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Implementation of the Maternal Reflective Method in Inclusive Schools: Teachers' Perspectives on Writing Learning for Deaf Students

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the application of the maternal reflective method in teaching writing for deaf students in inclusive schools. Through a qualitative approach, data were obtained through interviews with three teachers who have experience teaching deaf students at the elementary school level. The findings of the study indicate that these teachers implement the maternal reflective method with various techniques, such as the use of facial expressions, visual media, and word repetition to build deeper understanding. Despite facing challenges related to time constraints in the regular curriculum and lack of understanding from regular teachers, all teachers reported increased student courage in writing as well as a better understanding of sentence structure and self-expression. This study reveals that maternal reflective not only contributes to the development of deaf students' writing skills but also strengthens the emotional relationship between teachers and students, which is an important element in inclusive education. These findings point to the need for systemic support and training for teachers to optimize this approach in inclusive learning.

Keywords: maternal reflective method, teaching writing, deaf students, inclusive education, reflective communication.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a concrete manifestation of the commitment to provide equal rights in obtaining education for all children, including children with special needs such as deaf students. In an inclusive school environment, teachers are required to be able to apply a flexible and adaptive approach so that learning can be accessed and followed optimally by all students (Sunardi et al., 2011).

One of the skills that is a major challenge for deaf students is the ability to write. This difficulty is generally closely related to limitations in mastery of written language, which is a consequence of obstacles in the development of spoken language from an early age (Marselis, 2013). This requires a learning method that is able to bridge language barriers while empowering the potential for visual communication possessed by deaf students.

The reflective maternal method is present as an alternative approach that emphasizes the importance of meaningful communication between teachers and students. This method was developed by Cornett (1992) and is based on the principle that language learning can take place naturally through intense, expressive, and reflective interactions, similar to the communication process between mother and child. According to Mahfud (2017), the reflective maternal method is very relevant for deaf students because it emphasizes the use of sign language, visualization, and

emotional expression in language learning and writing skills.

In the context of inclusive schools, the implementation of this method presents its own challenges, especially for teachers who do not have a background in special education. Teachers must be able to integrate learning strategies that are responsive to the individual needs of students while maintaining the continuity of the teaching and learning process in regular classes (Subini, 2015). Therefore, teachers' understanding of the maternal reflective method and its implementation practices in the field are important keys in supporting the development of writing skills for deaf students.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine how the maternal reflective method is implemented in writing learning in inclusive schools, as well as teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of its implementation. By exploring teachers' views, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of more inclusive and empathetic pedagogical practices towards students with special needs, especially deaf students.

The reflective maternal method is a language learning approach that was originally developed for deaf children. This method imitates the natural process of a mother in communicating with her child, namely through facial expressions, intonation, body movements, and reflective repetition of words. The

main goal is to create an emotional and meaningful communication environment for students (Cornett, 1992).

According to Mahfud (2017), the reflective maternal method emphasizes the affective aspect in learning by strengthening the connection between teachers and students. In practice, teachers use sign language, writing, and visuals to help students understand the meaning of words and sentence structures, especially in writing lessons. This approach is believed to be able to stimulate more comprehensive language development because it involves emotions, experiences, and active involvement of students.

Writing is a complex skill that is greatly influenced by language skills. For deaf students, learning to write is often a challenge due to limitations in vocabulary and grammar mastery. Marselis (2013) stated that limited access to spoken language from an early age hinders the development of syntax and semantics in the writing of deaf students. To overcome this obstacle, teachers need to use contextual and visual methods so that students can understand sentence structure, punctuation use, and word choice effectively. One approach that can be used is to combine images, body movements, and reflective activities to build meaning gradually (Yuwono, 2019). The maternal reflective method is relevant in this context because it combines emotional and visual expressions as writing aids.

Inclusive schools are regular educational institutions that accept students with special needs and provide the necessary support to ensure their academic and social success (UNESCO, 2009). In this context, teachers are required to adjust learning strategies according to students' individual needs.

However, the main challenge in inclusive education is the lack of specific training for teachers in dealing with the differences in students' learning needs, including deaf students. According to Sunardi et al. (2011), many regular teachers feel unprepared to teach students with special needs due to limited knowledge and special skills, especially in terms of sign language and alternative methods of communication. Teachers' views and experiences are important factors in the successful implementation of learning methods in inclusive classes. Teachers not only act as learning facilitators, but also as decision makers in choosing the most appropriate strategies for students (Tomlinson, 2005).

In the context of using the reflective maternal method, teachers' understanding of the principles of this method, as well as their willingness to apply it in heterogeneous classroom conditions, greatly influences learning outcomes. A study by Wahyuni (2020) shows that teachers who have a positive attitude towards the reflective approach are better able to build meaningful communication with deaf students, which in turn has an impact on improving students' writing skills.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand in depth how teachers interpret and implement the maternal reflective method in learning to write for deaf students in an inclusive school environment. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that qualitative research aims to understand phenomena in a natural context, emphasizing the meaning from the perspective of participants.

The subjects in this study were teachers who teach in inclusive schools and have experience in teaching deaf students, especially in writing learning. The selection of subjects was done purposively by considering certain criteria, such as; 1) Have experience teaching deaf students for at least one year; 2) Have implemented or are familiar with the maternal reflective method; 3) Willing to be interviewed and involved in the research process.

