



Maximizing Potential : 5W+1H Reading Comprehension Strategy for Student with Moderate Intellectual Disability

Hanita Nur Azmi*, Linda Primana

Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author. Email: hanitanurazmi@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to enhance the reading comprehension skills of elementary school students with moderate intellectual disabilities through a single-subject method. In this study, the researchers use the 5W + 1H strategy to help students understand the meaning of the text. The research data was collected using observation guidelines, which then will be analyzed by using pretest-posttest techniques to assess the subject's reading comprehension skills improvements. Teaching the 5W + 1H principle - which emphasized the question words why and how using visual images and keywords - was found to be effective in enhancing the subject's reading comprehension. This finding also explained that this method could maximize the potential of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. The instruction on the question words why and how was particularly effective in increasing the subject's understanding of questions as well as leading him to provide correct and contextually appropriate responses. However, using visual images as a learning aid, especially for why and how questions, seemed less effective, as evidenced by the subject's reliance on keywords within the sentence. In the future, this strategy can be employed by educators to enhance reading comprehension skills for students with moderate intellectual disabilities.

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Introduction

Intellectual disability is a condition where students have limitations in intellectual, adaptive, social, and practical functions, including difficulties in thinking and reasoning, adjusting to the environment, acquiring basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as independent living skills (American Psychological Association, 2023). In greater detail, The American Psychological Association classifies the severity of intellectual disability based on Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores, which are mild (IQ score range 55 to 70), moderate (IQ score range 40 to 55), severe (IQ score range 24 to 40), and profound (IQ score range below 25). Furthermore, from the category of intellectual disabilities, those considered trainable are moderate intellectual disabilities (Mangunsong, 2014).

Nowadays, many students with intellectual disability actively participate in learning at school (Shelton et al., 2019). In Indonesia, this trend is due to the implementation of an inclusive approach at all levels of education. This is regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education number 70 of 2009, Article 5, paragraph 2, which states that each school unit must accept at least one student with special needs (ABK), including students with intellectual disabilities (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, n.d.). To maximize the learning process in schools, teachers need to provide continuous learning opportunities for students (Weiss et al., 2018), one thing that needs to be trained for students is written communication skills.



In this study, the subject was identified as AJ (not his real initials). He was a 5th-grade male student in elementary school with moderate intellectual disabilities. His Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score was 43, classified as a moderate intellectual disability based on the Stanford-Binet scale. When participating in this study, he was ten years eight months, and his mental age was four years eight months. In daily activities, he can communicate verbally, such as mentioning general information, such as his name, the name of the day, or his home address. However, AJ seems to struggle with written communication, such as explaining information or providing the correct and relevant answers aligned with the context of questions. While reading, AJ can accurately find the answers from the text, which include basic information, such as the names of characters and objects, as well as the places and time background of the stories. Nevertheless, AJ finds it difficult to comprehend and explain the reasons or the process from the text. While studying at school, those difficulties show when AJ is doing assignments and answering questions based on reading texts. As a result, he cannot provide relevant and correct answers. This illustration indicates that AJ struggles with reading comprehension skills.

Reading comprehension is a person's ability to understand the contents of the reading or information they read; this ability is also said to be the final achievement of reading ability (Solari, 2014; Wadihah & Fauzi, 2021). For students with intellectual disability, reading comprehension is often perceived as a further challenge due to their cognitive limitations (Azatyany & Alaverdyan, 2020; Joseph et al., 2023; Knight et al., 2018; Sevcik et al., 2019; Van Wingerden et al., 2017). Cognitive limitations interfere with language-related information processing and understanding the meaning of relationships between related words or concepts (Van Wingerden et al., 2017). In the process of understanding texts, those limitations caused students with intellectual disabilities to only read and not realize that the meaning of the texts must be understood (Gersten et al., 2001). Reading comprehension can be a basic skill for achieving academic success and living a more independent life for students because it supports all subject areas in school (Smith et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this skill is often ignored and developed by students with moderate intellectual disabilities (Browder et al., 2013; Di Blasi et al., 2018).

