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Postmodern Perspectives on Teaching Deaf Culture through Inclusive BISINDO Classrooms: Hearing Students Micro-Narratives

Bagus Dwi Bramantyo[1*], Tuti Widiastuti[2], Yohanes Arie Kuncoroyakti[3]
[1,2,3]Doctoral Communication Science Program, Universitas Gunadarma, Depok, Jawa Barat, Indonesia
Email: [1*]bagusdwibramm@gmail.com, [2]tuti.widiastuti@staff.gunadarma.ac.id,
[3]yohanes_ari@staff.gunadarma.ac.id

Abstract

The shift from medical to socio cultural perspectives on disability has positioned Deaf culture as a legitimate form of knowledge. In this context, Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) serves not only as a communication tool but also as a key marker of Deaf identity and cultural transmission. This study explores how Deaf culture is taught in inclusive BISINDO classrooms organized by GERKATIN, focusing on hearing students' experiences as forms of micro-narratives. Using a qualitative, constructivist approach and drawing on Jean François Lyotard's postmodern theory, data were collected through interviews and observations involving four hearing students and one Deaf teacher. The findings show that BISINDO classrooms challenge dominant assumptions that prioritize spoken language. The use of visual communication creates moments of discomfort and adaptation for hearing students, which become important parts of the learning process. Students' experiences reveal that learning Deaf culture produces diverse interpretations rather than a single meaning. Additionally, Deaf teachers are recognized as legitimate knowledge holders based on lived experience. Overall, the study highlights BISINDO classrooms as spaces that promote knowledge diversity and shift traditional power relations in education.

Keywords: *Deaf Culture, BISINDO, Inclusive Education, Micro-Narratives, Postmodernism*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the way disability has been understood within academic discourse has shifted considerably. Public perceptions of persons with disabilities are often constrained by social stigma, which regards physical, sensory, and intellectual impairments as barriers to optimal participation and contribution (Natalia & Winayanti, 2025). Contemporary perspectives, however, increasingly situate disability within social and cultural contexts. This shift challenges the assumption that bodily difference is synonymous with deficiency. Instead, disability is now recognized as part of human diversity, intertwined with identity formation and alternative ways of perceiving and engaging with the world (Oliver, 2013). Within this broader transformation, the Deaf community has emerged as a particularly significant site of inquiry.

Research in communication studies on Deaf cultural phenomena has predominantly emphasized message effectiveness, communication strategies, and patterns of interaction, often underpinned by the assumption that spoken language represents the primary and

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universal form of communication. Nevertheless, within the field of communication, the study of Deaf culture can also serve as a critical avenue for examining how meaning is negotiated in diverse communicative situations, particularly when interlocutors possess different sensory orientations and cultural backgrounds, such as in interactions between hearing and Deaf individuals.

According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2020, approximately 22.97 million Indonesians are persons with disabilities, including around 1.8 million individuals with hearing impairments (KemenPANRB, 2024). While hearing loss is often framed as a communicative obstacle, scholars such as (Padden & Humphries, 2006) remind us that deafness cannot be reduced to a biological condition alone. It also encompasses a distinct linguistic system, shared cultural values, and a collective identity rooted in sign language practices. To speak of deafness, therefore, is to speak not merely of absence, but of a different presence one constituted through visual language and embodied interaction.

Despite this, spoken language continues to dominate public and institutional life in Indonesia, particularly in education. Communication systems grounded in sound remain normative, while visual gestural modalities are frequently marginalized (Fjord, 2003). In such contexts, Deaf individuals are often positioned as those who must adjust to hearing centered norms, rather than being acknowledged as bearers of legitimate cultural and epistemic authority. This imbalance reflects broader structural inequalities, where Deaf culture and sign language remain insufficiently recognized in public discourse (O'Connell, 2024).

Within Indonesia, two sign systems are widely known: Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia (SIBI) and Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia (BISINDO). SIBI, influenced by American Sign Language (ASL), has been formally endorsed for use in special education settings. In contrast, BISINDO is widely regarded by the Deaf community as a natural language, characterized by regional variation and lived usage (Bramantyo & Fitriani, 2019). For many Deaf individuals, BISINDO is not simply a communicative tool but a marker of identity and belonging.

