

## Exploring Mental Disorder Students' Reading Strategies in an Emergency Remote Teaching: A Case from Indonesia

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How to cite: Rakhmah, F., & Prasetyoningsih, L. S. A. (2023). *Exploring Mental Disorder Students' Reading Strategies in an Emergency Remote Teaching: A Case from Indonesia*. International Journal of Language Teaching and Education, 6(2), 33-39. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v6i2.22469>

Submitted : 15 december 2022

Accepted : 01 Januari 2023

Published : 08 february 2023

### Keywords:

learning strategies, beginning reading, mentally retarded children, limited PTM

### ABSTRACT

All students must have the ability to read and the reading ability of each student is of course different. For example, mentally retarded students in grade 5 SDLB C Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik who have deficiencies in reading, because their intellectual ability is below 70. This study aims to describe strategies for learning to read at the beginning of mentally retarded children SDLB C KB 2 Gresik in limited PTM. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The primary data sources for this study were class teachers and mentally retarded students in grade 5 with poor reading skills. Retrieval of research data is done through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study indicate (1) mentally retarded students in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik at limited PTM have different characteristics, both in terms of their physical, behavioral, abilities and IQ, (2) planning carried out by the teacher in learning to read beginning namely making prota, promissory notes, syllabus, and lesson plans in one semester, (3) The implementation of the strategies used by the teacher in learning early reading varies according to the level or type of intellectual disability, characteristics, and abilities of each student, and (4) The evaluation carried out by the teacher in learning to read at the beginning is to report to parents, carry out self-assessment and evaluation.

### 1. Introduction

Education is something that must be taken and is very important for every human being. In Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System chapter IV article 5 paragraphs 1 and 2 it states that all citizens have the same right to quality education. Citizens who have physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and social disabilities are entitled to special education services. From the UUD it can be understood that the rights of children with special needs (ABK) in getting an education are also the same as other children.

Children with special needs is a term for children who have internal barriers that require special treatment. In Prasetyoningsih's research (2020: 1-2) entitled Learning Initial Literacy Skills for Children with Autistic Disabilities with Modified ABA Strategies During the Covid-19 Pandemic, that children who are in their developmental period experience obstacles mentally, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially referred to as children with special needs. There are various kinds of children, one of which is mentally retarded children.

Children with mental retardation are children who experience obstacles to intellectual development and their IQ is below the average of other children, namely below 70. The impact of the low intelligence factor that students have will affect other developments and one of them is language development, if a student experiences Delays in language development will also have an impact on the development of education and social interaction. Wijaya (2013: 32) argues that the obstacles experienced by mentally retarded children generally have poor abilities in thinking, writing, spelling,

counting, speaking, listening and reading.

All students must have the ability to read and the reading ability of each student is of course different. For example, mentally retarded students in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik who have deficiencies in reading. Therefore, they attend school in special schools (special schools) in order to get special attention in their studies, especially in learning to read. The definition of reading in the Big Indonesian Dictionary is seeing, understanding, and verbalizing (or only inwardly) the contents of writing. According to Rahim (in Mikasari, 2015: 3) all the interests of life always include reading activities, therefore the ability to read that is owned by someone is very important.

As we already know, starting from March 2020, Indonesia was shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic. The global COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting many aspects of life, particularly the educational system (Rahayu, et al. 2022:2). The pandemic was initially encountered in December 2019 in the Capital of China's Hubei Province and since then has spread universally (Nissa and Haryanto, 2020:403). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 pandemic as an International Public Health Emergency (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020. Most people exposed to COVID-19 experience chronic respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, fever and shortness of breath (Handayani et al., 2019).

During the Covid-19 pandemic like this, education could not be carried out properly. Previously, education was carried out face-to-face, due to the pandemic, education was carried out online (in the network), namely teachers and students doing virtual face-to-face learning. The Gresik Regency Education Office, starting August 31, 2021, will again allow school institutions to conduct PTM in a limited manner, provided that they comply with strict health protocols and that each class contains a maximum of 50% of the existing student data. A learning system like this is also implemented by Special Schools (SLB), especially in the SLB where this research was conducted, but in SLB the regulations for implementing face-to-face learning are more stringent than other schools.

