

# Language Disorders in Students with Mild Mental Retardation in SLB/Sekolah Luar Biasa (School for Disabled Children): How to see their Language Acquisitions

Authors : Ilfan Askul Pehala<sup>1\*</sup>, Fika Nurul Fadillah<sup>2</sup>, Wawan Gunawan<sup>3</sup>, & Ulwia Hamsi<sup>4</sup>

Affiliations : <sup>1,2,3,4</sup> English Department, FTIK, State Islamic Institute of Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

Correspondence : [faizsaniyasnaini@gmail.com](mailto:faizsaniyasnaini@gmail.com)

Abstract : The purpose of this case study is to discuss the differences in language disorders between two female mild mental retardation students. Observation data and semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically to see differences in language disorders between two female students who have the same mild mental retardation. This research conducted with three participants, one teacher and two is female students who have mild mental retardation. The finding of this study showed that there are some differences between two mild mental retardation students' language disorders and there are several themes that showed, namely: (1) the Kind of language disorders in two female mild mental retardation students; (2) The using of language in two female mild mental retardation students; (3) Socialization and the development of language in two female mild mental retardation students; (4) The cause of language disorders in two female mild mental retardation students. The result of this study indicates that we should have to give extra energy to analyzing students with mental retardation because they are not similar. They have some differences, in skill and also in their problems (language disorders). It means that even though participants have the same mental retardation, it is not guaranteed that they have the same language disorders. This study suggests to the next researchers could gain data from some students who have several levels of mental retardation.

Keywords : *Language disorders, Mild mental retardation, Language Acquisitions*

License : This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY)

Copyrights : © 2023 by Authors

## 1. Introduction

Language has an important role in human life because it is used to speak or do communication. Humans in (language) to speak or communicate will produce sounds that are captured by the ear and then will be processed through the brain so that the human can understand the conversation of the interlocutor (Mardiati, Asrumi, & Suyanto, 2018). Language skills consist of four aspects, namely listening or listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Masitoh, 2019). The language process begins with semantic, grammatical, and phonological encoding. Semantic and grammatical encoding takes place in the brain, while phonology starts from the brain and then involves the nervous system of the speech brain from the throat, tongue muscles, lips, mouth, palate, nasal cavity, vocal cords, and lungs (Nurwendah, Mahera, & Setiawan, 2019). Speaking is more than just the pronunciation of sounds or words, but is an instrument or tool for humans to communicate to convey their ideas even as a tool for humans which is very important in controlling human society itself (Afiffah & Soendari, 2017).

In general, language disorders can be divided into two. First, language disorders are due to medical factors namely the problems caused by disorders of brain function, and language disorders due to social environmental factors. Second, language disorders are caused by the social environment in which an individual lives. For example, the problem is caused by being marginalized from the interaction of the human environment, so the individual concerned does not get any language input (Khairina, Nasution, & Daulay, 2007). 2020). Masitoh (2019), stated that language disorders are a form of abnormality or disturbance in communication where a person experiences difficulties or loss in the symbolization process. This difficulty in symbolizing causes a person to be unable to provide symbols that are received and vice versa unable to change the concept of understanding into symbols that can be understood by others in their environment. Language disorders are something that we cannot deem that it is unimportant, this is in line with the opinion by Kohnert and Medina (2009), that communication disorders or language disorders are high-incidence disabilities. Language disorders in this study refer to the opinion of Khairina, Nasution, and Daulay (2020), who stated that language disorders are caused by aphasia due to imperfections in brain development and retardation or mental retardation.

Language disorders have received considerable attention from many researchers, such as what factors influence students' language disorders, what causes students to have language disorders, cases of language disorders, and their causes (see Khairina, Nasution, & Daulay, 2020; Masitoh, 2019; Sitompul, 2019). Furthermore, in addition, the topic of language disorders in mild mental retardation students also has become a focus of some researchers, such as the types of language disorders experienced, the development and use of language, the efforts or methods used by the teacher in the learning process, how verbal communication and nonverbal mental retardation students, (see Ita, Bunga, Kiling, 2014; Komariah, 2018; Nurwendah, Mahera, & Setiawan, 2019). While, there is still a scarcity of studies that discussed language disorders in students with mild mental retardation, especially analyzing the different types of language disorders of two students with mild mental retardation and what methods can be used to overcome the language problems they experience.

