



---

## Analysis of Symbolic Interaction between Teachers and Deaf Students: Opportunities and Inhibiting Factors

Rani Ika Wijayanti<sup>1</sup>, Eneng Tika Rostika<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This Study delves into the intricate realm of symbolic interactions between teachers and deaf students at SLB Laskar Putra Mandiri Darma-Indonesia, aiming to comprehend the dynamics during the learning process through verbal and non-verbal communication. Employing a purposive sampling technique with a snowball sampling approach, the study uncovers the keys to symbolic interaction encompassing the mind, self, and society. The classification of these keys reveals discernible opportunities and inhibiting factors that significantly impact the success of symbolic interactions. Through interviews and observations, the research not only unravels the complexities of these interactions but also provides recommendations. Educators and institutions are urged to create inclusive environments, offering targeted training programs to enhance teacher proficiency in facilitating effective interactions with deaf students. Identifying and mitigating inhibiting factors, such as communication barriers, emerges as a crucial step toward fostering successful symbolic interactions within the special education context, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive educational landscape.

**Keywords:** *Symbolic interaction, Teacher, Deaf student*

### A. Introduction

Education is the main need for every individual guaranteed by the state. This is stated in the 1945 Constitution article 31 Paragraph (1) which reads, "Every citizen has the right to education" (Zaitun 2017). In line with this, Children with Special Needs (ABK) who have obstacles in their growth and development also need special education. Children have deficiencies both physically and mentally which make them different from children who are born normally (Atmaja 2018).

SLB Laskar Putra Mandiri Darma is located in Kuningan Regency, West Java Province. This school has students who are deaf, mentally retarded, quadriplegic and autism. Students with hearing impairments have limited communication compared to students with other disabilities. Deafness is a condition where a person is less able to hear (Widjaya 2015). Deaf children have unique characteristics in terms of language and speech. They are less able to communicate verbally because they have limitations in hearing. Language and speech processes are closely related to hearing acuity. So that deaf children have difficulty interpreting figurative words that are abstract and lack vocabulary (Haenudin 2013).

---

<sup>1</sup> IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Jl. Perjuangan By Pass Sunyaragi, Kota Cirebon, Indonesia, [ranwij@syekhnurjati.ac.id](mailto:ranwij@syekhnurjati.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Jl. Perjuangan By Pass Sunyaragi, Kota Cirebon, Indonesia

Humans are social beings who live together in a certain scope. Teachers and students experience a process of social interaction together in special schools. They carry out daily activities at school regularly and continuously for a certain period of time so that they are able to communicate using certain symbols.

The way children with special needs communicate is of course different from normal children. To obtain an optimal communication process, the teacher must develop a curriculum which certainly considers certain components in communicating.

According to Wilbur Schramm (Yohana and Saifulloh 2019) basically, what must be considered in the communication process must consist of five elements: 1) Source. Sources are individuals who need interaction and communication. Within the scope of this research the source of communication arises from the interaction and communication needs of teachers and students. Students who are classified as ABK need guidance from teachers in SLB in order to gain useful knowledge. 2) Order. Typical verbal and non-verbal symbols, can stand alone or be put together and conveyed by the communicator to the communicant. In the communication process between teachers and deaf students, the messages sent are different from the communication process in general. Messages conveyed by ABK can only be in the form of writing, pictures, gestures, gestures and other visual symbols. Especially for messages in the form of audio, it is very minimal or even cannot be conveyed at all. 3) Destinations. Someone whose role is to receive, understand and interpret messages. The communicant in the communication process with ABK responds to messages using verbal and non-verbal forms which are also limited in audio form. 4) Encoding. A data processing process internally within the communicator. The communicator composes messages consisting of verbal and non-verbal symbols which are carried out in a structured manner so as to produce output in the form of words, sentences, symbols and cues. 5) Decoding. An acceptance process followed by data processing internally within the communicant. This received message becomes a stimulus received by the five senses. Then the message is processed again by combining the knowledge and experience possessed by the communicant so that it can enter the stage of giving meaning and changing behavior.

