

The Role of Teachers in Accommodating the Learning Needs of Students with Speech Delay in Regular Elementary School Classrooms

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of inclusive education and the role of teachers in accommodating the learning needs of students with speech delays in regular elementary school classes. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results show that inclusive learning is implemented in regular classes with diverse student characteristics. Teachers act as facilitators, motivators, and social-emotional guides by adjusting methods, media, and communication patterns, such as the use of simple language, visual media, and providing additional time. These efforts can increase student participation and confidence. However, there are still obstacles such as limited teacher competence, time, and professional support. It is concluded that the success of inclusive education is highly dependent on teacher readiness and school system support.

Keywords: Needs, Speech delay, Teacher role

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi pendidikan inklusif dan peran guru dalam mengakomodasi kebutuhan belajar siswa dengan keterlambatan bicara di kelas reguler sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, dan dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran inklusif diimplementasikan di kelas reguler dengan karakteristik siswa yang beragam. Guru bertindak sebagai fasilitator, motivator, dan pembimbing sosial-emosional dengan menyesuaikan metode, media, dan pola komunikasi, seperti menggunakan bahasa sederhana, media visual, dan memberikan waktu tambahan. Upaya ini dapat meningkatkan partisipasi dan kepercayaan diri siswa. Namun, masih ada kendala, seperti keterbatasan kompetensi guru, keterbatasan waktu, dan keterbatasan dukungan profesional. Disimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan pendidikan inklusif sangat bergantung pada kesiapan guru dan dukungan sistem sekolah.

Keywords: Kebutuhan, Speech delay, Peran guru



INTRODUCTION

The National Education System Law number 20 of 2003 affirms that every child has the right to receive quality educational services, including students with special needs. In this case, education providers play a crucial role in the implementation of education that provides opportunities for all students, including children with special needs. Children with special needs are children who require specific services in education, different from children in general. These children with special needs experience obstacles in learning and development (Dahlan, 2022). Other studies state that children with special needs are children who require special treatment in connection with developmental disorders and abnormalities experienced by children (Triantoro, 2022). From these two opinions, it can be concluded that children with special needs are children who experience obstacles or abnormalities in their development and learning process, so they require services, assistance, and educational handling that are special and different from children in general. These services are provided according to the needs and characteristics of each child so that their development and learning can take place optimally.

Inclusive education exists to provide the broadest possible opportunities to children with special needs. Because its existence is seen as capable of realizing the implementation of education that respects diversity (Irdamurni: 2020). Inclusive Education is a form of education that unites children with special needs (ABK) with normal children in general to learn. This means that in inclusive education all children with disabilities are served in the nearest school, in regular classes with their peers (Mervyn Hyde, 2014). Meanwhile, according to Hildegun Olsen (Trianto, 2022: 8) Inclusive Education is a school/Madrasah must accommodate all children regardless of physical, intellectual, social-emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. According to Staub and Peck (Trianto, 2022: 8) Inclusive Education is all children with special needs must learn in the same class as their peers. This is in line with research conducted by (Farhan, 2022) Inclusive education is an approach that aims to change the education system by eliminating barriers that prevent each student from fully participating in education (No Title, 2022). From these several definitions, it can be concluded that inclusive education is education that provides services to all students without differentiating social status, physical conditions to participate in education together in one learning community. In the context of regular classes, this problem is unique, because teachers must balance the demands of the majority curriculum with individual communication needs, so that the research domains from both educational science and inclusion policies are interrelated. Indramurni (2020) states that inclusive education requires every elementary school to be able to accommodate the needs of diverse students, including students with speech delays.

