



## The Communication Ability with Sign Language by Teachers Towards the Achievements of Special Needs Children who are deaf.

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### ABSTRACT

*This research demonstrates the importance of sign language as an effective communication tool for the deaf, particularly in the educational context at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyuang. It also emphasizes the significance of developing communication methods that enhance better accessibility for students with special needs to comprehend lesson materials and actively participate in the learning process. Utilizing a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to describe the communication patterns developed by these deaf teachers. Teachers teaching these students need to integrate spoken language with body language, face challenges in understanding deaf students in particular, and often receive assistance from fellow teachers to facilitate better understanding.*

**Keywords:** *Achievements of the deaf, communication, children with special needs.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication skills are crucial in daily life, especially in the context of education. Without effective communication, the process of delivering lessons to students becomes challenging. Communication involves conveying information, messages, ideas, and thoughts between individuals or groups. It can take the form of

verbal expression to deliver a message, but it can also be conveyed non-verbally, such as through sign language. Sign language is a form of communication using body language, such as hand movements or lip movements, primarily used by communities with hearing impairments like the deaf.

The results of initial observations and interviews conducted at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyung indicate that students with special needs, particularly those who are deaf due to hearing impairments since birth or accidents, face communication challenges. This research focused on a student named Fatih, who is in the final year of high school at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyung. Despite being academically talented, Fatih experiences communication difficulties due to his hearing impairment and requires communication through sign language. However, not all teachers are proficient in sign language to effectively communicate with their deaf students.

The lack of knowledge among teachers about sign language hinders effective communication during the learning process for students with hearing impairments like the deaf. Teachers often resort to methods such as pointing to the blackboard, using books, or lip-reading, which may not always ensure clear understanding from the students. Therefore, it is essential for researchers to describe the application of learning methods and communication strategies using sign language and other understandable methods for deaf students in order to emphasize the importance of communication skills in achieving success among students with special needs at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyung.

Previous research on communication skills with sign language among special needs children, particularly those who are deaf, has been conducted by various researchers. For instance, Fina Tania (2019) studied the Communication Patterns of Deaf Teachers Towards Autistic Students in Art Painting Lessons (Case Study in Middle Class SLB Au" JASSI\_anakku). Tunarungu refers to individuals who experience hearing loss, affecting their ability to communicate verbally. Autism, on the other hand, affects developmental aspects such as interaction, communication, and behavior. In her study, (Tania, 2019) aimed to understand the communication patterns developed by deaf teachers towards autistic students, using verbal language combined with body language. Challenges included misunderstandings between teachers and students, sometimes resulting in tantrums from students. Teachers made efforts to approach students and understand their needs, often seeking assistance from other teachers to clarify student intentions or instructions. Current achievements include the students' proficiency in creating abstract paintings.(Tania, 2019)

Both previous and current research share similarities and differences in examining communication skills with sign language among special needs children. Previous research focused on "communication patterns in student achievements in making paintings," while current research addresses "communication skills in the achievements of special needs children." According to (Tania, 2019), an individual's abilities fundamentally consist of two essential components: intellectual abilities and physical capabilities, including stamina, agility, strength, and similar skills. Abilities vary among individuals in performing tasks and responsibilities. Additionally, (Simon & Alouini,

2004) define communication as the most essential role for human life to interact with daily life. Especially, communication that occurs within the smallest community, is family. In Dad even if

Sign language according to (Mursita, 2015) is a language performed using body movements and facial expressions as symbols of meaning from spoken language. Deaf individuals are the main group who use this language, typically combining hand shapes, orientation, hand movements, arm gestures, and facial expressions to convey their thoughts. From this explanation, it can be concluded that sign language is a language used specifically by the deaf.

There are two main sign languages used in Indonesia: SIBI (Indonesian Sign Language System) and BISINDO (Indonesian Sign Language). According to Hakim, Lukman, and Samino (2015), standardized sign language systems serve as a medium to assist communication among the deaf or communication involving deaf individuals in broader society.

(Mursita, 2015)

The development of sign language among the deaf is divided into these two sign languages, SIBI (Indonesian Sign Language System) and BISINDO (Indonesian Sign Language). the existence of these two sign languages has made it difficult for the deaf to determine accessibility in communication, whether to use BISINDO or SIBI. The government also faces challenges in policy-making regarding the accessibility of the deaf, and teachers encounter difficulties in delivering education and communicating with the deaf. The issue of having two sign languages poses a communication problem for the deaf (Mursita, 2015)

Defines deaf individuals as those who have lost their ability to hear, hindering the process of language information through auditory means, whether or not they use hearing aids, where the limits of their hearing sufficiently prevent successful processing of auditory information. Deaf children show difficulties in hearing ranging from mild to severe, categorized as hard of hearing and deaf. Deaf individuals face communication barriers with others, relying on sign language. Finger-spelling has been internationally patented, whereas sign languages vary from country to country.(Rahmah, 2018)

