



## Implementation of the Sight Words Method to Improve Word Reading Skills in Sixth-Grade Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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### Abstract

This research aims to improve the ability to read words through the *sight words* method for students with autism in grade VI at the Dian Amanah Special School. This research is a Classroom Action Research with Kemmis and Mc. Taggart model, consisting of two cycles. The subject was one sixth-grade student. Data collection using tests and observations of learning behavior. Hypothesis testing was carried out by comparing the scores of student learning outcomes in the pre-action test, post-action test in cycle I, and post-action test in cycle II. The results showed that the sight words method was able to improve the ability to read words for students with autism in grade VI, as evidenced by an increase in the score of the learning outcome test for the ability to read words from 40 in the pre-action test, to 73 in the post-action test in cycle I, and to 89 in the post-action test in cycle II. The improvement in student learning behavior, such as increased focus in learning, the ability to identify words, the ability to read words, and the ability to read words in sentences with SPOK patterns sequentially.

**Keywords:** sight words; autism; reading words

### INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in an individual's ability to function as a social being. One essential aspect of language proficiency that must be mastered is reading ability (Mualimah, Stkip, & Rangkasbitung, 2018). Reading difficulties are often a root cause of academic learning problems experienced by students in schools (O'Connor et al., 2014). This is because the majority of learning objectives require reading ability as a prerequisite. Therefore, it is essential for students to develop reading skills in order to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

The importance of reading, however, is not proportional to the reality on the ground in Indonesia. This is evidenced by data from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, Indonesian Central Statistics Agency) regarding reading ability in 2021, which showed that only 17.66% of children with special needs in Indonesia possessed reading skills (UNICEF, 2022). Similar findings were reported in a 2022 study by Central Connecticut State University, which ranked countries based on literacy levels worldwide and indicated that Indonesia ranked near the bottom, placing 60th out of 61 countries (Aryanto et al., 2023). Additional data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in the 2022 Indonesian Student Competency Assessment (AKSI), which measured reading skills, revealed that 46.83% of students with special needs in Indonesia were still lacking in reading proficiency. From these findings, it is evident that the reading ability of students with special needs remains a significant challenge.

Improving reading skills is an effort to achieve academic success for all students, including those with disabilities, who are considered a vulnerable group facing barriers to academic attainment. One group experiencing difficulties in reading skills is students with autism (Nally et al., 2018). Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), according to the DSM-5, is a pervasive developmental disorder that manifests before the age of three, characterized by impairments in three domains: difficulties in forming social relationships, challenges in communication, and a tendency to engage in repetitive behaviors. Whalon et al., (2015) state that the characteristics of children with autism include abnormalities in social-communication interactions, behaviors, and restricted, repetitive interests, which impact their ability to absorb information and master concepts. The difficulties experienced by students with autism lead to challenges in acquiring reading skills due to their inability to process verbal and nonverbal information, thereby affecting educational outcomes (Carvalhais dkk., 2022). Therefore, it is evident that communication impairments specifically place students with autism at a disadvantage in language development, particularly in the aspect of reading.

Language-related challenges, particularly in reading, are also experienced by students with disabilities, including those with autism (Munfarikhatin 2021). Students with autism may also exhibit language difficulties, as indicated by echolalia, a behavior in which the child can repeat words without understanding their meaning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The effects of autism also impact the reading abilities of students with autism. According to Ludlow, Taylor-Whiffen, & Wilkins (2012), this is due to visual processing abnormalities, including hypersensitivity to light and color. This phenomenon, often referred to as visual distortion, occurs when students with autism perceive sequences of symbols, colors, and light as disturbing or uncomfortable, particularly in relation to lines, printed words, or text. Similar findings were reported by Nally et al. (2018), in their study titled *“An Analysis of Reading Abilities in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders”* which demonstrated that children with autism experience limitations in reading skills.

