

Interaction and Communication of Autistic Students at SLBN Cileunyi Bandung Regency

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Abstract

Communication and interaction are the most difficult thing for autism. It is hard for them to open conversation and to recognize the situation around them. the most difficult They can't concentrate to the things around them. Just focus to the activity that they have started. Even when we call them it should be more often until they recognize it. They answer without any eye contact. this research describes how the autistic students communicate and interact with their teachers and their friends how the teacher gets engage with them., and this study analysed four children with autism: 14 years old, produce weak sound, he will speak if the teacher call him by focusing his face to the teacher, 9 years old used verbal language, he can hear but can't produce the sound, a boy has unstable emotional sometimes, and tries to get observer attention to his ability. The informants of this research are four teachers of SLBN Cileunyi, Bandung. This research is qualitative research, data collected by observation, interviews and documentation. Analysis of data used reduction of data, representing, conclusion and verification of data. The validity of data used by correlating the data from informants, observing the children behaviour, and the theory. The result of research shows that each of children are in the level of different autism. it is high, average and low. The guidance and full of care and warm heart is the most comfortable intervention for the autism. They brave to talk, to do the instruction, and to give the attention is depends on the approach of the teachers.

Keywords: interaction, communication, autism, eye contact, concentrate

INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that genetic factors play a significant role in the development of autism. There is evidence of a strong genetic component, as autism tends to run in families. Certain genetic mutations or variations may increase the risk of developing autism (Frith, 1994:2) Children with ASD often struggle with social communication, such as understanding and using nonverbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. This can lead to challenges in initiating and maintaining conversations, interpreting social situations, and developing relationships (CH Tsai et all.2022).

Mahardani (2016: 13) states that disturbances in the communication aspect occurred in autistic children because they experience language disorders, both verbal and nonverbal, the existence of these disorders will make it difficult for autistic children to be able to communicate and convey their desires. To interact with other people, autistic really need social interaction, so they can convey their wishes. Autistic will clap their hands, make sounds/scream, spontaneously pull people next to them and hit them when they want to communicate.

Disturbances aspects of social interaction in autistic children, Some individuals with autism may have delays in developing spoken language or may not develop spoken language at all. Others may have a limited vocabulary, difficulty initiating or sustaining conversations, or exhibit echolalia (repeating words or phrases). Individuals with autism may struggle with nonverbal communication cues such as maintaining eye contact, understanding gestures, facial expressions, and body language, or using appropriate gestures themselves (Volkmar 1993). they cannot show interest in social interaction, uncontrolled behavior that makes autistic children are unable to focus, and also often changes in the emotions of autistic children suddenly, (Kaplan and Sadock in Iskandar, et al. 2020: 13).

Autistic children in groups will not join social activities, he prefers to be separated from his group of friends or he remains in the group but his presence is not seen in the Mahardani (2016: 585). Autistic children can hang out with their friends, but they just keep quiet and don't care about the people around them. This happens because autistic children are more into their own fantasy world.

Autistic children experience barriers/obstacles communicate in social interactions that they do, which include very little eye contact, less lively facial expressions, less focused gestures, unable to play with peers, unable to feel what other people feel, lack of relationships and emotional reciprocity, and autistic children prefer to be alone (Asrizal. 2016:4).

There are obstacles / constraints between teachers and autistic children themselves, teachers who deal specifically with autistic children are difficulty obtaining instructions, difficulty interpreting speech, difficulty understanding or interpreting teacher warnings and anger, as well as language and speech delays (Yuliani. 2020: 173). The obstacles faced by teachers in autistic children are more emphasis on the difficulties of autistic children in interpreting what the teacher says.

Autistic children have barriers with peers, autistic children have difficulty in establishing interactions, so they have difficulty interacting with their friends, autistic children have interference in playing with peers, no empathy, and also the absence of good socio-emotional reciprocity in interacting (Darojat, et al. 2014: 4).

