keeping Eye Contact in Conversation

The following context occurred in a classroom.

TV : *Mana ade'?*
 P : *Ade tidak ikut.*
 TV : *Dimana?*
 P : *Di rumah.*

(DATA CODE 06/ITR.02)

(English Translation)

TV : *Where's your child?*
 P : *He isn't coming with me.*
 TV : *Where is he?*
 P : *At home.*

(DATA CODE 06/ITR.02)

TV or the student with mild intellectual disabilities asked where the researcher's child was who she had ever brought to school and met TV. When TV was asked, she made eye contact with her interlocutor. While for the student with moderate intellectual disabilities during the observation, it was never found that he ever looked at his interlocutor.

3.5. Language Transmission

3.5.1. Expressing Wishes and Feelings

TV : *Kakak, HP.*
 K : *Makan mki' dulu.*
 TV : *Makan mi goreng.*
 K : *Ini ada nasi goreng kubawakanki'.*
 TV : *Tidak mau.*

(DATA CODE 07/TL.02)

(English Translation)

TV : *Give me the gadget.*
 K : *Eat your meal, first.*
 TV : *Eating 'ried noodles. (incomplete spelling of 'fried')*
 K : *Here I brought you fried rice.*
 TV : *No!*

(DATA CODE 07/TL.02)

The data context occurred in the canteen conducted by TV and her elder sibling. TV expressed that she wanted to play with her gadget and eat fried noodles. She also showed her rejection when offered a lunch meal brought by her sibling.

NH : *Ibu beya'. (berak)*
 G : *Cepatmi ke WC nak.*
 P : *Sini ibu yang temani.*
 G : *Itu ada kakak temaniki.*
 NH : *Ammuu. (tidak mau)*

(DATA CODE 23/TL.09)

(English Translation)

NH : *Mommy, 'oo. (incorrect spelling of 'poo')*
 G : *Hurry, go to the restroom, Son.*
 P : *Let me accompany you.*
 G : *Go, let Miss accompany you.*
 NH : *'On't want to. (incorrect spelling of 'don't')*

(DATA CODE 23/TL.09)

The data context occurred in a classroom where the student with moderate intellectual disabilities was conveying his want to his teacher to defecate, so the teacher asked him to go to the restroom with the researcher to accompany him. Even so, NH refused to be accompanied by the researcher. It indicates that the student with moderate intellectual disabilities can express wants or wishes as well as feelings.

3.5.2. Identifying Noun, Verb, and Adjective

P : *Apa itu Terecia?*
 TV : *Tissu.*
 P : *Untuk apa?*
 TV : *Sakit ingus.*

(KODE DATA 18/TL.06)

(English Translation)

P : *What is that, Terecia?*
 TV : *Tissue.*
 P : *For what?*
 TV : *Sick nose.*

(DATA CODE 18/TI.06)

The data context took place in front of a class between the researcher and the student with mild intellectual disabilities. It shows that TV was able to understand only certain nouns, verbs, and adjectives. As for the noun in the excerpt, that is 'tissue' and the adjective 'sick', those indicate that she was having a runny nose or flu.

P : *Apa itu, NH?*
 NH : *Mama meong.*
 M : *Tidakji nak.*
 NH : *Meong... meong.*

(KOde DATA 12/TI.03)

(English Translation)

P : *What is that, NH?*
 NH : *Mommy, meow.*
 M : *It's okay, dear.*
 NH : *Meow... meow.*

(DATA CODE 12/TI.03)

The data context occurred in the parents' waiting room where the student with moderate intellectual disabilities was having lunch with his mother. At that time, the researcher pointed to a cat that was approaching NH, and she suddenly called it 'meow'. It shows that the student can identify simple words according to what they know.

3.5.3. Understanding Commands

G : *TV*
 TV : *(menoleh)*
 G : *Tutup dulu pintu, Teresia.*
 TV : *(menutup pintu)*

(DATA CODE 14/TI.04)

(English Translation)

G : *TV.*
 TV : *(turning her head around)*
 G : *Close the door, please, Teresia.*
 TV : *(closing the door)*

(DATA CODE 14/TI.04)

The data context occurred in a classroom where the teacher asked the student with mild intellectual disabilities to close the door. She did as commanded by closing the door immediately. It indicates that the student can understand simple command sentences.