Several methods have been implemented to improve the reading skills of children with autism. For instance Rani Ayu (2016) described the Syllabic Method, which focuses on reading syllables. Hafni et al (2021) explained the use of a multisensory approach to teach reading skills to children with dyslexia and autism by engaging all sensory modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile). In addition, Pasapan (2021) applied the TEACCH method, which emphasizes visual support through picture cards. In the present study, the Sight Words method is employed, which focuses on the use of visual perception while minimizing the decoding stage, with visual support to facilitate children with autism in improving their reading skills.

Based on observations conducted on February 12, 2023, at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah, reading difficulties were identified among sixth-grade students with autism at the SDLB level. The vocabulary mastered by these students had not shown improvement with the current teaching method. The instructional approach employed, namely the drill method, has not been effective in enhancing the reading skills of sixth-grade students with autism. These reading difficulties may hinder students from achieving learning objectives. This is because the students have not yet met the learning outcomes described by the classroom teacher at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah, which are outlined in the phase A learning objectives, where students are expected to progress from pre-reading to reading simple story texts. These learning outcomes should ideally have been mastered by the students, enabling the development of reading skills.

However, if students have not yet acquired reading proficiency, the learning process is impeded, and students do not make progress in subsequent material. Therefore, accommodations are necessary to improve the reading skills of sixth-grade students with autism, in order to maximize learning outcomes.

The low word reading ability of sixth-grade students with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah is closely related to the cognitive and linguistic characteristics of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Students with autism tend to experience difficulties in phonological processing, attention to graphemic symbols, and integrating visual and auditory information during reading activities (Vale et al., 2022). These challenges result in delayed acquisition of word recognition and decoding skills, which in turn affect overall reading development. Furthermore, mechanistic instructional strategies, such as the drill method, are not fully aligned with the learning needs of students with autism, who require exploratory, multimodal, and visually-based approaches (Solis & McKenna, 2023). The mismatch between learning characteristics and instructional methods has prevented students from achieving phase A learning outcomes, namely the ability to read simple texts. Therefore, an adaptive, concrete, and visual instructional approach is needed to optimally accommodate the learning profiles of students with autism.

The Sight Words method is a commonly used approach in the early stages of reading instruction for young children, designed to help them recognize whole words without having to decode phonemes sequentially. This strategy emphasizes strengthening the visual association between word forms and their meanings, enabling students to recognize words automatically through meaningful repeated exposure. This principle aligns with the characteristics of students with autism, who typically possess strengths in visual memory and a tendency to learn through pattern repetition and concrete visual stimuli (Stevenson et al., 2021). The use of this method is developmentally appropriate for sixth-grade students with autism, considering that some individuals with autism exhibit a mismatch between chronological and developmental age, including in language and literacy skills (Solis et al., 2023). This discrepancy means that some students still require early reading approaches even though they are in the sixth grade of elementary school (Tager-Flusberg and Kasari, 2013). Implementing the Sight Words method with visual aids can enhance memory for word forms and meanings, while also improving vocabulary acquisition and basic reading skills in students with autism (Vale et al., 2022). This method functions as a form of instructional accommodation tailored to students' actual developmental needs, ensuring that the reading skills acquired are more functional and meaningful.

Recent studies indicate that the Sight Words method is more effective for children with autism compared to several other reading approaches. The phonics approach, for instance, requires the ability to analyze abstract letter-sound relationships, which is often difficult for individuals with phonological processing difficulties (Sprenger-Charolles et al., 2003). Research conducted by (Peristeri et al., 2024) also emphasizes that Sight Words-based instruction can enhance word recognition and text comprehension more meaningfully for children with autism and reading difficulties. Additionally, Stevenson et al. (2021) found that children with autism respond positively to visually oriented instruction that focuses on whole-word recognition, aligning with their strengths in visual memory. Based on these findings, the implementation of

the Sight Words method is considered appropriate to support basic reading skills in sixth-grade students with autism who are still at the early reading stage.

