

Development of an Assessment Instrument for Early Reading in Moderately Mentally Disabled Grade VIII Students at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v%25vi%25i.1336>

*Mamat Rohimat, Ayi Najmul Hidayat^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: mamatrahmat2390@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study develops a contextual early reading assessment instrument for eighth-grade students with moderate intellectual disabilities at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa, Sumedang Regency. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research process involved observation, interviews, focus group discussions, and expert validation. The findings indicate that while students show varying degrees of competence in phonemic awareness, syllable decoding, and vocabulary comprehension, they encounter significant challenges in sentence construction and reading fluency. The assessment instrument was refined through collaborative discussions with educators and validated by external experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and usability. Key enhancements include the formulation of concrete indicators, improved visual media, and standardised implementation guidelines. The results underscore the need for adaptive assessment tools that align with the cognitive and developmental profiles of students with intellectual disabilities. This instrument supports the formulation of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and contributes to inclusive assessment practices. The study recommends institutional adoption through integration into policy frameworks, professional development initiatives, and inter-school moderation efforts to strengthen consistency and equity in assessment. The validated instrument offers a practical model for advancing literacy interventions and fostering educational inclusion.

Keywords: *Early Reading, Assessment Instrument, Moderate Intellectual Disability, Special Education, Inclusive Assessment*

Article History:

Received 07th August 2025

Accepted 15th October 2025

Published 17th October 2025



INTRODUCTION

Reading instruction plays a crucial role in special education, particularly for children with special needs. One of the primary objectives in special schools is to help children with special needs build a larger vocabulary, which is essential for their overall academic and social development. Early reading instruction is particularly significant, as it forms the foundation for future literacy skills. However, many special schools, including SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa in Sumedang District, face challenges in providing systematic, specialized assessments to support early reading learning. As a result, reading activities – especially in early reading – often lack proper analysis, which in turn affects the effectiveness of the instruction. This gap highlights the need for tailored assessment tools to evaluate the reading abilities of children with intellectual disabilities and to support educators in making informed decisions about their teaching strategies.

Early reading skills are foundational in the literacy development of children with intellectual disabilities. These skills, such as phonemic awareness, word recognition, and vocabulary acquisition, are critical for students to understand and process written language. For children with moderate intellectual disabilities, these skills may develop at a slower pace, requiring more targeted support and specific instructional strategies. Without an appropriate assessment tool to gauge these abilities, it becomes difficult to identify students' strengths and areas for improvement, which hinders the development of personalized educational plans that

can meet their unique needs. In this context, the importance of early reading assessment cannot be overstated.

The right to education, as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia (Article 31, Paragraph 1), ensures that every citizen, regardless of their background or abilities, has access to education. This principle is essential for promoting inclusive education, where children with special needs (ABK) are given equal opportunities to learn and develop. Children with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, face unique challenges in their education and require specialized programs and services. According to Nur et al. (2022), children with special needs are defined as those who need special educational services to maximize their human potential. These services include not only educational support but also social, psychological, and counseling services, all designed to address the specific challenges they face.

Intellectual disabilities, which are commonly observed in children with special needs, can significantly impact a child's cognitive development and adaptive behavior. According to Kemis and Rosnawati (2016), children with intellectual disabilities are those whose intellectual abilities are below average (with an IQ score of 84 or lower), accompanied by difficulties in adaptive behavior that affect their daily life skills. These disabilities often emerge before the age of 16. Moderate intellectual disability, in particular, is characterized by an IQ range of 40 to 55, which affects not only academic performance but also social integration and independent living skills. As a result, children with moderate intellectual disabilities require consistent, specialized educational interventions that are tailored to their specific developmental levels.

Assessment is a key element in the educational process, especially when it comes to children with intellectual disabilities. According to Marlina (2015), assessment is the ongoing process of collecting relevant information to guide educational decisions. In special education, assessments are crucial for understanding a child's learning needs, strengths, and areas where further support is required. For children with moderate intellectual disabilities, assessment should be multifaceted, focusing not only on cognitive skills but also on their social and emotional development. Early reading assessments are an essential tool in identifying the specific areas where a child needs help, enabling teachers to design individualized learning strategies.