Gerakan untuk Kesejahteraan Tunarungu Indonesia (GERKATIN) has played a crucial role in advocating for the recognition of BISINDO and the broader rights of the Deaf community. Through its language center, Pusat Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia (Pusbisindo), GERKATIN organizes BISINDO classes that are frequently attended by hearing participants. These classes are designed not only to teach sign language but also to introduce learners to Deaf cultural norms through direct interaction with Deaf teachers (Clara, 2019)

What distinguishes these classes from conventional language programs is their pedagogical orientation. Visual communication becomes the primary medium of interaction, spoken language use is deliberately restricted, and learning is grounded in embodied practice. In this environment, hearing participants must adjust to Deaf communicative norms. This reversal is significant. It temporarily disrupts the usual hierarchy in which Deaf individuals are expected to conform to hearing-dominated settings.

For hearing students, such an experience can be unsettling. Feelings of confusion, communicative vulnerability, and uncertainty often surface. Yet these moments of discomfort are not merely incidental; they invite learners to reconsider assumptions about language, authority, and normalcy. Learning in this context involves more than acquiring vocabulary. It entails encountering a different cultural logic. Each participant navigates this process differently, producing diverse reflections shaped by personal background, expectations, and classroom encounters.

Discussions of inclusive education often focus on access and accommodation interpreters, assistive devices, or policy adjustments (McDermid, 2020). However, as (Slee, 2018) argues, inclusion cannot be reduced to technical provision. It demands a reconfiguration of knowledge hierarchies, communication norms, and power relations within learning spaces. Inclusion, in this sense, is not neutral; it involves contestation over whose knowledge counts.

From this perspective, BISINDO classrooms may be understood not simply as educational programs but as sites where epistemic authority is rearranged (Bramantyo et al., 2025). Deaf teachers are positioned as legitimate sources of knowledge, while hearing students enter as learners who must navigate unfamiliar communicative terrain. What is at stake here is not only language acquisition but the negotiation of cultural legitimacy.

This dynamic resonates strongly with Jean François Lyotard's postmodern critique of grand narratives. In *The Postmodern Condition*, (Lyotard, 1984) describes postmodernity as marked by "incredulity toward metanarratives" skepticism toward overarching frameworks that claim universal truth, such as narratives of rationality, progress, or normality. These metanarratives function to standardize knowledge while marginalizing alternative forms of understanding.

Postmodern thought challenges this hierarchy by foregrounding localized and situated accounts of meaning (Lyotard, 1984). Lyotard refers to these as micro-narratives specific, contextual stories through which individuals interpret their lived realities. In the context of BISINDO classes, the reflections of hearing students can be approached as micro-narratives. Through their accounts, Deaf culture is encountered not as an abstract concept but as a lived presence that unsettles taken for granted assumptions.

Deaf culture itself may be understood as an autonomous narrative grounded in visual epistemology, embodied expression, and collective identity (Mayer & Trezek, 2023). BISINDO classrooms thus operate as spaces where alternative forms of knowledge are not merely accommodated but foregrounded. Rather than assimilating Deaf practices into hearing frameworks, these spaces affirm their legitimacy on their own terms.

Lyotard's concept of paralogy further illuminates this process. Paralogy refers to the production of new knowledge through disruption rather than consensus (Lyotard, 1984). Knowledge emerges not from smooth agreement but from tension, difference, and negotiation.

Existing studies on BISINDO in Indonesia have primarily addressed communication strategies, advocacy efforts, and interactional adaptation. (Abdillah & Andamisari, 2024) examine GERKATIN's strategic communication in promoting BISINDO, highlighting audience targeting and message dissemination. (Mandasari & Winduwati, 2022) analyze public relations practices employed by Pusbisindo to increase public awareness of sign language. (Rubiyanto & Clara, 2019) explore interactional adaptation between Deaf teachers and hearing students, emphasizing mutual expectations in classroom communication. (Rengganis et al., 2023) analyze communication learning experiences of Deaf students in Indonesia, emphasizing interactional dynamics. While these contributions are important, they tend to frame BISINDO classes as functional educational initiatives. Less attention has been paid to their philosophical implications or to the ways hearing students' narratives function as sites of epistemic transformation.

A gap therefore remains in understanding how BISINDO classrooms operate as cultural and philosophical interventions that challenge dominant constructions of disability and communication. Examining these spaces through a postmodern lens allows us to see how they embody principles of epistemic plurality, decentralization of authority, and recognition of local knowledge.

