A Deep Scanning on Mild Mental Retardation Individual's Language Acquisition and Development

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Abstract

This research investigates the language acquisition and development of a child with mild mental retardation in the 14th year. Language acquisition is developed by the appropriate treatment of caregivers including parents, family members, teachers, friends, and neighbors. A parent is the main caregiver that contributes language development of the child with mild mental retardation. The research uses a qualitative approach in a case study as a research design. The results of this research show that the child got speech therapy in the 3rd and the parent provided facilities to develop languages, such as story books, stationery, and gadgets. The child acquired four languages; Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, English, and Arabic since she went to school. Each language has a different role in the child's daily activities and communication. The schooling system contributed to the child's achievement academically and non-academically because she was studying at an inclusive school with specialist teachers from a psychology education background. In addition, the neighborhood environment supported the child's confidence in socialization. Thus, this research is supposed to reference the following researchers to discover more treatments for mentally disabled students in acquiring languages.

Keywords: language acquisition, language development, mild mental retardation, parenting, psycholinguistic

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the term mental retardation was changed into Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities as declared by the American Association on Mental Retardation (Heward et al., 2017). The intellectual disability is embedded in language and, concurrently, a form of linguistic othering that relies upon language as the agent of its social enactment (Holmes, 2014). Children who have language disabilities need proper

treatment from an early age to progress because the progression over years, they should master many language skills (Brent et al., 2001). This case motivates the parents to improve the language skills of the children because the parent is the coreference of children's growth instead of providing facilities for them. The parents collaborate with the medical services to get proper treatments for their mental retardation children. The treatment of the parent to the mild retardation child can be implemented based on behavioral psychology principles, incidental teaching, errorless compliance training, and parent training (Mcdiarmid & Bagner, 2005). Those four techniques are needed to increase positive behaviors for children with mild mental retardation.

In acquiring language, children in the infant stage will look at their surroundings and comprehend the instruction even if they cannot say each word. In the first two or three years of development, a child requires interaction with other language users to bring the general language capacity into contact with a particular language such as English (Yule, 2010). In this research, the child acquired the Javanese language and Bahasa Indonesia for daily communication. Both languages are the child's language acquisition, meanwhile, the child learned English and Arabic language. Meanwhile, they are aware of using the language for communication. Also, Chomsky (2002) defined language acquisition as transitioning from the state of the mind at birth, the initial cognitive state, to the stable state corresponding to the native knowledge of a natural language. In the case of this research, the child uttered the Javanese language and Bahasa Indonesia for daily communication.

Children's language ability is learned by imitating their responses to listening, which can be improved through positive reinforcement from their parents (He, 2019). The first language acquisition was the form of "nature (innate capacities and structures children are born with) and "nurture" (what they gain from experience) (Clark, 2009). Children's language acquisition is congenitally inherited because the language development of children grows because of the development of children's vocal organs and brain's nerve function (He, 2019). Moreover, chomsky (2022) stated that first language acquisition was distinct from other kinds of learning and could not be explained in terms of habit formation. In this case, the learning happened inside the learner's head and was driven by an innate capacity for language 'language acquisition device'. In non-English countries, English is becoming the second language and more the foreign language. Scholl & May (2017) defined a second language as a language that is learned by the majority of people, beyond a person's native language. On the other hand, a foreign language is learned where most people do not commonly speak the language in a community. Third language acquisition (L3) refers to the acquisition of any given language after the second language (L2) (Rast, 2008). In Indonesia, the use of the Arabic language as the foreign language acquisition of students at Islamic-based schools indicates that the language itself is learned by students consciously. Especially In pesantren, Islamic boarding schools usually provide meaning to the development or learning Arabic (Yusuf & Wekke, 2015).