Meanwhile, according to Soewito Rahmah, (2018), the deaf are: "Individuals experiencing severe to total deafness, unable to grasp spoken words without reading their conversational partner's lips." Deaf children are those who have lost their hearing ability partially or entirely due to damaged hearing function, potentially impacting various aspects of their lives.(Rahmah, 2018)

The main problem of this research is the communication skills with sign language by teachers towards the academic achievement of children with special needs. Therefore, the research problem formulation is how the communication skills with sign language by teachers affect the academic achievement of children with special needs. Thus, this study aims to discuss the communication skills with sign language by teachers towards the academic achievement of children with special needs. This scientific research needs to have theoretical and practical benefits and utilities.

Theoretically, this research is expected to have implications for the initial study on the communication skills with sign language by teachers towards the academic achievement of children with special needs. This study is expected to have practical implications for more serious development in studying the communication skills with sign language by teachers towards the academic achievement of children with special needs.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method employed direct observation and interviews supported by literature review. This study used a qualitative approach applying a literature review method. The sources followed previous journals that have been found or not found related to Communication Skills with Sign Language of Teachers Towards the Achievement of Special Needs Children, specifically the hearing impaired. The analysis technique involved combining relevant findings on the current topic and drawing conclusions from interview results conducted with the subject of the study, where the informant was a teacher teaching at SLB N 1 Pagaruyung.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Sign Language**

According to Silpia and Sari Silpia & Sari, (2023), medically, a deaf person (tunarungu) is someone who has lost their hearing ability due to damage or non-functioning of their auditory sensory organs. Pedagogically, tunarungu refers to individuals with hearing impairments that create obstacles, necessitating guidance and education tailored to their needs. Therefore, to facilitate communication in conveying messages to deaf children, special communication methods such as sign language are essential. Sign language helps them in both conveying and receiving messages from others. Hence, special education is necessary to teach effective communication methods, particularly non-verbal communication or sign language, to children with special needs like tunarungu.(Silpia & Sari, 2023)

According to Bunyasi Joseph & Lizzie, (2018), Sign Language is a language for the deaf that uses manual communication to convey meaning and information compared to acoustic sound patterns. This form of communication is used in daily communication among the deaf community and as an instructional medium in the educational cycle. Sign Language is expressed through combinations of hand shapes and facial expressions. It possesses grammatical structures suitable for visual media but may not necessarily be used in oral language communication.(Joseph & Lizzie, 2018)

From the perspectives of Borman and Priyopradono(2018), Sign Language is a tool used by the deaf to communicate with each other or with non-deaf individuals, employing hand movements, facial expressions, and body gestures to form symbols that represent letters or words. One such sign language method used by the deaf community is BISINDO (Indonesian Sign Language). BISINDO is promoted by the Indonesian Association of the Deaf (GERKATIN) and developed by the deaf community themselves. However, a challenge in communication for the deaf with non-deaf

individuals is that the message conveyed may not be understood because non-deaf individuals do not comprehend the language used by the deaf. Many books provide lessons on understanding sign language used by the deaf, but in practice, these books only explain how to use sign language. Thus, there is a need for specific applications that can translate sign language so that non-deaf individuals can understand what is being communicated by the deaf.(Borman & Priyopradono, 2018)

According to (Kissya, 2022), communication by teachers to deaf students in introducing sign language is crucial. Deaf students cannot immediately understand and use sign language. Therefore, teachers need to engage in a process of teaching and introducing sign language to deaf students. The communication of teachers to deaf students in introducing sign language is key to facilitating the learning process. Teachers introduce basic sign language until students understand, master, and gradually use it during communication. Communication can continue if the message recipient responds to the message conveyed. The communication conducted by teachers in introducing sign language to students plays a crucial role in the vocabulary development of students. Teachers must have specialized communication skills in teaching and getting close to deaf students during the learning process. Good interaction between communicators will foster an understanding of sign language, making it a language for communication. Therefore, the sign language proficiency of teachers at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyung should be implemented and improved, as per Kissya's view.(Kissya, 2022)

## **B. Academic Achievement of Children with Special Needs (Deaf)**

Most diseases in modern times have caused deafness in babies before they can speak immediately or soon results in fatal consequences in the past; However, some genetic deafness does not occur in all periods of history but tends to affect one or several siblings and parents or more distant relatives also affected similarly.(Stokoe & Marschark, 2005)