Language processing in the human thought process occurs in an organ called the brain. The human brain is divided into two parts, namely the right brain and the left brain. The left side of the human brain functions to speak or process language. A special tool in the human

brain is called a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Students with mental retardation have weaknesses in several ways, including adapting to other people in daily life (Mardiati, Asrumi, & Suyanto, 2018), and mental retardation students also have limitations in their language skills (Komariah, 2018). Mental retardation students are students who have significantly below-average intelligence and are accompanied by an inability to adapt behavior that appears during development (Nida, 2013). For students who have mental retardation problems, they cannot participate in the teaching and learning process in schools in general, so it is necessary to study in special places, such as special schools or in Indonesia it is called SLB (Sekolah Luar Biasa) (Nurwendah, Mahera, & Setiawan, 2019).

This study will focus on how the comparison of two students with mild mental retardation of their language disorders and how to solve their language disorders. Mental retardations have some levels, there are mild mental retardation, moderate mental retardation, severe mental retardation, and profound mental retardation. According to Rochyadi and Alimin (2005), the development of mentally retardation students in acquiring language skills is much lower than normal students. Most mild mental retardation students or students can not achieve perfect language skills, the language development of mental retardation students is very late compared to normal students, and mild mental retardation students or students experience certain difficulties. In mastering grammatical, mild mental retardation students or students' language is concrete, and mental retardation students cannot use compound sentences. In line with this, Sunardi and Sunaryo (2006) stated that mild mental retardation students or students in daily communication tend to use single sentences, in general, they also experience disturbances in articulation, voice quality, and rhythm, and experience delays in speech development.

## **2. Methods**

In this study, the researchers used qualitative research. The qualitative research method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Lexy, 2001). This study used a case study because it wanted to understand the phenomenon in-depth, even to explore and elaborate on it (Ying, 1994). Observation and interviews are the instruments of this study (Creswell, 2012). This study used thematic analysis as the method to identify, analyze, and report the theme patterns of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study was conducted in one of the SLBs in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. There are three participants in this research. The researcher used semi-structured interviews (Cresswell, 2012) and deep interviews to gain more information about two female mental retardation students (Harding, 2018). To get the data from all participants, the researchers interviewed the first participant (teacher). The researchers give the questions based on the focus of this study. After interviewing the first participants, the researchers observe two female mental retardation students. The researchers interviewed the teacher and observed two female mental retardation students three times in three weeks.

This study involved two female mental retardation students and a male teacher in SLB. The recruitment process of all the participants is based on the relationship between the researchers and the teacher. There are some mild mental retardation students in SLB, but the teacher suggested the researchers observe only two female mild mental retardation students because they are diligent to go to school. All participants agreed to participate in this study, and their names are disguised and addressed as follows:

Table 1: Demographic data of participants

Name	Gender	Age	Profession
Yana	Female	8 years old	Student (mild mental retardation)
Yani	Female	8 years old	Student (mild mental retardation)
Yono	Male	22 years old	Teacher

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Result

Interview data, as well as observation data, revealed several findings that were conveyed through four subtitles, namely: (1) the Kind of language disorders in two female mental retardation students; (2) The use of language in two female mental retardation students; (3) Socialization and the development of language in two female mental retardation students; (4) The cause of language disorders in two female mental retardation students.

#### Kinds of Language Disorder in Two Female Mental Retardation Students

The two participants, Yana and Yani had the same level of disorders, namely mild mental retardation. However, based on the data from observation and also interviews, it can be seen clearly that their abilities are different. This is in line with Yono’s statement, one of their teachers, said:

*“Yana dan Yani memiliki jenis tunagrahita yang sama, yaitu tunagrahita ringan. Namun, yang lebih sulit berinteraksi dan berbahasa itu Yani. Yana lebih aktif dalam berinteraksi, ia tidak hanya merespon lawan bicara, namun ia juga bisa mengajak temannya untuk bermain walaupun hanya dengan kalimat yang sederhana seperti “Ayo, main!” atau “Ayo, pergi!”. Berbeda dengan Yani, ia hanya bisa merespon dengan menjawab “Ayo”, “Iya”, dan “Tidak” saja.”*