In the process of communication between teachers and deaf students, symbolic interaction is needed. The purpose of symbolic interaction is the effectiveness of conveying messages, especially learning materials verbally and nonverbally. The learning method for deaf students is different from the learning methods for other students with disabilities. Teachers can use various methods such as: 1) Speechreading, a language learning technique by reading speech. This technique is easy to learn and useful for gesturing various non-language words or sounds. This technique will be more comprehensive when combined with the Code Speech technique by using hand signals, 2) Utilizing hearing aid technology or performing medical procedures to improve hearing ability, 3) Manual sign language. Students are taught to fully understand the basics of standard sign language.

George Herbert Mead put forward the main idea of the formation of meaning is the human mind (mind), self-concept (self) and relationships in society (society) which are carried out simultaneously when interacting (Elbadiansyah 2014). Symbolic interaction provides an explanation that humans use symbols, give meaning to symbols and act. According to Mead, the process of giving meaning in an interaction can lead to communication (Rahman and Purnomo 2020). Individual actions when interacting are not only seen as a response to the message, but rather the result of translation and giving meaning back to the message itself (Elbadiansyah 2014).

According to John Dewey (Derung 2017), symbolic interaction is about thoughts. The human soul is reflected in his mind, so the human mind reflects his soul. Humans actively make selections for whatever things they face. The results of this selection will then be dynamically adapted to follow his own development. Humans can choose and sort out what images they can display through the way they interact with their environment.

Social interaction that occurs in society is the result of symbolic interactions, or in other words, humans exchange the symbols they have. Human social life is influenced by factors such as the use of language, social interaction and education. Charles Cooley said that individuals who are members of a community group are a single entity. The individual is a reflection of society. These individuals establish relationships with others so that they get a response according to their behavior. If someone establishes a positive relationship, then that individual will also get a positive response and vice versa (Derung 2017).

Seeing from Blumer's explanation regarding symbolic interaction, this theory is built on the premise that: 1) Humans take action according to the meaning of "something" according to their understanding, 2) The origin of the meaning of "something" arises because of interaction, 3) Humans perfect meaning through the process of interpretation when interacting (Maghfira and Mahadian 2018). The communication process carried out by teachers and deaf students can occur when teaching and learning activities are taking place. The teacher sends a message which will then be interpreted by the students. Students will respond to the message and will be "returned" to the teacher according to their respective abilities.

For this reason, this research was conducted with the hope that researchers could find out the process of symbolic interaction in the learning process carried out by accompanying teachers of deaf students with deaf students themselves. In addition, researchers also want to know what are the supporting factors and inhibiting factors that influence the success of the symbolic interaction process carried out.

## **B. Methods**

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method. The qualitative method is a series of research stages that have an output in the form of descriptive data in the form of written or spoken sentences from observing someone's behavior (Moleong 2016). In essence, qualitative research aims to explore the depth of the data by using interview techniques, field observations and literature studies.

The data sources that the researchers used consisted of primary data sources, namely teachers accompanying deaf students. Then the secondary data that researchers use are literature studies that can be obtained from books, scientific journals, the internet and other reference sources that can complement this research. Primary data sources of the research were obtained through in-depth interview techniques with teachers accompanying deaf students and observation activities while the learning process was taking place at the SLB Laskar Putra Mandiri Darma-Indonesia.

The technique for determining informants in this study was purposive sampling with a snowball sampling approach, because informants were considered to have a close and specific relationship with certain criteria. Then, the snowball sampling approach is an approach to determine key informants who are considered capable of providing a complete explanation (Nurdiani 2014). The criteria referred to are activities at the SLB Laskar Putra Mandiri Darma, understanding the needs of deaf students, and understanding and being able to communicate with

special speech techniques for children with hearing impairments. In addition, researchers also determine supporting informants such as the principal and parents of students.

In the process, this study uses the data reduction model of Miles and Huberman because researchers can reduce less important data and can focus research on main data. The data obtained during the research will then be displayed in the form of a textual narrative followed up by verification and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono 2014).

