

ESTABLISHING IDENTITY: NARRATIVES OF DEAF THAI

A Dissertation Presented to

The Graduate School of

Bangkok University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Interpersonal Communication

by

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2005



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Establishing Identity: Narratives of Deaf Thai (268 pp.)

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ABSTRACT

Deaf identity in Thai society is stigmatized. Most Thai people know the meaning of being deaf from the folktales that condemned deafness as a disease to be cured and a person with deafness as dependent. Academic studies relating to the issue of deafness in Thailand are mostly conducted in medical and educational contexts which confirm the assumption that deafness is a problem to be fixed. This assumption is also in the mind of most deaf people, who feel inferior to the hearing world. The new theory of identity and communication presented by E. Eisenberg suggested that a person's identity does not have to conform to the majority consensus. A person can build his or her identity on the uncertainties in life. It is the matter of how an individual interprets his or her surrounding which is reflected in the story he or she tells.

Due to the lack of presenting other aspects of the deaf life in Thai society, this study has a strong determination to empower deaf people in Thailand by conveying the stories of 'living the deaf life' to the readers. Thirty-four deaf participants in four regions of Thailand were interviewed in order to answer the three research questions:

- (1) How is deaf identity constructed in Thai society?
- (2) How do deaf Thai handle deafness in their interaction with others?

(3) How does the process of telling his or her story reveal the narrator's process of identity construction?

The narratives revealed that deaf people in Thailand construct their identity by conforming their ways of life to the biological, spiritual, cultural, economic, societal, and interpersonal surroundings advanced by Eisenberg. They managed their deafness by communicating only with the people who could understand them. Their styles of telling their stories were mostly open and comfortable. The deaf participants know who they are and where they belong in the society. By reading their life stories, readers will find that deaf people are as capable as hearing people. All they need is an opportunity to use their abilities.

Approved: Quita C. James

Signature of Advisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to many people who have contributed much to bringing this dissertation to light.

I am deeply grateful to Asst. Prof. Michael I. Arrington, Ph. D., my initial advisor, who introduced me to the narrative research in the first place and gave invaluable advice all along. I am also profoundly grateful to Assoc. Prof. Anita C. James, Ph. D., my advisor to the completion of this dissertation. Without her, this work would not have been possible to achieve.

I would also like to thank my boss, Asst. Prof. Chintana Monthienvichienchai, Ph. D., who handed me the application form of this Ph. D. program and supported me in every possible way throughout my study. Thanks also to Saint John's University for granting me the scholarship to complete this degree.

I owe a lot of thanks to Kroong, my sign language interpreter, who went along with me during the field trips all over Thailand. Without him and his fine interpreting skill, I would not have completed the fieldwork in time.

I would never forget to acknowledge special persons whose love and care made this study possible. Dr. Kittima Chanvichai has always encouraged and prodded me to write. My beloved brother, Kan Arthayukti, constantly gave the valuable comments from the deaf person's point of view. Above all, my mother and father, Tiparat and Varahrat Arthayukti, have always offered immeasurable support in everything I did.

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CHAPTER ONE

GROUND SETTING

In the year 2004, the stories of Thai Olympic Heroes have been told repeatedly over months after the Olympic Games ended. Thailand sent athletes to the Olympic Games 2004 at Athens, Greece, and won eight medals. The country celebrated the so-called “Olympic Heroes” by giving each of them seven-figure amount of money. There was also a huge procession of the Olympic Heroes from the hotel in the middle of Bangkok to the House of Parliament, where there was the official welcome dinner ceremony held by the government. Thai people praised the Olympic Heroes as if they were holy idols. Some people even shouted to the heroes, “Thank you for bringing Thailand the Olympic medals.” Moreover, almost all of the celebration events that the Olympic Heroes attended were broadcasted live to the audience all over the country. This kind of incident last for months after the games ended.

Thailand also sent athletes to the Paralympic Games, the Olympic Games for the disabled persons. Thai athletes with disabilities won 15 medals, seven medals more than the Olympic winners did. Some of them even set the new world records; wheelchair 4x4. Unfortunately, Thai society was quiet to this incident. The majority of people in Thailand did not hear much about the stories of their great paralympians. The reward for those athletes who won the medals was less than a half of what the Olympic Heroes had received. The government held a welcome party at lunch time on working day which was live broadcasted but there were very few people at home to watch the TV.

From the above story, we can see that people with disabilities in Thailand are living in the unequal society. The majority group always has more power to impose their stories on the society and calls them truths, norms, or public agreements for others to follow. The majority of Thai people admires the Olympic Heroes and seems to ignore the winners of Paralympic Games. The whole country seems to feel the same.

Some may be surprised that the deaf people have their own version of Olympic called Deaflympic. The 20th Deaflympic Games was held in Melbourne, Australia in January, 2005. On the official website of Deaflympic Games (2005), there is a section about the history of the games. It said,

In the years prior to 1924, international sports provided limited opportunities for young deaf people. Indeed there were very few national federations to provide sporting competitions for the deaf. Mr. Eugène Rubens-Alcais, a deaf Frenchman, worked very hard to encourage six official national federations, then in existence, to accept the idea and to take part in the International Silent Games, a deaf version of the Olympic Games.

This is the just the example of the story of people with disabilities that is rarely known to the majority group in the world. In our world, the story of the majority group is the grand narrative, the story of how to live a better life, which values a liberal progress from poverty and superstition to prosperity and the rule of reason (Gress, 2000). Due to the power of majority, people of the world, including those of developing countries as Thailand, adopt the idea of progress as a norm of life.

Living in the progressing world, people are experiencing ever-changing activities and they tell stories to each other. People tell stories in order to exchange

information for the better life. The variety of stories represents the diversity of ideas and identities held by individuals. But when individuals unite as a group, the matter of uncertainty comes into play. Whose story is right? Who is the most trustworthy storyteller? Which story is of good reason? Then, people interact to work out conflicts and solve problems in order to reduce uncertainty they have. Identity is believed to be a result of interaction (Burke, 1957; Eisenberg, 2001; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1968). Although people argue for what they think it is right, the power of the majority suppresses the individual identities. People tend to associate themselves as member of the bigger group and value the story of the group as their way of thinking. The major story of this world is “progress.”

As the story of the progressive life is considered “normal” way of living, everybody works hard to maintain the ‘normal’ status. Whoever thinks or acts against this path is considered ab-normal. Unfortunately, there are groups of minorities who do not live their lives against the concept of progress. They are not protesters or postmodernists who try to be skeptical. Only the body conditions make them look different and be considered ‘dis-abled’. Branson and Miller (2002) noted that concept of “disabled” did not occur overnight but was “formed and transformed by the peculiar cultural condition associated with the gradual development of capitalist democracies” (p.3).

Because of their disabled bodies, it is difficult for people in these minority groups to tell the stories of what they think the progress is. Without any support, the blind would have difficulty to walk straight to the podium and tell their stories. Mobility disabled persons must be slower than others to get on the stage to tell their stories. And the deaf hardly express their stories in hearing language.

The researcher's concern and argument for this very matter is that norms, values, and beliefs in any society are just the majority consensus. They are not the truth for each and every person in the society. Each individual has his or her own way of life, and his or her own identity which is reflected in his or her life story. Each story has its own reason as Fisher (1985) pointed out that narrative is in itself a justified moral construct and consonant with reason. People with disabilities do not oppose to the progress. They just have their own pace of progression that should be valued and respected. Their stories are not abnormal, but special.

It is the fact that almost every community has disabled persons. They have to live the minority lives within the normal world and their stories are often overlooked by the normals. By conducting this study, the researcher has revealed the life stories of disabled people, especially the deaf ones. Stories of the deaf persons are scarce because, of all of the disabilities, deafness directly obstructs communication. It is hard for normal people to understand their meaning through strange voices or sign language. Moreover, most deaf people communicate with sign language which has no archive to be able to refer to afterward. Therefore, deaf people are the most interesting disability group for the researcher to record and retold their stories, which also reflects their identity construction, to the society.

The researcher presents this dissertation as a report of a qualitative study of the identity construction of deaf people in Thailand. The study was based primarily upon the stories of 34 deaf participants, who live their lives among the majority of hearing people in Thai society. This first chapter introduces the background of the study, identifies the problem, shows the significance of the study, and presents the

overview of the methodology. The chapter ends with the delimitations of the study and the definitions of key terms used.

Background of the Study

Deaf people in the west have strong deaf communities that support their human rights. Almost all deaf people in the world know some British or American sign languages. For instance, the American Sign Language (ASL) “I love you” is globally known even to the hearing people. Another example of the power of deaf communities is when the deaf students protested in Washington D.C. in March 1988. In that protest, the deaf asked for equal rights so that a deaf person should be eligible to be selected as the president of deaf university, Gallaudet. And they won (DPN 10, 1997). Deaf people in the west seem to have the same opportunities as the normals. For example, in 1995, Miss America, Heather Whitestone, was deaf; and in 2002, the audience witnessed Christy Smith, a deaf contestant, in a famous television game show “Survivor.”

Even though the struggle of deaf people in hearing world is a repetitive phenomenon occurring to the deaf all over the world (Erting, Johnson, Smith, & Snider, 1994), confrontation is not the case in Thailand, a Southeast Asian developing country. Thais do not confront when having conflict. Due to the collective characteristic of Thai culture, deaf Thai conform to the majority consensus, the notion of being disabled. “Disabled” is a label imposed by “abled” people. The term ‘deaf’ and ‘deafness’ carry the meaning of inferiority to the superior hearing people. In Thai language, there are still terms like “deaf-dumb,” “deaf-mute,” or even “mad-mute” (Arthayukti, 2001). Studies mentioned to the similar situation that deaf Thai have been depressed from the dominant hearing society one way or another (Arthayukti,

2001; Kongklai, 1995; Kongnin, 1999; Ngao-Ngam, 1998; Pochanakit, 1999; Reilly, 1995).

Deaf people themselves are sometimes confused about what they really are in the society. According to Buddhist teaching, a person who is disabled is believed to be sinful (Sri-on, 2000). There are ten kinds of person who is forbidden from being ordained as a Buddhist monk; one is a person who is deformed. Deaf men in Thailand are considered deformed persons because they cannot say a sacred prayer correctly in the ordain ceremony. Disabled persons are regarded as 'ill-fated' persons whose karma is thought to be linked to former bad deeds. Due to the power of rhetorical acts condemned by "normal" people, deaf identity is weak and inferior in Thai society.

Deaf people are trying hard to establish their identities among negative attitudes, beliefs, and values that are imposed by the hearing society. While deaf people in the West are fighting for equal civil right, deaf people in Thailand do not want to be humiliated by shouting in a strange voice or embarrassed when they sign in public (Suwanarat, 1994). They are silently waiting for advocacy regulations issued by the authorities.

Silence of the Deaf

In the west, the stories of deaf people have been told for a long time. Not only in printed media such as books or texts about living a deaf life (Fisher & Lane, 1993), but the stories of a deaf person also appeared on screen, for example, "Children of a Lesser God" in 1986 and "A Miracle Worker" in 2000. There are studies that confirm that by being exposed to related stories in social interaction, a person can process his/her self-definition (Guajardo & Watson, 2002; Schely-Newman, 1997). Therefore,

deaf people in the west have the opportunity to identify themselves to deaf stories, which provides a sense of belonging to them.

Unfortunately, it is not the case of deaf Thai. Deaf and other disabilities in Thailand are treated as diseases to be cured by authorities. Most deaf people in Thailand are dependent on guardians. The parents have responsibility in the life of their deaf child. As a consequence, most parents keep their deaf children at home in order to prevent them from dangers. Those deaf children do not have chance to expose themselves to the wider world. Their stories have not been told to other people in the society. No one knows them well. Branson, Miller, and Sri-on (2001) conducted research in 1997 to provide a general view of current attitudes toward deaf people in Thailand. The research shows that Thai people knew very little about the deaf and they regarded disabled people as not being able to look after themselves or to organize their own lives. This attitude makes it harder for the deaf people to claim their independent places in Thai society. Since the stories of being deaf are often kept inside the family, it resulted in the deficit of studies that concern the deaf identity in Thailand.

Emancipatory research for people with hearing disabilities is rare. Over fifty thousands deaf people form the second largest disability group in Thailand, following the mobility disabled (Office of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities, 2004). Ratchasuda College, the prominent higher education and research institute for the deaf and other disabilities, has a tiny collection of 126 research titles on deaf issues from all over the country (Ratchasuda, 2004). Two major categories of deaf research in Thailand are “deaf education” and “deafness related to biomedicine.” Less than ten publications dealt directly with the life experiences of deaf Thai.

Deaf people in Thailand have less opportunity to tell their stories of how they live a deaf life to the public. Most researchers still treat deafness as a disease that they have to find the way of curing it. Of all the researches concerning experience of being deaf Thai, there are very few of them emphasizing in communication in terms of interaction in everyday life (Kongklai, 1995.) Communication in everyday life is the important factor for individuals to realize who they are and where they belong. The lack of deaf story in the society gives consequences that a deaf individual could not identify him/herself to the group of deaf people. Moreover, hearing people do not have the opportunity to know their deaf friends other than being “disabled.”

As stated above, the story of deaf people in Thailand is overlooked by the public. This resulted in the inferior feeling for being deaf. Most deaf people in Thailand do not see their identities as important. So, they do not care to tell their stories to the next generation. They do not know how important it is to have their own heritage. It is the problem that needs to be attended in order to maintain human rights for all kinds of people in the society.

Purpose of the Study

This study has the objective of empowering deaf people in Thailand by conveying their stories to the readers, both deaf and hearing. Arthayukti (2001) emphasized that deaf people need to be able to tell their side of the story, and that they have the full potential to reach the goal of life as anybody else in a society. Therefore, only if deaf people can be proud of their deaf identities which can be reflected in the deaf stories, can deaf people make progress side by side with their hearing friends.

Shotter and Gergen (1989) suggested that persons are largely ascribed identities according to the manner of their embedding within a story – in their own or

in the story of others (p. x). In the case of this study, stories of deaf life were gathered by the method of in-depth interview. The stories revealed so many thoughts about their identities in a hearing world. The study solicited stories from participants in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: How is deaf identity constructed in Thai society?

RQ 2: How do deaf Thai handle deafness in their interaction with others?

RQ 3: How does the process of telling a story reveal the narrator's process of identity construction?

Significance of the Study

The problem of deficit in deaf story leads to an obscure understanding among the deaf people themselves and among the majority hearing people in Thai society. Deaf people do not know what the choices are for them to identify their lives to, since they have no chance to expose themselves to other deaf stories. Hearing people still have the same old picture of a deaf person that looks strange and with whom they are not being able to communicate. Moreover, some mean hearing people even make fun of the expression of the deaf people. Hearing people can take this study as a new point of view to look at deaf persons within their own neighborhoods.

In addition, as a developing country, Thailand is now seriously concerned about human rights issues. In the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006), the government put great effort into human resource development including the development of people with disabilities. The governmental reform in September 2002 has established the Office for the Protection of Children and Elderly and the Disadvantaged under the newly appointed Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Disabled persons are counted as disadvantaged in Thai society.

Recently, the Deaf issue has become a topic of interest at the government policy level. A government agency has chosen deafness for a pilot study in developing regulations and legislations to promote human rights, in a sense of helping, for disabled people in Thailand. With the opportunity window that has been opened, this research would provide an important piece of information for the government concerning its plan for the deaf people. This study reveals the importance of social interactions towards people with disabilities. This study also has a potential to contribute positive impact to the deaf and other groups of people with disabilities in Thailand.

Overview of Methodology

This study used the method of in-depth interview which is one of the qualitative research methodologies. On the assumption that identity is the certain state of individual's mind in dealing with uncertainty, the researcher collected life stories from deaf participants to see how a deaf person deals with uncertainties in his or her life.

Thirty-four deaf participants were purposively selected from all four regions of Thailand; north, northeast, central, and south. The researcher conducted the pilot study with 2 participants in the north and 1 participant in the northeast. Pilot study revealed some problems that needed to be solved. For instance, the local sign-language interpreters could not use sign language fluently as this study requires. Some participants did not use standard Thai sign language. The camera angle was not right for the transcription process afterward. These kinds of problems from the pilot study were treated before the actual field trips.

For the real field trips, the researcher and a college certified sign-language interpreter went to thirteen provinces where the deaf participants reside; Chiang Mai, Tak, Pitsanulok, Songkhla, Nakhon Sritammarat, Yala, Nakhon Ratchasima, Roi-Et, Surin, Nakhon Panom, Ayuthaya, Nakhon Pathom, and Bangkok. The process was to conduct in-depth interview with each participant at his or her comfort place; their houses, work places, and the deaf clubs. Each participant was requested to tell his or her life experience to the sign-language interpreter, whereas the researcher was fully observing the interview. There was a list of questions to be asked in case of the dead-air communication occur, which was very few. Average time for each interview session was forty-five minutes to one hour. All interviews were recorded on digital video camera and transferred onto VHS tapes for transcription.

Due to the hardship of contacting deaf participants and finding a certified sign-language interpreter, the interview sessions took four months to finish and the transcription from Thai sign language to written language took another three months.

Researcher analyzed the data by looking at the content of each story according to the narrator's relationship with his or her uncertain surroundings throughout his or her deaf life. Along the stories that deaf participants told, the surroundings had changed from time to time; from birth to babyhood, from school to workplace, from parents to friends, and, most importantly, from deaf to hearing world. Each deaf participant shared his or her experiences in dealing with uncertainties in order to survive as a deaf person in the majority hearing society. Each story has its own way of revealing the narrator's identity.

Delimitations

Within a workable time frame, 10 months, this study used the small number of participants in order to get more details from each story. Thirty four deaf participants were over thirty years old, and have at least Mattayom 3 diploma (equal to Grade 9). All of the participants can communicate with the standard Thai sign language. All of them are hearing impaired persons, however, there was no requirement for the degree of hearing lost as long as the participant considers him or herself as a deaf person and uses sign language as a communication mode in everyday life.

The sampling technique used in this study was a purposive sampling as well as a snowball sampling. The snowball went to some participants who live in the remote area or even at the border of the country. This study intended to go to the deaf participants wherever they were. However, the area of the field trips had to be limited to the places that a car could reach. It was because there were so many instruments to be taken along to the interview sessions; video cameras, tri-pod, tapes, connecting cords, monitor, notes, gifts, and two persons. It was impossible to walk or ride on a bike with all the things.

There was also the limitation of the language used in this study. The primary language used in all interviews was the standard Thai sign language. However, this study does not focus on sign language, therefore, the researcher did not concern in-depth in the linguistic matter. Since the sign language has its own syntax and grammar which is different from English or Thai language, this study omits the analysis of word choice, pauses between words or sentences, or the repeated message. The study focuses only on the meaning of the story that the participants shared. The archive of all interviews was kept in digital videotape.

Definition of Key Terms

As deafness is not a common social knowledge, several terms used in this study must be defined so that readers can understand their precise meaning. However, Creswell (2003) suggested that in qualitative proposal like this one, terms should be defined tentatively. Some meanings may emerge clearer in the field. The following are some terms that should be mentioned prior.

Deaf/deaf:

In this study, the terms Deaf and deaf refer to people with hearing loss of a critical level that interferes with their understanding of normal communication. They use sign language as a primary mode of communication.

However, there is always confusion in using the terms ‘Deaf’ and ‘deaf’. The National Association of the Deaf (United States) explains the use of these two terms clearly. The term ‘deaf’, with a lowercase “d”, is used to refer to the audiological condition of not hearing. The uppercase “D” is used when referring to a particular group of people who share a language – sign language- and a culture.

Since Thai language has only single case letter, the researcher used the word deaf with the lowercase “d” throughout the study, except in the beginning of sentences.

Hearing:

In this study, the term ‘hearing’ refers to people who do not have a hearing impairment and can participate in normal spoken communication.

Identity: Identity is used in this study to refer to the state of mind that an individual makes sense of oneself in certain environment through communication process self-concepts that emerges from interactions with others.

Narrative: In this study, narrative refers to the life stories of the deaf participants which disclosed through the in-depth interview.

Sense making: The process of interpreting one's surroundings or giving meaning to things, people, and the situations all around.

Conclusion of the Chapter

Apart from presenting the objectives and background of the study, this chapter summarizes what has been done through out the research process. The rest of the dissertation will be the chapters that elaborate everything in details; literature, methodology, findings, and discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aristotle said, “Let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared.”

Quintilian, the Roman philosopher and rhetorician, also said, “Good man speaks well.”

Two ancient notions condemn people with disabilities who live in the world of normalcy. Consider the two notions above; it is the rhetoric that constitutes the meaning of disability. Aristotle’s command imposed the idea that disability is not acceptable. Quintilian’s statement implied that a disabled person, especially a deaf person, will never have a chance to be a good speaker since he or she is not able to speak; therefore, unable to achieve “goodness.” Both ancient notions against disabilities and grand narrative of the modern world create unnecessary conflict between people. People in the world are not necessary alike. Deafness is just a condition of a person. As some can drive, some cannot, some can read, some cannot, or some can hear, some cannot. It should not be a big matter that resulted in anybody’s sorrow. However, with the grand narrative and majority consensus, deafness is different.

In this chapter, I will present some information to broaden an understanding of deafness. As I totally value people’s differences, the following information about deafness, deaf people, and attitudes towards the deaf will shed light on the necessity of my proposed study.

Deafness

The hearing world refers to deafness as having something missing, damaged, or defective in the sense of hearing. The World Health Organization (WHO) mentions that deafness or hearing impairment can retard an individual's development by damaging language acquisition and cognitive development and impeding school progress. It can cause vocational and economic difficulties and lead to social isolation and stigmatization at all ages (Prevention of deafness and hearing impairment, 2002). This verdict of such an international organization as WHO acts as the grand narrative that leads people to have pity on the deaf persons. Deafness is regarded as not being able to hear due to a physical condition which stops the ears from working “normally” or “properly.” Deaf people are, therefore, condemned to be people who lack a normal sense of hearing, suffer a loss of hearing, or are unable to hear what normal people say.

