

THE EFFECT OF THE SYLLABIC METHOD ON THE EARLY READING SKILLS OF EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AT A SPECIAL SCHOOL IN SURAKARTA

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the low initial reading ability of eighth-grade students at Special School Surakarta, where all students still have difficulty in recognizing letters and often make mistakes in distinguishing letter shapes. Based on these problems, the researcher aims to determine the effect of implementing the syllabic method on the improvement of initial reading ability in eighth-grade mentally retarded children at SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta. This research uses a quantitative, experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest. The validity test used in this study is content validity, as measured by Aiken's V formula, which yielded an average value of 0.94. While the reliability test uses Cronbach's Alpha, which shows a significance value of 0.884. Data collection was carried out using an oral test instrument. The data analysis technique used to test the research hypothesis is the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. The study found an increase in initial reading ability after the syllabic method was applied. This finding indicates that the use of the syllabic method has a positive effect on improving the initial reading ability of mentally retarded children. The advantage of this method lies in its approach, which focuses directly on syllables rather than letter-by-letter spelling, thereby accelerating the reading learning process for children with special needs. Thus, the syllabic method can be an effective alternative reading instruction method for students with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: ability; early reading skills; intellectual disability; syllabic method

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya kemampuan membaca permulaan pada peserta didik kelas VIII di Sekolah Luar Biasa Surakarta, di mana seluruh peserta didik masih mengalami kesulitan dalam mengenali huruf dan sering melakukan kesalahan dalam membedakan bentuk huruf. Berdasarkan permasalahan tersebut, peneliti bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh dari penerapan pembelajaran dengan syllabic method untuk mempengaruhi peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan pada anak tunagrahita kelas VIII SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain eksperimen berupa one-group pretest-posttest design. Uji validitas yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah validitas isi dengan rumus Aiken's V didapatkan nilai rata-rata sebesar 0,94. Sedangkan uji reliabilitas menggunakan Cronbach Alpha yang menunjukkan nilai signifikansi sebesar 0,884. Pengambilan data dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan instrumen tes lisan. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis penelitian adalah Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan setelah diterapkan syllabic method. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa penggunaan syllabic method berpengaruh positif terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan anak tunagrahita. Keunggulan metode ini terletak pada pendekatannya yang tidak menekankan pada pengejaan huruf per huruf, melainkan langsung pada suku kata, sehingga mempercepat proses pembelajaran membaca bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus. Dengan demikian, syllabic method dapat dijadikan sebagai alternatif metode pembelajaran membaca yang efektif bagi peserta didik tunagrahita.

Kata kunci: anak tunagrahita; kemampuan; membaca permulaan; syllabic method

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a right of every citizen. All individuals, including children with special needs, have the same right to develop and contribute to society. For children with special needs, education is not only a right but also a vital component for their future development (Suharsiwi, 2017). According to Regulation of the Minister of Child Protection Number 4, Article 1 of 2017, children with disabilities or special needs are those who experience physical, intellectual, mental, or sensory limitations over a long period, which hinders their ability to interact with their environment and participate fully and effectively with other children.

Mental retardation is a term used to describe children with significantly below-average intellectual ability. It refers to a condition marked by limited intelligence and inadequate social interaction. Children with intellectual disabilities often face difficulties in following conventional educational programs and therefore require special education services tailored to their individual needs (Somantri, 2018).

Children with intellectual disabilities also tend to have limitations in language acquisition. This is not due to articulation disorders but is often caused by limited vocabulary and underdeveloped word-processing skills (Suharsiwi, 2017). Studies in developed countries show that more than 10% of students experience reading difficulties. These difficulties can lead to behavioral problems, feelings of inferiority, and a lack of motivation to learn. Such outcomes occur because reading is a fundamental skill, and much of the information in education is presented in written form, requiring proficient reading skills to access (Yusuf, 2005). Reading development occurs in two main stages: the beginner stage and the advanced stage. At the beginner stage, reading is mechanical, and activities such as reading aloud are appropriate. At the advanced stage, which typically occurs in higher grades, reading focuses more on comprehension and is better suited for silent reading (Syamsuddin, 2021).

