

## **Strengthening Visual Communication Skills for Deaf Friends at The As-Sami Tuli Foundation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Student Internship Program (KKM) was held at the As-Sami Tutoring Foundation in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, in July 2025. The goal was to improve the visual communication skills of deaf learners as a means of empowerment and to support inclusive learning practices. Visual communication plays a central role for individuals with hearing impairments in understanding information and interacting socially. The program consisted of three main participatory activities: delivering instructions through sign language, a picture-guessing game, and a handicraft workshop. All activities emphasized hands-on practice tailored to the participants' visual learning characteristics. The results showed a high level of enthusiasm and engagement, with participants demonstrating improved understanding of visual symbols, shapes, and colors, as well as increased self-confidence and social interaction. The program made a positive contribution to strengthening visual communication skills and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

The As-Sami Tuli Foundation is a religious educational institution focused on inclusion and empowerment of people with hearing disabilities in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. Established approximately two years ago, it is the only semi-Islamic boarding school in the region specifically providing Islamic religious education for the deaf community. Through the implementation of the signal manuscript. The sign language Quran, developed by the Ministry of Religion's Maktab Tuli As-Sami, seeks to expand access to religious literacy and emphasize the principle of equality in understanding Islamic teachings for all groups, including people with disabilities.

The institution currently accommodates 57 students from various regions in West Kalimantan, supported by 13 teachers, both male and female. The presence of female teachers strengthens the institution's commitment to gender equality in religious education. However, the main challenge faced by the students lies in developing effective and expressive visual communication skills, which are a key foundation in the learning process for the deaf community. The limitations of interactive, visually oriented learning methods often limit the development of students' expressive abilities and active participation in learning activities.

In response to these issues, the 2025 Student Internship Program (KKM) adopted the theme "Strengthening Visual Communication Skills for Deaf Friends at the As-Sami Tutoring Foundation." This activity is designed to train visual communication skills through a hands-on and participatory approach, including sign language training, a picture-guessing game, and the creation of wristband accessories. This effort aligns with the principles of inclusive education, which emphasize equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities.

Academically, this community service is relevant to previous studies highlighting the importance of visual-based and participatory learning in improving the communication skills of deaf students (e.g., Smith, 2018; Nurhidayah, 2022). Therefore, this activity is expected to contribute to the development of adaptive and inclusive visual learning models. Therefore, this research focuses on strengthening visual communication skills as an effort to support the creation of an equitable, responsive, and empowering learning environment for the deaf community in religious education settings.

## METHODS

This community service activity was carried out by the Student Work Lecture (KKM) group in July 2025 at the As-Sami Tutoring Foundation, with a focus on strengthening visual communication skills for deaf friends. This activity uses a qualitative approach with a participatory-educational method, where deaf people not only play a role as participants, but also actively participate in all stages of the activity. This approach was chosen to make the learning process more interactive, fun, and in accordance with the visual characteristics of the participants. The implementation process of this activity is divided into three main programs, namely the planting program, the picture guessing quiz program, and the handicraft program in the form of making decorative bracelets.

The research method used was a qualitative approach with a participatory and educational approach. This approach was chosen so that deaf people are not only seen but also actively involved in the entire process. This makes the learning process more interactive, enjoyable, and in keeping with the predominantly visual nature of the participants. The target group for this activity was approximately 57 deaf students at the As-Sami Tuli Foundation.

The KKM program is carried out in three main activities that aim to improve the participants' visual, fine motor, and expressive skills. The three activities are: (1) Providing visual directions using sign language and movements so that participants can understand instructions that do not use words; (2) Playing guessing games with sheets of paper to practice the ability to recognize visual symbols and understand messages in images; and (3) Making decorative bracelets as a way to increase productivity and train coordination between vision and hand movements. The results of these activities are assessed based on enthusiasm, participation, ability to understand instructions, and visual interaction of the participants.

The data collection method in this community service activity involved three main techniques, namely Participatory Observation, Field Notes, and Informal Interviews. Through Participatory Observation, KKM students directly observed the level of participant engagement, the extent to which they understood the visual process presented, and how social interactions occurred during the implementation of the activity. Along with observations, Field Notes were used to document participants' nonverbal responses, such as expressions of joy or communication difficulties that emerged, as well as to record the final results of the handicrafts produced. Finally, Informal Interviews were conducted with the administrators of the As-Sami Tuli Maktab Foundation to obtain feedback on the overall impact of the program on the inclusive learning environment and on increasing the participants' level of self-confidence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program, "Improving Visual Communication Skills for Deaf Friends" at the Maktab Tuli As Sami Foundation, went well and received positive feedback from deaf friends and the foundation's management. Overall, each program significantly improved the participants' visual communication skills, engagement, and self-confidence. The activities also created a fun and inclusive learning environment through interactions focused on visuals, symbols, and creative expression.

During the planting program, the deaf students demonstrated high enthusiasm from the start. They followed the guidance of the KKM students, who visually demonstrated how to plant using polybags and burnt soil. Each step of the activity, from filling the polybags with soil, planting seedlings, to watering the plants, was demonstrated by the students with simple movements and gestures for clear understanding. This process is an effective visual learning method because the deaf students can imitate each step by watching directly. In addition to fostering environmental awareness, this activity also trains the deaf students to understand nonverbal instructions and follow visual directions well.