Deafness can be interpreted in several ways. In the book, *Lend Me Your Ear*, Brueggemann (1999) provides three areas that deafness would fall into: deafness as disability, deafness as pathology, and deafness as culture. As a disability, deafness obstructs a person from normal communication. As a person is unable to hear, that person is restrained from acquiring the dominant language. Brueggemann uses the metaphor, “literacy as power” and asserts that “English” is the power the deaf students wish for, but never receive. She talks about the situation in the prominent higher educational institute of the deaf, Gallaudet University. There are two dominant languages used on campus; American Sign Language (ASL) and Standard Written English (SWE). For native ASL users, SWE is a second language since ASL has no written components. The grammar, syntax, and word orders are totally different from

Standard English. Therefore, Standard Written English is power at Gallaudet University. Those who can write well, have a wider path of life.

Brueggemann (1999) also points out that deafness can be seen from a pathological viewpoint. If we consider that the world achieves progress by rule of reason, according to the grand narrative, then deafness is an infirmity and should be repaired. Referring to Quintilian's idea that a "good man speaks well," we can see that the Western culture emphasis on "the will to speech." Therefore, audiologists and speech therapists are the authorities in the world of deafness. They are experts who can transform a deaf person to a "good man."

In a pathology sense, deafness is a degree of hearing loss that is related to technical terms such as decibels and hertz. Deafness is known through a medical chart. In the scientific context, biomedicine and its technology make deafness a problem that must be cured. Assistive listening devices such as hearing aids are boom and cochlear implant is introduced. Audiologists do not realize that they are imposing inferior meaning to deafness, the meaning of ab-normal. An experienced audiologist sincerely expressed, "We are people-oriented. I became an audiologist because I wanted to help people" (Brueggemann, 1999, p.126). In the eyes of scientists, deafness is a disease to be cured.

The third notion from Brueggemann's suggestions is deafness as culture. The rise in cultural awareness of deafness stems from both the deaf and the hearing. The protest to have a deaf president at Gallaudet University, in the campaign "Deaf President Now: (DPN)" shows the strength of deaf communities in the United States. In the DPN protest, students were "armed" with "sign language," the language of the deaf that at last granted full sociolinguistic status. The students called for a reversal

and “voice” in matters of power, politics, and pedagogy. In DPN, hand-signs drastically drowned out voices. Media had to place cameras on the protesters and microphones on the hearing sign language interpreter. Sign language is a main factor that keeps deaf people unified within their own culture. At the same time, it is the factor that isolates them from the hearing world. Sign language is unable to be distributed widely in print. In this sense, it creates difficulties for others to know stories of the deaf.

From all three areas that deafness could fall into, we may say that deafness is undesirable for the dominant society. Deaf people are marginalized. Hearing people treat the deafness as something bad and want to eliminate deafness from society. At the same time, people with deafness strengthen their deaf identity by demanding recognition of deaf culture. These incidents lead to conflict. Only if we value the differences in people, deafness is just another condition of living on this same old earth.

People who are Deaf

Deafness is a common condition found everywhere. The World Health Organization's (WHO) most recent estimate in 2001 reported that 250 million people in the world have a hearing impairment – moderate or worse hearing impairment in the better ear (see appendix 1). Two-thirds of these people live in developing countries.

In the United States only, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders reports that more than 28 million Americans are deaf or hard of hearing. Moreover, it is interesting to learn that approximately 1 in every

1,000 infants is born deaf. Another 1 in every 1,000 infants has a hearing impairment significant enough to make speaking difficult (Health Information, 2002).

In Thailand, there are 57,665 deaf persons registered as disabled which equals 14.2 % of all people with disabilities (Office of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities, 2004). The researcher went to different research sites, especially in the remote area, and found that there are more deaf people in Thailand who have not registered with the government agency because they have no access to literacy and because they consider themselves as second-class people who are not entitled to go for any official practice.

From this huge number, deaf people are considered as a piece of jigsaw that is worth while to study in order to complete a big picture of a beautiful society. Deaf stories should be made known to the public. I encourage everyone to be more open and listen to the story of a deaf person.

A Deaf Person

There is a controversy among people in regard to identifying the deaf. Some see a deaf person as an ordinary person who cannot hear sound. Some view a deaf person as disabled. Deaf persons look at themselves as perfect human beings that have their own culture. Most of these areas are created by hearing people. For example, from a medical standpoint, a deaf person is a patient whom physicians and therapists try to help, so that individual can function in the hearing world (Hollins, 2000).

Cochlear implantation is the biggest debate of all time between the deaf and hearing.

It is the medical process of replacing the hearing organ to make a deaf person become a hearing one. Hollins found that children who have cochlear implants are actually a

marginalized group. After the implantation, they are not deaf, but they are labeled 'deaf who can hear'. It is psychologically harmful.

Foster (2001), stated that whether or not a particular deaf person is identified as disabled depends on the attitude of the hearing person. As a member of the deaf community, a deaf person is 'normal' in that community. The same person can also be considered disabled when he is a patient who needs medical treatments for his loss of hearing. Moreover, when he is seen as a citizen of his country, that particular person is considered a minority within a majority of hearing people. We can see that being deaf is tough since deafness is stigmatized. Deaf people have no choice to be anything else but deaf.

Attitudes toward Deaf

Hearing people have certain attitudes toward deaf people and vice versa. Several researchers have studied the different attitudes of deaf and hearing people. According to Trafimow (2000), an attitude is "an opinion a person has about another's behavior, whether positive or negative" (p. 47). Trafimow also suggests that individual difference variables affect attitudes. Kiger (1997) studied the influence of emotion, values, and stereotypes on the attitudes hearing people have toward deaf people. Kiger found that attitudes toward deaf people are shaped by relationships and experiences with deafness. Kiger (1997) examined the relative effects of affect, cognition, and stereotype on attitude toward persons who are deaf. He found positive attitude yet embedded with the idea that deaf people do not pose a political, social, or economic threat to non-deaf people. What if they do? This findings support my assumptions that attitudes toward deaf people are so mean because it implies that deaf

people have to be silent and express no feeling against the on going political, social, and economic activities.

Erting (1985) also found that the conflicts between hearing and deaf interactants stem from different experiences and definitions of deafness. Wixtrom (2003) summarized two major views of deafness; deafness as pathology and deafness as a difference as shown in Figure 2.1

That said, “deafness” is the key word for which both deaf and hearing people should have a common understanding. When people have a common ground on deafness, anything happen between deaf and hearing is counted as a fair play. To have mutual understanding, hearing people should have listened more to the deaf stories. The following stories are just a small part of them.

Figure 2.1 : Two Views of Deafness. Outline by Chris Wixtrom (2003) for the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) library.

Deafness as Pathology	Deafness as a Difference
Define deafness as a pathological condition (a defect, or a handicap) which distinguishes abnormal deaf persons from normal hearing persons.	Define deafness as merely a difference, a characteristic which distinguishes normal deaf persons from normal hearing persons. Recognize that deaf people are a linguistic and cultural minority.
Deny, downplay, or hide evidence of deafness.	Openly acknowledge deafness.
Seek a "cure" for deafness: focus on ameliorating the effects of the "auditory disability" or "impairment."	Emphasize the abilities of deaf persons.
Place much emphasis on speech and speechreading ("oral skills"); avoid sign and other communication methods which are deemed "inferior."	Encourage the development of all communication modes including - but not limited to - speech.

(Continued)

Figure 2.1 (continued) : Two Views of Deafness. Outline by Chris Wixtrom (2003)

for the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) library.

Deafness as Pathology	Deafness as a Difference
Give much attention to the use of hearing aids and other devices that enhance auditory perception and/or focus on speech. Examples: amplifiers, tactile and computer-aided speech devices, cue systems . . .	Give much attention to issues of communication access for deaf persons through visual devices and services. Examples: telecommunication devices, captioning devices, light signal devices, interpreters . . .
Promote the use of auditory-based communication modes; frown upon the use of modes which are primarily visual.	Strongly emphasize the use of vision as a positive, efficient alternative to the auditory channel.
Describe sign language as inferior to spoken language.	View sign language as equal to spoken language.
View spoken language as the most natural language for all persons, including the deaf.	View sign language as the most natural language for the deaf.
Make mastery of spoken language a central educational aim.	In education, focus on subject matter, rather than a method of communication. Work to expand all communication skills.
Support socialization of deaf persons with hearing persons. Frown upon deaf/deaf interaction and deaf/deaf marriages.	Support socialization within the deaf community as well as within the larger community.
Regard "the normal hearing person" as the best role model.	Regard successful deaf adults as positive role models for deaf children.
Regard professional involvement with the deaf as "helping the deaf" to "overcome their handicap" and to "live in the hearing world."	Regard professional involvement with the deaf as "working with the deaf" to "provide access to the same rights and privileges that hearing people enjoy."
Neither accept nor support a separate "deaf culture."	Respect, value and support the language and culture of deaf people.

Being called deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing impaired carries a negative connotation almost everywhere in the world. In Japan, deafness is portrayed in television and film as a disability and is isolated (Valentine, 2001). Tsuchiya (1999) stated that deaf lives were made miserable by hearing people. When a deaf child was born, the birth was considered a sign of misfortune for the family, and a child might be abandoned. In Nepal, many deaf children are prevented from attending school because of financial restraints and lack of awareness of educational opportunities available. Services of any kind for deaf adult are non-existent in Nepal (Joshi, 1994).

Sururu (1994) told the tragedy of a deaf woman in Burundi. As being deaf, she would not be able to be married openly, although she has five hearing children. Because of the interference of her hearing family members who undermine the mother's influence over the children, the children have taken away from their mother and grown up without respect for their mother. In Zimbabwe, the negative traditional beliefs toward disabilities prevent the integration of deaf students into regular school (Chimedza, 1998).

In Europe, deaf people were labeled deaf and dumb. Lane (1993) analyzed oppressive language used to describe marginalized people. The analysis shows that hearing people label deaf people in much the same way the Europeans labeled the Africans which was not in a positive way. Erting (1985) found a cultural conflict between hearing teachers and deaf parents over the education of deaf students. Parents' expectations are not met by school plan. Hearing educators promote finger-spelling, while deaf parents prefer ASL (American Sign Language) in school. The reason is that ASL is the first language of the deaf but finger-spelling is the communication mode that represents the written English of hearing people.

As evidenced above, it seems that hearing people do indeed apply unpleasant labels to people who are deaf. The majority of hearing people hardly accept deaf people as equal human beings in society. This prejudice is obviously the communication barrier between deaf and hearing people and leads to conflict. Unfortunately, it is not only hearing people that reject the deaf, the deaf also refuse to accept hearing people into their silent world.

After years of oppression, deaf people now openly express prejudice against hearing people. The student protest at Gallaudet University in 1988 has proven this fact. In that protest, deaf communities all over the United States supported a deaf person to become the president of the first and only liberal arts university for the deaf in the country. Cumming and Rodda (1988) wrote, “The victim of the prejudice may tend to reciprocate and/or internalize the prejudice to which they have been exposed” (p. 5). Moreover, many studies show that deaf people have strong negative feelings toward the hearing. They do not appreciate it if their children are born hearing (Miller, Moores, & Sicoli, 1999). They argue against cochlear implantation (Crouch, 1997). Furthermore, deaf students ignore hearing teachers in school (Robertson & Serwatka, 2000). All of these studies illustrate that deaf and hearing people have a hard time being in the same society, all because the grand narrative that promotes progress and condemns disabilities.

Attitude toward Deaf Thai

According to Arthayukti (2002), stories of the deaf life are rarely mentioned anywhere in existing accounts of Thai history. However, a few religious texts touch on disabilities as undesirable results of a bad deed (p. 25).

Most Thai people have heard about a deaf person in the story of “Sung Tong”, a charming golden prince, named *Pra Sung*, who disguises himself in the body of an ugly deaf and dumb man, named *Jao Ngo*. Because the princess overlooked an ugly appearance and saw the golden heart of the charming prince, Jao Ngo was married to the seventh daughter of King Samon. The King lost face in this incident and planned to kill Jao Ngo. The King ordered all seven sons-in-law to catch a hundred fish, as he expected that the deaf and dumb Jao-Ngo could not accomplish the task. The king planned to execute Jao Ngo. As a lesson to those who want to kill him, the golden prince, *Pra Sung*, uses his magic to gather all fish in the river and trade two fish for the tips of the noses of other six competitors. King Samon and his six sons-in-law failed to kill Jao Ngo this time. They kept trying to get rid of this ugly deaf and dumb creature in so many ways. God Indra knows the story and wanted to help Pra Sung, the golden prince. Indra threatened the kingdom of Samon that if the king’s son-in-law can beat him at ‘Khli’ (a prototype of the polo played today), he would spare the kingdom. After all six sons-in-law failed, Indra suggested Samon to call for another son-in-law. Jao Ngo discarded his disguise and showed that he was not deaf and dumb. He matched Indra in every stroke and Indra pretended to be defeated. Jao Ngo, as Pra Sung, becomes king (adapted from *Sang Thong*, the Thai popular folktale).

Even though the story of ‘Sung Tong’ encourages people to look for the goodness inside others, the story shows that deaf and dumb or mute people are undesirable. And this prejudice is embedded in people’s feeling toward deaf Thai.

In Thailand, deaf people have to survive in the midst of pity and embarrassment. For ordinary Thai people, the loss of hearing in a child is most regretted for its elimination of spoken communication. When a child does not

response to speech like others, the parents are naturally reluctant to give up on the auditory channel (Reilly, 1995). Research conducted in 1997 reveals negative attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors toward people with disability in Thai society (Sri-on, 2001). Most people believe that disabled people are inexperienced and unable to help themselves. Thai people regard advocacy to disabled people as making merit. They seek merit by giving donations to the disabled. Thai people see disability as a barrier in all daily life, religion, education, occupation, politics, and so on. They are inclined to sympathize with the disabled and do not want them to work hard.

From the attitudes toward deaf Thai, we can imagine the sadness that deaf people in Thailand encounter in everyday life. As a collective, high-context society, deaf Thai do not confront, which make their identity more invisible for the public, and for themselves.

Thailand is known as the land of smile, Thai people, whether rich or poor, whether experiencing difficulties or not, smiles often. We, the deaf Thai, smile often, too. But we have less to smile about, because we are oppressed by ignorance- the ignorance of not knowing about our surroundings as well as hearing Thai do. We often have fewer friends and are often lonely.

(Suwanarat, 1994, p. 61)

The introduction to deafness and deaf people presented above is just the small part of a whole story. The deaf are depressed because they do not have a normal condition according to the hearing world. The stories about deaf people are scarce especially in Thailand. As the activities in daily life come and go, most deaf people have to live their lives day by day, night by night without any pride in their existence.

In the next part of this proposal, I will address the concept of identity. We will see that deaf identity stands on shaky ground. Uncertainties in life make deaf people depressed. However, Eisenberg (2001) proposed the alternative way to look at identity construction. Through the interaction with surroundings and expression via communication process, the deaf might have a chance to securely place themselves among this ever-changing world.

Identity

The most important thing is not to live, but to live well, to live according to your principles. (Plato- The Apology)

Everybody is a traveler who travels from birth to death. A person has to go through so many things in one life. If someone ever wonders what people really want in their journey, it is also commonly assumed that people want to survive or exist in this world as long as they can. Now the question is how an individual knows that he/she exists, what is the sign of existence? How do we know who we are?

Because humans are social animals, they have to explore the way to live among others. People have to exchange information in order to manage their existence according to the group in which they belong. We exist by the recognition of others. We simply do our best to be recognized in the society we are in. Who we think we are, is a principle for which we live our lives. Identity is primarily what matters in survival (Martin & Barresi, 2003).

The importance of identity was recognized long ago. In the West, Plato (428 BC) mentioned that people should live their lives according to their beliefs. In the East, the oldest book of Hinduism, Upanishad (600 BC), mentioned the self-concept. Prior to 543 B.C., Buddha taught about the knowing of one's self. Most discussion of

identity or self appears in religious and theological contexts until William James, the psychologist, introduced the concept of consciousness of self in 1890. After that time, concept of self and identity disappeared again. In 1934 George Herbert Mead picked up the concept and a little later Erving Goffman explored the concept of self-presentation thoroughly in 1959 (Martin & Barresi, 2003).

Definitions of Identity

Identity is a unique concept, yet vague in some aspects. Scholars use the term 'self' and 'identity' interchangeably. The two terms commonly indicate one's awareness of existence. In consideration, self and identity are not totally the same. They overlap on each other, but each term has its own significance.

Roughly distinction, self is more on psychological aspect. Identity inclines to the field of philosophy. Self is more concrete than identity. One aspect of self is visible as a total body, but identity is invisible. Identity has to be revealed by activities of the self, or behaviors.

If we consider the two terms, we may see that self is more tangible than identity. Self is more social related while identity seems to be less concrete. But the two terms are interdependent. Self reflects identity whereas repeated self-activity (i.e. behaviors) constitutes the sense of identity to oneself.

Simple denotations of 'identity' are given in several dictionaries, for example, The Macquire Dictionary gives, "Identity is the condition of being oneself and not another." The Longman Dictionary says that identity is "who someone is." Identity also has connotations, which will be the locus of my research.

Peter J. Burke (2003) provides three bases of identity: role, group, and personal characteristic. The role identity requires the role partner. An individual is a

teacher only if he or she has a student. An individual can also have group identity when he or she is a member of a certain group, for instance, Black, White, Thai, American, Deaf, Blind, etc. The personal characteristic such as being honorable, assertive, passive, etc. is another base of individual's identity (pp. 2-3).

After reviewing some definitions of identity, I come up with my definition. In my opinion, identity is the state of mind (philosophy) that an individual makes sense of oneself (psychology) in certain environment through communication process (social). From this definition, identity relates to certain concepts; mind, self, and communication.

The mind. According to Mead (1967) the mind is the ability to make meaning out of symbols in communication. Mind arises in social process that an individual involves. When the process occurs, the individual becomes self-conscious and has a mind (p. 134). When entering into new environment, a person interprets symbols used in the situation. A person has a thought of how certain symbols indicate certain characters. Mead appointed the concept of mind as one of the main concepts in his symbolic interaction theory. Moeller (2003) studied mental state input to children's state of mind. She found that children's language skill was influenced by frequency of mother-child interaction. Once a person has language skill, the person can figure out the meaning of other people and things all around; therefore, the mind is the most important element of identity.

The self. According to the Handbook of Self and Identity, Leary and Tangney (2003) admit that there is no agreement upon a single definition of self. Self can be interpreted as the total person, personality, experience subject, beliefs, or active agents. Researchers must provide their definition of self in their studies. They may

clarify by using the prefix self, in front of the theme they want to study (e.g., self-concept, self-esteem, self-control, self-disclosure, etc.) However, Leary and Tangney came up with three common traits that seem to exist in most of the meanings of self: (1) people's experience of themselves, (2) their perceptions, thoughts, and feeling about themselves, and (3) their deliberate efforts to regulate their own behavior (p.8). The self is also the main concept in Mead's symbolic interaction theory, which will be explained later.

Communication. Communication is the means an individual uses to let the self express states of mind. People always communicate one way or another. Persons can make sense of themselves as well as they can do in interpersonal or group communication; and, through the communication, a person reveals his or her identity (Eisenberg, 2002). Burke (2003) emphasizes that meaning of 'who one is' is a shared meaning. When people interpret the meanings of 'who they are' in the process of communication, those meanings determine what to expect of themselves and from others

Identity is the core concept that this research intends to explore. The process of identity construction is crucial to understand a person's identity. There are several ways of constructing identity and, in every way, communication plays the most important role.

Identity Construction

Identity emerges when individuals communicate. Scholars believe that identity is a posteriori product of experience (Burke, 1957; Eisenberg, 2001; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1967). Identity is acquired after an individual possesses information and recognizes the meaning of the information via communication. "Disability exists

when people experience discrimination from interactions” (Kasnitz and Shuttleworth, 2001, p. 20). There are certain communication-related theories that explain how an individual forms his or her identity.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

George Herbert Mead (1934) observed and reflected his belief that human symbolic activities are the basis of human identity. Individual can acquire identity only by interacting with others. There are five key concepts in Mead’s theory: mind, self, I, me, and role taking (Mead, 1934, & Wood, 2000).

Mind – is the ability to use symbols in communication. Baby-talk is a good example of using symbols. Before knowing the meaning of words, a baby makes sounds to catch the attention of adults and get what he wants. The sounds are symbols the baby uses to communicate. When the baby knows what sound or symbol leads to getting what he wants, the baby develops his mind to use that symbol. This ability is the basis of language learning further in his life.

Self – Mead sees the self as emerging out of the mind. The mind develops from social interaction. The mind is a thinking part of the self. After interaction with others, individual build up the self-concept according to what others see. The self is imposed on us by others. Wood (2000) mentioned to Mead’s concept of “looking glass self” and clarify Mead’s view of self. Wood said, “We learn to see ourselves in the mirror of others’ eyes” (p.98). To be clear, the following concept of I and Me will help.

I and Me – Mead sees that the ‘I’ as the active self and the ‘Me’ as the passive self. The individual uses ‘I’ in creating ideas and initiating interaction. In Mead’s word, the ‘I’ gives the sense of freedom, of initiative (Mead, 1934). The ‘I’ and the

'Me' are complimentary parts of the self. Mead wrote, "If the 'I' speaks, the 'Me' hears. If the 'I' strikes, the 'Me' feels the blow (Mead, 1960). The self is essentially a process going on with these two phases. If it did not have the two phases, there could not be conscious responsibility, and there would be nothing new to experience (Mead, 1934).

Role taking –How others see us is so powerful that it indicates how we see ourselves and how we live our lives, regardless of whether others' perceptions are reasonable (Wood, 2000). Mead presented the concept of significant others and generalize others. Significant others are persons who are important to us. Our parents or close family members can be our significant others. These significant others have influence in how we see the world. They are the primary source for meaning. When we see the world through their eyes, we are taking their role. For example, a deaf person has been raised in the home that is full of music. Other family members, ones who can hear, love to play music and sing songs. The deaf person develops the meaning that music is appreciated, even though he is deaf.

Generalized others are other people we interact within a society. There are group's opinions, viewpoints of social groups, community, or society as a whole. They, too, have influence in our understanding of society and the world.

Symbolic interaction illustrates how individuals create meaning. It is the basis of how identity emerges for an individual. We can see clearly from this concept that identity emerges from interaction with others. The "looking glass self" has a significant influence on how individuals interpret symbols. Significant and generalized others also have power in this matter. There is another concept of identity construction related to symbols. The concept was proposed by Kenneth Burke.

