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## Fall 2022 Volume XIII Issue 6(62)

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### Interpersonal Communication Between Sign Language Interpreters as Tour Guides and Deaf Tourists in Indonesia

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#### Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to determine the process and communication barriers between tour guides and deaf tourists and the motives behind them becoming special guides for deaf tourists. This research used the theory of communication patterns, interpersonal communication, communication for deaf people, and tour guide. The method used in this research was the constructivism paradigm with a qualitative research approach. This research used the case study research method. The research subjects were ten sign language interpreters as tour guides domiciled in Jakarta. The results showed that the communication pattern between "heard" or "deaf" tour guides with "deaf" tourists needed to start with vocabulary adjustments - decoding and encoding - because the sign language that developed in each tourist area of origin was different. After adjusting the vocabulary, the interpersonal communication pattern could be circular or two-way. The motives to become a tour guide as deaf tourists were divided into three: the motive of knowledge, the motive of the social network, and sign language attraction. Meanwhile, communication barriers during the tour guiding process were differences in vocabulary, lack of international signaling skills, and English ability.

Keywords: tour guide; sign language interpreter; deaf tourist.

JEL Classsification: L83; L84; Z32.

#### Introduction

Communication plays a role in all aspects of human life, including in the context of tourism (Mansur *et al.* 2021a). Important aspects of communication from the tourism context start from destination marketing, conveying the philosophical meaning of a tourist object/destination until the opinion is formed from hospitality. All of them can work optimally through good tourism communication. For normal humans without physical disabilities, traveling will be an activity that is highly desirable and easy to do. But for humans with physical limitations or disabilities, traveling is an activity that is difficult to do and generally requires special needs. One of the disabilities that require special treatment is deaf people. The deafness problem in the world reaches 360 million or 5.3 percent of

the world's population. Half of the deaf people worldwide or 180 million people are in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is in fourth place after Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and India. According to data, the birth rate in Indonesia that can experience severe hearing loss is around 13 thousand out of 250 million Indonesians (Jawa Pos 2016).

A Deaf is someone who experiences a deficiency or loss of the ability to hear appropriately or partially or entirely due to the failure of some parts or all of the hearing senses (Barnet 2002). The term deafness (Deaf) refers to a condition in which a person cannot hear, while the term hard of hearing refers to all terms of hearing loss. Deafness is defined in three categories, the first is the level of deafness, the type of deafness, and the age when deafness occurs (Lintangsari 2014). Physically, deaf people are the same as other hearing people in general, because people will know that they are deaf when talking. Deaf people speak silently or in a less or less articulated voice. They may not even speak at all and are only using gestures. The deaf disability makes it difficult for deaf people and it even makes them unable to communicate with the surrounding environment and do their activities freely like traveling. Deaf people can also have difficulty receiving information about tourist objects.

The concept of disability-friendly tourism or accessible tourism has been introduced by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), United Nations, and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT). The Indonesian government also pays attention to the concept of accessible tourism as stated in article 5 of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning the right of people with disabilities to get access to tourism. This awareness has been accompanied by the emergence of travel agents that provide tour guides and facilities for people with disabilities. In Indonesia, there are not many tour guides available who can guide people with disabilities traveling, especially for deaf people who need a tour guide as a sign language interpreter. Therefore, most of the function of tour guides for deaf people is carried out by a sign language interpreter who can communicate with deaf people. Interpreters in Indonesia, especially in the area of Jabodetabek (Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang- Bekasi), are members of several communities, including the Movement for Welfare Deaf Indonesia (GERKATIN) and the Sign Language Interpreter Service Center (PLJBI). Movement for Welfare Deaf Indonesia (GERKATIN) members are entirely deaf people. Meanwhile, members at Sign Language Interpreter Service Center (PLJBI) consist of deaf and ordinary people studying or already could communicate by using sign language. But both GERKATIN and PLJBI have something in common, namely helping deaf people to stay connected to other ordinary people. Most sign language interpreters translate in formal and informal events, but many sign language interpreters can guide deaf people on trips like a tour guide. Through the exchange of meanings in sign language between tour guides/interpreters and deaf people, researchers were interested in examining: Communication patterns, motives, and self-awareness of sign language interpreters as tour guides for deaf tourists in the area of Jabodetabek (Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang- Bekasi).