The researcher collaborated with the classroom teacher to develop the reading skills of sixth-grade students with autism using the Sight Words method. This study focuses on the instructional method because teaching approaches play a crucial role in creating optimal learning conditions that align with students' characteristics (Husna et al.,2025). The study emphasizes a modified instructional method aimed at assisting students with autism in improving their learning outcomes in reading skills. Sight Words are words read through visual memory without the need for decoding, analogy, and/or word prediction, which otherwise require additional effort from students. This Sight Words method is also optimized according to the learning responses of sixth-grade students with autism at SLB Dian Amanah, specifically to maximize their word memory capabilities.

The Sight Words method is effective in teaching reading to children with autism because it emphasizes their strengths in visual processing and memory. This approach teaches words as meaningful wholes without requiring analysis of letter–sound relationships (decoding), making it more accessible for children with autism who often struggle with abstract phonetic concepts (Santoso, 2018). Spector (2011) asserts that Sight Words instruction can assist children with autism and limited oral language in recognizing printed words directly, while also providing a sense of accomplishment that can enhance reading motivation. Other studies indicate that teaching Sight Words, whether through direct strategies or with the aid of instructional tools, can improve word recognition accuracy and expand functional vocabulary needed for reading texts and environmental symbols (Coleman et al, 2015). Consequently, this method leverages the visual strengths of children with autism to reinforce meaningful and contextual early reading skills.

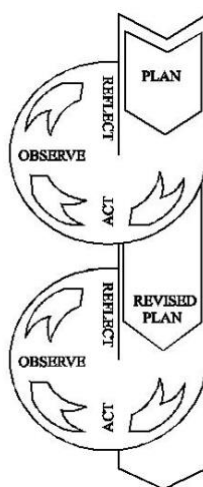
The novelty of this study lies in the implementation of the Sight Words method integrated with contextual vocabulary relevant to the students' environment, the use of visual media optimized according to the child's interests with a fading strategy from picture support to independent reading, and intervention targeting environmental factors and concentration through negative reinforcement. Unlike previous studies, which generally focus solely on the use of word cards or standard printed materials, this study develops the Sight Words approach to be more practical, contextual, and oriented toward the actual needs of students with autism in the classroom. Based on this rationale, this study seeks to investigate efforts to improve word-reading skills using the Sight Words method for sixth-grade students with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah.

## **METHOD**

This study is based on Classroom Action Research (CAR) and employs a qualitative approach. Rochiati Wiriaatmaja (2014) explains that Classroom Action Research involves teachers designing instructional practices and reflecting on them as experiential learning processes aimed at improving subsequent teaching practices. Similarly, Zainal Aqib (2017) defines Classroom Action Research as a form of research conducted by classroom teachers within their own teaching environment, focusing on the refinement and enhancement of learning processes and instructional implementation. Furthermore, I. G. A. K. Wardani & Kuswaya

Wihardit (2014) state that the purpose of Classroom Action Research is to improve teaching practices and processes, with the ultimate goal of optimizing students' learning conditions. Through Classroom Action Research, weaknesses and obstacles in the learning process can be more rapidly identified and analyzed, enabling timely corrective actions to minimize learning difficulties and enhance students' learning outcomes. This aligns with the purpose of the present study, which is to improve word-reading skills among sixth-grade autistic students at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah through the use of the sight words method.

The Classroom Action Research design employed in this study refers to the Kemmis and McTaggart model. According to Suharsimi Arikunto (2012), this model is structured in a spiral form consisting of at least two cycles. Each cycle comprises four key components: the planning stage, the action implementation stage, the observation stage, and the reflection stage.



**Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Design Based on the McTaggart Model**

The implementation phase of Classroom Action Research in each cycle begins with the planning stage. This stage originates from the identification of a learning problem in the classroom, followed by the formulation of a solution to address the issue through the design of systematic steps to be carried out within the action research process in order to improve students' learning processes and outcomes. This stage also determines the timing, location, duration, and the necessary tools or materials to be used. The second stage, namely action implementation, involves carrying out all the activities that have been designed during the planning stage. Concurrently, the researcher conducts observation to monitor the course of the action and the students' responses during the learning process. Following the observation, the next stage is reflection, which refers to the evaluation of the learning objectives achieved. Based on the results of this reflection, the researcher then makes modifications or improvements to the action plan to be implemented in the subsequent cycle.