Burke's Concept of Identification

Kenneth Burke introduced his thoughts on the matter of identification in 1969. Burke defines man as a “symbol user” and, to understand each other, man has to have the same interpretation. His comments on identification are noteworthy. In Burke's view, verbal symbols, or language, convey the attitude of the speaker. Burke (1969) saw that each person is unique and this uniqueness is the foundation of communication. Burke believes that communication is the means by which we seek to transcend our uniqueness with each other. However, uniqueness creates conflict in a society as a whole. Therefore, a person tends to identify oneself to other that he or she can manipulate, or at least thinks and acts alike, in interpreting symbols. To quote Burke, “...a way of life is an acting-together; and in acting-together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes, that make them consubstantial” (p.21).

The concept of identification leads us to understand the way individuals come up with their identities. According to this idea, a person builds up identity through the process of interaction. Through the identification process, persons acquire group identity. And to be safe, people tend to identify with the group that has more power. Deaf people are having a hard time identifying with the normal world, all because they are stigmatized.

Goffman's Concept of Stigma

Goffman (1963) defined stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3). People who are discredited by stigma live in uncertainty; they do not know exactly where they belong. Goffman (1963) stated that the social setting divided people into categories. Typically, we do not become aware of our reactions to

strangers. When someone is presented to us as different in a negative way, we tend to impose stigma on that person. Stigma affects individuals both in the presence of others or being alone. In the study of prostate cancer survivors, Arrington (2003) found that after they were treated for cancer, survivors still acknowledge the stigma of the “C” (cancer) word. This acknowledgement somehow discourages their daily life as “normal” men.

Stigma pushes stigmatized people away from the dominant society. Persons with disabilities are stigmatized by the majority of people in the society. As I talked to a blind person, he told me that many of the blind persons experience that normal people speak loudly or even shout to them as if they also deaf. Braithwaite (1990) found that after disablement, a person is isolated. “The old friends do not come along, and the roommates move out” (p.471). A woman expressed her feeling after the accident and appears to be on a wheelchair. She felt like she was a foreigner in her own country. Even the waitress asks another person who comes with her, “And what does she want for lunch?” (Braithwaite, 1993, p. 472) Goffman said that the stigmatized individuals have reason to avoid mixed society and construct their own group. That is, they form a certain identity.

All of the theories and concepts related to identity construction mentioned above have shown that people seek certainty and try to identify with others who are similar to them. People are pushed to obtain identities from others opinions and attitudes towards them through communication. Those theories provide no alternative for individuals to come up with their own identities. Social interaction process has significant power to impose certain identity on an individual.

It is the fact that we are living in a changing world and people need to be able to manage their identity according to the changing world; otherwise, there will be more suicide cases as individuals are stuck with the imposed identity and cannot tolerate it in the changing. As the world is going towards liberty and freedom, it is fair to say that an individual should have his or her own decision to choose identity. In the following part, an alternative concept of identity construction is proposed.

A New Theory of Communication and Identity

Eric M. Eisenberg, a communication professor who is interested in topic of communication and identity, introduced a new theory of communication and identity. He presents this theory as an alternative to identity formation. Eisenberg sees that the way scholars define identity formation is too tight. He suggests that we can open opportunity to the uncertainty. Identity can be built upon uncertainty (Eisenberg, 2001)

The identity theories in the past talked about how an individual reflect oneself from others' view point. Symbolic Interaction Theory framed the individual's ability to form identity within a self-reflection concept. An individual's self is a reflection of other people's opinion, both significant others or generalized others. Burke's identification concept also limits individual identity to the identified group. And Goffman's concept of stigma supports that identity is imposed by others.

Eisenberg notes that all aspects of present identity theories leads to the reduction of uncertainty. People identify with each other or groups in order to be certain that they are accepted. People exchange symbols and learn language in order to speak the same way and understand the same meaning as others. As the world

keeps changing, a primary challenge is living in the present world with the awareness of an uncertain future (Eisenberg, 2001).

In Eisenberg's view, identity is not static; it is changed along with the world. For example, women's status in the past was not supposed to take roles in military. As the world is changed, we have female soldiers. As the world changes, Franks (1995) pointed out the changes in the identity of sick persons. In pre-modern time, a sick person was unaware of sickness. The person went to bed and died. In modern time, patients surrendered their identities to health experts. Now, in Frank's words, we are in the postmodern time. Patients ask for more participation in making decisions about their illness.

Eisenberg (2001) sees that the old concept of identity "locks" people within a particular way of thinking. He stated, "what we gain in certainty, we lose in possibility" (p.540). Normalcy makes no room for difference. If we believe in people's differences, we must change our view of forming identity. Identity of the same person can be formed in so many different surroundings. It depends on how that person expresses his or herself. There are possibilities that the person can hold different identity in different surrounding. Following Eisenberg's new theory of communication and identity, we will see other possibilities for how an individual acquires identity.

The Surroundings

No one can deny communication. Eisenberg emphasizes that person's communicative choices express identity. Communicative choices are connected with their personal narrative of their mood and emotion which correlate with their surroundings.

Eisenberg believes that we were born into a preexisting world. We had names, language to be used, people to be related to, and all other things were predetermined for us. We even had identity before we enter into the world. I have direct experience in supporting this idea of Eisenberg. In 1975, my mother got pregnant. After they knew that the baby in the womb is a boy, my parents planned to have him study in the most prominent boy's school in the country. He already had several identities even though he was not born yet. After two years of not responding to any sound, my baby brother was diagnosed as hard-of-hearing. All the plans had to be changed. He could not hear the sound to understand the meaning through spoken communication. He had no choice but to study in the school that has programs for the deaf.

The world changes, and so do we. Our identity has changed from time to time according to the changes of our biological-selves and our surroundings. As we were small children, distance between the house and the playground seemed so far but it was worth it to go there to play on the swings and slides. But in present time, we can walk for a couple steps to where it used to be our playground. Swings and slides are too small to play with. As adults, we may feel dizzy playing on those things. This incident indicates the identity change due to the biological and surrounding change.

Eisenberg used the term 'surround' to represent the sum of the total environmental influence (Eisenberg, 2001). He manages surroundings into six groups: spiritual, cultural, biological, economic, interpersonal, and societal. Individuals make sense of the changing world while having influences from their surroundings. When someone marries a Muslim, he/she has to change spiritual identity to Islam. When a person enters into another cultural environment, his or her ethnic identity is salient to

himself or herself. When a person wakes up into disability, his identity is shaken, and so forth.

The Sense Making Process

The process of identity construction involves the sense making process, or the process of giving meaning to things all around. Individuals need to make sense of the surroundings. Eisenberg presents three sub-processes in making sense. The first sub process is related to biological aspect. This aspect can be expressed as individual's expectation of the future, either near or far. As they cannot hear, deaf persons always have questions whether other people are saying bad things about them. The sample of swings and slides can also be used here. As our bodies are bigger than before, it is make sense that we are not tend to play both swings and slides. Biological change also changes people's emotion. It reflects in identity formation as well. For example, Arrington (2003) found emotional change in the study of survivors of prostate cancer. Even though they survive the treatment, they are haunted by the risk of recurrence of cancer.

The second sub process is the personal narrative of life story. Individuals edit their life story according to the influence of their surroundings. In certain cultures, it is taboo to talk about certain topics. A person may edit his or her story when telling it in certain culture. Sometimes we have to screen the story of ourselves when the intimate interpersonal relationship is playing its role.

The third sub process is the communication style. Person reveals their identity in communication. Communication style is also affected by surround. Person can be opened or defensive in this ever-changing world. In a rigid Thai family, remember that culture is one of the elements of surround; children may not be allowed to free

speech, whereas the American family, children are taught to be open and speak for their own sakes.

Application of the New Theory

Eisenberg (2001) proposes this theory to be alternative channel for scholars to see identity formation. He clearly presents the interrelation of the three sub processes. In the biological sense, Eisenberg states that certain moods set out for certain interpretations of a life story. Consequently, communication style is determined. To be clear, someone who is feeling good about life is more likely to tell a positive story, which leads to more open communication.

In a personal narrative sense, he said that it depends on personal preference of certainty. As certainty limits freedom, a person who prefers sharp boundaries would be content with the same old story. That person would tell the same story over and over again as he or she is confident in his permanent identity. We may see some examples in the stories told by conservative people. In contrast, new life stories are meaningful for people because they lead to new patterns of relationships and enhance moods. People with liberal minds would love to talk about possibility and are ready to experience new things.

The third process Eisenberg (2001) addresses is the need for new communication skills. As this changing world is filled with conflicts, he suggests that violence and avoidance communication should be replaced with “strong and healthy relationships that can tolerate productive disagreement” (p. 548). People should be more open to the changing environment and try their best to deal with it. It is harder to change other than oneself. Eisenberg concludes that the relation of surroundings and processes of identity formation is only possible through communication.

Eisenberg's theory posits that people can have multiple identities as they are connected to the environment. He encourages people to look at the bright side of opportunity as it emerges in uncertainty. Thanks to the differences in this world, individuals exist in an environment that is comprised of many different things. People do not have to hold to what is imposed on them. People have freedom to choose their own identity according to their relationship with their surrounding. This notion should be applied to everybody, including deaf people. Deaf people should also have an opportunity to be some person other than deaf. Unfortunately, Eisenberg's idea is new as it said. Deaf people have not been exposed to this alternative yet. Their identity is still "labeled."

Deaf Identity

The grand narrative constructs knowledge that leads the way people perceive deafness in a society. Social knowledge tells abled people what the deaf people are, and, at the same time, reaffirms to deaf people who they are. Communicating with others is the way deaf people construct their identity. As deaf people have to live among the deaf and hearing worlds, communication strategies they use should be studied. Braithwaite (1990) analyzes cultural change from abled to disabled and found that disabled persons exercise communication strategies in order to survive in the majority world of abled people.

The incident of Christy Smith, the deaf contestant in the game show "Survivor" who refused to use sign language as a means of communication in the game, illustrates the fact that a deaf person living in the hearing world has to be flexible and able to blend into the dominant culture. The struggle of deaf people in the hearing world is a repetitive phenomenon that occurs to the deaf all over the world.

In Thailand, Arthayukti (2002) found that one of the key elements for a deaf person to achieve success is the effective communication environment. In his study, he observed and interviewed the deaf manager of the leading drinking water factory in northern Thailand. Some of the workers in the factory are deaf but most are hearing. The manager uses written and simple body language with the hearing workers and uses sign language with the deaf workers. To create a better understanding of communicative environment, the deaf manager even offers a free informal weekend class to teach sign language to the hearing workers who are interested in signing.

Kongklai (1995) studied communication problems of the deaf merchants in daily life and found that in dealing with the hearing customers, deaf merchants continue their business by adapting body language and gestures which are basic human communication methods instead of using sign language known mostly by only deaf people. These studies support that deaf people are trying to establish their existence by managing the communication environment to be supportive of their disability.

Like others, deaf identity can be formed by social influence. Without interacting with the deaf person, we hardly recognize who is deaf. People who are deaf suffer from a disappointed look when interacting with the normal for the first time. Recently, the manager of a small jewelry factory showed an interest in hiring disabled people. When she was introduced to the deaf workers, she first looked happy. After a little interaction, she refused to hire them. She prefers mobility disabled who, even though they have to use wheelchairs, can communicate in normal language.

From the social construction perspective, switching status from one to another affects identity formation. Identity stands in a dialectical relationship between the

individual and society and is formed by the social process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). A person decides to reveal his or her identity according to his or her expectation of others' perception (Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1967; Wood, 2000). As deafness can be considered hidden disability, deaf persons are always in dilemma of which identity they should reveal in certain environment.

Bentley-Townlin (2003) studied the construction of hidden disability identity (including deafness) and found that hidden disabled people have identity confusion since they tend to be neither able-bodied nor disabled. As in Christy Smith's case, she is condemned by the Deaf community because she ignores deaf culture. But when deaf people communicate, hearing people see them as a terribly strange creature as Suwanarat (1994) mentioned, "some say that we behave like monkey" (p. 62).

Even though it is the fact that deaf and hearing people are living in the same world, deaf people are in the stages of identity confusion, frustration, and depression caused by prejudice against them. They do not know where exactly they belong, deaf or hearing world. Which world sincerely accepts them as an equal member in the society, deaf or hearing?

Carty (1994) illustrated how deaf people go through the process of identity development. A deaf person relates him or herself with surroundings and develops the following stages:

- Confusion arises from the realization that one is not the same as everyone else in the family.
- Frustration, anger, and blame are the common emotional reactions to a lack of acceptance or understanding by people.
- Exploration will start looking for self-identity.

- Identification or rejection to and by certain groups will confirm self-identity.
- Ambivalence occurs after experiencing negative aspects of a group.
- Acceptance of self-identity occurs when the deaf have sufficient information and experience to know who they are and where they belong.

From the above stages, a deaf person develops deaf identity through the process of making sense out of interactions with surroundings.

There are some Western scholars who conducted researches on deaf identity issue. Bat-Chava (2000) is interested in deaf identity. Using cluster analysis, Bat-Chava found three identity traits in a sample of 267 deaf adults. They are cultural hearing identity, an identity within hearing environment; cultural deaf identity, an identity found among deaf culture; and bicultural identity, an identity of deaf person who move back and forth between two worlds. This study found that deaf people have different perceptions of themselves. They do not share a common view of themselves. This phenomenon affects communication patterns. An individual who has a hearing identity sees him/herself as a normal person who happens to be deaf and prefers to be socialized with hearing people. Those who hold a deaf identity have a strong sense of pride and consider themselves members of the deaf community (Maxwell-McCaw, Leigh, & Marcus, 2000).

The most important factor in identity construction for the deaf is family interaction (Overstreet, 1999). Overstreet conducted qualitative research and acquired self-reports about family life and educational experiences from oral and ASL (American Sign Language) deaf informants. The results showed that family interaction leads deaf people to choose an identity. From the research, Overstreet found that if a deaf child felt he/she was the same as hearing family members, the

child constructed a hearing-centered identity. Conversely, if a deaf child felt different from hearing family members, the child constructed a Deaf-centered identity, joined the Deaf community, and communicated using sign language.

Stone and Sterling (1994) conducted interviews with deaf children and found that deaf children of deaf parents expressed less confusion in their deaf identity than deaf children of hearing parents. The children were also asked about their expectation to become hearing people when they grew up. “I will stay the same”, answered the child of deaf parents. “I have a friend who is hard of hearing, and we both will become hearing when we grow up,” replied a profound deaf child of hearing parents.

In their investigation, Miller, Moores, and Sicoli (1999) found that the majority of deaf college student respondents did not prefer hearing status for any children they might have in the future. This finding supports the idea that family interaction is the key formula in constructing deaf identity.

Many children with pre-lingual hearing loss have normal hearing parents. To overcome communication difficulties, parents decide on the primary language for their children (Eleweke and Rodda, 2000). Desselle and Pearlmutter (1997) investigated the effect of parent communication patterns on their deaf children. They found that parents whose sign language skills were more proficient had children with higher scores of self-esteem than parents who use oral communication. Based on these reviews, we can conclude that family interaction is the primary source of identity. After deaf children identify themselves as members of either a deaf or hearing group, language preference follows.

Deaf identity depends a lot on relationship with others. Atkin, Ahmad, and Jones (2002) explored the negotiations about identity between South Asian young

deaf people who live in the United Kingdom and their families. Communication takes place as the medium of their negotiation. Kluwin, Stinson, and Colarossi (2002) conducted meta-analysis and found 33 studies indicate that hearing students were more socially mature than deaf students, deaf students were more likely interacted with deaf classmates than hearing ones, deaf students are accepted among hearing students.

Holte and Dinis (2001) explored the process of self-esteem enhancement in deaf and hearing women and found that language and communication is crucial in self-esteem enhancement of the deaf. Happ and Altmaier (1982) discussed the issue of counseling the hearing impaired. They emphasize that it is an important issue because counselors have so much influence in client's decision making, especially in identity matter. Many adolescents who are in the stage of confusion usually go to counselors. The discourse of counseling is directly and powerfully related to the social construction of self. Whatever they talk in counseling sessions would effect client's thoughts, and transform into behaviors (Russell, 1999).

After the elaboration of deaf identity, we can see that deaf people are having a hard time establishing their identity in the society. Their experiences of struggling through all those years of life are worth to be studied. As Burke (2003) said, an identity is contained in the meaning of 'who one is' and the meaning is always a part of general culture. In Thailand, most deaf people use sign language which rarely translates into written record, the stories of living a deaf life is scarce. Therefore, this proposed research has solicited stories of deaf Thai and analyzed the findings to see 'how' deaf Thai live their lives, 'how' deaf Thai establish their identity in the normal

world. The purpose of doing this is to promote deep understanding towards deaf people in Thailand to both normal and the deaf themselves.

The rest of this chapter is the discussion on the narrative analysis, the strategy I had chosen in conducting this research. Narratives are stories that reflect the teller's experience. Therefore, it is justified to be the method of exploring life experience of deaf Thai.

Narrative Inquiry

According to John Locke (in Martin and Barresi, 2003), personal identity depends on the presence of a psychological relationship (i.e. remembering) that binds together earlier and later stages of a person. Other people's remembering can be observed indirectly by listening to their stories. People tell a story in which they and others are characters who in turn are also characters in the stories of others (Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001). Moreover, Capps and Ochs (1995) commented that, "By journeying through their own narratives, persons may come closer to understanding and changing how they represent themselves in the world both linguistically and psychologically" (p.435). As life is a continuous narrative and stories are woven together, therefore, one can understand the orientation of life by analyzing the stories (Oliver, 1998).

However, there are controversial debates about the truth represented by narrative inquiry. Fisher (1984) argued that any story can be justified as good reason as he introduced the narrative paradigm.

Narrative Paradigm

According to Fisher (1984) humans are storytellers. Every communication act can be counted as storytelling. Storytelling is an ongoing process. It is as natural to

human as breathing (Wood, 2000). If someone tries to compare the storytelling to the reasoned discussions or arguments, one may find difficulty to accept the notion of Fisher's narrative paradigm. Fisher does not agree that human communication should be framed within the rational world paradigm, therefore, Fisher made clear that his proposed narrative paradigm is the alternative way to consider reasoned arguments. In the rational world, Fisher noticed that the reason in any argument is justified by social norm, or expert. This is ironic to the paradigm itself. As I present at the beginning of this paper, the norm is just the majority of perspective, it depends on persuasive skill of the leader. It is not exactly justified reason. Moreover, to rely on an expert's opinion is to rely on one personal reason. It is, again, not a valid reason at all.

The Basic Idea

We do not have to worry that what we say is reasonable or not. Through the narrative lens, every story is counted reasoned, as it depends on moral judgment of the storyteller. The basic idea of the narrative paradigm is that all people live their lives as drama. Fisher mentioned, "Narrative perspective does have critical connection with dramatism." (p.2) The word "story" is associated with some kind of novel, play, movie, or television drama. When we tell any story, there are elements of Burke's pentad; purpose, agent, scene, act, and agency. As we can see from any show on TV, for example, 'Survivor', the purpose of the show is to reveal strategies people use to survive. All contestants are agents. The Brazilian jungle is the scene. Activities and games during the show are act. And the nature of the primetime television show is the agency. Every story involves in dramatism characteristic. Since human life is a drama, every act we play tells story.

Fisher links the narrative to “fantasy theme”. Fantasy theme is the imaginative interpretation. As a personal fantasy becomes a group story, it has more persuasive power. For example, prostate cancer survivors noted that by sharing experience in the Man-to-Man support group, they feel better emotionally (Arrington, in press-a). Therefore, with the justified reason in fantasy theme, personal narrative can be counted valuable. However, any narrative should meet the presuppositions of the paradigm.

Presuppositions

To quote Fisher (1984), the narrative paradigm is constructed by five presuppositions; “(1) human are storytellers; (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision making and communication is good reason which varies in form among communication situations, genre, and media; (3) the production and practice of good reason is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character along with the kind of forces identified in language act; (4) rationality is determined by narrative probability and narrative fidelity; and (5) the world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation” (p. 7-8).

Considering these presuppositions, we may find that narrative paradigm is the best way to study human life story. This is because narrative paradigm is open for each and every kind of story to be reasoned. Human narrative is natural and no need for any practice. It is the truth in itself. Researchers could find the truth from any story that has been told. Nevertheless, the notion of rationality is significant to the narrative paradigm.

Rationality

In Western culture, rationality is considered extremely important (Wood, 2000). It reminds me the rule of reason in the grand narrative. It is accepted in every society that good person speaks with reason. As it is the grand paradigm, everybody in the world is taught to evaluate the story's worthiness by judging how much evidence is presented. We can easily notice this claim from law systems. Either common law or civil law bound to the evidence. Lawyers are among the largest profit makers in society. They make money by arguing with their own constructed reasons.

In order to be protected from the accusation of being so vague, Fisher (1985) re-presents the criteria for judging reasons in any story. Story should meet two criteria of narrative rationality, which are 'narrative probability' and 'narrative fidelity'.

Narrative probability is the concern of whether or not the story hangs together and free from contradiction. Narrative fidelity is the concern of "truth quality" of the story. For example, if we tell a lie, it is easy to be inconsistent. After a while, our lie will be revealed as it shows impossibility. The story that does not meet these two criteria is not reasoned. The case of President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky may be an example of the story that did not meet narrative fidelity. The story told by both of them was different. It depends on the audience to judge. Audience had to use rationality criteria to evaluate the stories whether to believe President Clinton or Lewinsky. Each of the audience could come out with different idea since they looked at the story from different perspective. As an international student, this story was just one of international news on TV. As an American, this story influenced their trust in the Democrat. They had to make choice upon this story.

Fisher presents four significant features of the narrative paradigm. (1) The narrative paradigm is a ground of resolving the dualism. There can be neither good nor bad. Everything can have its own value. (2) Narrative paradigm is moral construct since it came from individual's moral value. (3) Narrative paradigm is consonant with notion of reason. The storytelling is in itself justifying reason. Story has starting point, turning point and ending point. (4) Because public argument is unreasonable in the rational world paradigm, as it always depends on the opinion of some group of people, (i.e. experts), narrative paradigm offers the way to resolve problems of public argument by values each and every argument.