Problem Identification

Based on the background that has been described above, the authors identify the following problems:

1. What is the Problems of Autism students in the Aspects of Communication and Social Interaction in SLBN Cileunyi Bandung Regency?
2. How autism students communicate and interact in SLBN Cileunyi Bandung regency?
3. What is Communication Barriers in Autism students in SLBN Cileunyi Bandung regency?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Communication

Communication is the delivery of information/messages to others and has meaning. In life, communication plays an important role because communication is a person's source of

interaction. Communication activities by answering the question "Who Says What In Which Channel To Whom With What Effect?" (Lasswell. 2004). There are five main components of communication, namely: Communicator (source), message (message), media (channel), communicant (receiver) and effect (Effect) (Nurhadi, et al. 2017:92)

"Communication is the process to modify the behavior of other individuals". Communication is the process of changing the behavior of other people (Afriyadi. 2015:364) From Carl I. Hovland's understanding, researchers can conclude that, from communication we can change someone's behavior which can be seen from the meaning of the message/information conveyed.

Communication Elements

We want our communication to go well, so we need elements of communication, as Littlejohn (Muslimin, 2019: 3-6) said in his book "Theories of Human Communication", states that there are three elements that must be met in communicating :

a. Sender of the message. It is a human who starts the communication process which is called a "communicator". Which communicator will be the main source in conveying messages/information to others. If there is no communicator then communication will not work.

b. Message Recipient. It is commonly referred to as the "communicant" is a rational human being. There is another term for mentioning the recipient of the message, namely "decoder". Which means the recipient of the message. The sender of the message is a human who starts the communication process which is called a "communicator". Which communicator will be the main source in conveying messages/information to others. If there is no communicator then communication will not work.

c. Message Recipient. It is commonly referred to as the "communicant" is a rational human being. There is another term for mentioning the recipient of the message, namely "decoder". Which means the recipient of the message.

d. Communication Function. In communication, it must have a basic function in communication, in Liliweri (2010: 136-138) states there are seven basic functions of communication : 1) Education and teaching, Communication is a means of providing knowledge, expertise and skills to facilitate human roles and provide opportunities for people to actively participate in social life. In other words, the function of educational and teaching communication can help humans to help each other 2) Information The quality of life will be poor if without communication. Information can be obtained through oral and written communications from either individuals or groups. 3) Entertainment is one of the important needs for everyone, communication provides entertainment through films, television, dramas, etc. In the sense that entertainment can make everyone forget about their problems in an instant. 4) Discussion, Our life is full of different views and opinions, to unite these differences requires debate and discussion between individuals and in groups. In other words, discussions or differences of opinion can unite other people or strengthen ties of friendship. 5) Persuasion encourages us to continue to communicate in order to unite different views in the context of making personal and group or organizational decisions. In a sense, even though there are different views, communication can reunite a dispute by making the right decision. 6) Cultural promotion Communication also provides opportunities to introduce, maintain and preserve the

cultural traditions of a society 7) Integration Through communication. More and more people know each other and know each other's situation, both in one place (region) and in different places.

Communication Purposes

The purpose of communication is to plan something to be achieved in a communication. As stated by Staton (1982) in Rustan, et al (2017: 60) there are five communication objectives :

1. Influence others
2. Build interpersonal relationships
3. Find the different types of knowledge
4. Help others
5. Play

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication refers to the transmission of information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings through spoken or written words. It is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and plays a crucial role in conveying messages, expressing emotions, sharing knowledge, and building relationships.

Verbal communication is discussed in relation to private language, non-verbal communication, and the acquisition of psychological concepts. The study explores how verbal expressions, such as words used to describe sensations like pain, are connected to non-verbal behaviors and how individuals learn and communicate psychological concepts through language.