### **C. Findings and Discussion**

From the results found in the field when conducting research, researchers obtained information related to symbolic interactions carried out by teachers during the learning process. In the learning process carried out, the teacher communicates verbally and nonverbally to convey learning material. In order for the communication process between the teacher and the deaf students to be minimal, the teacher is expected to have sign language skills.

*“Hmm..in principle we are always open to anyone who wants to serve here. Due to the limited number of teachers who are suitable for teaching ABK, and when I was in college majoring in Special Education it was just me and Mr. Firman. In fact, when this school was first established, I tried to invite colleagues who were willing and ready to teach ABK children. (Resp-1, interview, 3 May 2023).*

The intensity of communication between teachers and deaf students is quite intense and is carried out continuously while supervising the activities carried out by these students.

*“In school, there must be communication. There is also no barrier between teachers and students. Moreover, the crew members need to be supervised at all times.” (Resp-1, interview, 3 May 2023).*

Communication as a medium for transmitting messages between communicators and communicants. The message conveyed in verbal communication is a message that has a denotative meaning which means conveying the meaning explicitly based on the literal meaning. It is also supported by the existence of nonverbal communication as a means of conveying connotative meanings that are seen implicitly and may have a different meaning from the verbal message (Kusumawati 2016). Even though teaching deaf students, teachers at school still use verbal communication in the learning process. Verbal communication is not only done in class but also on other occasions outside of class during recess, or just to communicate in general. Such as the data that researchers found when observing and conducting interviews

*“Yes, we still use verbal communication, but yes, if needed, we also use hand signs” (Resp-2, interview, 3 May 2023).*

From the results of the interviews it can be seen that there is always a communication process carried out by the teacher as well as to supervise student activities. Communication can be in the form of verbal and nonverbal communication so that students can understand the message conveyed

*“I communicate every day because I teach here every day. The communication is yes, I sometimes give orders to communicate with other teachers using sign language because using vocals is not clear. So, there are 2 types of sign language, BISINDO and SIBI. But what is taught here is only SIBI because that is what is usually used” (Resp-2, interview, 3 May 2023).*

The main language used in the learning process is Indonesian because there is translation into sign language. Companion teachers sometimes also teach the local language, namely Sundanese, to students, but this is not the main lesson

*"We prioritize using Indonesian. SIBI's sign language is also Indonesian, right? There isn't a Sundanese language dictionary yet. For example, if I teach one Indonesian word, for example "mata", if you understand it, then I teach Sundanese for eyes, it means "panon" (Resp-3, interview, 3 May 2023).*

The results of field observations made, the use of verbal communication in the form of writing was carried out at the beginning of learning. The teacher provides an introduction to what material the deaf students will learn in class by writing on the blackboard. This can help make it easier for deaf students to understand the material. However, not all material can be explained in writing, especially for subjects that require practicum. The teacher must guide by combining it with non-verbal communication.

*"Usually use sign language, but I personally still use verbal teaching. I can judge each student's ability by how well they pronounce the letters. For example, if a student can pronounce the letter A, I will mark if he can. But yes, there are times when you use sign language too. So not everything is verbal or not all are signs" (Resp-3, interview, 3 May 2023)*

In line with the above, parents of deaf students also provide learning media with various types that can support the improvement of the abilities of deaf students. So that understanding of the material at school is not lost when at home. Parents also provide hearing aids to maximize learning methods. But for reasons of discomfort, students often take it off.

*"If she wants to study, we give properties, such as picture books. For sign language, that's for sure, only her mother can do it" (Dede, interview, 4 May 2023)*

*"Yes, I bought a hearing aid. But rarely used, he said, makes earaches and uncomfortable" (Resp-4, interview, 4 May 2023)*

The form of communication carried out by the accompanying teacher to deaf students is adjusted to the abilities of the students themselves. If students understand the message conveyed by the teacher, then these students can respond so that there is two-way communication. But if students do not understand the message conveyed, then the form of communication is only one way and no feedback is sent by students.

