

## SENSE MAKING OF KNOWLEDGE AMONG DEAF PEOPLE OF “JABODETABEK”

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### ABSTRACT

*The world of deaf is a kind of ‘terra cognita’ to many heard individuals. Surely, the deaf have the reciprocal interaction on information seeking, the meaning ascribed and action with other individuals, heard and unheard. How is the deaf sense-making of knowledge at work? What is the dynamics between these two worlds? In this exploratory paper the theory of relational dialectic theory by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) has been applied to understand the above dynamics. Qualitative research design employed in this study using an in-depth interview with a thematic analysis drawn from the data collected. A total of 9 deaf people from “Jabodetabek” (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) area participated in this conversation-with-a-purpose engagement. The qualitative data revealed tension-of-the-deaf where the nature of knowledge are bounded by the deaf experience with the hearing world; thus, it revealed that the influence of family communication style in listening effectiveness applied differently; the power of sign language competency and the ability of the deaf in negotiating their identity came as a solution to the tension within communication in relationship between the deaf and the hearing world in their sense-making process, it honors differences; treating deaf like ‘people’; and it privileges listening that build respect and safety. Thus, this research added an under-presented knowledge of sense-making among deaf as a reflexivity of the author, family who have deaf member and society at large.*

Key words: Deaf, knowledge, relational dialectic theory, sign language, sense making.

### INTRODUCTION

The world of deaf is a world of ‘differences’ [from us, the hearing community]. It is a realm of ‘silence’ (Francis, 2014). Some deaf do cry for normalcy; often forced to ‘speak’ like the heard; anger towards the hearing world for not being able in understanding their gaps; feeling of suppression and abnormality. Many deaf are suffering from “stranger anxiety”; emotional turmoil of physically and culturally different in their own living world (Sacks, 1989). In many occasions, deaf perspectives are often being ‘neutralized’ by the hearing society, where negativism are converted towards the deaf by saying that “it is okay being a deaf”; “deaf can understand the way we (hearing) do, nothing is different”. Sociologically speaking, the deaf is having the third status of membership in the society, where in everyday experience; they were not posited as neither ‘friend’ nor ‘alien’; and described themselves as “a bird in the cage” (Maxwell & Doyle, 1996), for being oppressed; prejudiced and discriminated. However, some other deaf take pride in being deaf. “Being deaf is significantly advantage” stated by deaf blogger David Peter at Gizmodo, 2012. No matter what, the deaf is part of the whole community, and they want to be acknowledged as such. In Indonesia, as reported by the Social Department, the deaf populations in 2012 were about 2 million (Poskotanews.com, 2015). Perhaps the number should be bigger as the unreported cases are uncommon in the country. In Bahasa Indonesia, deaf is known as *tuli/ tunarungu*.

Surely, deaf are communicators, where they have and receive messages. In this regard sense-making knowledge of the deaf is at work in relation to deaf understanding, the knowledge gathered in building up their point of view upon understanding a phenomenon, with different perspectives; diverse sensibility and feasibility from the hearing. Generally, deaf has their own way of organizing their activity on information seeking, meaning ascription and action. In a nutshell, deaf has their own version in sense-making of knowledge, whereby processing in good communications, give meaning to experience, and completion of puzzle that helps to rationalize the deaf action and understanding. Therefore, it construed, sense-making is an issue of communication (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005), namely on ‘linguaging’ and talk. As a term, ‘linguaging’ is relating to the cognitive process of negotiating and producing meaningful, comprehensible output as part of language learning process (Swain, 1985); talk as a verb means to communicate, to exchange ideas or information by speaking. The deaf speaks. Delphie (2006) observed that most of the deaf has language problem that intricate their communication ability.

A similar issue in Indonesia, where Wasito, Sarwindah & Sulistiani (2010) found that many *tuli/ tunarungu* are struggling in communicating with their own family and facing a lot of hurdles in adapting to the surrounding. Meanwhile, many Indonesians from the hearing society were expecting the deaf to talk and learn orally just like the ‘normal’ people. Here, the deaf negotiate about their identity and struggling to be accepted by the hearing community. Yet, it is effortless that neither inclusive nor welcoming by the hearing world (McEwen, Roper, Bryant & Langa, 1990). Pathologically, mindfulness of communication by the society and families with the deaf is not rigorous. The competency level of listening skill and knowing a proper [sign] language to talk with the deaf is not professionally high. The above deficiencies make the deaf living in the state of high anxiety, at least as seen with the researcher’s own deaf sibling. “*He engages and isolates himself with the deaf community. He resists talking with the hearing community. My own family has the inability to dialogically speak to him*”. Personally, the process of recovering the sound of silence, when not understand the deaf sense-making, is a tiring exercise.