Verbal communication is a complex process that involves not only the words spoken or written but also factors like tone, pitch, volume, and context. Effective verbal communication requires clarity, understanding, and the ability to convey messages accurately to ensure mutual comprehension between communicators. (Cosmin, 2015)

Verbal communication in individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) can present various challenges. Some individuals with autism may have difficulties in using spoken language effectively for communicative and social purposes. These challenges can include issues with initiating and maintaining conversations, understanding social cues, and expressing emotions through speech. Additionally, some individuals with autism may exhibit echolalia, which is the repetition of words or phrases without conveying communicative intent (Velonen, 2012)

Elements of verbal communication

1. Language is a symbol system that allows people to share meanings. In communication, the language used is spoken verbal language, written on paper or electronically.
2. The word is the smallest symbolic unit in language. The word is something that symbolizes or represents something, item, event or situation. But these words are not people, things, and events. The meaning of words does not exist in one's mind and there is no relationship between words and things (Alqanitah, 2015: 10)

Verbal Communication Function

In Wulandari (2013: 18) there are three functions of verbal communication

Get to know the world around us

As we know that language or verbal communication is our introduction to knowing the world around us. And later we can learn something that we do not know.

Connect with other people

The next function is to talk about relationships with other people, language or communication allows us to get along with other people, and to influence other people.

Creating coherence in our lives

The third function is to enable us to live more orderly, to understand each other about ourselves.

Non-verbal Communication

Devito in Rosdiana, et al. (2017: 21) explains that "Non-verbal communication is the way messages are communicated by body movements, eye movements, facial expressions, body figures, use of space, speed and volume of speech, even silence". In other words, nonverbal communication is communication that does not use words, but instead focuses more on symbols/sign language.

Nonverbal communication has a function in communicating, in Kusumawati (2016: 93-94) says there are five message functions in nonverbal communication : 1. Repetition, repeating ideas that have been presented verbally, such as saying refusal, namely shaking the head 2. Substitution, replacing verbal symbols, like we don't speak at all, but we nod our heads to show approval 3. Contradiction, Rejecting verbal messages or giving other meanings to verbal messages. For example praise 4. Complement, Completing and enriching the meaning of nonverbal messages 5. Accentuation, confirming verbal messages or underlining them.

Autistic children

Achmadi, et al (2019: 198) say that etymologically the word autism comes from the words "auto" and "ism", "auto" means self, while "ism" means a school or understanding, so autism can be interpreted as an understanding that is only interested in its own world. Meanwhile, according to Sunu (2013) said that autism comes from the word "auto" which means self. this term is used because those with symptoms of autism often do look like someone who lives alone. they seem to live in their own world and apart from the social contacts around them.

Autistic child character

Basically, autistic children have characters that will indicate that they have a disorder. Faisal said that autistic children can be characterized by the main characteristics, namely not caring about the social environment. Unable to react normally in social interaction.

The Development of language and speech is not normal, reactions or observations of the environment are limited and repetitive (Gita, et al, 2019: 140).

Causes of autism

The causes of autistic children include disorders of the nervous system and development in children, disturbances in knowledge/cognitive and language disorders which can make it

difficult for these children to communicate and interact. According to Koegel and Lazebnik, et al (2019: 140) said that the cause of children experiencing autism is a "neurobiological" disorder. Based on this explanation, autistic children are caused by "neurobiological" abnormalities or disorders of the nervous system.

Based on the formulation of the research problem above, the purpose of this study is to find out the communication and interaction of autism students in SLBN Cileunyi. The benefits of this research are that it can enrich knowledge related study of clinical linguistics

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this research is qualitative research method. Qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore. The literature might yield little information about phenomenon of study we need to learn more from participant through exploration Creswell (2012). The data collected by interview and observing the behaviour of research object.

Researchers also used a descriptive research approach. Achmad, et al (2019 201) explains that this qualitative descriptive research aims to describe what is currently happening. In it there are efforts to describe, record, analyse and interpret the conditions that currently occur or exist. This descriptive research also aims to obtain information about existing conditions.

Research subjects are people in the research setting, namely people who are used to provide information about the situation and conditions of the research setting, according to Moleong (1990) in Nugrahani, et al (2014: 61-62). The subjects / informants in this study have criteria, namely: Principal at SLB Negeri Cileunyi, Bandung Regency, Teacher at SLB Negeri Cileunyi, Bandung Regency, and Parents of students at SLB Negeri Cileunyi Kab Bandung

The number of subjects in this study were 4 people. The subject selection technique used is *purposive sampling*. Supardi (2013: 126) explains *purposive sampling* is a *non-probability sampling* technique where the researcher has made a grid or boundaries based on the characteristics of the subject to be sampled for research. Where in this study the selection of informants carried out is considered to know to be a source of data, so that they can provide information about Autistic Children's Communication in Social Interaction.