In accordance with the circular letter from the Gresik Education Office number 421/2703/437.53/2021 the class capacity for TK/KB/SPS/SDLB/SMPLB is a maximum of five students and each student must be spaced 1.5 meters apart. This limited PTM must also be based on permission from each parent by providing a written permit. So, every school institution continues to provide Distance Learning (PJJ) if students do not get permission from their parents to attend PTM. By implementing this limited PTM system, of course, it is very difficult for teachers to choose and implement strategies for beginning reading learning for mentally retarded students.

The reason the researchers chose the research setting at SDLB C KB 2 Gresik was because limited face-to-face learning was implemented at the school by running a rolling or alternate system for students who entered face-to-face at school, for other students whose schedule was not face-to-face, then learning long distance. The alternating learning system is also implemented by grade 5 teachers at SDLB C KB 2 Gresik to minimize the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This will certainly have an impact on learning to read the beginning of the mentally retarded students in grade 5.

This research was conducted during the thematic learning theme 1 "Me and My School" sub-theme 1 "My friends" learning 6. Thematic subjects for mentally retarded students in grade 5 do not have KD (basic competence) which is specifically for learning to read beginning, because the KD lies in thematic learning of mentally retarded students in grade 4. However, due to the conditions and reading abilities of mentally retarded students in grade 5 which were still lacking, the grade 5 teacher continued to do it on the sidelines of thematic learning. Children with mental retardation have poor initial reading skills, therefore they need a method, media, and strategy that can contribute to the obstacles they experience in beginning reading (Widodo, 2016: 25). Therefore, this research is important to do to find out how the strategies for learning to read early on for mentally retarded children in grade 5 SDLB C Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik in limited PTM.

## 2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research. The choice of this qualitative approach is because the researcher wants to describe the conditions that will be observed in the field in an objective, specific, and in-depth manner. In addition, the data generated is in the form of verbal data, namely speeches and documents from research subjects, not in the form of statistical data.

In this study, researchers played a direct role as planners, executors, data analysts and finally reported the results of their research. The presence of a researcher in the field is the main research key needed. This research deals directly with natural phenomena that require the presence of researchers to go into the field. Therefore, researchers conducted observations, interviews and documentation at SDLBC Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik. which is addressed at Jl. Raya Randuagung 1-2 Randuagung Kebomas Gresik.

There are two sources of data in this study, namely primary data including class teachers and mentally retarded students in grade 5, secondary data including documents that support this research. Research data that has been collected by researchers then analyzed by adapting data analysis techniques as done by Miles and Huberman (1992). The data analysis procedure includes several stages, namely data collection, data classification, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### *Characteristics of Mentally Disabled Students at SDLB C Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik at PTM Limited*

Mental retardation students in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik in limited face-to-face learning have different characteristics. Grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik consists of various levels or classifications of mental retardation, namely mild, moderate and severe. Mild mentally retarded students in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik only have one female student with the initials ABK Tg 1 with an IQ of 70. This is in line with the opinion of Wikasanti (2014: 15-17), who stated that children who have an IQ between 50-70 are children mild mental retardation.

Based on the values in the report cards and the observations made by the researchers, of the five mentally retarded students in grade 5, only those with special needs Tg 1 had superior academic ability compared to their classmates. The reading ability of ABK Tg 1 is also good, he is able to read long texts fluently, it's just that his intonation is lacking. In line with Amin's opinion (in Sumaryana, 2012: 13) that the characteristics of mild mentally retarded children are still able to do exercises both in special schools and in public schools usually.

There are two students with moderate mental retardation in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik, one girl and one boy with the initials ABK Tg 2 with an IQ of 37 and ABK Tg 3 with an IQ of 35. This is in line with the opinion of Wikasanti (2014: 15-17), states that children who have an IQ between 30-50 are moderately mentally retarded children.

ABK Tg 2 and ABK Tg 3 are classified as moderate mentally retarded students, have the same reading ability, that is, they are able to read simple words that end in patent letters (s, r, n) and those without a patent ending. For example, Mom buys vegetables, I buy books. In addition, they are also able to write and do simple arithmetic. This is in line with Sumaryana (2012: 17) who concluded that the lessons that can be taught to moderately mentally retarded children are teaching writing, counting, and reading which are used as provisions for their lives. Besides that, it can be taught to protect yourself and some other simple lessons.