This paper is to explore how sense-making of knowledge among the deaf affected by listening capability at family communication style; to evaluate the importance of sign language; and to investigate how the process of negotiating identity affecting the process of sense-making. Theoretically, knowledge on the process of sense-making among deaf is under-presented, and limited. This work is an attempt to enrich the understanding on and about the deaf via applying the relational dialectic theory as the device of investigation. The above knowledge is important for the researcher reflexivity that happens to have a deaf sibling. Similarly, for the family who have deaf children and the hearing community at large. The findings could acts as intelligence for the hearing community, in particular Indonesians where the level of inclusion with the deaf is discouraged (Al-Khashrmi, 2000).

## RELATIONAL DIALECTICS THEORY

The Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) concept was introduced by Baxter and Montgomery in 1988. The concept focuses on contradictions in relationships. Yet in that contradictions and differences, a totality of relationship is being sustained. The RDT posits that the nature of the relationship is upholding praxis. Such dialectics is never free from creative tension (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), where between communicators the theory has the spirit of opposites/contrary forces like yin and yang. In my observation, this tension is peculiar in the deaf world. Simply, RDT favored its focused in understanding of meaning and meaning making; thus, language is regarded as a central to the experience. (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996)

We articulate that the theory with the communication approach among deaf is able to reveal how the deaf make their sense-making on everyday life activities. There are various occasion on how such making is constructed, it might occurred and reflected by the socio-cultural influence, by individual experiences or by the family influences (Burr, 2003; Pearce 1995). The meaning making might occur as well by the position of centripetal and centrifugal meanings. "The centripetal is easily legitimated as normative, typical, and natural, and thus it functions as a baseline against which all else is somehow positioned as a deviation. By contrast, the centrifugal margins are positioned as non-normative, off-center, unnatural, and somehow deviant." (Baxter, 2014). In elaboration, the centripetal meaning in the deaf is imbued by normative or by those who hold a privilege position over them, something that deaf think it is natural or they have to obey, such as parents as an authoritative unit. However, the centrifugal meaning in the deaf will occurred when they feel marginalized, when they feel the way things should be according to them isn't the same as the way things are by the person they are in contact with. Such difference between centripetalism and centrifugalism will disrupts the meaning making process (Baxter, 2011). Surely, we believe in managing this relational dialectics both parties may resort to the following tactics: Alternation, denial, segmentation, disorientation, balance, reaffirmation and integration. We believe, RDT could explain the dynamic tension of sense-making of knowledge among the deaf, in particular about how meaning is constructed through language between people (Baxter & Norwood, 2015).

## SENSE-MAKING IN COMMUNICATION

Since the study is about the social relationship (communication) between the deaf and the hearing world, we are focusing on Karl Weick's term (2001) of sense-making, that is an issue of language and communication, namely languaging and talk, that involves how deaf developed images of their interpretation and rationalize that into their own understanding or according to the community norms (s)he is living into. Premises of sense-making itself is that, it assumes that reality is a discontinuity of gaps; it's a constant changing by a products of human observations of reality, and by having an interaction and mindful communication, the responds and action is changing and thus, able to break an old perspectives that has been structured to one's mind (Mustafa & Ahmad, 2007).

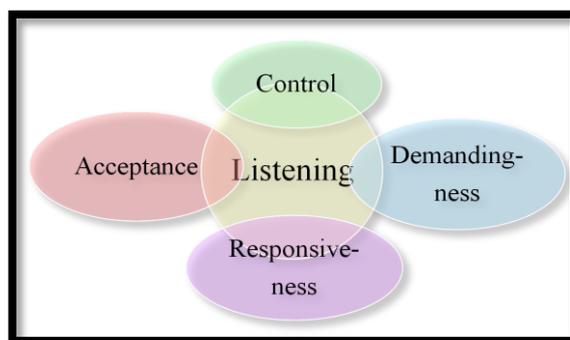
Mills (2003) explained that the nature of sense-making is the central role of how people would behave; where their action and identity being constrained. As such a failure in this type of negotiation could turn the deaf to distant or anger; but when it's successfully negotiated, their self esteem shall be empowered (Laroche, 1996; Lane, 2002; Weick, 1993). Since sense-making is equivocal; the unfolding voice that cannot be obscured only by the language, but appreciating things that may look significant for the deaf but insignificant by the hearing, because it can have large consequences (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Sense-making starts with noticing and bracketing the events, collecting all the pictures and match it just like a puzzle. It is also about labeling that streamed from the experience happened towards the deaf. Similarly, it is about presumptions and influences of variety of social factors, especially that coming from their own deaf community (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Not to be forgotten, mindfulness in communication is central to go through the process of sense-making; an interactive talk and mindfulness resulted a better understanding, and lower concern on communication resulted resistance among deaf towards the hearing world.