This research was conducted at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah, located on Jalan Kapten Haryadi, Sinduharjo, Ngaglik, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta. The subject of the study was one sixth-grade student with autism. The research was carried out in the elementary-level classroom (SDLB) of the school. The selection of this research site was based on several considerations: the presence of a sixth-grade student with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah

who demonstrated low word-reading ability, and the fact that the sight words method had not yet been fully optimized in teaching word-reading skills within the sixth-grade classroom at the school.

Data were collected using two techniques: learning outcome tests and observation of learning behavior. The test technique was employed to obtain quantitative data. The test administered to the student was a performance-based word-reading test utilizing the sight words method. The test took the form of a reading performance task using a list of words arranged according to simple sentence structures. Each word was assessed based on four indicators: accuracy, clarity, fluency, and intonation. Scores were assigned on a scale of 1 to 4 for each indicator, then summed and converted to a 0-100 scale. The pre-action score of 40 was obtained from the calculation of the number of words read correctly that met the minimum criteria. The assessment criteria were developed based on the characteristics of early-stage reading skills in students with autism, emphasizing whole-word recognition, basic meaning comprehension, and accuracy of pronunciation.

The non-test technique was employed to assess the student's activeness and learning behavior through systematic observation. The aspects observed included attention focus, response to visual stimuli, participation in reading activities, and consistency in recalling word forms. Data reliability was ensured by involving two observers, the researcher and the classroom teacher, both of whom used identical observation instruments. The observation results from the two observers were then compared to evaluate the inter-rater agreement level. A high level of agreement indicated that the observational data on learning behavior were reliable and free from individual assessment bias.

The success of this research was determined by the proper implementation of learning procedures, the active participation of the student, and the improvement in learning outcomes, with a minimum classical mastery level of 75% and a Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. The data analysis technique involved examining the differences in the student's learning outcomes between Cycle I and Cycle II. The comparison results were used to demonstrate the improvement in the student's word reading ability from the first cycle to the second cycle.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The implementation of word reading instruction using the sight words method for sixth-grade students with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah was carried out in cycles. Each cycle consisted of three meetings, during which word-reading materials were presented. This implementation stage represented the application of the lesson plans that had been developed for reading instruction through the sight words method. The activities in this stage consisted of three parts: a pre-action test, the implementation of the action, and a post-action test. The stages of implementing word reading instruction for students with autism through the use of the sight words method were as follows:

1. Preparing the student for the lesson, including a warm greeting, an opening salutation, prayer, and arranging the instructional media to support sight words reading.

2. The teacher provided 20 words, divided into five sentences following the S–V–O–A (Subject–Predicate–Object–Adverb) pattern. Word reading instruction using the sight words method was conducted with the support of picture cards and word cards.
3. The student and teacher conducted reflection and repeated practice of word-reading activities.

### ***Implementation of the Pre-Action Test***

The implementation of the first cycle began with an analysis of the student’s initial word reading ability in the sixth grade at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah, conducted through observation and interviews as part of a preliminary study carried out by the classroom teacher. Based on the collected information, the student (initials BA) demonstrated low word-reading ability. The previously used drill method was considered less effective, as it did not align with the learning characteristics of the student, who primarily relied on memory-based learning. The student’s initial reading ability was also assessed through a pre-action test administered on April 17, 2023, in the elementary classroom (SDLB) of SLB Autisma Dian Amanah. The vocabulary known by the student prior to the intervention was limited to simple words such as “mandi” (to bathe), “makan” (to eat), “kupu-kupu” (butterfly), “pensil” (pencil), “meja” (table), and “kursi” (chair).

