

Research Article:

Silent Voices, Loud Learning: Exploring English Learning for The Deaf

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ABSTRACT

The importance of English as a global language cannot be overstated, serving as a crucial tool for communication, education, and professional development. Learning English presents a unique challenge for the Deaf community because of differences in language acquisition and reliance on visual learning aids such as sign language. This research explores the difficulties faced by the Deaf in learning English, identifies potential solutions, and examines the role of sign language in facilitating their language acquisition. This research involved a comprehensive survey and interview with a diverse, small group of the Deaf to gather in-depth insights into their learning experiences. Key findings indicate that while the Deaf recognise the importance of English, they encounter significant barriers, including limited access to appropriate resources and teaching methodologies that do not cater to their specific needs. Participants highlighted the need for more inclusive and visually-oriented teaching methods, the integration of sign language in English instruction, and the increased availability of specialised learning materials. By incorporating their feedback and leveraging the strengths of sign language, educators can enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction for the Deaf, thereby promoting greater inclusivity and academic success.

Keywords: Deaf, English language learning, sign language, *Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia* (BISINDO), American Sign Language (ASL)

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INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is crucial for individuals, as it serves as the foundation for communication, learning, and expressing thoughts and emotions. It enables people to share ideas, understand others, and interact effectively in various situations. According to Burhanuddin et al. (2020), language is an essential component of human existence. Without it, conveying feelings, seeking assistance, or building relationships would be significantly challenging. Moreover, language plays a fundamental role in education, as it facilitates knowledge acquisition, literacy development, and critical thinking skills.

Proficiency in language is particularly vital for effective learning. It allows individuals to articulate their understanding of a subject, making language an integral part of the educational process. Atar et al. (2021) note that individuals without disabilities generally acquire lifelong learning skills with relative ease. However, for individuals with impairments, particularly Deaf individuals, acquiring language and accessing education can be significantly more challenging. Deaf students often struggle to engage in contextual learning, which is readily available to their hearing peers. Their limited exposure to natural language acquisition affects their ability to gather knowledge from their surroundings, ultimately impacting their overall learning experience.

Cabreros (2020) further explains that while individuals without sensory impairments acquire language spontaneously, Deaf individuals experience a distinct and often delayed process of language acquisition. This delay has profound consequences on their communication skills, influencing both their academic performance and social cognition. Language development is essential in helping students adapt to academic environments. However, due to the delay in acquiring language, many deaf learners face difficulties in school, leading to noticeable gaps in their educational achievements. These challenges emphasise the importance of early and consistent language exposure for Deaf individuals, just as it is for their hearing counterparts.

The impact of delayed language acquisition is particularly evident in academic performance. Cabreros (2020) observed that 23 deaf students enrolled in the Associate in Computer Technology programme at a community college in Quezon Province, Philippines, encountered significant difficulties in their English courses. Many barely achieved passing grades, and those who did often relied on additional support from their instructors. While their hearing impairment was a major factor, the lack of adequate support services further contributed to their struggles, particularly in subjects that required strong language skills, such as English.

To effectively support Deaf learners, it is essential to thoroughly assess their unique needs, particularly their language acquisition process and proficiency in English. For Deaf individuals, language acquisition is not just about communication—it shapes how they interact with the world. Whether through sign language, written language, or spoken language with additional support, strong language skills enable them to participate more actively in society, access better opportunities, and improve their overall quality of life.

English, in particular, has become one of the most widely spoken languages worldwide. As noted by Rao (2019), English is commonly used in interpersonal interactions, business contexts, and academic institutions by both native and non-native speakers. Studies suggest that extensive exposure to English helps students master the four key language skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Cetinkaya & Sutcu, 2019; Darancik, 2018; Li & Hafner, 2022). When students are regularly immersed in English—whether through classroom instruction, social interactions, or digital platforms—they become more familiar with its structure, vocabulary, and natural flow. This continuous engagement builds confidence in their speaking and writing abilities, making communication more effortless over time. Therefore, fostering language acquisition in Deaf learners is not just a matter of academic success but a critical step toward their personal growth and social inclusion. This research will answer the following research questions:

1. How does delayed language acquisition affect the academic performance and social development of Deaf students?
2. What challenges do Deaf students face in learning English, and what support systems can enhance their language acquisition?

This research is significant as it sheds light on the unique challenges faced by Deaf students in acquiring language, particularly English. Language acquisition plays a crucial role in their academic success, social interactions, and overall cognitive development. By understanding the impact of delayed language exposure, educators and policymakers can develop more effective strategies to support deaf learners. Additionally, this study highlights the need for inclusive educational approaches, specialised teaching methods, and adequate support systems to bridge the language gap. The findings will contribute to improving language learning experiences for Deaf students, ensuring better educational outcomes and increased opportunities for personal and professional growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hearing loss is a significant global issue, affecting individuals across all regions and countries. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2024) defines hearing loss as a reduced ability to hear compared to someone with typical hearing, classified as having thresholds of 20 dB or better in both ears. Hearing loss varies in severity, ranging from mild to profound, and can affect one or both ears. Several factors contribute to hearing impairment, including congenital or early-onset paediatric hearing loss, chronic middle ear infections, noise-induced hearing loss, age-related hearing loss, and the use of ototoxic medications that damage the inner ear. According to WHO (2024), over 1.5 billion people—approximately 20% of the world's population—experience some degree of hearing loss, with 430 million individuals facing severe impairment. By 2050, the number of people with debilitating hearing loss is projected to surpass 700 million, highlighting the urgent need for early detection and intervention.

Hearing loss disproportionately affects low- and middle-income countries, where access to hearing aids and related support services is severely limited. WHO reports that the global production of hearing aids meets only 3% of the demand in these nations. The social and economic consequences of hearing impairment are profound, affecting communication, education, and employment opportunities. For children, hearing loss can delay language development, while older individuals may experience social isolation, loneliness, and frustration. Additionally, many regions lack adequate educational and workplace accommodations for individuals with hearing impairments, further limiting their academic and career prospects. In impoverished nations, children with hearing impairments often receive little to no formal education, exacerbating inequalities in access to opportunities.

Deafness, a severe form of hearing impairment, significantly affects an individual's ability to process auditory information for language comprehension, which in turn impacts academic performance (Birinci & Sariçoban, 2021). A major challenge among Deaf individuals is difficulty with writing, as their exposure to spoken and written language differs from that of hearing individuals. However, identity plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences of deaf individuals. According to Mc Cartney(2018), identity holds great significance within the d/Deaf community. The capitalisation of the word "Deaf" reflects cultural affiliation and a sense of belonging. "Big D Deaf" individuals actively engage in Deaf culture, use sign language as their primary mode of communication, and participate in a close-knit social network (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Leigh, 2009; Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011; Mindess, 2014). In contrast, "small d deaf" refers to those who have hearing loss but do not strongly associate with the deaf community.

The deaf community is a unique cultural group that embraces deafness and relies primarily on sign language for communication (Kelly-Corless, 2022). However, hearing individuals often perceive deafness as a medical condition, leading to challenges for Deaf individuals as they navigate between the Deaf community and the broader hearing society. Culturally, Deaf individuals are under-represented in mainstream media and society, which limits their visibility and recognition. Garden (2010) explains that cultural Deafness encompasses those who communicate through sign language, identify with Deaf history, and actively participate in a social network. From this perspective, Deafness is viewed not as a disability but as a cultural identity. The social model of disability supports this viewpoint, emphasising that difficulties faced by Deaf individuals stem from societal failure to accommodate their differences rather than from the hearing loss itself.

