

THE EFFECT OF WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF EARLY READING ABILITY OF GRADE IV STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AT SLB NEGERI SUKOHARJO IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/2023

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of the Whole Language Approach method on improving the initial reading ability of elementary school-age students with intellectual disabilities in SLB Negeri Sukoharjo for the 2022/2023 academic year. This research is a pre-experimental quantitative research with a research design of one group pretest posttest. Data sources of this study include the results of oral assessments of students' beginning reading skills. The validity test technique used is the validity of the content. Data analysis using the Wilcoxon sign ranks test. The result of this study is that there is a significant impact of the application of the whole language approach on improving the initial reading ability of grade IV students with intellectual disabilities at SLBN Sukoharjo. And the conclusion is Whole Language Approach can giving effect to increasing oral assessments of students' beginning reading skills for 4th grade elementary student with intellectual disability in SLB Negeri Sukoharjo.

Keywords: early reading, intellectual disability, learning, mental retardation, Whole Language Approach

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh metode Whole Language Approach terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa tunagrahita usia sekolah dasar di SLB Negeri Sukoharjo tahun ajaran 2022/2023. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kuantitatif pra eksperimental dengan desain penelitian one group pretest posttest. Sumber data penelitian ini meliputi hasil penilaian lisan kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa. Teknik pengambilan sample dilakukan dengan sampel jenuh. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan pelaksanaan pretest dan posttest kemampuan membaca permulaan. Teknik uji validitas yang digunakan adalah validitas isi. Analisis data menggunakan uji wilcoxon sign ranks. Hasil pada penelitian ini yaitu terdapat pengaruh yang signifikan dari penerapan whole language approach terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa tunagrahita kelas IV di SLBN Sukoharjo. memahami materi yang dipelajari. Diketahui bahwa Whole Language Approach berpengaruh dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca permulaan siswa tunagrahita kelas IV di SLBN Sukoharjo

Kata kunci: membaca permulaan, pembelajaran, tunagrahita, tunagrahita ringan, Whole Language Approach

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INTRODUCTION

Citizens have the same right to obtain quality education. This is stated in Article 5 of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. This demonstrates that all citizens, including individuals with disabilities (ABK), have the right to receive appropriate education. According to Heward (Pitaloka et al., 2022), ABK refers to children with special characteristics that differ from typical children and consistently show mental, emotional, or physical disabilities. One type of disability

is intellectual disability. According to DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), "Intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) is a disorder with onset during the developmental period that includes both intellectual and adaptive functioning deficits in conceptual, social, and practical domains." This means that intellectual disability is a disorder that manifests during the developmental period and involves deficits in both intellectual and adaptive functioning in conceptual, social, and practical aspects. This leads to problems in various aspects of development, including language development (Atmaja J. R., 2018).

Reading is one of the four language skills (Tarigan in Aisyah et al., 2020). Reading ability is considered important for individuals with intellectual disabilities because through reading, individuals with mild intellectual disabilities can learn various subjects taught in school (Ningrum, Risdayanti et al., 2017). However, due to their limitations, the reading ability of individuals with mild intellectual disabilities is generally lower compared to typically developing children of the same age (Apriyanto in Aisyah D. A., 2017). Therefore, appropriate learning methods are needed to improve the reading ability of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The Whole Language Approach (WLA) or Whole Language Method is one of the methods that can be used to teach early reading to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Goodman (Aisyah S. et al., 2020) stated that the whole language approach is a language learning approach that teaches language as a whole, rather than separate components. This approach teaches children to read, write, listen, and speak according to their developmental level (Meha in Fahrurrozi, 2017). This approach can also provide new experiences for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the process of learning to read.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are to determine whether there is an influence of the WLA on the improvement of early reading abilities in individuals with intellectual disabilities. Another objective is to understand how the WLA can affect the reading ability of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is quantitative. This study utilizes a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, where an intervention or treatment, namely the WLA, will be provided to the subjects. The subjects' performance will be assessed through a pretest before the intervention and a posttest after the intervention. The results of both tests will be compared to determine the influence of the intervention on the early reading abilities of students with intellectual disabilities.

