

Teacher Communication Strategies in Dealing with Differences in Character and Emotions of Elementary School Students

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ABSTRAK

Perbedaan karakter dan kondisi emosi siswa merupakan realitas yang tidak terpisahkan dari proses pembelajaran di sekolah dasar. Guru dituntut memiliki strategi komunikasi yang efektif agar mampu mengelola keberagaman tersebut secara konstruktif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dan mendeskripsikan strategi komunikasi guru dalam menghadapi perbedaan karakter dan emosi siswa sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi kelas, dan dokumentasi terhadap guru sekolah dasar yang dipilih secara purposive. Analisis data dilakukan dengan model analisis interaktif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menerapkan strategi komunikasi empatik, penyesuaian gaya komunikasi berdasarkan karakter siswa, pemanfaatan komunikasi verbal dan nonverbal, serta pendekatan persuasif dan reflektif dalam mengelola emosi dan perilaku siswa. Strategi komunikasi tersebut berkontribusi dalam menciptakan iklim kelas yang kondusif, meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, dan mendukung perkembangan sosial-emosional siswa. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa komunikasi guru memiliki peran strategis tidak hanya dalam penyampaian materi pembelajaran, tetapi juga dalam pembentukan lingkungan belajar yang aman secara emosional. Temuan penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi rujukan dalam pengembangan kompetensi komunikasi guru sekolah dasar dan perumusan kebijakan pendidikan yang berorientasi pada pendekatan humanis.

Kata kunci: strategi komunikasi guru, karakter siswa, emosi siswa, sekolah dasar, penelitian kualitatif

ABSTRACT

Differences in students' character and emotional conditions are an inherent aspect of the learning process in elementary schools. Teachers are therefore required to possess effective communication strategies to manage this diversity constructively. This study aims to explore and describe teachers' communication strategies for addressing differences in character and emotions among elementary school students. This research employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation involving elementary school teachers selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that teachers use empathetic communication, adapt their communication styles to students' character traits, employ both verbal and nonverbal communication, and apply persuasive and reflective approaches to manage students' emotions and behaviors. These communication strategies contribute to creating a conducive classroom climate, enhancing student engagement, and supporting students' social-emotional development. This study emphasizes that teacher communication plays a strategic role not only in delivering instructional content but also in fostering a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for developing elementary school teachers' communication competencies and for educational policies that promote a humanistic approach to learning.

Keywords: teacher communication strategies, student character, student emotions, elementary school, qualitative research.

INTRODUCTION

Elementary school represents a crucial stage in shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, where diversity in student backgrounds, personalities, and emotional states presents unique communication challenges for teachers. This diversity calls for strategies that help teachers move beyond transmitting materials, positioning them as both communicators and psychological counselors responsible for facilitating a positive classroom environment.

In this context, teacher communication plays a central role in creating a conducive learning climate. Teacher communication goes beyond conveying learning instructions; it also builds interpersonal relationships that influence students' sense of security, motivation, and engagement. Research shows that effective teacher interpersonal communication contributes to the creation of positive relationships between teachers and students and improves the quality of learning interactions in elementary school classrooms (Afifah & Utami, 2025). Through appropriate communication, teachers can help students feel valued, understood, and accepted, which ultimately impacts their psychological well-being and learning interests.

Differences in character and emotions among elementary school students create challenges for effective learning. Teachers must navigate a range of student temperaments—active, expressive, quiet, sensitive, anxious, or emotionally variable—within a single class. Addressing these differences requires flexible, context-specific communication strategies. Such strategies include the methods teachers use to convey messages, provide feedback, respond to behavior, and manage classroom interactions, all tailored to students' personalities and emotional needs. Empathetic, persuasive, and dialogic communication approaches have been shown to boost learning motivation and foster positive teacher-student relationships (Arif et al., 2015).

From an interpersonal communication perspective, communication effectiveness is defined by openness, empathy, supportiveness, and the ability to understand others' perspectives. Within the educational context, interpersonal communication theory posits that teacher-student relationships are both structural and emotionally meaningful. Teachers who exhibit empathy and openness in their communication are more likely to establish rapport with students, fostering a classroom environment where students feel secure in expressing their perspectives and emotions (Afifah & Utami, 2025). Such communication provides an essential foundation for addressing the diversity of character and emotion among elementary school students.