English has become a dominant global language, serving as a means of communication across various domains, including science, education, business, and technology. The widespread use of English has made it indispensable for individuals, including those who are Deaf. Effective communication, education, and professional development often require proficiency in English, highlighting the need for accessible language learning resources. According to Birinci and Sariçoban (2021), language learning consists of multiple elements, including lexical knowledge, syntax, auditory comprehension, oral expression, reading ability, and writing proficiency. Among these, vocabulary knowledge is central to language acquisition, as it directly impacts reading comprehension and communication skills.

For Deaf learners, vocabulary acquisition is particularly crucial, as it forms the foundation for developing linguistic structures, writing, and reading skills (Birinci & Sariçoban, 2021). Without a strong vocabulary, it becomes challenging for Deaf individuals to engage with written materials effectively. Research indicates that the vocabulary proficiency of Deaf and hard-of-hearing students is often more limited compared to their hearing peers. Deaf students tend to acquire vocabulary at a slower pace due to their reliance on visual input rather than auditory exposure. Consequently, language instruction for Deaf learners must incorporate visual strategies and repeated exposure to vocabulary to enhance retention and comprehension.

Deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals have the capacity to acquire language, but their learning processes differ significantly from those of hearing individuals. Chomsky's innate hypothesis suggests that all humans have an inherent ability to learn language, regardless of sensory impairments. However, the absence of auditory input presents additional challenges for Deaf learners, requiring them to rely on alternative methods such as sign language, gestures, and finger spelling (Birinci & Sariçoban, 2021). To support effective language learning, educators must adopt inclusive strategies tailored to the needs of Deaf learners.

Atar et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of understanding the unique qualities of disabled individuals to ensure their effective participation in education. Deafness affects cognitive abilities by limiting access to information, environmental engagement, and social interaction, which can hinder the development of communication skills. Various factors influence foreign language acquisition, including cognitive style, motivation, learning techniques, and affective filters. For Deaf learners, additional considerations such as visual learning preferences and the need for repeated exposure must be accounted for. Research highlights the effectiveness of visual techniques in teaching vocabulary to Deaf learners. These methods include using drawings, wall charts, pictures, flashcards, crossword puzzles, picture stories, realia, mime, and visual storytelling. Visual demonstrations help learners form meaningful associations with vocabulary and improve retention.

Advancements in technology have further facilitated language learning for Deaf students. Digital tools, multimedia resources, and interactive platforms provide new opportunities for engagement and comprehension. By integrating technology with effective visual teaching strategies, educators can enhance language acquisition for Deaf learners and bridge the gap between their language development and that of their hearing peers. As research continues to explore best practices for language instruction, it remains crucial to prioritise accessibility and inclusivity in foreign language education for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative research design as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), focusing on understanding the lived experiences of Deaf individuals in learning English. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of

the challenges faced by Deaf learners, their strategies for overcoming these difficulties, and the role of sign language in their language acquisition journey. By capturing rich, descriptive data, this approach provided more profound insights into the participants' perspectives, which would not have been possible through quantitative methods alone.

The participants in this research consisted of 10 Deaf individuals (Learner 1/L1 to Learner 10/L10) who were active members of an English learning community specifically designed for Deaf learners. The selection of participants was based on purposive sampling, as they were chosen due to their ongoing engagement in English learning and their willingness to share their experiences. The group included five male and five female participants, all between the ages of 20 and 30. Their diverse backgrounds, encompassing both students and employees, contributed to a broader understanding of how English learning challenges manifest across different life and professional contexts.

Data collection was conducted using multiple instruments to ensure triangulation and enhance the research's credibility. The primary tool was an open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms (questions are listed in the Appendix). The questionnaire was carefully designed and validated by an expert to ensure clarity and relevance to the research objectives. Once participants completed the questionnaire, the researcher conducted follow-up Zoom meetings to confirm and clarify their responses. This step was crucial in ensuring that the data accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings, considering the potential complexities of written communication for Deaf individuals.

All clarifications and additional details were gathered during the Zoom meetings rather than through reflective writing. These follow-up discussions allowed participants to elaborate on their responses, providing a more nuanced understanding of their perspectives. This approach ensured that any ambiguities in the questionnaire responses were addressed while also creating a space for participants to share insights in a way that was comfortable and accessible for them.

Data analysis followed the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the researcher systematically reviewed the participant responses, identifying key themes and patterns through coding. This thematic analysis allowed for the extraction of recurring ideas, shedding light on the specific challenges faced by Deaf learners, their strategies, and their preferences regarding *Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia* (BISINDO) and American Sign Language (ASL) in the context of English learning. By iteratively refining the codes and categories, the researcher ensured a rigorous and accurate interpretation of the data.

To maintain the trustworthiness of the research, several measures were implemented. Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple data sources—questionnaires and Zoom confirmations—to validate findings from different perspectives. Member checking was also conducted during the Zoom meetings, allowing participants to verify and clarify their responses. Additionally, the researcher maintained an audit trail by documenting the data collection and analysis processes, ensuring transparency and replicability.

Ethical considerations were emphasised throughout the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, with clear explanations about the research's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. To protect confidentiality, all personal information was anonymised, and responses were stored securely. Furthermore, the researcher was mindful of the participants' communication needs, ensuring accessibility through simple language and the availability of sign language interpreters when necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to the question “How difficult do you think it is to learn English?”, three out of the 10 participants indicated that they find learning English to be difficult. This result highlights a significant challenge faced by nearly one-third of the study's participants, reflecting the complex nature of acquiring a new language, particularly for Deaf individuals.

The question, “What was the biggest struggle when you were learning English?” prompted participants to share their experiences. Participants provided a range of responses that collectively highlight the multifaceted challenges they face in mastering the language. The most common difficulties reported were focused on grammar, particularly in the context of communication and writing. Several participants expressed that they struggle with understanding and applying English grammar rules, which significantly hampers their ability to communicate effectively and write with confidence.

Two participants mentioned that they find it particularly difficult to write long words in English, preferring instead to use short, simple phrases like “good morning” (L3). For example,

Aku sulit menulis kata-kata panjang, lebih baik aku gunakan kata yang singkat saja (Good morning) dong. [I find it difficult to write long words, I'd rather just use short words (Good morning).] (L3)

Aku kesulitan dengan tata bahasa dalam Bahasa Inggris, kalimat panjang. [I have difficulty with grammar in English, long sentences.] (L2)

Kesulitan pahami kata-kata dengan panjang dalam Bahasa Inggris. Karena Bahasa Inggris itu biasanya kalimat kebalik, beda sama Bahasa Indonesia. [Difficulty understanding long words in English. This is because in English, usually when writing a sentence, we 'flip' the words, unlike Indonesian.] (L2)

This preference for brevity may stem from a lack of familiarity with more complex vocabulary and grammar structures, as well as the cognitive load associated with constructing longer, more intricate sentences. The challenge of writing longer words and phrases indicates that the participant may struggle with English morphology, including the use of prefixes, suffixes, and compound words, which are often less intuitive for non-native speakers and

can be especially challenging for Deaf learners who may rely more on visual and tactile learning methods. It is in line with Quigley and King (1980), as cited in Hoffmeister et al. (2021), who strengthen that Deaf pupils faced challenges with various aspects of English language structures, including negation, conjunction, pronominalisation, verb construction, complementation, relativisation, disjunction, and omission of determiners. It is important to clarify that when we mention issues, problems, or deficits in syntax that Deaf children may experience, we are utilising the terminology employed by the hearing authors of the referenced works. We contend that the assertion that deaf individuals possess syntactic deficiencies is based on racist and ableist discourses.