Tourism has become one of the world's largest and most dynamic industrial sectors in Indonesia (Han and Hyun 2015; Klimkiewicz and Oltra 2017; Novokreshchenova *et al.* 2016; Hailuddin *et al.* 2022). In this growing industry, the number of people involved globally is increasing. Tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has provided clear evidence that the industry will continue to thrive. Buhalis and Costa (2006) noted only 25 million international arrivals registered in 1950, the number continued to increase to 700 million during the turn of the century; This phenomenon generates a large proportion of the Gross Domestic Product in most countries of the world. Today, in Indonesia tourism is a vital sector to bring foreign tourists and increase accessible jobs. According to Minister of Tourism Arief Yahya, Indonesian tourism is considered advantageous in terms of destination and price (Briandana *et al.* 2018).

The development in the tourism industry has been recorded since 1950, and the development is based on two things; factors that lead to growth in demand and positive changes in market supply and availability that facilitate industrial growth (Gartner and Bachri 1994). The first factor for tourism progress is influenced and supported by growth in terms of demanding market and is built on the improvement of the standard of living of the world population, reducing barriers from marketing and growth of global free trade, the emergence of the phenomenon of globalization and transnational enterprises, population growth, language skill improvement, industrial growth on information and technology, world peace, professional growth and an association community who share the same profession, hobby, and interest. One of the increasingly developing professions due to the tourism sector is a tour guide. A tour guide is a person who stands at the forefront, who acts as a communicator between tourist and tourist object, between tourist and the community, between tourist and company/travel agent, and between tourists with all their needs and complaints. In addition, the tour guide acts as a translator of the provisions applied in a tourist attraction, as an explanation of all aspects of a tourist attraction, and a guide in tourism activities, such as tracing caves, entering the protected forest, and so on.

#### 1. Literature Review

#### 1.1. Interpersonal Communication

Through interpersonal communication, this communication process takes place. Interpersonal communication is communication between people face-to-face, which allows each participant to capture other people's reactions directly, either verbally or non-verbally (Mansur *et al.* 2021b; Wood 2013). Through conveying the message, each person can interpret the message with several different assumptions. According to Bucata and Rizescu (2017) in communication, there are two general forms of action taken by people involved in communication, namely the creation and interpretation of the message. Febrianita and Hardjati (2019) define interpersonal skill as an umbrella term. This term refers to "goal-directed behavior, including communication and relationship-building competencies, employed in interpersonal interaction episodes characterized by complex perceptual and cognitive processes, dynamic verbal and nonverbal interaction exchanges, diverse roles, motivations, and expectations" (Febrianita and Hardjati 2019). Studies also indicate that effective interpersonal communication. Okoro *et al.* (2017) state that sound interpersonal communication skills would aid business executives in presenting and explaining information, including negotiating successfully with counterparts.

#### 1.2. Deaf

Deaf people have lost all of their hearing power so they are difficult to communicate verbally. Even though they have been given help with hearing aids, they still need special educational services (Heineman-Gosschalk and Webster 2003). Deaf and hard of hearing people communicate in different ways. They need special media to be able to understand the content of the communication message. Here are various communication media that can be used (1) For deaf people who can speak, continue to use speech as a media and read the speech as a media for receiving deaf people; (2) Using written and reading media as a media of acceptance; (3) Using gesture and sign as the media (Alsa *et al.* 2021).

#### 1.3. Tour Guide

A tour guide is defined as anyone who leads an organized group for a short or long period. The tour guide's duties have several specifications depending on the task (according to the ability mastered). A special guide at a specific location is called a local guide who is usually a permanent officer at that location (for example museum, botanical garden, zoo, and others). Tour guides are frontline employees in the tourism industry who play an important role in shaping tourists' experience in a destination (Huang *et al.* 2010). Tour-guiding service is the core component of various tour services offered by tour operators. The tour guide's ability to deliver good quality service to tourists is not only essential to the success of the business of the tour operators they are affiliated with but also critical to the overall image of the destination they represent (Huang *et al.* 2010). According to the Regional Representative Council of the Indonesia Tourist Guide Association of Banten Province, tour guides can be grouped according to the following points of view:

1.**Transfer Guide**: A tourist guide whose activities are to pick up tourists at the airport, seaport, station, or terminal to the hotel or vice versa or take tourists from one hotel to another hotel.