Mild mental retardation children have IQ scores from 50 to 70 (Heward et al., 2017). Children with mild intellectual disabilities are identified when they are entering school in the second or third grade (Heward et al., 2017). They also have behavior and health problems more than mild intellectual disabilities (Heward et al., 2017). Children with mild mental retardation achieve most developmental milestones at expected ages, learn basic

language, and interact with family members and peers (Weis, 2018). Children with mental retardation are markedly slower than their peers in using memory effectively, associating and classifying information, reasoning, and making sound judgments – the types of performance measured on an intelligence test (Kirk et al., 2009). Language impairment is also caused by genetic factors, toxic agents, infections, and environmental factors (Kirk et al., 2009). In early childhood with mild mental retardation between 2 to 3 years old, they still produce one bilabial word. In this stage, the children have essentially produced disyllable in which the syllable-initial or onset consonants and the vowels are identical (Johnson & Reimers, 2010). Furthermore, the children are at a high risk of developing speech and language disorders, compared to typically developing children (Memisevic & Hadzic, 2013). At 9 years old, the children enrich their vocabulary memorization and their ability to develop lexical words and the words have more concrete meanings because they use to communicate with others (Shilc et al., 2017).

Skinner (2014) emphasizes the term "verbal behavior" that indicates the linguistic ability of a person is influenced by the behavior between speaker and listener. The theory affects the parent's treatment of the child with mild mental retardation due to the language proficiency of the child with mild mental retardation is much more influenced by the environment and behavior. Children with disabilities often have trouble interacting completely with peers and adults (Hebbeler & Spiker, 2016). A strategy for parents to provide information and support to children is to change their behavior rather than a lecture (Gross, 2013). An Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) could affect specific behaviors displayed by children with disabilities and emphasize improving the quantity and quality of language input or language development (Hebbeler & Spiker, 2016).

In the statute of the Indonesian Republic, disabilities are everyone with limited borderline in physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory in a long duration of time that has obstacles and difficulties to interact with others effectively within the same rights (Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 13, 2020:7, chapter 2 about Essential Accommodations to Students with Disabilities). The students who are classified as disabled students are allowed to join regular schools that are called inclusive schools. Inclusive education holds the teaching and learning of special needs students incorporate with normal and regular students (Wahyudi & Kristiawati, 2016). The schools occupy both regular and special needs students in the same classrooms. The special program for mental retardation students is developing self-esteem (Permendikbud No. 157, 2014:5, chapter 10, verse 2, point c about Curriculum of Education) due to the students having physical detention and intelligence under 70 IQ level. In companionship to special needs students, the government occupies special education teacher called Guru Pendamping Khusus (GPK) to education institutions in Indonesia (Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 13, 2020, chapter 5, verse 3, point b about Essential Accommodations for Students with Disabilities). Thus, inclusive schools provide three teachers in one classroom: they are classroom teacher, subject teacher, and special education teacher (GPK) (Wahyudi & Kristiawati, 2016).

The child's process to acquire English and the Arabic language is language learning. It is due to language learning being conscious about grammar and rules. Therefore, the urgency of this research is about a child's achievement in acquiring language. In case, the outcomes of acquiring language are supported by the development of the child's language capacity and surrounding environments. Therefore, the internal family depends on the

child's linguistic skills that contribute to the fluency of the child in producing vocabulary, creating sentences, and interacting based on instructions. Other external factors are continued in the school environment and neighborhood environment. The school environment shaped the child's probability to achieve competence achievements academically and non-academically.

METHOD

Research Design

The research is descriptive qualitative research using a case study research design that is conducted by observing an individual with mild mental retardation behavior and language development using digital tools to acquire literacy at home. A case study focuses on a single unit for analysis – one person, one group, one event, one organization, and so on (Saldana, 2011). In the case study, the researcher analyzed the observable behaviors around children, students, clients, patients, and other human beings (Duff, 2007). Therefore, the purpose is to gather a broader and more representative spectrum of perspectives. The case study in and of itself is valued as a unit that permits in-depth examination (Yin, 2018). The researcher focuses on a single case using embedded design. The subunits of analyses are incorporated within the single-case study and add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case (Yin, 2018).