To determine the student’s baseline reading ability, the pre-action test consisted of 20 word items arranged in simple sentences following the S–V–O–A (Subject–Verb–Object–Adverb) structure, and utilized picture card media. The pre-action test was conducted to identify the reading ability of the sixth-grade autistic student prior to the implementation of the intervention. The word reading instruction using the sight words method began with the administration of this pre-action test, the results of which are presented as follows:

**Table 1. Recapitulation of the Pre-Action Test Results on the Subject’s Word Reading Ability**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Score Obtained</b>	<b>Description</b>
BA	40	Below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM)

Based on the table of pre-action test results for the word reading ability of student BA, it was shown that the student obtained a pre-action test score of 40. The results indicate that BA’s initial word reading ability, according to the assessment criteria, falls into the “low” category and has not yet met the school’s Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), which is set at 75. After the implementation of Cycle I, which consisted of three learning sessions, the student’s word-reading ability showed improvement. However, this improvement was not yet optimal, as the score had not reached the predetermined KKM. A recapitulation of the post-action test results from Cycle I is presented in the following table:

### ***Implementation of the Post-Action Test in Cycle I***

The post-action learning outcome test for Cycle I was administered on Wednesday, May 10, 2023. The test took the form of a performance-based word reading test. The test items consisted of 20 words, organized into five sentences following the S–V–O–A (Subject–Verb–Object–Adverb) pattern. The test was conducted in the elementary classroom (SDLB). The results of the Cycle I post-action test indicated a notable improvement. The student (BA)

demonstrated an increase in score and successfully achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). The recapitulation of the post-action test results is presented in the following table:

**Table 2. Recapitulation of the Cycle I Post-Action Test Results on the Word Reading Ability of Subject BA**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Cycle I Post-Action Test Score</b>	<b>Description</b>
BA	73	Below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM)

Table 2 presents the learning outcome test scores obtained after the implementation of the instructional intervention using the sight words method. The scores were calculated based on the accumulated results of the student's test responses. The test results indicate an improvement in performance, with the score increasing from 40 to 73. Subject BA achieved a score categorized as "good," yet below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). Therefore, it was deemed necessary to proceed to Cycle II. The corrective actions planned for Cycle II included:

1. Enhancing negative reinforcement by arranging a learning environment separated from peers to minimize distractions and promote better focus during the learning process.
2. Emphasizing and clarifying word pronunciation through the use of visual aids, such as pictures, to build the student's confidence in articulating the instructed words.
3. Ensuring natural and clear pronunciation models from the teacher to make it easier for the student to follow and reproduce the target words accurately.

#### ***Post-Action Test Implementation in Cycle II***

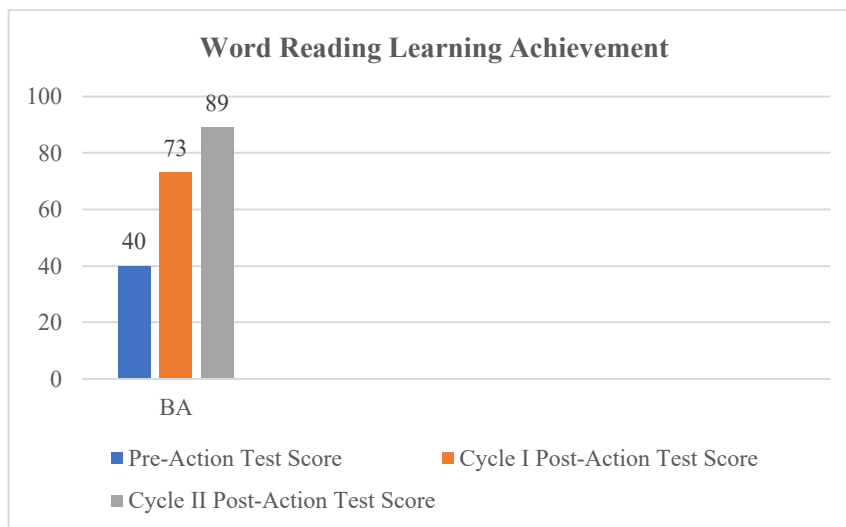
The student's word reading ability showed a marked improvement after the implementation of Cycle II, which consisted of three learning sessions. The post-action learning outcome test for Cycle II was administered on Wednesday, May 24, 2023. The test took the form of a performance-based word reading assessment, consisting of 20 words arranged into five sentences following the Subject–Predicate–Object–Complement (SPOC) structure. The test was conducted in the SDLB classroom of SLB Autisma Dian Amanah. The results of the post-action test in Cycle II demonstrated adequate achievement, indicating a further increase in the performance of student BA, who successfully met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) set by the school. Table 3 below presents the post-action test results after the implementation of Cycle II.

