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**PRELIMINARY TEACHING PRACTICES IN SPECIAL
REMEDIAL CLASSROOM**

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Abstract

This study aims to explore teachers' practices at the beginning of teaching and learning in a Special Remedial Classroom. Six special Remedial Malay Language teachers were selected as participants in this research. This qualitative study used exploratory case study design, description, and illustration using an embedded method to obtain data through observation, document analysis, and interviews. The validity of the data was done by examining the impact of the researchers, briefing with colleagues and confirming from the participants. Data reliability was obtained through a trial audit. The findings indicate that there were several instances of teachers' practices which include close interaction with students; read al-Fatihah, and gave salutations to the prophet; taking shoes off and asking questions as well as explaining the topic to be learned. The findings contribute to the field of Malay Language in special remedial learning and promote the quality of teaching and learning within primary schools' Malay Language in special remedial classrooms.

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1. Introduction

Global education at a lower level is a component of the World Declaration on education for all: Meeting basic needs in Jomtien, Thailand. The declaration emphasized that the learning needs for learning problems require special attention to be given to provide equal access to education for all categories as an integral part of the education system. This means that every school must provide facilities and opportunities for all kinds of children to learn together, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, and other needs. Schools should also use the most appropriate methods to provide the best education for all children.

Special Remedial Program has been implemented by the Ministry of Education Malaysia since 1960s to assist primary school students with special learning difficulties in mastering basic reading, writing and counting skills (3M). In 1983, the Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools (ICPS) was introduced in Malaysia education system. The new curriculum is an effort to get back to the basics of education by focusing on 3M, and students who cannot achieve it are assisted through the Special Remedial Programme. Teaching and learning at Level One (Year 1-3) will enable teachers to identify students with 3M mastery problems. Next, the school is working to set up a Special Remedial Program to address the problem of mastering 3M's basic skills.

The Special Remedial Program is a continuing educational program involving a selected group of students and being taught according to the strategies and recommendations contained in the *Buku Panduan Pemulihan Khas* (2019). The Special Remedial Program is defined as an educational program provided for students experiencing difficulties in mastering complex 3M skills due to environmental factors. This program is run by a dedicated teacher, in a special area (*Buku Panduan Pemulihan Khas*, 2019). "The Special Remedial Programme" in the sense that will be used in this research refers to Sharifah Alwiah (1986) view of Special Remedial Education as "... a special action is taken to address the educational needs of disadvantaged students in special rooms in regular schools, in specialized centers attended by part-time students, in groups separated from regular schools and in the classroom for teaching specifically by remedial teachers" (p. 371). In addition, Ishak and Koh (1982) defined it as "special service to meet the needs of children with learning difficulties in normal schools" (p. 191).

According to the statement by the Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (1998), there are two concepts of remedial education: (a) Specialty Remedial Education in a special room; and (b) Remedial Education in the regular classroom. This research confines the study to Special Education in the specialty room. The Special Remedial Programme provides education for students who have been identified with literacy and numeracy skills problem. In this system, students are taken out of the ordinary classroom and taught in special or withdrawal classes. The teacher who teaches this class is known as the Special Remedial teacher. Classroom remedial education, in turn, refers to the education given by ordinary teachers in the regular classroom. In this system, teachers used an extra time to teach students with learning difficulties. Additional teaching in a regular classroom involves students individually or within small groups. They are assigned to the similar assignments which were given to the other students but with little modification.

In this research, remedial education is used interchangeably because it carries the same meaning as referring to all the strategies, programmes and services provided by primary schools to help "weak" students to master 3M skills in Special Remedial classes. Remedial education helps low-achieving year one to year three students achieve as other students of their age at the same school level. This research does not include

special education services provided to students with special needs such as students who are blind, deaf, mentally retarded, members with disabilities as well as outstanding students.

Special Remedial Students are children with difficulty mastering 3M's basic skills due to environmental and non-cognitive factors. In the Special Remedial student classification, students with mild learning disabilities do not show any specific physical signs such as visual acuity and hearing loss. Special Remedial Students are also students who cannot master basic language skills. Jais and Mat Nor (1990) defined that, "remedial students and low-achieving students in a classroom, are equal. The term lower achievement does not mean that they are weak in all aspects or subjects. They may be only weak in one or two subjects or certain aspects in basic skills" (p. 9).

Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (2002) concludes that "the differences in the individual's interests, experiences, talents and learning styles have led to the delay in developing a skill in comparison to their peers. If they are not given the remedial education, they may fail to acquire the education that they need and their potential will be diminished. Through the Special Remedial Program, the needs of low-achieving students can be identified and fulfilled" (p. 2). In this research, the phrase "Special Remedial," is used specifically for students with learning disabilities in this country. When referring to studies from abroad, researchers use the phrase "students with learning disabilities," as the phrase is more common and programmes abroad include a wide variety of terms. In the context of this study, Special Remedial students learn in the classroom in which the placement criteria are set by the school according to their ability.

Special Remedial Teacher is a teacher who teaches the Malay language subject for a group of Special Remedial Students. Teachers who were selected as the sample of this study are those who are experienced or have taught the related subjects for more than three years. In this research, the special remedial class teachers identify the weaknesses and plan to overcome the weaknesses of the students. Furthermore, the practice of Special Remedial teachers in this research is to (a) conduct diagnostic tests. (b) carry out new tasks and should review the latest remedial teaching techniques for students with mild learning disabilities. (c) cooperate with other teachers and the headmaster in solving the problems faced by the Special Remedial students.

2. Problem Statement

The Special Remedial Program has been implemented by the Ministry of Education Malaysia since the 1960s to help primary school children with special learning problems to master basic reading, writing and counting skills (3M). In 1983, the New Elementary School Curriculum (NESC) was introduced to the education system in the country. The new curriculum is an effort to get back to the basics of education by focusing on 3M (reading, writing, and counting), and underprivileged students through the Special Remedial Program. Teaching and learning at Level 1 (Year 1-3) will enable teachers to identify students with 3M mastery problems. Next, the school is working to set up a Special Remedial Program to address the 3M basic ownership problem. The focus on eradicating these 3M issues is also covered in the Third Core: Empowering National Schools and, Fourth Core: Bridging the Education Gap in the Education Development Master Plan (PIPP) 2006–2010. Through these two core areas, several action are planned to ensure that students master the basic 3M skills at Level 1. The Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) empowers the Special Remedial Program by upgrading the remedial classes and providing adequate trained

special education teachers in the Level 1 students (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2006). The main objective of the Special Remedial Program in primary school is the mastery of 3M skills. The gap between students' achievement levels and Special Remedial students is referred to; (a) difficulty in mastering 3M's basic skills, (b) failure to meet minimum standards, and (c) high-risk students to drop out of the education system (Buku Panduan Pemulihan Khas, 2019). One of the aspects of upgrading the remedial class is from the initial phase of teaching and learning. A good start to teaching can create effective teaching and learning. In this regard, the researcher attempts to analyse and discuss the beginning practice of teaching by the Special remedial teacher. In order to prepare Special Remedial students for a learning, teachers have to emphasize the beginning of the lesson which is usually neglected by the Special Remedial teachers. In this study, Special Remedial teachers referred to teachers who have a high level of knowledge, skills, and expertise in the Malay Language subject in particular.

3. Research Questions

What is the practice of Special Remedial teachers in the beginning stages of teaching in the Special Remedial Classroom? The beginning phase of teaching is important in preparing students for learning. In addition, Special Remedial students are categorized as weak in some aspects of learning. Therefore, the initial preparation before the beginning of the lesson content is very important both physically and spiritually.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching practice in the beginning stages of Special Remedial students' classroom. This study is a part of an ongoing study on the practice of teaching and learning for Malay language subject in the Remedial students' classroom.

5. Research Methods

This is a qualitative study and the design of the study is a case study. The type of the case study used are exploration, description, and illustration using the embedded method. The main advantage of using case studies is to be able to understand the details of a case (Mohd Majid, 2005). In particular, this study is in the form of multi case studies. Also known as multiple field studies or multisite studies. The multi case study described by Merriam (1998) is a study involving various field of study and its data can further enhance the external validity or generalization of the findings. Data collection was obtained through observation, document analysis, and interviews to obtain an accurate picture of the teaching strategies used by the Special Remedial teacher. Diversifying this method of data collection is essential for triangulation or the strengthening of research data. Triangulation techniques are used to minimize bias and ensure the internal and external validity of data obtained and analysed by researchers (Gay, 1996). Six Special Remedial teachers were selected as participants. Participants were experienced and knowledgeable and they were directly involved in the teaching and learning process of Special Remedial education for Malay language subject. The selection of participants in qualitative studies is usually by purposive sampling (Gay

1996; Gay & Airsian, 2000). Participants who were selected could provide clear and accurate information for the study and the environment.