Despite the significance of early reading assessments, many special schools lack such tools, particularly in Indonesia. Research on the current state of assessment tools in special education reveals a significant gap in available instruments for assessing early reading abilities in children with intellectual disabilities. According to Pamungkas (2017), early reading assessment plays a critical role in identifying children at risk of reading difficulties, such as dyslexia, which can complicate their academic journey if not addressed early. In a similar vein, children with moderate intellectual disabilities face significant barriers to mastering reading, and without the proper assessments, teachers may miss opportunities to intervene at crucial developmental stages.

The lack of suitable early reading assessment tools in schools like SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa has far-reaching implications for the educational outcomes of children with moderate intellectual disabilities. Teachers are often left to rely on general teaching methods that may not fully account for the specific needs of these students. As a result, reading activities may be less effective, and students may struggle to acquire the foundational skills necessary for further academic success. This gap in assessment tools highlights the urgent need for specialized instruments that can accurately measure the early reading abilities of children with intellectual disabilities and provide teachers with the insights needed to tailor their instruction effectively.

The development of an early reading assessment instrument for children with moderate intellectual disabilities is crucial to addressing these challenges. By creating a tool that is specifically designed for this group of students, educators can more effectively gauge their reading abilities and identify areas that require intervention. The instrument would also

support the creation of individualized education plans (IEPs), which are essential for providing a personalized approach to learning. IEPs can guide the development of tailored teaching strategies, accommodations, and modifications that are designed to meet the unique needs of each student.

This study aims to develop a contextual early reading assessment instrument for eighth-grade students with moderate intellectual disabilities at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa. The research will focus on the process of designing, validating, and refining an assessment tool that can be used by teachers to evaluate the early reading abilities of their students. The tool will be grounded in the specific cognitive and developmental characteristics of children with intellectual disabilities, ensuring that it is both accessible and effective for this group.

The expected outcomes of this study are twofold. First, the research will provide a practical and reliable assessment instrument that can be implemented in SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa, enabling teachers to more accurately assess their students' early reading abilities. Second, the study will contribute to the broader field of special education by offering insights into the development of inclusive early reading assessment tools for children with intellectual disabilities. This could serve as a model for other schools facing similar challenges and help promote more inclusive educational practices across the country.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of early intervention and specialized assessments in improving the academic outcomes of children with special needs. The development of an early reading assessment tool tailored to the needs of children with intellectual disabilities will help ensure that they receive the support they need to succeed in their educational journey. This research will also provide valuable input to schools that currently lack an assessment instrument for early reading, helping them create more effective and inclusive learning environments for children with special needs.

METHOD

This research was conducted at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa in Sumedang Regency, using a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and develop an early reading assessment tool for children with moderate intellectual disabilities. The study aimed to understand the process of creating a contextual instrument that accurately measures early reading skills in students facing challenges such as phonemic recognition, decoding, comprehension, and fluency.

The research involved one eighth-grade teacher, two students with moderate intellectual disabilities, and two expert validators from other special schools, SLB Permata Hati and SLB Shappira Diyanah. The students involved in the study had below-average intellectual abilities and struggled with early reading tasks. Data were collected through a combination of non-participatory observations, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), documentation studies, and instrument validation.

Observations were conducted during early reading lessons, where strategies such as word cards and object cards were used to enhance phonemic awareness. In-depth interviews with the teacher and students helped explore their perspectives on decoding challenges and reading comprehension. FGDs with teachers allowed for discussions on how the assessment tool could address the specific needs of students in early reading, and the validation process by expert teachers ensured the tool's relevance and usability.

Data analysis followed the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). Triangulation of data sources and techniques was employed to strengthen validity. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed throughout the research. The study aims to contribute to the development of effective, inclusive assessment practices for children with intellectual disabilities, enhancing early reading education in special schools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A Snapshot of Early Reading Skills in Children with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities

Field observations conducted at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwa in Sumedang Regency provided a grounded understanding of the early reading development process in children with moderate intellectual disabilities. Two eighth-grade students, referred to as RA-1 (CY) and RA-2 (TS), were observed and assessed as research participants. Their literacy profiles revealed both potential and limitations that require contextualized pedagogical responses to address. The findings from this observation offer significant insights into the cognitive-linguistic development of this learner group and the structural challenges in designing appropriate assessment tools.