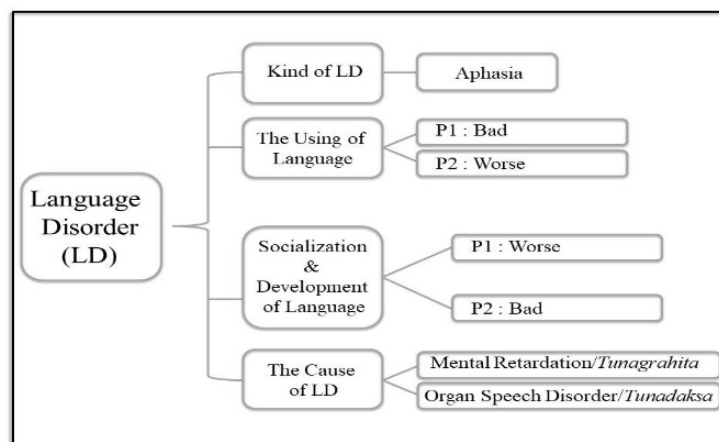


Figure 1: Outline Language Disorder of Participants

Although both of them have the same type of mental retardation, namely mild mental retardation, their level of language disorders are different. The two participants in this study have different language disorders, but they also have a common language disorder, namely difficulty and slowness in responding to the interlocutor. This can be seen from the results of observation and also interview, which are as follows:

*“Yana dan Yani ditanya dengan pertanyaan yang sama, yakni “Kamu sudah makan?”. Yana dan Yani tidak langsung menjawab, Kemudian Yono, guru mereka bertanya kembali, “Yana, Yani, sudah makan?” Kemudian mereka menjawab “Iya, sudah. Nasi telur”, jawab Yana disusul dengan Yani, ia menjawab “Sudah”. Yono, mengatakan bahwa keduanya kesulitan untuk berkomunikasi dengan orang lain”.*

From observation and interviews with participants, Yana and Yani have aphasia. Aphasia is a breakdown of the language center in the brain's cerebral cortex and causes difficulty or loss of ability to communicate. In addition, Yani has another problem, namely organ speech disorder or tunadaksa. Tunadaksa is a problem with the muscle, joint, or bone. Tunadaksa makes Yani hard to close her mouth and it makes her more difficult to speak.

### **The Using of Language in Two Female Mental Retardation Students**

The two participants cannot use perfect sentences. The perfect sentence here refers to the Subject + Verb + Object + Adverb or in Indonesia it is called SPOK (Subjek + Predikat + Objek + Keterangan). This is following Yono's statement, namely:

*“Yana dan Yani hanya mengucap beberapa kata saja dalam berkomunikasi. Respon mereka ketika ditanya agak sedikit lambat dan harus diulang beberapa kali dengan menggunakan kalimat sederhana yang betul-betul mereka bisa pahami. For instance, ketika ditanya tentang aktifitas apa yang mereka telah lakukan misalnya, Yana hanya menjawab “makan nasi goreng, ke sekolah”, sedangkan Yani hanya menjawab beberapa kata seperti “mandi, makan”. Mereka juga harus terus diberi pertanyaan untuk terus menjawab, jika tidak begitu, mereka hanya menjawab satu kata saja.”*

To make Yana and Yani actively communicate, it is necessary to have repeated questions asked of them. They are difficult to get understand, so the teacher should repeat the sentences until they got the meaning of the sentence or instruction. In addition, the use of simple sentences is very important, so that it is easy for students to understand. Perfect sentences will make it difficult for mental retardation students to communicate because they also have difficulty understanding perfect sentences. This is following Yono's expression, namely:

*“Yana dan Yani belum pernah mereka menggunakan kalimat majemuk. Mereka hanya menggunakan kalimat yang sangat sederhana, dan gramatika nya itu sangat kacau. Mereka juga hanya bisa menyambung-nyambung kata seperti “kalau solat, harus berwu....” “du”, hanya sebatas itu. Kalau untuk memberikan pemahaman mengenai penggunaan kalimat majemuk kami guru disini belum bisa, sebatas menggunakan pola SVO saja itu sudah sangat luar biasa bagi anak tunagrahita. Untuk memberikan pemahaman mengenai kalimat yang baik, saya sebagai guru mereka hanya bisa memberi contoh kalimat yang baik secara berulang-ulang seperti “Saya mau belajar solat”, “Saya mau belajar wudhu”, dan “Saya mau makan.”*

To overcome language problems for mental retardation students, Yono always gives examples of using sentences that are good and correct but still simple. Yono's strategy is to accustom Yana and Yani to the perfect sentences.