This study seeks to explore the teaching of Deaf culture within inclusive BISINDO classrooms organized by GERKATIN, positioning hearing students' micro-narratives as loci of postmodern knowledge production. It investigates how these learners construct meaning around Deaf culture, how their experiences unsettle dominant metanarratives about disability, and how classroom interactions renegotiate epistemic legitimacy. At a broader level, it considers how such spaces cultivate diverse ways of knowing and being. Theoretically, this research extends Lyotard's postmodern framework into the field of Deaf cultural education. Empirically, it contributes insights from the Indonesian context, highlighting alternative and counter hegemonic knowledge practices. Practically, it aims to inform the development of educational environments that move beyond deficit based perspectives. Ultimately, this study affirms Deaf culture as a legitimate and autonomous presence within a plural and contested landscape of knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Postmodern Perspective Of Jean François Lyotard

The postmodern perspective of Jean François Lyotard is a theoretical framework that explains shifts in paradigms of knowledge, culture, and contemporary society. (Lyotard, 1984) argues that postmodernism is characterized by skepticism toward metanarratives, or grand narratives, which previously dominated the way people understood the world. These metanarratives include overarching ideas such as progress, universal rationality, and human emancipation, which were considered the primary foundations of knowledge and social development during the modern era.

Lyotard (1984) further emphasizes that in the postmodern condition, the legitimacy of knowledge no longer relies on grand narratives, but instead on the plurality of "little narratives" (*petits récits*). These smaller narratives are local, contextual, and pluralistic, allowing for the emergence of perspectives that were previously marginalized. As a result, knowledge is no longer viewed as universal and objective, but rather as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by cultural contexts, language, and power relations. In this regard, language plays a central role. Lyotard introduces the concept of *language games*, referring to the various ways individuals use language to construct meaning in specific situations. Each language game operates according to its own internal rules and logic, meaning that there is no single universal standard for determining absolute truth (Erlina & Syaifuddin, 2024).

Moreover, Lyotard (1984) critiques the relationship between knowledge and power in postmodern society. He argues that the production of knowledge cannot be separated from economic and political interests, particularly in an increasingly digitalized world. Knowledge becomes a commodity that is evaluated based on efficiency and utility rather than its intrinsic truth. This condition is referred to as "performativity," where the value of knowledge is determined by its contribution to system performance. Consequently, postmodernism has a significant impact on contemporary culture, particularly in terms of the plurality of identities and the fragmentation of meaning (Ni'mah & Rofiq, 2026).

Furthermore, postmodernism has important implications in the field of education. From Lyotard's perspective, education is no longer a means of transmitting universal knowledge, but rather a dialogical space that allows multiple perspectives to emerge (Purwasito & Rahmawati, 2025).

In cultural studies, Lyotard's postmodern theory highlights how popular culture reflects the plurality of meanings and the deconstruction of grand narratives, where distinctions between high and low culture, seriousness and entertainment, become increasingly blurred, as seen in films and other media (Baihaqi & Sudikan, 2022). This demonstrates how postmodernism dismantles previously established cultural hierarchies.

The relevance of Lyotard's perspective can also be observed in studies of disability and Deaf culture. Smith & Campbell (1997) explain that discourses on deafness have shifted from a medical model toward a socio cultural approach. Within a postmodern framework, Deaf experiences are no longer viewed as deficiencies to be corrected, but as cultural identities with their own systems of meaning. This aligns with Lyotard's idea of legitimizing little narratives, where the experiences of minority groups are recognized as valid sources of knowledge.

Overall, Lyotard's postmodern perspective offers a fundamental critique of modern assumptions about truth, knowledge, and progress. By rejecting the dominance of metanarratives and emphasizing the plurality of perspectives, Lyotard opens space for recognizing the diversity of human experiences. In research contexts, this framework is highly relevant for understanding the dynamics of meaning that emerge in complex social interactions, such as inclusive learning or intercultural communication. This perspective asserts that truth is not singular, but always negotiated within diverse social contexts (Lyotard, 1984).

Deaf Culture

Deaf culture is a system of meanings, values, and social practices that develops within the Deaf community. It is not merely determined by the biological condition of deafness, but rather by cultural experiences shaped through social interaction and visual language. From this perspective, deafness is not viewed as a deficiency, but as a cultural identity with unique characteristics, particularly in the use of sign language as the primary means of communication and expression (Padden & Humphries, 2006).

One of the most fundamental elements of Deaf culture is sign language. In Indonesia, Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) serves as both a symbol of identity and the main medium for building social relationships within the Deaf community. BISINDO functions not only as a communication tool but also as a cultural representation that embodies the values, norms, and worldview of the Deaf community (Gumelar et al., 2018). Through BISINDO, members of the Deaf community are able to express their life experiences authentically and strengthen group solidarity.