2. Walking Guide/Tour Guide: A tour guide whose activity is to guide tourists on a tour.

3.Local/Expert Guide: A tour guide whose activities are specifically guided tourists to certain tourist objects or transactions, for example, museums, agro-tourism, river rafting, cave, historical building, and others.

4.Common Guide: Is a tour guide who can carry out activities both transfer and tour.

5.**Driver Guide:** Is a driver who also acts as a guide. The task is escorting tourists to the wanted tourist object or attraction and providing the necessary information. It is not uncommon for a driver's tour guide to come down to the object to explain the object if there is no local guide. Sometimes the driver also accompanies the tourist when shopping or eating. So, the driver guide performs two functions, namely as a driver and a guide.

#### 2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach. This research applied a qualitative approach. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning that some individuals or groups consider a social or humanitarian problem. Qualitative research will also be more specifically built on theory development, which is a collaboration of specific theories (Gioia *et al.* 2012). Qualitative analysis was also chosen to use in this research because of the need to explore and explain phenomena and develop theories. The research method used was a case study. The research subjects selected

in this study were 10 tour guides in Jakarta who have mastered international signal language for deaf people). The data collection techniques used in this study were as follows: In-depth Interview, Observation, Document Study, and Literature Study. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, field observation, and document study. Haryati (2019) explained that data validity checking techniques include three concurrent activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (verification). Then to determine the validity of the data, the researchers conducted triangulation of the source. The triangulation processes were (1) comparing the observed data with the interview data (2) comparing the consistency of the informants' answers, namely by comparing what the informants say in public with what is said personally (3) comparing someone's perspective with others on his work team (Erlita 2019; Mulyana *et al.* 2022).

#### 3. Result and Discussion

Through communication, humans can get useful information for life, especially in a social context; communication becomes a process that can connect one individual to another. Indirectly, communication will always process and accompany human life. For ordinary people, communication can be carried out relatively without obstacles. However, it is different for individuals who have disabilities both physically and mentally, of course, it will affect their communication process. One of the disabilities that makes it difficult for a person to communicate is deaf. The results of this study were obtained from in-depth interviews with research subjects, field notes, and several articles written by the research subjects. From the data that were collected and analyzed, the researcher then found four things that could explain the use of the term 'deaf', some differences in the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO), the meanings and motives of being a tour guide for deaf people, barriers, as well as guide communication pattern and deaf tourist.

#### 3.1. The Use of the term 'Deaf' or 'Hearing impairment'

Until now, many people still use the term 'hearing impairment' to describe people with hearing disabilities, but it is wrong. According to the deaf activist, Adhi Kusuma Bharotorres, one form of discrimination can be seen from many parties who still use the word 'hearing impairment'. "Normal people think the word 'hearing impairment' is a good term, and most of my friends think that the word 'hearing impairment' is better than 'deaf'. However, the message of the word 'hearing impairment' is still based on the feeling of pity, so that term arises from the medical term which assumes that there is a relationship of physical damage because the word 'hearing impairment' contains a literal meaning of impairment and damage" (Lane 2005). The use of the word 'hearing impairment' sets deaf people apart from normal people. However, this awareness is still not understood by the general public, even media crews also often report them by using the term 'hearing impairment'. The results of the study were also supported by informants, both deaf and sign interpreters, to provide correction for not using the term hearing impairment. Through one of his profiles on Kompasiana.com, one of the informants explained: "They prefer to be expressed by using the term "deaf" because it doesn't make them feel "disabled". Oh yeah, if someone thinks that deafness is stupid, that person doesn't understand the nature of the creation of humans by God, there must be advantages and disadvantages. Deaf has the same brainpower as normal people, only what is different is how to fill it. We who are normal can hear and see, so all information can be absorbed in the brain (Gomez-Pinilla 2008).

Hearing impairment informants chose to use the term deaf because they felt like they had their own identity, language, ability, and culture. Meanwhile, the use of the term deaf is considered more appropriate as a medical term or medical language which means ear damage. Consequently, hearing impairment is physical damage, so it needs to be repaired, treated, and cured by all means so they are called truly "normal" people in general. Meanwhile, deaf means unable to hear. That is the real identity from childhood, not made. The use of the term deaf unconsciously or unconsciously shows that deafness is a disease, and it is an "abnormality," so they think that they (deaf people) need compassion and help. This view is generated when using the term deaf to them. The word 'impairment', which means 'inability', is incorrect because they only have trouble in communication. But physically and their way of thinking is normal like other people in general. In addition, deaf people consider the term "deaf" to be the identity and culture of their community. Therefore, they feel happier and honored to be called deaf than the hearing impaired (Munoz-Baell and Ruiz 2000).

