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The Communication Competence of Visual Reader at Visually Impaired's Cinema
(Case Study at Bioskop Harewos, Bandung, Indonesia)

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THE COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF VISUAL READER AT VISUALLY IMPAIRED'S CINEMA
(Case Study at Bioskop Harewos, Bandung, Indonesia)

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Abstract

Bioskop Harewos is a cinema that specialized in visually impaired film viewers in Bandung, Indonesia. The cinema runs with a traditional and distinct watching process. Some important concepts used in this research are related to communication competences; Visually impaired; and film. Using a qualitative method with constructivism paradigm and case study approach, this research tries to uncover several aspects, such as the communication capabilities of Visual Readers in Bioskop Harewos; the management effort of Bioskop Harewos in enhancing the communication effectiveness between Visual Readers and visually impaired viewers; also the competency of communication skills that required by Visual Readers. The result of this study revealed that the communication skills of Visual Readers in terms of being a prompter to visually impaired viewers were still under expectation. In terms of improving communication skills, the manager of the Bioskop Harewos has made several introductions and pre-viewing activities, yet the result is not as expected. This research also found three key competencies that are a necessity to be possessed by Visual Readers.

Keywords: *Communication Competences, Cinema for Visually Impaired, Visual Reader, Film.*

A. Introduction

Bioskop Harewos is a cinema made especially for the blind. It is the only cinema for the blind that operates regularly in Indonesia. Established since 2016 in Bandung city and consistently shows films three to four times a year (Karolina, Maryani, & Sjuchro, 2020). The uniqueness lies in the playback system which uses a traditional system, where the technology of audio description (AD) is not included, instead, by using an audio description played by a prompter known as the Visual Reader.

Prompter or Visual Reader is a descriptor who will describe the visual messages which appear in the film in order to provide the visually impaired viewers to imagine the visuals that appears in the film. According to Karolina, et al, the Visual Reader can be interpreted as an active narrator for the visually impaired viewers during the films and has an important role in achieving the meaning of the film. The meaning of the narrator, according to KBBI (Kamus Besar Indonesia/ Indonesian Dictionary) ("Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia," 2019), is the person who tells the story or the storyteller. In the concept of Visual Reader, the narrator is defined as a person who tells the visual of a film that is not visible to the eye of the visually impaired viewers or the blind. In case of the other disabilities, the narrator's duties are quite familiar, for example as in language translators for the deaf (Karolina, Maryani, & Sjuchro, 2019)

Bioskop Harewos is an idea of some youths in Bandung as a social movement activity that exists as a response to the limited facilities encountered by the blind viewers to the access of the cinemas and films. Some countries around the world, such as Germany, Australia, Morocco and several other countries in Europe are quite familiar in facilitating the visually impaired in accessing films through Audio Description (AD) technology.

Audio Description (AD) is interpreted as an inter-semiotic process, from visual text to oral text – in which sometimes be written and recorded, and sometimes sent directly. In addition, audio descriptions might be bilingual but not necessarily, is generated when there are gaps in

the oral channel of audiovisual texts and the system is narrative precedes action (Matamala, 2017)

"*Harewos*" is uptaken from Sundanese vocabulary which means "whisper". The word "whisper" used by *Bioskop Harewos* to describe the watching process that is dominated by whispering. It is also an illustration of the duty of a Visual Reader who conveys the audio descriptions by whispering.

As a substitution of Audio Description, Visual Reader plays a significant role in the process of watching films for the visually impaired viewers. Related to the function of audio, the description plays a role to explain the visual messages conveyed through a series of words.

The pre-research found that the visually impaired viewers were poorly experiencing concepts. In this case, the concept in question-related to things in the world they have never sensed through the eyes before. Therefore, in assisting the visually impaired viewers in watching the film, we need to define many things in detail to form an imagination of the environment that they encounter.