Deaf culture is also closely related to the formation of self identity and self esteem among Deaf individuals. Within organizations such as GERKATIN, Deaf individuals find a space to develop their self esteem and self identity through interactions with others who share similar experiences. Participation in the Deaf community enables individuals to build confidence and positively embrace their identity, which may have previously been hindered by stigma from the wider society (Bramantyo & Fitriani, 2019). Interactions within the Deaf community emphasize ethical responsibility, which is evident in visual communication practices that are attentive to social context (Wijaya & Riyanto, 2023). This relationality highlights that Deaf culture is not solely individual-oriented, but is deeply rooted in interconnectedness, where each member plays a role in maintaining social balance and harmony.

In a broader context, Deaf culture is often understood in relation to hearing culture. Cue (2025) argues that hearing culture tends to prioritize verbal auditory communication and majority norms, which often dominate social and educational spaces. In this context, Deaf culture emerges as both a form of resistance and an alternative to such dominance, emphasizing visual values, inclusivity, and diverse modes of communication. Furthermore, Deaf culture encompasses various social practices, including the use of visual space, facial expressions, and interaction norms that differ from those of hearing society. For instance, in Deaf communication, eye contact and visual expression are essential to ensure mutual understanding. This demonstrates that Deaf culture possesses

a complex and structured communication system that is equally rich as spoken language (Padden & Humphries, 2006).

In conclusion, Deaf culture can be understood as a social and cultural construction that goes beyond the medical aspect of deafness. It encompasses language, identity, values, and social practices that shape the way of life of the Deaf community. Its existence underscores the importance of recognizing cultural diversity in society, as well as the need for more inclusive approaches in understanding the experiences of Deaf individuals.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach informed by a constructivist paradigm, which understands knowledge not as a fixed entity but as something shaped through social interaction, language, and culturally embedded practices (Creswell, 2013). Such an orientation is particularly appropriate for exploring hearing students' micro-narratives, as these narratives emerge from situated experiences of learning and interpreting meaning within Deaf centered classroom settings. Consistent with postmodern sensibilities, the study moves away from universalizing assumptions about language, normality, and pedagogy, and instead foregrounds localized accounts, plural interpretations, and the legitimacy of alternative epistemologies enacted within classroom interaction (Lyotard, 1984). Drawing from Deaf Studies, Deaf culture is conceptualized as a cultural linguistic system grounded in visuality and embodied communication, rather than as a deviation from hearing centered norms (Padden & Humphries, 2006). At the same time, insights from Communication Studies frame teaching and learning as ongoing communicative processes through which meanings, identities, and power relations are continually negotiated.

Data collection was conducted within one inclusive BISINDO classroom organized by Gerakan untuk Kesejahteraan Tunarungu Indonesia (GERKATIN) in the Jakarta region, with particular emphasis on hearing students' lived learning experiences. The classroom functioned as the primary research site and was treated not merely as an instructional setting but as a postmodern learning space in which Deaf cultural norms were foregrounded as the dominant framework of interaction. Data were generated through in-depth semi structured interviews and participant observation, enabling a detailed examination of how Deaf culture is taught, learned, and interpreted by different classroom actors. Five informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of four hearing students (MR, RZ, BL, and EL) and one Deaf teacher/instructor (Y). This sampling strategy was intended to capture multiple perspectives within the same pedagogical space, consistent with qualitative research principles that emphasize depth, contextual relevance, and meaning rich data rather than representativeness (Moleong, 2017).

Table 1. Informant Demographics

No.	Initials	Age	Professional Background	Duration of Learning BISINDO
1.	MR	45	Private Sector Employee	3 months
2.	RZ	22	University Student	3 months
3.	BL	27	Teacher	3 months
4.	EL	39	Bank Employee	3 months
5.	Y	51	Deaf Teacher/Instructor	

The semi structured interviews invited participants to reflect on their experiences of engaging with Deaf culture in the classroom, their understanding of BISINDO as both language and cultural medium, and their responses to learning in an environment where spoken language was intentionally suspended in favor of visual interaction. For hearing students in particular, attention was directed toward moments when participation in the BISINDO classroom unsettled prior assumptions about communication, normalcy, and disability. These reflections were treated as micro-narratives situated accounts through which participants articulated experiences of disruption, adjustment, and reinterpretation. This interview strategy reflects constructivist commitments to understanding meaning as narratively produced and acknowledges that diverse interpretations of shared classroom experiences may coexist.