The next picture-guessing quiz program was the most interactive and enjoyable session. In this activity, deaf students received printed sheets of paper containing images whose meanings they had to guess, including pictures of animals, objects, and everyday activities. KKM students guided the quiz using sign language and facial expressions to help explain the meaning of each image. Throughout the activity, participants demonstrated high engagement and the ability to work together to understand and interpret the meaning of the images presented. This activity demonstrated an increase in deaf students' ability to recognize visual symbols and understand the messages contained in the images. Furthermore, this activity also increased participants' collaboration and confidence in expressing ideas visually.

The final program, a handicraft program in the form of making decorative bracelets, provides a means for deaf students to express their creativity. MOH provided visual examples and live demonstrations on how to make bracelets from simple materials like beads and colored string. The deaf friends enthusiastically selected colors, arranged patterns, and proudly displayed their creations. This activity trained participants' precision and visual-motor coordination, while also fostering self-expression

through works with aesthetic value and personal meaning. The atmosphere of togetherness created during the activity strengthened social bonds and a sense of solidarity between the students and their deaf friends.

Overall, the three programs successfully improved the visual communication skills of deaf students through interactive, educational, and hands-on experience-based activities. All participants were able to participate effectively without any significant communication barriers. The foundation also expressed its appreciation for the KKM activities, which were deemed to provide tangible benefits to the deaf community, in terms of learning, creativity, and camaraderie.

The findings of this activity are consistent with Daryanto's (2016) view that visual communication is an effective means of conveying information to individuals with hearing impairments because it relies on visual elements such as movement, images, and symbols. This is because it incorporates visual elements such as movement, images, and symbols that are easy to understand. Therefore, this community service activity not only provides practical benefits for deaf individuals but also represents a concrete manifestation of the application of inclusive and creative communication that can be expanded into educational and social areas.

### **Visual Instruction Presentation (Planting Program)**

This program aims to train the understanding of nonverbal instructions and visual directions. KKM students demonstrate each step visually, from filling polybags with burnt soil, planting seeds, to watering plants, using simple movements and gestures. Deaf Friends show high enthusiasm and are able to imitate each step by observing directly from students. This program successfully trains their ability to understand the sequence of visual processes (workflow) and respond to nonverbal cues, which are important foundations in visual communication. The effectiveness of this accuracy method is in accordance with research on education for the Deaf community, where visual-kinesthetic-based learning provides better understanding than verbal instructions.

### **Guess the Picture Game**

This session was the most interactive, using printed sheets of paper containing images of everyday objects, animals, and activities. Students guided a quiz game using sign language and facial expressions to explain the images. Participants showed significant improvement in recognizing images and understanding their messages, as well as improving their ability to collaborate and convey ideas visually. This program strengthened the understanding of the relationship between symbols (images) and their meanings, which is crucial in visual communication. The increased collaboration also demonstrated a positive impact on social interaction, consistent with previous research findings that used visual media, such as Visual Storytelling, to develop the potential and independence of deaf students.

### **Making Accessories (Handcrafts)**

This program is a way to express creativity by making bracelets from beads and colored string. Students demonstrate how to make them directly through visualization. This activity trains precision, hand-eye coordination, and enhances the ability to convey feelings through works that have aesthetic value and personal meaning. Participants express pride when displaying their work, reflecting increased self-confidence and the development of creative skills. Creative activities like this are important for the Deaf community because they help them communicate and express themselves without using language, and strengthen their identity, as suggested by research on the application of Photovoice as a visual

communication tool.

This aligns with Daryanto's (2016) opinion, which asserts that visual communication utilizing movement, images, and symbols is easier to understand and more effective for deaf individuals. Although the program successfully improved participants' understanding of symbols, shapes, and colors, as well as increased self-confidence and cooperation among participants, a major limitation is the underestimation of formal post-activity assessments to accurately measure skill improvement.

The results obtained were more descriptive and based on observations. However, the success in interaction and active participation seen by the KKM team demonstrates that interactive and visual-based learning methods can effectively overcome communication barriers. The KKM program also demonstrated a concrete example of the use of inclusive and creative communication, resulting in a positive impact appreciated by the foundation. To ensure its sustainability, similar activities are needed in the future, focusing on more specific visual communication-based training, such as drawing or other artwork, so that deaf students can continue to develop and enhance their social and creative abilities.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Community service activities with the theme "*Strengthening Visual Communication Skills for Deaf Friends at the As-Sami Tuli Maktab Foundation*" were successfully implemented and had a positive impact on improving the participants' visual communication skills and creativity. Through three main programs: planting using polybags and burning soil, a picture-guessing quiz, and bracelet-making, the deaf students demonstrated improvements in understanding visual instructions, actively interacting, and creatively expressing ideas.

The results of the activity demonstrated that effective communication does not always depend on spoken language but can be built through a meaningful combination of gestures, symbols, and visual media. This participatory and educational approach also reinforced students' awareness of the importance of inclusive and adaptive learning strategies for deaf students.

As a follow-up, it is recommended that the As-Sami Tuli Foundation continuously develop visual communication-based training programs, such as drawing, crafts, and other creative skills. Furthermore, further evaluation or action research is needed to assess the effectiveness of visual learning methods and identify the best model for inclusive education in religious settings. With continued innovation in activities, it is hoped that deaf friends can continue to develop into independent, self-confident, and socially and creatively empowered individuals.

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