Furthermore, the educational psychology approach emphasizes the role of emotions in the learning process. Elementary school students are undergoing a period of emotional development that remains unstable and is heavily shaped by their social environment. Teachers represent pivotal figures who facilitate students' recognition, expression, and regulation of emotions through supportive communication. Research indicates that the quality of teacher-student relationships depends substantially on teachers' emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to understand and manage both their own emotions and those of their students (Saleh & Hibatullah, 2025). Teachers with strong emotional intelligence typically employ adaptive communication strategies and demonstrate sensitivity to students' individual differences.

Teacher communication strategies in learning encompass the use of positive language, calming intonation, and supportive nonverbal responses. Communication that does not recognize students' emotional states may induce stress, anxiety, or withdrawal, whereas empathetic communication and respect for differences foster a safe and inclusive

learning environment (Hadi et al., 2025). Consequently, teacher communication strategies are intrinsically linked to students' psychological context and the social dynamics within the classroom.

Although numerous studies have emphasized the importance of teacher communication in learning, most research continues to focus on general learning outcomes or student motivation. Studies specifically exploring how teachers design and implement communication strategies to address the diverse characteristics and emotions of elementary school students, particularly from teachers' own perspectives. And because teacher communication strategies are often situational, intuitive, and shaped by personal experiences and the school's socio-cultural context.

However, existing studies still show several limitations that constitute research gaps. First, most previous studies have emphasized teacher communication in relation to student learning outcomes, motivation, or learning interests, while aspects of differences in character and emotional dynamics of elementary school students have not been a primary focus in depth (Arif et al., 2015; Hadi et al., 2025). Second, research examining teacher communication generally uses a quantitative approach, thus not fully capturing the processes, considerations, and meanings behind teacher communication strategies in real-life classroom situations. Third, there are still a few studies that explicitly combine perspectives from communication science and educational psychology to understand how teachers adapt their communication strategies when dealing with students with diverse personalities and emotional states, especially at the elementary school level.

Furthermore, teachers' communication strategies in daily practice are often situational, intuitive, and influenced by personal experiences and the school's socio-cultural context. These aspects have rarely been comprehensively addressed in previous research, yet they are crucial for the effectiveness of teacher communication in managing differences in student character and emotions. In other words, there is a gap between theoretical concepts of educational communication and teachers' classroom communication practices that needs to be bridged through more context-specific, in-depth research.

Based on this description, qualitative research is relevant for understanding teachers' communication strategies for addressing differences in the characters and emotions of elementary school students. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meaning, experiences, and practices of teachers' communication holistically, including how teachers read students' emotional situations, adjust their communication strategies, and balance individual student needs with class interests. Thus, this research is expected to make theoretical contributions to the study of educational communication and educational psychology, as well as practical contributions to teachers by developing more empathetic, adaptive, and student-centered communication strategies.

This study aims to describe and analyze teachers' communication strategies for addressing differences in the characters and emotions of elementary school students. Specifically, this study aims to understand how teachers interpret differences in students' characters and emotions, the communication strategies they use in learning situations, and the implications of these strategies for students' psychological well-being and classroom engagement.

Based on the description, the formulation of the problem in this study is how the communication strategy used by teachers in dealing with differences in character and emotions of elementary school students?, how do teachers interpret differences in character and emotions of students in the learning communication process in the classroom?, what factors influence the application of teacher communication strategies in dealing with

differences in character and emotions of elementary school students?, and what are the implications of teacher communication strategies for psychological conditions and student involvement in learning?.