The diversity of students in regular classes requires teachers to always implement diverse learning according to students' learning needs. It was found that the reality of learning in regular classes shows that students have very complex diversity, both in terms of academic abilities, learning styles, socio-cultural background characters, and in terms of developmental abilities themselves. A teacher must be able to accommodate differences in learning needs so that all students are actively involved and have equal opportunities in regular classes. Regular Class (Full Inclusion) Children with special needs learn alongside normal children all day in regular classes using the same curriculum. (Barlian et al., 2023). Education should be able to accommodate all these differences, be open to all and provide the needs required by each individual (Andini et al., 2000). In one class, teachers are faced with students who are able to understand the material quickly, while other students need a long time and require intensive (special) attention, in addition, there are also students with mild special needs, such as students with Speech Delay, who experience delays in speaking or in communicating verbally, so

they require different learning strategies and approaches. Although various studies have discussed inclusive learning strategies for children with special needs, studies specifically highlighting the imbalance in teacher competency in managing students with speech delays in the classroom are still relatively limited. Most previous studies have focused on identifying speech delays, therapeutic interventions, or the role of parents, while the pedagogical issues teachers experience in the learning process have not been studied in depth. Field conditions indicate that teachers often experience difficulties in adapting media methods and communication patterns, resulting in a mismatch between student needs and the learning practices implemented. As a result, the learning process becomes less effective and has the potential to hinder the development of students' communication skills. Therefore, research is needed that more comprehensively examines the types of teacher difficulties, the factors causing this imbalance, and appropriate learning strategies to support the management of students with speech delays in the school environment.

The urgency of this research lies in the fact that teachers' difficulties in managing students with speech delays can directly impact the effectiveness of learning, student engagement, and the development of their communication and social skills in the classroom. If teachers lack appropriate strategies, media, and competencies, students with speech delays are at risk of experiencing greater learning delays, difficulty interacting, and even being neglected in inclusive learning processes. Furthermore, the increasing number of students with special communication needs in schools demands more adaptive and applicable learning models for teachers.

The novelty of this research can be emphasized by its focus, which not only examines speech delay from the student's perspective but also from the perspective of teachers' experiences and challenges in daily learning practices. This research's novelty can be seen in the identification of (1) forms of imbalance or barriers for teachers in managing students with speech delays in the classroom; (2) analysis of causal factors including teacher competency, learning methods, media, and school support; and (3) formulation of more effective and contextual learning strategies or models tailored to field conditions. Therefore, this research offers a new perspective by linking the needs of students with speech delays with teachers' pedagogical readiness, a situation rarely studied specifically. So the aim of this research is to describe the role of teachers in accompanying and facilitating the learning process of students with speech delay in class.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study to understand the role of teachers in the learning of students with speech delay. Qualitative research is conducted in natural settings, with the researcher as the key instrument, using triangulation as the data collection technique, inductive analysis, and an emphasis on meaning rather than generalization (Safarudin et al., 2023). The research subjects were classroom teachers and students with speech delay in an inclusive elementary school, with data sources consisting of informants and learning activities.

The research procedure was conducted through direct observation in regular classes, semi-structured interviews, and documentation in the form of photos of activities, assignments, and student progress notes. Observations focused on the teacher's delivery of material, communication strategies, and adaptations to learning and classroom interactions. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques to reduce uncertainty (Safarudin et al., 2023). Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, presentation of data in narrative and tabular form, and drawing conclusions and verification. The results

illustrate the teacher's role in assisting and adapting methods, media, and communication patterns to meet the learning needs of students with speech delay..

RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

Result

1. Overview and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Regular Elementary School Classes

The school's policy regarding the admission and services of students with special needs is based on a commitment to inclusive education, namely providing equal opportunities for all students without discrimination. SDN J accepts students with special needs, including those with speech delays, to study in regular classes alongside their peers. SDN J strives to adapt learning and provide support according to student needs, despite limitations in resources and special support services. The learning model at SDN J utilizes regular classes (fully inclusive). During the learning process, teachers strive to actively involve all students, while still providing special attention to students with speech delays so they can participate in learning activities according to their abilities and needs.