Visual Readers and visually impaired viewers who are accompanied will build communication processes during their interaction. The interaction is built in the form of communication that shares messages both from the introduction to the watching process. Wood defines communication as a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to form and interpret meanings. Communication is called a process because it is something happening and always moving. Communication is a system that it has, several related aspects, for instance, communication in the family, the people inside the family circle as a part of the system. Symbols in communication can involve language and other non-verbal behaviour, such as art and music. Meaning is the essence of communication. It is not just what we have got from the experience, but also what is formed during the process. We talk with others to clarify what is thought, how to interpret the non-verbal behaviour of others (Wood, 2004).

As a communicator, Visual Reader certainly requires good communication skills as well. Communication skill is seen through the communication competence they have in communication. Communication competences have been described in the West in various terms, including accuracy, clarity, flexibility, affection, empathy, and so forth. However, effectiveness and appropriateness are the concepts most consistently used to characterize communication competence. Effectiveness refers to an individual's ability to produce intended effects through interaction and is measured by determining whether, and to what degree, the goals of interaction are accomplished (Xiao & Chen, 2009).

Communication competences are closely related to how a communication process can work effectively. Effectiveness is pertinent to goal attainments, such as satisfaction, desired change, or creativity. The importance of appropriateness indicates the contextuality or relation/context specificity. One's knowledge, motivation, and skills affect the perceived effectiveness and appropriateness, and ultimately influences other's judgment of competence" (Wiemann, Takai, Ota, & Wiemann, 1997).

Visual Reader and visually impaired viewers will interact by face to face with quite intimate closeness. This is seen from the process of watching a film which built communication between two people, known as building interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication, as part of communication, certainly has its own interpersonal communication competency concept. The concepts of interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence, and intercultural competence are prone to frequent misunderstanding as a result of an epistemic field that does not draw clear cut distinctions among the subject of the discipline (Lesenciuc & Codreanu, 2012).

According to Henry G. Widdowson, the communication competence is not only a matter of matching different forms of knowledge but also a matter of complex negotiation of the common knowledge framework within which the linguistic instantiation takes place (Widdowson, 2007).

Devito defines interpersonal communication as a communication that takes place between two people who have a relationship. The two people are

connected in one way communication or another. For example, interpersonal communication between children and fathers, bosses and employees, teachers and students, between a boy and his girlfriend (Devito, 2011).

Several researches have shown that communication skill is an important thing in term of communication process. Selviana et al found that in order to convey precise information and in accordance with the message that it should be, the ability of interpersonal communication behaviours which are appropriate too, is the most important. In this case, the context of the research relates to librarians as information pervades (Selviana, Nadjib, & Bahfiarti, 2017). In addition, Tamara sees that the use of language which is included as part of communication competence has a very important meaning in achieve communication objectives (Tamara, Setiyadi, & Nainggolan, 2019)

Based on the concepts of the visually impaired viewers, communication competence and communication effectiveness, as well as various previous researches, the researchers are considered to uncover the improvement of communication competence of visual reader in *Bioskop Harewos*, the improvement of communication competence is an effort to reach the effectiveness of communication in the cinema specialized to visually impaired scientifically becomes quite important. The researchers will examine with three research questions, namely how the communication competence of Visual Reader in *Bioskop Harewos* nowadays, how the management of *Bioskop Harewos* in increasing the effectiveness of communication in watching films, and what communication competences required by Visual Reader.

B. Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a case studies approach. The research approach was to collect as much data as possible from the research subjects. Researchers observe activities at *Bioskop Harewos*. Researchers also conducted the result of this research by in-depth interviews with several related parties, including the visually impaired viewers, the

managers of *Bioskop Harewos*, the visual readers, and the expert researcher in visually impaired research. This research also conducted by literature reviews regarding related concepts and studies.

This research employed a constructivism paradigm that is flexible and open and uses inductive analysis. According to Denzin & Lincoln (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) research in the constructivist paradigm has the following characteristics: Reality is relative, generating knowledge-based on findings in the field, including findings that occur during the interaction process that occurs between researchers and key informants. The methodology used was dialectics and hermeneutics, whose primary purpose is to obtain consensus construction. Qualitative research is a research which interpretive and uses interpretation also triangulation in examining research problems. The purpose of the research is to gain a holistic understanding relating to reality under research (Mulyana, 2018); The research has collected data through various sources as well as techniques in case studies. Therefore, qualitative research generally used several data collection techniques (Cresswell, 2007); The research uses various sources of data to produce more comprehensive data from various sources and various types of data.

