

Exploring Expressive Language Disorders in Children with Autism in Banyuwangi: A Psycholinguistic Review

Akhmad Sofyan¹, Muta'allim², Saepulloh³, Asia Anis Sulalah⁴, Sahrotul Qeisiyeh⁵

¹Universitas Jember, ² Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Togo Ambarsari Bondowoso, ³ STAI Darul Falah Cililin Cihampelas Bandung Barat, ⁴ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Togo Ambarsari Bondowoso, ⁵ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Togo Ambarsari Bondowoso

Email: 196805161992011001@mail.unej.ac.id, alimhafidz@yahoo.com, saepulloh@staidaf.ac.id, asiaanis22@gmail.com, sahotulqeisiyeh1009@gmail.com

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Abstract- Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects various aspects of a child's development, including language abilities. This study aims to identify and analyze the fluency, articulation, and sentence structure abilities of autistic children at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi Regency. The research employs a qualitative descriptive design. The data in this study consists of words and sentences, with the data sources being autistic students from Class X IPS4 at SMAN 1 Glenmore Banyuwangi. The method used for data collection is the observation-participation method, where the researcher observes the spoken and written expressions of autistic students from Class X IPS4 SMAN 1 Glenmore Banyuwangi through recording and note-taking techniques. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the autistic students, teachers, parents, and the students' peers. After the data was collected, the researcher performed data reduction, classification, verification, tabulation, and coding for each data set. Finally, the researcher interpreted the data and drew conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the expressive language abilities of autistic children are still hindered by several factors, such as fluency in speaking, pronunciation, and unclear articulation, especially in words containing the letters or endings L, N, M, R, T, and NG. Autistic children tend to speak in short phrases and are experience significant challenges in active communication, nor can they convey information clearly. However, Bela Citra Kinanjur (BCK) is able to write independently with simple compositions, although some grammatical errors are still present, such as in the use of articles, spacing, and writing mechanics. Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers help build the confidence of autistic students through public speaking activities, writing therapy, and word-building stimulation.

Keywords: Autistic Children, Expressive Language Ability, Neurodevelopmental Disorder

I. INTRODUCTION

Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects various aspects of a child's development, including language abilities. This disorder is primarily characterized by three main aspects: impairments in reciprocal social interaction skills, communication difficulties, and stereotyped behaviors with limited interests and activities (Pamuji, 2007); (Maha & Harahap,

2020); (Istiqlal, 2021) & (Julianita et al., 2023). Children with autism experience developmental disruptions in brain function that affect social domains, verbal and nonverbal communication, imagination, flexibility, interests, cognition, and attention. This condition is further clarified by the definition that describes autism as a deviation in a child's ability to communicate and interact socially (Parwoto, 2007).

Challenges in communicating using expressive language are significant factors that impede the success of autistic students in learning and socializing at school (Muhammad et al., 2015); (Hikmawati et al., 2019); (Maha & Harahap, 2020); (Istiqlal, 2021); & (Julianita et al., 2023). In this context, the author is interested in further exploring expressive language abilities in children with autism. In Indonesia, particularly in remote areas like Banyuwangi, research on expressive language disorders in autistic children is still very limited. Although attention to Special Needs Students (SNS) is increasing, there is a substantial gap in understanding the characteristics of expressive language disorders, especially within the unique local cultural context. Banyuwangi, with its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, offers an intriguing perspective for research on this disorder.

Autistic children exhibit distinctive behavioral characteristics that often emerge when they are confronted with certain objects or situations. These characteristics are referred to as the autistic triad, encompassing three primary impairments: difficulties in social interaction, communication disorders, and motor behavior abnormalities (Pamuji, 2007). One aspect frequently affected in children with autism is expressive language ability, which is the capacity of an individual to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas through spoken or written language (Ramaa, 2013); (Muhammad et al., 2015); (Mawarda, 2021), (Istiqlal, 2021), (Putri & Marlina, 2022); (Julianita et al., 2023); & (Azizi et al., 2023). The first component of expressive language ability is mastery of active language or speech, which is the human ability to produce language sounds through the use of articulatory organs or speech organs (Sabarti Akhadiah et al., 1993).