The classroom environment at SDN J reflects the diversity of students, as evidenced by differences in academic ability, learning styles, character, and language and communication development, particularly among students with speech delays. Within a single class, there are students who are able to grasp material quickly, students who require more support, and students with speech delays who experience communication difficulties. This situation requires teachers to create an inclusive atmosphere that values differences and provides educational services tailored to students' needs. The readiness of teachers and the school to implement inclusive education is evident in the school's commitment to accepting students with special needs at SDN J. However, this readiness still faces limitations, particularly in terms of specific teacher competencies, inclusive education training, and professional support. Consequently, the implementation of inclusive education is not yet fully optimal.

2. Characteristics and Conditions of Students with Speech Delay in Regular Elementary School Classes

Have you ever met a child who has difficulty expressing what they want? Have you ever seen a child who is more often silent than they are talking in class? This condition is known as Speech Delay. The Speech delay students observed at SDN J have the following characteristics: not interested in speaking, having difficulty understanding instructions, having difficulty answering questions when asked, often crying when their speech is not understood by friends, not wanting to work in groups, and preferring to be alone. Therefore, Speech delay students often experience obstacles in their learning, especially in understanding verbal instructions and answering questions from teachers and interacting with peers. These obstacles make it difficult for Speech delay students to express their understanding and opinions verbally, so they appear passive and slow to receive responses. These obstacles have an impact on their social interaction patterns, lack of confidence, frequent tantrums and frustration expressed through crying. Which ultimately has an impact on their learning participation at school.

3. The role of teachers in accommodating the learning needs of students with speech delays

a. Teachers as facilitators in learning

Based on the results of observations and studies of classroom learning practices, the role of teachers as learning facilitators appears to be very important in supporting students with speech delay, teachers not only function as material deliverers, but also

companions who adjust the learning process to the individual needs of students. Adjusting the method of delivering material is the main strategy implemented by teachers. Teachers deliver material gradually, with a slow tempo and clear structure. The material is simplified without reducing the substance of the learning, so that students achieve their learning objectives. The results of observations show that this approach helps students with speech delay to be more focused and not experience confusion in the learning process. An example of learning carried out by teachers, in the material showing body parts (eyes) the teacher pronounces with with slowly and clearly while pointing to the eye then the teacher shows a picture of the eye.

Teachers use simple language, accompanied by repetition and visual aids to reinforce student understanding. The language teachers use tends to be short, concise, and to-the-point. Important instructions are repeated several times to ensure students understand what to do. Furthermore, the use of visual aids such as pictures, word cards, picture cards, and other props has been shown to help students connect words, meanings, and objects. These results align with findings that visual stimulation can support the language development of children with speech delays.

During the learning process, teachers also provide additional time for students with speech delays, especially when asked to answer questions or express opinions. Teachers do not force students to respond immediately and allow them to process information at their own pace. As a result, students demonstrate increased self-confidence and are more willing to attempt communication, both verbally and nonverbally.

Observations also revealed that teachers strive to create a sense of safety and comfort for students to communicate. Teachers demonstrate patience and empathy, avoiding direct correction that could lead to embarrassment. They also provide positive reinforcement for every communication effort made by students. This highly supportive classroom environment results in increased student participation in learning activities and social interactions with peers.

Overall, the results and discussion of this research demonstrate that teachers play a key role as adaptive, communicative, and empathetic learning facilitators, positively contributing to the communication skills and learning engagement of students with speech delays. This approach not only supports academic achievement but also fosters optimal social and emotional development.

b. Teachers as Motivators

Research results at SDN J indicate that the role of teachers as motivators significantly contributes to increasing student courage and participation, particularly for students with speech delays. The motivational support provided by teachers impacts not only academic aspects but also students' social and emotional development. One form of motivation provided by teachers is through positive reinforcement, both verbal and non-verbal. Teachers offer verbal praise, such as saying "You're great," or giving a thumbs-up. They also provide non-verbal reinforcement by saying "Thank you for your courage and giving applause. Observations indicate that this positive reinforcement can increase students' self-confidence and encourage them to be more active in the learning process.