Data were collected through three main techniques; 1) In-depth interviews, conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore teachers' views, experiences, and strategies in implementing the reflective maternal method; 2) Direct observation, conducted during the writing learning process in class, to observe the interaction between teachers and students and the form of application of the method; 3) Documentation, such as teaching notes, lesson implementation plans, and student writing results as supporting data.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques consisting of three stages according to Miles and Huberman (1994), namely; 1) Data reduction: the process of sorting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from interviews and observations; 2) Data presentation: organizing data in the form of descriptive narratives or thematic tables to facilitate interpretation; 3) Conclusion drawing and verification: carried out continuously during and after the data collection process to find patterns, categories, and meanings from the implementation of the method.

To ensure the validity of the data, source and method triangulation techniques were used. Triangulation was done by comparing interview results with observations and documentation. In addition, member checks were done by asking subjects to review the interview results to ensure the accuracy of the information (Creswell, 2010).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Various Implementations of the Maternal Reflective Method

The first respondent, for example, emphasized the use of facial expressions and simple word repetition to build a meaningful connection between written words and the emotions that accompany them. This practice

reflects the basic principle of maternal reflective as explained by Cornett (1992), that deaf children need to “feel” language, not just see or imitate it. This emotional experience forms a context that facilitates the internalization of word meaning and sentence structure.

Meanwhile, the second respondent applied this method through the integration of picture story media and written reflections. This strategy shows the existence of a cognitive scaffolding process, where students are given a visual context first before being asked to express themselves in writing. This supports Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development—that with the help of teachers (scaffold), students can complete tasks that were initially beyond their abilities.

The third respondent added a deeper social-emotional dimension by using mirrors and pictures of facial expressions. This method not only builds emotional vocabulary, but also brings students closer to expressive writing skills. In this context, reflective maternal is not just a language strategy, but also a tool to facilitate self-expression and build the personal identity of deaf students—who often lack space in conventional classes.

From the three practices, it is clear that reflective maternal has high flexibility to be adapted to different teaching styles and student characteristics. This is a strength in the context of a heterogeneous inclusive class.

Structural Imbalance in Implementation

Although the maternal reflective method is considered effective, teachers face significant structural obstacles. One of them is the pressure of the regular curriculum that does not provide enough space for an approach that requires a slow and reflective process. The second respondent stated that “reflective learning is often delayed because we have to catch up on other lesson targets.” This shows that the success of this method depends not only on the capacity of the teacher, but also on the flexibility of the learning system.

In addition, the lack of understanding of regular teachers regarding the learning needs of deaf students is also an obstacle. The third respondent revealed that many teachers do not understand the principles of reflective communication, so that learning is often one-way and technical. This condition strengthens the findings of Sunardi et al. (2011) that inclusive education in Indonesia is still marked by low systemic support for teacher professionalism in educating children with special needs.

This challenge reflects the tension between the idealism of inclusion and the reality of practice in the field. Therefore, intensive training and policies are needed that support the integration of alternative

methods such as maternal reflective in inclusive learning design.

Teacher Reflection on the Impact of Methods

Despite the challenges, all teachers reported a positive impact of using the maternal reflective method on the writing skills of deaf students. Some indicators of success that emerged include: increased courage in writing, understanding of sentence structure, and the ability to express personal experiences and emotions.

This perception is supported by Wahyuni’s research (2020), which found that emotional involvement in the writing process can improve the quality of deaf students’ writing, both in terms of structure and meaning. In other words, this approach not only teaches writing techniques but also strengthens students’ agency in conveying their ideas.

Interestingly, this impact was not only felt by students, but also by teachers. All three teachers admitted to feeling emotionally closer to their students after using this method. This shows that maternal reflective is not just a pedagogical strategy, but also a means of building humanistic relationships between teachers and students—something that is essential in inclusive education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study shows that the reflective maternal method is an effective and humanistic learning strategy in supporting the writing skills of deaf students in an inclusive school environment. Through reflective interaction, emotional expression, and meaningful involvement, teachers are able to facilitate the language process more naturally and personally.

The three teachers who were the subjects of the study adapted this method with various approaches—from the use of facial expressions, visual story media, to strengthening emotional vocabulary. All of them emphasize the importance of affective two-way communication, in line with the essence of reflective maternal which positions teachers as responsive and empathetic figures.

However, the implementation of this method still faces structural challenges, such as time constraints in the regular curriculum, as well as the lack of understanding of regular teachers about the learning needs of deaf students. This indicates the need for systemic support so that a truly inclusive approach can be realized.

Overall, the reflective maternal method not only contributes to improving writing skills, but also strengthens the social-emotional relationship between teachers and students. This emphasizes that inclusive

education requires strategies that are not only technical, but also transformative and relational.

Suggestion

For Teachers in Inclusive Schools, it is recommended to develop understanding and skills in implementing the maternal reflective method in a more structured manner, including utilizing visual media, gestures, and emotional reflection as part of the writing learning process.

For Schools and Education Policymakers, there needs to be special and ongoing training for regular teachers regarding alternative approaches in teaching students with special needs, including maternal reflective as one of the literacy strengthening models.

For Further Researchers, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies by directly involving students, as well as examining the long-term impact of using this method on literacy skills and the development of deaf students' identities.

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