The population of subjects in this research consists of all fourth-grade students with intellectual disabilities in SLB Negeri Sukoharjo. The sample subjects in this study are also all fourth-grade students with intellectual disabilities in SLB Negeri Sukoharjo, totaling 6 individuals. Therefore, the sampling technique used in this study is saturation sampling. You explain clearly how you conducted the research. The data used in this study are the results of reading tests. These test items have been previously tested for content validity and inter-rater reliability. The data analysis will employ the non-parametric

Wilcoxon sign ranks test, which will compare the pretest and posttest results of the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data of students' initial abilities or pretest data were obtained from testing or assessments conducted before the administration of the treatment or intervention. Here is the presented data related to the results of the initial ability scores, description of the data, frequency distribution of the initial ability data, and a graph depicting the results of the students' initial ability test. The data of the students' initial ability test results are as follows:

Table 1. Results of Initial Ability Test (Pretest)

Number	Name	Pretest Score	Explanation
1.	BP	51	Fine
2.	FS	54	Fine
3.	FD	35	Low
4.	KB	58	Fine
5.	RY	45	Fine
6.	RS	48	Fine

The test results above indicate that from the pretest results of the initial ability of the 6 students, namely BP, FS, FD, KB, RY, and RS, the lowest score was obtained by subject FD, which is 35. FD has started to read some lowercase letters but still struggles with reading uppercase letters. In terms of syllable reading, FD still faces difficulties and can only read one syllable question with limited fluency. The aspect of reading words also requires full guidance for FD. Similarly, the same applies to reading sentences. On the other hand, the highest score in the pretest data was achieved by KB, which is 58. KB has a good recognition of letters. KB can read some syllables although not fluently. As for reading words, KB can read some words but still requires guidance. The same applies to reading sentences, where KB still needs full guidance. As for the other four subjects, they also have different abilities. RY obtained a score of 45, with the description of being able to read some letters although not fluently. In terms of reading syllables, RY is still not fluent and cannot answer all questions correctly. RY still requires assistance in reading words. The same applies to reading sentences. The next subject is RS with a score of 48. RS can read some letters although not fluently. RS is also not fluent in reading syllables. As for reading words and sentences, RS still requires guidance. Another result is the score of 51 obtained by BP. Based on the pretest results, BP can read some letters although not fluently. BP can read syllables although not fluently. As for reading words, BP still requires guidance, just like the reading of sentences. The last subject is FS with a score of 54. Looking at the aspect of reading letters, FS is not much different from the other subjects. FS can read some letters although not fluently. In terms of reading syllables, FS can read some syllables although not fluently. As for reading words and sentences, FS still requires guidance. From these six data points, the average score of the subjects is 48.5, categorized as adequate.

The data of students' final abilities or posttest data were obtained from testing or assessments conducted after the administration of the treatment or intervention. Here is the presented data related to the results of the final ability scores, description of the data, frequency distribution of the final ability data, and a graph depicting the results of the students' final ability test. The data of the students' final ability test results are as follows:

Table 2. Results of Final Ability Test (Posttest)

No	Nama	Nilai <i>Posttest</i>	Explanation
1.	BP	77	Good
2.	FS	80	Excellent
3.	FD	61	Good
4.	KB	83	Excellent
5.	RY	71	Good
6.	RS	74	Good

After obtaining the pretest scores, an intervention or treatment in the form of learning using the Whole Language Approach was given for 10 sessions. The first 2 sessions focused on learning to read two-syllable words while also memorizing the letters. The next 2 sessions focused on learning to read three-syllable words, with an emphasis on reading patterned syllables. The following 3 sessions focused on learning to read sentences consisting of two words, with a renewed emphasis on reading words. The remaining 3 sessions focused on learning to read sentences consisting of three syllables, while emphasizing fluency in reading.

After the intervention, a final ability test was conducted, and the lowest score was obtained by FD, with a score of 61. The final ability description for FD indicates that they are able to read letters and syllables. In terms of reading words, FD can read, although some assistance is still needed. As for reading sentences, FD still requires guidance. The highest score of 83 was obtained by KB. The final ability description for KB includes reading letters and syllables well, being able to read almost all word questions independently, and some still require guidance. Similarly, in terms of reading sentences, KB is able to read some questions independently and requires guidance for others. The other four subjects also obtained different scores and exhibited varying abilities. RY is observed to be able to read both letters and syllables, but still requires guidance in reading words and sentences. RS, in the final ability test, can read both letters and syllables, but requires assistance or guidance in reading words and sentences. BP, in the final ability test, is able to read letters and syllables, and can read some words independently while others require assistance. As for reading sentences, BP still requires guidance. FS, in the final test, is able to read letters and syllables, and can read some word questions independently while others require assistance. From these six data points, the average score for the students is 74.3, categorizing their performance as "good."

Next, hypothesis testing was conducted in this study using non-parametric statistical analysis with Wilcoxon Sign Rank test calculation using SPSS 26 software. This analysis utilized the Asymp.