After all in that communicative action, people use the available information to make-sense of *situation present-ness* and construct their point of view (Mustafa & Ahmad, 2007). The situation presentness is adapted from gestalt therapy, refers to where contact and awareness in there and now is being appreciated; the concrete actuality, where deaf needs to be recognized as a member and being included. We believe situation presentness is pivotal in sense-making process of the deaf. Indeed, the mindfulness of communication and level of concern are needed in the process of sense-making as both lead to the successful process of how the interpretation and negotiation of the message conveyed, vice versa (Weick, 2009). Therefore, to be able to understand the equivocal perception is vital when the deaf is capable to accept or questioning the unclear message towards something they might already knew, the associations of sense-making in relation to listening and family communication style, the sign language competency and negotiating identity are explained.

### A. LISTENING & FAMILY COMMUNICATION STYLE

As mentioned above situations play an important role in a successful communicative action within the deaf (Mustafa & Ahmad, 2007). The capability of listening skills depends largely with family style communication (Epstein, et al. 1993). Being an active listener means involving your effort to understand other people's point of view (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Parents are the most important role that brings up how the communication between its members should be. It is not just a mere communications but also in bringing up the characters, personality and intelligence of each member to communicate with larger society as well as empowering their children identity (Somantri, 2006; Syahwandri, 2013). Graham & Crossan (1996) argued that family communication challenge was not because of the lack of money but the lack of time spent; family with busy schedule has difficult time to find a meaningful conversation.

Figure 1: Family communication style



Syahwandri (2013) applied four dimensions in family communication style: First, *Demandingness*: described how parents dictated their standard towards their own children, and mostly by force; Second, *Control*: the dimension where it shows the level of parents' effort to regulate their children's behavior and activity according to their rules, parents' power are highly authoritative. A high authority in family communication lead to lower listening ability, where emotion unshared and different opinion are less valued (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b); Third, *Responsiveness*: where we measure how parents responded their own children, involving the children to every discussion and to solve problems together, in this dimension parents shows their love with their action and behavior as well as understanding their needs; Fourth is *Acceptance*: here parents shows not only to involve children in discussion but also to listen their wants, desire, complain, dreams mindfully; accepting of who they are. Syahwandri (2013) and Lestari (2016) clarify that family who hold an acceptance and high respond to their deaf children tend to listen more, every desire, complain, dreams and encouragement towards their deaf member, and thus, resulted in easier process of sense-making

## B. SIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCY

Sign language is an important entity for the deaf and the hearing in order to be able to understand deaf world clearly. The deaf need sign language in order to face the environment and interact with it; to build their empathy skill in order to open up to different thought; shaping their learning development; and ease both parties to receive a clear transmission of the message to succeed the sense-making process of knowledge (Allothman, 2014; Marschark, 1997; Paul, 1998; Poepplmeyer, 1995). Lestari (2016) argued that language enable us to deal and have a good talk/conversation; to influence their insight and emotional intelligence (Somantri, 2006). Practically, competency of using sign language smoothen the sense-making process (Gumperz & Cook, 1982). It empowers the identity of the deaf as a capital for inclusion, not integration, with the hearing community. Hergarty, et al (1981) explained that inclusive system provide an accessibility to whole opportunities as enjoyed by the hearing community. For example, be able to responds the diversity, to listen to different voices, to be able to empower all members, respect and recognize different individual needs with their complexity and different identity. Thus, by knowing sign language, the process of sense-making will be easier.

## C. NEGOTIATING IDENTITY

The deaf world-views were often being ignored by the hearing world. Perhaps such anomic treatment is a myth based upon ideas that the deaf are sub-standardized species in term of literacy or thinking skills (Fearon, 2013). Implicitly, such false consciousness catapulted the hearing community as the superior to the deaf, and some of them even satisfied in doing so!