### **Socialization and the Development of Language in Two Female Mental Retardation Students**

Yana and Yani have different language disorders. Yana is more active in using language to interact or communicate, but this does not guarantee that Yana has good socialization. Yani, who has a language disorder that is quite more severe than Yana, can socialize well. This is following Yono's statement:

*“Meskipun Yana lebih aktif untuk berbicara dengan teman sebayanya, namun ia kurang bisa berinteraksi jika dengan orang baru dikenal. Yani lebih bagus sosialisasinya dibanding dengan Yana. Yani bisaa sering menghampiri orang baru tersebut untuk meminta bantuan, contohnya ada guru baru di SLB tersebut, kemudian Yani meminta tolong untuk membukakan kue dengan cara mengucap “buka, buka”. Kemudian Yani juga pernah minta tolong dengan mengucap “pipis” dengan maksud ia ingin buang air kecil”.*

Yono also said that Yani is a fairly active child with her peers, as well as Yana, this is stated in Yono's statement, namely:

*“Interaksi Yana dengan siswa lain atau dengan temannya sedikit aktif, namun ia menjadi sangat pendiam dengan orang yang baru ia kenal. Didalam kelas pun jika kita belajar secara formal, Yana dan juga Yani menjadi anak yang sangat pendiam, berbeda ketika mereka berinteraksi dengan teman sebayanya. Jadi, saya sebagai guru harus pintar berinteraksi dengan mereka agar mereka tidak merasa malu, dan bagaimana saya bisa menjadi teman bagi mereka.”*

To overcome the problem of socializing the two mentally retardation students, Yono, the teacher tried to approach the students so that they would not feel embarrassed when teaching and the learning process.

### **The Cause of Language Disorders in Two Female Mental Retardation Students**

The causes of language disorders between the two mental retardation students are their mental retardation and disorders of the brain. This is following the interview answer by Yono, namely:

*“Penyebab Yana dan Yani memiliki gangguan berbahasa yakni karena ketunagrahitaannya. Kemudian Yani juga memiliki penyebab lain, yakni ia memiliki permasalahan pada otot rahangnya atau bahasa medisnya disebut dengan tunadaksa, yang menyebabkan ia tidak bisa untuk selalu menutup mulutnya, bahkan air liurnya sering jatuh dan ia pun sangat sulit untuk berkomunikasi.”*

Observations also showed that both participants were very slow in communicating both verbally and non-verbally. This can be seen when one of the researchers gave them instructions to write their names, they took a long time to do that. This is because mental retardation students have limitations in several aspects. Difficulty in communicating in mental retardation students can also be said to be a language disorder or aphasia. Students with language disorders or aphasia cannot express themselves in ways that are appropriate for



their age group. To overcome the language problems experienced by the participants, Yono only uses improvised learning media. This is stated in Yono's statement, namely:

*“Untuk mendapatkan perhatian dari Yana dan Yani, yang mana mereka memiliki keinginan sangat kecil untuk belajar, saya hanya bisa menggunakan puzzle huruf, Balok huruf, serta Gambar atau poster. Mereka lebih tertarik dengan barang-barang yang berwarna dan nyata atau bisa mereka pegang”.*

Overcoming mental retardation students is not easy and requires extra patience must also be able to take their hearts so that they are willing or have the will to learn. To get the attention of mentally retardation students, teachers need to find a lot of learning media that can be used during the teaching and learning process.

### **3.2. Discussion**

Language disorder is the one of problems in communication that cause someone gets difficulty speaking or do communication with others. This study found two kinds of language disorders, namely aphasia and organ speech disorders (tunadaksa). Research conducted by Masitoh (2019) describes that there are several kinds of language disorders, namely the slowest of language development, aphasia, organ speech disorder, hearing disorder, behavior and emotional disorder, and autism. This present study has similar issues that mild mental retardation students get aphasia and organ speech disorder that cause them difficulty to do communication with others, or they hard to connect communication with interlocutors.