#### 3.2. The Meaning of Interpersonal Communication for Sign Language Interpreter as Tour Guide

Deaf people generally have no physical difference from normal people, but they will see the difference when they start communicating. Deaf people cannot hear or can hear the other person only for a little. This makes it difficult for them to communicate. Especially for people who are born deaf, usually can't speak because they don't know the word since birth. Difficulty in communicating ultimately makes deaf people lack information. As a result, some

of them feel inferior. But actually, they are still able to speak, but in a different form. If normal people use verbal language when communicating, then deaf people use non-verbal language. The non-verbal forms used are sign language and sometimes body gestures. The need for communication using sign language is the key for deaf people to communicate, but unfortunately, not all normal people can use sign language. Sign language prioritizes body language, lip movement, and manual communication and does not prioritize voice. The form of sign language for deaf people is more of a combination of the shapes and movements of the hand, arms, body, and facial expressions, all of which are used to express what they are thinking. Therefore, as a tour guide who deals with special needs (deaf) tourists, Sign language communication skills are needed to build interpersonal communication (Musselmanv and Akamatsu 1999).

#### 3.3. Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO)

In the application of sign language in Indonesia, there were two types of sign language for deaf people, namely the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO). Even though both were used, some differences were why deaf people used Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) more. Not only deaf people, but the sign language interpreters who carry out their function as tour guides also used Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO). Informants who use Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) have some reasons, namely:

1. More expressive and the concepts facilitate communication.

2.The Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) is made by normal people and does not involve deaf people to examine sign language. Meanwhile, the original Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) was made by deaf seniors by always discussing it first, and researching the original sign language. Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) was made or born for deaf people to interact with each other. Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) is a sign language that is designed to suit normal / hearing people.

3.SIBI has a longer sentence than Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO). For the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI), for example, "I have eaten" but at BISINDO it becomes "I have eaten already". So, if SIBI is like Indonesian with a Subject, Predicate, and Object structure.

4.Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) is a sign language that is mostly taken from the American Sign language, which was created by hearing or normal researchers, not native deaf researchers. Meanwhile, Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) is a sign language that is mostly used by native deaf people naturally, not made by hearing or normal people."

Other informants as ordinary people and research subjects revealed the following details:

"is comfortable or not, I cannot choose because I only can use Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO). If we talk about language, in my opinion, Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) is a language. This means that the process of forming vocabulary, structure, and meaning occurs naturally because in Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) there are arbitrary elements that are found in the natural formation of language. What needs to be paid attention also is the nature of language. Language is not something that is made, but something that arises and develops by itself as long as users of that language are still using it. What is documented in a dictionary, for example, is the vocabulary developed in the community. Thus, it is not surprising that there are dictionary updates from time to time as languages develop, new vocabularies, and some are no longer used. When talking about the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI), what I understand is that the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) is not a language, but a sign system based on Indonesia Language. Because it is based on Indonesia Language, it means that the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) is not a sign language - the modalities are visual, gestural, and spatial. Indonesia Language, the spoken language, is conveyed with different modalities, namely audio and oral. So, the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) is not a sign language."

From the answers of the speakers above, interpreters and tour guides clarified using Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) not only because it is widely used by deaf people, but also because Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) is a language, which means that the process of forming vocabulary, structure, meaning occurs naturally. Besides, in the formation of language, language naturally occurs more that arises and develops by itself as long as the language used is still using it because growth needs to be documented in a dictionary. Moreover, Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) is the language that was most used by deaf people, it could be felt more appropriate because it was made by native deaf people so it developed naturally, not as a language made by normal / hearing people. In short, it can be concluded that the difference is as in the following picture.



Figure 1. Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO)

#### 3.4. The Meaning of Interpersonal Communication

The meaning of interpersonal communication for a tour guide when interacting with deaf tourists is generally divided into:

- 1. Have new friend
- 2. learn sign language
- 3. Learn other cultures
- 4. Togetherness with deaf peers to be able to progress or develop themselves

5. A form of equality and fair information because the interaction is complete without any inequality/discrimination in the report.