Any story can be a story of good reason. The most important is that we should not block the possibility of any story from being told. Narrative is the most suitable way to explore the truth in human mind. It is the closest way to others' reality that a researcher can reach for. The type of question that narrative research would best answer is the question about how story can reveal the worldview of the storyteller. How can the story be interpreted so that to provide an understanding of the life that created the story? The main focus of the narrative method is to analyze the story that is told (Patton, 2002).

Narrative and Identity

As identity is a state of mind and abstract, there is no proper way to quantify identity. Researchers who want to study identity issue have to analyze the issue from stories. People give meaning to their lives through the stories they tell, therefore, it is appropriate to study a person's identity through narrative. Van Der Molen (2000) studied themes from six cancer narrative and found the theme of self-identity as the most reoccurrence. Even though the respondents were using the term 'information'

when explaining their needs in their lives, the researcher analyzed that all information they needed was used to “readjust their identity in several circumstances” (p.51).

Anderson and Martin (2003) used narrative analysis to study survivor identities over the course of life-threatening illness. The stories of prostate cancer survivors reveal attitude toward their own identity that they do not want to be perceived as an artificial men (Arrington, in press - b). The stories told by chronically ill men uncover their shaky identity status (Charmaz, 1994). Vanderford, Jenks, and Sharf (1997) explored patients’ experience through the analysis of self report and found that narrative reveals patients’ understanding of their own illness and their role as a decision maker. In analyzing the discourse of agoraphobia, Capps and Ochs (1995) found that once the person is labeled by herself and others as “agoraphobic,” she is capable to trigger panic ‘unaccountably’ rather than in connection with earlier distress (p. 427).

Other than health issue, narrative analysis is also used in revealing identity of all kind of people that researchers interested in studying their lives. Corey (1996) conducted study of young men in prison. After analyzing in-mates stories, the researcher found that the stories uncover the identity of ‘homeboy’, not ‘criminal’. Through conversation analysis, Georgakopoulou (2002) could illuminate the concept of identity management. Researcher even found expected identities embedded in the conversation. As Capps and Ochs (1995) suggested that talking about oneself may leads to more self understanding and change the way of self representation. The study of Schely-Newman (1997) reaffirm this notion since the researcher discover that immigrant people can use locale narrative to cope and established their identity. Schrauf (2000) points out that narrator may tell stories in which they re-position themselves in order to repair the sense of lose.

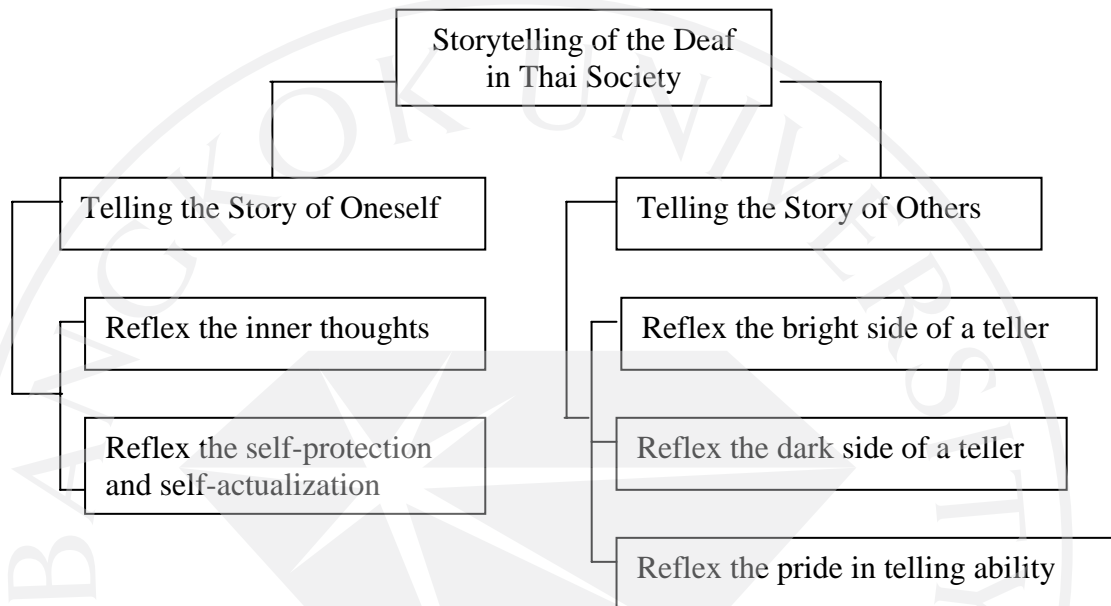
Concept of Storytelling of the Deaf in Thailand

The issue of deafness in Thailand has been emphasized on the pathology aspect. There are a few studies dealing with the life experience of the deaf people, especially the storytelling of deaf Thai. However, I have seen the classroom activities in some deaf schools, telling story is the main task for all deaf students. Moreover, telling story by the deaf contestants has been the major contest in the annual celebration of Disability Day.

Prof. Dr. Poonpit Amatyakul M.D., the prominent pioneer scholar in communication disorder in Thailand and the founder of Ratchasuda College (for disability), has suggested (personal communication, October 9, 2003) that the storytelling is crucial for the life of the deaf people. When telling story, a deaf person is mastering his or her wisdom. The more a deaf person tells stories, the more that person knows the meaning of life. The self-perception of a deaf individual is reflected in the story that individual tells. Dr. Poonpit illustrated his suggestion as shown in Figure 2.2

A deaf person may tell either the story of oneself or of others; it reflects what is in the mind of the teller. Telling the story of oneself, the deaf teller has to go through the process of thinking inward and selecting a part of his or her life to be disclosed. The deaf people seldom exercise this kind of thinking in daily life. This process also masters the efficiency of the brain function. In telling one own story, the deaf teller would also recall the life experience that made pride to him or her. It would make the deaf life more precious.

Figure 2.2 : Amatyakul's chart of the storytelling of the deaf people in Thai society which reflect self-perception of the teller.



Telling the stories of others shows the teller's ability in both positive and negative aspects. Positive side of telling story of others is that the teller has acquired a lot of information and be able to manage and evaluate information to be told. The negative side may be seen if the teller expresses negative attitude toward others and which is considered rude in Thai society.

All of the studies and concept mentioned above prove the significant role of narrative in identity issues. It is fascinated that telling story could reveal the inner self of the storyteller. Deaf people in Thailand tell stories to others in sign language and have no recorded archives. The story of the deaf had been forgotten eventually. This study is one of the first recorded archives of the life stories of deaf people in Thailand.

Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter has presented the theories and concepts including some previous researches related to identity, deafness, and narrative. All theories and concepts have been discussed in order to provide a common ground between the researcher and the reader. Identity is defined as a certain state of individual's mind when dealing with the uncertainties all around. Deaf people are standing on the uncertain ground because, in the majority hearing world that the deaf people live in, there are many definitions for deafness and also may different attitudes toward being deaf. The theory of communication and identity has been high-lighted to be the theory that open to the uncertainty and assured that identity can be built upon uncertainty. Narrative paradigm, therefore, comes in to help justify the reason of life story of deaf people. Several supportive concepts and researches are also presented.

After reviewing literature, the next chapter will elaborate the methods used in this research. In order to find out how deaf people establish their identity on the uncertain ground, the researcher employed the qualitative in-depth interview to gather the life stories of the deaf participants all over the country.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

To marginalized people, autobiography may be the most accessible of literary genre ... yet there are serious obstacles in the way of realizing the counter hegemonic potential of the disability memoir. Obstacles can be found at three distinct junctures: having a life, writing a life, and publishing a life.

(Thomas Couser, 2001: p. 78)

What Couser said supports my intention to explore and write about the life of deaf people in Thailand. To narrate someone's life accurately, a researcher has to deeply understand the circumstances and surroundings of the subject person. This research is a study conducted in a natural setting to understand what and how things are going on in reality that effect deaf identity. With the questioned words such 'what' and 'how', the answers can be best provided by qualitative research methodology.

General Research Perspective

In order to assess the quality of a qualitative research, Merriam (2002) suggested the readers look for the consistency of the problem, methods, findings, and discussion. For this research, the researcher has seen inequality between the deaf people and the hearing people in Thailand in terms of their social access. The literature shows that deaf people in the western world have been fighting for equal rights while there is no record of such strong determination of deaf people in Thailand. The researcher, therefore, wanted to understand how deaf people in Thailand perceive their own identity. This chapter provides the detailed information about the qualitative method used to find out what the researcher wanted to know.

Qualitative methodology is the way of studying issues in depth and in details; therefore, the qualitative methodology for this study is the way to study the deaf life in depth and in details. Qualitative methods are best suited for research intended to provide an understanding of processes occurring within particular contexts and of the beliefs and perceptions of the participants involved in the processes being studied. Accordingly, this research has the objective of understanding the process of identity construction of the deaf people in the context of Thailand. Qualitative researchers should go into the field and collect the information they need through qualitative methods. This study has proposed the research method which was taken to conduct the pilot study and has encountered many problems as will be seen in the following section.

The Pilot Study

This study is one of the pioneer studies concerning the life of deaf people in a Thai setting. A pilot study was needed in order to assist in testing the feasibility of the proposed study design. This pilot study helped the researcher to determine whether the whole process would work out properly. The result showed some difficulties in the process which will be elaborated in the following detailed descriptions.

Gaining Entry and Selecting Participants

Schensul, Schensul, and Le Compte (1999) described entry as the process of “developing presence and relationships in the designated research setting that made it possible for the researcher to collect data” (p. 69). Le Compte and Preissle (1993) have suggested that initiating contact requires the researcher to locate a gatekeeper within the culture, informally and in person. The entry for this research has been done through both formal and informal processes.

The researcher contacted the staff of the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand (NADT) in person, asking for the list of deaf people who registered as members of NADT. They asked for the formal letter in order to process the researcher's inquiry (Appendix A). The researcher got the list of almost 500 deaf members in all four regions of the country. Unfortunately, the list showed only 18 persons from the 500 who met the criteria of this study, which are the age and the education level. The NADT suggested that there are regional member clubs which might have known more deaf people in the area. The regional member clubs are situated in Chiang Mai, Nakhon Panom, Song Khla, and Bangkok.

Chiang Mai and Nakhon Panom were purposively selected as the pilot sites. The reason was that the researcher wanted to know whether the differences of knowing the two places before would affect the process of the interviews. The researcher is familiar with Chiang Mai but had never been to Nakhon Panom. The result of comparing the two research sites showed no effects on the process of the interviews. The interview site could be anywhere that can be reached by a car.

Building Rapport

Schensul, et al. (1999) noted that the researcher must establish a trusting relationship with participants. They suggested that the rapport is achieved through the researcher's connection. For this study, the researcher contacted the sign language interpreters of the regional clubs in Chiang Mai and Nakhon Panom in order to have them as the research contact persons. Glesne (1999) mentioned the importance of a lay summary--verbal or written introduction of the research and researcher to the participant--that "helps prepare participants to take part in the interview the most effectively. The lay summary reached the participants a week before the pilot sessions

began (Appendix B). This rapport is also dependent on the researcher's ability to put people at ease, maintain confidentiality, and how quickly she is able to learn the customs (Schensul, et al., 1999). Concerning what Schensul, et al. said, the researcher attended a Thai sign language course for basic conversation provided by the NADT prior to the field research. The researcher also practiced using sign language with her deaf brother as much as possible. Even though the researcher could not sign effectively, she had the confidence that she could understand what the participants would sign.

The researcher went to conduct the pilot study in Chiang Mai and Nakhon Panom using her own car which turned out to be the most suitable way to go from one research site to another. In Chiang Mai, the sign language interpreter had made the appointments with Mr. Prasert and Mr. Buncha, deaf persons who were willing to cooperate with this study. In Nakhon Panom, the researcher met with Mr. Wittaya at the office of the member club. The researcher drove to Chiang Mai a day before the interview. Miss Yui, the sign language interpreter of the Northern Deaf Member Club came to meet the researcher at the hotel on the next day with Mr. Prasert. Miss Yui acted as the sign language interpreter for both with Prasert and Buncha. We did the first pilot interview with Prasert in a quiet corner of the hotel. Prasert said that there was no suitable place to interview him at his house. With Buncha, we went to his house which was far away from the city of Chiang Mai. Buncha lives in the small mountainous village in the Chiang Dao district. The small car could not reach there, so we rented a local car with a skillful driver to take us to Buncha's place.

The Proposed Interview Method

We have tried to interview the participants with the research design proposed in the first place, the Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) suggested by Wengraf (2001). The BNIM is a particular narrative interview starting from a single initial question in the first sub-session. The interviewee's primary response will be determined by a single question asked for narrative in the first sub-session. The interviewer will not intervene by asking any follow-ups, nor by developing or specifying directions in any way. All curiosities must be held until it's time in the second sub-session. The initial narration continues until the interviewee indicates clearly that he or she has no more to say. At least a 15-minute break should be provided for the interviewer to review the notes and prepare for the second sub-session.

Wengraf suggests that the second sub-session should be on the same day with the first. It is wise to make the two sub-sessions appear to be one for the interviewee. This is because the interviewee would have the sense of continuing in telling the story. The second sub-session has a unique objective to ask for more elaboration of the initial story. This session will focus only on the topics raised in the first narrative. This second sub-session helps the interviewee to have a clearer direction to talk about. More importantly, their directions follow their own initial ideas. When this sequence of the two sub-sessions has been completed, the interview is over with the particular interviewee.

The BNIM sounded perfect for narrative interview; however, it did not work well for this particular study. It is the nature of the deaf people that they are suspicious. As they cannot hear what the hearing people say, the deaf people do not

trust strangers. The participants in this study mostly hesitated to talk about themselves in the first place. The first sub-session was very difficult. The process was started by the sign language interpreter greeting the participant and telling the participant that there would be the question and the participant is supposed to answer the question by telling his/her story. Prasert seemed to understand what we expected from him. However, to the first question, Prasert introduced himself and smiled. We encouraged Prasert to tell the story by asking him the open-ended question such as, “anything to add?” but Prasert could not think about the answer. He even asked the researcher to ask more questions. The researcher, therefore, asked probing questions of each interested area through the interpreter. Prasert answered all the questions well.

The researcher tried to use the BNIM again with different participants and the similar problems occurred with all three participants in the pilot study. Wengraf’s BNIM assumptions were violated; therefore, the researchers had to change the way to get the story from the participants. The less structured interview was also suitable for eliciting life story (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Patton, 2002; Riessman, 1993; Wengraf, 2001). The actual research, therefore, has used the semi-structured interview process.

Technical Difficulties

This study had to use a videotape recording device to record the sign language interviews. The researcher used two video cameras on this study. The first one was an analog video camera which had batteries problem during the pilot interview session at Nakhon Panom. In that moment, the researcher let the interview session go on without the interruption of the broken camera. The researcher tried to note everything down on the notebook. Unfortunately, the deaf participant was interrupted by the movement

of the researcher. The researcher has learned that it is very important to keep eye contact with the deaf participant during the interview. To divert eye contact to something else beyond the hands signed or the facial expression of the deaf participant made the participant pause his/her narration and wait until everything was ready for him/her to continue the narration. Therefore, the whole session was terminated and the researcher had to buy the new video camera immediately in order to be able to interview the next participant.

This pilot study has faced another difficulty with the positions of persons and camera. The camera was placed to see the participant in full frame. The sign language interpreter sat beside the camera and the researcher observed at the back of the camera. This position of camera and participant and interpreter caused big trouble later in the transcription process. As the interpreter was not in the frame, it was hard to know exactly what she asked (see Figure 3.1).

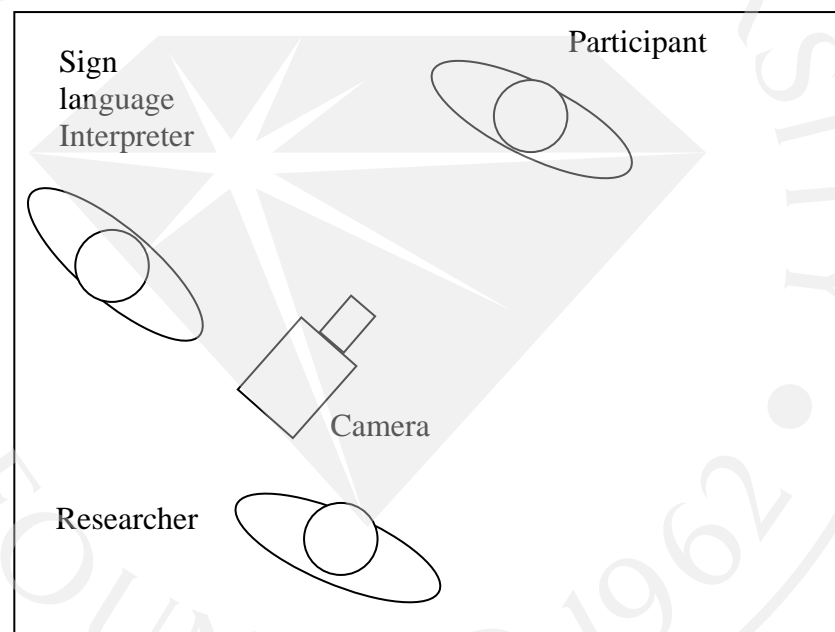
Another problem concerning the position of the interpreter was that the interpreter did not do the simultaneous interpretation. She did the consecutive interpretation, the way that the speaker pauses the talking consecutively in order to let the interpreter translate what the speaker said into another language, and the camera hardly recorded her voice. The researcher tried to solve the problem by using a microphone clipped on the interpreter's shirt. The voice was heard better than before; however, the problem with the interpretation still occurred.

Consecutive interpretation made several pauses in the interview. The interpreter was supposed to represent the researcher. The researcher and participant should be having an informal conversation, as Pool said, "... the narrative interview is

like interpersonal drama with a developing plot” (cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 118) The unnecessary pauses were not proper in the interview with the participant.

The interpreter was another difficulty in the pilot study. The proposed research design was to use local interpreters as they would know the participants. The result from the pilot study showed that the local interpreters did not have enough competencies in signing. Most of them were volunteers who knew just how to use sign language in order to communicate with the deaf people in basic conversations.

Figure 3.1 : Positions of persons and camera in pilot study



The interpreters in this pilot study could not perform simultaneous interpretation and the proposed design had to be changed on the matter of the interpreter. The problems were solved in the actual research.

Fortunately, Ratchasuda College, which provides a bachelor’s degree in deaf studies majoring in sign language interpretation, produced the first batch of graduates in March 2004. In the actual research, the researcher hired one of the graduates from

this first batch. Even though the new graduate who was hired for the study could not perform an excellent simultaneous interpretation, he could sign fluently. The research design had to be changed to fit the available choice.

In the actual research, the interpreter was briefed by the researcher thoroughly as to what was expected from the interview. The interpreter performed the whole interview with sign language. The researcher observed the interview and was ready for jumping in if necessary.

Conclusion of the Pilot Study

Interviewing three deaf participants in the pilot study provided useful information for the researcher to adjust the design of the actual field research. To gain the access to the deaf participants, the regional deaf member clubs were the true gatekeeper of deaf communities. The local sign language interpreters were very helpful as the research contact persons. The lay summary did not work well because the deaf participants did not pay attention to the content of the summary. The researcher had to brief the whole process again at the site. The deaf participant did not tell any story to the first question which violated a Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) suggested by Wengraf (2001). Having only the participant in the frame caused the transcription problem since we would not see what the interpreter really signed to ask the participant. Consecutive interpretation was also improper for the narrative interview with the deaf because it produced unnecessary pauses.

From the result of the pilot study, the researcher had changed the interview method from BNIM to the semi-structured in-depth interview. Only one certified sign language interpreter was hired to conduct all interviews as well as to transcribe the interviews from videotapes to the Thai written language in order to keep consistency

throughout the interview data. The position of a deaf participant and the interpreter in the frame had to be changed. Lastly, the researcher prepared to bring two video cameras to every interview session, just in case there were problems with one of the machines. The actual field research will be explained in the following section.

The Actual Research

Research Context

The term context is used here to identify the place and time of the study. After taking the pilot study in Chiang Mai in December 2003 and in Nakhon Panom in January 2004, the researcher had to wait for the sign language interpreter, who eventually graduated in March 2004. The actual field trip started in April and the last interview was conducted in the first week of June 2004.

This is the study of the deaf people in Thailand; therefore, research sites were spread out to the four regions of the country: north, northeast, central, and south. I drove to each site where the interviews took place. In the north, the interviews took place in three provinces which were Chiang Mai, Tak, and Pitsanulok. In the northeast, there were interview sessions in the provinces of Nakhon Ratchasima, Roi-et, Surin, and Nakhon Panom. Three provinces in the south were also research sites, Song Khla, Nakhon Sritammarat, and Yala. The provinces in the central part of Thailand which were research sites are Ayuthaya, Nakhon Pathom, and Bangkok. Details on each site will be given in the chapter four.

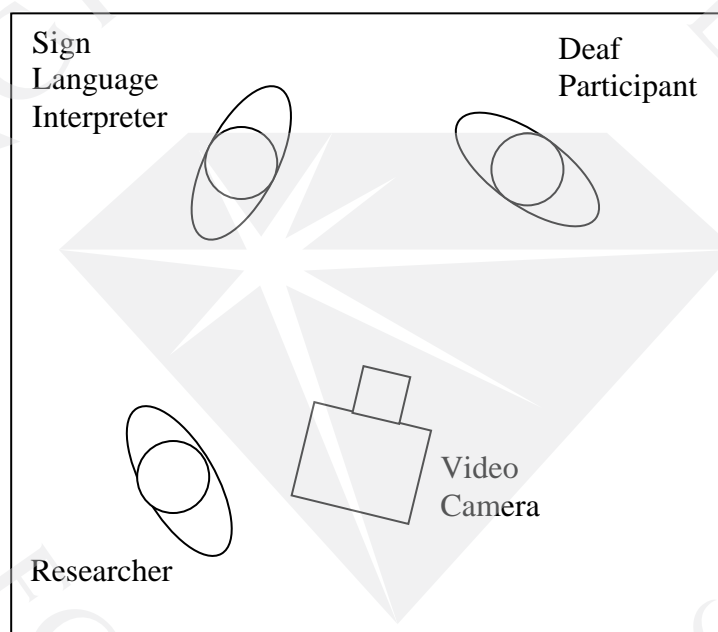
What should be clarified here in terms of the research site is the surrounding of the interview. Even though this study had interviewed many participants in many places, it had one thing in common. That is, all interviews were conducted in the

control surroundings. In each interview, there were three persons involved: the participant, the sign language interpreter, and the researcher (see Figure 3.2).