Research Participant

The research subject focused on a student with mild mental retardation in the 14th-year-old. She is called SM (pseudonym), a middle child who is studying in the eighth grade of Junior High School. This student is particularly special because of her condition as mild mentally retarded and her ability to do daily activities like her peers. Meanwhile, she gets difficulties in other activities such as riding a bike by herself due to her hand's length being shorter than her peers. Furthermore, she is going to an inclusive school which provides special needs students in the class. All classes are regular and she joins a regular class monitored by a special teacher assistant (Guru Pendamping Khusus / GPK). Her father is a soldier who works in another city. Her mother is a civil servant at a soldier's office in her hometown. She is categorized as mild mental retardation because her IQ level is 68 (Wechsler Scale).

The case of this research is based on the language competency of a child with mild mental retardation. The child 14th years old and has better language competency than other mild mental retardation children. Therefore, the role of the parent affects the language competency of the child. Indeed, the surrounding environment also supports the child's language development, including the neighborhood environment and school environment.

Data Collection Instruments

This research is questioning the process of the individual with mild mental retardation acquiring and developing languages. Besides, the next stage is the role of the parent in the child's language acquisition and development. In addition, the supportive neighborhood environment is also influenced by the child's communication. The last is the appropriate teaching and learning strategy for the child's language acquisition.

Therefore, the researcher used interviews, observation, and archival documents to answer the questions. The observation was conducted for two and a half months naturally at the child's home and neighborhood environment. During the observation, the researcher noted the activities related to the research in the form of diary notes. To support the data collection and observation, the research gained interviews with the caregivers, including parents, relatives, neighbors, and teachers at school. Indeed, archival documents were also involved to enrich the research, for instance; video, psychological score test documents, photos, and exercise results.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

Table 1. Treatments on Language Acquisition of Caregivers to the Child with Mild Mental Retardation.

Activity	Treatments
Studying	1. The parent monitored SM's written task. SM missed one to two letters in almost every word. (IND-TR-1, IND-TR-7, IND-TR-8, JAV-TR-2, JAV-TR-3,) 2. Mom and the private teacher, Miss IR taught SM to count the money. (IND-TR-3, IND-TR-6, IND-TR-12) 3. SM asked Miss IR to take a break because SM felt tired. (IND-TR-9) 4. The mother guided SM in doing examination at home by online. (IND-TR-16, IND-TR-24) 5. SM watched ATV, a local TV channel in Malang. On the TV, the teacher taught social subject to students. (IND-TR-17) 6. The parent let SM to create Wi-Fi password at home. (IND-TR-18) 7. The child could give examples based on her daily habits. (IND-TR-25, IND-TR-28) 8. SM got online examination for English subject at home. (ENG-TR-1, ENG-TR-4) 9. SM could answer "introduction" material for English examination. (ENG-TR-5, ENG-TR-8) 10. She learnt English from the laptop because she could operate it by herself. (ENG-TR-6, ENG-TR-7) 11. The teachers gave Arabic assignment to memorize stationary in Arabic language. (ARB-TR-2) 12. She wrote as Latin formation from the left side. Meanwhile, Arabic language was started on the right side. (ARB-TR-3) 13. The mother called an Islamic teacher to teach her family. SM recited in Iqro 2. She recited well but should be repeated many times. (ARB-TR-4)
Daily activities	1. Mom and aunt asked SM to mop the floor in Bahasa Indonesia instruction. (IND-TR-2)

