

ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE STRUCTURE SKILLS IN PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

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Abstract

The primary challenge faced by individuals with hearing impairments lies in the process of communication with hearing individuals, particularly because sign language possesses grammatical rules and structural systems that differ significantly from both spoken and written languages, including Indonesian and English. These differences affect their ability to comprehend and construct linguistic structures in written form. This study aims to analyze the role of English language structure in shaping language comprehension among individuals with hearing impairments. This research employs a qualitative approach using a critical ethnographic method involving 12 deaf participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of written interactions via digital media (WhatsApp). The data were analyzed thematically, with a focus on patterns of language use and sentence structure. The findings indicate that limited access to spoken language results in restricted vocabulary among participants, leading to less systematic sentence construction. Furthermore, sign language does not fully conform to the structural rules of verbal languages, which creates challenges in transferring meaning into written form. Specifically, 83% of participants demonstrated better comprehension of simple English structures compared to the more complex and affix-rich structures of Indonesian. This can be attributed to the relatively simpler grammatical patterns of English, which are more easily processed visually. The practical implications of this study highlight the need for adaptive language learning strategies for individuals with hearing impairments. These strategies should emphasize simplified structures, visual-based instruction, and bilingual approaches that take into account the unique characteristics of sign language.

Keywords: *Hearing Disabilities, Language Structure, English Language, Linguistic Competence*

INTRODUCTION

Language has an important meaning in communication because it serves as the main tool for conveying messages, ideas, feelings, and information between individuals or groups. Language is a medium for conveying ideas or information. Without clear language, communication becomes difficult or even impossible. Language helps create and maintain social relationships. In everyday interactions, the use of good language can strengthen the bond between individuals.

Language reflects the culture of a society. Through language, people can understand the values, norms, and customs that prevail in a culture, which is important for building cross-cultural communication (Devianty 2017). In the world of work, education, and social life, language is used to provide clear instructions, explanations, or directions so that others can understand and follow

correctly. The use of language allows a person to be able to express feelings and emotions, such as happiness, sadness, anger, or love, which deepens understanding between individuals. The use of language can be a tool to construct an individual or group identity, including national, ethnic, or social group identity.(Effendi, D., & Wahidy 2019).

Deaf people are those whose hearing is not functional so they need special aids when interacting. The condition of hearing loss covers all levels, both mild, severe, and very severe, resulting in communication and language disorders.(Nugraheni, Husain, and Unayah 2023)

Language barriers for the deaf are related to difficulties in hearing and understanding the spoken language used in daily communication. Due to hearing impairments or limitations, deaf people have difficulty understanding verbal communication directly. This has an impact on social interactions that often rely on verbal conversation. Much information is conveyed through oral media, such as on television, radio, or direct conversation. Deaf people may not be able to access this information easily without the help of hearing aids, written text, or sign language interpreters. Deaf people who are born unable to hear usually have difficulty mastering written language because they are not exposed to sound and word pronunciation early on, which can slow down the development of reading and writing skills.(Nelita Alpira Sapitri 2023)

Understanding the language or message conveyed verbally or in writing is the purpose of communication that sometimes fails to be understood by some groups. The sense of hearing is very important to capture information so that data communicates well with each other. However, this will be different from those who experience a sensory barrier where there is not the slightest gap in the sound received as a form of information (except with assistive devices) for the deaf is the reason for the received language comprehension is not optimal. Another thing is because a person with hearing impairment does not go through the imitating process that becomes the acquisition of the language of each individual. Individuals with hearing impairment experience partial or total damage to the external, middle, and inner organs of the ear that are experienced so that they go through the process of acquiring the right language.

Although sign language is the primary means of communication for many deaf people, not everyone in their environment understands or uses sign language. This creates a communication barrier between the deaf and the hearing. Difficulty in understanding and responding to oral conversations can make deaf people feel isolated in social situations. They may feel awkward or not fully engaged in social interactions because of these communication barriers. The use of sign language sometimes cannot convey the nuances or details that are usually conveyed through spoken language or tone of voice, so there can be misunderstandings in communication (Pradipta 2020).