Research Object

Object is something that will be investigated in research. Nyoman Kutha Ratna, et al (2018: 156) says that the object is the whole that surrounds human life. Judging from the source, objects in qualitative research are called social situations which consist of three elements, namely places, actors, and activities that interact synergistically. So the object of this research is the Social Interaction of Autistic Children.

The first informant holds the position of Principal at SLB Negeri Cileunyi. started teaching at this school in 2019, and has served as principal for 4 (places) years. Now she is 46 years old.

The second informant, holds a position as a teacher at SLB Negeri Cileunyi, started teaching at this school in 2015, and before at SLB Negeri Cileunyi, had taught in other schools. It has been 20 (ten) years serving as a teacher, now 58 years old.

The third informant, holds a position as a teacher at SLB Negeri Cileunyi, started teaching at this school in 2018, has been teaching for approximately 4 (four) years.

The fourth informant, is a parent of students, 39 years old, and a housewife.

The profiles of autistic students studied by researchers are:

Characteristics of the student 1 : Uses verbal communication with a weak and quiet voice, 14 years old, difficult to interact still in a world of its own, Likes to lie down anywhere, likes to cover his face, likes to lay his head on his teacher's lap, the right hand often reaches out to someone close to it moderate level of autism, high desire level and unwillingness to listen to

Characteristics of student 2: Using non-verbal communication, 9 years old, don't care about the neighbourhood at all, frequent head movements, enjoys drawing and won't stop unless told to, severe autism level, Sensitive to loud sound.

Characteristic of students 3, 15 years old but 5 years old attitude, can't resist the willingness, can't hold back emotions when calm, he is considered an obedient child., cry a whole day if he feels annoyed

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the author explains the results of research obtained based on observations and interviews, regarding Communication of Autistic Children in Social Interaction at SLB Negeri Cileunyi. In this study using the theory of Symbolic Interaction according to Herbert Blumer (1980), action humans translate each other, define their actions, not just the reaction of one's actions to others. A person's response is not made directly to the action, but is based on the "meaning" given. There are three main assumptions in Symbolic Interaction ;

Humans act based on the meanings that things have for them. The meaning is obtained as a result of social interactions with other people. These meanings are refined when the symbolic interaction process is ongoing (Ahmadi, 2008: 309-310).

This research is based on three main assumptions/concepts in symbolic interaction that have been explained by Herbert Blumer (1980) :

Every action taken by humans must be based on "meaning", so that the based on meaning is an action carried out by autistic children, especially in the context of social interaction at SLB Negeri Cileunyi. In this section will describe how the interaction between autistic children with teachers and autistic children's actions with friends in the school environment, there are also the characteristics obtained,;

Characteristics of autistic children's interactions with teachers:

Directions from the teacher.

Teacher starts conversation

Teacher repeats the question more time

Teacher tries hard to get autistic attention

Teacher holds the chick of student to get attention

Communication with friends :

They don't care each other

The teacher always mention of their friends name

If the autism need something there is the probability of communication with friend

Each autism is busy each other

The researcher found in the field the interaction actions between autistic children teachers and friends at school, there are two forms of communication, non-verbal communication and verbal communication.

Non-verbal communication is a form of communication using body movements, facial expressions, eye movements to communicate or convey a message to others. In field observations, it was found that autistic students, (9 years old), including one of the children when interacting using nonverbal forms of communication with the teacher. Every action and communication made by H always uses sign language / symbols. These actions include hand movements, namely how to take the ball to play, take the bag to go home, and take the food box if he wants to eat, other movements such as handholding, foot movements if he walks to get an item. Here the interview with the teacher:

"a boy still uses non-verbal communication for communication and interaction, he makes sounds but we cannot understand, he also has special movements, hand grips, hand movements are how He takes an object, he has talented of drawing. He never speak and he suffered severe autism

If he wants to play ball he will take the ball, if it's time to go home he will immediately take his bag and if he is hungry he will take his own food box. if he is going to walk to take something directly from someone else", if he has drawn, if he hasn't said it's finished, he will continue even though he has used up a ream of paper, that's an autistic child who has motoric sensor damage. (Teacher, Tuesday, 12 June 2023).