In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted participant observation by enrolling as a student in the BISINDO class from June to August 2025. Beyond interviews, the researcher engaged in participant observation, allowing for direct immersion in the pedagogical practices through which Deaf culture was enacted. This included observing visual turn taking patterns, embodied forms of expression, and the consistent enforcement of no-voice policies within the classroom. Occupying the dual role of learner and researcher required a reflexive stance one that recognized both involvement in the learning process and the analytical distance necessary for interpretation. Such positioning aligns with qualitative traditions that regard the researcher as the primary instrument of inquiry, whose situated presence contributes to the co-construction of knowledge (Denzin, 2018). Field notes documented classroom dynamics, moments of communicative disruption, and instances in which hearing participants experienced epistemic disorientation. These observations later informed the interpretation of the students' micro-narratives.

Data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively using an inductive thematic analysis approach, guided by the data analysis framework proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2020). This approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the micro-narratives of hearing students within the context of learning Deaf culture in an inclusive BISINDO classroom. The analytical process was carried out manually while maintaining rigor and systematic procedures in data management.

The first stage involved data reduction, which was conducted by transcribing interview data and compiling observational field notes from four hearing students and one Deaf teacher as research informants. At this stage, the researcher selected and focused on data relevant to the participants learning experiences, particularly those related to communicative disorientation, visual interaction, and the construction of meaning regarding Deaf culture. Subsequently, an inductive open coding process was carried out to identify units of meaning emerging from participants experiences.

The second stage was data display, in which the generated codes were organized into categories and patterns to illustrate the dynamics of learning within the inclusive BISINDO classroom. The data were presented in the form of thematic narratives that emphasize the diversity of hearing students' experiences as micro-narratives, as well as the role of the Deaf teacher as a source of knowledge grounded in lived experience.

The third stage involved conclusion drawing and verification, which entailed the development of key themes representing a postmodern perspective on learning Deaf culture, such as the plurality of meanings, the negotiation of knowledge, and shifts in power relations within communication. This process was conducted iteratively by continuously comparing the findings with the raw data to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines how inclusive BISINDO classrooms function as postmodern learning environments in which Deaf culture is not merely transmitted as a fixed and stable body of knowledge, but is actively constructed, negotiated, and continuously reinterpreted through interaction and lived experience. Drawing on Jean François Lyotard's postmodern framework, this discussion explores how communication, knowledge, and authority are redefined within Deaf centered educational contexts. The findings are grounded in qualitative data obtained from interviews with Deaf teachers and hearing students, allowing for a deeper understanding of how meaning is produced through practice rather than simply delivered through formal instruction.

In this setting, hearing students are not positioned as passive recipients of knowledge but as active participants who continuously interpret and reconstruct meaning based on their own experiences and interactions. Deaf teachers play a central role in shaping this process by introducing not only linguistic elements but also cultural perspectives grounded in everyday Deaf experiences. This shifts the classroom dynamic from a one way transmission of knowledge to a dialogical and participatory process of meaning making. Hearing students, in turn, are required to adjust to unfamiliar communicative norms, which encourages deeper engagement and reflection. Rather than focusing solely on mastering vocabulary or grammar, students begin to question their assumptions about communication and learning itself. This creates a learning environment where knowledge is not fixed but constantly negotiated.

Challenging Dominant Communication Metanarratives

In modern education, spoken and auditory based communication is often assumed to be the most natural, efficient, and legitimate form of interaction. This assumption operates as a metanarrative that defines what counts as valid knowledge and effective communication, often marginalizing other forms of expression such as sign language. However, BISINDO classrooms disrupt this hierarchy by placing visual communication at the center of the learning process.

Based on participant observation and the researcher's field notes where the researcher also positioned themselves as a hearing student within the class it was observed that a Deaf teacher reprimanded a hearing student for using spoken verbal communication with a peer during the learning process. Deaf teacher explained that during sign language instruction, all hearing students are required to communicate with one another exclusively through sign language. The use of spoken verbal communication, including voice, is strictly prohibited throughout the duration of classroom activities. In an interview excerpt, Y, a Deaf teacher, stated:

> *"We enforce a rule that prohibits hearing students from using their voice to speak so that they can fully experience and interpret the Deaf world, which is characterized by silence. We also consider this approach to be an essential part of their learning process, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of Deaf culture."* (Informant Y, interview, 2025)

Deaf teacher emphasize that sign language is not merely a supplementary tool, but a complete linguistic system that carries its own cultural meanings and social practices. As reflected in the interview with Y, a Deaf teacher, their role extends beyond teaching vocabulary or grammatical structures to encompass the sharing of lived experiences that shape how communication is understood and practiced. In the interview excerpt, Y stated:

> *"As a Deaf teacher, I understand my role not only as a language instructor but also as a bearer of lived experience and Deaf culture itself. In the BISINDO classroom, I do not merely teach vocabulary or the structure of sign language, but also ways*