This study not only discusses teacher communication in general but also specifically examines how teachers address differences in students' character and emotions in daily learning practices, a topic that is still rarely studied in depth in educational communication research. Unlike previous studies that predominantly use quantitative approaches and are oriented towards learning outcomes, this study employs a qualitative approach to explore teachers' experiences, considerations, and subjective meanings in designing and implementing classroom communication strategies. This study integrates interpersonal communication theory and educational psychology concepts (especially emotions and emotional intelligence) to understand teacher communication strategies more holistically, thereby bridging the gap between communication theory and pedagogical practice in elementary schools. Another novelty lies in the effort to uncover situational and contextual teacher communication strategies, influenced by teaching experience and classroom conditions. Therefore, the study's results have the potential to serve as a practical reference for teachers in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. Overall, this study offers a new contribution to the study of educational communication by positioning teacher communication strategies as interpersonal practices oriented towards managing differences in character and emotions in elementary school students, rather than solely on academic achievement.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to understand in depth how teachers communicate to address differences in character and emotions among elementary school students, based on teachers' experiences, meanings, and classroom practices. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore social phenomena holistically and contextually, as well as to understand the meaning behind actions and social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study was used because this research focuses on one specific context, namely the communication practices of teachers in a particular elementary school environment, thus allowing for in-depth and comprehensive data collection (Yin, 2018). The subjects of this research are elementary school teachers with teaching experience who directly interact with students with diverse personalities and emotional conditions. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, with the following criteria: (1) teachers actively teaching in elementary schools, (2) have experience managing classes with diverse student characters, and (3) willing to provide in-depth information related to learning communication practices. The research locations at SDN 1 Ledok, SDN 2 Ledok, and SDN 3 Ledok, Sambong District, Blora Regency, were purposively selected from elementary schools considered relevant to the research objectives and that allowed the researchers to obtain rich, in-depth data. In qualitative research, the selection of locations and subjects is based on considerations of the depth of information, not on the number of respondents (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection in this study was carried out using several techniques to obtain comprehensive data and support the validity of the research findings, namely:

1. In-depth Interview

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' experiences, perspectives, and communication strategies for addressing differences in students'

character and emotions. This technique allowed researchers to explore teachers' subjective meanings regarding their communication practices (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

2. Observation

Observations were conducted to directly observe teachers' communication practices in the classroom, both verbal and nonverbal, as well as students' emotional responses to teachers' communication strategies. Observations allowed researchers to understand the context of social interactions in a natural way (Yin, 2018).

3. Documentation

Documentation is used as supporting data, in the form of learning notes, teaching materials, or other documents relevant to teacher communication practices. Documentation techniques help strengthen research findings through data triangulation (Miles et al., 2014).

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously, from data collection through to drawing conclusions. The data analysis model used refers to the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions/verification (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction involved selecting, focusing on, and simplifying data from interviews, observations, and documentation to align with the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships between categories. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn by identifying the main themes that characterize teachers' communication strategies in addressing differences in students' character and emotions.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through several techniques, namely source and technique triangulation, member checking, and referencing adequacy. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the consistency of the findings. Member checking was conducted by confirming the research findings with informants to ensure that the meaning captured by the researcher corresponded with their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These steps aim to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative research results.

RESULTS

This study aims to explore and understand the communication strategies elementary school teachers use to address differences in student character and emotions, and their implications for the learning process and classroom management. Based on in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, this study found that teachers use adaptive, empathetic, and context-specific communication strategies to respond to students' diverse characteristics and emotions. The main findings of the study indicate that teacher communication strategies include: (1) empathetic interpersonal communication, (2) adjusting communication styles to student characters, (3) utilizing verbal and nonverbal communication simultaneously, and (4) using persuasive and reflective approaches in managing student emotions. These strategies play an important role in creating a conducive classroom climate and supporting students' socialemotional development.

Empathetic Communication Strategies in Dealing with Students' Emotional Differences

The results of the study indicate that teachers consistently use empathetic communication when dealing with students with various emotional states, including those

who are easily angered, anxious, withdrawn, or hyperactive. Teachers strive to understand students' emotional backgrounds before responding, for example, by first calming students, using a soft tone of voice, and giving students the opportunity to express their feelings. These findings indicate that empathic communication serves not only to convey messages but also to build emotional relationships between teachers and students. Theoretically, these findings align with the concept of empathic communication in interpersonal communication, which emphasizes the ability to understand others' perspectives and emotions (Rogers, 1957). In the context of elementary education, teacher empathy has been shown to be an important foundation for managing students' emotions and fostering a sense of psychological safety in the classroom. Compared with previous research, these results support the findings of Jennings and Greenberg (2009), who stated that teachers' social-emotional competence contributes significantly to classroom climate and students' emotional well-being. This study extends these findings by demonstrating how empathy is concretely manifested in everyday classroom communication practices.