The difficulties in reading are related to the condition and severity (Sevcik et al., 2019). Thus, it requires a strategy that is adapted to the student's condition. Teachers or other caregivers can give students with intellectual disability simple tasks relevant to their daily activities while doing them gradually and sequentially (Mangunsong, 2014). Despite having many limitations, Katims (2001) explained that students with intellectual disability can still be taught reading skills, including reading comprehension. To maximize this potential, various strategies and interventions have been implemented to maximize reading comprehension skills for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. In a review by Joseph et al. (2023), many reading comprehension interventions involve clear and gradual instructions, modeling strategies, guidance by teachers or other caregivers, independent practice, and direct and corrective feedback. From those various interventions, one effective strategy is teaching the function of the 5W+1H (What, Who, When, Where, Why, and How), visual images, and keywords that illustrate its function based on the text content (Bethune & Wood, 2013; Nephawe, 2023; Sanders & Erickson, 2018; Sermier Dessemontet et al., 2024).

5W+1H is the least prompt strategy, which can be a stimulus to make students with intellectual disabilities independently direct and find relevant information in the text when answering questions (Browder et al., 2013). In addition, visual images representing the function of 5W+1H are believed to attract students to pay attention to the information



presented so they can easily recall their prior knowledge about the function of 5W+1H or the information they previously read (Gaber et al., 2023; Sanders & Erickson, 2018; Wood et al., 2015; Yulis, 2016). Teaching 5W+1H means indirectly increasing vocabulary. The first step to teaching new vocabulary is using the keyword strategy because it can help students remember and understand the words or the concepts that are being taught (Vaughn et al., 2024).

This study replicates the study by Browder et al. (2013), which aims to examine how teaching the 5W + 1H function, specifically focusing on ‘why and how’ with visual images and keywords, increases the subject’s reading comprehension skills. An increase in reading comprehension is seen when AJ provides relevant and correct answers to questions based on texts. Providing relevant and correct answers to a question can describe a person's reading comprehension skills because to answer a question, a person needs semantic skills to understand the meaning of the question word and syntactic skills to comprehend the entire question (Sanders & Erickson, 2018).

In previous research, Browder et al. (2013) gave all the 5W+1H used to help students answer questions from text. In this study, researchers will adjust AJ’s ability, which already knows the what, who, where, and when question words. Hence, the primary intervention session will focus on teaching ‘why’ and ‘how’ because these question words are considered more abstract than other question words, so it might be more difficult for AJ. This follows previous research, which stated that the question words ‘why’ and ‘how’ are two question words with a high level of difficulty (Cairns & Ryan, 1978).

In addition, researchers also improve the limitations of the Browder et al. (2013) study, which uses a repeated story. This study has various story collections for each intervention session, which is modified from a collection of children's story books developed by the Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi (2021). The researchers modified the story by adjusting AJ's language skills, equivalent to a 6-year-old child. This is intended to further validate the subject's ability to change due to the effects of the intervention and not the influence of repeated training. Replication of this study is expected to provide literature references and teaching practices related to strategies for improving reading comprehension for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. This strategy is expected to be used by teachers and parents to maximize students' potential.

Research Method

Subject (AJ) was a 5th-grade elementary school student in one of the state elementary schools in Depok, West Java. AJ is a 10-year-old and 8-month-old boy with an IQ score = 43 (classified as moderate intellectual disability, Stanford-Binet scale). AJ had a mental age of 4 years eight months with language abilities equivalent to a 6-year-old child. Informed consent was obtained from parents and schools. The current study replicates an intervention implemented by Browder et al. (2013), using a single-subject method with A₁-B-A_{2.1}, 2.2 process (Satake et al., 2008). The data collection method used in this study was observation, where the researcher was directly involved in the process and progress that occurred during the study (Setiawan et al., 2020). The researcher used an observation guideline as a research instrument. The observation guideline for research instruments included performance indicators for 5W + 1H function activities and reading comprehension from the text. Performance indicators in teaching 5W+1H function were based on previous research by Browder et al. (2013), which were explained in Table 1. Meanwhile, the indicators for

reading comprehension activities were AJ's correct and relevant answers to the context of the questions from the text. Results from the observation guideline would be used for research data analysis, which would use the pretest-posttest techniques. The researcher would directly compare the percentage of correct answers obtained before and after AJ's participation in the intervention activity (Thyer & Curtis, 1983).

