Readiness of Special-Needs Schools in Developing Oral Language Skill Programs for Deaf Students

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Abstract

Limited learning programs in developing spoken language, as well as the inconsistency of teachers in implementing oral language communication, are allegedly the main causes of poor communication skills, especially for Deaf students. In contrast to this, oral language skills are a prerequisite for having communication with others. The present study draws attention to receive a description of the school (teacher) readiness in developing oral language skills programs for Deaf students. Conducted through descriptive qualitative method, the current project explores data from the chosen teachers of grade 2, 3, and 4, as well as PKPBI teachers through interviews, observation and documentation study. The data analysis technique is performed through data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions and verification. The findings disclosed that the oral language program planning is based on incidental needs analysis. The oral language skills program is still developed separately from the PKPBI program and communication training (either speaking or articulation). Likewise, conversational competence as a basis for developing communication has not become a definite program and is only applied to certain themes. The implementation of the oral language skills program is carried out partially with different learning patterns and methods, namely the global word method and the maternal reflective method (MMR). The teacher's evaluation was limited to correcting phonemes, repeating simple sentences and once into integrated thematically. The faced constraints are the availability of supporting infrastructure such as PKPBI room and articulation room that have not been optimized and the limited number of speech experts and PKPBI teachers. For such obvious reason, the seriousness and consistency of schools are highly necessary in developing oral language skills programs as the main focus during the learning process at each grade level by providing opportunities for all teachers to possess integration with PKPBI program and thematic articulation training programs using the reflective maternal method (MMR).

Keywords: school readiness, program, oral language skills, Deaf students

1. Research Background

Deafness is defined as a specific condition that describes a degree of hearing loss in certain individuals. And based on such obvious condition, it has a primary impact on

aspects or dimensions of speech language development (communication) and a secondary impact on aspects of cognition, social emotion, personality, motor skills, intelligence, academics, and so forth (Boothroyd, 1982). To address such issues, Moores (1982) states that hearing loss can affect a person in two main ways: (1) limited or lack of vocabulary as a result they encounter delays in language development milestones. (2) lateral inhibition of receptive communication (either capturing or understanding other people's speech) and expressively (speaking). Greater risk for the deafness not only results in the development of speaking skills, it is more on the occurrence of language poverty (Van Uden, 1977). As well, Leigh (1994; in Bunawan & Yuwati, 2000) clarifies that the main problem of Deaf students (deaf) is not that they are not mastering a means of oral communication, yet they are not or less able to understand language symbols and rules.

In an effort to address such situation, this actually has drawn broad attention that hearing loss can create barriers in communication. In particular, Deaf students who are classified as severe, either born deaf (known as congenital deafness), they may not recognize language symbols or names to represent objects, activities, events and feelings and have difficulty understanding the systems or even grammatical rules that apply and used by the environment. In this regard, the deaf students who are the same age as students in general, even though they have been well educated from an early age, the process of language mastery encounters a striking difference. Deaf students at the age of 4 have entered the language mastery stage, while for students who are deaf it is only achieved by age 12 (Bunawan & Yuwati, 2000).

With regard to this issue, the first and main step that can be given to deaf students is through developing their communication and language skills, especially to replace the language acquisition period that they have not accessed. Verbal communication will greatly help deaf students in developing their language and developing their cognitive abilities, especially to arrive at abstract thinking skills. To start this, in the context of schooling, teachers shall have the ability to understand deaf students through a series of assessments and competencies related to language mastery and communication-based learning strategies. The success of language development on deaf students is strongly influenced by the ability of teachers to formulate an inclusive curriculum in a learning program and implement it with the support of learning facilities and infrastructure, parental support, and other components of support for language development of Deaf students such as fostering communication of sound and rhythm perceptions, building speech and building signals through the PKPBI special program (Permendikbud RI Number 157 of 2014 concerning the Special Education Curriculum article 10 paragraph 1).

Several special-needs schools (SLB) that serve Deaf students, especially those who develop verbal (oral) language skills, have generally implemented integrated (thematic) language learning and independently through the PKPBI program and articulation exercises (Hernawati, et al, 2019). However, it was also found that there were special schools that had not integrated the development of articulation in the PKPBI program,

such obviously unclear communication approach with an emphasis on the process of language learning methods used, and the inadequate use of supporting infrastructure, namely the PKPBI room and the articulation room (Novianti, 2019). Furthermore, it was also found that there were also some teachers who had not carried out needs assessments related to language and communication skills training programs (Satriani, 2020).

