ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education

Journal homepage: https://ejournal.bumipublikasinusantara.id/index.php/ajcsne

Developing Communicative Skills in Primary School Students Through Inclusive Education: A Methodological Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study developed and evaluated a pedagogical methodology for improving communicative skills among primary school students in inclusive education settings. A quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control groups was used. The participants were 80 students from Grades 2 to 4 in mainstream schools, divided equally into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received a 16-week intervention involving interactive teaching, speech development activities, and collaborative learning. Data were collected using observation protocols, teacher checklists, structured interviews, and communicative skill assessments. The results showed significant improvements in verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, cooperation, and self-expression, particularly among students with special educational needs. These findings support the integration of structured communicative activities into inclusive primary classroom practice.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Submitted/Received 10 Apr 2025
First Revised 13 May 2025
Accepted 14 Jul 2025
First Available online 15 Jul 2025
Publication Date 01 Sep 2025

Keyword:
Collaborative learning;
Communicative skills;
Inclusive education;
Interactive methods;
Primary school;
Special educational needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education aims to ensure that all learners, including students with physical, cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and social differences, can participate meaningfully in classroom learning. In primary education, inclusive practice is especially important because this stage builds the foundation for academic learning, social interaction, and emotional development. Effective inclusion requires accessible teaching strategies, supportive classroom environments, and opportunities for students to interact with peers in meaningful ways (Glushchenko, 2025; Al Shaban Radi and Hanafi, 2024; Egbedeyi and Babalola, 2023; Rizqita *et al.*, 2024). Communicative skills are central to successful inclusive education. These skills include verbal and non-verbal communication, listening, cooperation, empathy, self-expression, and the ability to respond appropriately in social interaction. For primary school students, communication supports not only academic participation but also peer relationships and classroom belonging. Students with special educational needs may experience difficulties in speech, language, social communication, or emotional expression, which can limit participation and increase the risk of exclusion if not supported through appropriate pedagogical strategies (Sulyman and Yetunde, 2023; Adesokan and Bojuwoye, 2023; Shirinova, 2022).

In many classrooms, communicative development is still addressed through conventional teacher-centered methods, which provide limited opportunities for active dialogue, collaboration, and peer interaction. Inclusive classrooms require more structured and interactive approaches that allow students with different abilities to communicate, cooperate, and express ideas in multiple ways. Speech development activities, storytelling, role-playing, collaborative tasks, and reflective discussion can provide meaningful communication practice and support social integration among students, while teachers' beliefs, motivation, and classroom practices influence how such strategies are implemented (Erbil, 2020; Babalola and Adedokun-Shittu, 2024; Alhassan *et al.*, 2024).

Previous studies have discussed inclusive education, accessibility, communication, and the role of digital or interactive learning environments. However, practical methodologies for developing communicative skills among primary school students in inclusive classrooms remain limited, particularly in mainstream settings where teachers need clear and applicable instructional strategies. This gap shows the need for a structured pedagogical methodology that can be implemented in daily classroom practice while supporting learners' rights to participation and access to communication-oriented learning opportunities (Loisimaye and Tamthai, 2024; Rivky *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, this study develops and evaluates a pedagogical methodology for improving communicative skills among primary school students in inclusive education settings. The methodology integrates interactive teaching strategies, speech development activities, peer collaboration, and reflective practices. The study examines its effectiveness in improving verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, cooperation, and self-expression among students with and without special educational needs.

In addition, communicative skill development in inclusive classrooms should be supported by accessible learning environments, digital resources, and practical communication-based activities. Studies on inclusive education and digital accessibility show that students with special needs benefit from learning materials that reduce barriers to participation and provide alternative modes of interaction (Faddillah *et al.*, 2022; Musayaroh *et al.*, 2023; Glushchenko and Trubacheyev, 2025). Practical demonstrations can help learners understand, express, and apply information in meaningful contexts, especially when students need alternative modes

of communication (Muspita et al., 2021). In a broader technological sense, communication also involves systems for exchanging information, although technical communication studies should be used only as a supporting context rather than as direct evidence for inclusive pedagogy (García-Pineda et al., 2024).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The development of communicative skills in inclusive primary classrooms can be understood through several complementary theories. First, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that children develop language and thinking through social interaction, guided participation, and scaffolding. In inclusive classrooms, interaction with teachers and peers provides opportunities for students, including those with special educational needs, to practice communication in meaningful learning situations (Erbil, 2020; Leuwol *et al.*, 2023). Second, Piaget's constructivist theory explains that children actively build knowledge through experience, exploration, and interaction with their environment. Communication develops when students participate in activities that involve questioning, explaining, negotiating, and collaborating with others. Therefore, role-playing, storytelling, group discussion, and cooperative learning are useful strategies for strengthening both cognitive and communicative development (Barrouillet, 2015; Pakpahan and Saragih, 2022).