Students with severe mental retardation in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik are two male students with the initials ABK Tg 4 with an IQ of 17 and ABK Tg 5 with an IQ of 27. This is in line with the opinion of Wikasanti (2014:15-17), that children who have an IQ <30 are children with severe mental retardation. The two students with severe mental retardation when learning to read at the beginning were always unfocused. Atmaja (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021:142) argues that mentally retarded children always place their attention on other things and find it difficult to focus attention correctly.

The reading ability of ABK Tg 4 and ABK Tg 5 is still not good. They are only able to read a few letters of the alphabet they remember. During one semester, his reading ability did not develop properly. Due to his low IQ, he is very forgetful. This is in accordance with the opinion of Moh. Amin (in Sumaryana, 2012: 18) that the characteristics of children with severe mental retardation include forgetting easily and having difficulty capturing stimuli or information.

#### *Planning carried out by the teacher in early reading learning for mentally retarded students at SDLB C Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik in limited PTM*

The planning carried out by the grade 5 teacher at SDLB C KB 2 Gresik is by making prota, promissory notes, syllabus, and lesson plans in one semester. The teacher made these four plans at the beginning of the semester and was assessed by the principal. Based on the four plans carried out by the teacher, it appears that there is preparation before carrying out learning. According to Muammar (2020: 3), before learning to read begins, it is hoped that the teacher will make a good lesson plan so that he can instill in students that reading is an enjoyable activity.

From the RPP, it can be seen that the RPP for early reading learning integrates with the thematic learning RPP, because in grade 5 there is no special KD for beginning reading learning. So, in making lesson plans the teacher adjusts to the characteristics and abilities of students so that the learning carried out goes according to the learning objectives. Purwitasari (2019: 9) suggests that to make it easier for teachers to prepare lesson plans and choose suitable learning strategies, it is hoped that teachers can know how their students learn so that the learning process gets good results.

#### *Implementation of the strategy used by the teacher in early reading learning for mentally retarded students at SDLB C Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik in Limited PTM*

The existence of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in teachers and students having to adapt to a new learning system, namely limited PTM. The limited PTM learning system is applied by teachers in grade 5 by holding a rolling system for mentally retarded students face-to-face at school and online from home. The rolling system resulted in 3 students studying in class and 2 other students having to study from home. The learning system is in accordance with the limited PTM Procedure in the Guide to Organizing PAUDDIKDASMEN Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic, namely that all levels of special schools from SDLB to SMALB must maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 meters and a maximum capacity per class of only 5 five students.

Teachers apply contextual learning strategies to make it easier for students to receive learning material. In line with

this statement, that in learning something mentally retarded children need repetition so they need real examples and tools so that they get responses from what they learn (Atmaja in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021: 142).

In addition to applying contextual learning strategies, teachers also apply expository learning strategies or can be called direct learning strategies. According to Nasution (2017: 92) In implementing expository learning strategies the teacher is an important source and component. Every child with special needs cannot be separated independently in solving anything (Majid, 2017:39-41).

The reading ability possessed by mentally retarded students in grade 5 is still at the initial reading stage, it should have entered the advanced reading or comprehension stage. In the 2013 Curriculum, learning to read for the elementary level is classified into two stages, namely reading beginning in the low class (1,2,3), and reading comprehension, writing in the high class (4,5,6) (Shobirin, 2016: 13). However, due to the conditions and reading abilities of these students, the teacher still carries out early reading learning. The implementation of the strategy used by the 5th grade teacher at SDLB C KB 2 Gresik in learning to read begins with a plan and ends with an evaluation or assessment. This is in accordance with the opinion expressed by Majid (2017: 11-12) that teacher adjustments in achieving the goals of successful learning are summarized in learning strategies, which are divided into three stages, namely planning, implementation, and assessment.

The use of strategies in learning to read at the beginning is adjusted to the level or type of intellectual disability. When learning to read with mild mentally retarded students, there is no specific strategy or reading method that the teacher uses such as learning to read beginning with other mentally retarded students, because these students can already read but the intonation is lacking. As a different strategy, the teacher gives books that are different from other students that are tailored to the abilities of these students. This is in accordance with the opinion of Siregar (2010: 47) which states that in choosing a learning strategy it must be directed at the goals to be achieved, adapted to the type of material, student characteristics, and the situations and conditions of learning activities.