For the deaf an identity is an issue of struggle between bodies, as the individual who tries to fulfill own self-demand of understanding their deafness and the demand of the society (Frenk, 2011). One might resist being swallowed by the hearing society standard; others might negotiate in order to survive the socio-cultural life by trying to blend in and to prove that they are normal and capable like the hearers. Deaf identity is an account for their personal life; it can be influenced by the environments, families, experience and the surrounding for the way they see things, perceives and belief. McCall (1978) noted that the core processes of individuals' reflexive self-conceptions are formed via symbolic communication with others. Basically, in negotiating identity as a transactional interaction process, individuals make attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images. Contextually, negotiation among the deaf is to create a satisfactory outcome of how they see themselves among the hearing world, the feeling of being understood; more open minded; respected, and

supported. However, to negotiate is not an easy task though as many in the hearing community viewed deafness as nuisance. Similarly, many deaf people perceived deafness as handicapped not disabled being.

## METHODOLOGY

This case study employs a qualitative research design. This design involves in-depth interviews as the main method of collecting data. Interviews are being construed as talk-with-purpose-as-data, and in that engagement the spirit of awareness in the present and 'presentness' are highly observed. In due course, respondents' perspectives on a particular idea or issue are excavated. This action is not about the superiority of the researcher over the researched as the method is an 'inter view', an interchange of views between two persons (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). A list of questions prepared based upon the issues to be investigated, acts as the aide-mémoire. Other methods employed include documents analysis, and participant observation. Methods are ways to understand and explain the social phenomena under study (Myers & Salovey 1997). Ethical standard of using natural setting and natural approach gives the researcher an opportunity of not manipulating phenomenon or data collected (Patton, 2002). By adhering to the standard, the researcher is able to study the phenomena within the specific context of engagement. Qualitative methodology basically covers data interpretation/analysis as well; to describes, decode, transcribe, translate the natural setting that happen in the social worlds in order to make sense of the meanings that people brings differently into their very own interpretations (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

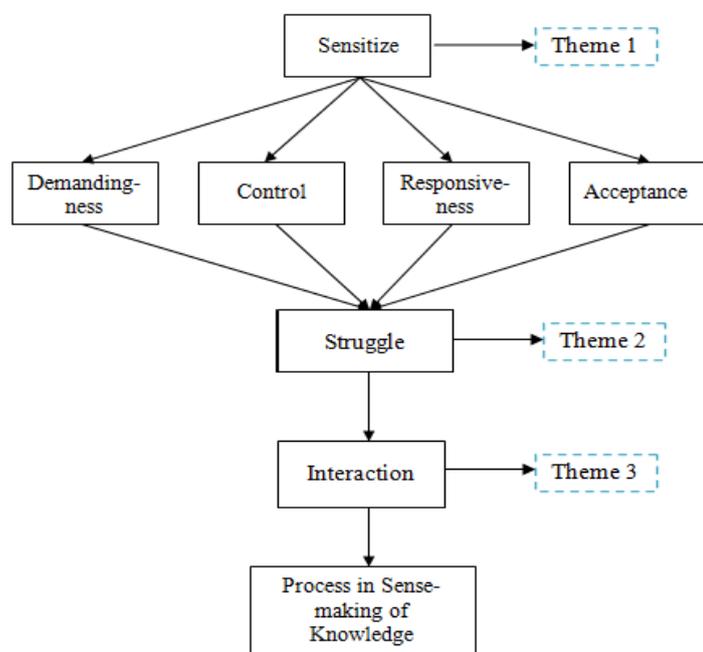
Patton, (2002) argued that a case study is a research that seek intensive data, implicitly and explicitly, from individuals as subject of research. 9 deaf respondents participated in this study, and most of them lived around "Jabodetabek" (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi), aged 18 years old above by using a snowballing sampling method referred by the Founder of Little Hijabi Homeschooling- Bekasi. This small number of participants are related to the issue on accessibility to the data.