Because deaf people do not hear spoken language naturally, they are unable to process information through their hearing and do not have the same exposure to vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure as children who can hear (Kauffman 1988). This can affect the way they understand and use written language. Written language often has complex grammar rules. Deaf people who use sign language as their primary language may face difficulties in learning the different grammar rules, especially since the structure of sign language is not always the same as spoken or written language. For example, sign language tends to be more visual and concise, while written language is more linear and detailed.

This research is expected to contribute to the development of linguistic studies, especially in the field of language acquisition for children with special needs, as well as a reference in the development of language learning strategies for deaf people.

Deaf children who do not receive proper language education early may have more limited vocabulary. This limited vocabulary can be an obstacle to writing clearly and variedly, as well as understanding more complex texts. Written language often contains expressions, idioms, or metaphors that are not always immediately understandable to the deaf. Because they are not directly exposed to the use of language in oral conversation, understanding this context may be more difficult for them (August 2012).

Sentence structure in written language can be challenging, especially if the deaf person is more familiar with sign language patterns that have different structures. This often results in sentences that do not conform to grammatical rules or unusual arrangements in written language. Reading and writing require the ability to understand the nuances of language, such as irony, humor, or implied emotions. Due to limitations in access to spoken language, deaf people may have difficulty in capturing hidden meanings or deep interpretations of texts. In some cases, education for the deaf may not be fully tailored to their needs in developing written language skills. They may require specialized teaching methods that focus on more visual and contextual language development.

Based on the results of pre-research conducted through interviews with SLB teachers, it is known that students with hearing impairments are unable to understand abstract sentences because the information they capture is only received through visuals so that something that is not real cannot be understood well. They deliver sentences with a less standard structure or frequent back and forth. This is due to their understanding that a sentence must begin with a subject which of course becomes different when it comes to sentence structure "*where's your book?*" This sentence does not begin with the subject so it is difficult for them to understand. The sentence that then appears as a form of their understanding is "*Which book do you have?*". More fatal things have an

impact on the fact that alumni are often denied job opportunities at an institution because of their inability to understand sentences in written questions and during interviews. On August 30, 2023, 4 alumni of SLB Wiyata Dharma registered at Mc Donald Metro as employees, but due to difficulties in understanding the systematic language, they were unable to answer correctly, there was even one of them who did not manage to answer the question at all. Difficulties in understanding experienced such as in the question "What is your Work Experience?". Sentences like this are incomprehensible, making them lose job opportunities (Wagimin 2024). In line with the explanation from one of the teachers at SLB Wiyata Dharma Metro, previous research also described the difficulty of deaf students in understanding sentences. Deaf students have difficulty understanding sentence patterns, difficulty completing sentences, and difficulty adding adjectives to sentences (Pradipta 2020).

In this study, the researcher supported previous research by looking at how understanding bears hearing disabilities by offering English language structure, especially in sentences that begin with pronouns, such as Subject Pronouns such as I, you, They, We, He, She and in Possessive Adjectives such as My, Your, His, Her, Their, and Our. With the problem faced, namely difficulty in understanding sentences if it does not begin with the subject which in this case is represented by English sentences. Like, your book is new. Pronouns are at the beginning of sentences so it is necessary to explore further the understanding of people with Deaf Disabilities about this so that the results of the research can contribute to learning English in people with disabilities, especially those with hearing impairments. This study aims to analyze the structure of English on language comprehension in people with hearing disabilities and the results of this study are expected to be input to the government and employers so that the stages that must be passed are adjusted to the conditions of people with hearing disabilities.

METHODS

Types of Research

In providing a description and description of the problems of people with hearing disabilities, the researcher used Qualitative Research with the research subjects being 4 students and alumni of SMALB Wiyata Dharma Metro who experienced total hearing loss with average intelligence. This study seeks to describe how far the language understanding of people with hearing disabilities is through the structure of English. In addition, this study also aims to find out the difference in the understanding of students with hearing disabilities towards sentence structure in Indonesian and English. This research was carried out at SMA Luar Luar Wiyata Dharma Kota Metro which is

located at Jl. Banteng No. 22a, East Hadimulyo, Central Metro District, Metro City, Lampung 43111.