6. Findings

This research focus on the beginning of teaching practices for Special Remedial classroom. Six practices practiced by the Special Remedial teacher which are: (a) reading al-Fatihah, praying and caring, (b) being friendly with students, (c) disciplining students, (d) asking questions about titles, (e) explaining titles, and (f) continue to teach.

6.1. Friendly Practice

Participants P02, P04, P05, and P06 practiced a friendly practice before they start a teaching to motivate the students. The purpose of the practice is to prepare students to begin learning. Participants P02 and P04 began by refining the student's clothing and preparation. Examples of student's friendly practice interview data at the beginning of the lesson by participant P02.

These remedial students first come in a bit comfy, hairless and oily. So I wash, oil and comb their hair, neat their clothes. Whenever I say, "You're all neat and tidy, so you can't play anymore." And then they stop playing, everyone heard. (TBP02: 20-24)

Examples of friendly practice interview data with students at the beginning of the lesson by participant P04.

While I went to the class, I didn't start with teaching. First, I checked and tidy their clothes. Asked them to go to the washroom. Look at the clothes and fix everything. Sometime I gave them food at the canteen and I gave them a gift. I was not teaching constantly. (TBP04: 754-759)

While P05 and P06, at the beginning of the lesson, the friendly practice of students was conducted through question and answer activities. Examples of data on practice questionnaires were answered at the beginning of the study by P05 participants.

P05: Where did you come from? Which class?

Students: Music.

P05: Teacher teaching music? What song did you sing?

Student: Tok Wi Ducklings.

P05: Again, try singing.

Student: Duck Tok wi ... (student doesn't remember / not sure)

P05: (Teacher continued) Shingles (while touching Rafiq's ear)

(students laugh)

P05: I want to ask you a question. What did you eat this morning?

Caliph & Shafiq raise their hands.

Caliph: Bread. (PHP05: 21-36)

Examples of observational practice questionnaires are responsible for initiating teaching P06.

P06: Daniel, what time did you sleep at night?

Daniel: 8.

P06: So you did not perform isyak at 8 o'clock. Ha, hurry up! Draw a line, write the date and day. How many cups is one person per cup?

Nabil: A cup.

P06: One cup. What is the colour of that car?

Daniel: Green.

P06: What's the colour of milo?

Daniel: Cocoa.

P06: Cold or hot?

Nabil: It's cold. (PHP06: 30-52)

6.2. Recite Zikir, Al-Fatihah Reading, Praying and Saving Practice

There were four participants, namely P01, P04, P05, and P06, beginning the lesson with recite the *zikir*. Examples of observational *zikir* data at the beginning of the lesson. Then the teacher read *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim* with the students, *lailahailallah*, *subhanallah*, *walhamdulillah*, *Allahuakhhbar* (PHP04: 29-31). Meanwhile, participants P05 started by reading *al-Fatihah*. Examples of observational data on reading *al-Fatihah* at the beginning of the lesson. "Teacher begins teaching with *al-Fatihah* reading" (PHP05: 20). Meanwhile, participants P06 begin their study by reading *al-Fatihah* and *du'a*. Examples of prayer practice observation data at the beginning of the lesson by participant P06.

Teachers are ready in the Special Remedial classroom. Three students came in and sit on separate chairs and desks or stand distance between them. One pupil sitting on the activity table. The teaching begins with recite *al-Fatihah* and *du'a*. (PHP06: 17)

Participant P01 start the lesson by recite *al-Fatihah* and *du'a*. Examples of interview recite *al-Fatihah* and *du'a* practices at the beginning of the lesson by participant P01. "I start the lesson by asking students to recite *af-Fatihah* and *du'a* (TBP01: 149).

Participant P04 practices differently in recite *du'a* at the beginning of the lesson. Participants P04 started the lesson by recite *du'a* and salutation to the Prophet. Participants P04 stated that "While the students are ready, then they will give salutation to the Prophet"(TBP04: 778-779). The benefits of recite *du'a* at the beginning of the lesson can be seen in the following interview data by participant P04.