The participant and the interpreter were seated facing each other with a little profile turned to the camera so that the camera could have both of them in the same frame.

The researcher was behind the camera but close enough for the interpreter to hear if there was anything to be changed or added during the interview.

Figure 3.2 : Positions of persons and camera in the interview session



According to Balch and Mertens (1999), body language is very important in doing an interview with the deaf. Tables should not be used as it will be an obstacle for reading the body language of the participants. In every interview session, nothing was placed between the interpreter and the participant to make it clear for both of them to communicate in sign language as well as body language.

One advantage of interviewing a deaf participant was that we did not have to find a quiet place to conduct an interview. The place could be in a private room or on an open-air terrace. Only visual distractions needed to be avoided.

The Deaf Participants

Deaf people live in every part of Thailand. From the statistics of registered persons with disabilities up to November 2004, the total of 57,665 deaf population of Thailand is composed of 31,264 males and 26,401 females. They live in all four regions of Thailand: 12,421 persons in the north, 19,484 persons in the northeast, 11,712 in the central area, and 8,649 in the south. In Bangkok, there are 5,399 registered deaf persons (Office of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities, 2004).

This study interviewed 34 deaf persons, 22 males and 12 females. The deaf participants were both purposefully and accidentally selected. To be purposefully selected, the participant had to meet two criteria; the age must be 30 years old or older and the level of education must be grade 9 or higher. This study avoided having the vague sense of self which is mostly found in an individual who has not yet past his or her adolescent years. According to Erikson (1968), an individual will fully develop physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility when he or she has passed the identity crisis in adolescence. The adolescents are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others and compared with what they feel they are. Therefore, this study set the age criterion at 30 years old or older so that the participants would have been through any identity crisis.

In addition, all participants must have finished at least the lower secondary level of education, or grade 9 of the U.S. educational system. This criterion was set in

order to be sure that the participants would have learned some standard Thai sign language from the deaf school. It was very important to use the standard language in this study. Deaf people have their own version of sign language which varies from community to community. The demographic data has been grouped in tables as shown in Appendix C.

All participants are the children of hearing parents and those participants who have children, have hearing ones. The following section provides a summary of each participant.

Participants in the North

Mr. Prasert (Chiang Mai/pilot study)

Prasert is 36 years old. He works at the northern deaf club in member services. Prasert lives with his father and mother in Chiang Mai. His parents own an apartment building for rent and it will become Prasert's property in the future. Prasert seems to be happy with his life at present.

Prasert is deaf because his mother got rubella. He attended a deaf school and finished Mattayom 3. He went on to a vocational school for one year and quit because hearing students stole his drawing stuff. Prasert started to work at the local newspaper as a printing worker. He tried to learn more on his job and asked the boss for a more advanced job to do. He always wanted to be treated equal to the hearing colleagues. Prasert had a hearing girlfriend and broke up because of the communication barrier. Prasert is proud to sign. He likes explaining things to other deaf people. Prasert was selected to be on the leadership committee of the Northern Deaf Club. He quit the newspaper job and works at the club.

Mr. Buncha (Chiang Mai/ pilot study)

Buncha is 36 years old. He is married to a deaf woman and has two sons.

Buncha opened a small game room at his house. He also has comic books for rent.

His life is steady now. Buncha told a story of his teenage years.

Buncha became deaf after he had a very high fever. He had to go to the deaf school and use sign language. After he finished Mattayom 3, Buncha and another deaf friend went on to a vocational school. After the first year, his friend quit school.

Buncha was the only deaf student in the school. Buncha had a lot of hearing friends.

He followed hearing friends to do bad things.

Mr. Supa-art (Chiang Mai)

He is 52. Supa-art works at a drinking water factory in Chiang Mai. He is happy with his deaf life. He prefers to be deaf as he cannot understand spoken language.

Supa-art told us that he was hit by a lightning strike and became deaf at the age of nine. He went to a deaf school and learned sign language from deaf friends.

The deaf school did not encourage deaf students to sign. Supa-art didn't understand spoken language; therefore, to sign with deaf friends was the only way out that kept him lively at school.

Mr. Panom (Chiang Mai)

Panom is 36 years old. He lives in Lampoon and works in Chiang Mai. Panom finished Mattayom 3 from the deaf school at Tak province. He works at the Northern Deaf Member Club. Panom is in charge of member services. He told us that he is satisfied with working at the club, where he can use sign language and deal with deaf issues. Panom wants to help deaf communities in every way he can.

Panom perceived depression of being deaf in his youth/ along his lifetime. It gave him strong determination in helping other deaf people. Ratchasuda College took part in educating Panom and made him more confident to be deaf.

Mrs. Malai (Chiang Mai)

Malai is 43 years old. She was born in Payao and went to a deaf school at Tak. Malai was not attached to the deaf school much. She just went to school as her parents wanted her to do. Sign language helped Malai to survive in a society at school. Malai married a deaf man and has one hearing daughter. Her daughter is embarrassed to have a deaf mother. Malai likes going to the mountain or the waterfall. She likes to be quiet.

Mrs. Ladda (Chiang Mai)

Ladda is 37 years old. She works as a janitor at the center of special education region 10 in Chaing Mai. Ladda does not like being deaf. She has a strong feeling against her deafness. Her interaction with her family does not go well. Ladda married a deaf man and has a hearing son.

School experience did not give any good attitude for Ladda being deaf. Ladda finished her deaf school in Chaing Mai. Sing language is a relief for the students at deaf school, but it was prohibited. At work, Ladda feels that she is taken advantage of by the hearing colleagues. Ladda is depressed and wants to hear.

Mr. Wirat (Tak)

Wirat is 36 years old. He lives with his little sister who rarely talks to him. Wirat finished Mattayom 3 from a deaf school in Tak and has stayed home ever since. Wirat makes his living by helping his neighbors do this and that for little money.

Wirat's life is so simple. He wakes up late and rides a bicycle to his neighbor. If there is nothing to do, Wirat just hangs around in the neighborhood. He likes to be where he is accepted.

Mr. Nipon (Tak)

Nipon is 43. He seems to have a happy life as everyone in his surroundings accepts him. Nipon works as a ranger of the national park. He likes his job very much. His little brother is his chief. The two brothers work together so well.

Nipon become deaf because of rabies injections. His family tried to keep his spoken language but it was impossible because Nipon could not hear his own voice. Nipon reads lips and writes to communicate with other hearing people. The parents took Nipon to a deaf school in Bangkok. He was afraid of sign language at first, but he adjusted to the new place quite well. Nipon's older sister can sign and teaches in a deaf school. Nipon loves this sister the most because he can share everything with her without a communication barrier.

Mrs. Chonrudee (Tak)

Chonrudee is 40. She lives with her parents and her daughter. Chonrudee works as a maid in several houses in the area.

Chonrudee was accidentally deaf at a very young age. She attended a deaf school at Tak. Interaction within the family does not go smoothly. At home, her parents always yell at her and make her do hard work. The parents do not allow Chonrudee to talk to anybody. That made Chonrudee have no close friends. She met a hearing man and has a daughter. The man left. She loves her daughter so dearly. Chonrudee is so proud that she has saved up some money for her daughter. However, Chonrudee's parents are in charge of their granddaughter's fortune.

Mr. Poramin (Pitsanulok)

At 50 years of age, Poramin is famous when the newspaper interviewed him about the success of his small restaurant in Pitsanulok. Poramin runs this restaurant by himself after his parents passed away. As the owner is deaf, this small restaurant is well known to the people in the area.

Poramin became deaf when he fell off a horse when he was 12. He had to move to a deaf school where his spoken language gradually disappeared. He does not like being deaf. He blames deaf people for being panicked by everything. However, Poramin was selected to be the president of Pitsanulok Deaf Club. His wife died with a baby in the womb seven years ago. He lives by himself.

Miss Kanokwan (Pitsanulok)

Kanokwan is 30 years old. She sells flowers and souvenirs at night. She shares an apartment with other three deaf friends. Kanokwan has been through some experiences that made her tough.

Kanokwan was pronounced deaf at the age of seven when her mother took her to a hearing test at the hospital. Kanokwan had to go to a deaf school. She was afraid of students fighting. Kanokwan dropped out from the deaf school for seven years. She re-entered pratom 1 at the age of 16. Kanokwan finished Mattayom 3 and quit school again. Her mother was beaten up by her aunt. Kanokwan came home in order to look after her mother and a step-brother. After the mother passed away, her brother entered the temple and now he is a Buddhist monk.

Participants from the Northeast

Mr. Wittaya (Nakon Panom/pilot study)

Wittaya is 31. He has three deaf brothers and sisters in the family. He is the only deaf family member who went to school. After he finished Mattayom 3, Wittaya applied for a job at NADT and failed. He turned to selling t-shirts at Sukumvit Street in Bangkok for three years.

Wittaya is now working with the Northeastern Deaf Association. He is in charge of member services. He moved back to Nakon Panom in order to be close to his family.

Mr. Chanachai (Nakon Ratchasima)

Chanachai is 36 years old. He works at the Korat Deaf Club. Chanachai turned deaf at a very young age without knowing the cause. Chanachai finished Mattayom 3 from a deaf school. He worked as a horse keeper and became a jockey in a horse race.

Chanachai's childhood was not pleasant. His father always had a bad temper and hit Chanachai very often. He hardly understood what the family wanted to tell him. He liked being alone and working things out by himself. Chanachai married and his wife left him. He told us that he was a playboy and his wife did not like it.

Mr. Anuwat (Nakon Ratchasima)

At 36 years of age, Anuwat is the president of a Korat Deaf Club. Before this, Anuwat worked in a water drilling team. He moved around the country to drill the ground-water. He does not want to travel anymore.

Anuwat fell out of a tree when he was 4. He went to hearing school but he did not understand and could not communicate with others. His father took him to a deaf

school. Anuwat finished Mattayom 3 and got out to work. He told us that he had six girlfriends and all broke up because of the communication problems.

Anuwat focused on his deaf club when he talked with us. He talked about how to get money and how to make souvenirs.

Miss Nopamas (Nakon Ratchasima)

Nopamas is 30 years old. She is a member of Korat Deaf Club. She makes souvenirs and sells them to the department store.

Nopamas was born deaf. After having communication problem with hearing students in hearing school, Nopamas's parents took her to a deaf school. She finished Mattayom 3 and stayed home. The mother was very worried about Nopamas. She did not allow Nopamas to go out anywhere alone. She did not support Nopamas's desire for further education. She did not like sign language. Nopamas had a quarrel with her parents and left to Malaysia for two years. She came back and stayed with her mother for a while. The letter from the Korat Deaf Club asked Nopamas to join the club. She went to Korat. Nopamas's story focuses on her mother's negative attitude towards her deafness and sign language.

Mr. Chaiwat (Surin)

Chaiwat, at 49, is a Red Cross staff member. He is the only deaf staff at the Red Cross. Chaiwat is proud of his job. Prior to this job, Chaiwat raised pigs and cows for sale. He quit raising those animals because they produced bad smell in the neighborhood which became more crowded.

Chaiwat got a high fever and became deaf when he was seven months old. He went to a deaf school and finished Mattayom 3. Chaiwat goes to the temple and makes merit quite often. Chaiwat prays for not being deaf in his next life. Chaiwat can

support himself with the salary from the Red Cross. He even teaches sign language to other deaf people on weekends at his house.

Miss Busara (Surin)

Busara is 50 years old. She is a small woman, about 3 feet tall. She lives with her old mother and aunt. Busara was timid at first. She wanted to see the process of the interview before participating. However, Busara was very helpful to the study. She contributed an interesting story.

Busara was born deaf. She is the youngest sister of the family. After finishing school, Busara stays home and her brothers and sisters support her. The sisters took Busara to see the world. Busara has a lot of experiences traveling abroad. At present, Busara spends her daily life with her mother and aunt.

Mr. Sompong (Roi-Et)

Sompong is 36 years old. He is the president of the Roi-Et Deaf Club.

Sompong was originally a farmer. After he got married, his wife told him to join the deaf club in town and work for a monthly payment. To be in town, Sompong has to stay at the temple, eat the leftovers from the monks, and sweep the temple grounds.

Sompong was born deaf. He believes that he is deaf because of his father's bad deeds. Sompong attended a deaf school at the age of 10. He finished Mattayom 3 and worked in the rice field. He used to be a truck driver for a while before he got married. Sompong has been married a hearing woman for 12 years without any quarrel. They have two children, a boy and a girl.

Mrs. Ankana (Roi-Et)

Ankana is 35. She works as a treasurer of the Roi-Et Deaf Club. She is well-off as her family is wealthy. She volunteers to help the deaf community.

Ankana was born to a family of goldsmith. Her deafness is heredity. She has another deaf brother and sister. She does not seem to be sorry for being deaf. She has lived an ordinary life without any struggle. Ankana went to a deaf school in Bangkok. After finishing Mattayom 3, she moved back home and married hearing man. She has two hearing children.

Participants from the South

Mr. Artit (Song Khla)

Artit is 47 years old. He is the owner of a Para rubber farm in the south. He experienced some difficulties in selling the rubber to the hearing middle man. Artit also has negative attitudes towards government officers and bankers believing they discriminate against the deaf people.

Artit was accidentally deaf at the age of 9. An insect went inside his ear and his mother did not take him to the hospital. The mother used a stick and got the bug out. His ear was infected and became deaf later, from left to right ear. At the deaf school, the teacher borrowed Artit's money and did not pay back. Artit quit school because this matter. He only finished pratom 4 (grade 4). [Why was he included in the study when he did not meet the criterion of grade 9 education?]

Mrs. Roongrat (Song Khla)

Roongrat is 39 years old. She married a deaf man and has 2 hearing children. Roongrat earns a living by peeling fruits and does some housework.

Roongrat is originally from Yala. She was born deaf and went to the deaf school in Song Khla. Roongrat is not close to her family in Yala. She even said that she hates them. Roongrat was expelled from school when she was at pratom 4 (equivalent to grade 4). Roongrat stayed home since then. When she was 17, Roongrat

went away from home. She has lived by herself since then. [Again, she does not meet the criterion of grade 9 education]

Mr. Chuchart (Song Khla)

Chuchart is 34 years old. He works as the member services at the Southern Deaf Member Club. Chuchart is the oldest son of his family. He feels guilty that he is deaf and cannot support his brothers. Chuchart quit school since he was at Mattayom 2. He said there was nothing to learn in school. Chuchart always want to help deaf people to have a better life.

Chuchart believes that he is deaf because his parents had a quarrel when he was in the womb. He attended a deaf school in Song Khla and learned the sign language which has the basic structure of American Sign Language (ASL). Chuchart is sensitive to the attitudes of other deaf people toward the deaf in the south. He thinks that others, especially deaf people in Bangkok, look down on the deaf people in the south.

Mr. Jehwe (Yala)

Jehwe is Muslim. He is 42 years old. He is single and lives with his parents and relatives in Yala. Jehwe went to school and finished pratom 7. He sells rubber and fruits. Jehwe did not talk (sign) much.

Mr. Sa-me (Yala)

Sa-me is 37. He is also Muslim. He did not go to deaf school but he knows Thai sign language from his deaf friends. Sa-me makes and sells bird cages.

Mrs. Somjai (Yala)

Somjai owns a food shop in Yala. She is 52 years old. She married a deaf man and has two children. The children have gone to school in Had Yai. Somjai did not go

to school but she is confident in her ability to communicate. She used Thai sign language fairly well.

Mr. Tinakorn (Nakon Sritammarat)

Tinakorn is 38 years old. He has no job. He lives with his mother and little brother. Tinakorn turned a part of his house into a local deaf club. Deaf people in the area come to talk with each other at his house. Tinakorn's mother does not like that because she has to pay for whatever Tinakorn takes to serve his deaf friends. The mother told us that she will continue to pay as long as her son is the leader of the group.

Tinakorn was accidentally deaf at the age of three as he fell off the second floor of the unfinished house. He had to stay home without going to school for 9 years. No hearing school accepted him. Tinakorn went to a deaf school in Songkhla and finish pratom 6. His mother did not want him to continue studying in deaf school. Tinakorn stays home with his mother and little brother since then.

Tinakorn told us that family is a big problem for the deaf people. He feels guilty that he has no job and his mother still pays for everything.

Mr. Somyos (Nakon Sritammarat)

Somyos is 32 years old. He just moved back home in the south as his parents are getting older. He married a deaf woman. The couple has not had a baby yet. Somyos worked at a garment factory in Bangkok for 12 years. When he moved to his family in the south, Somyos takes order from the factory in Bangkok, makes shirts, and sends them to Bangkok.

Somyos was born deaf. No one can tell him the cause of his deafness. He attended deaf school and went to work in Bangkok after finishing Mattayom 3.

Somyos worked at the factory and that is where he experienced the inequality between deaf and hearing workers. The factory was near the school where deaf and hearing students learn together. He came to associate with the deaf students in the evening. On weekends, Somyos always hung out with deaf friends at the department store. He broke up with his hearing girlfriend because he paid too much attention to the deaf community. He came home and married a deaf woman.

Somyos can feel the inferiority of being deaf. He has a strong determination that he will have a deaf child. He will support his child to the highest education the deaf person can attain.

Participants from the Central

Mr. Nipan (Ayuthaya)

Nipan is 36 years old. He lives with his mother who opened an electrical supplies shop in Bangpahun market. Nipan helps his mother at the shop and gets some allowance. He communicates with his customers in writing. He said he can remember the price of all items.

Nipan turned deaf because of rabies injections when he was 9. Nipan has a hearing brother and sister. He prefers writing to his family to signing or reading lips. Nipan finished Mattayom 3 from a deaf school in Bangkok. He wanted to continue studying but his mother did not support him. Nipan likes to go to Bangkok on weekends and holidays to meet with his deaf friends. Nipan feels that his mother treats the hearing children better than she treats him.

Mrs. Somwang (Ayuthaya)

At the age of 36, Somwang has a 4 year old hearing son. Somwang lives with her deaf husband and her son in Ayuthaya. Her husband sells lotto tickets and Somwang makes baked good to sell in the market.

Somwang is originally from the province of Kampangpet. She attended a deaf school in Tak. She continued her study to the higher secondary level. Somwang has experience traveling to several countries in Europe. She has an opinion that deaf people in Bangkok are cleverer than deaf people in other regions.

Mr. Somkiet (Ayuthaya)

Somkiet is 48 years old. He is the leader of the deaf people in Ayuthaya. He opens his house to be the meeting place for deaf people. Somkiet works independently as a painter. He sells his paintings at the Sukumvit Road in Bangkok. He earns a lot monthly. Somkiet married a deaf woman and has a hearing son. His wife and his son stay at home in Ayuthaya while Somkiet takes the train to Bangkok every day.

Somkiet was born deaf and went to a deaf school in Bangkok. He also has two deaf brothers. He thinks that writing is more important than signing because the hearing people can understand. Somkiet encourages deaf people to go to the school that provides co-education with the hearing students. He said that the deaf will have hearing friends to help them in class.

Miss Pannipa (Nakon Pathom)

Pannipa is 32. She is a teacher of the kindergarten class at Nakon Pathom School for the Deaf. Pannipa finished a bachelor's degree in home economics from Rajabhat University Nakon Ratchasima. She was born deaf. Her mother sent her to a deaf school in Chonburi. At the school, they did not encourage students to use sign

language. Pannipa was trained to read lips and speak. Even though she cannot hear the sound, Pannipa can speak to others. Her voice sounds strange but it is understandable.

Mr. Jumpod (Nakon Pathom)

Jumpod is 36 years old. He just finished the two-year course of teaching Thai sign language from Ratchasuda College. He has just joined the teaching team at Nakon Pathom Deaf School for a month. Jumpod was born deaf because his mother got rubella during her pregnancy. Jumpod was sent to a deaf school in Kon Kean. When he came back home he could not communicate with his hearing brother and sister. He always has quarrel with his siblings. He thinks that his brother and sister love him in the wrong way that they give him money but do not really understand what he wants.

Mr. Vinai (Bangkok)

At 47 years old, Vinai makes a living by driving his tour van. He has his own van for rent. Vinai travels around Thailand with deaf and hearing customers. He has different impressions of the two kinds of customers. However, different impressions do not make Vinai treat his customers differently.

Vinai does not know why he is deaf. He knows that he has not talked much and played by himself. Vinai's father passed away and left financial problems to the family. Vinai finished Mattayom 3 and started working as well as other brothers and sisters. He had been making leather bags for 10 years. Later, the leather bag made no profit, so he moved to another job, driving a travel van.

Mrs. Lamai (Bangkok)

Lamai is 54 years old. She lives by herself at the townhouse near the NADT in Bangkok. Lamai was an athlete. She played badminton and won several medals. Lamai does not work because her older sisters, who live in England, support her.

Lamai's past was a tragedy. She was born to a poor family in the northeastern part of Thailand. Her mother hated Lamai so she took Lamai into the woods and left her there. Her sister went to get Lamai out. Lamai's mother died when Lamai was five. Lamai is the youngest child. Her brothers and sisters went to study in Bangkok. Lamai had to stay home and did little jobs until she saved up enough money to go to Bangkok. Lamai went to a deaf school in Bangkok. She finished Mattayom 3 and started playing badminton. Lamai married a deaf man and he cheated on her; they divorced. At present, Lamai spends her days with a dog and some dress-making hobby. She sometimes volunteers to help on NADT jobs.

The Instruments

Instruments used in this study include the researcher herself, the interview questions, the sign language interpreter, and the recording device.

The Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument. To maintain trustworthiness and credibility, Patton (2002) suggested that researchers should always acknowledge bias by questioning themselves of how they know what they know, how the participants knew what they told, and how the readers would perceive the researcher. Patton called this a triangulated inquiry. It is also the essence to clarify the researcher's assumptions, worldview, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation (Merriam, 2002).

To this study, the researcher positions herself as an outsider who wants to understand the thoughts of the deaf people in Thailand in general. Even though the researcher is a sister of a deaf brother, her brother is tangential to this study. The deaf brother of the researcher was raised as a hearing person and had never been in deaf school. The researcher had never known any of the sign language nor attended any deaf activity prior to this study. The story of deaf people or deafness was completely out of the researcher's consideration. This justifies the researcher to be an outsider to the deaf community.