Data Collection Methods

Research data collection is an important step in the research process that aims to gather the information necessary to answer research questions or test hypotheses. This process involves a variety of methods and techniques that depend on the type of research, objectives, and relevant data sources. The methods used are as follows:

Interview

This method involves direct interaction between researchers and respondents to gather more in-depth information. The interview was conducted In-depth Interview. This type of interview was conducted considering the difficulty of obtaining data from participants who actually experienced total hearing loss with average intelligence using sign language. This interview process involves teachers who can interact directly with the participants. The core participants are 5 (five) students and alumni and 2 (two) teachers of Wiyata Dharma Metro Extraordinary High School. This method is used to obtain data on how deaf SMALB students and alumni individually or in groups understand language.

Observation

Observation is a way of obtaining research data by making direct observations on the research subjects, namely students and teachers. The observation method is carried out by looking at students' communication activities directly because this is a social phenomenon (naturalistic research) that occurs in the real life of people with hearing impairments, meaning that the data will be seen based on the Case Study experienced by the participants.

Documentation

Documentation is carried out by obtaining data from conversations via WhatsApp and data in the form of posts or comments through social media such as Facebook and Instagram.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in the study is purposive sampling, which is by selecting samples based on certain relevant characteristics taken from the severity of the disorder consisting of partial and total disorders. This is done to obtain representative data on their language understanding. The characteristics of student participants consist of, *first*, SLB students and alumni

who have partial or total hearing loss. *Second*, communicate using sign language. while the characteristics of teacher participants are *first*, working as a teacher at SLB Wiyata Dharma Kota Metro for at least 5 years. *Second*, understand and be skilled in using sign language.

Data Validity

This technique is carried out to ensure that the data obtained is valid. To measure this, triangulation can be done, namely by comparing interview data with data obtained through documentation by *cross-checking* the resource partner's partner or related parties about the correctness of the data.

Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data collected through observation, documentation and in-depth interviews with participants were then analyzed using a critical study ethnographic approach, which is research on a group that includes language that focuses on marginalized groups in society. This is done so that participants also obtain rights related to communication based on cases or events experienced by people with hearing disabilities. The researcher conducts 9 stages of research in ethnography, namely by determining what questions will be used to obtain data, determining the target that is the source of observation, determining the time and place of the research, obtaining permission to conduct research, creating and building good relationships with participants, determining roles researchers in the field, agree with the informant regarding the research needs, and the last is to conduct an ethnographic interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is the data that has been collected from the respondents. Nvt is a deaf friend who has no hearing remainder. His deafness reached 150HZ so that only the sound of lightning could be heard. The complexity of the language he uses is too complicated.



Image Source: Personal Documents

Figure 1. Chat Responders via WhatsApp

From the results of the above communication, the author can capture the essence of the conversation simply that Novita does not work but only at home. And in the next communication, Novita was about to visit her teacher's house with her friend named Rian. In the next communication, the author conducted face-to-face communication accompanied by a translator who is also a teacher for the alumni of SLB Wiyata Dharma Metro. From the face-to-face interview, Novita has returned to work at the Metro silabi batik business.



Image Source: Personal Documents

Figure 2. Chat Responders via WhatsApp

From the results of the chat via whatsapp above, it can be concluded that the deaf language in the text seems convoluted because. This is due to the absence of information obtained from audio imagery. When her teacher asked about her work in batik, Novita replied " *Yes, sir.*" and continued "*Alhamdulillah, there are many batik*". The second answer is textually difficult to understand, what is meant by a lot of batik. After understanding, it turned out that there were many batik orders at his workplace.

The next information was explored through a whatsapp chat with Nvdr. Alumni of SLB Wiyata Dharma Metro who had been hanging out with the Punk children still had hearing remaining, although it did not significantly affect the ability to compose sentences. This is evident in the dialogue below.



Image Source: Personal Documents

Figure 3. Chat Responders via WhatsApp

The words written by Ryn are too many and are confusing. It is unstructured and the syntax is chaotic and even difficult to understand. When his teacher showed him a photo of his friend's house named Rk, Ryn replied with a long word that had a double meaning. "*Yes, for Rika's own house, buy a house building, sir*". Yesterday in the 6th month, I was josep yeli playing at Rika's house, "*eat bake catfish, sir*".