Forms of non-verbal communication using pictures are also used in the learning process. This is so that students who have difficulty reading writing can also understand the material provided. Teachers can combine writing, sign language and pictures as ways to learn. However, often the use of images as a form of non-verbal communication in learning is less than optimal

*"When I teach, I use writing and sign language. But slowly because using sign language. So when explaining material, sometimes it's one-way, sometimes it's two-way. depending on whether the child can respond or not. If the child does not understand, there will be no further response. But if you understand the child will respond so there is two-way communication. When teaching sometimes also use pictures. It's just that sometimes I don't have time to make pictures, so at least I don't go far from the lecture, I write using sign language" (Resp-3, interview, 3 May 2023).*

The school and teachers have tried to use audio-visual media as a means of conveying messages non-verbally. But this method is considered less effective due to several factors. Apart from the different hearing ability factors of deaf students, there are other factors such as the condition of facilities and infrastructure that do not yet support the use of audio-visual media.

*"Once I tried to use a headset with the highest volume but it didn't work. Then I was also afraid that if it was too loud it would even damage my hearing. Yes, most of the problems are because of the classroom. So you need a quiet classroom, then try the hearing test later. So this method is rarely used. But we have also tried it with visual media such as film screenings using Infocus. In the end, I also have to explain the contents after it's finished."* (**Resp-3**, interview, 3 May 2023).

Before carrying out the learning process, the teacher must prepare several technical matters to support the success of the learning process

*"Yes, of course. As for preparation before teaching, I first prepare lesson plans and others. But usually begins with an assessment first to the students. Assessment is the process of collecting data so that you know what the needs, weaknesses and potential of students are. So that we know what this child needs, what he needs to learn, so that later the teacher can develop it again. The teachers here are also ready to help if anyone needs it."* (**Resp-3**, interview, 3 May 2023).

To analyze the learning ability of deaf students, the teacher has a method to find out how far the students' ability to understand the lessons in class. The method is carried out from the most basic, such as trying to ask questions about the alphabet, words, sentences to paragraphs.

*"The first thing I did was with the basic material first. For example, for language skills, I will give letters first, now if you have mastered letters, you can move up to syllables. Syllables can go up into sentences. Sentences can just go up to paragraphs. Yes, something like that. For example, to study religion, the problem is that students have difficulty learning hijaiyah letters, such as letters that are difficult to pronounce. At least follow what he can, just go back to movement and get used to it"* (**Resp-3**, interview, 3 May 2023)

In addition to using learning methods with writing, pictures and using speech reading techniques, a method that can be used to minimize obstacles is to use hearing aids. To use hearing aids, it is necessary to carry out a medical examination in advance, which is adjusted to the conditions of each student. However, in field observations it was found that not all deaf students used hearing aids.

*"Students who have used hearing aids have already been examined. You have to be tested by an ENT doctor because you can't be careless. ABD has limits so that it is suitable for use by children. For example, the child has a minimum limit of 80 decibels, so that can be adjusted. I'm afraid that if given a high voice it will actually be damaged. So, as far as I know, out of the 6 children, 3 of them are using it, the rest haven't. It's just that sometimes it's used, sometimes it's not."* (**Resp-3**, interview, 3 May 2023)

To be able to communicate with their children, parents also learn sign language so that parents can still communicate. The urgency to understand sign language is carried out by parents to provide supervision and advice to their children because outside of school students experience quite pronounced environmental differences. This has an impact on the behavior of deaf students when they are at home. At home, not many other people can communicate in sign language like at school. Students became rather quiet and tried to communicate using writing on their

cellphones. So that students don't feel foreign, this is where the role of parents is in getting used to good habits that exist at school so that ABK still feel confident to communicate.