Table 1. 5W+1H Question Word Function Indicators

Question Words	Indicators
What	Refer to an object or explain an activity.
Who	Refer to a person's name.
Where	Refer to the name of a place or position.
When	Refer to time-related information.
Why	Explain a reason.
How	Explain how to complete or do an activity.

The A₁ process is a pre-intervention session that aims to measure the subject's baseline abilities before the intervention session begins. Next, the intervention is continued with primary interventions (B). Finally, the study ended with post-intervention (A_{2.1,2.2}), which will be done immediately after the intervention (A_{2.1}) and three months after the intervention (qualitatively by the subject's homeroom teacher) (A_{2.2}). This intervention involves two books as the equipment. The first book is 29.7 x 42 cm in size and contains a table of 5W+1H and their functions. There are visual images in the form of stickers that can be attached to the table. The second book is a compilation of stories that have been adjusted to the subject's language skills, and there are also six questions related to the story.

The intervention began with a 25-minute pre-intervention session to measure AJ's knowledge of the function of the 5W+1H (What, Who, When, Where, Why, and How) and its function in understanding texts (A₁). In the pre-intervention session, AJ was given a table of 5W+1H question words and asked to match them based on their function, as well as visual images illustrating the function of the question words (Graphic 1). After that, the subject was asked to answer six questions (one question consists of one question word) from the text.

Primary interventions include three sessions of interventions conducted on three different days at the subject's school. Each primary intervention had a maximum duration of 45 minutes. The first session teaches the question word 'why' while the second one teaches the question word 'how.' AJ will do three exercises to match question words to their functions and visual images representing question words 'why' and 'how.' The researcher would teach AJ by repeating the function and using images to illustrate 'why and how' questions three times in the first exercise.



Graphic 1. Example of Exercise Sheets in Primary Intervention

Furthermore, in the second exercise, AJ would receive help only if he could not answer the question. In the last exercise, AJ will be expected to do activities independently. Afterward, AJ will be asked to respond to questions using the question words 'why' and 'how' from 3



different texts. To help AJ learn the 5W+1H function, the researcher has included the keyword ‘*karena*’ (because) in sentences that express a reason for representing the question word ‘why.’ The researcher also adds the keyword ‘*dengan cara*’ (by) to explain a process or method for representing the question word ‘how.’ Using keywords is one of the effective interventions to improve the reading skills of individuals with intellectual disabilities (Stevens & Burns, 2021). This is also intended to help AJ provide relevant answers to the questions more easily. AJ cannot proceed to the next session unless they pass the previous session.

The third session in the primary intervention was aimed at ensuring a thorough understanding of the function of question words and their use in understanding reading texts before being re-measured in the post-intervention session. In this session, the researcher would not help the subject to complete the task. The subject was asked to match all question words with their functions and the visualization of the question words. After that, the subject would answer six questions representing each question word from a short story. The activities, media, and readings used in post-intervention (A_{2.1}) will be the same as the tasks in pre-intervention (A₁).

In this activity, AJ will earn points by correctly matching question words with their functions, providing an example of a picture representing the function of the question word, and answering questions from the reading text accurately and in context. In each primary intervention session, AJ can move to the next session if he provides correct and relevant answers to all questions after receiving examples from the researcher.

Results and Discussion

From the pre-intervention results (A₁), it is known that the subject answered 4 out of the six 5W+1H functions and the illustrative images correctly. The functions answered correctly were ‘what,’ ‘who,’ ‘where,’ and ‘when,’ while those answered incorrectly were ‘why’ and ‘how.’ Furthermore, the subject also had not succeeded in providing an answer that was relevant to the question from a text on the question word ‘why’ and ‘how.’ This result is similar to the previous study, where the subject found it easier to understand and provide correct answers to the questions of ‘what,’ ‘who,’ ‘where,’ and ‘when’ (Sanders & Erickson, 2018; Wood et al., 2015).