**Table 3. Recapitulation of Post-Action Test Results in Cycle II: Word Reading Ability of Subject BA**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Cycle II Post-Action Test Score</b>	<b>Description</b>
BA	89	Meets the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM)

Table 3 presents the learning outcome test scores obtained after the implementation of the sight words method during Cycle II. The scores were calculated based on the accumulated results of the student's test performance in this cycle. Student BA achieved a good score and successfully met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) established by the school. The test results also indicate a clear improvement, with the score increasing from 73 to 89. These findings demonstrate that the sight words method had a positive impact on the student's word

reading ability. The improvement in student BA's performance in word reading can be observed in the following diagram.



**Figure 2. Word Reading Learning Outcome Scores of Sixth-Grade Students with Autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah**

The diagram above illustrates the learning outcome scores in word reading following the implementation of the sight words method. Student BA obtained a pre-action test score of 40, categorized as low and below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). After the implementation of Cycle I, the post-action test score increased to 73, categorized as good but still below the KKM. Following Cycle II, the post-action test score further improved to 89, categorized as very good and successfully meeting the KKM of 75.

## Discussion

The sight words method was selected as the instructional intervention to enhance word reading ability in sixth-grade students with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah. The observed improvement in reading ability aligns with the findings of Chung dan Son (2020), who reported that children with autism often experience visual processing deficits, which contribute to difficulties in reading printed text. The sight words method is particularly relevant because it leverages the strength of visual memory in children with autism for word recognition. According to Cottini (2023), instructional repetition, reinforcement, and feedback can strengthen a child's memory of the words being learned. These findings are further supported by Spector (2011), who emphasized that sight words assist children with autism in recognizing printed words, even in the presence of limitations in oral language.

Sight words are words that are recognized and read through visual memory. In general, the sight words method can be implemented when the teacher provides instruction, reinforcement, and feedback. Each repetition of these three components, which include teaching using the sight words method, student responses, and teacher feedback, serves to strengthen the student's memory of the words being learned (Cottini 2023). The application of this concept is consistent with the findings of Santoso (2018) who emphasized the importance of visual card media to help children with autism more easily associate written symbols with their meanings.

The sight words method aligns with the learning characteristics of students with autism, who generally exhibit variations in how they memorize instructional material. Some students with autism tend to memorize information holistically, remembering entire sentences or grasping material with the support of visual media. Autistic children with a visual learning style prefer reading stories accompanied by pictures, as images help them better understand the content. Meanwhile, Gestalt learners tend to memorize entire sentences without fully understanding the meaning of each word. Other learning styles, such as rote learners, typically involve memorizing information literally without understanding the meaning of the symbols being memorized. In general, students with autism are more engaged in learning that utilizes media or learning tools enhanced with visual support to increase their interest in the material (Yolanda et al., 2021). The findings of this study support this notion, as student BA demonstrated an increase in score from 40 to 73 in Cycle I, although continued visual support was still required.