Communicative competence is also central to this study. It includes not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts, maintain coherent interaction, and apply strategies when communication difficulties occur. In inclusive classrooms, these dimensions are important because students must learn to express ideas, listen actively, respond empathetically, and adjust communication according to different situations and peers (Turko *et al.*, 2022).

Inclusive education provides the pedagogical foundation for the intervention. Inclusion requires flexible curricula, adaptive teaching, and classroom practices that support participation for all students. Rather than separating students with special educational needs, inclusive pedagogy values diversity and promotes shared learning experiences. This principle supports the use of communication-based activities that involve all students in collaborative and meaningful interaction (Kozleski *et al.*, 2015; Roche, 2016; Florian, 2014).

Speech and language development theory further supports the need for structured communication activities. Students with special educational needs may experience difficulties in expressive language, receptive language, speech clarity, and social communication. Early and context-based support, such as turn-taking games, language modeling, multimodal expression, and classroom-based communication practice, can help improve communicative outcomes in natural learning environments (Lindsay *et al.*, 2010; Dockrell and Hurry, 2018).

Universal Design for Learning also supports the methodology used in this study. UDL encourages teachers to provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. In communication learning, this means allowing students to express themselves through speaking, gestures, drawing, acting, visual aids, and collaborative tasks. Such flexibility helps make classroom communication more accessible for students with different abilities and learning needs (Capp, 2017).

Finally, social and emotional learning highlights that communication is closely related to self-awareness, empathy, relationship skills, and responsible interaction. Activities such as peer support, group reflection, empathy-building tasks, and cooperative problem-solving can

strengthen students' emotional expression and social relationships. Therefore, communicative skill development in inclusive education should address not only language use but also the social-emotional aspects of classroom participation (Mahoney *et al.*, 2018).

3. METHODS

This study used a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control groups to evaluate the effectiveness of a pedagogical methodology for improving communicative skills in inclusive primary school classrooms. The study was conducted in three mainstream schools in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, during the 2023–2024 academic year. The participants were 80 students from Grades 2 to 4, aged 8–10 years. They were divided equally into an experimental group and a control group. Each group consisted of 20 students with special educational needs and 20 typically developing students. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation based on demographic characteristics and special education status. Parental consent and student assent were obtained before the study. The experimental group received a 16-week intervention program that integrated interactive teaching strategies, speech development activities, role-playing, storytelling, peer collaboration, inclusive circle-time discussions, and cooperative problem-solving tasks. Speech therapy-based activities were also integrated for students with special educational needs. The control group continued with the standard curriculum and did not receive additional communication-focused instruction. Data were collected using the Communicative Skills Scale, classroom observation protocol, teacher assessment checklist, sociometric test, and structured interviews with teachers and parents. These instruments were used to assess verbal and non-verbal communication, collaboration, empathy, self-expression, speech clarity, turn-taking, emotional regulation, peer acceptance, and classroom participation. The research procedure consisted of three phases: diagnostic assessment, intervention implementation, and post-intervention assessment. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0 through paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed thematically to support and contextualize the quantitative findings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a 16-week pedagogical intervention for improving communicative skills in inclusive primary school classrooms. The intervention integrated interactive teaching, speech development activities, storytelling, role-playing, peer collaboration, and cooperative problem-solving. The results are presented through pre-test comparison, post-test comparison, subcomponent improvement, and qualitative findings.

4.1. Pre-test Group Equivalence

Before the intervention, a pre-test was conducted to determine whether the experimental and control groups had comparable levels of communicative skills. **Table 1** presents the pre-test communicative skills scores of both groups. The experimental group had a mean score of 58.2, while the control group had a mean score of 57.7. The p-value of 0.4878 indicates that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups before the intervention. This confirms that both groups were comparable at baseline.

4.2. Post-test comparison between groups

After the intervention, the post-test results showed a clear difference between the experimental and control groups. **Table 2** presents the post-test communicative skills scores

of both groups. The experimental group achieved a higher post-test mean score than the control group. The experimental group increased to 76.9, while the control group reached 61.4. The t-value of 5.327 and p-value of 0.000 indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups after the intervention. These findings show that the pedagogical methodology was effective in improving students' overall communicative competence.