Adjusting Communication Style Based on Student Character

Research findings indicate that teachers do not use a single, uniform communication style but rather adapt their approach to students' characteristics. Active and expressive students are approached with open and dialogical communication, while quiet or sensitive students are more often approached personally and persuasively. Interpretation of these findings suggests that teachers possess communicative awareness of the differences in individual student characteristics. This reinforces the view that the effectiveness of educational communication is largely determined by the communicator's (teacher's) ability to read their audience (students) (DeVito, 2016). Adapting communication style is an important way to prevent conflict, reduce student resistance, and increase learning engagement. When compared with developmental psychology literature, these findings align with theories of elementary school-aged children's social-emotional development, which emphasize the importance of an individualized approach to learning (Santrock, 2018). However, this study makes a novel contribution by positioning communication as the primary instrument in this adjustment, rather than solely a pedagogical strategy.

The Role of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Classroom Management

Observations indicate that teachers consciously utilize nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, and symbolic touch (e.g., patting a student on the shoulder) to manage students' emotions and behavior. Nonverbal communication is often used when students are in a negative emotional state or have difficulty accepting verbal reprimands. This finding suggests that nonverbal communication reinforces verbal messages and is an effective strategy in elementary school contexts. This supports the theory of nonverbal communication, which states that emotional messages are more often conveyed through nonverbal cues than through words (Burgoon et al., 2016). This study extends the literature by demonstrating that nonverbal communication is not merely a supplement but a primary strategy for addressing students with immature emotional regulation. Thus, this finding underscores the importance of nonverbal communication literacy in the professional competence of elementary school teachers.

Persuasive and Reflective Approaches in Dealing with Students' Emotional Behavior

Another significant finding is the use of a persuasive and reflective approach, in which teachers engage students in dialogue, reflect on their behavior, and understand the

emotional consequences of their actions. This approach is used more frequently than punishment or harsh reprimands. These findings indicate a paradigm shift from authoritarian to dialogic communication in elementary education. These findings support Vygotsky's view of the importance of social interaction and dialogue in children's cognitive and emotional development (Vygotsky, 1978). Compared with previous research focused on control-based classroom discipline, this study shows that persuasive communication is more effective at building students' emotional awareness and social responsibility.

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the limited number of informants and the specific research context within a single elementary school environment limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data relies heavily on the informants' openness and the researchers' interpretations; thus, the potential for subjectivity cannot be completely avoided. Third, this study did not directly involve students' and parents' perspectives, so the description of teachers' communication strategies remains one-way. These limitations may impact the interpretation of the results, particularly in understanding the long-term impact of teachers' communication strategies on students' emotional development.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of educational communication studies and educational psychology by confirming that teacher communication strategies are a key element in managing the emotions and character of elementary school students. This study strengthens the integration among theories of interpersonal communication, nonverbal communication, and children's social-emotional development. In practice, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for developing empathetic communication training for elementary school teachers, formulating school policies that emphasize a communicative approach to classroom management, and improving teachers' social-emotional competencies in elementary education.

Overall, this study demonstrates that empathetic, adaptive, and persuasive teacher communication strategies play a crucial role in addressing the diverse character and emotions of elementary school students. Communication serves not only as a means of conveying material but also as a key instrument in establishing an emotionally healthy classroom climate. Future research is recommended to incorporate student and parent perspectives, employ a multi-site design, and combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effectiveness of teacher communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' communication strategies in addressing the diverse character and emotions of elementary school students. Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that teachers employ adaptive, empathetic, and context-specific communication strategies to manage the diversity of students' characters and emotional states. Empathetic communication, adapting communication styles, using verbal and nonverbal communication, and employing persuasive and reflective approaches have proven to be the primary strategies teachers use to create a conducive learning climate and support students' social-emotional development. The findings of this study confirm that teacher communication not only serves as a means of conveying learning materials but also plays a strategic role in building interpersonal relationships, managing student emotions, and creating a psychologically safe classroom environment. Therefore, teacher communication competence is a crucial element in

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elementary school educational practices that focus on students' holistic development, including cognitive, social, and emotional aspects.

While this study makes significant theoretical and practical contributions, it has limitations, particularly its limited scope and number of informants, and its lack of direct involvement of student and parent perspectives. Therefore, future research is recommended to broaden the research context, involve various educational stakeholders, and combine methodological approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effectiveness of teacher communication strategies.

Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers, schools, and educational policymakers in designing training and professional development programs that emphasize the importance of empathetic communication competencies and student emotion management. By strengthening appropriate communication strategies, teachers can create more inclusive, humanistic, and sustainable learning processes.

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The research team hopes that the results of this study will benefit scientific development, especially in the fields of basic education, communication science, and educational psychology, and will also serve as a reference for further educational research and practice

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