- Informant 1 (T, 48) – Jakarta (Depok), deaf couple who have a hearing daughter;
- Informant 2 (W, 27) from Serang – Tangerang, her parents own a school for special children;
- Informant 3 & 4 (D, 18) and informant 5 (M, 22), deaf siblings, migrated from Ciamis – West Java to Bekasi;
- Informant 5 (A, 27), a deaf widower with a deaf mother – North Bekasi;
- Informant 6 (F, 27) a deaf head of school at The Little Hijabi Homeschooling (LHH) – East Bekasi;
- Informant 7 (L, 33) a deaf instructor from LHH – East Bekasi;
- Informant 8 (N, 27) the researcher own deaf sibling – North Bekasi;
- Informant 9 (G, 39) the owner and the founder of LHH – East Bekasi

Decision were made not to pick any younger participant in order to get deeper data from elder deaf perspectives who has faces 'real life' situation in surviving the world today. In qualitative research design the researcher is the instrument. As such the researcher is as much part of the inquiry. (S)he is inside, not outside; the inquiry process. In this regard, the researcher owns experiences, personal intellectual concerns, reflections and assumptions about knowledge feed the study (Joffe, 2012). Having said the above, the trustworthiness of the data is the bedrock in qualitative research (Flick, 2018). As such note taking while doing the talk, or having a translator while interviewing participants are highly observed. In addition, a closed transcription of data is provided to future researchers. In detail, an audited trail of the research is being reported and recorded. The trail is a transparent description of the research such as raw data, field notes, process notes, personal notes, theoretical notes and summaries (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), from the beginning until the end.

In this work, a thematic analysis is being employed with an emphasis on three major themes, adapted from Syahwandri (2013). Summarily, their relatedness is not to be generalized. Thus, further explanation is elaborated below section under the rubric of Analysis

Figure 2: Thematic framework



## ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

A thematic analysis has been used to highlight pattern of meaning that illustrate important phenomenon under the study (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman, 1997). The theme can be derived from the theoretical idea deductively or from the raw data itself inductively. Indeed, thematic analysis is among the most systematic and transparent form of work in qualitative research design whereby the depth of analysis of the data (Joffe, 2012) is not being sacrificed. Benefit of thematic analysis is that researchers can go beyond the theoretical boundaries.

### THEME 1: SENSITIZE

Listening skill helps in mindfulness of communication between the two people or more, and it is an agent in smoothing the process of sense-making. Poor listening lead to poor understanding. Hence, by being an active listener, one is expected to understand the other point of view, more watchful to verbal/non-verbal signs and messages of the deaf (Peterson, 2009). In this light, listening capability is related to how communication works within the family. It said that deaf people who have better sense-making of knowledge process are those living within the engendered of mindful environment (Somantri, 2006).

There are four dimensions of family communication styles introduced by Syahwandri (2013) in his previous research: **Demanding-ness, control, responsiveness and acceptance**. Those families who functions each dimension equally are the best in providing positivity to the process of sense-making, yet it is hardly being found in our study. Meanwhile, in our case study, families that adopted weak *Responsiveness* in their communication create deaf inferiority that would disrupt the sense-making process of knowledge. Informant (G,39), the founder of LHH School reveals,

*(F,27) and (I,33) are coming from a family that less responsiveness to their verbal and non-verbal message or behavior; (F) is having inferiority complex. He thinks he is incapable, helpless and useless. Meanwhile, (I) did try to kill herself. Their families do not engage in meaningful communication, not too responsive to their behavioral messages, and tend to communicate shortly. It is a hung up. In this umbrageous situation, the family is not being able to detect or read what is going on with both of them. This entire shortfall distracted their sense-making process.*

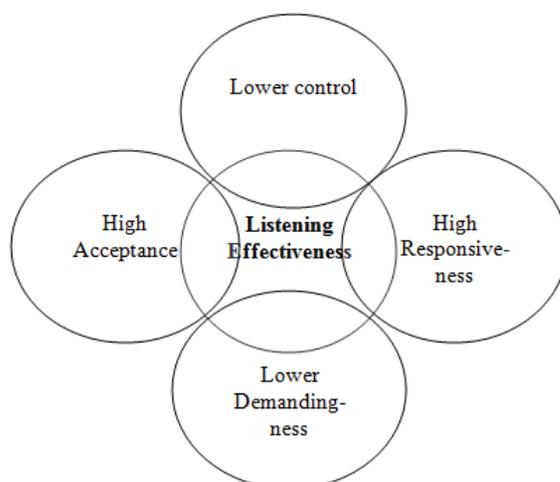
Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002b) observed that the families with lower responsiveness tend to have weaker communication that prevents the orientation of sense-making process. Syahwandri (2013) argued that the effectiveness of listening in higher **Control** and higher **Demanding-ness** family is lower, because parents tend to regulate their children behavior and activity according to what they think its best. Informant (T,48) explains,

