

ISOLEC 2018

by Afri Prayudi

Submission date: 11-Sep-2020 10:33AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1384254733

File name: ISOLEC_2018-converted.docx (723.94K)

Word count: 949

Character count: 5376

TEACHING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM BY IMPLEMENTING FLOOR TIME METHOD AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN SITUBONDO

Amalia Risqi Puspitaningtyas and Vidya Pratiwi
University of Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo
amalariisqipuspitaningtyas@mail.com; pdeeya@gmail.com

Abstract: This research aims at finding and describing teaching approach for children with autism. This was because children with autism have difficulties in communicating with their teacher and classmates. The difficulties were caused by emotional barriers. This descriptive qualitative research applied Floor Time method. The research subjects were students with autism in elementary schools in Situbondo. The results of the research revealed that the teachers had improved knowledge on approaches that could be used in developing communication skills of children with autism. Teaching using floor time method increased students' emotional and cognitive skills. The teachers showed an understanding that they had to make their students with autism learn in a comfortable environment, both academically and emotionally, by using the Floor Time method that was designed based on children's emotional development. A harmonious relationship among teacher and students eased the teacher to direct the students to improve their potentials optimally.

Keywords: teaching and learning, children with autism, and floor time method

INTRODUCTION

Interaction and communication is one means for a person to obtain various information through the environment. Environment to date is believed to be a source of great influence on the development of a person. If a person experiences obstacles in interaction and communication, it is believed that the person will experience obstacles in their learning activities. Children with autism as one part of children with special needs experience barriers to interact and communicate. This situation is exacerbated by the presence of behavioral disorders that accompany every child with autism, even this is the most disturbing obstacle in children with autism in interaction and communication with the environment.

Autism is a serious and complex disorder. If it was not treated properly and quickly, it will persist and may result in developmental delays. Developmental delays in cases of autism are commonly found in children and have a continuing effect on adulthood. Autism is a complex developmental disorder involving communication, social interaction and imagination activity. The symptoms begin to appear before 3 year old (Suryana, 2004: 1). According to Faisal Yatim (in Suryana, 2004: 1), autism is not a symptom of illness but is a syndrome, where there is a deviation of social development, language skills and concern for the surrounding that makes autism children live in his own world. Autism does not fall into the category of a disease but a set of symptoms of behavioral abnormalities. One of the developmental disorders experienced is the difficulty in understanding what they see, hear and feel. This disorder can cause developmental delays, among others, in the ability to communicate, speak, socialize, behave, and the development of their motor skills. Normal and disturbed people like autism need language. Language is a means of human communication in relationships with each other.

One of the approach is *The Developmental Individual Difference Relationship-Based (DIR)* or well-known as *floor time*. This approach can be used to develop communication skills in autistic children (Surfas, 2004). This approach is emphasized in spontaneity and a pleasant atmosphere. In practice, it creates continuous interaction and communication (Greenspan, 2010). DIR model based on three main understandings is to create programs that are based on the six stages of development that the child has achieved, the individual processing profiles, and the interactive relationships that best support their development.

Floor time is one component of an integrated DIR-based handling program. Floor time focuses on creating emotionally meaningful learning interactions, which encourages the six basic developmental capacities of children. The purpose of handling the floor time model is to build the foundations for healthy development, rather than just managing 3 behaviors and surface symptoms. Using this approach, children might learn to master important abilities. The floor time method can improve the children's ability to communicate and speak independently and meaningfully and to improve social reciprocal experiences.

The language produced by a person reflects his or her thoughts; the more skilled a person speaks, the clearer and brighter his or her way of thinking. Such skills can only be obtained from practice and practice (Pamuji, 2007: 119). Mastery of language both expressive language and receptive language is important for children with autism in order to communicate, interact, convey ideas / thoughts, and adjust to the environment. By having good language skills, children with autism can follow the learning in the class well too. However, because children with autism experience interference in language and communicate then autistic children also have difficulty in understanding the meaning of words and the use of language that fit the context (Yosfan Azwandi, 2005: 15).

METHOD

The approach and type of research used is qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative descriptive research aims to describe the object of research that is not clear and full of meaning with systematic, factual, and accurate. Qualitative descriptive approach in this study aims to determine the application of models and learning approaches that have been applied by teachers in the learning process for children with autism. This research was conducted on autistic children in elementary school in sub district Situbondo that in the location there is one child with autism in SDN 6 Dawuhan Situbondo. This study is using data analyst technique that is data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion or verification.