The teacher has encouraged students to have the courage to speak without applying excessive pressure. The teacher also provides opportunities for students to express themselves according to their abilities, and creates a learning environment that is tolerant of mistakes. This approach has been proven to be effective in reducing students' anxiety in communicating and providing opportunities to speak even with imperfect pronunciation. Furthermore, based on observations, the teacher has also shown an attitude of respect for every communication effort made by students with speech delay. Every student's attempt at communication is treated as a learning process,

not solely assessed on language accuracy. This appreciation for communication efforts plays an important role in fostering students' intrinsic motivation and strengthening the teacher-student relationship.

In situations where students experience frustration or tantrums, teachers play an active role in adaptively managing their emotions. Instead of imposing punishment, teachers use an empathetic approach by calming students, providing pauses, and helping them express their feelings simply. This approach helps students develop emotional regulation and prevents disruptions to the learning process due to emotional stress.

From the above description, it can be concluded that research findings show that teachers' roles as responsive, empathetic, and consistent motivators can create a learning environment that supports students' communication and emotional development. Appropriate motivational support not only increases learning participation but also strengthens students' psychology in the context of inclusive learning.

c. Teachers as social-emotional guides in creating a conducive classroom climate

The role of teachers as social-emotional mentors is crucial in supporting the social-emotional development and participation of students who experience communication and interaction barriers with teachers. Teachers not only focus on academic achievement but also play an active role in building positive social relationships and an inclusive classroom climate. Teachers deliberately organize group activities, collaborative games, and simple discussions, allowing students to participate according to their abilities. Teachers at SDN J (SDN J) do this by helping students interact with their peers, where teachers act as social mediators who facilitate interactions between students. Observations show that teacher support in social interactions helps students who tend to be passive begin to engage in activities with their peers, thereby expanding students' learning opportunities.

Furthermore, teachers have instilled empathy and acceptance in the classroom by modeling respect for differences, explaining the importance of helping each other, and emphasizing that each student has unique characteristics and abilities. This fostering of empathy is achieved through direct guidance, role modeling, and reinforcement of students' social behavior. Results indicate that these efforts have had a significant positive impact on increasing mutual acceptance and reducing discriminatory behavior in the classroom.

To address students who exhibit withdrawn behavior or resistance to learning activities, teachers employ a supportive and persuasive approach. They strive to understand the emotional factors underlying such behavior and then provide gradual support. Strategies include assigning customized assignments, engaging with students individually, and providing opportunities for students to express their feelings. As a result, students demonstrate increased learning engagement and a gradual decrease in withdrawal behavior.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the teacher's role as a social and emotional mentor contributes significantly to creating a safe, inclusive learning environment that supports students' social and emotional development. This approach not only helps students adapt socially but also strengthens their emotional readiness to actively participate in the learning process.

4. Teachers' Obstacles in Accommodating Students with Speech Delay

In this study, there were several obstacles encountered by class teachers who handled students with speech delay. Some of the challenges found included; (1)

Teachers still experienced limited knowledge and special training regarding responsive teaching strategies for students with special needs, especially students with speech delay, so that teachers were less prepared to manage student diversity in inclusive classes. Teachers' unpreparedness is not only caused by a lack of training, but also by limited facilities and resources that support inclusive education. (2) It was found that teachers in the classroom face limitations in terms of time and the number of students in the class. This becomes a practical obstacle in providing individual attention. (3) The lack of professional support such as therapists or special assistant teachers limits teachers' ability to address students' specific needs appropriately. These shortcomings are often identified in research that highlights the lack of support facilities and resources in inclusive schools. It is very important for assistant teachers and regular teachers to receive special training so that they can thoroughly understand the characteristics and needs of students. (4) Teachers face pressure from the demands of the regular curriculum which sometimes makes them focus on achieving general academic standards, so that the space for differentiating and adapting learning is limited. The imbalance between curriculum demands and the needs of students with special needs is a challenge that needs to be overcome to realize inclusive and effective learning.