*My parents did not allow me to bring my friends home to stay over, did not allow me to work independently. They did not encourage me to share my opinion whenever the rest of member having discussions. I think they do not want me to disturb their flow. I have to wait until the last moment when decision has been made. They just want to inform me about the decision. I feel angry about it. I cannot do anything because I am deaf, He he he. I think my family does not want to make my life difficult.*

(T) is disappointed for being sidelined although she is happy with her family. (T) is living in a state of praxis. (T) thinks she is being less valued as her opinions not being attended and listened to. Baxter, (2011) said that family communication style shapes how we interact in every context in our lives. Things that look insignificant to the heard might be significant to the deaf. For (T) being present should include the idea of presentness, it is important in her sense-making of knowledge and to feel less discriminated. Indeed being part of the flow is like completing a puzzle. This is about appreciation in the process of understanding and sense-making, noted Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, (2005).

To informants of (D, 18 & A, 27) their world is empty, without feeling of being appreciated, they feel inferior as their father is having high irresponsiveness communication style. This response is similar with Syahwandri (2013); the inferiority feeling and lower self-confidence are resulted from the lower mindfulness in communication with family members. Both (A) and (D) fight a lot with their father, not because they want to, but because their father did not respond enough and did not giving them chance to speak out. For this reason they label their father as someone that is less loving person. Surely, this experience of deficiency shapes and colored communicative behavior and action (Taylor & Van Every, 2000) of (A) and (D). with their father.

Figure 3: Listening effectiveness



The figure shows how effectiveness of listening can be succeed when there are lower demand and control; and high responsiveness and acceptance applied inside the family communication style. In addition, the case of high *Acceptance* family communication style can be seen in the case of informant (M). Her mother tells,

*(M) got divorced just after a week of being married, she was not only hurt, but she felt that she is being fooled by people who are taking advantage of her deafness. After becoming a divorcee, she isolates herself, did not talk to anyone at all except her family. She cries a lot."*

Her mother tries her best to listen and toughened her heart with the new life situation. Even though she might not be able to talk much, but she has a high *Acceptance* to her children, especially to (M). This is in line to Syahwandri. (2013) and Lestari (2016) works that family who hold an acceptance to their deaf children tend to listen more, every desire, complain, dreams and encouragement towards their deaf member, and thus, resulted in easier process of sense-making. For that reason, listening effectiveness are differ depending to which family communication style applied.

## THEME 2: STRUGGLE

This theme put in a nutshell each participant's struggle in dealing with the hearing world especially, when it comes to talk with sign language. Most normal people of the hearing community tend to converse orally and they thought the deaf were able to grasp the whole message conveyed. As suggested by Gadamer, (1989) to reach an understanding of communication, one needs to understand the language of the individual. In that capacity, coherence and sensibility of the message can be captured. Indeed unable to interact meaningfully could leads to emotional instability and vulnerability among the deaf. In that state of uncertainty (red: helplessness), the process to make sense of their emotions, desire, thought and opinion is incomplete.

Informant (T, 48) has experienced the above torment: *"Offended, and left out. I asked them what they were discussing about but they asked me to wait till the decision has been made. My family does not use sign language, they told me to use oral and gesture as it will be beneficial for me to communicate with the hearing people. Surely I can't express everything freely, so I got angry many times with them. Deep inside I am getting mad with myself."*

Additionally, (F) says: *"My family is clueless with my expectations. They think it is enough to talk to by asking how is my day, have I eaten something, etc. They were thinking that by being able to talk in gesture or oral, they have done enough communication with me"*. In communicating with his family, (F) was quite all the time, because he feel that their parents is not capable to make sense of his desire, wants and dream. But this situation might not as worst as happened to informant (I). Since joining LHH (I) becomes a cheerful person. She is every student's favorite. No one sees it coming, not even her family. One day (I) gave up with her life by drinking a mosquito liquid repellent. (I) explained,

*Seeing everyone in my family talking normally, I felt that I'm cursed by being deaf, my parents is not able to talk to me the way they talk to my other siblings, my youngest sister is getting married, and I'm here being shadowed. I feel that I am useless.*