Impairments in this ability can significantly impact a child's quality of life, affecting their social interactions, learning, and adaptability within their environment (Hikmawati et al., 2019); (Maha & Harahap, 2020); (Mawarda, 2021); (Putri & Marlina, 2022); & (Muès et al., 2024). The accuracy of expressing ideas heavily depends on the appropriate use of language, including vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. Writing skills are particularly complex, as they require students to master various components such as correct spelling, precise vocabulary selection, effective sentence construction, and well-organized paragraph structure. When writing, many autistic children struggle with

legible handwriting and often take a considerable amount of time to write even a few words. In fact, for writing around 30 words, the subject may take approximately 20 minutes (Musjafak Assjari & Eva Siti Sopariah).

Children with autism are categorized as SNS, who have the same rights and obligations to receive quality education. These rights are regulated not only by the 1945 Constitution, particularly Article 31 Paragraph (1), which states that every citizen is entitled to education, but also by the Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009. This regulation establishes that inclusive education is a system that provides opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities and exceptional intelligence or talent, to receive education alongside their peers. Both the 1945 Constitution and Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009 create opportunities for SNS to receive appropriate educational services. These educational services must respect diversity and be non-discriminatory toward students with physical, emotional, mental, or social disabilities, as well as those with exceptional talents. SMA Negeri 1 Glenmore, as an inclusive school, provides educational services for SNS. During the 2021-2023 academic years, the school enrolled an autistic student who studied in a regular class alongside other students. However, during the learning process, the student encountered challenges, particularly in communication with classmates and teachers (Mawarda, 2021).

Based on this background, the researcher formulates the main issue: how the expressive language abilities of autistic children at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi Regency, are. To address this issue, a psycholinguistic study is necessary. Psycholinguistics is a discipline that combines psychology and linguistics to explore the relationship between language and human cognition. This field investigates how humans process, understand, and produce language, as well as how language is learned from an early age. In the context of psycholinguistics, language comprehension is a key aspect under examination. Researchers aim to uncover how the brain processes and interprets words, sentences, and discourse that we hear or read. Additionally, psycholinguistics explores how individuals plan and produce speech or writing, a process involving various complex cognitive mechanisms.

The psycholinguistic approach provides a relevant framework for understanding the

dynamics of expressive language disorders in children with autism. This approach allows the research to uncover how cognitive, neurological, and linguistic aspects interact in the language development of autistic children. Therefore, this study aims to explore and describe expressive language disorders in autistic children in Banyuwangi, as well as to review the psycholinguistic factors influencing their language development. This study is expected to enrich the literature on expressive language disorders in autistic children, particularly within the context of Indonesia's unique cultural and linguistic environment.

To date, there have been no specific studies examining expressive language disorders in autistic children in Banyuwangi. However, several similar studies can serve as references. Research by (Hikmawati et al., 2019) found that the speech of autistic children can be classified into several language production processes, such as imitation, creation, structuring, expression, continuation, and naming. (Vistasari & Patria, 2019) demonstrated that visual analysis revealed improvements in participants' grammatical language skills during the PECS program. Additionally, research by (Larasati et al., 2021) found that the use of picture lotto media improved the expressive language skills of autistic children in naming nouns.

Research by (Mawarda, 2021) found that individuals with speech impediments, or "cadels," struggle to pronounce the phoneme /r/ accurately, often substituting it with other phonemes such as /l/, /y/, /h/, and /w/. One of the causes of this speech impediment is genetic factors. Research by (Rizkiani et al., 2022) identified several causes of expressive language disorders in children, including health factors, lack of parental attention to language development, the influence of gadgets, and delays in language development. Meanwhile, research by (Azizi et al., 2023) discovered that some forms of expressive language disorders experienced by NS include limited vocabulary, frequent vocabulary errors, difficulty forming long sentences, inability to initiate conversations, and challenges in celebrating events.