> *of thinking, ways of interacting, and the values embedded within the Deaf community."* (Informant Y, interview, 2025)

Many participants initially approached communication from an auditory centered perspective, assuming that speech was essential for effective interaction. When they entered a BISINDO classroom where spoken language was minimized or even discouraged, they encountered significant disruption. Students described feelings of discomfort, confusion, and even loss of confidence when their usual communicative strategies were no longer effective. For instance, "BL," a hearing student, explained that the inability to rely on spoken utterances created a sense of loss of control in interaction, as if their primary mode of communication had been removed. In the interview excerpt, BL stated:

> *"When all hearing students were prohibited from speaking during the learning process, I initially felt confused because I could not immediately ask questions in the way I was accustomed to. However, over time, this experience helped me better understand the position of Deaf students, who have continuously had to adapt within school environments."* (Informant BL, interview, 2025)

Meanwhile, MR, another hearing student, also explained that communicative norms within Deaf culture demand full visual attention, which differs significantly from communication habits in hearing contexts. In the interview excerpt, MR stated:

> *"When I started learning sign language, I realized that we must be fully visually focused on the hand movements being communicated. This experience opened my eyes to how different the standards of communication are between the hearing world and the Deaf world."* (Informant MR, interview, 2025)

These experiences reveal how deeply embedded auditory norms are in shaping communication practices and highlight how what is considered "normal" is actually socially and culturally constructed. From a postmodern perspective, this shift reflects Lyotard's concept of incredulity toward metanarratives, where dominant assumptions are no longer accepted as universal truths but become open to critique and reinterpretation. Hearing students begin to recognize that communication is not fixed or universal but shaped by cultural, social, and contextual factors. This realization encourages them to rethink their assumptions and engage more openly with alternative forms of interaction. In this way, teaching Deaf culture through BISINDO becomes not only a linguistic process but also an epistemological intervention that challenges dominant knowledge systems and expands the possibilities of communication and understanding.

Hearing Students' Micro-Narratives and Meaning-Making

In Lyotard's postmodern framework, knowledge is not derived from universal or overarching theories, but emerges from localized, context specific experiences that reflect individual perspectives. This is clearly reflected in the diverse backgrounds and motivations of the participants involved in this study. Some hearing students enrolled in the BISINDO class for professional reasons, such as improving their ability to communicate with Deaf students or clients. For instance, EL, a hearing student who works as a bank employee, stated:

> *"In my workplace as a bank employee, I have encountered Deaf customers several times, and honestly, I found it difficult to serve them effectively. We usually rely on written communication or assistance from others, and I feel that this is not comfortable, both for me and for the customers."* (Informant EL, interview, 2025)

In addition, BL, a hearing student who works as a school teacher, also described their reasons for joining the sign language class. In the interview excerpt, BL stated:

> *"I joined the BISINDO class with fairly simple expectations. I thought the class would help me memorize basic signs so that I could communicate more fluently with Deaf students at school."* Informant BL, interview, 2025)

Meanwhile, RZ motivation for participating in the sign language class was driven by personal relationships and a desire to engage more closely with the Deaf community. In the interview excerpt, RZ stated:

> *"I joined the BISINDO class for a simple reason, which is to have more friends and to communicate more smoothly with Deaf friends I already know."* (Informant RZ, interview, 2025)

Initially, many participants viewed BISINDO as a practical skill that could enhance communication efficiency. However, as they engaged more deeply in the learning process, their understanding began to evolve in more complex and reflective ways. Through interaction with Deaf teachers and exposure to Deaf cultural norms, hearing students began to reflect on broader issues related to communication, identity, and inclusion. For example, one hearing student, BL, explained how their perspective shifted from viewing sign language as a simple communication tool to recognizing it as a comprehensive system of meaning and culture. In the interview excerpt, BL stated:

> *"After directly interacting with the Deaf teacher and experiencing the dynamics of the classroom, my perspective began to change. I realized that BISINDO is not merely a collection of hand movements, but a system with its own structure, expressions, and cultural values."* (Informant BL, interview, 2025)

A similar statement was expressed by MR, who noted that their perspective on BISINDO had also changed after participating in the sign language class and engaging directly with the Deaf teacher. In the interview excerpt, MR stated:

> *"I realized that learning BISINDO is not only about being able to 'have conversations,' but also about understanding a different culture and ways of interacting. The cultural norms of the Deaf community in the classroom made me more aware that communication is also about attitude, attention, and mutual respect."* (Informant MR, interview, 2025)