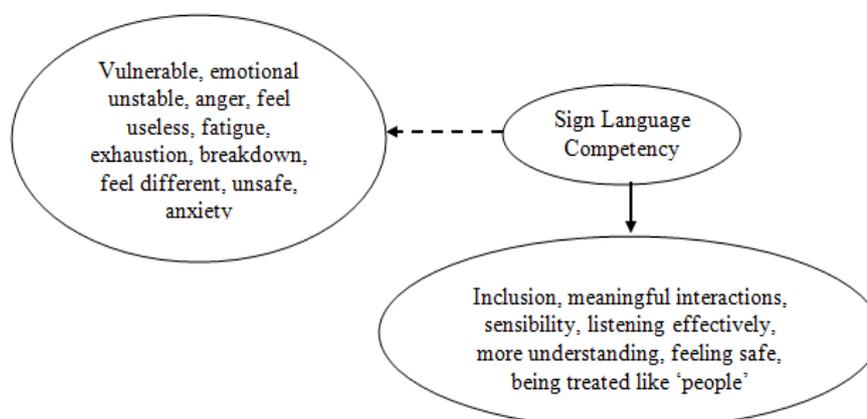
Poepplmeyer (1995) and Lestari (2016) explained that using sign language would enable the deaf to relate their emotionality with others. Somantri (2006) noted that inability to speak similar language in a conversation could drive participants into breakdown, fatigue and exhaustion. Informant (A) narrates, *"My father often threatened to kick me out of the house if he could not endure while talking to me. He fights with me and he fights my mother too. I think he is having high anxiety in communicating with the deaf. I think he is very angry with himself for not able to communicate sufficiently with me."*

Unlike (A), (D) is withholding his emotion. His mother translates, *(D) often goes into fight with his father whenever they are communicating, his father is weaker than me in communicating with his children, (D) and his father fights a lot, and then (D) locked himself off in his room"*.

Meanwhile (W) has different story to tell. *"My parents has taught me and taught all my family members to talk in sign language, being familiar with the oral as well as the gesture, this helped me a lot to convey my opinion, desire and feelings, and every time there are misunderstanding between us can be easily tackled in a short time"*.

In relation to the above, informant G advices that, *"Every family member has to be open towards inclusion, listen to their children, teach them how to love themselves to heightened their self-awareness and self-acceptance, make time to sit and talk to them using their language. At Little Hijabi Homeschooling, we tell students and parents to listen more than talking, learn sign language so they will be able to listen the 'unheard' voices. This is why every Thursday I open free sign language class to parents, and also teach our students to listen and talk with animals, plants, flower, for them to be able to feel more and listen deeper"*.

Figure 2: Sign language competency



Hence, the above figure shows the influence of sign language competency, in which incompetency to communicate with sign language with the deaf may occur several breakdown mentioned towards the deaf members, while competency in communicating with sign language creates positive outcome among deaf, and thus the process of sense-making is at ease.

### THEME 3: INTERACTION

Senghas & Monaghan (2002) explained negotiating identity as the interactive attitude of inclusion and exclusion in accepting differences. In this study, it refers to the ability of the deaf to integrate between their worlds of deafness with the hearing world. In that communicative action participants could achieve their dialectical self-awareness.

Informant (W) has been able to indulge herself by interacting with the hearing world even though she knew her situation completely without feeling inferior. Her family helps by accepting (W) as she is. The family provides positive responsiveness towards her, being a good listener and mastered the sign language. Her mother says,

*In the beginning (W) felt that she is different, but I did my best to teach her how not to feel different, I communicate and share our opinion, until (W) is able to open up her mind, to talk in sign language, oral and gesture, now (W) has been able to negotiate her identity, to have herself acceptance of herself.*

In a similar vein, (T) notes, *I might feel angry, sometimes. I used to be bullied by being deaf and different, but I learn to stand up for myself, Thank God that I have 2 brother who also deaf, they helped a lot getting through this when we were child, now I'm well aware and accept myself.*

According to Cummins (2000), the failure of negotiating identity can be consequences towards dis-empowering relationship between the deaf and the normal people and feeling of being discriminated. Informant (G) concurs: *"one of my reasons to open the mainstream inclusion educational system for the deaf is to give them courage to accept the fact that they are deaf people. To provide them with high self-esteem because, I want them to have self-awareness as the servant of God, as His creation".*

The above point is similar to findings given by Alothman (2014) and Al-Khashrmi (2004), noted that having inclusive education gives benefit to the deaf in learning development. The system nurtures them to have positive attitudes and accepting themselves as the deaf people. The mother of informant (D) and (M) laments,