In addition, several studies are relevant to this topic. Research by (Muta'allim et al., 2020); (Muta'allim et al., 2021); (Muta'alim, 2022); (Muta'allim et al., 2022); (Yudistira et al., 2022); (Sofyan, Firmansyah, et al., 2022); (Akhmad Sofyan et al., 2022); (Sofyan, Badrudin, et al., 2022); (Irsyadi et al., 2022); (Yudistira, R.,

2023); & (Haryono et al., 2023) highlight various aspects of language, including its forms, uses, roles, and functions within social contexts, such as community, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), diversity, speech levels, political language, and context-based language use. Moreover, research on intercultural communication, language enhancement, and strategies by (Hairus Salikin et al., 2021); (Muta'allim et al., 2021); (Irsyadi, 2023); (Merizawati & Munawir, n.d.); (Karuru et al., 2023); (Suryanti et al., 2023); & (Daulay et al., 2024) provides additional insights into various dimensions of communication and language strategies, which are relevant for understanding expressive language disorders in autistic children within specific cultural contexts.

Furthermore, several studies discuss enhancement, managerial aspects, development, implementation, roles, and strategies in the contexts of religion, curriculum, learning, education, and society. These studies include works by (Sutanto et al., 2022); (Kamil et al., 2023); (Muta'allim et al., 2023); (Ghasi Pathollah et al., 2022); (Mahardhani et al., 2023); (Muta'allim et al., 2023); (Muta'allim et al., 2022); (Dumiyati et al., 2023); & (Julhadi et al., 2023). These studies highlight the religious role in curriculum improvement, teaching, and the promotion of interfaith harmony through the concept of religious moderation. Based on the review of several studies, no research has been found that specifically addresses expressive language disorders in children with autism in Banyuwangi. Therefore, this study is considered novel and possesses a distinct uniqueness in several important aspects. First, this research innovatively highlights expressive language disorders in children with autism in Banyuwangi, a region with a unique context. To date, there has been little research that specifically explores this issue among autistic children in this area. Thus, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature and enhance the understanding of this phenomenon within the specific local context.

This study also offers a new dimension by using a psycholinguistic approach to analyze expressive language disorders. This approach allows for a deeper analysis of the relationship between cognitive function and language in children with autism, providing insights that may not have been revealed in previous research using other approaches, such as developmental psychology or speech therapy. Additionally, by focusing on a specific population—children with

autism in Banyuwangi—this study contributes to a relatively underexplored area of the literature. The combination of local context and the psycholinguistic approach offers a new perspective that enriches the study of expressive language disorders. Lastly, this research solidifies its uniqueness by reviewing and comparing recent literature, as well as utilizing relevant methods and data. Thus, the approach used in this study, in terms of location, population, and methodology, makes it a significant contribution to the fields of psycholinguistics and autism studies. This research not only fills a gap in the existing literature but also offers new insights that can serve as a foundation for future research.

Psycholinguistics not only addresses language processing and speech production but also investigates language acquisition processes, including how children learn their first language. Research in this field extends to how adults learn a second language, providing insights into the dynamics of language acquisition throughout life. In addition to normal aspects of language use, psycholinguistics also includes studies on language disorders, such as aphasia or dyslexia, which can affect an individual's language abilities. This research aims to uncover how various conditions or disorders impact language skills, enabling the development of more effective intervention strategies. Thus, psycholinguistics offers a deep understanding of the mental processes involved in communication and how cognitive, social, and biological factors influence language ability.

II. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative descriptive research design was chosen because it is highly suitable for exploring expressive language disorders in autistic children. This design allows researchers to understand the context and individual experiences in depth, recognizing the importance of capturing the nuances of how autistic children communicate and face challenges. The flexibility of qualitative design provides an opportunity to explore complex and less structured phenomena, gaining a holistic insight into various aspects of expressive language disorders. Additionally, this design helps in understanding cultural and social factors affecting language disorders within the local context of Banyuwangi, which has unique characteristics. With this approach, researchers

can delve into the perspectives and firsthand experiences of autistic children, as well as their families or educators, thereby providing richer information about the impact of expressive language disorders on daily life. Finally, the qualitative descriptive design is also valuable for mapping various issues related to language disorders that may not yet be identified, potentially serving as a foundation for further research or more specific interventions.