The meaning of Ryn's explanation is ambiguous, whether Rika buys a new house or builds a house by building from scratch. Then in the second line he said backwards he should have eaten

grilled catfish to eat catfish grilled. If it is in the English structure, then what is said in the arrangement is correct "*I eat grilled fish*".

Further communication with Y1. The youngest alumnus was born in Pekalongan, East Lampung, which is directly adjacent to Metro City. In communication through WhatsApp social media, the words expressed in the message are very long and do not pay attention to the proper sentence structure, both in the rules of Indonesian and in the rules of English. Although Yeliana is a transfer student from a regular school, she quickly gets along with her friends and fellow deaf people. Even the ability to follow lessons and skills is very easy and fast.

Therefore, after graduating from SLB Wiyata Dharma Metro, Y1 was immediately accepted to work in the Metro silabi batik business. With his good skills, his colleagues and batik management are getting more professional. With the increase in workers with disabilities, the silabi batik business is advancing and continues to accommodate workers with disabilities.



Image Source: Personal Documents

Figure 4. Chat Responders via WhatsApp

The communication text in the image above shows how difficult it is for deaf children to express things. As yeliana wrote, "yesterday chat a friend, sir, you went to the house of Eid, sir. Monday at noon, sir". His words were back and forth and long-winded. This is not intentional, but indeed the ability to transform signs into language texts becomes difficult. Actually, what Yeliana wanted to convey was "*yesterday I was a friend and said that you were leaving*". The problem of

deaf delivery is based on very little information, so it is natural to seem convoluted. Deaf people understand short and clear words according to the sign language used. The structure of sign language also has minimal word similarity, so when a new word is presented that has similarities, it is relatively difficult to memorize and understand. The structure of English is simpler, and the diction is not long and does not have a prefix and suffix, this is probably what makes it easier for deaf people to better understand English diction.

Further discussions with the DA. The 28-year-old woman has a lot of vocational potential. Since becoming a student, he has repeatedly won competitions held by the Lampung provincial government. Since graduating from SLB Wiyata Dharma Metro, DA was immediately recruited as an honorary employee at SLB, as well as becoming a mainstay batik maker in the syllabic batik business. In sign language communication, Desta's ability is relatively good compared to his friends. However, in textual communication, DA's ability is no better than other alumni. It can be seen in the WhatsApp dialogue between the DA and his teacher.

When Eid arrived, DA and his friends were about to stay in touch at his teacher's house. After agreeing to celebrate Eid with his friends, he contacted his teacher via WhatsApp, so that the dialogue excerpt below occurred. Starting with a greeting, then the DA asked for the location of his teacher's house which was then replied with a map of the location of the house.



Image Source: Personal Documents

Figure 5. Chat Responders via WhatsApp

In the dialogue, the DA gave a sentence that was textually inconsistent with the teacher's statement. "*Come to your house first*", which seems to answer the teacher's question, even though he explains that he wants to go to the teacher's house, now the complexity of deaf language when

written seems to be the complexity of complexity caused by the long sentence structure. Even though in English it can be simpler "*to your home*" for example. So in general, after learning sign language and text, deaf people are more likely to use short and clear words.

Based on the results of interviews and analysis of texts written by people with hearing disabilities, it was found that the ability to use language structures is still limited, both in sentence structure, diction selection, and completeness of word forms. This phenomenon is evident in text-based communication through digital media such as *WhatsApp and Facebook*, where the resulting sentences tend not to follow the syntactic rules of Indonesian or conventional English.

These findings are in line with research on language acquisition in deaf individuals which shows that limited access to spoken language has a direct impact on the development of literacy and written language structure. Barriers in verbal communication cause deaf individuals to have difficulty understanding language receptively and expressively, so that the language acquisition process takes place differently than hearing individuals (Haliza, N., Kuntarto, E., & Kusmana, A. 2020). Furthermore, other research also shows that barriers in language access cause low mastery of grammar and sentence structure in deaf students, which has an impact on difficulties in composing sentences appropriately in written form (Fadilah, N., Wagino, & Sujarwanto. 2024). This reinforces that language acquisition pathways in deaf people are different and require a more adaptive learning approach.