The complexity of such conspicuously problems in the field certainly requires a systematic effort by considering the existing potentials and opportunities oriented towards school readiness in developing empirically tested language and communication skills that can contribute to improving language skills (oral) in Deaf students. The readiness of schools in facilitating and accommodating the development of language skills and possessing receptive and expressive communication for Deaf students is not an easy process, therefore it requires systematic efforts and synergy from various involved parties, and thus it could be reasonably inferred that Deaf students can communicate and capture key skills that provide them with access to further socialization opportunities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Deaf Students

Deaf students are learners who encounters barrier in their hearing organs, either partially or completely, thus it inhibits the hearing process. The term hearing impairment also describes hearing loss or impairment that hinders the ability of hearing to receive sound, especially the sounds of Language. Brill and Newman quoted by Hallahan & Kauffman (1991: 266) and Hardman, *et al.* (1990: 276) stated that hearing loss is a general term that indicates a hearing loss ranging from mild to very severe, which can be classified into hard of hearing and deaf groups. Moores (2001: 11; Kirk & Gallagher, 1989: 300) asserts that a hearing-impaired person is someone who has greater hearing disorder may cause difficulties, yet they are still able to understand speech through hearing, either by utilizing hearing aids. A deaf person is someone with a severe auditory impairment and it may result in less understanding speech through his/her hearing, whether using a hearing aid.

The direct effect of hearing loss is the inhibition of language skills, especially receptive and expressive communication skills. Receptive oral language skills are related to the ability to perceive what the speaker is saying, while the expressive language skills are related to the ability to convey messages through speaking activities. And therefore, the acquisition of language skills is closely related to listening ability, therefore in terms of language, deaf students have distinctive characteristics, not to mention; very limited in vocabulary, the articulation is generally difficult to understand, it is difficult to interpret figurative meanings and abstract words.

2.2 Oral Language Skills

Spoken language is generally defined as a system of speech sound symbols used to communicate by the user community. Oral language is the key to human life on this earth, because with spoken language people can exchange messages and meanings. Its notion

can also be defined as a system of speech sound symbols used in community communication. And hence the understanding of spoken language can be interpreted as a series of sounds produced by conscious human speech tools (Felicia, 2001: 8). In term of grammatical rules, vocabulary and pronunciation (Santosa, 2003: 67), the words are derived from a large vocabulary together with spoken words into a string of phrases and sentences grouped syntactically (Joko, 2010). Oral language skills are a person's skills to express "something" and understand "something" expressed by speakers orally. Oral language skills are important for everyone, including those with hard of hearing.

3. Method

The main objective of this study is to describe the data regarding the readiness of teachers in developing oral language skills programs for Deaf students. To achieve such formulated goal, the present study uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Based on the characteristics of the research data, the research subjects were chosen from grade 2, 3, and 4 teachers, as well as PKPBI teachers at SLB Negeri Cicendo Bandung. Data was then carried out through interviews, observation and documentation study. The data analysis technique was done through data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions and verification.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

The formulated aspects explored in this study are a series of what teachers do in developing oral language skills programs for Deaf students, starting from program planning, program implementation, and evaluation.

4.1.1 Program Planning

Based on the results obtained in this line of online interviews, it was discovered that during the process of preparing the oral language skills program, classroom teachers and PKPBI teachers did not carry out the prior assessment, they only conducted an incidental or partial needs analysis. The teacher prepares makeshift lattices and instruments based on the pre-existing programs. The content of program for oral language skills is made separately yet it still refers to the lesson plan and can be declared as an "attachment" to the lesson plan and implemented by the classroom teacher using various strategies or language learning methods integrated thematically. Meanwhile, the form of planning made by PKPBI teachers is more towards the Daily Learning Process Record (CPPH) which is obtained from unwritten observations and made to be implemented in groups. The aspects observed included general language skills and sound perception (only the properties of sound). Observations are carried out every day by PKPBI teachers when learning begins, precisely before the PKPBI teacher enters the subject matter by repeating the material on the previous day. According to the grade 2 teacher (with initial Mom R), the implementation of the assessment is only carried out when students enroll in a school or when students transfer from another school. The description or the results of the

assessment was not made in a written document and thus only spontaneously. Likewise, regarding the determination of the instructional media use, the teacher puts more emphasis on optimizing existing media. The data needed to strengthen the profile findings of Deaf students (spoken language) are only limited to data on the level of hearing loss through an audiogram, while other supporting data are incomplete.