The research was conducted from November 2018 to October 2019 by interviewing various sources, including the entire *Bioskop Harewos* team, visually impaired audiences, and Visual Reader volunteers. The selection of informants by purposive sampling and aimed to get data from various perspectives of people involved in the *Bioskop Harewos* film screening activities. Purposive sampling is a technique of collecting data with certain considerations, namely data sources that are considered to know the most about what expected, therefore researchers can explore the data of the case being done (Sugiyono, 2013).

In this study, the management team acted as supporting data regarding the management of communication process at the *Bioskop Harewos*; Visually impaired audiences acted and the Visual Reader as the communicators also the communicant at the *Bioskop Harewos*. All

informants were those who involved in watching activities at the *Bioskop Harewos*. Researchers also collected data by observations and literature reviews. We observe the watching process at *Bioskop Harewos* and the form of recruitment volunteer.

After data conducted, Researcher analysed data by use interactive model Miles and Huberman. The validity test done by triangulation. Which triangulation means: Extension of participation, perseverance of observation, triangulation, peer checking, referential adequacy, negative case study, member checking, detailed description, dependency audit, and certainty audit (Moleong, 2007).

C. Finding and Discussion

This section will discuss three main ideas, there are the communication skill of Visual Reader at *Bioskop Harewos*, the management of *Bioskop Harewos* in increasing the effective communication, and the competencies of communication which required by Visual Reader.

The research found that the communication skills possessed by Visual Reader in screening film at the *Bioskop Harewos* were still not as expected from the visually impaired viewers. The visually impaired viewers argued that there were a number of things about the description of the film that was still not in accordance with what they were hoping for. In other words, there is a gap between expectation and reality in the ability of the Visual Reader to provide visual descriptions of the film being watched. The visually impaired viewers felt that increasing the ability and skills of the visual reader accompanying them was important to be improved.

> "*Sometimes what was conveyed by the visual reader who accompanied me when film screening at Bioskop Harewos made me not understand the purpose of the film. They are less able to convey it well*" (Putra - Visually impaired viewer, 2019).

Communication skills are highly needed when two people build a conversation. There is a general skill and those are contextual in nature.

General skill defined as general performance when people communicate with other people. Contextual communication skills will adjust by various aspects that support the communication process. Such as (Wijaya, 2018) states that people with disabilities have their disadvantages, they also certainly have certain advantages that need to be further developed. We can call it uniqueness, and it is a contextual condition. In this case, the competence of communication is talking about the ability in describing the show to visually impaired interlocutors.

In accordance with the communication skills of Visual Readers, the research finds there were several obstacles experienced by visually impaired viewers in terms of the communication skills of Visual Readers who accompanied them. Among these are, when the Visual Readers over-conveyed the description of the film; the Visual Readers does not convey important descriptions of the film; there are lag of times between films and whispers that interfere with film; and barriers to the limitations and awkwardness of communicating with the Visual Readers because there has not been an introduction between the two parties.

A research revealed that the describer should not subjectively interpret the images, but should instead be like "the faithful lens of a camera (Walczak & Fryer, 2017). In other research, revealed that people that visually impaired have a highly good sense of hearing. They need good communicant who could talk in a good way. About film describer, they need a describe which understand what they need, like who in the stage/screen, who is speaking, the set/location including entrances and exits, furnishings, furniture, etc; the lighting, colours and textures, the costumes, the physical appearance of the characters, their facial expressions, the movements, actions, mannerisms, gestures, fights, and dances. Describe what is causing any unidentified sounds (ADI AD Guidelines committee, 2020).