CY exhibited the ability to recognize and articulate vowel and consonant letters, as well as differentiate between letter shapes and phonemic sounds with minimal assistance. Moreover, the student demonstrated an emerging understanding of high-frequency, concrete vocabulary, including object names and primary colors. However, CY was not able to sequence words into syntactically correct or semantically meaningful sentences. Conversely, TS demonstrated partial competence in decoding simple, syllabic units. TS was capable of reading open syllables (e.g., ba, ta, ka) and some closed syllables (e.g., dan, pun, kan), although only with repeated instructional prompts. The student had yet to achieve independent fluency in reading short phrases or demonstrate consistent comprehension of the lexical content in those phrases.

These findings affirm the observations made by Abdurrahman (2012), who emphasized that children with intellectual disabilities often experience limitations in visual discrimination, working memory, and phonological awareness, which are foundational for successful early reading. Such cognitive constraints manifest not only in delayed decoding skills but also in difficulties in generalizing vocabulary knowledge and applying learned phonetic patterns across different lexical contexts.

It is important to note that early reading for children with moderate intellectual disabilities involves more than just alphabetic recognition. This process encompasses decoding, word association, syntactic structuring, and semantic integration. Therefore, the implementation of an effective early reading assessment must account for the multidimensional nature of these cognitive processes. As Soendari and Mulyati (2010) underscore, meaningful assessment requires a holistic understanding of a learner's cognitive, psychological, and socio-emotional profile. Accordingly, teachers must not merely assess isolated reading components but also attend to the broader learning environment and behavioral cues presented by the learners during literacy tasks.

Data obtained from in-depth interviews with the eighth-grade homeroom teacher revealed that the assessment process was implemented in three systematic phases. The first stage involved identifying student needs based on Kurikulum Merdeka (KUMER) and the results of preliminary observations. At this stage, the teacher mapped out the baseline competencies in symbol recognition and phonemic awareness. The second phase entailed the development of an assessment grid that operationalized key competencies into observable and measurable indicators of performance. These included sub-skills such as distinguishing between vowel and consonant letters, constructing syllables, and recognizing familiar words drawn from daily routines and classroom interactions. The final phase focused on preparing supportive instructional materials. These included illustrated flashcards, letter posters, and contextualized picture-word associations designed to enhance engagement and reduce cognitive load.

The teacher also made adjustments to the assessment schedule and duration to accommodate students' limited attention spans and sensory sensitivities, which is a crucial pedagogical consideration when working with children with intellectual disabilities. The flexibility in timing is consistent with Mumpuniarti's (2007) assertion that instructional and assessment strategies for learners with special needs must be adapted to reflect their individual pace of learning, responsiveness to stimuli, and emotional regulation capacity.

Despite this structured and adaptive approach, several challenges remain. Teachers at SLB ABC face material shortages, particularly in producing durable and visually accessible

teaching aids. Furthermore, there is an evident lack of access to professional development related to competency-based assessment frameworks in the UAE. This results in an overreliance on teacher intuition and informal assessment strategies, which, although valuable, may lack the reliability and validity required for instructional decision-making. Marlina (2015) highlights that a valid assessment must be grounded in both theoretical and empirical evidence and must offer replicable outcomes that can inform the development of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs).

Another noteworthy limitation is the absence of collaborative multidisciplinary input in the design of the assessment tool. Ideally, such tools should be co-developed with input from psychologists, speech and language therapists, and curriculum experts to ensure that they reflect current evidence-based practices in the field of special education. Without such collaboration, assessments remain limited in scope and fail to address all relevant developmental domains, such as receptive and expressive language, phonological processing, and executive functioning.