4.1.2 Program Implementation

Based on results obtained in this line of observations through the zoom application and when conducting a home visit, it was figured out that the implementation of the oral language skills program was carried out partially with different learning patterns and methods. In the aspect of implementing the method or strategy of language learning (spoken), for class 2 (Mom R) and class 4 (Mom D), the global words method is used. Meanwhile, for class 3 (Ms. N) uses the maternal reflective method (MMR), which is a language learning method using conversation with the initial stages, namely the heart-to-heart conversation, conversation visualization, and preparation of deposit or video visual reading. For the next phase, linguistic conversation and reflection are only applied occasionally. On certain materials or topics, the classroom teacher has implemented oral language skills strategies by integrating them into thematic learning. but they have not integrated it in the specific field of Sound and Rhythm Perception Ability Development (PKPBI) and the special articulation program especially in the conditions of learning from home (BDR). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, for PKPBI special fields were sometimes carried out by PKPBI teachers or by class teachers and carried out in class, as well as for special articulation programs carried out by class teachers spontaneously and occasionally by teachers as well as speech therapists.

Related to the Sound and Rhythm Perception Ability Development program (PKPBI), according to the PKPBI teacher (Mom. SM), according to the curriculum structure, for the elementary level, schools set a time allocation of 4 lesson hours, with 2 hours of distribution for communication materials and perception material sound for 2 hours. Communication learning is carried out classically by emphasizing practice reading and speaking, practicing saying simple words or sentences, imitating sentences from the blackboard, showing pictures. Meanwhile, for the material of sound and rhythm perception, the scope taught is detection, discrimination, and identification, but more often it is introducing and distinguishing the characteristics of sound.

4.1.3 Evaluation

Based on results obtained in this line of observations, it was found that the evaluation conducted by grade 2, 3, 4 teachers for oral language skills was integrated thematically during the lesson. The teacher more often asked students to write by dictation and repeat simple sentences and emphasized more on phoneme correction (speech correction) for simple words. Evaluation is also carried out for each meeting based on assignments, especially on independent book assignments that are given to students every day. According to Mrs. SM's explanation, the evaluation of the Sound and Rhythm Perception Communication Development program was carried out by observing

students' responses or reactions to the sounds that were played by the teacher at random, and the teacher recording student responses on the observation sheet.

4.1.4 Problem

Based on the results of interviews with teachers in grades 2, 3, and 4, it was found that the implementation of the development of the oral language skills program still encountered obstacles, including (1) teachers were not used to and had difficulty designing language assessment instruments and implementing them (2) teacher understanding was still minimal. about the application of various language learning methods, especially the maternal reflective method (MMR), coupled with an educational background that is not a deaf specialty (Bu D). The language learning method used is still general in nature which is usually applied to students in general. For grade 3 teachers (Ms. N), even though they have applied the conversation method (MMR), its application is still limited to certain materials and not all MMR stages are applied. (3) there is a lack of continuity between the thematic provision of language skills training (oral) in the classroom with the special program for the Development of Sound and Rhythm Perception Communication (PKPBI) and the articulation training program. (4) limited teachers who have PKPBI and articulation skills, makes it difficult for classroom teachers to integrate oral language learning with the two special programs, (5) PKPBI teachers are more focused on developing sound perception exercises than communication exercises, even though the time allocation distribution has been arranged in such a way, (6) teachers are not free in designing and developing oral language skills, due to a lack of commitment and support from school leaders as evidenced by the inadequate use of supporting infrastructure such as the PKPBI room and articulation room, and the lack of empowerment of PKPBI teachers and speech therapists. (7) in carrying out home visits or studying from home (BDR) as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic, it makes it difficult for teachers to develop learning oral language skills, especially when they have to use media or teaching aids that are not available in students' homes. Likewise, when it comes to correcting phoneme correction (articulation exercise) it is rather difficult to do because it has to interact directly.

