

# COMMUNICATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS USING SIGNALONG INDONESIA

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Communication is a process of delivering information by someone to others as a form of social interaction. The form of communication as a process of social interaction can take the form of verbal language and non verbal language. Communication of children with special needs have different characteristics among types of disability with each other. It becomes a problem when they have to interact with each other. More than a decade, researchers in the UK conducted a study to develop a communication system that could be a solution to solve the problem. In order to overcome that communication problems, people need to create a communication system with sign language that is easier to use by all children with special needs. In 1992 researchers in the UK have been developing a Signalong communication system which is a model of sign language communication for children with special needs. Signalong communication system has been implemented and proved to have a high level of effectiveness. This communication system model adopted to the conditions and culture of Indonesia. After going through the stages of development, the result of adaptation of Signalong communication system is called Signalong Indonesia. Adapted Signalong Indonesia aims to be implemented and improve the quality of education services for children with special needs in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Signalong Indonesia, Children with Special Needs*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Communication is a process of delivering information by someone to others as a form of social interaction. Communication contains a specific purpose, namely to inform or to change attitudes, opinions, or behavior (persuasive), directly by oral (verbal) or indirectly through the media (non verbal), i.e. by using writing or gestures (SunardidanSunaryo, 2007).

Communication of children with special needs has different characteristics with common children. Deaf children use sign language to communicate with others. Meanwhile, the communication process in children who have motoric disorders, intelligence, and behavioral disorders requires visual support in the process of delivering information or messages. It is in the form of media images or symbols that can be read by the sense of sight.

In last decade, United Kingdom has conducted in-depth research to get solutions to overcome these problems. Communication skills of children with special needs can be optimized. To optimize the communication skills of children with special needs, we must develop a communication system. UK has developed "Signalong", a sign language system to help optimize the communication skills of children with special needs. Signalong helps children acquire language skills and improve communication skills with easy-to-understand gesture systems and has been implemented and proven to have a high level of effectiveness (Leona: 2012). This communication system model is adopted to the conditions and culture of Indonesia. After going through the stages of development, the result of adaptation of Signalong communication system is called Signalong Indonesia. Adapted Signalong Indonesia aims to be implemented and improve the quality of education services for children with special needs in Indonesia (Jauhari: 2017).

## 2 COMMUNICATION

Communication, terminologically means the process of delivering information by someone to others as a consequence of social relations (Jauhari: 2017). Communication contains a specific purpose, namely to inform or to change attitudes, opinions, or behavior (persuasive), directly by oral (verbal) or indirectly through the media (non verbal), i.e. by using writing or gestures (SunardidanSunaryo, 2007). Communication has the purpose to express and support self-identity, to build social contact with those around us and to influence others to feel, think, or behave the way we want (Mulyana: 2010).

Communication system can be divided into verbal communication and non-verbal communication (Mulyana: 2008). Verbal communication has some aspects: (1) vocabularies; (2) racing; (3)

sound intonation; (4) humor; (5) brief and clear; (6) timing. In the other hand non-verbal communication is grouped into (1) kinesthetic messages, non-verbal messages that use body movement; (2) the gestural message, showing the movement of some limbs to communicate various meanings; (3) proxemic messages, messages conveyed by arranging distance and space; (4) artifactual messages, messages expressed through the appearance of body, clothing, and cosmetics; (5) paralinguistic messages, nonverbal messages relating to the way messages are revealed.

Characteristic of communication in Indonesia is based on the understanding that the culture should be based on a number of characteristics. Culture is shared, acquired through learning, symbolic, adaptive, relative and universal (Jauhari: 2017). The communication system is an activity of managing, storing, issuing ideas, thought, symbols, and signs that make the information in making the decision to reach an agreement and understand each other by processing the message to be a source of information.

## 3 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with special needs are different children from children in common, they show special characteristics either from the mental point of view, communication skills, sensory, social behavior, or physical characteristics (Muhammad: 2008; Wardhani: 2009; Efendi: 2006). WHO has defined three different terms about children with special needs, namely impairment, disability, and handicap (Mathan: 2007). Impairment refers to a deficit naturally, i.e. loss or abnormality of physiological or anatomical structures or functions, whether permanent or not. Disability refers to limitations as a result of interference, while Handicaps refer more to people experiencing impairment or disability as a result of social factors outside of individual controls so that the

individual is less able to display a social role.