Sig (2-tailed) with a significance level (α) of 0.05. This significance level is used to test the hypothesis. If the calculation result shows that Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) is greater than 0.05, then H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected. On the other hand, if the calculation result of Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) is smaller than the significance level of 0.05, then H_a is accepted, and H_0 is rejected. The results of the rank analysis in the Wilcoxon Sign Rank test for this study are as follows:

Table 3. Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test Rank Analysis Results

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttets - Pretest	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	,00	,00
	Positive Ranks	6 ^b	3,50	21,00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	6		

a. Posttets < Pretest

b. Posttets > Pretest

c. Posttets = Pretest

Based on the table above, it can be observed that there are no negative ranks, indicating that no subjects experienced a decrease in scores after the intervention or treatment. On the other hand, there are 6 data points that have positive ranks, indicating an improvement in scores or values for all six subjects after the intervention or treatment. Furthermore, there are no ties in the data, meaning that no subjects obtained the same score or value before and after the intervention or treatment.

Additionally, from the table above, the mean rank is 3.50, and the sum of ranks is 21. This means that the average ranking of the data is 3.50 out of 6 data points, and the total sum of ranks is 21. The result of the Wilcoxon Sign Rank test from this study is as follows:

Table 4. Results of Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test Statistics

Test Statistics ^a	
Posttets - Pretest	
Z	-2,333 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,020

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the calculated value of Z is -2.333, with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.020. This data indicates that the calculated Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.020 is less than 0.05. This means that the calculated Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is smaller than the predetermined significance level.

Based on the acceptance criteria for the applied hypothesis, which states that the calculated Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value should be greater than 0.05, we can accept the null hypothesis (H₀) and reject the alternative hypothesis (H_a). Therefore, the test result supports the hypothesis in this study, which states that there is an influence of the Whole Language Approach on improving the initial reading ability of fourth-grade students with intellectual disabilities at SLB Negeri Sukoharjo.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be observed that the students experienced a significant improvement in their initial reading ability after receiving the WLA intervention. This can be attributed to several factors, including the fact that WLA is an approach that focuses on real communication through meaningful and enjoyable learning environments (Richard and Rodgers, as cited in Aditya et al., 2022). During the intervention, the students were actively engaged and enthusiastic about the learning process. Before starting the lesson, the students were able to choose the material they wanted to learn on that day, allowing them to have a say in their learning. This helped them maintain a sense of curiosity and interest in the material being taught.

WLA is an approach that recognizes language as an inseparable entity, and language skills should be taught in meaningful and authentic contexts (Moats, as cited in Fauzi, 2020). This is relevant to the challenges faced by students with intellectual disabilities, such as difficulties in abstract thinking, understanding symbols and their meanings, as well as issues with low memory and concentration (Murti, 2018). By implementing WLA, students find it easier to comprehend reading because they learn the material holistically. They are not only taught how to mechanically pronounce and memorize alphabetic units, but they are also taught the meaning of the words they are learning. This enables students to learn to read while understanding the meaning of the words. These findings align with previous research conducted by Aditya et al. (2022) on the influence of WLA on improving students' initial reading abilities.

Furthermore, WLA not only trains reading skills but also enables students to develop other language-related abilities. Through various steps and activities in WLA, students can practice speaking and writing skills. Through activities such as reading aloud, shared reading, and guided reading, students can improve their oral skills and pronunciation. Through guided writing activities, students can enhance their motor skills and writing abilities. Similar research conducted by Isni Fauzi Marsidah on the effect of the VAKT method on improving the initial reading ability of students with intellectual disabilities also showed significant improvement.

Another factor contributing to the significant improvement observed in this study is the number of treatment sessions conducted. This is related to the need for repetition and frequent practice among individuals with intellectual disabilities to facilitate their learning process (Atmaja, 2018). With 10 sessions of intervention, students with intellectual disabilities can better understand the initial reading instruction provided. Additionally, the ample number of intervention sessions increases the students' learning experiences in reading.

WLA provides real and meaningful experiences for children in their learning process (Moats, as

cited in Fauzi, 2020). The use of media also plays a role in supporting the improvement of students' initial reading abilities. Therefore, the use of media plays a role in supporting the improvement of students' initial reading abilities. To facilitate students in understanding the meaning of the words they are learning, illustrations in the form of pictures are provided in each learning session. Another function of using media is to capture students' attention and create a more enjoyable learning experience. Based on previous research conducted by Oktaviyanti et al. (2022), it has been proven that visual media can enhance students' initial reading abilities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the research data and the discussion, it can be concluded that there is an influence of implementing the Whole Language Approach on improving the initial reading abilities of fourth-grade students with intellectual disabilities at SLB N Sukoharjo in the academic year 2022/2023.

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