Other participants (L3 and L6) noted a specific difficulty with understanding verbs, especially when the language becomes more advanced or “high.” While they may comprehend the individual vocabulary words, the participant struggles to grasp the verbs within these contexts, suggesting a disconnect between vocabulary knowledge and grammatical application. L3 wrote,

Kalo bahasa tinggi, kosa kata aku pahami semua cuma cara verb aku belum pahami. [If it's a 'higher level' language, I understand all the vocabulary, but I don't understand how to use verbs yet.] (L3)

Mungkin saya lebih sulit namanya regular verbs umum, gimana cara saya proses masih belajar dasar, atau gimana bisa adaptasi regular verbs kata kerja hilang. [Maybe I have more difficulty with the common regular verbs, I am still learning the basics, how I learn the regular verbs or when to omit/change the verbs.] (L6)

This difficulty may arise from the complex nature of English verb conjugation, which includes tenses, aspects, and irregular forms that can be confusing for learners. The participant's struggle with verbs may also reflect a broader challenge in connecting the meaning of words with their functional roles in sentences, which is crucial for both understanding and producing coherent speech and writing.

L6 further echoed the challenge of remembering and applying grammatical rules, admitting to forgetting or being unsure about the need for regular verbs or the past simple tense. L6 wrote that,

Saya lupa, beberapa ga inget butuh regular verbs atau butuh namanya past simple. Yang penting regular verbs bisa kerja bebas, kita coba-coba. [I forgot, I don't remember when I need regular verbs or the past simple. The important thing is the regular verbs so I can make the sentences freely. If I know regular verbs, I can try them out in sentences]. (L6)

Mungkin saya lebih sulit namanya regular verbs umum, gimana cara saya proses masih belajar dasar, atau gimana bisa adaptasi regular verbs kata kerja hilang. [Maybe I have more difficulty with the common regular verbs, I am still learning the basics, how I learn the regular verbs or when to omit/

change the verbs.] (L6)

This struggle points to the difficulty of internalising and consistently using grammatical structures—a challenge that is often exacerbated in the absence of regular reinforcement and practice. For Deaf learners, who may not have the same auditory exposure to English as hearing individuals, the memorisation and application of these rules can be particularly daunting. This is in line with Uğurlu et al. (2019), who stated that Deaf and hard of hearing pupils demonstrate parallels in their accuracy rate of reading words in the past and future tenses, but they exhibit shortcomings in the present tense.

L7 and L2 wrote,

Kata kata balik balok. [Back and forth words.] (L7)

Kesulitan pahami kata-kata dengan panjang dalam Bahasa Inggris. Karena Bahasa Inggris itu biasanya kalimat kebalik, beda sama Bahasa Indonesia. [Difficulty understanding long words in English. This is because in English, usually when writing a sentence, we ‘flip’ the words, unlike Bahasa Indonesia.] (L2)

This highlighted the issue of word order, stating that they often find the words “reverse” when constructing sentences. This problem may stem from differences in the syntactic structures of English and sign languages like BISINDO or ASL. Sign languages often have different word orders and grammatical conventions, which can lead to confusion when translating thoughts from sign language into written or spoken English. The challenge of word order underscores the need for targeted instruction that addresses these specific differences and helps learners develop a stronger sense of English syntax.

One participant faced additional challenges due to external factors, such as the lack of access to an English teacher and the demands of work, which limited their time for study. L8 wrote,

Aku sulit belajar Bahasa Inggris karena tidak ada guru Bahasa Inggris yang mengajarkan aku. Waktu aku kerja, jadi tidak ada waktu untuk belajar pada saat yang sama. [I had a hard time learning English because I didn’t have an English teacher to teach me. I was working, so I didn’t have time to study at the same time.] (L8)

Kalau mau belajar Bahasa Inggris, saya ingin diajari guru dengan bahasa isyarat atau tulisan Bahasa Indonesia yang lebih baik dan mudah dipahami. Saya pernah takut mengikuti les Bahasa Inggris di tempat lain karena tidak ada akses JBI untuk teman Tuli. Jadi, saya butuh akses JBI untuk mengajarkan saya belajar Bahasa Inggris. [If I want to learn English, I want a teacher to teach me using sign language or written Indonesian, which is better and easier to understand. I was once afraid to take English lessons elsewhere because they didn’t provide the sign language interpreter access for deaf students. So, I need the sign language interpreter access to teach me English.] (L8)

This response highlights the importance of having adequate support systems and accessible educational resources for Deaf learners. Without guidance from a knowledgeable instructor, learners may struggle to overcome their difficulties, leading to frustration and slower progress. The time constraints mentioned by this participant also point to the need for flexible learning options that accommodate the busy schedules of adult learners, particularly those who are balancing work with their educational pursuits.

The complexity of English vocabulary, especially words with affixes similar to those in Indonesian, such as “ber-” “ter-” and “men-” further compounded the difficulty of learning English. These affixes, which are common in Indonesian grammar, may not have direct equivalents in English, leading to confusion and difficulty in understanding how to form and use similar words in English. The participant’s struggle with these affixes indicates that learning English requires acquiring new vocabulary and comprehending the construction and modification of words to convey diverse meanings and functions.

Lastly, L10 mentioned that learning for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was particularly challenging. L10 wrote,

Kalau menurut saya sulit belajar TOEFL. [In my opinion, it is difficult to learn TOEFL.] (L10)

The TOEFL exam is known for its rigorous testing of English proficiency, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. For a Deaf learner, the listening component alone can be a significant obstacle, as it may require adaptations or alternative methods to assess comprehension. The participant’s difficulty with TOEFL preparation reflects the broader challenge of standardised language testing, which often does not take into account the specific needs and abilities of Deaf individuals. The situation highlights the need for more inclusive assessment methods that can accurately measure the language proficiency of Deaf learners without penalising them for their hearing loss.

Upon further inquiry into the challenges faced during English language learning, the ten participants provided detailed insights into the specific difficulties they encountered. These responses reveal the diverse and multifaceted nature of the obstacles that Deaf learners must navigate in their journey to acquire proficiency in English.

One of the primary issues highlighted by the participants is the challenge of understanding verbal explanations and basic or rudimentary sign language used by English teachers. Several participants expressed that these methods were insufficient for their comprehension.