	2. The mother asked SM to water the flowers in front of the house. (IND-TR-5)
	3. The mother reminded SM to pray first because the praying time was coming. (IND-TR-10, ARB-TR-1)
	4. The aunt asked SM to fold SM's own clothes. SM had washed her underwear by self. (IND-TR-11)
	5. SM debated to her mom about online class uniform. (IND-TR-26)
	6. The mother supplied diet herbal medicine to her children. (JAV-TR-5)
	7. The mother provided facility for SM. SM got high technology gadgets at home. (ENG-TR-2)
	8. The parent let SM to use smart TV as well. She knew the English language vocabulary from gadgets. She operated the TV well by herself. (ENG-TR-3)
Communication	1. The mother confirmed to SM about SM's friends at school. The mother knew some problems about her daughter and friends. (IND-TR-4)
	2. The child told the truth about her condition and activities. (IND-TR-4, IND-TR-25, JAV-TR-1)
	3. SM and her father talked on phone. (IND-TR-13)
	4. SM talked to her neighbor besides her house. (IND-TR-14,)
	5. SM talked to her cat every day. She trained the cat to do good habit at home. (IND-TR-15, IND-TR-20)
	6. The mother let SM to play with neighbor. (IND-TR-19)
	7. SM offered the breads to me. (IND-TR-21)
	8. SM sent messages to her friends about classroom materials. She also asked her friends' condition. (IND-TR-22)
	9. PU called SM using video call. She often called SM for minutes. (IND-TR-23)
	10. The mother always reminded SM to study every day. In a spare time, SM tended to play online games. (IND-TR-27)
	11. The brother called SM to take out Emot. The brother usually spoke in Javanese language to SM. (JAV-TR-4)

The table above represents the outcomes of the child in acquiring languages. The achievement of SM in acquiring both Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese language allowed her to learn foreign languages. SM got English language and Arabic language at elementary school. Furthermore, her ability was not as fast as regular children's because her IQ measurement was 68 in Wechsler Scale. A child with mild mental retardation acquired 170 vocabulary from 200 vocabularies provided (Pandudinata et al., 2018). The result showed that language acquisition of mild mental retardation was approximately approached the regular children. It was similar with the case in this research that the child (SM) could speak well in Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese.

Therefore, when SM got English language at school, the teachers used songs and replaced the original lyrics to be filled with English language vocabulary. Arabic teachers

also did this condition. This strategy built up SM's ability to memorize foreign language vocabulary. By singing the songs in different lyrics with the same tone, the child was easily comprehended the foreign languages. Research by Mohammadian & Dolatabadi (2016) found that teaching with affection had any effect on children with an intellectual disabilities learning English. In this case, the children had an English language background. The researchers trained the children using Total Physical Response (TPR) to do imperative. The result was quite different from SM's achievement. SM recognized English in simple sentences and vocabulary due to her background in English-speaking-country.

Table 2. Language Development Outcomes of the Child with Mild Mental Retardation

Code	Context
IND-INS-1	SM helped her aunt in doing housewife activities.
IND-CON-1	Enjoying mobile phone.
IND-CON-2	SM told her stories at elementary school.
IND-CON-3	SM told her problems at junior high school.
IND-INS-2	SM learnt money with Miss IR.
IND-CON-4	SM gave advice to GG
IND-CON-5	SM told GG not to be naughty in riding activities.
IND-CON-6	SM taught GG to be more patient.
IND-CON-7	SM asked GG to be quite.
IND-CON-8	SM treated neighbor wisely.
IND-CON-9	SM explained her idea to stop GG playing water faucet.
IND-CON-10	SM told me that she felt ashamed to meet her old friend.
IND-CON-11	SM told her father about her brother's interruption to her mother.
IND-CON-12	SM blamed GG to not open SM's bag without permission.
IND-CON-13	SM smiled, nodded, and said thank to me about my gift to her.
IND-CON-14	SM offered some bread to me.
IND-CON-15	SM felt annoying to her brother because he liked to choose meals, instead of eating the served meals.
IND-CON-16	SM shared her milkshake to GG.
IND-CON-17	SM shared the foods to GG.
IND-CON-18	SM taught GG to reply her words.
IND-CON-19	SM noticed GG to be polite to me.
IND-CON-20	SM talked with her classmates by phone.
IND-CON-21	SM felt annoying because GG and AL played together.
IND-CON-22	SM watched television with GG and AL.
IND-CON-23	SM noticed her cat to be quite.
IND-MEM-1	SM sang a song from Maluku "Rasa Sayange" with Miss IR.
JAV-CON-1	GG motivated SM to ride bicycle.
JAV-CON-2	The aunt motivated SM to stay focus in riding bicycle.
JAV-CON-3	SM asked GG to give her water.
JAV-CON-4	SM made her bed tidy before riding bicycle.
JAV-CON-5	SM reported to her aunt after doing housewife activities.
JAV-CON-6	SM debated to her brother.