In summary, the observed capabilities of the two students and the corresponding instructional strategies reflect both progress and limitations in early reading instruction for learners with moderate intellectual disabilities. While the teacher demonstrated a strong commitment to differentiation and contextualization, the broader systemic challenges—limited resources, lack of formal training, and absence of national-level assessment standards—constrain the full realization of an inclusive data-driven pedagogical framework. To address this, it is necessary to invest in the professional capacity of special education teachers, expand access to inclusive teaching materials, and develop a standardized early reading assessment instrument validated across diverse educational settings.

The findings of this study may inform the development of a national framework for assessing foundational literacy in children with intellectual disabilities. Such a framework would ensure that early interventions are data-informed, student-centered, and aligned with both curricular goals and the developmental realities of learners in special education contexts. Through structured, valid, and context-responsive assessments, schools can better support the literacy journeys of students like CY and TS, helping them build confidence, autonomy, and a meaningful relationship with written language.

Development of Assessment Tools and FGD: Contextual and Collaborative Strategies

Following the preliminary data collection process through direct observation and semi-structured interviews at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwa in Sumedang Regency, the subsequent stage of the study focused on refining the initial reading assessment instruments. This process was conducted through a structured Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving teachers, researchers, and external validators. The objective was to ensure that the assessment tools were not only aligned with the cognitive and developmental characteristics of children with moderate intellectual disabilities but also practical for implementation in the classroom.

The FGD adopted the principles of educational assessment as outlined by Sunardi and Sunaryo (2006), emphasizing the need for assessment practices that are authentic, comprehensive, and responsive to the unique developmental profiles of students with special educational needs (SEN). In this context, authenticity refers to assessments that reflect real-world tasks and learning contexts. Comprehensiveness entails capturing a broad range of reading sub-skills, while developmental relevance ensures that the tools are sensitive to the learner's cognitive, emotional, and linguistic capacities.

Consensus within the FGD was reached regarding the core domains that the assessment tool must address. These included (1) the recognition of vowels and consonants, (2) blending and segmenting syllables, (3) reading familiar and meaningful simple words, and (4) interpreting or identifying the meanings of short, high-frequency sentences. This domain classification aligns with the framework suggested by Marlina (2015), who contended that literacy development among children with special needs must be scaffolded progressively, beginning with foundational phonemic awareness before advancing to word and sentence comprehension.

To support these domains, the group proposed a set of contextualized media, including syllable flashcards, illustrated letter posters, and concrete objects (such as classroom tools, toys, and familiar food items) to visually connect symbols to real-life references. This multimodal approach was influenced by studies such as Anggraeni et al. (2022), who found that flashcard-based media significantly improved early reading outcomes in children with intellectual disabilities by reinforcing vocabulary acquisition and enhancing word-symbol association.

The FGD further discussed environmental considerations that could optimize assessment performance. A key decision was to conduct assessments in a quiet, separate room rather than the main classroom, thereby minimizing distractions and sensory overload, which are commonly experienced by learners with moderate intellectual disabilities (Abdurrahman, 2012). Moreover, the assessment duration was carefully calibrated to align with students' average attention spans; each session was limited to a maximum of 15 minutes to avoid fatigue and cognitive disengagement.

An important product of the FGD was the establishment of measurable and observable indicators for each domain of assessment. For example, a benchmark was set for students to correctly identify and name five vowel letters within two minutes. In the domain of syllabic reading, students were expected to read at least three open or closed syllables independently with minimal scaffolding. These indicators allow for more consistent performance measurements and facilitate tracking of individual progress over time. According to Soendari and Mulyati (2010), clear and operationalized indicators are critical in special education contexts, where learning trajectories can be highly individualized.

One of the distinguishing strengths of the FGD is its participatory nature. As highlighted by Paramita and Kristiana (2018), FGDs offer a platform for collaborative inquiry and shared reflection among practitioners, enabling the co-construction of knowledge based on field-based experiences. The SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwa FGD embodied this principle by allowing each participant—teachers, researchers, and validators—to contribute their expertise from their respective vantage points. This process ensured that the resulting instrument was not only theoretically grounded, but also responsive to classroom realities.