It is inevitable that having a deaf brother helps the researcher in contacting deaf organizations and people dealing with the deaf issues in the country. The researcher attended the basic Thai sign language course provided by the National Association for the Deaf in Thailand (NADT) in order to be familiar with the language which would be used in the study. The researcher also observed the national annual conference of the deaf 2004 held by NADT in order to be familiar with the deaf activities before entering the field. Moreover, the researcher did the pilot study with three deaf participants in order to test the whole process of conducting this study.

Considering the researcher's assumption and worldview, the researcher believes in uncertainty. Even though she was born and registered as a Roman Catholic, the researcher always has so many questions about Christianity. As a loose faith Catholic, the researcher has been studying Buddhism for many years. Her worldview is influenced by the core teaching of Buddhism, the consideration of anatta or no-self. As Podhisita (1998) has summarized, "Suffering as defined by Buddhism arises from the fact that everything in the world is changing and thus impermanent.

All things, material and immaterial, are liable to decay and transformation. There is no such thing as real “self” or anatta” (p.33).

From this worldview, the researcher looks at deafness as one of the conditions in people’s life. Being deaf is equal to being a man, a woman, a millionaire, a homeless person, or a priest. It is the condition of life that an individual has to deal with. A millionaire could cry as the homeless person could smile. It depends on how those individuals interpret the world around them. This worldview makes the researcher have the curiosity on how the deaf people interpret their world.

It is interesting to know that the researcher’s worldview coincides with the new theory of communication and identity proposed by Erik Eisenberg. Eisenberg emphasized that identity can be built upon the uncertainty with the help of communication. His theory encourages an individual to be open to the unavoidable changes in life. The uncertainties are opportunities to see new things which may be better. This theory is the researcher’s theoretical framework for this entire study.

From this worldview, the researcher is neutral to the participants. None of the participants has known the researcher before. However, some of the participants did know the sign language interpreter, which turned out to be the benefit of this study.

The Sign Language Interpreter

This study used a sign language interpreter because the researcher is not a native signer and that may distort the meaning of what the deaf participant wants to tell. The sign language interpreter was selected from the first batch Ratchasuda College graduates, majoring in sign language interpretation. Mr. Bob (pseudo name), the sign language interpreter for this study, is a child of deaf parents. He is, then, considered a native signer. Despite the fact that Bob lives with his deaf parents, he

was raised by the hearing friend of the family. He is well rounded by both deaf and hearing environments.

Brunson and Lawrence (2002) revealed that a despondent interpreter mood caused significant negative mood change in the deaf participant even when the therapist mood was neutral or cheerful. Fortunately, Bob was an optimistic and cheerful man. He also wanted to know more about the deaf way of thinking. He was willingly to join this research. His surplus enthusiasm sometimes got unexpected answer from the participants. However, the trustworthiness of the interpreter was considered.

Stroll (2002) pointed out that interpreter must see him/herself as an impartial transmitter of message. As Bob is the child of deaf parents, this study avoided having his parents as the participants. The transcripts that Bob did were reviewed by a deaf instructor of Ratchasuda College in order to check the accuracy.

The Interview Questions

The result of the pilot study suggested that the semi-structured interview would be the best fit to the condition of the deaf participant. The researcher had set the open-ended questions related to the research questions as follow;

RQ 1: How is deaf identity constructed in Thai society?

As identity can be constructed on the uncertainty, everything surrounds the participant has a possibility to affect the identity construction. The interview questions concerning this research question were:

- How does the deaf participant see him/herself?
- How does the deaf participant think about his/her deafness and deafness in general?

- How does the deaf participant think about his/her significant people?

RQ 2: How do deaf Thai make sense of their deafness in their interaction with others?

Deafness is the unavoidable personal trait attached to the participants; therefore, to make sense of their deafness is to make sense of themselves in interacting with others. To answer this research question, the researcher has to understand the participants' attitudes toward other people. How the participants see and communicate with other persons leads to the understanding of how the participants make sense of themselves. The interview questions for this RQ were:

- How does the deaf participant think about his/her significant people?
- How does the deaf participant communicate with others?

RQ 3: How does the process of telling his/her story reveal the narrator's identity construction?

There was no specific question asked in order to get the answer for this research question. The researcher would analyze the whole interview and determine the way that telling the story disclosed the process of identity construction.

There were also supplementary probing questions which were prepared for eliciting more details from the participants. The interview questions and supplementary probing questions were shown in the interview protocol and interview guide (Appendix D and E).

Interview Guide

An interview guide is a list of issues to be explored in the interview session (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). The interview guide was prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of questions would be pursued with each participant. The interview

guide provided topics within which the interviewer was free to probe. The researcher checked the interview guide throughout the interview session and told the interpreter to probe if necessary. The interview guide is shown in Appendix D.

All interviews were recorded on a digital videotape and transferred to the VHS analog videotape for the transcription process.

Procedure in the Field

Gaining Entry

The researcher contacted local sign language interpreters of all four regions, Miss Yui in Chiang Mai, Mr. Ow in Nakhon Panom, Miss Pan in Song Khla, and Miss Aoy in Bangkok. These contact persons received my introduction letter telling the nature of the research and asking for the deaf persons in their area who would be willing to join the study (Appendix B). For the northeastern and southern regions, Mr. Ow in Nakhon Panom and Miss Pan in Song Khla helped me find deaf participants not only in their province, but in other provinces within their region as well. In order to have a variety of participants in the northern region, other than Chiang Mai, the researcher contacted the teacher at the Tak School for the Deaf who would be able to refer the researcher to some deaf persons in Tak.

Also, the researcher attended the national annual conference of the deaf 2004 in Thailand in order to meet more deaf people and ask for an appointment to interview some of them later. From the conference, the researcher made contact with two deaf persons who later led to six more participants in the provinces of Ayuthaya and Nakhon Ratchasima.

The researcher went to all research sites with the sign language interpreter. All the documents, notebook computer, the video camera, tripod, cable, extra batteries,

and video cassettes were packed properly in the trunk. We also prepared gifts which were wrapped nicely for all participants. The hotels were booked before taking off from Bangkok. We were always ready for every field trip.

Interview

Mostly, each interview has its interested topic to look for the answer and set the interview questions accordingly. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) explained the different types of interviews. The structured interview lists all the questions that the interviewer is supposed to ask and the interviewer is expected to follow the guide consistently. In the semi-structured interview, the interviewer asks the basic questions on the interview guide, but the researcher is free to ask probing follow-up questions as well. In the unstructured interview, the interviewer is provided only the topic of interest and has the freedom to decide the focus of questions. Since the proposed BNIM was terminated in the pilot study, the semi-structured interview method was suitable. The interview guide was prepared (Appendix D) and followed.

The researcher explained every question in the interview guide to the interpreter. The interpreter studied the interview guide thoroughly. The interpreter, then, signed to the deaf instructor to check if the questions were conveyed accurately and properly in the deaf way. After checking and adjusting the hand signs, the interview guide was ready to be used in the field.

Even though the researcher did not ask the questions to the participants by herself, she was totally in charge of the interview session. In the actual interview, the interpreter asked the main questions and the researcher checked the answer whether it needed any probing. The interpreter would maintain eye contact and the participant would not notice that the researcher was talking to the interpreter.

After each interview, the participant was asked to complete the form which gathered the demographic data. Then, the researcher presented a gift to the participant at the end of the session.

The Field Notes

The field notes were recorded into the notebook computer every evening that the interviews occurred. The researcher could not make any field notes in the field because she had to pay full attention to all interviews so as not to cause any visual distractions.

Analysis Procedure

Transcription

All interviews were recorded in digital videotapes. The researcher transferred all interviews from the original digital tapes to VHS analog tapes to be transcribed. This process was done in order to protect the original tapes from damage in the transcription process.

The interpreter took all VHS videotapes to transcribe all 42 interviews. The interpreter transcribed the interviews to Thai written language and sent to the deaf instructor at Ratchasuda College to check the accuracy of translation. The transcription process took three months to finish. The researcher did the analysis from those transcripts.

Information Reduction

There were eight participants who were excluded from this study for the following reasons:

1. Somporn (Tak) is the deaf person who never went to school and doesn't know sign language. She used only body language which is only known to her father.
2. Wongduen (Nakhon Panom) never attended school and does not know sign language.
3. Thongdee (Nakhon Panom) has lost the standard sign language since she has never been with any deaf person for almost 20 years.
4. Suda (Nakhon Panom) never attended any school.
5. Thongchai (Song Khla) is both deaf and blind.
6. Kampol (Bangkok) is a well-known deaf person who has exposed himself to a wider Deaf world than within Thailand.
7. Usanee (Nakhon Sritammarat) was deaf when she was a teenager. She had lived a normal life for more than ten years.
8. Daranee (Bangkok) is a hard-of-hearing person who was raised normally with hearing people. She could talk with understandable voice.

However, the researcher did not exclude them in the first place because they were willing to help in joining the interviews.

There were 208 pages of transcripts in Thai handwriting. First, the researcher read through the transcription of each participant and pulled out the topics of interest concerning the interaction of the participants and their surroundings. Then, the topics were grouped together into six categories according to Eisenberg's theory of communication and identity; (1) biological, (2) spiritual, (3) cultural, (4) economic, (5) societal, and (6) interpersonal surroundings.

Report the Result

The result is reported in chapter four in thick description. As this research explores a specific culture of the deaf people, the thick description provides all details for the readers to get the idea of how and why deaf people think and feel the way they do. Thick description gives the context clues to the readers to interpret the specific culture clearer (Geertz, 1973). Moreover, the fully details in thick description could make the readers move along into the field with the researcher.

Narrative Interpretation

From the thick description presented in chapter four, the researcher will interpret the narrative text by highlighting the uncertainties in the life of deaf people in Thailand, concerning the six groups of Eisenberg's surrounds. After that, in chapter five, the researcher will analyze how deaf people in Thailand make sense of their uncertain surrounds. Also, the researcher will determine how the storytelling process had helped others to know the self-perception of the deaf persons.

Conclusion of the Chapter

This chapter has explained the methods used in this qualitative study of the live experiences of deaf persons which effect their identity construction. From 34 interviews, the technique of inductive analysis had been used to examine the transcripts and see the whole picture of identity construction of the deaf participants. The pilot study, conducted with three participants in two research sites, showed the weak point of a hearing researcher using Wengraf's technique of biographic narrative interview method (BNIM) with deaf participants. The actual field research, therefore, depended mostly on in-depth interviews using a sign language interpreter.

Deaf participants were purposefully selected from the recommendations of the staff of the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand (NADT). This research used the sign language interpreter for helping the researcher in communicating with the deaf participants and transcribing all the information from the videotape to Thai written language.

All interviews were recorded on digital videotape in a specific type of shot which allows the transcriber to see hand signs of both questions and answers. After the interpreter transcribed all the interviews into Thai written language, the researcher did the coding process by categorizing the participants' answers into six groups according to Eisenberg's theory. The answers reflected the relationships between the participant and the (1) biological, (2) spiritual, (3) cultural, (4) economic, (5) societal, and (6) interpersonal surroundings.

In the next chapter, deaf participants shared their stories with the researcher through in-depth interviews. The researcher will take the reader to all research sites, explain all procedures, and introduce the reader to each and every participant.

CHAPTER FOUR

A JOURNEY TO THE DEAF WORLD

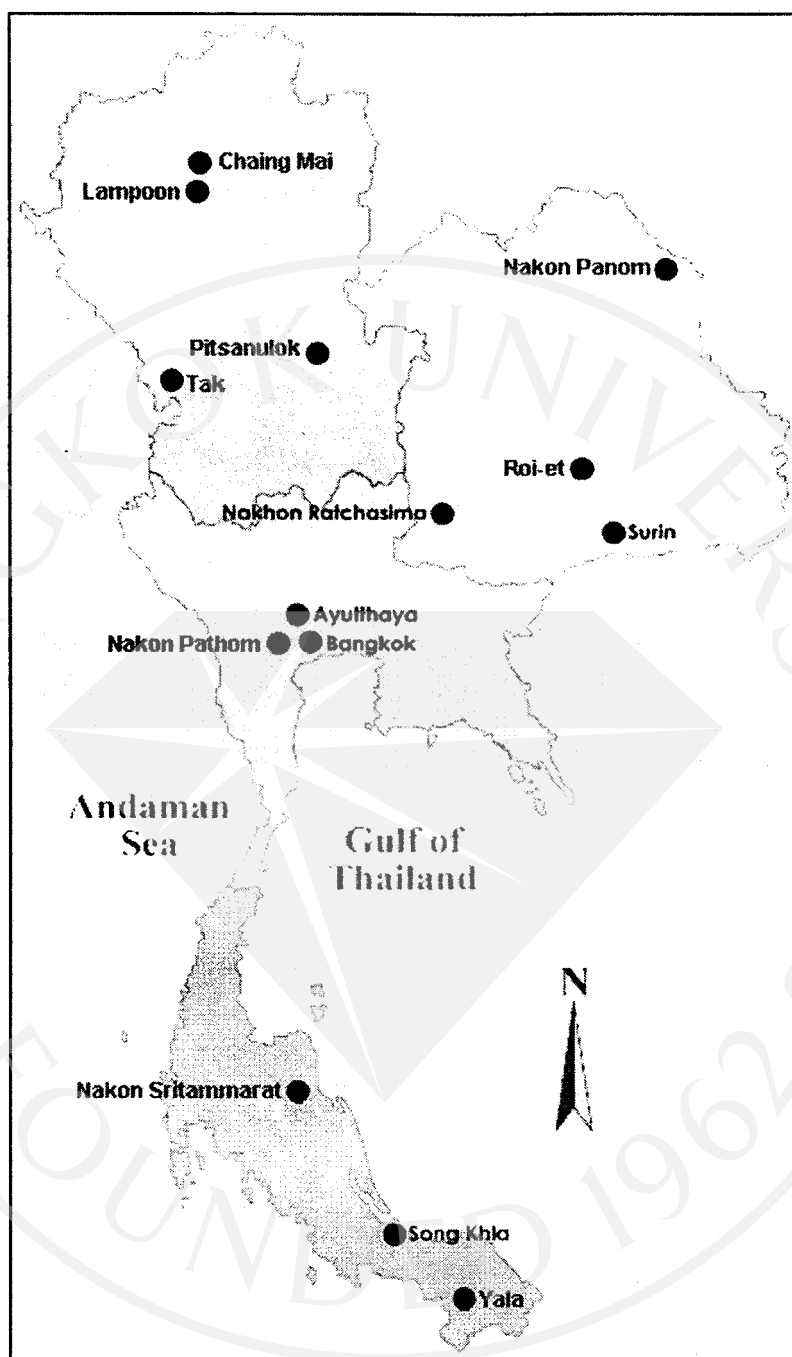
This chapter will present the findings of 34 interviews in thick description. As suggested by Geertz (1973), thick description helps the readers to have the idea of what was really going on in the matter. The elaborative details in the thick description shows the readers the context clues that affect the way people in the particular society think and feel. This chapter starts with the three interviews in the pilot study. After that, we visit each and every participant in 14 provinces. Based in Bangkok, I drove to each research site as shown in figure 4.1. When the journey is done in thick description, I will categorize the findings and present them again in six categories of Eisenberg's surrounds.

The Pilot Trips

Chiang Mai Trip

After having confirmed with Miss Yui, I drove to Chiang Mai one day before the appointment. It took me almost 10 hours driving from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. Twenty years ago, I had been in Chiang Mai University for my bachelor degree in Mass Communication. During that time, when I was a sophomore, I worked on a term project about promoting the need to know more about deaf communication. I remember that I got an A for that course. That was the only academic activity I had done with the matter of deafness. I had no idea that deafness would be the topic of my dissertation twenty years later.

Figure 4.1 : Map of Thailand showing the provinces of research sites



I arrived in the city of Chiang Mai and checked-in to the hotel I had booked. I called Miss Yui, the sign language interpreter of the northern deaf member club who accepted to be the interpreter in the interview sessions, to tell her I had arrived in

Chiang Mai safe and sound. Miss Yui contacted two deaf persons to be participants in the pilot study, Mr. Prasert and Mr. Buncha. I interviewed Prasert the next morning and went to Buncha's place in the afternoon.

Miss Yui came to see me at the hotel. She brought Prasert with her. Prasert told me that there is no suitable place at his house to do the interview; therefore, he preferred to have the interview session at the hotel. We found the good quiet corner in the hotel garden. I set the camera while Miss Yui was talking to Prasert. When everything was ready, the interview began.

I started the first question which, according to the BNIM, should elicit some story from Prasert. I said, "Please tell me the story about yourself, your family, or whatever that you want to tell. I will listen to your narration without any interruptions." Miss Yui translated my statement into sign language and Prasert signed back. "Hello, my name is Prasert. I worked at the Northern Deaf Member Club." Then, he stopped. The interviewer was not supposed to ask anything more according to the BNIM. I used body language to encourage Prasert to sign something more. Unfortunately, he kept smiling and signed nothing. I decided to ask if he had anything to add. Prasert signed back that he needed a question to be able to answer. He did not know where to start telling his story without questions. Then, to keep the interview session going, I had to violate the BNIM and conduct a semi-structured in-depth interview. Prasert enjoyed answering questions.

Prasert told us that he was born deaf. His mother got rubella during the pregnancy and did not know its effect.

"I asked my mother and she told me that she had rubella. She didn't tell my father because my father went to work far away at the construction site. My mother

didn't know what happened with herself until the ninth month of pregnancy. I was born at the hospital. I was so cute that made my parents so happy. They didn't know whether I was hearing or deaf. Until I was 3 to 4 months old my mother talked to me and I didn't reply. My mother told my father to take me to the doctor. The doctor found that I am deaf which made my parents sad."

Prasert is a middle child of his parents. He has two hearing sisters. He was close to the older sister before she left for a foreign country. Prasert told us, "I have to write to my older sister and she helped me well. My younger sister doesn't care much about me. I'm fine with it. When my older sister moved to foreign country, I was so lonely and turn to deaf friends."

Prasert explained to us about his education. He started with a private teacher in pre-school years and moved to the deaf school later.

"My parents looked for a deaf school which there was none in my province. My father took me to his old friend who is a teacher. The teacher asked me to write my own name, but I couldn't. He taught me how to write alphabets and numbers. After that I move to the deaf school at Tak province."

"My parents took me to the deaf school at Tak province. They left me at the deaf school. I was so lonely for the first seven-eight months because I couldn't communicate to other students. I decided to gradually learn sign language until I understood. I was at Tak School until Pratom 3. Then I moved to Chiang Mai Deaf School"

Prasert finished Mattayom 3 from the deaf school and continued his study in a vocational school for about a year. He quit vocational school and he shared with us:

“I finished deaf school at Mattayom3. I was 15 years old. My parents wanted me to study more. They took me to apply for a vocational school. There were 17 hearing students in my class and three deaf students. My deaf friends and I had never studied with hearing students before, and those hearing had never known sign language. We three talked to each other until the teacher came in. The teacher introduced us to other hearing students and asked them to look after us. The hearing students accepted us and a couple of them came to talk with us.”

“One day, I opened my bag and noticed that the color-box was stolen. I asked my friends and they said they didn’t see. I was afraid to tell the teacher that the hearing friends might be angry with me and they might start fighting. I decided to quit school.”

Prasert elaborated more about the reason he quit school. His father did not push him through the problem. Prasert said, “I told my father that I was fed up with school. I’d like to study more but my stuff had been stolen and we have to spend money to buy the new ones again and again. My father didn’t force me to get back in school. I was also disappointed that the hearing friends didn’t help me and the teacher was too busy to look after me. I thought that it was better to quit school. I tried to find jobs, but I was hopeless. I stayed home and did nothing.”

After staying home for a while, Prasert got a job at the local newspaper. Prasert was a hard worker. He wanted to be treated equal to the hearing workers. He tried to learn more tasks and asked his boss for a chance to prove he could do as many things as the hearing workers could.

“I worked at the newspaper printing machine. There was a chief who taught me to put together layouts for printing. I was able to do it but I didn’t really like what I

had to do. I went to the owner of the papers and asked for a raise. They gave me 800 baht a month and told me to be patient.”

“I was also a newspaper man; I delivered papers to many houses in the morning. I had a list of the customers and I rode a motorcycle following a senior co-worker to remember the customers’ places. I spent an hour every morning to deliver the papers.”

“I told my boss that I wanted to have more money. I wanted to have equal opportunity with the hearing co-workers. I was willing to have two jobs to get more money. I was put to work at the layout department and the paging department. I worked there for 13 years.”

Prasert has been interested in the deaf community for a while. He joined the deaf community in Chiang Mai as he mentioned,

“I tried to associate with the other deaf people. I met Mr. Tanoo, the president of the Northern Deaf Club, and he took me to the club. I told Tanoo that I really wanted to associate with the deaf. Tanoo invited me to be the substitute on the board of the club. I accepted and was a substitute on the board for two years. There was a general election in 1999 and I was elected to be the president. Mr. Tanoo taught me everything.”

Prasert quit the newspaper job and works fulltime at the deaf club. He wants the deaf people to have equal opportunity in everything with the hearing ones. Prasert has a strong determination on this matter as he said,

“In the past, when I met deaf man working as a merchant, selling things, I felt that deaf people have to work harder than the hearing. He told me that I had to be patient to be equal to the hearing people. The hearing people can do anything they

want but the deaf people cannot. Deaf people don't know computers. No one helps us with the motorcycle or car, in terms of getting a license. We have to help the deaf people to have equal opportunity with the hearing."

"I don't feel any embarrassment when talking to my friend with sign language. We have the right to talk as the hearing people have. If we ask the hearing persons to sign they don't dare to do it. Deaf people sign as the hearing people speak. When I walk to the hearing people to ask what they are talking about, they ignore me. I just want to know, to understand. Deaf people don't feel embarrassed to ask for help from the hearing person. Deaf people switch words when they write. I realize that and I have to practice more."

Prasert was one of the pioneers in using the mobile phone. Many people may be puzzled to see a deaf person has mobile phone. Deaf people communicate to each other using the short messages service (SMS). They type letters and numbers in the phone and press "send" to the phone number they want. It is quite similar to talking on the phone.