Recite *du'a* and give salutation to the Prophet is an obligation as stated by participants P04 from the interviews. Participant P04 mention that they recite *salawat*, *tasbih*, *tahmid*, and

du'a. These practices will prevent them from forgetness. If I forget, the students will remind me on reciting *du'a*. (TBP04: 805-808)

Through document analysis as well as observing, participants P02 and P03 never implement either recite *du'a*, give salutation to the Prophet or *al-Fatihah* in their teaching and learning. Participant P03 stated "I do not do and do not emphasize. I have forgotten" (TBP03: 116).

6.3. Discipline the Students

Participants P04 emphasized the discipline of the students in the beginning of the lesson (PHP04: 754-759, TBP04: 777-792). Examples of observational data disciplining students used at the beginning of the lesson by participants P04.

Three students attended Special Remedial Classes. The three students arranged the shoes in front of the class and placed the socks on the shoes. Students greet and shake hands with teachers and researchers. Next, students go to a corner of the classroom to pick up *a kopiah* and wear it. (PHP04: 754-759)

Participant P04 explained the advantages of disciplinary practice at the beginning of the teaching. Participant P04 emphasized that the practice make students clean and also inculcate morals and meet the demands of the *Prophet's sunnah*. Examples of interview data on disciplining students at the beginning of the lesson by participant P04.

Shoes are neatly arranged as soon as the students arrived. After demonstrations, the students had managed to do so without any orders given. The shoes were facing forward. They arranged it because the Messenger of Allah likes the beauty and tidy, there are discipline in Islam. Our worship is born of action. Although it's not a worship. So this worship is pure and has its' meaning. We are born of our daily routine. That is the undeniable truth. So the students arranged their shoes facing forward (exit). I asked them to put their socks properly and come in. The students have to open their socks to prevent a bad smell in the classroom. We use airconditioners sometimes. Especially on Thursday. These students, I never arrange their shoes. Students from other classes also arrange their shoes to enter this classroom. If the students did not arrange their shoes properly, they will not allow them to enter the remedial classroom. That is the discipline. (TBP04: 777-792)

The practice of disciplining the students above is the arrangement of shoes with the front-facing toward the outside. The socks are placed over the shoe in a non-slip way instead of cradling the shoe. How to put the socks on allows the socks to dry, unlike when they are crushed and put into the shoes.

6.3. Describe the Teaching Title

There was a participant P06, who continued to describe the titles to start a lesson. Examples of practice observation data describe titles at the beginning of the lesson. "Today teacher wants to teach you to spell. I want to start with the easiest spelling" (PHP06: 26-27).

During the observation, only participant P05 began the study with a question and answer regarding the subject of the lesson. Examples of observation practice for questioning and answering at the beginning of the lesson.

P05: What did I say earlier? Didn't I tell you to learn yesterday? You have seen in the book, there was the word "kuih" "pisau" "duit." What did you say earlier? Your mother selling cookies to earn money. You help your mother decorate the house, when it is a feast, help to tidy the house. We have to learn.

Student: Learn. (say the word) / War.

P05: What does it mean by "war"? (Teacher shows hand and finger gestures). Take a look at this picture (moving laptops so that all students can see clearly).

Rafiq: Fish.

Caliph: The sea. (PHP05: 60-74)

The above question and answer exercises are related to the subject of teaching, which is the general noun of the words war, fish, and sea.

After the researcher's observation of the practice at the beginning of the study, the researchers found that three participants, namely P01, P02, and P03, continued to teach. Examples of teacher observation data continue to be taught at the beginning of teaching by participants P01.

Two students entered the Special Remedial classroom. Then the students seated at the activity table in front of the class. The teacher takes the mystery box and asks the pupil to stand in front of the teacher.

Rizal: What is it?

Teacher: I cannot tell you. Today, I want you to touch, not to see, not to hear, not to see but to feel. Not to taste using your tongue. What do you touch (teacher opens and closes)? (PHP01: 16-24)

Examples of observation data when teacher continue taught at the beginning of teaching by participants P02.

Two students come in and sit at the activity table. The teacher instructed the pupil to retrieve the exercise's book on the bookshelf. Once the pupil are ready with the book, teacher will

sit together with the students and start the teaching and learning. Students open text books and exercise book, and then teacher asked them to read. (PHP02: 12-17)

Examples of observation data while teacher continue to teach at the beginning of teaching by participant P03.