From the perspective of translanguaging theory (Holcomb, L. 2023), deaf individuals do not rigidly separate sign language and written language, but rather use all linguistic resources they have in an integrated manner in the communication process. This explains why in their writings there are often unconventional structures, because there is a process of mixing visual and verbal language systems.

In addition, research (Lillo-Martin, D., & Hochgesang, J. A. 2022) shows that sign language has a complete linguistic system but is structurally different from spoken language. This difference is not a deficiency, but rather a variation of language influenced by *visual-gestural* modalities. Therefore, when deaf people transfer sign language into written form, structural inconsistencies often occur, such as reverse sentence arrangement or incomplete use of words.

The vocabulary limitations found in this study are also supported by previous studies (Septiawati, D., Suryani, N., & Widyastono, H. 2021)) which showed that lack of exposure to spoken language leads to low lexical variation and fluency in writing in deaf children. This has an impact on the unsystematization of sentence structure, as seen in the analyzed chat and social media data. In addition, low vocabulary proficiency also affects overall language skills, including in comprehending and structuring sentences systematically (Khotimah, K., & Pamuji, P. 2024).

Furthermore, research shows that vocabulary limitations are also related to low literacy skills, especially in understanding abstract meanings and complex sentence structures (Arnawa, N., Geria, A. A. G. A., Arsana, I. G. L. R., Liswahyuningsih, N. L. G., & Permanamiarta, P. A. 2022). This causes sentences produced by deaf people to often not conform to the applicable syntactic rules. In fact, in some cases, deaf children are only able to produce simple sentences with a limited structure and do not fully understand the meaning of the words used (Rizkya, S., & Wahyudi, F. 2020).

From the point of view of cognitive theory, deaf individuals rely more on visual processing in understanding language (Herdian, M. A. N., Anatasya, S., Wahyu, W., Nur, S. A., & Hamidah, S. 2024). Research shows that sign language processing can directly aid with word recognition in written form, especially if the information is presented visually and concretely. This explains why it is easier for deaf people to understand the structure of simple and concrete word-based English than the complex and plural Indonesian language. This indicates that deaf people tend to understand concrete concepts more easily than abstract ones

Furthermore, the concept that written language is not a naturally acquired system, but rather through explicit learning, further reinforces the finding that deaf individuals need special learning strategies. In contrast to hearing individuals who can take advantage of the relationship between sound and letters (phonology), deaf people experience limitations in accessing the phonological aspects of language so that the process of reading and writing becomes more complex. Research shows that reading and writing skills in the deaf are more complex abilities because they are not optimally supported by listening and speaking skills as the basis for language acquisition (Rofiah, K. 2017). Other findings also show that the development of deaf literacy is highly dependent on explicit and visual-based learning strategies, such as the integration of sign language and visual media to help understand the meaning of written language (Septiawati, M. 2024).

Thus, the results of this study reinforce that the difficulty of language structure in the deaf is not solely caused by individual limitations, but by the difference in linguistic systems between sign language and verbal language. Therefore, language learning for the deaf needs to be designed adaptively by integrating visual approaches, structural simplification, and bilingual strategies that accommodate sign language characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been presented, it can be seen that deaf sign language does not have structural rules like verbal language. So that textual communication through WhatsApp is more appropriate to find out the ability to compile the

structure of Indonesian and English language carried out by the deaf. From this communication, it can be concluded that deaf people are easier and more effective in understanding very simple English words and rules than the Indonesian words and rules that are affixed.

Based on the conclusion of the above research, the researcher provides recommendations for consideration by the government and government and private agencies in Metro cities in the implementation of the mandate of the Law on Persons with Disabilities number 8 of 2016. In order to realize the mandate of the law, this study recommends:

1. UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung as the only public campus in Metro City needs to recruit lecturers who have extraordinary educational qualifications. This is done to provide special education services individually in urgent circumstances.
2. The government as a *policy maker* needs to support the implementation of inclusive education in Islamic religious universities by making clear regulations. In addition, financial support is also very much needed to develop a comprehensive inclusive education system.

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