The greater improvement in the experimental group may be attributed to the use of interactive and inclusive learning activities. Role-playing, storytelling, peer collaboration, and circle-time discussions provided students with repeated opportunities to speak, listen, respond, and cooperate in meaningful classroom situations. This supports the view that communicative development in inclusive education requires active participation, peer interaction, and structured pedagogical support (Erbil, 2020; Leuwol *et al.*, 2023; Turko *et al.*, 2022).

Table 1. Pre-test communicative skills scores.

GROUP	N	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION	T-VALUE	P-VALUE
Experimental	40	58.2	6.4	0.712	0.4878
Control	40	57.7	6.9		

Table 2. Post-test communicative skills scores.

GROUP	N	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION	T-VALUE	P-VALUE
Experimental	40	76.9	5.8	5.327	0.000**
Control	40	61.4	6.3		

Note: $p < 0.01$ indicates high statistical significance.

4.3. Improvement by Communicative Subcomponents

To identify which aspects of communication improved most strongly, communicative competence was divided into four subcomponents: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, empathy and cooperation, and self-expression. **Table 3** presents the improvement by communicative subcomponents in the experimental group. All communicative subcomponents improved significantly after the intervention. The greatest improvements were found in empathy and cooperation, and self-expression, each with a mean difference of +4.3. Verbal communication improved by +3.8, while non-verbal communication improved by +3.3. These results suggest that the intervention strengthened not only technical language use but also social-emotional communication and classroom participation.

Table 3. Improvement by subcomponents in the experimental group.

COMMUNICATIVE COMPONENT	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	MEAN DIFFERENCE	P-VALUE
Verbal communication	14.50	18.30	+3.8	0.000
Non-verbal communication	13.80	17.10	+3.3	0.000
Empathy and cooperation	14.70	19.00	+4.3	0.000
Self-expression	15.20	19.50	+4.3	0.000

Note: All improvements are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

The improvement in empathy, cooperation, and self-expression is important for inclusive classrooms because communication involves both language and social-emotional skills. Group reflection, peer support, and cooperative problem-solving encouraged students to understand others, express emotions, and participate more confidently. This finding is consistent with social and emotional learning perspectives, which emphasize the role of relationship skills, empathy, and responsible interaction in student development (Mahoney *et al.*, 2018).

4.4. Observational and Qualitative Findings

Classroom observations and interviews supported the quantitative findings. Students in the experimental group became more active in initiating dialogue, asking questions, and participating in two-way communication. Students with special educational needs showed greater confidence, increased verbal output, and stronger participation in group tasks. Teachers also reported improvements in speech clarity, turn-taking, emotional expression, and responsiveness to peers.

These qualitative findings indicate that the intervention created a more supportive and communicative classroom environment. The use of differentiated activities, multimodal expression, and collaborative learning helped students participate according to their abilities. This aligns with inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning, which emphasize flexible participation, multiple forms of expression, and access for diverse learners (Capp, 2017; Kozleski *et al.*, 2015; Roche, 2016; Florian, 2014).

The findings also show that communication-focused activities can support students with speech, language, and social communication difficulties. Turn-taking games, language modeling, storytelling, and peer interaction provided natural opportunities for students to practice communication in meaningful contexts. Such classroom-based support is relevant to studies emphasizing early, structured, and context-embedded interventions for children with speech and language needs (Lindsay *et al.*, 2010; Dockrell and Hurry, 2018).

Structured, inclusive pedagogical methodology can improve communicative competence among primary school students. The intervention supported verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, cooperation, and self-expression while also promoting social integration among students with and without special educational needs.

4.5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that structured communicative intervention can significantly improve the communication abilities of primary school students in inclusive classrooms. The experimental group showed higher post-test scores than the control group, suggesting that interactive and collaborative learning strategies were more effective than conventional instruction. This improvement can be explained by the fact that communication develops through repeated social interaction, guided participation, and meaningful classroom engagement. In inclusive classrooms, students need opportunities to speak, listen, respond, cooperate, and express emotions in ways that match their developmental needs. This is consistent with sociocultural perspectives, which emphasize the importance of scaffolding, peer interaction, and supportive learning environments in children's language and social development (Erbil, 2020; Leuwol *et al.*, 2023).