Prasert talked about his communication with others. In communicating to his parents, Prasert said, "My parents wanted to communicate to me. They taught me to speak and read lips." He also added:

"I preferred talking to my parents. However, I couldn't speak long sentence clearly, so there might be misunderstandings that I always feel bad about. I really need to be clear when communicating to my parents. I told my father to learn sign language but my father didn't agree with me. He said that it's a headache for him. I feel bad about this, but it's okay. I can live with it. 'How about writing?' I asked my father. He said 'Okay.' I always switch words in writing so that my parents couldn't understand

the meaning. I have to write to my older sister and she helped me well. My younger sister doesn't care much about me. I'm fine with it. When my older sister moved to a foreign country, I was so lonely and turned to deaf friends. I'm happy that we can talk to each other easily."

To communicate to other persons than his family and relatives, Prasert would write. He shared with us:

"One day I went to open a bank account. I sat down and the clerk asked me questions. I told the clerk that I am deaf. He said that I look like a hearing person. We wrote to each other along the process. He said that I was good. I could open the bank account by myself. I deposit 500 baht and got the passbook."

Prasert is Buddhist. He had been in a monkhood for seven days. He talked about the ordination that was the tradition for all Thai men. He was ordained to be a monk with another deaf friend. Prasert elaborated the process in detail.

"In the morning, they told me and my friend to sit still in the white gown. After that, my father came to me and helped me change to the yellow robe. People went home after lunch. I talked to my friend that this robe is itchy. We were not allowed to eat anything after 12. At 6-7 p.m. we had to close our eyes for meditation. At 8 p.m., we went to sleep until around 4 in the morning. We had to get up and dressed up. We had to walk two kilometers to the people who wanted to make merit by offering food for monks. I was a monk for seven days. On the first day, they didn't allow me to wear the underwear in the ceremony. After that I put it on." Prasert smiled.

Prasert's attitude towards deaf people is salient. He wants deaf people to be independent. He encourages everyone to live on their own. He always tries his best to be equal to the hearing people. Prasert said,

"I work because I need money to spend. I warn other deaf friends to develop themselves about the working skill. I don't want to see unemployed deaf people. I see some fathers that look after their deaf sons and daughters. I told the deaf that they have to live by their own and give some money to the parents. Some deaf friends believe me and go to work. They told me that they are so proud and happy that they don't have to ask for money from their parents. That was a shame."

Prasert was frustrated on the unfair job opportunity for the deaf people. He wanted to study more to have more accesses to variety of jobs. However, his parents soothed him by telling something to Prasert and he found that it is true. Prasert told us:

"I wanted to get a bachelor degree, but my father didn't have money to support me. I was sorry, but it's okay. My parents wanted me to work at home. They told me that a bachelor degree holder can be unemployed as well. I didn't believe them at first. Until, I go to work and I found that the bachelor degree gets 5000 baht a month. I have a Mattayom 3 diploma and get 5000 baht a month as well. So I understand."

The interview with Prasert took almost 90 minutes. Prasert offered to take us to his house after that he would also take us to Buncha's house. We had lunch in the market near Prasert's house and took a short walk to his house. His parents own a small apartment complex about 30 units. Prasert lives here. We also met his parents who were so kind.

We had to rent a van to go to Buncha's place. The reason was that Buncha's house is far away up on the mountain. We needed the local driver who familiar with the route.

It took almost two hours to get to Buncha. It was a small village called Meung Ngaii in Chiang Dao district. The main street is laid zigzag about five kilometers from the first house to the last. Buncha owns the game shop and has comic books for rent. His shop situated on the highest curve of the hilly main street of the village. The weather was so fresh and windy up there. The camera picked up the noise of the strong wind all the time.

We met Buncha and his wife. He seemed to be happy to see our group arrived. After we did a small talk in order to build up rapport, I set the camera and we started the interview.

Buncha is 36 years old. He lives with his wife and two children. Buncha turned deaf because he got a hemorrhagic fever. He had to go to deaf school at Tak as he told us, "I was sad as I am deaf. I asked my mother why I am deaf and she said that I got a very high fever. My father worked so hard to support me to the deaf school at Tak." Buncha had nothing much to tell about his early childhood. He had an interesting experience when he was a teenager. Buncha talked about this story.

"I finished Mattayom 3 in 1986. I applied to the vocational school with Prasert. We were the only deaf persons in school. Prasert quit after the first year. I was alone. I turned to the hearing friends which they were good to me. Unfortunately, it was a bad experience that I went to classes less than I went to nightclubs and bars with the hearing friends. One night, the hearing friends induced me to go out to spray graffiti which was against the law. The police came and my hearing friends were

disappeared. My father had to bail me out from jail. It was the unforgettable experience that I hurt my father's feeling. I quit school and came home to help my father work."

"My father sent me to take a mechanics course for three months. I also took the non formal education program in order to have a Mattayom 6 diploma, but I didn't finish the program."

Buncha met his wife at the class of non formal education. They fell in love and decided to marry. Buncha quit studying again because he wanted to work for money to build his own family. The first son was born. "My first son was born at Chiang Dao Hospital. I thought about having more income so I decided to go to Singapore and Hong Kong."

Buncha went to Singapore and Hong Kong to sell keychains. [Selling keychains, souvenir, or flowers are the popular career among deaf people. Not only in Thailand, Buncha and some other participants in the actual research gave the similar information.] Buncha was in Singapore two years and in Hong Kong two years. He got enough money to come back to Thailand. Buncha came back and the second son was born.

"I came back and talked to my wife that we should have our own business. I decided to open the game shop. We rent this place from my grandmother. The income from the game is good. We had four Play Stations and we just bought a new one. So we have five altogether. I borrowed money to open this shop and I already paid back. The game gives good money."

We turned to talk about deafness. Buncha told us that he wants to hear. “I want to be a hearing person. I want to go to college and have bachelor degree. Our sons are both hearings and I have asked my sister to teach them to speak.”

“Deaf and hearing persons are different. In the past I had lots of hearing friends but now I have lots of deaf friends. I prefer hearing friend to the deaf ones. I don’t have any close deaf friend. Everybody is equal. I think deaf persons like to gossip and take every matter so serious. I don’t like that.”

Buncha did not talk much and we were frequently interrupted by the customers who wanted to change games and extend the play time. So, the interview session with Buncha was very short. We left Buncha and headed back to the city of Chiang Mai. I drove back to Bangkok the next day.

Nakhon Panom Trip

I contacted Mr. Ow who was the sign language interpreter and the NADT correspondent of the northeastern region. Mr. Ow told me that I could come to the office of the club in Nakhon Panom and he would take me to the deaf or even bring the deaf to me if I want. Nakhon Panom is 740 kilometer far from Bangkok. It is almost the same distance from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. The only difference was that I had never been to Nakhon Panom before and I had to drive there by myself. I had confidence that my skill in using a map was good enough to reach Nakhon Panom safely; however, I was not sure the map was accurate.

I arrived at the hotel in Nakhon Panom around 6 p.m. I called Mr. Ow and we agreed to meet at the office of the deaf club but I had no idea where it was. My mom always says, “The way is at the mouth, if you don’t know the way, just ask.” So I reached the office of the deaf club with the help of local people.

I met Mr. Ow at the club. There was a career training program for the deaf that took place in another room. Mr. Ow told me that he would call a couple of deaf persons from the training for me to interview. Unfortunately, the deaf persons who came to attend the training were ones who never went to school. The standard sign language was impossible. They used body language and Mr. Ow himself did the consecutive interpretation, but he just summarized what he thought the deaf person signed. My Nakhon Panom trip seemed to be useless.

Fortunately, I was introduced to Mr. Wittaya, a deaf man who worked as the member service at the club. Wittaya tried to help translate from body language to standard sign language for Mr. Ow to interpret to me. Wittaya helped a lot but I could not use those data in the analysis because they did not match the educational criterion. At last, I decided to ask Wittaya if I could interview him. He agreed to be one of my deaf participants. I also asked him to do the interview at his house and he said yes to my request.

We went to Wittaya's house in the evening. The two-story house is made of wood. Wittaya lives with his mother, brothers, and sisters. We set the interview area at the marble table outside the house near the kitchen which is separated from the house. The interview started when Wittaya introduced himself to the camera. Wittaya knew the questions as he helped me interpret for other deaf people during the day time. Wittaya read the question by himself and answer in sign language to Mr. Ow. Mr. Ow then did the consecutive interpreting again but with full details because he understood Wittaya's sign language so clear. However, this transcript was done later from the actual translation from the videotape by Bob, my research assistant.

“My parents have nine children and I am the fifth. There are three deaf and one retard. I am the only deaf son who went to school. My parents left me at the deaf school in Kon Kean. I was so afraid. I cried to go home. I was patient until I finished Mattayom 3. I attended Thai sign language program provided by Ratchasuda College. When I got the certificate, I went to the NADT in Bangkok and applied for a job but I failed. I turned to my friends and sell t-shirt at Sukumvit Rd. I’d been selling t-shirts for three years and came back to Nakon Panom because my father passed away.”

About his school years, Wittaya said,

“When I was a kid, my mother talked to me but I didn’t understand. She took me to the hearing school but I couldn’t understand. My father had heard that there is deaf school in Kon Kean. They took me to the deaf school and left me with the teacher. I cried to go home. I had to stay at school a go home only on school breaks.”

Wittaya revealed that he wants to be a hearing person as he said,

“Actually I want to hear. I feel sad that I am deaf. When I see hearing people talk to each other I really want to hear. I have to be patient. I sometimes need an interpreter to communicate with the hearing people.”

Wittaya has a lot of friends, but he said he does not have any close friend. He told us that, “I communicate with everybody equally. With the ones who don’t know the sign language, I would teach them until they can sign. I used to communicate with the deaf person who didn’t go to school. I had to use a simple sign and body language. The sign for the same meaning are vary from place to place.”

At the end of the interview, I asked Wittaya to compare deaf people in Bangkok with other deaf people. Wittaya said, “Deaf people in Bangkok sing very

quickly. They always overstate every matter. I had been in Bangkok for a while and I know that they usually tell lies. It is different from the deaf people in other provinces.”

Wittaya invited me to have dinner with him and his family. It was a very warm and nice welcome for me. The food was brought to the table that I used for the interview. Wittaya’s mother and sister joined the table. I sat with them and ate sticky rice dipped into the homemade hot sauce, which is the standard menu for the northeastern people. The taste of food was never better than the taste of a happy life in this nice and warm family.

I went back to Bangkok in the morning. My pilot study was half-done. I had to go back and review everything that I had done in the field in order to see if there is anything I should change for the actual research.

For the rest of this chapter, I will present the thick description for each participant in the actual research, starting from the north, the northeastern, the south, and the central.

Now, get into the car! Sit back and relax. I will drive you to my research sites; from the north to the northeast, to the south, and back to the central part of Thailand. We will meet with my participants all over the country. They were very exciting trips for me and I hope they will be ones for you, too.

The North

Start our journey from Bangkok, we, the interpreter and I, drove north to the province of Chiang Mai. It took about eight hours, including breaks, to drive 750 kilometers from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. After checking into a hotel, I informed the persons who helped me to get to the participants in Chiang Mai about my arrival. We agreed to start the first interview on the next day at 9 a.m. We would meet with Mr.

Supa-art at his work place in the morning and Miss Malai at her house in the afternoon.

Chiang Mai

Next morning, at “Dew Drop,” the drinking water factory, Mr. Supa-art was working with other workers both deaf and hearing. Mr. Supa-art is in charge of checking the water bottles to be delivered to the customers. When I arrived at the factory, I saw him standing by the truck, checking the list. Mr. Tanoo, the manager of the factory, who is also a deaf man, came to greet us and lead us to the area which was set for the interview. We walked across the street to the river bank

There was a wooden shelter which extended into the river. The area was quiet. I set the videotape recorder and the positions of the interpreter and participant. After everything was ready, I walked back to the factory and invited Mr. Supa-art to the set.

Mr. Supa-art knew about the interview beforehand as he was informed by Mr. Tanoo, my connection in Chiang Mai. We did the small talk by introducing each other. Mr. Supa-Art was afraid that he might not contribute much to my research as I might expect. I assured him that everything he would tell me is equally precious for my study. So we started the interview session.

Supa-art (52) told us that he was hit by a lightening strike and became deaf at the age of 9. He was expelled from the hearing school.

Supa-art said, “I didn’t know anything. I couldn’t sign. I just played. I couldn’t talk and when someone talked, I couldn’t hear.”

“I felt sad because my dad talked to me and I didn’t understand”, he added.

Supa-art went to deaf school and learned sign language from deaf friends.

“I was afraid of the sign language at the first time I saw it. After a couple of days, I knew what it is”

The deaf school in those days did not encourage deaf students to sign. Supa-art did not understand spoken language; therefore, to sign with deaf friends was the only way out that kept him lively at school

“When the teacher asked for my name, I couldn’t tell her. She hit me. The teachers at school taught in spoken language. They did not sign much. I hardly understood what the lessons were about.”

Supa-art preferred to be deaf as he cannot understand spoken language at all.

“No one in my family signs to me. I sometimes write to my parents, but rare. I am not good at writing. Sometimes they write to me and I couldn’t read. I sign to my deaf friends and we understand each other very well. But the hearing people don’t understand me and I don’t understand them. I always sign.”

Supa-art used to be frustrated with his parents when he grew up as a teenager. Supa-art’s brothers and sisters could go out by themselves, but Supa-art could not. Again, communication problems occurred within the family.

“My father didn’t understand me. He was afraid that I might encounter some difficulties outside. My mother was afraid that I might get lost. I told them that I am not stupid. My mother always wanted to talk to me because she couldn’t understand sign language”

Supa-art married a deaf woman and has not had any children, yet. He does not care if his child is deaf or hearing. But for himself, Supa-art wants to hear.

“I am sad to be deaf. I can only sign. If I have a baby, it can be deaf or hearing. That’s not the problem.”

Supa-art lives a daily life among deaf and hearing people with whom he can sign. He does not like to go to places that he is not familiar with.

“If I have to buy things, I’ll go to the same shop. The owner knows that I am deaf which makes everything easier in communication. If I change the shop, there will be a communication problem.”

“I’ll go to the hospital with a hearing person. If I just catch a cold, I can go to see the doctor in a small clinic by myself. Deaf people are usually afraid of the complicate procedure at the big hospital. Deaf people prefer the doctor at a small clinic because it is easier in communication.”

“Sometimes I saw some deaf persons who didn’t go to school but they could communicate with the doctor. But for some deaf persons who went to school, they were just afraid to see the doctor.”

Supa-art also told us that he used to go to the temple to make merit with his parents. But he did not know any meaning in doing so.

“I just followed what they did. My mother taught me to offer food for monks in the early morning. I did what she did. Actually, if my mom didn’t make it a strict order, I didn’t want to do at all. Deaf people are all the same in this matter.”

Supa-art told us more about how he solves problems at work. He usually keeps the problems to himself, but if the problem is too heavy, he would talk with the chief. This factory encourages the hearing workers to learn sign language; therefore, most of the workers can understand some simple signs.

Supa-art concluded that he wants to be a hearing person but he knows that it is impossible as he is old. He said he is fine with what he is and has no problem.

From the story Supa-art shared with us, I found that communication is the uncertainty in his life. Supa-art solved the problems by being in the certain places that he knows there would not be any communication difficulties. Supa-art just lives his life day-by-day avoiding communication problems. He knows he is deaf and he can live with that fact. He posed the emic deaf identity to himself.

After the interview, Supa-art walked back to the factory and continued checking the list. The interpreter and I packed all the instruments to be ready for the afternoon session.

We had a simple lunch at the small restaurant nearby. We went back to the factory after having lunch in order to pick up a man who would lead us to the second participant. It was Mr. Tanoo, the manager of the factory, who got in my car and told me the way to Mrs. Malai's house. It was quite an experience driving with a deaf navigator. The roads in Chiang Mai are small and have many turns and junctions. I had to look at the rear mirror very often to see his hand pointing to the left or to the right.

I think I was lucky that I have the experience of being a navigator to my deaf brother when he drove to somewhere he did not know before. I know how to point the hands and I know the proper positions of hand to the rear mirror so he could see my hand without leaving sight from the street.

At last, we arrived at Mrs. Malai's house safely. The house is a two story brick house situated in a crowded community. I parked my car by the fence and went into the house. Mrs. Malai came to open the gate and led us to the terrace where we would do the interview. While I set the camera, Mrs. Malai talked to Mr. Tanoo, the man who brought me to her. They are friends for a long time. I saw Malai signed that she

had nothing to tell me, but the man signed back that she could talk about anything. I told her that if she gets stuck, I would throw in questions. And the interview began.

Malai (43) is originally from Payao province, east to Chiang Mai. She moved to Chiang Mai to marry and live with her husband's family. The house she lives in is not hers. It belongs to her husband's brother who has pity on the deaf family and lets her and her daughter stay. Malai's husband has been in a prison for 16 years. Malai lives in this house with a teenage daughter and brother and sister-in-law. Malai shared the story with us as follow:

"I was born deaf. My mother gave birth to me at home. There was no hospital nearby. I was born in an old-fashion process at home in Payao. My mother raised me naturally. Time passed by and I had not yet spoken. My mother talked to me but I didn't hear and didn't talk back to her."

"When I was a kid, I saw other people spoke. I asked my parents why I am deaf. I felt sad and looked at the people who could speak. But I am patient."

"I went to the deaf school in Tak province. I finished Mattayom 3. There was no one at home who can sign even my deaf sister. She didn't go to school. My hometown in Payao was an ordinary suburb that there was no one knew sign language. We use natural body language or writing in stead."

Malai shared with us her feeling towards school and deaf community.

"At school, sometimes my friends stole somebody's stuff and put the blame on me. Teacher hit me. I didn't do anything at all. Other student put the pen in my bag. The teacher asked everybody and they said that I did it. I was 12 years old."

"When I was at school, I was an ordinary student. I talked with my friends happily. When I finished school, I didn't think about school again."

“When I was a child, there was no deaf person around. But twenty years later, there were many deaf children in my neighborhood. In the past I had a chance to go to school, but these children stayed home. I asked them and they told me that they were the students at Tak School for the Deaf. They were expelled from deaf school. Some of them didn’t go to classes and some had sex affair. I talked to them but they didn’t listen to me. So I don’t want to teach them anymore.”

“Deaf people in the past were good. But now deaf people are arrogant. They looked down on deaf people. I met someone in Bangkok. That person asked for my name. That person looked down on me. I think Chiang Mai is the better place to stay. Deaf people in Bangkok are arrogant. I really don’t like the way deaf people hating each other like this.”

Malai is lucky that she does not have to work hard for a living. The husband’s brother supports Malai and her daughter. However, if she wants to, Malai can make money by selling flowers on the graduation days.

“My brother-in-law supports me and my daughter. I have no job. Sometimes I sell bouquets for the graduation day. I earn so little. But my husband’s brother supports me well.”

“I have enough money to live. If I need more money, I can ask from my brother-in-law. He said I can ask him because deaf person doesn’t have much money.”

Malai lives in this house happily. She adjusts herself to the owner of the house. Malai is not allowed to bring in any pork as her husband’s family is Muslim. Malai is Buddhist and she makes merit outside the house quite often.

“I am a Buddhist. My husband and his family are Muslim. I can’t eat Halal food, so I stay being Buddhist. I offer food to monks in the morning. I do that only when there is no one at home. Muslim doesn’t allow me to do that.”

“When I think of Buddha, I ask him for winning lotto.”

Malai has a problem with her own daughter. It is sad to know that Malai’s daughter feels embarrassed that her mother is a deaf person. Malai is sad, too. However, she keeps the hard feeling inside and tries her best to be a mother.

“My daughter feels embarrassed when she has to sign to me. She even feels bad to let her friends know that she has a deaf mother. When her friends come to our house, I walk in to say hello to the group. My daughter is embarrassed and asks me not to join the group. I feel that they hate deaf people. I have to be patient.”

“My daughter is stubborn. She doesn’t listen to me. She likes to go out at night. She was good when she was a girl. She grows up and blames me. When I start talking to her for a minute, she takes off with her motorcycle. I can’t teach her. She is arrogant. She likes to go out with her friends.”

Malai stays home alone most of the time. Her daughter goes to school and other people in the house go to work. Malai takes care of all the housework and she also cooks for the whole family. She sometimes goes out to talk with other deaf friends at the water factory.

“If I feel lonely, I go to Mr. Tanoo’s. I talk to him for a while and I go to the market. I am happy at Mr. Tanoo’s place. There are many deaf workers. I can talk to them.”

From Malai’s story, I found that Malai has a passive deaf life that she accepts her deafness without complain. It seems to me that she could adjust herself into any

kind of uncertainties. She stays home. She stops talking to whomever will not listen to her. Malai's deaf identity stems mostly from the reaction of the outsiders towards her deafness, for example, the husband's brother who has a pity on her, the hearing friends who taught her to write, or even her own daughter who feels embarrassed to have a deaf mother. These people imposed the deaf identity on Malai and she is fine with it. She often said to us, "I have to be patient."

We left Malai and took Mr. Tanoo back to the factory. We headed back to the hotel and I had to write down the field notes. I also checked the tape and everything to be ready for the interview on the next day. I called a lady who made the appointments for my next two interviews. We agreed to start at 10 a.m. The place would be the office of Northern Deaf Member Group.

The office of the Northern Deaf Member Group was a room on the second floor of the Special Education Center Region 10 which is out of the center of Chiang Mai. It was quite hard to find the place as it was in the back of other big buildings. I even wondered how the disabled people would come to this place. Not only in Chiang Mai, but also in some other provinces I found the Special Education Centers situated in a very difficult-to-come place for the disabled people. However, I arrived at the center around 9.45 a.m.

I met with Miss Yui, who corresponded with me about the interview. We met each other once four months ago when I was in Chiang Mai for the pilot study. Miss Yui introduced me to Mr. Panom, who is the staff of the group. At the age of 36, Mr. Panom was a newcomer for the office. He just joined the office for two months. He seemed to be eager to tell the story to me.

We started with asking him to tell the story of himself being deaf. He did not hesitate to talk about it.