This shift illustrates how learning BISINDO involves more than acquiring linguistic competence; it requires a deeper engagement with the cultural and social dimensions of language. For instance, EL, a hearing student, explained that their experience in learning Deaf culture led to a shift in their assumptions about communicative standards. In the interview excerpt, EL stated:

> *"There were several moments in class that truly changed the way I view communication. One of them was when I realized that in the BISINDO classroom, speaking while looking away is considered impolite. That moment made me aware that the communication standards I had always considered normal are actually highly oriented toward hearing culture."* (Informant EL, interview, 2025)

Informant Y, a Deaf teacher, also conveyed that the learning experience in the BISINDO classroom encouraged a shift in hearing students' perspectives on communication. In the interview excerpt, Y stated:

> *"There was a moment when hearing students who initially viewed sign language merely as a 'tool' became surprised to see that discussions, humor, and emotions could be fully expressed through signing. At that point, I could see their assumptions about sign language beginning to change."* (Informant Y, interview, 2025)

Knowledge is validated through lived experience rather than through conformity to a single theoretical framework. This aligns with Lyotard's emphasis on the legitimacy of localized narratives. The emphasis on micro-narratives also shifts the focus of learning

from outcomes to processes. Instead of seeking a single correct answer, hearing students engage in ongoing negotiation of meaning, recognizing that understanding is always partial and context-dependent. The classroom becomes a space where different perspectives are acknowledged, valued, and explored. This approach challenges traditional educational models that prioritize uniformity, standardization, and measurable outcomes. It highlights the importance of context, experience, and dialogue in shaping knowledge. In this sense, BISINDO classrooms exemplify a postmodern approach to education, where meaning is continuously constructed, contested, and reinterpreted.

Discomfort, Dissensus, and Transformative Learning

The findings of this study also highlight the significant role of discomfort and confusion as integral components of the learning process. Many hearing students reported experiencing feelings of uncertainty, frustration, and self doubt, particularly during the early stages of learning BISINDO. These emotions were often triggered by unfamiliar communication practices, such as the requirement to rely entirely on visual attention, the absence of spoken language, and the need to interpret meaning through gestures and facial expressions. In conventional educational settings, such experiences are often viewed as barriers that hinder learning and are therefore minimized or avoided. A Deaf teacher, Y, explained that the discomfort, confusion, and even resistance experienced by hearing students should not be seen as obstacles to learning, but rather as an essential part of the transformative learning process itself. In the interview excerpt, Y stated:

> *"I see those moments as an important part of the learning process. Confusion and discomfort often arise because hearing students are stepping outside their comfort zones. However, for me, it is precisely in these moments that reflection and transformation in learning begin to occur."* (Informant Y, interview, 2025)

Deaf teachers play a crucial role in facilitating this reframing process. Rather than immediately resolving hearing students' confusion or discomfort, they allow moments of uncertainty to persist, thereby encouraging students to reflect on their reactions and engage more deeply with the learning process.

As further explained in the interview with Y, discomfort is understood as a crucial part of learning because it indicates that students are encountering something new and unfamiliar. In the interview excerpt, Y stated:

> *"I usually do not immediately eliminate that discomfort, but instead invite them to understand why those feelings arise and what they mean within the context of learning from a different cultural perspective."* (Informant Y, interview, 2025)

From a theoretical perspective, this process aligns with Lyotard's concept of dissensus, which highlights the productive role of disruption and difference in knowledge formation. For many students, these moments of discomfort became turning points in their learning journeys. Experiencing communication barriers firsthand allowed them to develop a more embodied and empathetic understanding of the challenges faced by Deaf individuals.

MR explained that confusion in the classroom helped them understand what it feels like to communicate within a system that is not designed for them. In the interview excerpt, MR stated:

> *"There were several moments when I felt uncertain and confused, especially when I misinterpreted signs or did not understand the context of a conversation. At first, I felt uncomfortable because I was afraid of being seen as impolite or not serious. However, over time, I came to interpret those feelings as part of the learning process."* (Informant MR, interview, 2025)

A similar experience was also shared by another hearing student, RZ, in the following interview excerpt:

> *"I made mistakes using signs several times, and it made me feel embarrassed because the meaning could be different. But over time, I began to interpret that embarrassment as part of the adaptation process."* (Informant RZ, interview, 2025)

During the learning process, after the Deaf teacher explains the material, hearing students are usually asked to come to the front of the classroom and practice what they have learned. Many of them still make mistakes when performing BISINDO. However, based on the researcher's observations, the Deaf teacher consistently provides encouragement and emotional support to the hearing students.