Table 2. Result From Learning Question Word Functions

Questions Words	Pre-Intervention	Primary intervention			Post Intervention
		I (Why)	II (How)	III (All 5W+1H)	
What	Passed	-	-	Passed	Passed
Who	Passed	-	-	Passed	Passed
Where	Passed	-	-	Passed	Passed
When	Passed	-	-	Passed	Passed
Why	Failed	Passed	Passed	Passed	Passed
How	Failed	-	-	Passed	Passed

When following the primary intervention, the researcher taught and demonstrated three times about the function of 5W+1H in the first exercise. As a result, AJ can provide correct answers about the function of ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions during the second and third exercises; however, while learning the ‘how’ question word in the second exercise, AJ still needed the



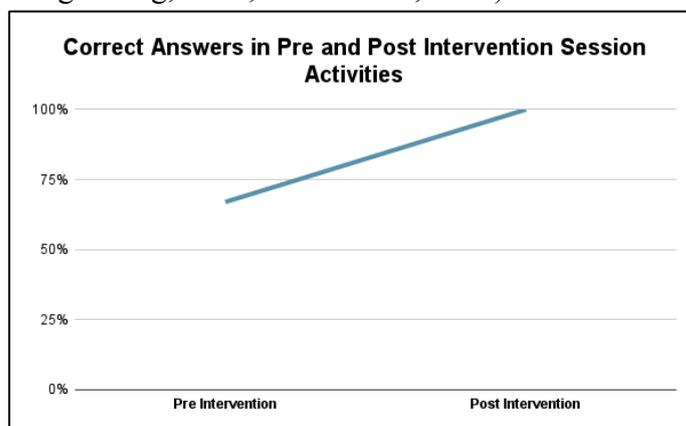
researcher's help when he wanted to answer the question of word function. AJ can answer the question after the researcher gives a verbal prompt by saying, "Try to remember the keywords and the picture." The results are consistent with Browder (2013), which indicates that using verbal prompts can effectively improve reading comprehension by giving the correct answer. It's important to note that people tend to have positive experiences when following verbal instructions (Miltenberger, 2016). These experiences, often reinforced through praise or rewards, contribute to their ability to understand and follow verbal instructions in general. Therefore, in this intervention, verbal prompts are effective in guiding AJ to provide the correct response.

From the two sessions of teaching the question words 'why' and 'how,' AJ can provide the correct answer by identifying the keywords 'Karena' and 'dengan cara' in a text and directs himself to find the answer from a text when he must answer the questions from it. The use of the keyword 'Karena' in the question word 'why' simplifies AJ's answer to respond to the question. This is because a keyword is one of the fixed formats that make it easier for people to answer the question 'why' (Cairns & Ryan, 1978). Therefore, this makes it easier for AJ to provide accurate and relevant answers to questions.

Table 3. Example of Answers From Reading Comprehension Intervention

Questions From Text	Answer From Primary Intervention
Why	
1. Why does Ilham like ice cream? <i>Mengapa Ilham suka es krim?</i>	Because it tastes sweet <i>Karena</i> rasanya manis
How	
1. How do rabbits walk? <i>Bagaimana cara kelinci berjalan?</i>	By jumping <i>Dengan melompat</i>

In the last session of primary intervention, the subject was able to answer all 5W+1H functions and images representing question words, including questions that use the question words 'why' and 'how.' In addition, the subject's ability showed an increase in the subject's knowledge of the question words 'why' and 'how,' which indicated no influence of learning or memorizing the answer patterns from the given practice questions. This increase in ability can be seen when AJ can provide correct and relevant answers to various readings. Modifying learning media such as stories and instruction models given to subjects is important because individuals with moderate intellectual disabilities are classified as trainable; thus, the impact of repeated training or teaching is highly likely to influence the individual's skills (Mangunsong, 2014; Weiss et al., 2018).