This study showed that mild mental retardation students have a big problem using language in communication. Sitompul (2019) in his research showed that mild mental retardation students have several characteristics of using language, namely, they are unable to use many words, which means that mild mental retardation students have limited vocabulary. Second, mentally retardation students hard to communicate with interlocutors because they are frustrated to do communication with others. Mental retardation students also imitate other people, and animals, such as the cat voice, car sounds, and others. This study is also the same as Sitompul (2019), the mental retardation students felt difficulty to use complete sentences. This study also has a similar case in which the two participants could not use a perfect sentence, even though they felt it was difficult to use simple sentences. In this research, the teacher always uses a good and simple student to make the students accustomed to that.

Furthermore, this present study found a connection between language disorders between mild mental retardation in students' socialization. In Nurwendah, Mahera, and Setiawan (2019) the problem that mental retardation students got is their disabilities to understand the code or rules in the school, family, or in society. In this study the two participants also the difficulties of socialization. Meanwhile, there are causes of language disorders in mild mental retardation students' cases. In Masitoh (2019) there are several factors of language disorders, namely medical factors, physiological factors, and environmental factors. This present study found the two participants have medical factors, namely mild mental retardation and organ speech disorders or tunadaksa. The second participant, Yani, who has mild mental retardation and organ speech disorder or tunadaksa more active in society than Yani, who has mild mental retardation.

#### 4. Conclusion

Language disorders are difficulties experienced by a person to communicate with other people. In this study, the language disorders experienced by the two mentally retardation students were caused by aphasia due to imperfect brain development and mental retardation. Both students have the same level of mental retardation, namely mild mental retardation. This study found that although they have the same level of mental retardation, their language disorders are not the same. This study is not without limitations. The researchers just focus on mild mental retardation students. To probe further data, researchers in the future could gain data from some students who have several levels of mental retardation.

#### References

- Afiffah, N., & Soendari, T. (2017). Meningkatkan kemampuan pada anak tunagrahita sedang melalui media gambar di SLB B-C YPLAB kota bandung. *JASSI\_anakku*, 18(1), 47-54.
- Ardha, R. Y. (2017). Keterampilan social anak tunagrahita ringan di sekolah dasar inklusi. *JASSI\_anakku*, 18(1), 46-50.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Harding, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: From start to finish* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). SAGE.
- Ita, K. N., Bunga, B. N., & Kiling, I. Y. (2014). Gambaran komunikasi anak usia dini tunagrahita di Nusa Tenggara Timur. *Jurnal Pendidikan Teknologi dan Vokasi*, 13(1), 59-63.
- Khairin, D., Nasution, S. Y., & Daulay, M. A. J. (2020). Analisis gangguan bahasa pada anak melalui kajian psikolinguistik. *Jurnal Sasindo*, 9(2), 1-8.
- Kohnert, K., & Medina, A. (2009). Bilingual students and communication disorders: A 30-year research retrospective. *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 30(4), 219-233.
- Lexy J, M. (2001). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosda Karya.
- Mardiati, N., Asrumi., & Suyanto, B. (2018). Kemampuan pelafalan bunyi kosakata dasar bahasa Indonesia oleh Lutsiana anak tunagrahita ringan di SLB negeri Patrang kabupaten Jember. *SEMIOTIKA*, 19(2), 130—146.
- Masitoh. (2019). Gangguan bahasa dalam perkembangan bicara anak. *Jurnal Elsa*, 17(1), 40-54.
- Nida, F. L. K. (2013). Komunikasi bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam*, 1(2), 163-189.
- Nurwendah, Y. D., Mahera, I. A., & Setiawan, A. (2019). Gangguan berbahasa pada penyandang tunagrahita: Studi analisis proses pembelajaran bahasa anak penyandang tunagrahita. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Arab*, 1(1), 16-35.





- Porter, L. (2002). *Educating Young Students with Additional Needs*. Crowsnest: Allen & Unwin.
- Rochyadi, E., & Alimin, Z. (2005). *Pengembangan program pembelajaran individual bagi anak tunagrahita*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional.
- Sitompul, M. (2019). Analisis gangguan berbahasa pada anak di kecamatan pahae julu. *KONFIKS: Jurnal Sastra, Bahasa dan Pengajaran*, 6(1), 34-45.
- Sunardi, & Sunaryo. (2006). *Intervensi Dini Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*. Bandung: Jurusan PLB FIP UPI.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.