*Maybe if I can talk in sign language, and my kids were studying as well, they will be more independent and more sociable to other people. (D) and (M) will only sit at home when they off from work, they will not do anything, not even want to help me to buy something in shop, I have to walk myself.*

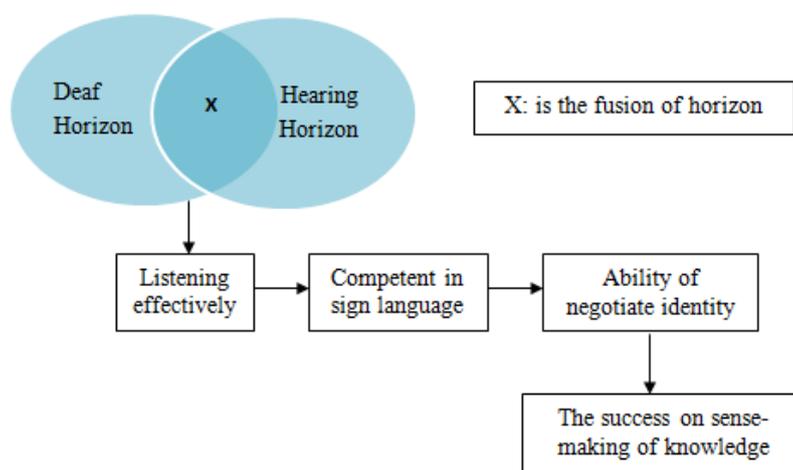
Indeed, to be able to negotiate with one's own identity is not easy. Informant (F) and informant (I) had gone a lot of pain before reaching the state of accepting their bodies as such. In that journey both of them endure intimidation, discrimination or even frustration that end up with harming their own bodies. Now their family tries their best to communicate with them, indulge them in sharing their feeling and opinion, and listen to their point of view. Nowadays, both (F) and (I) has been able to negotiate

better, understand their presence and situation and aware of being different but has persistent that they can be as good as the hearing people.

Simply, negotiation identity among the deaf will create a satisfactory outcome of how they see themselves among the hearing world, if their emotions being understood, their mind being respected, and their communicative action being supported (Ting Toomey, 1994). Additionally, the deaf should be welcome by the hearing world.

## CONCLUSION

The process of sense-making of knowledge is not merely completing the puzzle and picture that fall to pieces and try to understand it. There are processes that relate to one another to support the process of sense-making itself. In relational dialectic theory communication is about the tension dynamics in relationship, a movement of up and down; similarity and differences; calm and tension. The success of sense-making process draws within the fusion of horizon in between the tension of the deaf and the hearing relationship in communication. Its shows that an affective listening draws from the family communication style who applied lower control and demand, yet having high respond and acceptance towards their deaf member. For that reason RDT focus on language in order to enables us to understand the process of sense-making. Additionally, the competency of sign language is proven to be one of the vital factors in order to integrate the process based on the interview analyzed. Moreover, to be able to make sense, the deaf also need to be able to negotiate their identity, because the process is emerges on how deaf struggle being different, discourses. When the ability to negotiate is achieved, deaf would be able to capitulate between their concepts and others point of view, open their mind, empower the relationship between deaf and the hearing worlds and to accept and love themselves without feeling inferiority.



In suggestion to solution the fusion of horizon must be bigger, whereby the “dialogicality” is needed to support the process. Dialogue means respecting relationship, it is about mine-and-yours activity (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001), the mediation to the rings where dynamic tension occurred within communication of both parties, to where we learn perspectives and experiences of others, exploring another context of meaning that changes from time to time, the differences and the similarities. Here, a person not only concern to what being said rather than listening carefully to what the other says, it includes risk and safety where deaf might feel uncomfortable; unfamiliar in using different form of communication to the hearer; and scared of differences, but with dialogicality the deaf will not hold back in communicating and does not feel insecure for letting out their opinion because the hearing honors the relationships. Thus, dialogicality provides safety. RDT has shown numerous tensions displayed in thematical findings that occurred during the process of sense-making. Simply, this work suggests the importance of listening, language competency and positive identity negotiation in order to achieve the sense-making of knowledge among deaf. Hopefully future research on the deaf, at least in Indonesia would apply this (RDT) theory for the betterment of the society. *Let the bird in the cage fly freely.*

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