JAV-CON-7	SM and PU talked in mobile phone.
JAV-CON-8	SM debated to her mother about wearing a mask.
JAV-CON-9	SM's brother reminded SM to pray first.
JAV-CON-10	SM reminded her brother to pray Jumat.
JAV-CON-11	SM grumbled because of her laptop.
JAV-CON-12	SM noticed GG's maid to close the door during Maghrib time.
JAV-MEM-1	SM sang Javanese song "Lir Ilir" for examination.
ENG-CON-1	SM played online games.
ENG-CON-2	SM downloaded online games by herself.
ENG-CON-3	SM noticed to be quite when she was playing online games.
ENG-CON-4	SM downloaded other games using laptop.
ARB-MEM-1	SM recited and memorized verses in Quran.
ARB-MEM-2	SM prayed in Islamic religion before eating, while GG prayed in Catholic religion.
ARB-REC-1	SM read and wrote Arabic letters.
ARB-MEM-3	SM learnt and memorized Arabic language vocabulary.

The table above explored the outcomes of language development in the form of conversations and interactions. In the development language of Bahasa Indonesia, the child communicated well with her parent and family member. It is due to the facility provided by the parent at home. As Joshi & Shukla (2019) investigated, children are easy to develop their language because of memory games. Memory games consist of objects that can expand language and understanding of concepts strengthening basic requirements for literacy, numeracy, and social interactions. In her daily conversation, SM tended to speak Bahasa Indonesia in a casual style and simple way not grammar correct. The child's proficiency in literacy aspect is going better. She could read the text and storybooks.

DISCUSSION

After one year of therapy on speech therapy, SM showed improvement in her language skills. She could understand her parent's instructions and other people's speech. She started to be more talkative because she spoke more than before the therapy. SM could say the words in bilabial, labiodentals, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal. Furthermore, she needs more extra to say liquid words because her tongue was smaller than regular children's (Memisevic & Hadzic, 2013). The research of Memisevic & Hadzic (2013) showed that children with mild mental retardation had a lower prevalence than those with moderate mental retardation children. Almost all children with mild mental retardation had some form of speech-language disorders (49.4%) while the moderate mental retardation children were doubled (93.9%). This research emphasized the importance of speech therapy for children with mental retardation. Her ability in learning the English language for SM has been being her foreign language acquisition. In the case of the SM (the child), she utters the Javanese language and Bahasa Indonesia for her daily communication. On the other hand, the way of children to conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk is called language learning (Krashen, 2009). In this case, the child's process to acquire English and Arabic language is language learning.

At home, SM can differentiate Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese languages from her parent who has a different culture. Unfortunately, the Javanese language usage at school was lacking because the SM's teachers tended to use Bahasa Indonesia to communicate. The condition was unlike the research of Khuzaefi (2018) who investigated the use of the Javanese language using *Krama* level was students' daily behavior at some Islamic based schools in Semarang. However, SM's condition was different because she used *Ngoko* level to communicate with her family. Johari & Nazari (2019) also concluded that Javanese people should expose to the use of Javanese language in daily communication. In this case, the parent was the main role to cultivate local language. Alsalem (2016) found that disabled students improved their motivation by using digital literacy. In SM experiences, she developed her language acquisition by consuming gadgets. SM acquired English more from the instructions on mobile phones, laptops, and smart television. It is in line with Hanser (2010) who investigated children with intellectual disabilities needed to learn exploratory reading and writing experiences of children before they learn to formally read and write that is called as emergent literacy, which focuses on developing foundational experiences to prepare them for conventional instruction when entering elementary school. The literacy starts at an early age, as infants, toddlers, and young children.