The sight words method used in this study was optimized to ensure it was well received by the student. The intervention was implemented in two cycles. Learning support, including picture cards and word cards, was selected to align with the communication characteristics of sixth-grade students with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah, who rely heavily on visual media. The subject was first administered a pre-action test to assess initial ability, followed by the intervention using the sight words method. After Cycle II, which incorporated negative reinforcement to increase the student's concentration, the post-action test score reached 89, successfully meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). This finding is consistent with (Supriatmanto, Dwi Herlambang, dan Rachmadi, 2021) who stated that environmental factors strongly influence learning concentration.

The sight words method can be applied as a beginning reading instructional approach, particularly for word reading in students with autism. This method is implemented with visual support, including picture cards and word cards. In its application, the student first identifies and matches picture cards with word cards, followed by matching picture cards with word cards and syllable cards without interpreting the meaning of the syllables. Next, the student matches word cards with syllable cards without focusing on the meaning, then progresses to reading word cards with picture support and later reading word cards without picture support. The learning continues with arranging word cards according to teacher dictation to form complete sentences, and finally, the student reads words within SPOC-patterned sentences without picture support. These gradual stages demonstrate an effective visual fading strategy, which is consistent with international findings by (Strauber et al., 2020), indicating that picture-embedded sight words enhance word retention more effectively than text alone.

In the pre-action test, the subject was administered 20 word-reading items. The words included "nama," "membaca," "buku," "kelas," "Pak Endro," "menggambar," "pohon," "ibu," "menjahit," "baju," "rumah," "bintang," "mencuci," "piring," "dapur," "Lintang," "membuang," "sampah," and "tempat sampah." During the pre-action test, student BA required considerable verbal and physical support. The score obtained was 40, categorized as low and below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), which was set at 75. These results are consistent with the findings of Coleman et al. (2015), who reported that children with autism can improve their mastery of functional vocabulary through sight words.



**Figure 3. Contextual Learning Tools for the Implementation of the Sight Words Method**

Student BA obtained a score of 73 in Cycle I, which falls into the good category. Although this represented an improvement compared to the pre-action test, the researcher and classroom teacher needed to review and address the challenges encountered in Cycle I to achieve better outcomes in Cycle II. Therefore, Cycle II was conducted to maximize the student's mastery of words that remained difficult and to resolve the obstacles experienced during Cycle I. The subject achieved a score of 89 in the Cycle II post-action test, which falls into the very good category. This score improvement can also be interpreted through the reading development framework proposed by Khotimah & Soedarto Harjono (2019), which emphasizes perceptual, associative, and experiential aspects as essential stages in reading development.

Nevertheless, several challenges were observed during Cycle I. Throughout the intervention, the researcher conducted observations of the learning process. The student often engaged in conversation during lessons, and attention was frequently diverted by the activities of nearby students. According to Thursan Hakim (2022), in addition to internal factors, a student's concentration during learning is also influenced by several external factors. One important factor is a quiet and supportive learning environment. Environments with multiple distractions, such as noisy sounds, pollution, and the movement of people, can reduce students' ability to concentrate on learning.

Aviana & Fatichatul Hidayah (2014) explained that one of the factors that can reduce a student's comprehension ability is concentration. Concentration serves as a crucial foundation for students to absorb instructional material and as an indicator of successful learning processes. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to create a conducive learning environment that allows students to maintain focus during lessons. In Cycle II, a corrective effort was implemented by the teacher through the use of negative reinforcement to prevent unnecessary behaviors and learning responses. This strategy aligns with the principles of behavior modification, aiming to enhance students' focus and engagement in the learning process.

Student BA also experienced difficulties pronouncing certain words naturally due to inherent characteristics of oral communication. The student's learning style, which relies heavily on visual support, contributed to hesitation and challenges during word-reading practice. Based on these observations, the researcher concluded that the sight words method implemented in Cycle I was not yet fully optimized and required adjustments in Cycle II. This finding supports the view of Sharbini et al. (2015), who stated that sight words not only enhance reading ability but also foster a positive attitude toward the teaching and learning process.