The syllabic method introduces reading through syllables rather than individual letters. Learners are taught to recognize syllables such as *ba, bi, bu, be, bo, ca, ci, cu, ce, co*, and so on. These syllables are then combined to form meaningful words—for example, *ba-ju, cu-ci, da-du, and ku-ku*. This activity can be extended to form phrases or simple sentences by combining these words. The advantages of this method include, 1) Students are not required to spell out each letter individually; 2) Students learn to recognize letters through peeling and combining syllables; 3) Students can more easily recognize various types of words; 4) Instruction using this method does not require excessive time; 5) The method supports understanding of meaningful words more quickly.

Compared to other reading methods, the syllabic method is especially helpful for students who struggle with recognizing the relationship between letters and sounds. It promotes faster learning and a greater sense of enjoyment in the learning process. As students better understand the material, learning becomes more effective and independent. Additionally, this method increases students' motivation and enthusiasm for participating in reading lessons.

The application of the syllabic method begins by introducing syllables such as ba, bi, bu, be, bo, etc. Students are then guided to combine these syllables into meaningful words (e.g., ba-ju, ba-ja), and eventually into simple sentences. Instruction also includes peeling words into syllables and combining syllables into full sentences, reinforcing word recognition and reading fluency.

METHOD

Based on observations, information was obtained that mentally retarded people in grade VIII at SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta have difficulty in early reading skills and are still often reversed in recognizing letters. The thing experienced by mentally retarded people is that children still do not have the ability to read in grade VIII so that children have difficulty in receiving text-based or written information. Efforts that can be made to develop the ability of mild mentally retarded children is by giving encouragement and applying syllabic method to improve the ability of beginning reading of children with mentally retarded class VIII SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This researcher aims to test the hypothesis to prove the influence that appears before and or after giving treatment to the subject by using the syllabic method on the ability to read the beginning of class VIII SLB C SETYADARMA children. The subjects of this study amounted to 6 children and were conducted for 8 sessions using the experimental method of one group pretest-posttest design. The independent variable of this research is the use of Syllabic Method, and the dependent variable is the ability of beginning reading. This research was conducted based on the facts in the field regarding the condition of children with disabilities who still have difficulties in beginning reading, difficulty distinguishing letters with similar shapes, sounding syllables that have double vowels and consonants (Nurani et al., 2021). Based on the results of a series of analytical tests, hypothesis tests and tests with the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test that have been obtained, a description of the ability to read the beginnings of children with disabilities before the intervention and after the intervention is given.

In the pretest data, it was found that the scores of the beginning reading ability were 43, 68, 47, 65, 48, and 51. Furthermore, given treatment for 6 meetings, the posttest data of the subject's beginning reading ability were 64, 84, 60, 79, 63, and 74. Different conditions can be illustrated in the histogram below.