4.1.5 Efforts made by the school

There are several general efforts that have been made by schools (teachers) in developing oral language skills, including (1) the school collaborates with researchers from other institutions (LPTK) to conduct training and socialization on language and communication development programs, (2) schools provide opportunities for teachers to participate in PKPBI and other technical guidance activities, such as the development of the maternal reflective method (MMR) (3) there are teachers who have developed MMR as an alternative in literacy activities as an effort to strengthen language skills improvement, (4) schools are trying to organize and re-function the PKPBI and articulation rooms.

4.2 Discussion

The development of oral language skills program is a necessity that shall be conducted and developed either by schools or teachers, and hence the ability of Deaf students in language and communication becomes better. Assessment activities as an initial series in developing an oral language skills program are the main thing to determine the abilities of these students. When this assessment is carried out partially or only on the language aspect receptively, the teacher will not know the students' needs completely. Therefore, the assessment must be carried out thoroughly and comprehensively (Directorate of Special Education and Special Services Development, 2016, p. 12). Likewise in the implementation of the Sound and Rhythm Perception Communication Development (PKPBI) program which was only carried out partially and facultatively, The lack of integration between communication material and sound perception, and in the application of sound perception training is more focused on recognizing the properties of sound only and does not reach the comprehensive stage, making children's language skills not improve. Whereas PKPBI in its capacity as a special needs program and is an effort to compensate to support the process of developing language skills in Deaf children aims to make the child's remaining hearing sensitivity and vibrational feelings more trained to understand the meaning of various kinds of sounds, especially language sounds which are critical to success in communicating. with the environment (Aprilia, 2017: 74). Novianti's research results (2019) reinforce assumptions about the role of PKPBI in improving the speaking ability of deaf students.

As well, the use of language learning methods, schools do not have a high commitment to make the maternal reflective method (MMR) as an alternative in improving oral language skills. Teachers are still trapped in the practice of implementing language learning methods that are usually applied conventionally. The maternal reflective method (MMR) is a language learning method that is born from a conversational process that adopts the ways of a mother in providing language acquisition to students who do not speak through conversation. Bunawan & Yuwati (2000) suggest that "Maternal is a process of mastery the mother tongue or native language with conversation as its axis". This MMR was developed by Van Uden which is based on the concept of language acquisition put forward by Myklebust. Van Uden argues that the learning procedure by applying the reflective maternal method is broadly divided into four phases, namely: conducting conversations, visualizing the results of the conversation, reading, and holding reflections (Bunawan & Yuwati, 2000). Based on these four stages, the application of MMR is effective in increasing student interest in learning and improving language understanding in deaf children, (Prasetyo *et al*, 2017) supported by the use of interesting media, the oral language skills of Deaf students have increased (Zulmiyetri, 2017). Likewise, the ability to write in Deaf students increases (Satriani, 2020).

If schools make MMR as an alternative to improve language skills (oral) in Deaf children, then schools should establish this MMR consistently by making a systematic program supported by increasing teacher qualifications and supporting facilities. The opportunity for schools to make MMR a program is strengthened by the results of

Satriani's research (2020) by implementing MMR in literacy activities. Likewise, what was developed by Hernawati, *et al* (2018) by producing a learning design by applying MMR as one of the methods and integrating it with PKPBI. The results of this study provide a recommendation and the implication that the oral language skills development program can be applied holistically and integrated between thematic learning, PKPBI and articulation exercises.

5. Conclusion

Based on results obtained in this line of research, school readiness in developing oral language skills for Deaf learners can be concluded as follows:

1. As a series in the development of an oral language skills program, starting from planning, implementing, and evaluating activities, schools (teachers) have not implemented them systematically, structured, integrated, and inconsistently.

2. The obstacle faced is the teacher's lack of understanding in either developing or implementing language skills programs (verbal). This problem consisted of a lack of teaching methodological strategies on the part of teachers to solve immediate problems related to discipline.

3. There seems to be a complete lack of the support and commitment from the school principal to develop oral language skills for their students. And therefore, this is indicated by the inadequate use of supporting infrastructure such as the PKPBI room and the Articulation room and the supporting devices in it.

4. Efforts made by the school (teachers) are formulated to develop and collaborative research collaboration with universities, and the participation of teachers in technical guidance activities relevant to language development and communication for Deaf children.

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