Verbal communication refers to the exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings through spoken language. It involves the use of words, tone of voice, and other vocal elements to convey a message from one person to another. Verbal communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and plays a crucial role in various aspects of life, including personal relationships, professional settings, education, and social interactions.

Verbal communication in individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can vary significantly. Some individuals with ASD may have limited verbal language skills, while others may have more advanced language abilities. Difficulties in verbal communication for individuals with autism can include challenges in expressive language (speaking) and receptive language (understanding spoken language)

Furthermore, the second autistic student uses a form of verbal communication. Verbal communication is a form of communication to convey messages using spoken and written language.

On the observations a student is 14 years old, and when **he** interact if the teacher ask him and in other to give attention the teacher repeat the question while he Chick is moved by teacher to see her face. He responds but in very slow sound and it is hard to listen because his sound in a weak consonant.

When performing actions in interacting he takes out a book from the bags he wants to study, speaks when asking / borrowing an item such as shavings, able to write, and raises his hand to shake hands, when the teacher instructs to shake hands. At the time of observation, he was in the session of doing the general test, the teacher read out the questions, he chose the correct answer. Unlike ordinary children, he worked on multiple choice questions in almost three hours for 20 questions. What is characteristic of autistic children such as broken is the strength of their stance, for example at that time the pencil was broken, he immediately asked the teacher for help to sharp the broken pencil. But the teacher asked him to use another pencil, while he still wanted to sharpen the pencil and finally he asked the observer to help him sharpen the pencil. Autistic children never attempt to initiate communication unless they are in need of asking someone for help.

The teacher said during the interview:

"a boy can already use verbal communication to interact with me (the teacher). another has special movements, often moves his head and sleeps where he wants. Before coming to SLB Cileunyi, he could not speak. He has a good emotional is evidenced when he comes home from school he likes to remember his younger brother , he asks where is his younger brother bag? Other boy has not been able to communicate quickly, when he asked he can answer but repeats the question, very little eye contact, he has a habit of hiding his face covered by his hands or he puts his face on his teacher's lap ", he suffered of middle autism. (teacher, 12 June 2023).

The most surprising thing in this observation was the emotional outburst of a child , he was 15 years old, his body was already heading towards adolescence, but when we came he was crying very loudly, all the teachers calmed him down and asked him to stop crying. After we asked what the cause was, it was his desire to turn on the school computer which at that time had to use a password, and incidentally no one knew the password. How worried I was when I saw an autistic children crying all the sounds he made were enough to shock all the school residents.

All the teachers took turns walking him while giving him food so that he stopped crying. When he has finished to eat some ice cream he continue to cry while he lay on the floor.

That is the characteristic of autistic children who do not have sensomotoric, doing things below their age. Only the guidance of all teachers can calm the emotions of autistic children. The teacher took him for a walk by carrying him around the school as an intervention for the emotions.

He can't control his desires as his teacher said

" he is an obedient child, this is the first time he has cried this much, it seems that his soul and brain are in different directions, his brain apparently wants to play play station , maybe the activity he usually does at home, but his body is at school but his mind in home, there is less connection awareness (Teacher, Tuesday 12 June 2023)"

In this study, teacher direction is needed for children to be able to perform interaction actions, another boy has not been able to say / speak what he wants because he has severe autism. Only drawing is his world. To interact with his teacher He only follows directions/instructions from the teachers such as to stand up, turn around, be told to sit down, follow instructions when he is focused.

The second child is the brother of the previous, with mild autism can speak in a low and weak voice when asked, do instructions from the teachers such as reading test questions, ticking the correct answers.