#### 3.5. Motives to Become a Tour Guide for Deaf Tourists

Not many travel agencies provide a sign-language tour guide in Indonesia. Therefore the guide function for deaf tourists is carried out by interpreters or sign language interpreters. Besides helping local tourists, the tour guide as a sign language interpreter also helps foreign tourists from various countries. During guiding this tour, of course, there were differences between local and foreign tourists. The difference was the sign language used by each tourist. Even though international signals exist, not all deaf foreign tourists can use them. Therefore, usually, Deaf friends use international sign language in international meetings. However, international sign language is less complex than natural sign language and has a limited lexicon (Sandi 2020). Besides differences in sign language, the level of hearing impairment may also affect the ongoing communication process including communication between tour guides and deaf tourists.

In general, the researchers found several motives for the informants to be tour guides for deaf tourists, namely:

1. The tour guide has the motive of knowledge in guiding deaf tourists to want to receive information or knowledge such as learning international sign language and English language and obtaining information about the global deaf system. There are also tour guides who want to provide information or knowledge about history, tourist attractions, and Indonesia

2. Tour guides have the motive of social networks in guiding deaf tourists because they want to build a network of friends and want to be guided by them when they visit their home countries.

3. Tour guides have the motive of sign language attraction in guiding deaf tourists because they start with an interest in language and consider sign language to be unique and fun. There are even tour guides who intend to become language researchers. Informants only possess this motive with "hearing" or normal status.

#### 3.6. Process and Communication Barriers Between Tour Guides and Deaf Tourists

Generally, communication barriers may be encountered in the communication process, as well as communicating with people who have a hearing impairment. A frequent obstacle in the communication process is the difficulty in using the international signal. The obstacle experienced by informants when communicating and guiding tours is the difficulty in using international signals, especially when dealing with deaf foreign tourists. The main difficulty is due to vocabulary differences in different visual gestures. The process of communication between the deaf tour guide or normal tour guide with deaf tourists gradually as follows:

1. When communicators send messages to communicants, namely deaf tourists, communication barriers occur due to differences in sign language in each region or country of the tourist. A tentative vocabulary adjustment was made for each informant to overcome this obstacle.

2. This adjustment process takes place using various methods such as gesture, fingerspelling, use of the international or English alphabet, reading lips, writing, choosing easy vocabulary, and technological sophistication.

3.After the adjustment process is complete, communication between the deaf or normal tour guide with deaf tourists can go both ways. Here communication takes place to give feedback which is called the Cyclical Communication Pattern.

In general, it can be illustrated in the following figure



Figure 2. Process and communication barriers between tour guides and deaf tourists

#### Conclusion

This study concluded four things: first, informants, especially people with hearing impairment, preferred to use and be called 'deaf' than 'hearing impairment'. This was because the word 'impairment in the term hearing impairment means inability or damage. For deaf people, it was not appropriate because they only have trouble communicating. In addition, the term "deaf" was also considered to the identity and culture of their community. Therefore, they felt happier and honored to be called deaf than hearing impaired. Second, there was two sign language used in Indonesia, namely, the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO). However, both of them have differences. Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) was made by people who "hear" or normal people were taken from American sign language. The structure was subject, predicate, and object. There was an assumption that the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) was not a sign language but only a system based on Indonesia Language, which was then processed visually. Meanwhile, Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) was made by native deaf people and was easier to express by deaf people. The structure was subject, object, and predicate. Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) was considered a language because it has arbitrator elements. All informants were more comfortable using Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) than the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI). Third, the guides had several motives, including the motive of knowledge, social networks, and sign language attraction. Fourth, the communication barriers felt by the informants were differences in vocabulary, lack of international sign skills, and lack of English language skills. Based on the results of research and analysis, the researchers recommend the following things:

1. The role of the government is very important to create a disability-friendly Indonesia in many aspects, especially in tourism. The government also has a big role in encouraging awareness about accessible tourism for tourism industry players and the creative economy to provide access for tourists with disabilities, especially deaf people.

2. The potential of accessible tourism, especially for deaf tourists, should be identified by the tourism industry and the creative economy

3.It is hoped that sign language interpreters can develop themselves to learn other signs besides the Indonesian Signal System (SIBI) and Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO). Some of the signs that may be studied further are International Sign Language and American Sign Language. Before that, the sign language interpreters are also expected to learn the English language more to make it easier for them to do spelling fingers when the communication process experiences problems.

4. The negative stigma against people with disability, especially deaf people, should be removed.

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