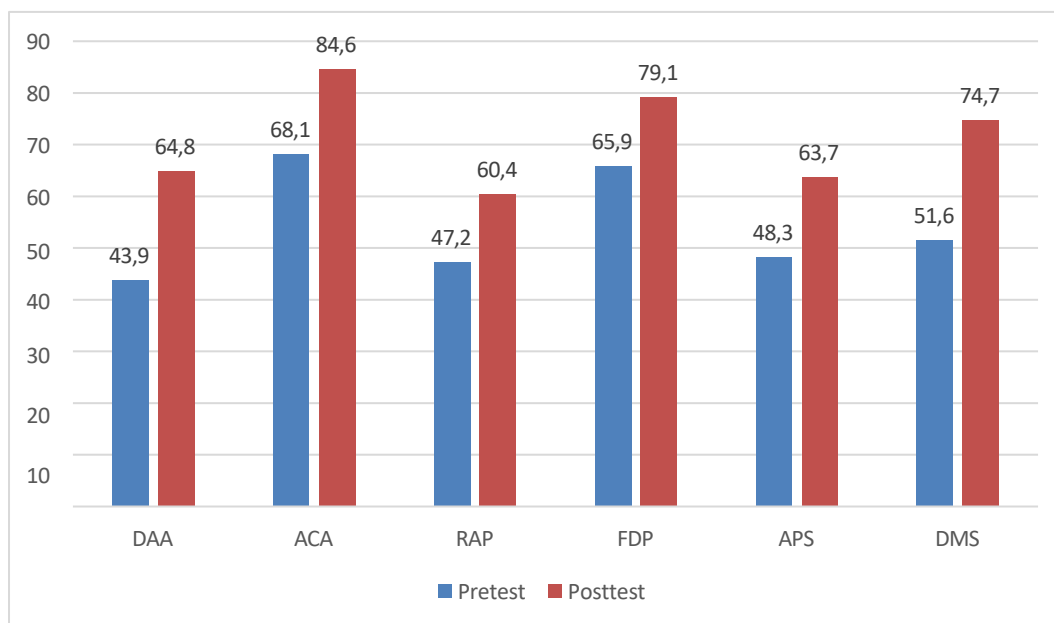


Figure 1. Recapitulation of Research Results

Based on the results of the calculation of pretest and posttest values, the interpretation of the output data analysis with the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test can be displayed as follows: In this study, the probability level used was 0.05 and the selected significance level was 5%. Based on table 1, it can be stated that the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test (Z) calculation value is -2.201 and the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is at 0.028, which means it is smaller than the applicable significance level, or can be written as $0.028 < 0.05$, so H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that the hypothesis in the study, which reads “The use of syllabic method on the ability to read the beginning of class VIII SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta,” is acceptable. It can be proven by the research results showing that children who received treatment with the syllabic method experienced an increase in posttest scores. The child's pretest score, which was originally 54 after treatment with the syllabic method, improved to 71 on the posttest, indicating that the ability to read for children with disabilities has increased.

This study also showed an increase in the proficiency of mentally retarded children in answering and the speed in solving the problems given. Another study by Yulianti (2022) suggests that the use of syllabic method causes students to be more involved, excited, and brave during the learning process, besides being interesting for the teaching and learning process, the use of this method is also very helpful and motivates students to be more enthusiastic in recognizing letters, syllables and sentences.

To address difficulties in reading syllables, teachers must provide clear guidance and examples of proper letter pronunciation. It is also essential to explain the differences between uppercase and lowercase letters, helping students to better distinguish between them and reduce frequent reading errors (Suyadi & Sari, 2021). The syllabic method can be effectively combined with various instructional

strategies and media, including teachers, textbooks, and the school environment (Asma Wati et al., 2023). According to Müller et al. (2017), educational games such as flashcards can further motivate students and enhance their syllable recognition skills, thereby improving reading accuracy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a series of analytical tests, hypothesis testing, and the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, the mean pretest score was found to be 54.1, while the mean posttest score increased to 71.2. These posttest results indicate that the syllabic method has a significant effect on the early reading ability of eighth-grade students with intellectual disabilities at SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta. The use of the syllabic method can enhance students' motivation to learn and facilitate the learning process, as it does not require students to spell each letter individually. As a result, students can acquire early reading skills more quickly. Therefore, this study's findings show that the syllabic method has a positive impact on students with intellectual disabilities' early reading skills in the eighth grade at SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study concludes that the syllabic method significantly improves the early reading abilities of students with disabilities in Grade VIII at SLB C SETYADARMA Surakarta. Its effectiveness stems from its approach, which eliminates the need for letter-by-letter decoding, enabling faster acquisition of reading skills. The use of this method fosters greater student participation, enthusiasm, and confidence during the learning process. Furthermore, it enhances engagement in literacy activities and motivates students to become more enthusiastic in recognizing letters, syllables, and sentences.

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