The research focuses on words and sentences as data. The data source for this research is autistic students in the X IPS4 class at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi. Data collection methods involve the observation-participation technique, where the researcher observes both spoken and written utterances of students through recording and note-taking. Additionally, interviews are conducted with autistic students, teachers, parents, and peers. Once the data is collected, the researcher performs data reduction by selecting and sorting spoken and written data. The data is then classified according to its type. Next, the researcher verifies the data through consultations with artists, cultural experts, linguists, psychologists, doctors, guardians, and teachers. The following process involves data tabulation and coding based on data type. Finally, the researcher interprets the data and draws conclusions from the obtained findings.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The results of the study indicate that the expressive language abilities of autistic children still face challenges in several aspects, such as fluency in speaking, pronunciation, and articulation, particularly with words containing the letters or suffixes L, N, M, R, T, and NG. Autistic children tend to use short words, struggle with active communication, and have difficulty conveying information clearly. However, despite some grammatical errors in writing, such as issues with articles, spacing, and writing mechanics, they are able to write independently with simple compositions. Expressive language abilities in autistic children are detected in two main aspects: oral and written. In the oral aspect, limitations are evident in speaking, dialoguing, and expressing desires. In the written aspect, limitations include difficulties in writing, constructing sentences, and composing text. Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers enhance autistic students' self-confidence through public speaking activities,

writing therapy, and stimulation through word-building exercises. The table below illustrates the language abilities of X IPS4 class students at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi.

Table 1.1: Language Abilities of Autistic Students at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi

| Data Code | Language Abilities | | Description |
|-----------|---|---|---|
| ELAO | Expressive Language Abilities (Oral) | Speaking Abilities | BCK can speak a maximum of 5-7 words in a single sentence. BCK will respond correctly if she understands what she hears. For example, when asked, “Besok mau rekreasi kemana?” she responds with “tidak tahu”. |
| | | Dialoguing Abilities | BCK tends to communicate in a one-way manner and is not yet capable of engaging in reciprocal interactions with her peers. On the other hand, BCK can engage in dialogue, as evidenced by her ability to answer questions, although her responses are limited to just a few words |
| | | Ability to Express Desires | BCK can express her desires in simple and often reflective ways, such as saying, “Belajarnya semester depan perlu ditingkatkan lagi”. When conveying her wishes, BCK tends to use language that is easier for others to understand. For example, when asked about a subject in which she received a low grade, she responded, “Nilai Bahasa Inggrisku jelek, tapi aku ga tahu berapa?”. |
| ELAW | Expressive Language Abilities (Written) | Writing Abilities | BCK's writing is very good, though further guidance is needed regarding sentence structure and layout. |
| | | Sentence Construction Abilities (Statements, Questions, and Commands) | BCK is able to create various types of sentences, including statements, questions, and commands. |
| | | Ability to Write Free Compositions (With Given Topics) | BCK appears relatively fluent in expressing her ideas in writing. However, her sentence structures and writing format are still quite basic, with frequent issues regarding incorrect word usage and placement. Additionally, her handwriting is often unclear and difficult to read. |

DISCUSSION

Bela Citra Kinanjur (BCK) is one of the students in the X IPS4 class at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi, who has been diagnosed with autism by an autism therapy center in Surabaya. According to a statement from her previous junior high school, BCK has difficulties with expressive language, including challenges with making eye contact during communication, repetitive speech, and concentration issues. Despite these communication challenges, BCK is able to interact with both typical peers and other

students with special needs and participates in learning with minimal obstacles. BCK is noted for having relatively high compliance, though she occasionally becomes a victim of bullying from her peers due to her tendency to follow instructions without fully understanding their purpose. Interview and observation results reveal that BCK experiences difficulties with expressive language, both in speaking and writing. Her vocabulary is limited, and her articulation is unclear, which causes problems in speaking, reading, understanding, and listening. These

difficulties impact and present challenges in BCK's learning process.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE ABILITIES (ORAL): ELAO