When implementing the strategy in learning to read beginning with students with moderate mental retardation, the teacher applies the syllable peel-off method (da, de, di, do, du, na, ne, ni, no, nu, and others). The use of this method is because according to the teacher's narrative it is more efficient and faster for mentally retarded students. In line with this statement, Muammar (2020: 35-37) suggests that the advantage of the syllable method is that students read by not spelling out one letter at a time so that the time required is not long, students can recognize various words, students can understand letters by how to decipher the syllables read.

In learning to read beginning, the strategy used by the teacher with students with severe mental retardation is that the teacher uses three strategies. First, the teacher applies the spelling method when teaching the letters of the alphabet. This method is in accordance with the ability of students who have not been able to read the letters of the alphabet. However, this method takes a long time. In line with this statement, Muammar (2020: 30-32) states that the drawback of the spelling method is that it requires a long time, if it is not studied repeatedly students will forget the shape and sound of the letters, and finally students will have difficulty getting to know syllables. words or words. Second, the teacher applies the syllable method, so that students have no difficulty getting to know syllables. Third, the teacher adjusts to students' abilities and interests by using word counting strategies. This is in line with the opinion of Apriyanto (2014: 91), that mentally retarded children can learn something with the condition that the teacher must adjust their abilities and needs.

In learning to read, the beginning of the strategy used by the teacher certainly has differences and similarities. The differences in these strategies are: a) for mild mentally retarded students, the teacher does not have a specific strategy because these students have good reading skills, as a different strategy, the teacher gives different books that are adapted to the student's abilities, b) for moderately mentally retarded students, the strategy carried out by the teacher in the form of applying the syllable method, c) for students with severe mental retardation, the teacher applies the alphabetic method, the syllable method, and finally a counting strategy that is adjusted to the interests of students. This is in line with the opinion of Apriyanto (2014: 91), that mentally retarded children can learn something with the condition that the teacher must adjust their abilities and needs.

While the similarities in the implementation of the teacher's strategy include, for all types of mentally retarded students, every day the teacher provides initial reading lessons by face to face accompanied by loud letters and inserting positive words (smart, good, etc.) to students. With face to face learning, the teacher will immediately respond to help the difficulties faced by students. In line with this statement, Saputro (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021: 142) concluded that the concept of learning that is carried out between the teacher and students face to face with the teacher can quickly control the obstacles experienced by students. Become a teacher as a learning partner for students and at the same time as a learning resource”.

The implementation of beginning reading lessons carried out by the teacher with mentally retarded students, both mild, moderate, and severe, of course, comes up with obstacles. These obstacles, namely: a) external obstacles include the use of less varied learning media, lack of attention from parents, and little time because PTM is limited. b) internal barriers include intelligence, memory, and laziness of mentally retarded students.

External barriers are obstacles that come from outside the child, such as the use of less varied learning media, because the teacher only teaches reading with books and blackboards without learning media that attracts students. This is in

accordance with the results of Romlah and Andajani's research (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021: 142), namely that learning seems less attractive to students' attention and enthusiasm, because teachers use traditional methods such as letter recognition only written on the blackboard without the help of interesting learning media. Lack of attention from parents when children study at home, parents tend to be busy with their own work and leave it entirely to the teacher without parental guidance from home. In line with this statement, Rahim (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021: 143) argues that the role of parents and the environment in educating children at home and providing opportunities to read with various kinds of reading materials children will have good reading skills. In addition, according to Sugihartono (in Muammar, 2020: 20) students' initial reading ability is influenced by various factors, one of which is environmental factors which include students' experiences at home. Then, the limited time due to the limited PTM learning system resulted in limited learning time and not like it used to be before the co-19 pandemic. In line with this statement, Atmaja (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021:142) concludes that in learning something, mentally retarded children need a long time to repeat the lesson. This repetition depends on the severity and severity of mental retardation.

Internal obstacles are obstacles that come from within students such as intellectuals, according to Sugihartono (in Muammar, 2020: 20) People who have high intellectuals will find it easier to be given directions in learning. The higher a person's level of intelligence, the lower the deviation experienced. Conversely, the lower a person's level of intelligence, the more deviations experienced (Febriana, 2016: 43). Memory, that mentally retarded students have great difficulty in saving lessons, so the teacher always provides early reading lessons so students don't forget. This is in line with Atmaja's opinion (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021:142) who concludes that in learning something, mentally retarded children need a long time to repeat the lesson. This repetition depends on the severity and severity of mental retardation. Then the lazy nature of mentally retarded students in learning. This is in line with the results of Algebra's research (2016: 2) which shows that mentally retarded children tend to be lazy to learn because of a lack of encouragement to learn from their parents.