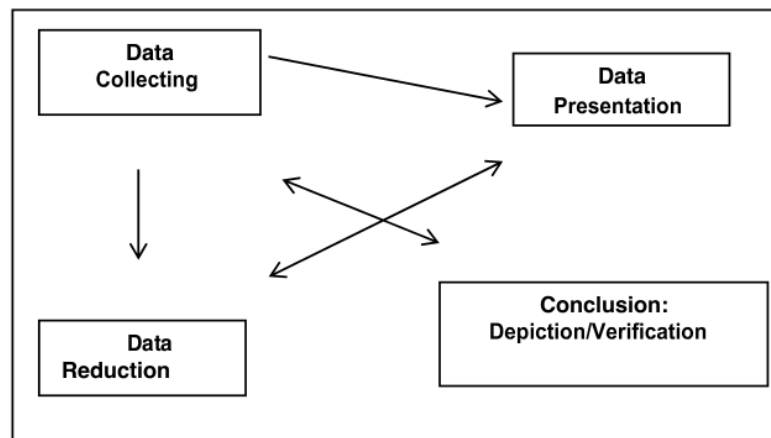


Figure 1. Research Procedures

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data of research show that there are some alterations made by student which is able to understand the intention or command from teacher. Autism is a syndrome characterized by a lack of communication and hyperactivity capabilities and socialization skills in community, usually followed by autistic behaviors such as playing with their own world by ignoring the environment. It is with this characteristic that causes the teacher to feel bitter in confronting the autistic child in the class, especially the lack of fluency in the teaching and learning process due to the limited ability to communicate between autistic children and teachers and their classmates. This limitation occurs because of the condition of the autistic child in understanding himself and expressing his desires. The ability of language and limited vocabulary, the imposition on an object also make children with autism less able to follow

the learning. The Floor time method focuses on creating meaningful emotional learning interactions that encourage the six basic developmental capacities of children. The purpose of handling the floor time model is to build the foundations for healthy development, rather than just managing 5 behaviors and surface symptoms. With this approach, students can learn to master important abilities. The floor time method can improve students' ability to communicate and speak independently and meaningfully and improve social reciprocal experiences.

Mehrabian and Ferris mention that language is the second most important after facial expression in conveying feelings or emotions (Deddy Mulyana, 2011: 85). This statement is in line with the results of research, where students during their communication tend to produce flat utterances without emphasis, the speed of voice was still slow, and accuracy in responding is still lacking because they cannot focus and have difficulties to understand. Behavior certainly affects the way people interact socially, the notion of behavior itself is everything that is done, said, seen, felt, heard from someone, or that you do yourself (Prasetyono, 2008: 87). In line with the statements of the results of research where autistic students do not experience hearing loss but when given the call, they are not able to reply. Autistic students' behavior in following the conversation tends to be passive or sometimes just silent.

Deddy Mulyana (2011: 86) states that togetherness, chatting, and noise is a sign of good life, but for autistic children they tend to be quiet rather than unwilling but they have limitations in communication that affect their behavior, responding is a difficult thing for autistic students because of their weaknesses in communication.

The social interaction of autistic students underlies the desire to be understood, just as when autistic students repeatedly call the teacher's name but there is a reply to autism student just silent but then call the name again. It indicates their willingness to interact but not yet have the ability to start communication and social interaction. The results showed that the students included in the classification of autistic children of the passive group because it is a type of autistic children who do not interact spontaneously, but do not reject the interaction efforts of others (Abdul Hadis, 2006: 52). Autistic students have been able to speak but their talk cannot be used to communicate, then from the results of research found Holis shows more verbal communication through touch and body movement. Currently the development of communication and interaction, Holis is good enough because it can respond to the environment, although not entirely good results like other children.

DISCUSSION

The result from the approach of learning with behavioral floor time method that appear in autism student has been able to improve students' interaction by using language, not because they cannot speak but when the mood of autistic student is good sometimes oral language appears. There are some research notes from observation during the learning process that shows the success in creating a conducive learning that provides more convenience for teachers to provide guidance and includes 5 strategies applied by teachers. The results of developments occur to students with autism using floor time method. In the learning process, the teacher provides a comfortable atmosphere for the child so that the interaction between teachers and students is harmonious.

The learning process is more child-centered, although it is only limited to imitating teacher speech but is progressing when the child is able to speak the words spoken by the teacher. In addition to the records, there is also a note that shows the weakness of the implementation of this floor time method: because the floor time method is a new approach known to the teacher, then before implementing, the teacher takes a long time to understand the concept and to implement the method. Obstacles possessed by children with autism is so complex that it requires teachers' readiness and adjustment of children and the environment in accordance with the condition of the child to apply floor time method. This condition requires hard work of teachers to understand their needs of students, the concept and implementation of deeper floor time method, and the arrangement of learning environment in accordance with the condition of the students so as to enable the interaction between the teachers and students.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the study show that teachers have a broader perspective on the approaches that can be used to improve autistic children's abilities. The approach of autistic children's learning by using floor time method to produce progress in emotional and cognitive ability in children with autism. Teachers have an understanding that for children with autism is not only academic learning that should take precedence but how to make children comfortable emotionally so that the learning process can run smoothly. It can be done because basically the floor-time method is designed based on the child's emotional development. The creation of a harmonious emotional relationship between teachers and students makes it easier for teachers to direct students and increase their potential optimally.

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