Observations following the corrective measures implemented in Cycle II indicated that the use of the sight words method enabled the student to maintain focus and more easily acquire word-reading skills. These findings are consistent with (Sharbini dkk. 2015), who stated that instruction for students with learning difficulties is more effective when using the sight words method. Additionally, they explained that this method has the potential to foster a positive attitude toward both the subject matter and the teaching-learning process. Therefore, this study confirms that visual-based sight words, implemented in a gradual and contextual manner, are effective in enhancing word-reading skills in students with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah.

The corrective measures in Cycle II were also implemented by having the student practice word reading with picture support during the first session of Cycle II. In the subsequent two sessions, the student was required to read independently without picture assistance. Furthermore, the teacher provided clearer demonstrations of word pronunciation, closely aligned with standard pronunciation indicators, to enable the student to follow more easily and gain confidence.



**Figure 4. Documentation of Word Reading Learning for Sixth-Grade Students with Autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah Using the Sight Words Method**

The improvement in word-reading skills of the student with autism can be analyzed through the reading development framework proposed by Khotimah & Soedarto Harjono (2019), which includes three aspects. The first aspect is perceptual, referring to the student's ability to interpret what is observed as a symbol or word. The second aspect is associative, which pertains to the student's ability to recognize the relationship between symbols and sounds, as well as between words and their meanings. The third aspect is experiential, involving the student's ability to connect a word with prior experiences to derive its meaning.

According to Susilawati, et al. (2023), several factors influence word-reading ability. The first is the physiological factor, in which the student BA does not experience any physical impairments. The second is the environmental factor, as the word reading instruction for student BA involves contextual material that incorporates elements closely related to the student's immediate environment. The third is the psychological factor, where student BA demonstrates a specific interest in and preference for visual media. In this study, the sight words method was optimized by using visual media aligned with the students' interests.

The results of this study demonstrate a primary achievement in the improvement of word reading scores, increasing from low in the pre-action test (40) to good in Cycle I (73), and very

good in Cycle II (89), thereby meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). This success confirms that the sight words method, combined with contextual visual media, can assist students with autism in optimizing their visual memory strengths for word reading. Furthermore, the study indicates that modifying the learning environment and applying negative reinforcement can enhance both student concentration and engagement during the learning process. However, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted with only one participant, so the findings cannot yet be generalized to children with autism who have different characteristics. Second, the learning media were limited to word and picture cards, leaving the effectiveness of digital-based or interactive sight words media untested. Third, the relatively short duration of the study prevented observation of the long-term effects of the sight words method. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger sample of students, utilize technology-based learning media, and extend the intervention period to evaluate the consistency of outcomes over time.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate that the sight words method contributed to the improvement of word reading skills in a sixth-grade student with autism at SLB Autisma Dian Amanah. The improvement is evident from the scores obtained by student BA, which increased from 73 in Cycle I to 89 in Cycle II, surpassing the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. This improvement was achieved through the implementation of the sight words method in word reading instruction. The score in Cycle II was obtained as a result of refinements to the teaching approach from Cycle I, including the application of negative reinforcement to create a more conducive learning environment, the clarification of word pronunciation, and teacher support to enhance the student's confidence in pronouncing words according to instructions. Through these strategies, the student became more confident, focused on teacher instructions, and able to read words independently following the SPOK sentence pattern.

### **Recommendations**

The implementation of this study provides insights and hopes that teachers can utilize the sight words method with more advanced media and incorporate variety in the learning process to improve word reading skills in students with autism in SDLB. It is expected that, following this study, students can learn word-reading material using the sight words method both at school and at home. Other stakeholders, such as school principals, may consider the sight words method as an alternative instructional approach, which can inform decisions regarding the provision of more diverse learning media. However, the results of this study cannot yet be generalized to other students, particularly those with moderate or severe autism. Therefore, this study contributes as a reference for the development of scientific knowledge, which can be utilized in future research, especially in efforts to enhance word-reading skills in students with autism. Future researchers may use this study as a foundation for further scholarly work related to students with autism, instructional methods, and the development of reading skills.

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