Children's Ability to Speak

Based on observations, BCK can speak a maximum of 5-7 words in a single sentence and often only uses 1-2 words when speaking. He frequently responds with "I don't know" to questions. BCK is an autistic child who shows relatively high compliance when he is focused, whether during questioning or while working on tasks. However, when focused, BCK finds it very difficult to respond to stimuli. If he understands the question, he will answer correctly; if not, he will only repeat fragments of the question asked. For example, when asked, "Besok mau rekreasi kemana?" BCK responds, "tidak tahu". However, if BCK does not understand the question, his answer may be irrelevant. For instance, when asked, "BCK, kemarin kamu makan apa?", she answered, "liburan". Based on an interview with BCK's Islamic Education (PAI) teacher, it is evident that BCK's speaking abilities are still very limited. The teacher reported that BCK speaks very minimally and struggles with memorizing and understanding Quranic verses. For instance, when given a task to memorize a verse, BCK was only able to remember a few words from it. Interview footage shows that BCK often stutters and has a limited vocabulary. These findings suggest that BCK's speaking ability is significantly constrained, with issues including incomplete sentences, fragmented speech, and unclear articulation.

Children's Dialoguing Skills

Observations indicate that BCK can only answer questions with 1-2 words and is unable to ask questions in return. When the conversation partner remains silent and does not ask questions, BCK tends to lower his head and do the same. Additionally, BCK rarely makes eye contact and tends to engage in one-way communication. According to interviews with the Biology and Indonesian Language teachers, BCK's speaking abilities are very limited. The teachers reported that BCK can only respond briefly to questions and lacks the ability to ask questions or engage in reciprocal communication. The development report for BCK from the early semester shows that he tends to communicate unidirectionally and has not yet developed the ability to engage in reciprocal interactions with his peers. Despite

this, BCK can perform simple dialogues, such as answering questions, although his responses are limited to a few words.

Children's Ability to Express Their Desires

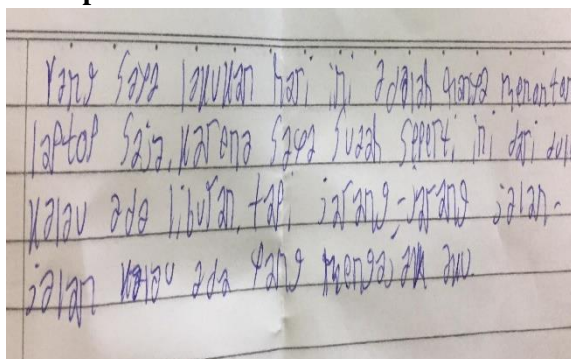
Based on observations, BCK is able to express simple desires and often repeats them reflectively. For example, when asked about plans for the next semester, BCK said, "Belajarnya semester depan perlu ditingkatkan lagi". When asked to mention a subject with poor grades, BCK frequently responds, "Nilai Bahasa Inggris jelek, tapi aku ga tahu berapa?" and sometimes adds, "Saya tidak tahu". Interviews with parents and several teachers reveal that BCK has difficulty describing his desires. They noted that BCK still struggles to articulate what he wants in complete sentences, often resorting to the phrase "Saya tidak tahu". Based on these findings, it can be concluded that BCK's ability to express his desires is still very simplistic and fragmented, with a dominant tendency to use phrases like "I don't know."

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE ABILITIES (WRITTEN): ELAW

Children's Writing Ability

Observations of BCK's work in specific school subjects indicate that BCK has a fairly good ability to answer questions. Her writing skills are better than his speaking abilities. However, despite this, his writing often lacks neatness and proper spacing between sentences. Once corrected, BCK is able to write sentences with slightly better organization, though small errors still persist. Here is an example of BCK's writing, which is a short paragraph:

Figure 1.1: BCK's Short Paragraph Writing Example



Based on interviews with the GPK coordinator and several subject teachers, BCK's writing ability is considered better than his speaking ability. The GPK coordinator stated, "kemampuan menulisnya sesuai melebihi

kemampuan pengucapannya mbak”. In other words, although BCK's pronunciation is often inaccurate, his written work is more precise. On the other hand, the classroom teacher noted that BCK's writing skills are still at an elementary school level, with issues in letter formation, neatness, and spacing between words. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that BCK's writing ability is fairly good, though further guidance is needed regarding sentence structure and layout. BCK occasionally forgets to use double or triple consonants and often fails to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences. Some words are also frequently misspelled according to their pronunciation, and BCK's vocabulary remains limited.