Figure 1: Children with specialneeds

In general, children with special needs have different communication characteristics. Characteristic of communication in children with hearing impairment is in terms of use of sign language. In several other cases, children with impairment use total communication systems as a means of interaction. Total communication is a way of communicating involving verbal language, sign language and body language. Total communication is used by some children with hearing impairment who still have hearing ability. Characteristics of children with intelligence disorders also use a total communication system. However, in some cases, children with intelligence disorders do not use sign language to help their total communication.

Unlike others, children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) are more likely to use visual media as their tool to communicate. Impaired communication and social interaction experienced by children with ASD resulted in the difficulty to exchange information verbally with people around, so they need help in the form of visual media. In addition to make it easier to communicate with people around, children with ASD need a simpler sentence structure to easily response and give feedback. These characteristics have no significant differences compared to children with

speechdelay. Speaking with speech delay children needs to use a simple sentence structure to make it easier for them to process and to respond.



Figure 2: Children with hearing impairment communicate with others using sign language

#### 4 SIGNALONG INDONESIA

Signalong is a sign language system to help children with special needs in acquiring language skills and to improve communication skills (The Signalong Group, Stratford House, Waterside Court, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4NZ). Signalong is based on the concept of British Sign Language (BSL). There are several sign language systems from BSL that have been combined and developed into Signalong for ease of use. Therefore, some similarities of BSL can be found in Signalong that have been developed.

Signalong's main goal is to empower people with communication problem to make it easier to understand and express their needs. Signalong signaling system includes a vocabulary adapted to the learning environment and daily activities within the community. In its use, the signalong uses a gesture system that is accompanied by a verbal pronunciation. The concept aims to help children focus on the information conveyed by using words in simple sentences and help them to understand the essence of the information conveyed (Jauhari 2017).

The basic principles of signalong adopted and modified from BSL are tailored to the needs and abilities of people with verbal communication

difficulties. Using one cue on each concept, for example: supporting cues used in spoken words, using voice marks, body language, facial expressions and tone of voice as a form of total communication system; keywords on signaling systems are important words in sentences; starting from real objects and real experiences, real generalization of the concept.

The purpose of Signalong is to develop the use of supportive sign in communication, to improve communication skills and for the interaction between children with special needs. Signalong benefits include: greater fulfillment of potential, greater independence, reduction in disturbed and challenging behavior, improvement in self-esteem and improved relationships. Signalong communication system has been implemented and proven to have a high level of effectiveness (Leona: 2012).

The basic concept of Signalong Indonesia is to develop oral communication patterns in the learning process. The goal is to be easily understood by children with special needs in special schools and inclusive schools. In general, some children with special needs lack verbal communication skills, thus impacting on their learning activities. Therefore Signalong is adopted and adapted to the conditions and communication culture of Indonesia in order to be implemented in an effort to improve the quality of education services especially for children with special needs (Jauhari: 2017).

## **5 CONCLUSION**

Communication is the process of delivering information by someone to others as a consequence of social relations. Communication has the purpose to express and support self-identity, to build social contact with those around us and to influence others to feel, think, or behave the way we want. Communication

contains a specific purpose, namely to inform or to change attitudes, opinions, or behavior (persuasive), directly by oral (verbal) or indirectly through the media (non verbal), i.e. by using writing or gestures. In accordance with the classification of forms of communication, children with special needs also have the characteristics of communication in the form of verbal and non verbal. Each child with special needs has different characteristics from one to another. Children with hearing impairment have communication characteristics using sign language. In other cases, they also use total communication. The use of total communication is also done by children with intelligence disorders, but some of them do not use sign language as a communication tool.

In contrary, children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) and speech delay need to use simple and clear sentence arrangements to make it easier for them to process the information and gives feedback or response to other. Children with ASD also need visual help to make it easier for them to communicate as a medium to communicate with the surrounding environment as well as in learning activities.

The characteristic varies in communication children with special needs, therefore it requires a communication system that can facilitate them to improve communication ability to be able to interact with people in activity at home and in activity of learning. The purpose of Signalong is to develop the use of supportive sign in communication, to improve communication skills and for the interaction between children with special needs. Signalong communication system has been implemented and proven to have a high level of effectiveness. Therefore Signalong is adopted and adapted to the conditions and communication culture of Indonesia in order to be implemented in an effort to improve the quality of education services especially for children

with special needs in Indonesia. Based on the analysis it can be concluded that the importance of children with special needs to use Signalong Indonesia to facilitate them in improving communication skills.

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