Two external validators were engaged to further validate the technical quality of the assessment tools. The first validator, from SLB Permata Hati, provided constructive feedback on the layout and content hierarchy of the assessment grid. Specifically, the validator suggested improving the numbering format to ensure consistency and recommended increasing the weighting score for closed-syllable recognition tasks, arguing that such tasks are more complex because of their phonological structure. This adjustment reflected an effort to differentiate the task difficulty levels and ensure alignment between the scoring rubrics and cognitive load.

The second validator, affiliated with SLB Shappira Diyanah, endorsed the general structure of the instrument, while proposing refinements to the language used within the descriptors. The validator emphasized the importance of utilizing operational terms that are easily interpretable by classroom teachers, especially those with limited exposure to technical terminology in special education assessments. Simplifying terminology while preserving the precision of construct definitions was viewed as essential to ensure consistent application across varying teaching contexts.

Beyond technical validation, the FGD served as a critical platform for institutional reflection on broader assessment practices in higher education. The discussions raised awareness of the urgent need for school-based policy frameworks that support the systematic development, implementation, and moderation of assessment tools. This insight aligns with the position advanced by Purnamasari and Soendari (2018), who argued that locally developed assessments have the potential to be more responsive to students' lived experiences. However, they cautioned that such assessments must undergo moderation and external review to ensure inter-school fairness, reliability, and alignment with national learning goals.

The deliberations also highlighted the limitations of relying solely on teacher-developed instruments. While context-sensitive and grounded in classroom realities, these tools may lack the psychometric robustness of standardized instruments. Therefore, FGDs like the one conducted at SLB ABC Miiroojuttaqwaa must be institutionalized as part of a broader strategy to bridge the gap between local classroom knowledge and system-level assessment. This would require training initiatives, resource investment, and inter-school collaboration, supported by regional education authorities.

In conclusion, the FGD phase in this study played an indispensable role in shaping an initial reading assessment instrument that was both grounded and applicable. The tool's design reflects a balance between theoretical frameworks and classroom pragmatism, enabling educators to assess early reading development in learners with moderate intellectual disabilities more accurately. As schools continue to strive for inclusive and evidence-based practices, structured FGDs and external validation represent vital mechanisms for ensuring the relevance, fairness, and instructional utility of classroom-based assessment tools.

Validation of Tools and Implications of Assessment for Educational Services

The validation of educational assessment instruments is a crucial phase in ensuring their accuracy, reliability, and relevance, especially when designed for children with special educational needs. In this study, the validation process was conducted by a panel consisting of two teachers from different special schools, both of whom possessed specific expertise in the education of children with intellectual disabilities. This process was not merely evaluative in nature, but also developmental, as it generated critical insights that contributed to refining the assessment tool further.

As outlined by Sugiyono (2018), the validity of an educational instrument encompasses several dimensions, including content accuracy, clarity of indicators, appropriateness of scoring rubrics, and alignment with student needs and abilities. The validators involved in this study assessed the draft instrument using those criteria and provided structured feedback to guide its improvement. Both validators recognised the systematic organisation of the tool and appreciated its deliberate focus on the core dimensions of early reading skills – namely, phonemic recognition, syllabic blending, and vocabulary use within basic sentence structures.

However, constructive critiques were also presented. One key concern was that certain indicators in the assessment grid were still abstract and lacked operational clarity. For instance, the original indicator, “the child is able to understand the meaning of simple sentences,” was considered too interpretive for practical application with learners who have moderate intellectual disabilities. The validator recommended revising the item to “the child is able to name objects mentioned in short sentences,” thus transforming the assessment task into a more observable and measurable behaviour. This change aligns with Marlina’s (2015) assertion that valid assessments must consider the cognitive load and processing limitations of children with special needs. By making indicators more concrete, teachers can more easily assess performance without relying on subjective judgment.

Further technical refinements were also addressed. Visual components of the instrument, including font size, typeface, and colour contrast, were scrutinised with particular attention to the perceptual limitations of students. Asmiati (2019) and Anggraeni et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of high-contrast visuals, large fonts, and familiar visual cues when designing materials for children with intellectual disabilities, given that visual perception is often compromised in this population. The validators recommended increasing font sizes and using contrasting colours (e.g., black letters on a yellow background) to enhance readability and reduce cognitive strain. Additionally, the use of pictorial support – such as image-word matching – was encouraged to strengthen symbol-meaning associations, particularly for students with limited decoding skills.