Waktu saya diajari oleh guru Bahasa Inggris, saya sulit memahami penjelasan dari guru secara lisan dan dengan bahasa isyarat dasar (belum sempurna). Saya hanya bisa memahami materi yang diajarkan guru jika disampaikan secara tertulis atau dengan menggunakan bahasa isyarat yang lebih lengkap. [When I was taught by an English teacher, I had difficulty understanding the teacher’s explanations verbally and with basic (imperfect) sign language. I could only understand the material if it was presented in writing or with more comprehensive sign language.] (L1)

Kalau mau belajar Bahasa Inggris, saya ingin diajari guru dengan bahasa isyarat atau tulisan Bahasa Indonesia yang lebih baik dan mudah dipahami. Saya pernah takut mengikuti les Bahasa Inggris di tempat lain karena tidak ada akses JBI untuk teman Tuli. Jadi, saya butuh akses JBI untuk mengajarkan saya belajar Bahasa Inggris. [If I want to learn English, I want a teacher to teach me sign language or written Bahasa Indonesia, which is better and easier to understand. I was once afraid to take English lessons elsewhere because they didn't provide the sign language interpreter access for Deaf students. So, I need the sign language interpreter access to teach me English.] (L8)

Saranin kalau guru English berisyarat dasar2 kalo bisa. Dan jika ada JBI. [I recommend that the English teacher can provide basic sign language, if possible. And if possible, the sign language interpreter.] (L10)

Presenting the material solely through spoken language or limited sign language made it difficult for them to understand. Instead, participants reported a significant improvement in their understanding when presented with the content in written form or through more complete and detailed sign language. This suggests that written English and comprehensive sign language serve as crucial tools for facilitating the learning process for Deaf students. The reliance on these methods underscores the importance of incorporating visual and tactile learning aids into English language instruction for Deaf learners, as these approaches can bridge the gap between spoken language and the students' preferred mode of communication.

The participants identified the challenge of understanding long words in English as another common difficulty as L2 and L3 wrote respectively,

Kesulitan pahami kata-kata dengan panjang dalam Bahasa Inggris. Karena Bahasa Inggris itu biasanya kalimat kebalik, beda sama Bahasa Indonesia. [Difficulty understanding long words in English. This is because in English, usually when writing a sentence, we 'flip' the words, unlike Bahasa Indonesia.] (L2)

Aku sulit menulis kata-kata panjang, lebih baik aku gunakan kata yang singkat saja (Good morning) dong. [I find it difficult to write long words, I'd rather just use short words (Good morning).] (L3)

English tendency to use complex, multisyllabic words, along with its frequent use of inverted sentence structures, distinguishes it from Indonesian and creates an additional layer of complexity for learners. The participants noted that these differences in linguistic structure pose significant hurdles, as they require learners to adjust not only to new vocabulary but also to unfamiliar grammatical patterns. The participants' limited exposure to advanced vocabulary, which often stems from their reliance on basic English instruction and lack of access to more advanced learning materials, may also contribute to their difficulty understanding long words.

Learner 3 and 8 mentioned formal English as a particular area of difficulty.

Aku sulit Bahasa Inggris pakai formal. [I have difficulty using formal English.] (L3)

Saya sulit memahami materi belajar Bahasa Inggris karena saya hanya memahami dasarnya saja dan belum mencapai level selanjutnya, terutama dalam komunikasi Bahasa Inggris, susah kalimat formal. [I have difficulty understanding English learning materials because I only understand the basics and haven't reached the next level, especially in English communication, where formal sentences are difficult.] (L8)

Participants indicated that she finds it challenging to use formal English, which often involves more complex sentence structures, advanced vocabulary, and adherence to strict grammatical rules. The struggle with formal English reflects the broader challenge of mastering different registers of the language, which is essential for effective communication in various contexts, such as academic writing, professional correspondence, and formal presentations. The difficulty in using formal English may also be tied to the participant's need for more focused instruction on grammar, verb tenses, and pronunciation—areas that were specifically mentioned as requiring greater emphasis in their learning process.

Meanwhile, Learner 5 highlighted a specific pronunciation challenge by citing the English word “cat,” pronounced “kaet” and “mall” pronounced “mol.”

lebih fokus tata bahasa cara verb, cara membaca contoh cat – kat.

membuat spok, membaca gimana cat – kat [Making a complete sentence (subject + verb + object + complement), how to read/pronounce ‘cat’ (kæt)]

membuat cerita verb, cara membaca Bahasa Inggris contoh mall – mol [Making a story using verb, and how to read/pronounce in English, for example, ‘mall’ (mol)]

This example highlights the difficulty of mastering English phonetics, which can be particularly challenging for Deaf learners who may not have the same auditory feedback mechanisms as hearing individuals. The participant's mention of pronunciation difficulties suggests that there may be a need for more targeted instruction in phonetics and articulation, perhaps through visual aids or tactile feedback methods that can help Deaf learners internalise the correct pronunciation of English words.

The complexity of English verb tenses and the distinction between regular and irregular verbs were also cited as significant challenges. L6 expressed difficulty with understanding and applying regular verbs, particularly in the context of learning the basics of English grammar. He wrote,

Mungkin saya lebih sulit namanya regular verbs umum, gimana cara saya proses masih belajar dasar, atau gimana bisa adaptasi regular verbs kata kerja

hilang. [Maybe I have more difficulty with the common regular verbs, I am still learning the basics, how I learn the regular verbs or when to omit/change the verbs.] (L6)

Saya lupa, beberapa ga inget butuh regular verbs *atau butuh namanya* past simple. [I forgot, I don't remember when I need regular verbs or the past simple. The important thing is the regular verbs so I can make the sentences freely. If I know regular verbs, I can try them out in sentences.] (L6)

Yang penting regular verbs *bisa kerja bebas, kita coba2.* [The important thing is the regular verbs so I can make the sentences freely. If I know regular verbs, I can try them out in sentences.] (L6)

The participant wondered how they could process these verbs effectively while still mastering foundational concepts and adapting regular verbs without overlooking important grammatical rules. This response points to the need for more scaffolded instruction that gradually introduces verb tenses and conjugations, allowing learners to build a solid foundation before moving on to more complex grammatical structures.

Two participants also reported difficulty in understanding English learning materials, particularly because they had only or even had not mastered the basics and had not yet progressed to the next level, especially in terms of English communication.

Saya sulit memahami materi belajar Bahasa Inggris karena saya hanya memahami dasarnya saja dan belum mencapai level selanjutnya, terutama dalam komunikasi Bahasa Inggris. [I have difficulty understanding English learning materials because I only understand the basics and haven't reached the next level, especially in English communication, where formal sentences are difficult.] (L8)

Sebelum belajar dasar yang kalimat lebih baik. [Before, we have to learn the basics, then we can make better sentences.] (L7)

This response suggests that the participant may feel stuck at an intermediate stage of learning, where they grasp basic vocabulary and grammar but struggle to move beyond this level to more advanced communication skills. The challenge of progressing from basic to intermediate or advanced proficiency is a common issue in language learning, particularly for Deaf learners who may have limited access to advanced instructional resources or opportunities for practice.

Additionally, other participants raised the question of distinguishing between spoken and written English.

Sulit perbedaan Inggris bicara dan tulis. [Difficulty distinguishing between spoken and written English.] (L9)

Sulit tata bahasa untuk komunikasi dan tulisan. [Difficulty in grammar for communication and writing.] (L1)

This issue highlights the complex nature of English as a language with distinct spoken and written forms, each with its own set of rules and conventions. For Deaf learners, who may rely more heavily on written English, the differences between these forms can be particularly challenging to navigate. The participant's response suggests a need for more explicit instruction in the distinctions between spoken and written English, as well as practice in both forms, to develop a well-rounded proficiency in the language.

The participants provided valuable insights and suggestions for improving English language learning, particularly within the context of a Deaf community that often utilises Zoom for instruction. These recommendations emphasise the need for tailored approaches that cater to their specific learning needs and challenges.