*"When it comes to communication at home, the response is good. She can communicate through writing on her cell phone even though sometimes it's not fluent" (Resp-4, interview, 4 May 2023)*

Verbal and non-verbal communication carried out by the teacher is very important to bridge the lack of students' communication skills at school. This study also found observations that apart from Indonesian being used as the main language, the use of sign language can also be a channel for sending messages. As explained above, the use of verbal and non-verbal communication symbols also experiences obstacles and also has its own opportunities. Regardless of this, each individual can communicate well through the symbols used.

According to the results of research in the field, the inhibiting factor in the process of sending messages is the inability of the ABK itself to hear. Because their hearing is less than normal until they are lost, they cannot imitate sounds so they have difficulty speaking normally. The next factor is the inadequate school facilities. Limited school conditions such as in one room must be shared with other students with special needs. Supporting facilities such as special education aids for deaf children are difficult to access. Then there are also other causes such as not all deaf students use hearing aids. So the process of delivering messages via audio to deaf students cannot be done.

While the opportunity factor that can be used by schools to support the success of the verbal and non-verbal communication process for deaf students is the motivation of the parties involved, namely the school, students and parents to learn. In addition, the school can try to cooperate with other parties in optimizing and providing the infrastructure used in the learning process. When viewed from the background of the educators in this school, it is quite good, even though not all teachers have an Special Education background, but the teachers are ready and alert to help each other when someone needs help in the learning process for students with daily needs.

### ***Symbolic Interaction of Teachers and Deaf Students***

According to Arisandi, the basic conception of symbolic interaction is the creation of a relationship that occurs naturally between humans and their environment and community groups with certain individuals (Derung 2017). The symbols that are mutually transmitted by teachers and deaf students include verbal symbols and nonverbal symbols that occur in schools. These symbols are exchanged during class time and outside the classroom during breaks or other activities. Verbal symbols can be in the form of interactions that occur in the classroom when the teacher teaches certain learning materials, the process of communicating using writing, pictures, and gestures, giving appreciation and advice for the development of student abilities. Nonverbal symbols that are often conveyed by teachers in classroom interactions include habituation of good behavior and courtesy to build noble character.

In the classroom, the teacher always pays attention to the abilities of the students. The abilities of students in this school vary depending on the limitations they have. However, all students are given a learning process that is more or less the same as getting used to saying sorry, please and thank you, saying greetings, starting and ending activities by praying, growing a sense of mutual love between friends. The data that the researchers found related to symbolic interactions can be seen at three levels, namely mind, self and society. This data is focused on

the interactions that occur between teachers and deaf students. Symbolic interaction is formed from the existence of meaning in human cognitive abilities (mind), about themselves (self) and their relations between social interactions and what goals are to be achieved with this interaction, and then these meanings are interpreted in the midst of certain social conditions where they carry out his daily activities.

### **1. Level Mind**

From the results of research at the mind level, researchers found that teachers have the ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally which is displayed in the form of using Indonesian and sign language that can be understood by deaf students. This process must be carried out continuously and simultaneously so that there is a common perception at the mind level so that they can communicate. The accompanying teacher uses Indonesian and sign language so that deaf students can understand the learning material. The teacher builds symbols in the form of letters of the alphabet, words and sentences in Indonesian which are then combined with hand sign language or Code Speech. If students understand the symbols given by the teacher, then the teacher will get various follow-up responses. This response can be in the form of head nods, expressions, hand movements, and sounds that indicate students understand the symbol. Likewise, when students are unable to understand, students are just silent, so that the teacher understands that this silent behavior can mean that the student does not understand.

### **2. Level self**

Self is a concept about developing one's own abilities by interpreting verbal and non-verbal symbols that have been carried out in the mind stage. At this level students are taught to form individuals who believe, fear Allah SWT and have good morals. The process of developing good personalities in students is not enough just with the learning process at school. This requires support from parents of students who always get used to good habits that exist at school so that they are carried out at home, so that students always remember and become accustomed to them.

The results found in the study are parents have an important role when at home. Parents are expected to be able to provide stimuli such as using sign language at home, providing learning aids at home, getting used to good behavior like what teachers do at school. One example of habituation of good behavior is then upheld by the child to become a value that he believes in. For example, when a teacher tries not to say hello when entering class, the child will remind you to say hello.