The validators also identified the need for an accompanying implementation guide. This guide would provide standardised procedures for administering the assessment, including timing, reinforcement techniques, and scoring rubrics. The absence of such a guide could lead to inconsistencies in implementation, especially when the tool is used by multiple teachers or

in different classroom contexts. Purnamasari and Soendari (2018) argue that for an assessment to be sustainable and transferable, especially in special education settings, it must be supported by clear operational protocols that mitigate subjective interpretation.

From a practical standpoint, the validated instrument holds significant value for both formative and summative assessment practices. In formative contexts, it enables teachers to map students' baseline reading abilities and monitor incremental progress over time. In summative contexts, the instrument can contribute to end-of-term evaluations and support educational planning. Furthermore, the tool supports the development of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) or Program Pembelajaran Individual (PPI), which are critical for ensuring tailored intervention strategies in special education. As noted by Soendari and Mulyati (2010), assessment serves not only as a diagnostic tool but also as a foundation for responsive pedagogy.

Beyond its pedagogical implications, the findings from this validation process have policy relevance. Many special schools across Indonesia, particularly those in rural areas, lack standardised early reading assessment frameworks tailored for children with intellectual disabilities. The absence of such frameworks leads to fragmented and inconsistent instructional approaches. Therefore, the validated instrument developed in this study can serve as a prototype for regional or national assessment modules. This aligns with the mandate set forth in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which obliges the state to provide equitable and appropriate educational services for all learners, including those with disabilities.

Teachers also benefit from the clarity and practicality of a validated assessment tool. One of the challenges in special education is the lack of confidence among educators in evaluating students with complex needs. With a well-structured and context-sensitive instrument, teachers gain confidence in their instructional planning and can provide more focused support. As Arikunto (2010) asserts, assessment should be integrated into the entire instructional process rather than relegated to an endpoint evaluation. In this regard, the instrument empowers teachers to make informed decisions, adjust instructional strategies, and provide evidence-based reports to stakeholders.

Parents and school administrators likewise stand to gain from this development. Assessment results can be used to communicate student progress, inform case conferences, and guide placement decisions. Moreover, reliable data from such assessments can be used to advocate for resources, training, and infrastructure improvements tailored to student needs. When assessment is perceived not as a judgemental tool but as a developmental instrument, it fosters a culture of inclusion and accountability within educational institutions.

Finally, from the students' perspective, the benefits of a well-designed assessment are manifold. It provides them with structured opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do, thereby promoting confidence and motivation. According to Yurmalina and Kasiyati (2019), even modest improvements in reading skills among children with intellectual disabilities can translate into greater independence and social engagement. When students perceive that their efforts are recognized and valued, they are more likely to invest emotionally and cognitively in learning activities.

In conclusion, the validation of the Early Reading Assessment Instrument significantly enhanced its technical quality, applicability, and fairness. By incorporating expert feedback and refining the content to match student characteristics, the instrument becomes a viable tool for advancing inclusive educational practices. It also serves as a strategic resource for policy development, teacher empowerment, and student progress tracking, affirming the critical role of assessment as a catalyst for equitable and quality education for all.

CONCLUSIONS

This study developed an early reading assessment instrument tailored for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, grounded in structured observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. The instrument's validity was strengthened through a rigorous validation

process, ensuring observable indicators, accessible media, and standardized scoring. It effectively supports the early identification of literacy abilities, aids in the development of individual learning programs, and informs instructional decisions. Furthermore, it shows promise as a scalable model for inclusive educational assessment within Indonesia's special education system. However, there are limitations to consider. The sample size was limited to one school and two students, which may affect generalizability. Additionally, while the validation process was thorough, it relied mostly on practitioner feedback rather than psychometric analysis. The absence of interdisciplinary collaboration, such as input from speech therapists or psychologists, may have constrained the tool's ability to assess broader language-related competencies. Future research should expand to multiple sites, incorporate quantitative validation methods, and integrate expertise from various disciplines to develop a more comprehensive and empirically robust assessment framework for children with intellectual disabilities.