#### *Evaluation conducted by the teacher in early reading learning for mentally retarded students at SDLB C Kemala Bhayangkari 2 Gresik in limited PTM*

After carrying out the initial reading lesson, the teacher evaluates the lesson. The evaluation is carried out by the teacher by reporting student learning outcomes to their parents via WhatsApp. The evaluation aims to let their parents know how their children's academic abilities are developing at school, especially their reading progress and it is hoped that students can study again at home with their parents so they don't forget what they have learned. This is in line with the research results of Rudita et al (in Amalia and Kurniawan, 2021: 141), namely at the evaluation stage, the teacher informs parents regarding their child's development so that parents can guide children while studying at home so that learning activities are not only carried out at school just.

In addition to the teacher's evaluation, the teacher also provides an assessment of reading learning which is combined with thematic learning values. Because learning to read at the beginning does not have KD in grade 5, but is in grade 4. The KKM score for the thematic lesson for grade 5 is 75. This assessment aims to let the teacher know how far students have achieved after learning. This is in line with the opinion of Sidin Ali and Khaeruddin (in Wulan and Rusdiana, 2014: 6) that assessment is an activity carried out to find out information about student learning outcomes or the progress of student abilities.

After carrying out these two evaluations, the teacher conducts an independent evaluation by aligning the planning and implementation that has been carried out. The evaluation is carried out by the teacher in order to find out which plans have been implemented and which have not. According to the teacher's narrative, the implementation of learning is always different from the planning that has been done before learning. Because the teacher must adjust to the conditions of each student. This is in line with Mardapi's opinion (in Wulan and Rusdiana, 2014: 12) that evaluation is carried out to obtain information about what has been achieved and what has not. In line with Mardapi's statement, Gronlund (in Wulan and Rusdiana, 2014: 10) states that evaluation can identify obstacles that arise during learning and can be used as experience in subsequent learning. Opinions that are in accordance with these two opinions were put forward by Muammar (2020: 42) that by carrying out evaluations, teachers can understand the successes and failures of the learning that has been carried out so that they can reflect on the next learning activities.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik consists of five students with various levels of mental retardation, namely mild, moderate, and severe. The characteristics of each mentally retarded student in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik at limited PTM are different, both in terms of their physique, behavior, abilities and IQ. IQ ABK Tg 1 70, IQ ABK Tg 2 37, IQ ABK Tg 3 35, IQ ABK Tg 4 17, and IQ ABK Tg 5 27.

Before starting reading lessons, the first activity the teacher does is make a plan. The planning carried out by the teacher is to make prota, promissory notes, syllabus, and lesson plans in one semester that are adjusted to the characteristics and

abilities of students so that the learning carried out goes according to the learning objectives.

The teacher applies learning strategies according to the context of the child's environment and expository when carrying out thematic learning, both when learning to read, write, listen, and speak. In this limited PTM, for online students, the learning activities are without reading, just listening and speaking, while for students who enter face-to-face at school the teacher does initial reading learning. In learning to read beginning, the teacher uses different strategies according to the level or type of mental retardation, the characteristics and abilities of each student.

The evaluation carried out by the teacher in early reading learning is by reporting student learning outcomes to their parents via whatsapp, providing an assessment of early reading learning that is combined with thematic learning values, and carrying out independent evaluations (by aligning lesson planning and implementation that has been carried out by teacher).

It is suggested to grade 5 teachers to coordinate with parents so that good cooperation can be created in the student learning process. In addition, it is also recommended for teachers to use varied and interesting media, both during thematic learning and early reading learning, so that students are more enthusiastic about learning and learning goes according to the objectives. This study also suggested to further researchers to discuss further about mentally retarded students so that they can provide interventions according to the abilities and characteristics of students. It is also recommended that parents of mentally retarded students in grade 5 SDLB C KB 2 Gresik pay more attention to their children's academic abilities and reading abilities.

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