L1 suggested that a more effective approach to teaching English involves starting with simple, easily understandable explanations of basic concepts before gradually introducing more complex ideas. He wrote,

Solusinya adalah dengan memberikan penjelasan yang sangat mudah dipahami, dimulai dengan konsep dasar sebelum beralih ke konsep yang lebih kompleks. Misalnya, guru dapat memulai dengan menjelaskan konsep secara sederhana dan konkret sebelum memperkenalkan detail yang lebih dalam. Ini dapat membantu saya untuk lebih baik memahami materi, terutama ketika menggunakan bahasa isyarat dasar. [The solution is to provide very easy-to-understand explanations, starting with basic concepts before moving on to more complex ones. For example, teachers can begin by explaining concepts simply and concretely before introducing deeper details. This can help me better understand the material, especially when using basic sign language.]
(L1)

Deaf learners particularly benefit from this step-by-step method, which enables them to establish a robust foundational understanding prior to encountering more advanced material. The participant emphasised that teachers should focus on explaining concepts in a simple and concrete manner, using basic sign language to aid comprehension. By breaking down complex ideas into more manageable pieces, students can better grasp the material, reducing the likelihood of confusion and frustration. The principle of scaffolding in education, which gradually introduces learners to more challenging content as they gain confidence and proficiency in their understanding, aligns with this approach.

L2 recommended that English learning should prioritise grammar from the outset.

Saran aku, langsung aja belajar tata bahasa dulu. Setelah itu, buatlah pertanyaan tentang artikan apa Bahasa Inggris ke Indonesia melalui di Zoom supaya buktikan ada yang niat belajar atau tidak. [My advice: Just learn grammar first. After that, ask questions about the translation of English into Indonesian via Zoom to see if anyone is serious about learning.] (L2)

She suggested that focussing on grammar early in the learning process would provide a solid framework for understanding the structure of the language, which is essential for effective communication. The participant emphasised the importance of focusing on grammatical rules and their applications in order to maximise classroom time. This focus on grammar could be particularly beneficial for Deaf learners, who may need more explicit instruction in the rules that govern sentence structure, verb conjugation, and other grammatical elements. By mastering grammar early on, learners can develop the skills needed to construct coherent sentences and engage in more meaningful communication in English.

A participant also recommended using multimedia resources like movies and TV shows with English subtitles to enhance both reading and pronunciation skills.

Menonton film atau TV dengan subtitle Bahasa Inggris dapat membantu dalam membaca paham pengucapan kata-kata serta ekspresi dalam konteks yang berbeda. [Watching movies or TV with English subtitles can help you understand the pronunciation of words and expressions in different contexts.] (L3)

Watching content with subtitles allows learners to see the written form of words while hearing their pronunciation, providing a dual sensory input that can reinforce learning. This method can also expose learners to different contexts and ways of using English, helping them to understand nuances and variations in language use. For Deaf learners, subtitles can be particularly valuable, as they provide a direct link between spoken and written English, making it easier to connect the two forms and improving overall comprehension. This is the same as reported by Donne and Briley (2015) in their research that using multimedia as a technique for vocabulary learning shows potential for effectively teaching preschool pupils who are deaf or hard of hearing. The utilisation of multimedia storybooks facilitated personalised and tailored training that aligned with the specific needs of each preschool student, hence enhancing their vocabulary acquisition. Their research findings demonstrated that children could either continue working with storybooks until they achieved a thorough understanding of the word, or they could go on to new storybooks and learn new vocabulary. The use of multimedia storybooks significantly increased the correct identification of words, both in isolation and in context, by more than double. Furthermore, the level of retention was satisfactory. Besides, in their research about enhancing digital education with serious games as a method for promoting inclusivity, Escudeiro et al. (2019) found out that serious games possess significant potential for facilitating the development of new talents or enhancing pre-existing ones.

L4 pointed out the importance of providing visual examples, similar to how lecturers might teach students by presenting clear and easily understandable visuals. He wrote,

Contoh mirip dosen ajari anak murid mudah tangkap kata2 dan visual. [For example, it is similar to how lecturers teach students to easily grasp words and visuals.] (L4)

This approach is particularly effective for Deaf learners, who often rely on visual aids to

enhance their understanding of spoken or written content. Diagrams, charts, pictures, or even videos can serve as visuals, illuminating the concepts under instruction. By incorporating visual elements into English instruction, teachers can make the material more accessible and engaging for Deaf students, helping them to better grasp complex ideas and retain the information over time.

The construction of complete sentences was another area of focus. L5 suggested that learners should practice making complete sentences, following the structure of subject-predicate-object-complement. She wrote,

Membuat spok, membaca gimana cat – kat. [Making a complete sentence (subject + verb + object + complement), how to read/pronounce ‘cat’ (kæt).] (L5)

Additionally, they emphasised the importance of learning how to pronounce these sentences correctly. This practice not only reinforces grammar and sentence structure but also helps learners develop the skills needed for clear and effective communication. This practice can be particularly challenging for Deaf learners, who may struggle with pronunciation due to limited auditory feedback. However, by using visual aids, such as mouth movements or written phonetic guides, teachers can help students improve their pronunciation and gain confidence in their spoken English. Another participant expressed a desire to communicate in English as if it were a normal conversation, indicating a goal of achieving fluency in both comprehension and expression.

Berkomunikasi Inggris, bisa paham seperti biasa ngobrol. [Communicating in English, can understand like normal conversation.] (L6)

This aspiration underscores the importance of creating opportunities for Deaf learners to engage in real-life conversations, whether through practice with peers, participation in group discussions, or interactive exercises during Zoom sessions. By regularly practicing conversational English, learners can develop the fluency needed to navigate everyday situations and communicate more effectively in various contexts.

In terms of writing, L7 suggested using a red strikethrough colour when correcting English writing examples.

Saran contoh tulisan Bahasa Inggris dipakai coret warna merah yang balik lebih jelas. [My suggestion, for examples of English writing is underlined in red, so it will be clearer.] (L7)

This approach makes corrections more visible and easier to understand, helping learners identify and learn from their mistakes. The participant also recommended that teachers provide clear feedback on written assignments, focusing on areas where students struggle, such as grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary usage. For Deaf learners, who may rely heavily on written communication, receiving detailed and visually distinct feedback can be a crucial part of the learning process, enabling them to improve their writing skills and avoid repeating the same errors.

L9 and L10 highlighted the importance of learning from a teacher who uses sign language and maximising group chat to learn writing skill, as these methods are more effective and easier for them to comprehend.

Saya minta bantu guru dan teman2 untuk wajib rutin via chat grup latihan dalam menulis Bahasa Inggris supaya semaksimal. [I ask my teachers and friends to help me practice writing English regularly via group chat to maximise my skills.] (L9)

Saranin kalau guru English berisyarat dasar2 kalo bisa. Dan jika ada JBI. [I recommend that the English teacher can provide basic sign language, if possible. And if possible, the sign language interpreter.] (L10)

They shared that they had previously been hesitant to take English lessons elsewhere due to the lack of access to sign language interpreters, which made learning difficult and intimidating. This response emphasises the critical role that sign language plays in the education of Deaf learners. It also underscores the need for educational institutions to provide sign language interpreters during English lessons, ensuring that Deaf students have equal access to the same learning opportunities as their hearing peers. By incorporating sign language into English instruction, teachers can make the material more accessible and provide a more inclusive learning environment. Meanwhile, group chats offer a low-pressure environment where learners can practice writing, ask questions, and receive immediate feedback from their peers. This collaborative approach not only enhances individual learning but also fosters a sense of community among Deaf learners, who can support each other as they work towards common language goals. Facilitating these group chats within Zoom sessions provides a valuable supplement to more formal instruction.