REFERENCES

- Anwar, S., & Umam, H. (2020). Transformative Education: Emphasizing 21st Century Skills and Competencies in the Independent Learning Curriculum. *AIM: Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15575/aim.v1i1.28886>
- Abdullah, N. (2013). *Understanding children with special needs*. *Magistra*, 25(86), 1–10.
- Abdurrahman, M. (2012). *Children with learning difficulties: Theory, diagnosis, and remedies*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Alimin, Z., et al. (2013). *Inclusive education services (Handbook for trainers)*. West Java Provincial Education Office, Save the Children, and IKEA.
- Anggraeni, S. F., Hastuti, W. D., & Ediyanto. (2022). The application of flashcards on the beginning reading skills of children with mild intellectual disabilities in Grade 2 at SLB Putra Jaya. *Jurnal Multidisiplin Madani*, 2(9), 3500–3506.
- Aprianti, N. (2015). *Implementation of Indonesian language learning for mildly mentally disabled children in Grade 7 at SLB Al-Azhar Bukittinggi* [Undergraduate thesis, Padang State University].
- Arifah, I. (2014). *Implementation of learning for mentally disabled students in Grade 5 at SD Gunungdani, Pengasih, Kulon Progo* [Unpublished manuscript].
- Arikunto, S. (2019). *Research procedures*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Arikunto, S. (2010). *Research procedures: A practical approach* (Rev. ed.). Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Asmiati, N. (2019). Improving early reading skills in children with mild intellectual disabilities through the peel and arrange method with sound repositioning technique. *Jurnal Unik*, 4(9), 78–85.
- Asyharinur, et al. (2022). Basic concepts of children with special needs. *Masaliq: Journal of Education and Science*, 1(1), 1–10.
- Darmadi, H. (2011). *Educational research methods*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (2003). *Law No. 20 of 2003 on the national education system*. Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Devi, N. P. (2022). Early reading instruction for children with mild intellectual disabilities. *Ulil Albab: Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal*, 2(1), 45–53.
- Fathonah, S. (2008). *Improving early reading skills in children with learning difficulties through remedial teaching for second grade students at MI Negeri Boyolali* [Unpublished undergraduate thesis, Sebelas Maret University].
- Kemis, & Rosnawati. (2016). Literature review, framework of thinking, and hypothesis. *Kajian Pustaka*, 1(1), 1–5.
- Marlina. (2015). *Assessment of children with special needs: Psychoeducational approach* (Rev. ed.).
- Mumpuniarti. (2007). *Academic learning for the mentally disabled*. Yogyakarta: FIP UNY.
- Paramita, & Kristiana. (2018). Focus group discussion techniques in qualitative research. *Jurnal Penelitian Kualitatif*, 1(2), 118–126.

- Purnamasari, P., & Soendari, T. (2018). The VAKT method for teaching beginning reading to children with mild intellectual disabilities. *JASSI Anakku*, 19(1), 25–31.
- Ratnawulan, T., Abdul, H., Sauzan, Q., & Putri, A. (2022). Development of learning media for beginning reading through word board games for children with mild intellectual disabilities. *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan*, 6(4), 6688–6694.
- Sugiyono. (2018). *Qualitative and quantitative research methodology and R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Sukmadinata, N. S. (2011). *Educational research methods*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Sunardi, & Sunaryo. (2006). Assessment of reading, writing, and arithmetic for children with intellectual disabilities. In *Buku ajar asesmen pendidikan luar biasa* (pp. 80–95). Jakarta: Depdiknas.
- Widiastuti, & Winaya. (2019). Literature review, framework, hypothesis. *Kajian Pustaka*, 1(1), 1–6.
- Wikipedia. (2023). *Compulsory education in Indonesia*. https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wajib_belajar
- Yurmalina, E., & Kasiyati, K. (2019). The effectiveness of the mingle technique in improving early reading skills for children with mild intellectual disabilities at SLBN 2 Padang. *Journal of Special Education Research*, 7(2), 12–18.
- Zuldafrial. (2012). *Qualitative research*. Surakarta: Yuma Pustaka.