The common obstacles are when Visual Reader descriptions of the movie are missing important details. The visually impaired viewer judged that this obstacle had the effect of not reaching the climax from the film. In

addition, Visual Reader only gives little description about the movie that makes the visually impaired difficult in interpreting the film being watched. This result relates to the concept of visually impaired who have a very limited understanding of the world image.

> *"The Visually impaired viewers need a description that must be comprehensive that meets the requirement of visual impaired needed. Limited understanding of the world makes the visually impaired difficult to understand the concept because it can be said that the senses of the eyes will give messages up to 80% in our lives."* (Nawawi- visually impaired specialist 2019).

On the contrary, when the description of the film contents is too excessive, the effect that will emerge is the disturbance of the concentration of the visually impaired viewers. The excessive description also causes the discomforting effect of the visually impaired viewers with Visual Reader. Therefore in delivering a description of the contents in the film requires a description that is packaged in a proportional, concise and clear. Not excessive or deficient.

In addition to the details of the description presented, visually impaired viewers also felt an obstacle in managing the interval gap between film scenes and descriptions from Visual Reader. Visually impaired viewers need a gap that fitted between the description and the scene described. In addition, the Visual Reader needs to pay attention to the audio that arises from the film, such as conversations or background sounds that describe the atmosphere, so it will not intercept with the delivery of descriptions.

Another obstacle is the barrier between Visual Readers and visually impaired viewers. The study found that the visually impaired found awkwardness in communicating with visual readers. Usually, awkwardness arises because there is a gap between the visual reader and the visual impaired viewers in terms of relations.

A research found that communication barrier that takes place within the communication systems. That is very unfortunate and unwanted (Kapur, 2018). The condition of visually impaired make the

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physical barrier as one of the big barriers in communication. That's why the communication between the visual readers and visually impaired viewers really contextual problem, and need a contextual solve.

The result of this research also found that any obstacle aside from obstacles due to the communication skill of Visual Reader of *Bioskop Harewos*. The obstacle is the limited ability of Visual Reader in building good relations with the visually impaired viewers. The obstacle relates to the pre-screening and the post-screening film activities at *Bioskop Harewos*. The Visual Reader will directly accompany the visually impaired viewers for the first time they present at the *Bioskop Harewos* screening activities. The obstacle due because the Visual Reader not as well as in the procedures for interacting with the visually impaired. So, in terms of guiding the direction of the road to the Cinema room, builds communication, and shows the direction of each error often occurs.

The *Bioskop Harewos* management system has provided an introduction about how to interact with the visually impaired to Visual Reader. The introduction gives some materials about how to describing visually message of the film to the visually impaired viewers and also an introduction about the physical condition of the visually impaired. The entire series of introduction will be given at the Briefing activity, which is seven days before the screening takes place.

In the Briefing activity, Visual Reader got some materials about the visually impaired, including material on how to guide the visually impaired, an overview of the watching activities which is will take part in by Visual reader, and introducing the visually impaired they would be mentally accompanied by (WhatsApp contact). While the first meeting between the visually impaired viewers and the Visual Reader is on the same day as the film watching.

From the management system in the briefing, researchers found that many things that have not been considered regarding the effectiveness factor of communication activities of watching films between the visually impaired viewers and the visual reader. Among others are;

the consideration factor of the competency of the Visual Reader and the capability when selecting volunteers who will qualify; the factor of speakers and materials of briefing activities which are still very shallow and not delivered directly by experts; and the factor of the direct meeting conducted on the day of the watching activity.

The initial selection of Visual Reader, the managers of *Bioskop Harewos* made the selection through an online form. Some prospective volunteer of visual reader data requested includes personal data, experiences, and motivation to join this screening activity. The visual reader who passes the administrative selection will automatically be selected as a visual reader in the playback that will take place. In this case, the study found that there was no consideration of the communication competence of the Visual Reader. The managers of *Bioskop Harewos* prioritize experiences that are possible to be shared by the Visual Reader to the visually impaired viewer who is accompanied by them.