This shift represents a movement from abstract knowledge to experiential and relational understanding. These experiences suggest that learning Deaf culture involves not only cognitive development but also emotional and ethical transformation. Hearing students come to understand that communication difficulties are not merely individual shortcomings, but are shaped by broader social and structural conditions, fostering empathy, critical awareness, and a more inclusive mindset. In BISINDO classrooms, learning is not about achieving mastery or certainty, but about engaging with complexity and difference. This aligns with postmodern perspectives that emphasize openness, plurality, and the ongoing negotiation of meaning.

Authority, Paralogy, and BISINDO as Postmodern Pedagogical Space

In traditional education systems, authority is often associated with formal qualifications, institutional recognition, and standardized knowledge.

Teachers are typically positioned as the primary source of knowledge, while hearing students are expected to receive and reproduce that knowledge. However, in the BISINDO classroom, authority is grounded in the lived experience and cultural expertise of Deaf teachers. According to Y, the presence of Deaf teachers plays a crucial role in creating an authentic and meaningful learning process. Through direct engagement with the teacher's lived experiences, hearing students do not merely acquire theoretical knowledge but also come to understand Deaf culture as a living reality within the Deaf community. In the interview excerpt, Y stated:

> *"I feel that my presence in the classroom is important because hearing students are able to learn directly from lived experience, not merely from theoretical explanations. In this way, Deaf culture is not positioned as an object of study, but as living and equal knowledge."* (Informant Y, interview, 2025)

BL explained that authority in the learning process is no longer determined solely by formal qualifications or written sources of knowledge, but also by lived experience and cultural expertise possessed by Deaf teachers. In the interview excerpt, BL stated:

> *"Deaf teachers have full authority in the classroom, and I understand them as a very important source of knowledge, especially in terms of Deaf culture and lived experience. This experience has made me more appreciative of knowledge that is grounded in experience and not solely derived from formal education."* (Informant BL, interview, 2025)

Hearing students consistently described Deaf teachers as central figures in their learning process. They valued the instructors' ability to demonstrate ways of knowing and communicating that could not be fully conveyed through textbooks or lectures. This recognition challenges traditional hierarchies in education and redefines what counts as legitimate knowledge. From a theoretical perspective, this shift aligns with Lyotard's concept of paralogy, where new forms of knowledge emerge by challenging established rules and norms. This transformation also reshapes the meaning of inclusive education. Rather than focusing on adapting Deaf individuals to fit within hearing norms, BISINDO classrooms require hearing students to engage with Deaf centered perspectives. This

statement is consistent with the view of another hearing student, RZ. In the interview excerpt, RZ stated:

> *"The cultural norms of the Deaf community in the classroom made me more aware that communication is not only about being able to convey messages, but also about mutual understanding of context and respecting how others interact."* (Informant RZ, interview, 2025)

This reversal of roles challenges existing power dynamics and fosters a more reciprocal and collaborative form of learning. Hearing students must adapt their communication practices, rethink their assumptions about knowledge and authority, and develop greater sensitivity to difference. As postmodern pedagogical spaces, BISINDO classrooms emphasize interaction, plurality, and ongoing negotiation. This environment supports a more inclusive, reflective, and transformative approach to education, demonstrating that teaching Deaf culture is not only a pedagogical practice but also an epistemological intervention that redefines how knowledge is produced, validated, and experienced.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the teaching of Deaf culture in inclusive BISINDO classrooms reflects a postmodern learning process in which knowledge is constructed through interaction, plurality, and lived experience. By centering visual language and Deaf cultural norms, these classrooms challenge dominant assumptions about communication and reposition Deaf perspectives as legitimate sources of knowledge. The findings highlight that hearing students' micro-narratives play a crucial role in shaping meaning, as each individual interprets their learning based on personal context and experience. Learning Deaf culture is therefore not limited to linguistic competence, but involves a deeper negotiation of identity, power, and ways of knowing. Moments of discomfort and confusion emerge as productive elements that encourage reflection and epistemic transformation. In addition, Deaf teachers are recognized as key knowledge authorities, whose lived experiences redefine traditional notions of educational legitimacy. For future research, it is recommended to explore a wider range of participants across different regions and institutional settings to better understand the diversity of BISINDO learning experiences. Further studies could also examine long-term impacts of BISINDO learning on attitudes toward inclusion and social interaction. Additionally, integrating other theoretical perspectives may provide deeper insights into the intersection of language, culture, and power in inclusive education contexts.

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