According to (Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022), children with special needs require special treatment for their development and the disorders they experience. In terms of the term "disability," children with special needs are those who have limitations in one or more abilities, whether physical such as blindness and deafness, or psychological such as autism and ADHD. Special needs differ in several aspects, such as their growth and developmental processes which may experience anomalies or deviations. Children with special needs require special treatment due to developmental disorders and anomalies they experience. Children are physically, mentally, intellectually, socially, and emotionally well. However, according to (Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022), deafness is a lack or loss of hearing ability, whether partially or completely, experienced by individuals. The cause is because there is no functioning of some or all hearing aids. The intelligence of deaf children is not different from normal children, which is high, moderate, and low. In general, deaf children have normal and average intelligence. The performance of deaf children is often lower than that of normal children because it is influenced by the ability of deaf children to understand spoken lessons. However, for

lessons that are not spoken, deaf children develop at the same rate as normal children. The low academic achievement of deaf children is not caused by low intelligence but because deaf children cannot maximize the intelligence they have. Intelligence aspects that originate from verbal are often low, but aspects of intelligence originating from vision and motor skills will develop rapidly.(Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022)

Delayed academic performance related to early childhood deafness continues to be experienced by many implant children. It is still not clear exactly how CI helps deaf children achieve academic success, and whether other variables should be considered, to explain class failure in particular. First, the age at implantation seems to not only be an important factor for the language development prognosis of pre-language deaf children, but also for academic achievement and types of educational arrangements. However, according to Venail et al.(2019) , no relationship was found between class failure and age at implantation. Second, most studies have shown that language skills are positively related to integration into mainstream schools, and to literacy and reading skills. However, there is no research on the relationship between language skills and other educational achievements in the French population compared to the American population.(Diaz et al., 2019)

Standardized test results are not the only academic achievements that need to be considered. Wagner, Newman, Cameto, and Levine (2012) found a number of positive attributes among deaf and hard of hearing high school students compared to other students with disabilities. First, they have higher grades and are more capable of attending regular classes. According to Mitchell & Karchmer (2012), when it comes to habits and character, deaf students and those with hearing impairments are more likely to attend school, behave better, have better social skills, be more likely to be part of a group, enjoy school more, have lower absenteeism rates, and show higher levels of independence and responsibility. Wagner, Newman, Cameto, and Levine (2012) found that deaf and hard of hearing students are most likely among all students with disabilities to complete high school (82.2% in 2003). Moreover, compared to other disabled adolescents, they are more likely to attend post-secondary education (53.1%) and participate in voluntary or community service activities (47.2%). The substantial improvement in post-school outcomes is significant given the somewhat static and disappointing record on standardized academic achievement tests.(Mitchell & Karchmer, 2012)

### **C. Sign Language Proficiency of Teachers towards the Achievement of Special Needs Children (Deaf)**

Research conducted through observation and interviews at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyung indicates that the communication skills of teachers in sign language towards the achievement of special needs children (deaf) have not been implemented due to the low proficiency in sign language. However, the Joint Committee on Exceptional Children and the National Council on Deaf Education established criteria in 1996 for novice teachers of the deaf that encompass instructional content and practical



skills, requiring teachers to "demonstrate proficiency in the language that novice teachers will use to instruct students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing" and to demonstrate characteristics of various existing communication modes used with students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. (Goodman, 2006)

The educational process in all educational institutions, including special schools for the deaf, relies on the language abilities of its students. It can be said that in all learning activities, language activities play a crucial role in oral, written, and sign forms. According to Hamalik's viewpoint (2019), learning is a composition of elements including human, material, facilities, equipment, and procedures that influence and combine with each other to achieve learning goals. There are several factors that determine the success and effectiveness of education, which in this case are carried out by teachers in schools (Putri N et al., 2019), namely: adequate facilities, curriculum and teaching programs, management, learning media, and learning models.

In handling special needs children, according to Juherna (2021), caregivers require knowledge about these children, as well as caregiving and serving skills. Children with special needs need encouragement, guidance, and direct practice gradually. The potential possessed by children with special needs will grow and develop along with the success of caregivers in understanding and nurturing the potential of these children. (Juherna et al., 2021)

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis discusses the importance of communication, especially using sign language, in the context of educating special needs children, particularly the deaf. The text outlines that communication is a crucial element in the learning process, and for deaf children, sign language serves as a vital medium for both conveying and receiving information. Research conducted through observation and interviews at SLB Negeri 1 Pagaruyung indicates that teachers' proficiency in sign language for achieving special needs children (deaf) has not been implemented due to their low proficiency in sign language.

The Importance of Communication in Education, effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal such as sign language, is necessary to facilitate the teaching and learning process. For deaf children, the ability to use sign language is crucial because they cannot effectively use verbal communication. Despite the importance of sign language, many teachers are not trained in its use. This leads to difficulties in effectively delivering lesson materials to deaf students. This research utilizes observation, interviews, and literature review methods to understand how sign language communication can influence the academic achievement of deaf children. The study highlights the importance of developing effective communication in the context of inclusive education.

The differences between the Indonesian Sign Language System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO), and the challenges faced in adopting consistent sign language standards for teaching, are also discussed. The findings of this research

not only have theoretical implications in understanding the importance of communication for children with special needs but also practical implications in developing more inclusive and effective teaching methods.

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