Children's Ability to Construct Different Types of Sentence

Based on observations, BCK is able to construct various types of sentences, including statements, questions, and commands. However, BCK's ability to form these sentences still needs improvement, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition. Expanding his vocabulary would enhance the meaning and effectiveness of BCK's writing in conveying information.

Children's Ability to Write Free Compositions

In activities involving writing compositions on a given theme, BCK appears reasonably fluent in expressing his ideas. However, his sentence structure and writing style remain very basic, with frequent issues in word usage and placement. BCK's handwriting is also unclear and difficult to read. Statements from the GPK and subject teachers reinforce these observations, with comments such as, “BCK belum bisa menulis dengan keinginan sendiri, Mbak”. This indicates that BCK still struggles to express ideas or narrate stories in writing. Her limited vocabulary is also a significant factor affecting his writing ability.

This research makes a significant contribution to understanding expressive language disorders in children with autism in Banyuwangi. Firstly, it enriches psycholinguistic theory by offering new insights into how autistic children develop and use expressive language within local cultural and environmental contexts. These findings provide a stronger foundation for advancing psycholinguistic theory related to expressive language disorders. Additionally, the results have important clinical applications. A deeper understanding of expressive language

disorders can be used to design more effective, evidence-based intervention programs. Speech therapists and related professionals can use these findings to develop more specific approaches tailored to the developmental language needs of autistic children in Banyuwangi. The study also highlights the impact of local environmental and cultural factors on the development of expressive language in autistic children. By understanding these factors, interventions can be made more relevant and contextual, thereby more effectively supporting language development in children.

The implications of this research extend to the realm of educational policy. The findings can serve as a basis for designing more effective inclusive education policies in Banyuwangi. Schools and educators can develop curricula and teaching methods that are more responsive to the needs of autistic children, particularly in the area of expressive language development. This research also plays a role in raising public awareness about the challenges faced by autistic children, especially concerning expressive language disorders. Increased awareness is expected to foster greater support from the community and families, helping children achieve their full potential. Additionally, therapy centers in Banyuwangi can enhance the quality of services by utilizing the findings of this research. With a more targeted, evidence-based therapeutic approach, the developmental outcomes for children with expressive language disorders are anticipated to be more optimal. Thus, this research provides valuable contributions to the field of psycholinguistics and has broad practical implications for clinical interventions, educational policies, and the improvement of therapy services in Banyuwangi.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research aims to describe the expressive language abilities of autistic children at SMAN 1 Glenmore, Banyuwangi Regency. The main findings of this research can be summarized as follows: First, there are significant challenges in the expressive language abilities of the children with autism (BCK), particularly concerning difficulties with certain speech sounds and a tendency to use short phrases. BCK consistently struggles with producing specific sounds, which impacts the clarity of their communication. Additionally, BCK's use of short phrases limits their ability to convey ideas or information in a more complex manner. These findings underscore the need for

targeted interventions to address these specific difficulties and support better development of expressive language skills.

The findings of this study have significant practical implications for educators, therapists, and parents. The difficulties BCK experiences with certain sounds and their tendency to use short phrases indicate a need for targeted intervention strategies. Therapists can design specialized programs to address challenging sounds through focused articulation exercises to improve sound production. To tackle BCK's use of short phrases, educators and therapists can implement exercises that encourage the use of longer and more complex sentences, such as role-playing and speaking activities. Additionally, understanding these specific challenges allows educators to tailor learning materials to individual needs, for example, by providing visual supports and additional structure. Parents can also play a role by incorporating suggested exercises at home and creating a supportive communication environment.

Regular monitoring and assessment are crucial for evaluating BCK's progress and adjusting intervention strategies as needed. By applying these findings, educators, therapists, and parents can more effectively support the development of BCK's expressive language skills and address the specific challenges they face. This research highlights the need for further, more specific research, such as longitudinal studies, to provide insights into the development of expressive language over time and the long-term impact of interventions. Additionally, comparative analysis across different cultural contexts could clarify how cultural factors influence expressive language disorders in various regions. By focusing on these aspects, future research can offer a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of expressive language disorders and the effectiveness of interventions in diverse cultural contexts.

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