Based on the data collected from the 10 participants regarding their use of BISINDO or ASL when learning English, the responses can be grouped into distinct categories that highlight their preferences and practices. The analysis of these responses reveals the diverse approaches the participants take in their language learning journey.

The majority of the participants, four out of 10 (L1, L2, L3, L6), indicated a preference for using BISINDO when learning English. This preference for BISINDO reflects the participants' comfort and familiarity with BISINDO, which is more closely aligned with their native language and cultural context. For these participants, BISINDO serves as an essential tool in bridging the gap between their primary mode of communication and the English language. By using BISINDO, they can better grasp English vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, as it provides a familiar framework within which they can translate and understand English concepts. The use of BISINDO in English learning also highlights the importance of culturally relevant sign language instruction that resonates with the learners' everyday experiences and linguistic background.

L5 and L8 reported that they use ASL in their English learning. These participants might have been exposed to ASL through various means, such as international interactions, online resources, or specific educational settings where ASL is taught or emphasised. For

these individuals, ASL provides a different perspective on English learning, as it is a sign language closely associated with the English-speaking world. The use of ASL might help these participants directly associate English words and phrases with their corresponding signs, potentially aiding in their understanding of English grammar and syntax. However, the adoption of ASL could also present challenges, as it may require them to learn and adapt to a new set of signs and conventions that differ from BISINDO. This dual learning process could be both enriching and demanding, depending on the individual's linguistic background and cognitive flexibility.

Three participants who are L7, L9, and L10 stated that they use both BISINDO and ASL for their English learning. These bilingual sign language users likely draw on the strengths of both languages to enhance their understanding and communication skills in English. By using BISINDO, they can rely on their native sign language for clarity and comfort, while ASL offers them insights into English language structures that might be more directly aligned with the target language. This dual approach allows for a more versatile learning experience, enabling them to switch between sign languages depending on the context, content, or specific challenges they encounter in their English studies. However, this bilingual strategy may also require a higher level of cognitive effort, as the participants must navigate the differences and similarities between BISINDO and ASL while simultaneously learning English. For these learners, the ability to leverage both sign languages could offer a unique advantage, providing them with multiple pathways to understand and express English concepts.

L4 mentioned that he does not use any sign language when learning English. This response suggests a different learning approach, possibly relying more on written materials, visual aids, or other non-sign language methods. The absence of sign language in their English learning process might indicate a preference for alternative modes of communication, such as reading, writing, or lip-reading, or it could reflect a lack of access to sign language resources. This participant's experience underscores the diversity of strategies that Deaf individuals might employ in their language learning, highlighting the need for flexible and adaptive teaching methods that can cater to a wide range of learning preferences and needs.

The participants' responses reveal a varied landscape of sign language usage in English learning, with the majority preferring BISINDO, some using ASL, and a few combining both sign languages. This diversity in sign language preference underscores the importance of recognising and accommodating different learning styles and linguistic backgrounds in educational settings. By understanding these preferences, educators can better tailor their teaching methods to support the unique needs of Deaf learners, ensuring that they have access to the most effective tools and strategies for mastering the English language. This is strengthened by Akmes and Kayhan (2023) who explained that sign language is an essential requirement for a youngster who is deaf. The primary focus of this study is the comparison between policies at the macrosystems level and the impact on children at the exosystems level. The primary focus is on national or local school policies that enhance the sign language proficiency of instructors working with deaf children. Without a policy outlining how teachers might assist in the development and education of deaf children, the

exosystem level, which encompasses education, becomes a worrisome aspect. Consequently, the education provided in the school would fail to adequately address the child's needs. Teachers are unable to engage with the child until they enhance their skills and acquire proficiency in sign language. They are unable to facilitate the communication between deaf children and their peers, and they are unable to establish circumstances that foster the children's language development. Family members and teachers are more effective in facilitating children's language development. The individuals immediately involved in the linguistic development of a deaf child are their parents, pre-school teachers, and special education teachers. Teaching sign language to pre-school instructors will help overcome communication hurdles and facilitate seamless interaction among children, their friends, and pre-school teachers.

Based on the 10 participants' responses regarding whether it is easier to use BISINDO or ASL when learning English, it is evident that their experiences and preferences vary, reflecting a range of perspectives on the effectiveness of each sign language in facilitating English learning. These responses can be grouped into distinct categories based on the participants' preferences for BISINDO, ASL, or a combination of both, with detailed explanations on why they find one easier than the other.

The majority of participants expressed a preference for using BISINDO when learning English, citing several reasons for its effectiveness.

Kalau saya ngerti BISINDO, saya bisa ngerti waktu guru Bahasa Inggris ngajarin pake BISINDO ke murid. Tapi kalau nggak ngerti ASL, gimana caranya saya belajar Bahasa Inggris? Dan sebaliknya juga gitu. Jadi, kemampuan dalam BISINDO atau ASL berpengaruh pada cara kita belajar Bahasa Inggris. [If I understand Indonesian Sign Language, I can understand when the English teacher teaches it to students. But if I don't understand American Sign Language, how can I learn English? And vice versa. So, proficiency in Indonesian Sign Language or American Sign Language influences how we learn English.] (L1)

Lebih baik pakai Bisindo tetapi dengan verbal pakai Bahasa Inggris. Sekalian kasih contoh cara gimana bacanya dalam Bahasa Inggris. Contohnya, tulisan "Love" bacanya "luv" gitu. [It's better to use Indonesian Sign Language but verbally use English. Also, give examples of how to read it in English. For example, the word "Love" is pronounced "luv."] (L2)

These responses underscore the crucial importance of BISINDO proficiency, as it enables the participants to fully comprehend the English-taught concepts. The participants further explained that if someone is not proficient in ASL, it can hinder their ability to learn English, underscoring the impact of sign language proficiency on English learning outcomes. As L2 noted that BISINDO is preferable for speaking in English and provided an example of how it can aid in reading English words, such as interpreting "love" as "luv." This practical approach illustrates how adapting BISINDO to teach pronunciation and reading skills aligns with the learners' pre-existing linguistic framework. Another participant

highlighted the ability to use BISINDO to explain concepts through body language and gestures, finding it easier to understand English when conveyed through these familiar and culturally relevant means. She wrote,

BISINDO lebih mudah digunakan karena bisa dijelaskan dengan menggunakan gestur bahasa tubuh. [Indonesian Sign Language is easier to use because it can be explained using body language gestures.] (L3)

This reinforces the idea that BISINDO, being more closely aligned with Indonesian culture, offers a more intuitive and accessible learning experience for those already familiar with it.

Another finding revealed that L8 currently uses ASL, but she has been using BISINDO for a long time, making it simple to understand and use in the context of learning English. She wrote,

Udah lama bgt pakai BISINDO, mudah paham dan gampang. [I've been using Indonesian Sign Language for a long time, it's easy to understand and convenient.] (L8)

This response underscores the role of long-term familiarity with a sign language in making it an effective tool for learning a new language. The participant's comfort with BISINDO likely stems from years of consistent use, which has ingrained its structure and vocabulary, making it easier to apply when learning English. Another participant (L6) mentioned that focusing solely on Bisindo is sufficient for their English learning needs, suggesting that a single, well-understood sign language can provide a solid foundation for acquiring English language skills.