Three students attended the Remedial classroom by giving *Salam*. Teacher was ready to start teaching. Teacher asked the other students. One student stated that his friend was still in their classroom. The teacher divided students into two groups. A group at the activity table of four. One boy and three girls. Meanwhile, another group of three boys was at the table. Once the students were in their group. The teacher was in front of the class, the students all stood up to greet. The teacher asked the students to sit down, and the students thanked them together. After that, the teacher distributed the reading material. Picture reading material for group A. (PHP03: 13-33)

The findings show that the value of instructional motivation for Special Remedial students is a key factor in starting or preparing to begin teaching and learning. Some practices are detected through the activities of the participants. Some participants build rapport with the students before starting teaching and learning. The rapport of teachers and students prepared students for self-preparation and self-esteem, question-answering and student-related story telling.

The findings of this study support the *Laporan Kajian Pelaksanaan Program Pemulihan Khas di Sekolah Rendah* (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2002), that the Special Remedial teachers have empathy and commitment to the students. It also supports Sukring (2016) view that friendly practice influences students' attitudes toward spiritual attributes to make disciplines a sincere, honest, patient, and loving person. This finding is consistent with the study of Halim and Mohamad Khairul (2010) that teacher friendly practices influence students through physical attributes such as speaking, behavior, personal hygiene, and dress. The findings of this study are also reinforced by the findings of Odom (2003), who found that teacher friendly practices for students with learning disabilities promote development and well-being, attracting interest and also helping parents to overcome their children's problems. This study supports studies conducted by Horner and Carr (1997), Hamre and Pianta (2001) and Sutherlant, Adler, and Gunter (2003). Horner and Carr (1997) found that teachers and students can reach a consensus on their learning goals. Hamre and Pianta (2001) have found that negative relationships between teachers and students affect their academic achievement and behavior. Sutherlant et al. (2003) noted that students pay more attention to assignments when teachers are always complimenting. The practice of disciplining the students involved preparation of shoes and socks, as well as the teaching in the classroom.

Participants frequently practiced recite *du'a*, recite *al-Fatihah*, recite the *zikir* and *salutation to the prophet* before beginning teaching and learning. Findings of prayer practice and prayer before beginning teaching and learning are in line with the view of Imam Al-Ghazali in his writings of *Ihya Ulumuddin* (Ahmad & Al-Bakri, 2007). This finding also supports the study by Hamid (1990) that is, before the student began their lesson, they must purify their souls from bad tendencies and bad temperament because

knowledge is placed in the heart. Recite *Du'a*, *al-Fatihah*, *zikir* and *salutation to the prophet* are believed to purify the heart. Knowledge is not only absorbed by the mind but also absorbed by the heart. The findings of this study also support Woolfolk's (2007) view that experience through student discipline is an experience that leads to consistent changes in student knowledge and behavior. The study also found that the value of intrinsic motivation through the beginning practice of Special Remedies teaching is in line with Crow and Crow's (1980) view that teachers need to motivate students to learn because their desire to learn is not compulsory for all people.

7. Conclusion

Some practices have been implemented by participants in a Special Remedial classroom, namely students-friendly practice, praying, ensuring students are disciplined, questioning their teaching or teaching content, explaining the topic of teaching, and teachers continuing to teach. Researchers found that students-friendly activities at the beginning of the study were practiced by participants P02, P04, P05, and P06. However, sometimes participant P02 continues to teach due to time constraints, or late student attendance to the Special Remedial room. In terms of prayer practice, participant P04 practiced recite *du'a* with their students during each lesson session. However, the phenomenon in the classroom is the pupil's ability for participant P04 to attend and *du'a* fluently. Participant P05 recite *al-Fatihah* at the beginning of the lesson. Participant P06, however, gave his students instruction in prayer. Disciplining students at the beginning of the lesson by putting shoes and socks on, and wearing a *kopiah* is only practiced by participant P04. Explain the topic of the lesson practiced by participant P06. Meanwhile, the P05 participants questioned the students to explain the topic of the lesson and to continue the previous lesson. Finally, in the observation of practice, it was found that three participants P01, P02 and P03 continued to teach the lesson. Participants P01 and P03 began the study with an induction set. Meanwhile, P02 participants began the lesson by continuing to teach the contents of the lesson. Overall, participants used a variety of practices in the beginning stages of teaching in the Special Remedial classroom. Practices in the beginning stages of teaching and learning for Special Remedial students are crucial to change their thinking and behaviour. Overall, the research found that the most dominant and frequent practice of participants was student friendly. Participants P01, P04, P05, and P06 were found to be very attentive and engaged in the beginning phase of teaching.

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