### **3. Level Society**

Relationships between individuals that fall within the scope of society in general. This relationship is created after students internalize the concepts in their minds and carry out habits that shape their personality. The result, is the behavior of students in society. This is inseparable from the teacher's interaction when in the same environment.

In this study, researchers tried to describe student behavior while at school and outside school. Student behavior is shown through behavior at school such as using sign language, communicating with teachers, communicating with friends and their behavior while studying in class. When outside of school, deaf students sometimes have different behavior from those at school.

Outside of school, these deaf students experience a different atmosphere than at school. If at school they feel comfortable because they are in an environment that is more or less in the same situation. This is also supported by the existence of teachers who are able to guide,

understand, and be able to communicate with them. So that they find it easier to interact with both teachers and peers. When at home, students can communicate with their parents. Indeed, sometimes not all parents like their fathers and mothers can speak sign language. There were differences in the behavior of deaf students when they were at home. There are those who still play with friends despite the language barrier. There are also students who are rather quiet, so they communicate more often by using writing written on paper or on their cellphones.

#### D. Conclusion

The process of verbal and non-verbal communication in the symbolic interaction of teachers and deaf students has an important role in honing students' abilities. The process of symbolic interaction at the mind level can help students to communicate using Indonesian and sign language, equalize perceptions, and respond to stimuli. Then at the self level, symbolic interaction becomes a process of internalizing messages into habits and behavior. It is hoped that deaf students can get used to the good behavior they get through the learning process with accompanying teachers at school when they are in a different environment. And the last is symbolic interaction at the society level. Deaf students are expected to be able to respond and behave according to the habits and culture of a more heterogeneous society. With the educational process at school, deaf students have the provision of knowledge that can bring benefits such as increased self-confidence to achieve achievements in a wider environment.

Factors supporting the success of the symbolic interaction of deaf students are the teacher's teaching ability at school and the process of repetition and habituation at home. While the inhibiting factors for the successful symbolic interaction of deaf students are the limitations of hearing itself, and the not yet optimal use of learning media in the form of audio and school infrastructure that needs to be improved.

#### References

- Atmaja, Jati Rinakri. 2018. *Pendidikan Dan Bimbingan Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Derung, Teresia Noiman. 2017. "Interaksionisme Simbolik Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat." *SAPA. Jurnal Kateketik Dan Pastoral* 2(1).
- Elbadiansyah, Umiarso. 2014. *Interaksionisme Simbolik Dari Era Klasik Hingga Modern*. Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Haenudin. 2013. *Pendidikan Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Tunarungu*. Jakarta: Luxima.
- Kusumawati, Tri Indah. 2016. "Komunikasi Verbal Dan Nonverbal." *Al Irsyad* 6(2). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30829/al-irsyad.v6i2.6618>.
- Maghfira, Tasya Aulia, and Adi Bayu Mahadian. 2018. "Interaksi Simbolik Pengajar Dan Siswa Di Komunitas Matahari Kecil." *Jurnal Komunikasi Global* 7(1):87–104. doi: 10.24815/jkg.v7i1.10540.
- Moleong, Lexy J. 2016. *Metodelogi Penelitian Kualitatif Edisi Revisi*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Nurdiani, Nina. 2014. "Teknik Sampling Snowball Dalam Penelitian Lapangan." *ComTech* 5(2).
- Rahman, Khafi Maulana, and Agustina M. Purnomo. 2020. "Penggunaan Simbol Pada Proses Interaksi Simbolik Siswa Use of Symbols in Symbolic Interaction Processes of Intellectual Disabilities Student and Teacher in Special." *Jurnal Komunikatio* 6:77–92.
- Sugiyono. 2014. *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Widjaya, Ardhi. 2015. *Memahami Anak Tunarungu*. Yogyakarta: Familia.
- Zaitun. 2017. *Pendidikan Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*. Pekanbaru: Kreasi Edukasi