Graphic 2. Subject's Performance in Pre- and Post-Intervention



Post-intervention implementation was carried out after the subject had completed all primary interventions. From the post-intervention results, the subject answered all the functions of the question words correctly and correctly and relevantly to the questions from a reading text. The subject could match the function and visualization of the images of the 6 question words requested, which means the subject's success rate in answering questions increased by 33% from the pre-intervention 67% (Graphic 2). However, images used in this study were adjusted to fit the function of 5W+1H and the story's content; images representing the question words 'why' and 'how' did not significantly affect the answers' accuracy. This finding is in line with the previous research where the presence of images did not help AJ in providing the correct answer (Sanders & Erickson, 2018). The reason for this might stem from the possibility that the response needed to answer the question is already concrete and clear, so the subject can answer the question without it being represented in the form of an image. On the other hand, abstract question words such as 'why' and 'how' are more challenging to describe and represent visually (Sanders & Erickson, 2018). Therefore, visual images are often unable to fully convey the meaning of the intended word. In this study, visual images were insufficient for providing direction and instructions for AJ to give appropriate responses to the questions. Furthermore, this study is enhanced by the strategic implementation of keywords. AJ was more often directing himself to sentences that contained keywords '*Karena*' and '*dengan cara.*' This finding strengthens previous research results, demonstrating that keywords are valuable for locating specific information and determining meanings within text (Barth et al., 2016).

A follow-up session was conducted after three months of primary intervention (A_{2.2}) by asking teachers about the subject's reading comprehension performance at school. The subject did not seem to be using the 5W + 1H principle, but when answering questions, the subject relied more on the use of keywords in providing answers that were correct and relevant to the context of the reading. During reading and question-answering activities, the student frequently asked the teacher for confirmation on whether a specific word could be used as a keyword to find answers in the text.

The research emphasized the importance of adaptive teaching strategies in improving reading comprehension for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. Teachers should use a differentiated learning approach and incorporate the 5W + 1H strategy to strengthen reading comprehension. Professional development programs must empower educators to master this strategy through diverse instructional approaches, ensuring they do not overly depend on keywords. Integrating this strategy with different teaching resources can help create a more inclusive learning environment.

Conclusion

The study results conclude that the 5W + 1H function teaching strategy can improve reading comprehension skills. Teaching the 5W + 1H principle - which emphasizes the question words 'why' and 'how' using visual images and keywords - was found to be effective in enhancing the subject's reading comprehension. This finding also explains that this method can maximize the potential of students with moderate intellectual disabilities. The instruction on the question words 'why' and 'how' was particularly effective in increasing the subject's understanding of questions and leading him to provide correct and contextually appropriate responses. However, using visual images as a learning aid, especially for 'why' and 'how' questions, seemed less effective, as evidenced by the subject's reliance on keywords within the sentence.



Recommendation

Several recommendations can be implemented for the 5W+1H strategy. First, policymakers should develop educational policies that promote the use of evidence-based curricula for students with special needs in inclusive schools, especially those with intellectual disabilities. The government can mandate a certification program for teachers in inclusive schools as part of their professional development to help them implement the curriculum and provide targeted guidance for learning. Schools should introduce the 5W+1H strategy to teachers to facilitate teaching students with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, schools can integrate the 5W+1H strategy with subjects that require reading skills or comprehension focused on question words that students have not yet mastered.

Teachers and caregivers who employ this strategy should use it consistently to monitor and evaluate students' progress. The 5W+1H teaching sessions can also be extended, as the strategy serves multiple functions. For example, 'how' can refer to conditions and methods, while 'when' can refer to time, date, day, and month. Additionally, since the use of images was found to be less effective in helping students understand reading texts, teachers should explore different visual learning aids and other types of prompts. For instance, they can use timing, gestures, and visual prompts that are suitable for the students' abilities and learning needs. Furthermore, it is crucial to hold regular maintenance sessions to prevent student's reading comprehension skills from regressing to their initial level.

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