Discussion

Based on research results, the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools demonstrates a commitment to providing equal learning opportunities for all students, including students with speech delays. Schools have implemented full inclusion classes, where students with special needs learn alongside regular students in one class using the same curriculum. This condition reflects the diversity of student abilities, both in academic and communication aspects, thus requiring teachers to be able to create adaptive and inclusive learning. However, limited teacher competency and professional support remain challenges in its implementation. According to (Emawati, 2008) in full inclusion classes, children with special needs learn alongside normal children throughout the day in regular classes using the same curriculum (Barlian et al., 2023).

The characteristics of students with speech delay in this study indicate barriers to communication, such as difficulty understanding instructions, slow responses, and a tendency to withdraw from social interactions. This condition impacts students' low learning participation and self-confidence. This aligns with the opinion that speech delay is a delay in speaking ability compared to children of the same age (Sri Ayu Laali et al., 2025). Therefore, a learning approach is needed that focuses not only on academic aspects but also on students' communication and social-emotional development.

In the learning process, the teacher's role as a facilitator is very dominant. Teachers adapt their methods by delivering material in stages, using simple language, and utilizing visual media such as pictures and flashcards to aid student understanding. This strategy has proven effective in increasing student focus and reducing confusion. This finding is supported by research that states that the use of visual media can improve vocabulary and articulation skills in children with speech delays (Use et al., 2025). Furthermore, teachers also provide additional time (wait time) so students can process information more optimally. The teacher's role as a motivator also contributes significantly to increasing student self-confidence. Teachers provide positive reinforcement, both verbally and nonverbally, and create a safe and error-tolerant learning environment. This approach can reduce students' anxiety in communicating and encourage them to participate more actively. Furthermore, teachers also act as social-emotional mentors by facilitating interactions between students, instilling empathy, and helping students manage their emotions when they experience frustration. A supportive

classroom environment has been shown to gradually increase students' social and emotional engagement.

However, teachers face several obstacles, such as limited knowledge about inclusive education, lack of time to provide individual attention, and minimal support from professional staff. Furthermore, the demands of the regular curriculum also pose challenges in adapting learning. This situation indicates that the success of inclusive education depends not only on the role of teachers but also requires adequate system support, including training, facilities, and policies that support inclusive and sustainable learning. A literature review on teacher professionalism in inclusive education indicates a lack of training and teacher competency development as a major obstacle (Septya et al., 2025). Therefore, it is crucial for mentor teachers and regular teachers to receive specialized training so they can comprehensively understand the characteristics and needs (Adelia et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the implementation of inclusive education in elementary schools has been successful, demonstrating a commitment to providing equal educational services for students, including those with speech delays. The role of teachers is key to successful learning, not only as presenters of material but also as facilitators, motivators, and social-emotional mentors. Teachers have implemented various adaptation efforts, such as the use of step-by-step methods, visual media, simple language, and providing additional time, which have been proven to improve student understanding, confidence, and participation in the learning process. The implications of this research indicate that the success of inclusive education is highly dependent on teachers' competence in understanding the characteristics of students with special needs and their ability to implement adaptive learning strategies. Therefore, increased teacher training and professional development, as well as support from schools and experts, are needed to create more optimal and inclusive learning.

However, this study has limitations, including its location in a single school and its relatively small number of subjects, making the results difficult to generalize widely. Furthermore, the study focused solely on students with speech delays without comparing them to other types of special needs.

Based on these limitations, recommendations for future research include expanding the study location, involving more subjects, and examining various types of special needs within the context of inclusive education. Further research is also recommended to explore the use of learning technology as a supporting medium for students with special needs, thereby making a more comprehensive contribution to the development of inclusive education practices.

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