M : *Ikutmi sama Ibu ke kelas Nak*
 NH : *Ammau (tidak mau)*

M : *Aampai di sinimi mama.*
 NH : *Ammau (tidak mau).*
 P : *Ayo sini samaki', bawa tasta'!*

(KOde DATA 22/TI.08)

(English Translation)

M : *Go with your teacher to the class, dear.*
 NH : *'On't want to. (incorrect spelling of 'don't')*
 M : *This is where I have to leave you.*
 NH : *'On't want to. (incorrect spelling of 'don't')*
 P : *Come on. I'll accompany you. Take your bag with you.*

(DATA CODE 22/TI.08)

The data context occurred in the school field when the researcher approached the student with moderate intellectual disabilities along with his mother who had just arrived at school. At first, the student refused to come with the researcher and only wanted to be accompanied by his mother, but in the end, NH wanted to come to class without his mother. The researcher asked to take his bag which his mother held.

3.5.4. Recalling Last Event

P : *Selamat pagi, mana Ibu Guru?*
 TV dan NH : *(tidak merespon)*
 P : *Kemarin ulangan apa?*
 TV dan NH : *(tidak merespon)*

(KOde DATA 25/TI.10)

(English Translation)

P : *Good morning. Where is your teacher?*
 TV & NH : *(not responding)*
 P : *What exams did you have yesterday?*
 TV & NH : *(not responding)*

(DATA CODE 25/TI.10)

The data context occurred in a classroom when the researcher entered while the students were waiting for their teacher. The researcher also asked about yesterday's exam if there was any, but the students did not respond. It can be concluded that both students with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities are unable to recall yesterday's event.

3.5.5. Responding to Teaching and Learning Process

G : *Ayo menulismi.*
 TV : *Sebentar.*
 G : *Sebentar istirahat belumpi selesai punyamu.*

TV : (menulis)
(**KODE DATA 20/TI.07**)

(English Translation)

G : *Come on, write it down.*

TV : *Hold on.*

G : *You can't finish it until break time is over if you don't write it now.*

TV : (starting to write down)
(**DATA CODE 20/TI.07**)

The data context occurred in a classroom when the teacher asked the student with mild intellectual disabilities to write down her answers to the test questions. It proves that the student can respond occasionally to the learning process depending on the learning situation.

G : *NH.*

NH : *Puang (pulang).*

G : *Sebentar baru pulang, menulis dulu.*

NH : *Ammau (tidak mau).*
(**KODE DATA 02/TI.01**)

G : *NH.*

NH : *'Ome. (incorrect spelling of 'home' which means 'going home').*

G : *Later you can go back home. Go on with your writing first.*

NH : *'On't want to. (incorrect spelling of 'don't').*
(**DATA CODE 02/TI.01**)

It appears that the student with moderate intellectual disabilities was not looking back when the researcher called his name and asked to follow the lesson. This happened because the student felt annoyed and no longer followed the lesson. It shows that the student was having difficulty in maintaining focus on the teaching and learning process.

4. CONCLUSION

Taken together, the feature of communication that can be done by the students with intellectual disabilities at *SLBDN 1 Kabupaten Maros* is verbal communication in the form of one-way communication from the researcher to the subjects. Verbal communication in the student with mild intellectual disabilities is shown by two to three words, while the student with moderate intellectual disabilities can only communicate with one to two words in which the expressed words are often unclear or lacking letters. In the same vein, the language function of verbal communication used by the students focuses on the functions of labelling, interaction, and language transmission. Both the students with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities tend to be passive in communicating. It is limited to merely asking,

answering, call names, and for some occasions, they still need instructions.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the study conception and design where this study is aimed as an additional insight for readers about the language skills of children or students with intellectual disabilities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to those who have supported and assisted upon the completion of this study. It certainly could not be completed without the great help and support of several parties.

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