> "*For the selection process, the main part of our review is the unique stories from the visual readers and the stories might be shared by the visual readers to the visually impaired viewers. The review based on the forms that they have*" (Robby – The Program Manager of *Bioskop Harewos*, 2019*).*

The research sees another factor between forms review by managers *Bioskop Harewos*. The research found that encouraged from the briefing activities that have not been effective enough, the material on the briefing activity is still too general. Visual Readers only get the material in the form of peer-teaching about interactions with the visually impaired viewers, but there is no direct practice. Therefore, it is only based on imagination. In addition, the presenters are usually brought in from one of the visually impaired viewers who will be involved, who tells about their experiences interacting.

The direct meeting on the day made awkwardness between the two parties. This study found that between the visually impaired and visual readers did not have time to communicate further about the needs and abilities of each other because of the time really short to communicate

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directly. The visual reader feels there are some obstacles in communicating, so does the visually impaired viewers.

> *"I think it is really awkward because it the first time we meet (with visually impaired) and I must accompany her"* (Larissa – a Visual Reader, 2019).

The interaction process between the visually impaired viewers and visual reader in *Bioskop Harewos* can be seen in the following illustration:

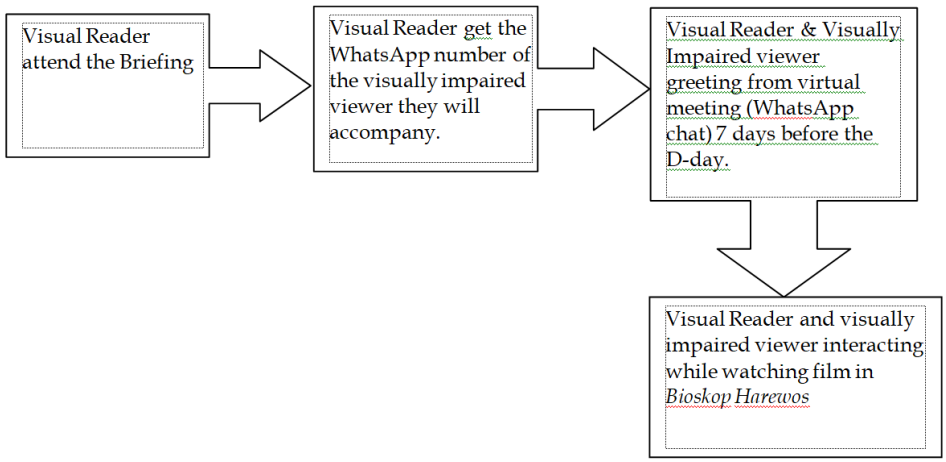

Figure 1. Interaction Model of Visual Reader and Visually Impaired Viewer at *Bioskop Harewos*.
Source: Result of Research, 2019

Guirdham say that the high-quality communication is effective and appropriate, which is able to produce the effects intended by the communicators and makes sense to the receiver in terms of wording, statements and logic (Zhang, 2018). Based on the results of the study, the researcher found that there were three categories of the competencies that required by Visual Reader before interacting as a film descriptor to visually impaired viewers, namely: (1) Communication interpersonal competency; (2) Storytelling Competency; and (3) Interaction with Visually Impaired Competency. The competency model can be seen through the following description:

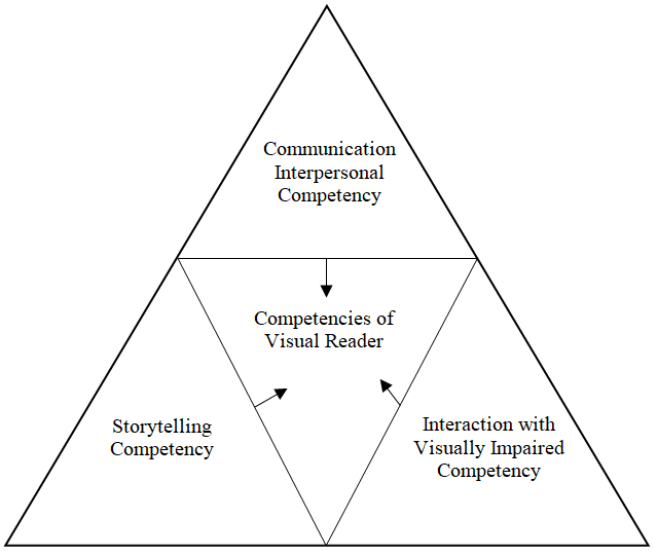

Figure 2. Visual Reader Competencies Model.
Source: Result of Research, 2019

Communication interpersonal competence is related to the visual readers' ability to build good communication relationships and the understanding of the visually impaired viewers as a communicant in the ongoing communication process.

> ""*We hope screening time at Bioskop Harewos is not only about watching a film, but also about how visually impaired can get a new friend by this program*" (Dita – Director of *Bioskop Harewos*, 2019).

Visual Reader and visually impaired viewers will co-exist start from the arrival of visually impaired viewers at *Bioskop Harewos*, the screening process until the return of visually impaired viewers. To build open communication between two persons, it takes the ability to build interpersonal communication relationships from one party. In case the researcher considers it necessary to have in the Visual Reader as part of the facilitator.

> *"We also need to find a new friend at Bioskop Harewos. So that, how they ask me and how we talk about each other personally like a friend also we needed"* (Sigit – visually impaired viewer, 2019)

Storytelling Competence is related to how visually impaired viewers are able to convey the description of the film which watched by them as well as interesting. Visual Reader must be able to adjust the portion of the description needed, the time lag between the film show with the description, as well as packaging the conversation as interesting as possible in the process of describing the film in progress. In case, Visual Reader needs mastery in building interesting descriptions to adjust the genre of film to be watched. Storytelling competence will give a good impact on visually impaired about the film which they watched. Because a describer needs to give simply, clearly and concisely. Ensure your description is easy to comprehend the first time it is heard (ADI AD Guidelines committee, 2020).

Interaction with Visually Impaired Competence is a competency that is specifically possessed by the Visual Reader in terms of understanding the things experienced by the visually impaired viewers. Visual Reader must be well acquainted with how to build a good interaction with the visually impaired viewers and known about the procedures to guide the way for the visually impaired. The problem of visually impaired viewers is the sense of their seeing. The visual readers will substitute that problem by describing it. It means the visual readers will substitute the medium of communication. The medium via which the process of communication is taking place should be effective and appropriate. Communication takes place in various forms; it is oral, written, audio, video, formal, informal, the medium used for the purpose of communicating should be accurate, precise and understandable (Kapur, 2018). Of course, the competency and knowledge about how to interact with visually impaired are an essential one.

D. Conclusion

Visual Reader communication capabilities in terms of being a film descriptor for the visually impaired viewers in the *Bioskop Harewos* are still not as expected. The gap between visually impaired expectations and the

Visual Reader communication capabilities raises communication problems in the form of visually impaired not getting a full experience of the movie.

In terms of improving communication skills, the manager of the *Bioskop Harewos* has made training for the visual readers, but this is still less effective. Communication competency in the selection process of the visual reader needs to be taken into consideration. *Bioskop Harewos* has not made the consideration of communication competence as part of the initial selection process. In addition, training the *Bioskop Harewos* provided also not going effectively. The trainer of training programs has not presented with people who are experts in the field of the visually impaired.

This research also found three important competencies required by Visual Reader, including; interpersonal communication skills; storytelling competencies and competence in interacting with the visually impaired. The results of this study also propose a pre-watch activity management system so that the competency of the Visual Reader as a film descriptor for the visually impaired can be increased so that the communication objectives can be achieved to the maximum.

Based on the results of the study, researchers suggested that the *Bioskop Harewos* management system must be improved. Improved management can be manifested through improvement in the volunteer recruitment system. The ability to communicate and tell stories needs to be an important part of the consideration in the selection process. Furthermore, the researcher also proposes that the manager of the *Bioskop Harewos* conduct a training workshop about interaction with the visually impaired with the experts.

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