Incorporating parenting treatment, caregivers including parents and educators should maintain the best learning goals to develop the languages of early children (Johnson & Reimers, 2010). In learning habits at home, the parent accompanied SM to read, write, and accomplish the assignments. Sudartinah (2008) found four benefits of the companionship of parents to their young children; developing more vocabulary, understanding abstract concepts easier, learning grammar naturally, and understanding conversation routines. Besides occupying gadgets for children with mild mental retardation or any other disabilities, the parent also allowed their children to access applications on gadgets. Lan et al., (2018) found that the result of using 3D virtual environment games for children with mental retardation had a high interest in computers to learn. This case proved that SM's caregivers also did the same actions. In the development in acquiring English, firstly, SM learnt vocabulary in the model of singing songs when she was studying at elementary school. The next phase was regarding the growth of technology that allowed her to recognize gadgets. By using gadgets, SM could brows many kinds on the internet including text, pictures, and videos. The steps encouraged SM's ability in acquiring and developing English language skills. During the online class, SM also used video in the process of teaching and learning. The teachers' explanation was delivered in the form of an audio-visual graphic. The use of audio-visual aids or videos produced more interest and tendency among learners toward English learning (Noori & Farvardin, 2016). The video's animation and lively context were a clue to remind the learners about word meaning.

An external factor for a mentally disabled child is a lack of support from extended families and society which affects difficulties in communicating with the school and ineffective school programs (Dyson, 2010). The condition was relatively different from SM social communication condition. In SM's neighborhood environment, the people welcomed to her and support SM's weakness and strength to increase her self-confidence. Therefore, SM felt secure living with her neighbors when her parent was not at home. SM could socialize well with them. In Skinner theory, behavior alters the environment through

mechanical action, and the properties are simple ways to the effects produced (Skinner, 2014). Therefore, case of SM's language proficiency is influenced by the acts of the environment.

In the educational field, particularly in an inclusive school, the teachers apply appropriate methods to engage students' interaction and communication with intellectual disabilities children because they have problems with conceptual skills, social skills, and practical skills (Weis, 2018). The curriculum for special needs students was similar to regular students in assessing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies (Aslan, 2017). Meanwhile, the classroom strategies were quite different from regular students. In this case, the teachers for special needs students had particular teaching strategies for them. Purbani (2013) investigated that the establishment of inclusive education can ease the school to grow in leadership. In the case of SM's experience in inclusive schools since elementary school, she showed leadership to herself and young children. SM applied her leadership when she played with younger kids. Hayes et al., (2018) enhanced literacy techniques to teach mental retardation students; they simplify text and use digital texts, best communication, cooperative learning, and motivation. However, those techniques suit SM because she could develop her linguistics skills. In this case, SM often missed letters and punctuation in writing a complete sentence. Hence, digital literacy increases engagement and motivation in learning the language for mentally retarded students because of the content inside the gadgets.

CONCLUSION

The researcher finds that the language acquisition of a child with mild mental retardation is rooted in parenting treatments. Indeed, to develop more language and linguistics awareness, the parent has the main role. In this case, the child is easy to uses Bahasa Indonesia with her father and the Javanese language with her mother because of her family habits. It is due to both parents having different ethnic groups with their local languages. The child's ability in acquiring foreign languages, such as English language and Arabic language is supported by the qualified teaching strategy at school. Teachers and parents incorporate to gain the language achievement of the child. However, a supportive neighborhood environment establishes a child's self-confidence. The implication of this research is narrowed to family treatments, particularly for families with special needs children. A very loving family contributes self-awareness and confidence to the children. The best parent educates their mild mental retardation child to achieve academically and non-academically. Academically is shown by how the child acquires language; while non-academically is represented by the interaction and communication with others. In addition, at the earlier ages of children, parents are asked to recognize the lack of children. This condition affects whether the children get speech delay or not. Moreover, in educational fields, inclusive schools are needed to accommodate children with special needs.

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