Fokus BISINDO saja itu cukup. [Just focusing on Indonesian Sign Language is enough.] (L6)

In contrast, some participants found ASL to be easier or equally effective when learning English. One participant expressed that ASL is simple to understand, especially when BISINDO might cause confusion. She wrote,

ASL ternyata cpt paham, klo bahasa isyarat Indonesia agak bingung wkwkwkwk. [It turns out I can understand American Sign Language quickly, but Indonesian Sign Language is a bit confusing, hahaha.] (L5)

This response indicates that, for some learners, ASL provides a clearer or more direct connection to English, perhaps due to its closer alignment with English grammar and vocabulary. The participant's experience suggests that ASL can serve as an effective bridge to English, particularly in contexts where BISINDO may not provide the necessary clarity.

Another participant stated that they find it "just as easy" to use ASL, indicating that both sign languages offer similar levels of accessibility for them in learning English. He wrote:

Sama aja gampang tapi dikir ASL. [Both are easy, but American Sign Language is a bit harder.] (L7)

This neutrality in preference reflects the participant's adaptability and ability to navigate between different sign languages without significant difficulty. Similarly, another participant mentioned that ASL is simple to comprehend in English, even when it is a translation into Indonesian. This response suggests that ASL, which is more directly associated with the English language, can sometimes provide a more straightforward path to understanding English content, especially when it involves direct translations.

Interestingly, one participant highlighted the potential for automatic adaptation between sign languages, suggesting that general usage might follow one sign language, but it can be switched or adapted as needed.

Lebih baik seperti biasa umum ikut sesuai kata2 tp nanti kami bisa berubah bahasa isyarat otomatis. [It's better to just follow the instructions as usual, but later we can switch automatically into sign language] (L4)

It appears that some learners may be able to switch between BISINDO and ASL depending on the context or demands of the English learning task.

The participants' responses reveal a nuanced landscape of sign language preferences in learning English, with most favouring BISINDO due to its familiarity, cultural relevance, and ease of use in conveying English concepts. However, a few participants find ASL to be equally or more effective, particularly when it offers clearer connections to English, as they wrote,

Sama aja gampang tapi dikir ASL. [Both are easy, but American Sign Language is a bit harder.] (L7)

Pakai ASL karena sesuai Bahasa Inggris gampang paham, jika BISINDO itu cuman translate dalam Bahasa Indonesia. [I use ASL because it's easier to understand than English, whereas Indonesian Sign Language only translates into Indonesian.] (L9)

Kalau pakai BISINDO, ditulis pakai Bahasa Inggris. [Use Indonesian sign language, but write it in English.] (L10)

The diversity of these experiences underscores the importance of accommodating different learning styles and providing access to both sign languages in educational settings. By understanding and respecting these preferences, educators can better support Deaf learners in their journey to mastering English, ensuring that they have the tools and resources needed to succeed.

The suggestions provided by the participants for improving English learning for Deaf individuals highlight the importance of adapting teaching methods to the linguistic abilities and needs of Deaf students. The responses reveal a recognition that effective

English instruction for Deaf learners must account for their varying levels of proficiency in both Indonesian and sign language. We can group these into several key themes, such as the importance of understanding and adapting to Deaf students' linguistic backgrounds, the necessity for teachers to learn and use sign language, the integration of writing and other visual aids, and the emphasis on grammar and pronunciation in the learning process.

One of the critical points emphasised is the need to tailor English instruction to the Deaf students' level of Indonesian understanding. As L1 noted, "It depends on the level of Bahasa Indonesia that Deaf friends understand. Not all of them speak Indonesian well, which can make learning English harder. If their Indonesian ability is high, the process of learning English will be easier because both languages have an equal level of difficulty."

Menurutku, itu tergantung dari tingkat Bahasa Indonesia yang dipahami oleh teman-teman Tuli. Tidak semua dari mereka menguasai Bahasa Indonesia dengan baik, dan jika pemahaman dasarnya kurang, bisa membuat belajar Bahasa Inggris menjadi lebih sulit. Jika kemampuan Bahasa Indonesia mereka tinggi, proses belajar Bahasa Inggris akan lebih mudah karena kedua bahasa memiliki tingkat kesulitan yang seimbang. [I think it depends on the level of Bahasa Indonesia of the Deaf friends understand. Not all of them master Bahasa Indonesia well, and if they are lack of basic understanding, it can make learning English more difficult. If their Bahasa Indonesia skills are strong, learning English will be easier because the two languages have a balanced level of difficulty.] (L1)

This insight underscores the importance of assessing the students' proficiency in Indonesian as a foundation for learning English. Since both languages have their own complexities, a strong grasp of Indonesian can facilitate the transition to learning English. However, for those with lower proficiency in Indonesian, additional support and tailored teaching methods may be necessary to bridge the gap and make English learning more accessible.

Another significant theme that emerged from the suggestions is the necessity for teachers to learn and use sign language in order to effectively communicate with and teach Deaf students. One participant (L8) explicitly suggested that "teachers should learn sign language in order to teach and deliver the English material."

Saran, Guru Bahasa Inggris bisa bahasa isyarat atau tulis bahasa yg gampang dasar supaya teman2 Tuli paham, situasi teman2 Tuli punya level Bahasa Indonesia beda2 dari rendah sampe tinggi, jadi sesuai dengan murid yg cocok untuk berkomunikasi pasti paham. [My suggestion is that English teachers can use sign language or write simple, basic language so that Deaf students can understand. The situation is that Deaf students have different levels of Bahasa Indonesia, from low to high, so it is appropriate for the students and suitable for communication, they will definitely understand.] (L8)

This recommendation highlights the vital role of sign language in ensuring that Deaf students can fully comprehend the lessons. By learning sign language, teachers can better convey English concepts and instructions, reducing the communication barriers that often hinder Deaf learners' progress. Additionally, one participant suggested that if a teacher is still struggling to understand what Deaf students mean, they can use paper or mobile phone notes to write down explanations or questions. This approach ensures that communication remains clear and that students can express their thoughts and needs effectively, even when sign language might not suffice. Sign language is very important in communicating with the Deaf as it is confirmed by Ngobeni et al. (2020) that once parents become aware that their children have a hearing impairment, they should be prepared to acquire knowledge of sign language. This will subsequently facilitate their children's acquisition of sign language from a young age. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) should acknowledge the importance of sign language in schools for the Deaf, particularly in terms of providing necessary resources and ensuring staff proficiency in sign language.

The integration of written language and visual aids also emerged as a crucial aspect of improving English learning for Deaf students. Several participants emphasised the importance of using BISINDO when explaining English concepts and complementing them with written English. One participant recommended that teachers "use BISINDO while explaining English and write in English."

Pakai BISINDO itu menjelaskan dan menulis pakai Bahasa Inggris itu kata2.
[Use Indonesian sign language to explain and write the words using English.] (L10)

This dual approach can help reinforce the learning process, allowing Deaf students to see the connection between the spoken or signed language and its written form. Another participant highlighted the need for teachers to "write an easy basic language for Deaf friends to understand," recognising that Deaf students have varying levels of comprehension in Indonesian.

Saran, Guru Bahasa Inggris bisa bahasa isyarat atau tulis bahasa yg gampang dasar supaya teman2 Tuli paham, situasi teman2 Tuli punya level bahasa Indonesia beda2 dari rendah sampe tinggi, jadi sesuai dengan murid yg cocok untuk berkomunikasi pasti paham. [My suggestion is that English teachers can use sign language or write simple, basic language so that Deaf students can understand. The situation is that Deaf students have different levels of Bahasa Indonesia, from low to high, so it is appropriate for the students and suitable for communication, they will definitely understand.] (L8)

By using simple and clear language, teachers can ensure that the material is accessible to all students, regardless of their linguistic background.