The improvement in verbal and non-verbal communication also shows that communicative competence is not limited to speaking ability. Students need to understand social cues, use

appropriate expressions, listen actively, and respond to peers in classroom interaction. The intervention activities, including storytelling, role-playing, circle-time discussions, and cooperative tasks, provided repeated opportunities for students to practice these skills in natural learning situations. This finding is aligned with the concept of communicative competence, which includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic abilities in communication (Turko *et al.*, 2022). In primary school settings, these competencies are important because students are still developing the foundations of social language, classroom participation, and peer relationships.

The greatest improvements were found in empathy and cooperation, as well as self-expression. This result suggests that communication-focused intervention supports not only language development but also social-emotional growth. Inclusive classrooms require students to recognize others' feelings, take turns, negotiate meaning, and participate respectfully in shared activities. These skills are closely related to social and emotional learning, which emphasizes self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible interaction (Mahoney *et al.*, 2018). The findings also support previous studies showing that rhymes, collaborative activities, and social interaction can help children with special needs acquire social skills and participate more actively with peers (Sulyman and Yetunde, 2023).

The results are particularly important for students with special educational needs because these students may experience difficulties in speech clarity, expressive language, receptive language, and social communication. Classroom-based activities such as language modeling, turn-taking games, multimodal expression, and peer collaboration can provide communication support without isolating students from the regular classroom environment. This is consistent with studies emphasizing that children with speech, language, and communication needs benefit from early, structured, and context-embedded support (Lindsay *et al.*, 2010; Dockrell and Hurry, 2018). In this study, students with special educational needs became more confident in initiating dialogue, responding to peers, and participating in group activities, indicating that inclusive communication practice can reduce barriers to participation.

The intervention also reflects the principles of inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning. Inclusive education should not only place students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms, but also ensure that classroom methods allow all students to participate meaningfully. Flexible instruction, multimodal communication, visual support, and varied forms of student expression are important for creating accessible learning environments (Capp, 2017; Kozleski *et al.*, 2015; Roche, 2016; Florian, 2014). The use of speaking, drawing, acting, visual aids, peer discussion, and group reflection in this study gave students multiple ways to communicate and demonstrate understanding. Therefore, the intervention supported both communicative development and inclusive participation.

The findings also confirm that inclusive education requires teachers to move beyond teacher-centered instruction. Traditional approaches often provide limited space for dialogue, collaboration, and student expression. In contrast, interactive learning allows students to construct understanding through experience, discussion, and cooperation. Constructivist perspectives support this approach because children develop knowledge through active engagement with their environment and interaction with others (Barrouillet, 2015; Pakpahan and Saragih, 2022). Digital and interactive learning perspectives also show

that communication can be strengthened through technology-supported and collaborative learning experiences (Babalola and Adedokun-Shittu, 2024; Rivky *et al.*, 2022). Although this study focused mainly on classroom-based intervention, its findings suggest that future programs may combine face-to-face communication activities with appropriate digital or visual media.

Several references also highlight the importance of accessibility and inclusive awareness in strengthening communication development. Inclusive learning requires materials and environments that reduce barriers for students with different abilities (Faddillah *et al.*, 2022; Musayaroh *et al.*, 2023; Glushchenko and Trubacheyev, 2025). Practical demonstrations and communication-based activities may also help learners understand and express ideas through concrete experiences, especially for students who need alternative modes of communication (Muspita *et al.*, 2021). In a broader sense, communication should be understood not only as classroom speech but also as the ability to access information, exchange meaning, and participate in social learning environments. This broader view is relevant to studies discussing communication systems and technology-supported interaction, although such references should be used carefully when they focus on technical communication rather than educational communication (García-Pineda *et al.*, 2024).

Overall, the discussion shows that the proposed methodology was effective because it combined inclusive principles, social interaction, communication practice, and differentiated learning activities. The improvement in verbal communication, non-verbal communication, empathy, cooperation, and self-expression demonstrates that communicative skills can be developed when students are given structured opportunities to interact meaningfully. These results imply that primary school teachers should integrate communication-focused activities into daily classroom routines, especially in inclusive settings. Teacher training should also emphasize how to design interactive, accessible, and socially supportive learning activities so that students with and without special educational needs can develop communication skills together.

5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that a structured pedagogical methodology can improve communicative skills among primary school students in inclusive education settings. The 16-week intervention, which integrated interactive teaching, speech development activities, storytelling, role-playing, peer collaboration, and cooperative problem-solving, significantly improved students' verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, cooperation, and self-expression. The experimental group showed greater progress than the control group, indicating that communication-focused and inclusive learning activities are more effective than conventional instruction. These findings suggest that teachers should integrate structured, collaborative, and differentiated communication activities into primary classrooms to support participation and social inclusion for students with and without special educational needs.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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