Using Sign Language to Enhance Vocabulary in Early Childhood with Autism

Marlina
Department of Special Education
Universitas Negeri Padang
Padang, Indonesia
lina_muluk@fip.unp.ac.id

Grahita Kusumastuti
Department of Special Education
Universitas Negeri Padang
Padang, Indonesia
grahita.kusuma@fip.unp.ac.id

Abstract—This study aims to describe the most used of key-word sign language by children with autism an early age and its implications for key-word sign language development. This research was conducted in three special schools which have early childhood with autism. Subject of this study were ten early childhood with autism in Padang. This research use qualitative approach through observation. Observations was conducted by special eacher and the researcher. The words are often used by children with autism was collected, reduced, summarized and interpreted. The results of this study indicated that there are 36 keywords which is consistently used by children with autism an early age.

Keywords—autism; sign language; communication

I. INTRODUCTION

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental barriers which can cause significant social; communication; and behavioral challenges [1]. Autism; and the broader category of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD); affects children and their learning in a variety of ways. Autism is a developmental disorder that is marked by profound deficits in social; language; and cognitive abilities [2]. ASD impacted different ways of interacting but depending on when the symptoms start; how severe; and other factors. The signs of ASD start from an early age; usually at the age of 2 years; although there are many early age children show symptoms in the first year.

Children with autism have limitations in communicate and interact with others. Children with autism very probably hampered in language development and understand what others are saying to him. The ability of children with autism to communicate using language depending on the intellectual and their social development [3]. Some children with autism may not be able to communicate through language and some other have the ability to speak limited. This inability to communicate in a functional manner may be the most handicapping of any of the symptoms of the disorder [4]. Barriers in speaking and communicating become the most problematic in children with autism because they require social skills and play skill [5]. Therefore; developing the ability to communicate is very important for the child. The ability to communicate becomes one of the main factors for children with autism to have more positive results [6]. Language development has a significant impact on the children in cognitive; learning and social relationships [7]. When infancy and in early age; the ability to communicate with gestures is the basis for language and social interaction [8]. Keyword sign language is one that is often used to improve language development and social communication in children with autism [9]. Sign languages are produced by the hands; accompanied by the face and body; and are perceived by the eyes. The hands move in a three-dimensional space. The motion of hands in space is a basic building block of signs in any sign language. Because they can make use of space; sign languages show quite distinct types of morphology; which make them typologically distinct from spoken languages [1].

Based on these explanations; the researchers wanted to assess the keywords sign language that may be used for children with autism an early age as a basis for social interaction. Keywords sign language in children with autism will be grouped to described about how to present it as understandable by children with autism when interacting at school and at home.

II. METHOD

This research use qualitative approach. Research carried out by observation for fourteen days until the word is found consistently used by children with autism in school and at home. The words used at home; obtained from interviews with teachers and parents. The data collected according to sign language that used the most by children with autism were analyzed through data...
reduction; summarize and interpretation of the data. The words collected but not consistently in gesture and its use is disqualified from the list of keyword sign language. Consistent word that used and consistent gesture then grouped and described how to use it. This observation was conducted on ten children with autism which has the characteristics of using the keyword sign language and verbal interactions at school and at home.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observation; it known a few keyword sign language that are commonly used by children with autism in school to interact with teachers and parents. Keyword sign language consisted of several semantic. Each semantic consists of some of words that used most by children with autism. Such words which can be seen in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Earliest Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>a word or phrase naming an attribute; added to or grammatically related to a noun to modify or describe it.</td>
<td>Tired; sad; happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Verbs that describe activity</td>
<td>Drink; eat; pee; pray; sit; bath; read; write; handshake; sleep; go; stop; listen; poop; see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>performed as part of a regular procedure</td>
<td>Help; thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>a polite word or sign of welcome or recognition.</td>
<td>Assalamu’alaikum; wa’alaikumsalam; halo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question words</td>
<td>Word that uses for asking something</td>
<td>How much; what; when; where; who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence</td>
<td>Objects or classes of objects using noun or pronouns</td>
<td>Name; mother; you; I; father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Negation/ allowance used to oppose an object or event</td>
<td>Yes; no; good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such words; then adjusted with a gesture that is understandable for children with autism; and used and trained to the children to make it familiarized and used in interaction. Gesture that is used can be seen in Table 2.
Sign language is useful for students who have little or no verbal abilities or communication skills. Keyword sign language may allow the students to communicate using signs and may stimulate verbal language skills. In applying the keywords sign language, it needed to know about:

- Pay attention to every aspect of the activities contained in the keywords sign language
- The implementation of the keywords sign language by one or both hands
- One hand means using the right hand
- Any keywords sign language is also equipped with the use of facial expressions
- Touching the child’s hand to help him form the word or gesture may be difficult if the child has tactile sensitivities.
- Train this sign language routine; because many children with autism have trouble imitating; which may prevent them from learning sign language.
IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of observation and discussion; it is known that there are thirty-six keywords which is often used by children with autism to interact at school and at home. These keywords sign language have a gesture characteristic which can be understood by children with autism. The results of this research can be basic research to continue the further research on advanced keywords sign language that may be owned by children with autism at school till adult.

REFERENCES