Deaf students need to focus more on grammar and pronunciation in their English learning process. A participant (L4) proposed discussing the grammatical rules to facilitate their translation into sign language, underscoring the importance of understanding the English

structure and its communication through sign language.

Saran hrus sesuai Bahasa Inggris dulu smaa mirip bentuk Bahasa Indonesia baru bisa menjadi ke bahasa isyarat. [My suggestion is that it must be in accordance with English first and similar to Bahasa Indonesia before it can be moved to sign language.] (L4)

L5 pointed out the need to “learn verbs and pronunciation more,” indicating that these aspects of English are particularly challenging for Deaf learners and require additional attention in the curriculum.

Membuat cerita verb, cara membaca bahasa inggris contoh mall – mol. [Making a story using verb, and how to read/pronounce in English, for example, ‘mall’ (mol).] (L5)

The emphasis on grammar and pronunciation reflects the participants’ awareness that mastering these elements is crucial for achieving fluency in English.

Finally, a participant mentioned the role of interpreters in the learning process, suggesting that “If the interpreter speaks English, it is okay to just use BISINDO directly.”

Langsung BISINDO aja gpp klo jbi pakai bicara Inggris. [It’s okay to just use Indonesian sign language if the sign language interpreter uses English.] (L6)

This comment highlights the potential for using BISINDO as the primary mode of instruction when the interpreter is proficient in both English and BISINDO. This streamlines the learning process and allows students to concentrate on understanding the content, free from the burden of language switching. By tailoring instruction to the students’ linguistic abilities, ensuring that teachers are proficient in sign language, integrating written and visual aids, and focusing on grammar and pronunciation, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. These recommendations underscore the importance of a flexible and responsive approach to teaching, one that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by Deaf learners in acquiring English language skills.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated the difficulties and encounters that Deaf people face when learning English. The research focused specifically on their unique requirements and the methods that could improve their language acquisition. By doing a thorough analysis of the replies given by ten Deaf participants belonging to an English learning community, a number of significant themes were identified. These themes emphasise the intricacy of acquiring English as a Deaf individual, the significance of customised instructional approaches, and the crucial role that sign language plays in aiding communication and comprehension.

This research highlights the unique challenges Deaf individuals face in acquiring English, including the complexity of syntax, difficulties with long words and formal structures, and differences between English and Indonesian sentence patterns. These challenges are further compounded by a lack of accessible learning materials and teachers proficient in sign language. To address these issues, participants emphasised the need for teachers to have strong sign language skills, adopt a structured learning approach that builds from basic to advanced concepts, and incorporate visual aids and simplified explanations to enhance comprehension. The research also revealed variations in sign language preferences, with some learners favouring BISINDO, others ASL, and some using a combination, underscoring the need for flexible teaching methods tailored to individual needs. Additionally, participants highlighted the vital role of interpreters in making learning more effective and expressed a desire for more opportunities to practice English in real-life contexts, such as group discussions and watching subtitled films. Ultimately, the findings stress the importance of a comprehensive, inclusive approach to English instruction that acknowledges linguistic diversity, ensures accessible resources, and equips educators with the necessary skills to support Deaf learners effectively.

This research, while providing valuable insights into the challenges and potential solutions for Deaf learners in acquiring English, has certain limitations. One key limitation is the small sample size, consisting of only ten participants from a single learning community. While their experiences offer meaningful perspectives, they may not fully represent the broader population of Deaf individuals learning English in different contexts. Additionally, the research relies on self-reported data, which, although insightful, may be influenced by personal biases or variations in individual experiences. The study also focuses primarily on learners who are already engaged in an English learning community, meaning the findings may not fully reflect the struggles of Deaf individuals who have little or no access to formal English education. Furthermore, while sign language played a central role in the research, differences in proficiency levels among participants in BISINDO and ASL may have influenced how they perceived their learning challenges and preferences.

Despite these limitations, the study offers significant pedagogical implications for improving English instruction for Deaf learners. It highlights the importance of teachers being proficient in sign language, as effective communication is crucial for explaining complex linguistic concepts. Educators should also adopt a structured, step-by-step approach, ensuring that learners build a strong foundation before progressing to more advanced topics. The findings suggest that using visual aids, simple explanations, and real-life practice opportunities, such as discussions and subtitled media, can greatly enhance language comprehension. Additionally, flexibility in teaching methods is essential, as students may have different sign language preferences and learning styles. Schools and language programs should provide accessible learning materials and, where possible, qualified interpreters to support Deaf students in their educational journey. By addressing these factors, English language instruction can become more inclusive, enabling Deaf learners to develop their skills more effectively.

For future researchers who wish to conduct similar studies, several suggestions can be made. First, it is essential to ensure that the research sample is diverse and representative of different linguistic backgrounds and experiences. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Deaf learners in different contexts. Additionally, future studies could explore the impact of different teaching methods and technologies on the English learning process for Deaf individuals. For example, researchers could investigate the effectiveness of digital tools, such as apps or online platforms, in supporting English language acquisition among Deaf learners. Finally, it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal studies that track the progress of Deaf students over time to gain insights into the long-term effectiveness of different teaching strategies and interventions.

Future studies can enhance the creation of more efficient and comprehensive English language instruction for Deaf individuals by expanding on the discoveries of this research and investigating new areas for exploration. Consequently, this can enhance the autonomy of individuals who are hearing impaired, equipping them with the necessary abilities and self-assurance to thrive in both their personal and occupational endeavours

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APPENDIX

Google Form Questions

1. *Seberapa sulit menurutmu belajar Bahasa Inggris?* (How difficult do you think it is to learn English?)
2. *Apa yang sulit paling besar waktu kamu belajar Bahasa Inggris?* (What was the biggest struggle when you were learning English?)
3. *Tolong jelaskan dengan jelas dan lengkap tentang sulitnya apa waktu kamu belajar Bahasa Inggris.* (Please explain clearly and completely what difficulties you encountered when learning English.)
4. *Menurut kamu, apa yang bisa bantu kamu belajar Bahasa Inggris supaya jadi lebih baik?* (What do you think can help you learn English better?)
5. *Tolong jelaskan beri solusi atau saran gimana cara supaya kita bisa belajar Bahasa Inggris lebih baik dan bagus. Jelaskan lengkap ya supaya jelas.* (Please explain give solutions or suggestions on how we can learn English better and better. Explain completely so that it is clear.)
6. *Bahasa isyarat penting dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris?* (Is sign language important in learning English?)
7. *Apa kamu pakai BISINDO atau ASL waktu belajar Bahasa Inggris?* (Do you use Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia (BISINDO) or American Sign Language (ASL) when learning English?)
8. *Gampang pakai BISINDO atau ASL waktu belajar Bahasa Inggris? Tolong jelaskan kenapa lebih gampang.* (Is it easier to use BISINDO or ASL when learning English? Please explain why it's easier.)
9. *Tolong kasi saran/masukan untuk buat belajar Bahasa Inggris jadi lebih gampang untuk Tuli. Tolong jelaskan ya supaya lebih jelas.* (Please give advice/input to make learning English easier for Deaf people. Please explain so that it is clearer.)