As stated by the teacher during the interview

"when I tell him to take something he will immediately take it like .he take the ball put it in the basket well that's what he will do, I tell him to sit he sits, stand he will stand, spin he will spin, he does it when he is focused, if he is not focused he will not want to listen to my instructions, when he wants to eat if he can't take his own food he immediately pull his teacher's hand". (, Teacher, Tuesday 12 June 2023)

Providing structured and predictable environments can help individuals with autism feel more comfortable and engaged in interactions. Clear routines and visual supports can aid in communication and understanding, many individuals with autism have sensory sensitivities, which can affect how they interact with their environment and others. Sensory sensitivities may include being over or under-sensitive to stimuli like noise, touch, or light, Kessel (2020)

Autistic children have minimal interaction tend to interact with themselves because they are still in their own world. Friends can help the individual to exchange ideas. If autistic children interact with friends can help them to interact, the average autistic child who has not been able to fully interact with friends he will immediately join by himself, but if the autistic child can interact with friends he will invite his friend to do something or play. Meaning is obtained when the results of social interactions are carried out, described through responses and language.

Friends can help the individual to exchange ideas. In autistic children interacting with friends can help them to interact, the average autistic child who has not been able to fully interact with friends he will immediately join by himself, but if the autistic child can interact with friends he will invite his friend to do something or play.

Autistic children will respond to people who are close to them such as teachers and parents. There are even autistic children who are able to say hello first when interacting.

Language is one of the main sources for communication. With the existence of language can help individuals to do everything. The language spoken in this study is the language used by autistic children to express and express their desires. There are two components :

In body language there is sign language and body movements, the body language that the researcher means here is how to express or how to express the wishes of autistic children through body language. Such as happy language, namely issuing expressions of laughter, smiling, and clapping. And angry language can be seen from if an autistic child rebels and throws a tantrum which indicates that he is not in a good mood.

In spoken language, autistic children can express their desires through sound, such as singing and shouting as in the case of one of student, he expresses his desires by crying and shouting. Children who have been said to be active in interacting will speak like normal people.

The meaning of an act of interaction will emerge from social interactions with others. The enhanced meaning is modification, which is a change seen in the eye contact of autistic children.

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Making eye contact is very necessary when interacting, autistic children have not been able to see the eyes of their interlocutors because they still cannot concentrate properly so that autistic children find it difficult to focus on eye contact. Not being able to see the interlocutor's eye contact does not mean that they cannot see other people's eyes, they can look into other people's eyes in interaction but only occasionally after that autistic children will turn their eyes away.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been carried out on the Communication of Autistic Children in Social Interaction at SLB Negeri Cileunyi in accordance with the Symbolic Interaction Theory according to Herbert Blumer (1980), the researchers concluded that:

Every action taken by autistic children during interaction has a meaning to achieve the desire to interact. Autistic children in the nonverbal category tend to interact only with teachers, while autistic children in the verbal category can interact with teachers and classmates.

Autistic children's behaviour is strongly influenced by the person who directs them, because they do not have their own initiative. They will talk if spoken to, they will shake hands if asked to shake hands. Autistic children have various habits that can be seen with the naked eye, some like to sit alone, walk around the class, some shake their heads and some are always drawing or cutting things, or lying down anywhere.

Some individuals with autism may find it challenging to initiate conversations or engage in small talk, which can affect their ability to connect with peers. Some individuals with autism may have limited interest in social interactions or prefer solitary activities, which can

result in fewer opportunities to engage with peers. Sensory sensitivities commonly associated with autism, such as sensitivity to noise or touch, can impact how individuals with autism engage in social interactions with their peers (Fatta, 2024).

Autistic children's social relationships are very limited and are an obstacle that must be intervened by the people around them. Parent-mediated interventions, such as the Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT), involve training parents to support and enhance their child's social communication skills. These interventions have shown positive effects on parent-child interactions and the child's communication initiations. Individuals with autism may have challenges in generalizing skills learned in one context to other settings or with different people. Interventions involving other people aim to facilitate the transfer of skills across various situations and individuals (Green, J, 2022)

They are unable to interact with others. They also need to be addressed several times in order to speak. The role of people around them is very influential for them. The behavioristic method can be an intervention in improving communication and social interaction. How they should always greet the teacher when meeting and parting, how they should get to know every friend nearby, greet friends they meet every day. This habit can be embedded in their memory which gradually becomes automatic as part of their memory.

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