“My mother told me that at the time she was pregnant, there was no electricity in the village. She had to use the ancient lantern. There was no hospital nearby her house. My mother couldn’t read and she took too much aspirin. She didn’t know it was dangerous for the baby. So, I was born deaf.”

Panom was born in Lampoon, the small province next to Chiang Mai. He added more on his special birth,

“Actually, I was born dead. I was born at night between Tuesday and Wednesday. (I kept quiet) until Wednesday morning, I cried. My mother was so relieved. After that my mother took me to the hospital. The doctor said that I am deaf. My mother was so sad.”

Panom continued talking about his childhood, his school years, and so on.

“When I was young I played with hearing friends. We played hide and seek. My friends invented the signs to communicate with me. I played with them and followed what they did. I learned how to play automatically.”

“My father took me to the deaf school at Tak province. I was so afraid and I cried. I told my father that I wanted to go home. My father told me to calm down. I wanted to go home. I missed my parents so much everyday. I cried. However, I tried to learn everything until I know everything by heart.”

“I went to a deaf school without knowing anything about deafness and sign language. I learned sign language from the senior students. I can sign well when I reach the age of 8-9 years old.”

“I was treated badly when I was a newcomer in the school. When I was a senior student, I did the same to newcomers.”

“In my childhood, I came home only when the school closed. When I came home, I could talk a little. We wrote to each other. We had a little sign.”

After he finished school, Panom stayed home. This was the time that he experienced the negative attitudes towards deaf people from the hearing people around him.

“My relatives know that I am deaf. They don’t bother to talk with me. They sometime ask if I have eaten anything yet, then they go. I think that they just ignore deaf people.”

“I usually ran away from home to my deaf friends. I didn’t want to be at home because I was tired of dirty sign at home...They signed only about dirty joke. They always did the same whenever they see me.”

“At present, I seldom talk to my family. We seldom see each other. We are all grown-ups and separated to our own way of life.”

Panom makes a living by himself. He works regularly at the Northern Deaf Member Group.

“I work in the section of admission for members and member-services. I send out letters for the members. I am okay with my income. I work and go home. If I don’t travel around, I can stay with this salary. If I am rich, I can travel, but not now. I can work here fine, but I have to travel quite a long way to work. I ride my motorcycle from Lampoon about 47 kilometers. I ride about one and a half hour everyday.”

Panom also shared with us his views about deaf and hearing people. He does not seem to be biased to the deaf people. He also sees the weak points of the deaf people.

“I have seen that the deaf people in Bangkok and in central look down on deaf people from other part of the country that they cannot sign as fluently as the deaf in the central or in Bangkok. Some deaf people think that they are rich and others are poor, and they look down on the poor. I don’t understand why they have to look down on the poor and ones who can’t sign fluently.”

“There are deaf people that always have quarrel, who always panic in everything, and who talk too much. There are deaf people who borrow money, who get divorced. I see that deaf culture and hearing culture are different. Sometime deaf people talk over days and nights. I think it’s their way of life. I talk to my friend for a while and I go home. I think there is nothing good to talk too long.”

However, Panom also has something to say about hearing people who treat deafness badly.

“The hearing people look at deaf people as the mute and know nothing. They condemn us to be abnormal. I think it is the bad word. I feel uncomfortable when they use the words such mute, crippled, or abnormal. I feel bad when hearing people make fun of me. I know, I can tell from their facial expression.”

I asked Panom about his attitude towards himself. Here are the answers:

“I’m fine now. In the past, I wanted to have an ear operation, but now I think it is okay. Being deaf is okay because a deaf person can have a job, get married, and write letters. I am not sad because I can do everything by myself.”

“I think I am not ready to hear. I always sat quiet and felt sad that I couldn’t hear. I saw other people talk but I couldn’t hear. But when I went to the Ratchasuda College (for the sign-language training course), I understood that if deaf people try, they can do. When my father passed away, I have only my mother left. I tried to work hard and we survive. I have a feeling that I can do everything.”

“Hearing people can talk to each other, so do the deaf. Hearing people can write but the deaf switch words when they write. I have to practice writing more and more. I can talk to hearing persons whom I feel close to. I sometimes have miscommunication with them.”

Panom is quite satisfied with his life now. He goes to the temple to make merit.

“At present, I am not afraid of anything. They may treat me bad or they may talk behind my back, and I don’t care.”

“I go to the temple once in a while. In the past, my mother took me to the temple. When I grew up, I took my parents to the temple. Sometimes I was lazy. I go to the temple on a New Year Festival, Song Gran Festival, and other important occasions.”

Panom wish to help other deaf people to have a better life. He mentioned the importance of sign-language interpreters and the government role in helping deaf people.

“I think the most important is the sign-language interpreter on TV screen. Otherwise they must provide caption. We also need interpreters at the hospital, police stations, and at the court.”

“I want the government to help in supporting interpreters. I also want the deaf to pay half price at the hospital or pay half price for transportation. The deaf people earn too little comparing to the hearing people. I want deaf people to have driving license for motorcycles and cars.”

Panom ended his story by this sentence:

“I’m okay with what I am now. I have friends that I can talk to. I’m happy.”

Panom perceived negative attitudes towards him being deaf from his family. It gave him strong determination in helping other deaf people. Ratchasuda College took part in educating Panom and made him more confident to be a deaf person. He has a strong Deaf identity which is the emic one.

As I finished interviewing Panom, Miss Yui told me that our next participant was waiting downstairs. I followed Miss Yui to go to Mrs. Ladda, my next participant. Mrs. Ladda was sitting in her room alone waiting for someone to tell her to go upstairs. I came to her and Miss Yui introduced me to her. Ladda seemed to be interested in the interview. She led us to the second floor where the camera and the chairs were set for the interview.

Ladda is 37 years old. She works as a janitor at the Special Education Center Region 10 in Chaing Mai. Ladda does not like being deaf. She has strong feeling against her deafness. Ladda started her story by talking about her deafness.

“My parents divorced. My mother gave birth to me and left me with my grand mother. My mother went to work and sent money to my grandmother. My grandmother already passed away.”

“I was born hard of hearing. I don’t know why. I don’t know anything. My parents send me to study with the hearing students. I was always treated badly. I

didn't like that. The principal send me to the audiologist for a year. But there was nothing improved."

Ladda talked more about her experience of being depressed at the hospital as she went for the hearing test.

"I went to the hospital for the first time and I met some deaf persons. When I left, they talked behind my back. I was patient. I wanted to be a hearing person. I felt uncomfortable that the deaf people talked behind my back."

Ladda encountered the negative attitudes since she was very young. Not only at the hospital, but also at school that Ladda did not know what should be done or not. The sign language, which should be the language of the deaf, was suppressed at school. Ladda was so upset in almost everything.

"My father sent me to the school for the deaf. I didn't want to go. But after a while, I got used to the place and felt better. I could sign to my friends."

"At first I went to the deaf school, the principal didn't allow us to use sign language. When the teacher was out of the class, we signed happily. When the teacher was back in, we had to speak out with strange sound."

"Actually some teacher taught sign language, but the principal didn't allow that. Sometimes teachers taught and signed at the same time. They told us to speak more than sign."

At home, Ladda suffered that she did not have any freedom to go anywhere as she is deaf. Her grandmother was so worried that Ladda might get into trouble, so she never allowed Ladda to go out. Ladda finished deaf school in Chiang Mai and stayed home. Later, Ladda married a deaf man and gave birth to a baby boy. The boy can

hear perfectly. Ladda usually thinks that she must have done something wrong in her past life that she is deaf.

“When I make merit, I always think that I did something bad in my past life. I really want to change to be a hearing person.”

Ladda works at the building of the Special Education Center Region 10 as a janitor. Here, at the special place for the disabled persons to come, Ladda still has to face the problem of being a deaf person.

“Hearing people sometimes take advantage of me. They make fun of me. They put me to do hard work and don’t allow me to have vacation. They give easy jobs to hearing janitor. I don’t know what to do. I don’t think this is fair. I have to be patient.”

Ladda feels that being deaf is depressing. She encounters communication problems when she has to contact the hearing person. Even though she works in the same building of the Northern Deaf Member Group, Ladda revealed that she had to suffer alone.

“There is no one helping me as an interpreter. When I go to the doctor, no one goes with me. I suffer so much. I want to change to be hearing, so I can help myself. There are few interpreters in Chiang Mai. They are too busy and I am sick.”

“I write to the officers at the government agencies. Sometimes they can’t understand my writing and I don’t have interpreter to come with me.”

“People who work here come to me and sign. Sometimes they can’t think about the signs for a certain meaning, so they write to me. There are few people who can sign fluently in this building.”

I asked her to tell about her feelings towards herself. Ladda spelled out more negative attitudes as she has experienced.

“I didn’t understand why I can’t speak. I asked my father but he kept silent. I asked others but no one helped me. I was alone by myself.”

“I never was happy playing with hearing friends. I didn’t know what they were playing or what they were doing.”

“I don’t want the hearing people to take advantages of the deaf people by putting them into the hard job like mopping floor. I want deaf people to have a job like sitting in the office or being teacher. Those are better jobs.”

However, her son is her hope.

“I have only one child, a boy. He can hear. I married to a deaf man and have a hearing son. I want my son to be hearing so he can help me as interpreter. He can sign fairly. He signs well when he is among the deaf people. He is a bit shy when he has to sign in the public. My son signs to me at home. He can be the interpreter for us”

Ladda’s story leans to a negative end of the continuum. Ladda’s view of life focuses on inequality between deaf and hearing people. She has lived among places that divided deaf and hearing people. Sign language is not always right for Ladda’s experience. Ladda constructs her identity on the suppressive feeling. She stands on a shaky ground of being deaf.

I thanked Ladda for her precious story. I told her that this story will contribute to the better understanding between deaf and hearing people in the society. I did not know if she cared what I told her or not. But I really meant it to be that way.

Next morning, I left Chiang Mai. I had to go back to Bangkok before driving up north again in the next three days. My next trip would be to the provinces of Tak and Pitsanulok.

For the Chiang Mai trip, it was quite interesting to know different attitudes, feelings, and identity constructions of deaf people. The participants from Chiang Mai are all profoundly deaf. They all finished Mattayom 3 from deaf school. The difference was that Panom had a chance to go to Ratchasuda College for the sign language training. Panom seemed to construct an emic Deaf identity. Others participants from Chiang Mai constructed their identities in an etic way.

Tak

Let us continue our journey to explore more deaf stories at Tak and Pitsanulok. Again, I drove my little car to Tak. It was about 500 kilometers from Bangkok. I left Bangkok around 9 a.m. and arrived at Tak at almost 3 p.m. Tak is less crowded than Chiang Mai. It is not a tourist attraction as Chiang Mai is. For Tak, I would have three participants: Wirat, Nipon, and Chonrudee, who are all profoundly deaf and finished Mattayom 3 at Tak School for the Deaf. You must be interesting to know that the three are, again, so different. Let us find out how and why they are so different.

My connection at Tak was Mr. Tong. He is a PE teacher at Tak School for the Deaf. He knows not only his deaf students in school, but also many deaf people in the area. Starting with Wirat, I had to drive to the village where Wirat lives. When our team, including the contact person, the sign-language interpreter, and I, arrived, Wirat was at the neighbor's house. It was a typical Thai country house which composed of two stories. The rooms are usually on the second floor. The area under the second floor usually left open for air ventilation. Wirat was sitting on a bamboo bench under the shade of the house. There were two other people who were relaxing together with Wirat. Everyone looked easy. They welcomed our team into their house as if we were friends for a long time.

Wirat is 36 years old. He lives with his little sister who rarely talks to him.

Wirat finished Mattayom 3 from the deaf school in Tak and stays home ever since.

Wirat makes his living by helping his neighbors to do this and that for a little money.

"I ride my bicycle here everyday for work. I work for the house next door and here. I do house work. I get 60-100 baht a day depending on work load which is a lot."

Wirat's story is about his simple daily life. He seemed to be happy with what he is now. However, we also talked about his experience of being a deaf person.

"I was born deaf and knew nothing. I felt okay that I could play with my neighbors. Sometimes I played with the hearing kids without knowing anything."

Wirat did not talk much. He usually said that he forgot what he felt like in the past. Most of the time he smiles and signs the word "forget." I had to ask him questions and he replied very short answers.

"Deaf people like gossip. I don't care and I forget everything."

Wirat's life is so simple. He wakes up late and rides a bicycle to his neighbor. If there is nothing to do, Wirat just hangs around at the neighbors'. He told us that he does not like the deaf community; however, Wirat does have deaf friends.

"I have couple of friends. I have deaf friends who were the students at the deaf school with me. Sometimes they come to see me at my house. Sometimes I go to theirs. I like to talk with my deaf friends at the deaf school because there is no one at my house can sign. It is better at school. I seldom talk to people at home. I prefer to be alone all the time. I like to go out with my deaf friends. Sometime we go to have drinks at night."

Wirat's signs were strange for a deaf person who spent nine years in the deaf school.

“When I first went to school, I can understand the sign well.”

“My sister can sign a little. I seldom talked to my parents. If I did, I wrote to them or I used homemade signs.”

“I write to talk with hearing friends. Most of the time I use body language.”

“I talk with my neighbors through the natural body language, but it just a few words. If the deaf friends come over, I would have fun using sign language with them.”

I asked him about his family. Wirat was not close to his family. He is closer to friends and neighbors than to his own family. Wirat seems to enjoy his life among the neighborhood. Eventhough he does not talk much, he is always at the places that everyone can see him.

“I like being here. There are people who talk to me. There is no one at my house that I can talk to.”

Wirat can make more money from being among his neighborhood in the holiday seasons.

“Everyday, my sister gives me 20 baht. On holidays as in Song Kran Festival, I wash cars and motorcycles and get 50-100 baht for each. I also deliver cigarette, whiskey, and beer to the party.”

Wirat has a big tattoo on his left arm. In rural Thailand, the tattoo is usually the sign of a magic shield that protects the person from blades or bullets. I asked Wirat about that.

“I got this tattoo from the man at the temple. I got it free of charge. The man said it's free for a deaf person. But I don't believe that this tattoo can protect me from any harm.”

So we linked to the topic of his spiritual surroundings. Wirat is Buddhist. He goes to the temple once in a while to make merit.

“I didn’t go to the temple very often. Deaf people have problem that they can’t hear. On the special occasion, I wake up in the morning and go to the temple. My father passed away. I go to make merit for him.”

Wirat had nothing to tell me more. He kept signing that he does not remember and just smile to me. I asked him the last question that how he feels about being deaf.

“I don’t want to be a hearing person. I am happy with what I am now.”

Before I left the village, I got the confirmation from the villagers that Wirat is a good man. He likes to help. He is always somewhere in the village. Everyone knows him well and no one thinks that he is a disabled person. Communication is not the problem at all. The villagers can communicate with him perfectly fine.

“He never gets the wrong item to me when I tell him to buy things”, said one of the villagers.

Wirat’s story focuses on his simple daily life. The neighborhood gives Wirat a certainty about who he is. Wirat is happy with his life as a deaf person. He likes to be where he is accepted.

I left the village and drove to the Lan Sang Waterfall National Park. It was about 30 kilometers from where I was with Wirat in the morning. At Lan Sang Waterfall, I had an appointment with Mr. Nipon. He works as an artist at the national park. I arrived at the site around 2 p.m. I contacted the receptionist and talked to the chief of the park. It was not complicated because I already sent an official letter to the head of the national park about conducting an interview with Mr. Nipon.

I was allowed to set the camera at the small terrace of the office cottage. There was a big wooden table in the middle of the terrace that I was not supposed to move. We, the interpreter and I, had to set the position that the camera could capture completely what Nipon and the interpreter would sign. In the mean time, the chief sent someone to call Nipon to the office.

Nipon is 43 years old. He seems to be a popular person at the park. I heard the staff called him "Pa Tok", short from Papa Tok. Tok is Nipon's nickname and it seemed to me that everyone in the park likes Nipon because they call him "Pa". Nipon came to the office in the forest ranger uniform. I learned later from the interview that the uniform means something to him. He headed to the chief and back to us. I introduced myself and summarized what we were going to do to him. Nipon did not know before that I would come that day. The chief did not tell him. Fortunately, Nipon is a kind man. He understood what I was doing and he cooperated very well.

The story of Nipon is pleasant. I was fascinated by the love and understanding of his family. Let us hear what he has told me.

"I was born at Cha-cheung-sao province. It was my father's hometown. But we moved to Tak where it is my mother hometown. I was born hearing until I turn 5 or 6 years of age. The dog bit me. I had to take 13 needles of rabies injection at the belly around my navel. My hearing was gradually reduced to completely deaf. My parents were sad."

It was a tragedy to Nipon's family that their third son became deaf. However, the family has been taking a very good care of him. His older sister chose to be a teacher in a deaf school. His younger brother looks after Nipon at work as he is the deputy chief of the Lan Sang Waterfall National Park.

“My parents love me so much. My brother also loves me. He let me work with him at the waterfall.”

Nipon told me about his childhood, his school years, and his experiences during those years.

“I don’t remember much what I was like when I was a hearing kid. I know that I am deaf and I went to the deaf school in Bangkok for five years. My parents moved to Tak and I moved to Tak School for the Deaf.”

Nipon experienced no negative changes from persons around him as he gradually turned deaf. We can see from his statements.

“When I was a kid, I played and talked with friends. After I became deaf, they still played and talked with me. Some tried to use body language, some shouted into my ear and we continued playing together.”

“My aunt and uncle were kind to me. They were worried about me because I am deaf. They took me to travel around. They never let go of my wrist when we walked in the public places. They did that even when I was 15.”

Nipon told us that he was afraid of the deaf people and sign language at the beginning. He could adjust himself to the environment later.

“When I first saw the deaf people sign, I cried. I was so afraid. I told my mother that I wanted to go home. My mother insisted that I had to study. The teachers taught sign language to me and I gradually understood.”

Nipon admitted that his deafness did make him sad once in a while, especially in his teenage years.

“I felt sad, sometimes very sad that I couldn’t speak while everybody else could. When I talked to my parents, they spoke to me but I could not. It was easy for

them to speak. I had to understand myself. I was so depressed and I punched things. My mother heard the noise and came to me. She asked me what happened and she hit me.”

“Some hearing friends made me know that they didn’t want to talk with me. I kept the bad feeling inside.”

His sadness is only a tiny bad feeling comparing to other happiness in Nipon’s life. Nipon is so proud of his job at the national park. He smiled all the time talking about his job at the national park.

“I wanted to be a soldier. I saw the troops on TV when they march. They are so smart. I like that. My brother told me that a deaf person cannot be a soldier. I felt so upset. I wanted to hold a rifle and run together with other soldiers. I asked my brother if I can wear a uniform. He said yes. Actually I prefer wearing uniform and work like this. I don’t want to shoot anybody. I don’t want to go to the war.”

“I make the signs in this place. Paint words on pieces of wood and place them here and there according to the order. I sometimes switch words, for example, I suppose to write DO NOT PARK HERE, but I wrote DO PARK NOT HERE.” Nipon smiled.

To communicate with others, Nipon has no problem. He writes to the hearing co-workers. He sometimes signs simple words that others know what he means. At home, Nipon reads lips of the family members and he speaks back. The family members are familiar with his speech and they understand what Nipon means. Sometimes Nipon also writes to them. Nipon uses sign language to his sister who works as a teacher at the deaf school. I asked him how he feels about himself at present.

“I am so proud that I am the only deaf person wearing a forest ranger uniform. Some deaf friends came to see me and asked if he could work here with me. I told them to submit the application to the government office.”

The story of Nipon is the story of a happy life. Nipon is fulfilled with love from everyone around him. He is proud of himself. His identity is so clear and certain. He is Nipon.

I had another appointment at 5 p.m. at the deaf school. After I finished up with Nipon, I drove back to town, to the deaf school as Mrs. Chonrudee would be waiting for me. That day, I had to make three interviews because the contact person, Mr. Tong, had only one day for me.

Established in 1969, Tak School for the Deaf had been considered the center of deaf education in the north. Tak School for the Deaf is quite a big school. The school has an academic area and a residential area separately. Deaf schools in Thailand are mostly boarding schools. All school admits students from kindergarten through lower secondary school or Mattayom 3 (Reilly, 1995, Sri-On, 2000). Mrs. Chonrudee was a student of the Tak School for the Deaf. Now, let me introduce you to Mrs. Chonrudee.

Chonrudee is 40 years old. She was accidentally deaf at a very young age. Interaction within the family does not go smoothly. At home, her parents always yell at her and make her to do hard work. The parents do not allow Chonrudee to talk to anybody. That meant Chonrudee has no close friends. She met a hearing man and got pregnant. The man left. Chonrudee loves her daughter so dearly. Chonrudee is so proud that she has saved up some money for her daughter; however, Chonrudee's parents are in charge of their granddaughter's fortune.

I met Chonrudee and did some small talk with her. She seemed to be closed at first. Mr. Tong helped breaking the ice and we could do the interview.

It was a school break so there were no students at school. We set the camera at the common area of the boys' dormitory, where there was an electricity outlet for the camera. We knew that Chonrudee had to go home by 6 p.m. It is the strict order from her family.

"I have to be at home at 6 o' clock everyday. I'm tired. I have to do the laundry for the whole family. My sister comes home every Friday. She pays me for doing her weekly laundry. I am patient. My mother always talked to me badly. I don't know the words she said, but I was so depressed whenever she blamed me."

Chonrudee shared with me about her bad experience of being deaf. She was not sure what the cause was, but the deafness fills her life with sorrow.

"My mother never tells me why I am deaf. My older sister told me about the cause of my deafness as I asked her everyday why I am deaf. She told me that when I was a little girl, my father took me to the doctor in Bangkok. My father wanted me to have operation, but the doctor said no to him. I am deaf in both ears. First at the right ear as my mother picked my ear. The deafness went to my left ear later. I don't speak clearly."

Her childhood was not pleasant at all. Chonrudee had no close friends. Her parents treated her badly.

"There were hearing kids who liked to do bad things to me. They threw rocks at me. Some punched me. Some pinched me. Both boys and girls did bad things to me. I remember that I screamed. The grownups came and the hearing kids who did bad things to me ran away."

“I didn’t tell my parents. I kept quiet. Later, a hearing kid told his parents that I did a bad thing to him. Their parents came to hit me. It happened like this for years.”

“I don’t have friends. I don’t want to talk to anybody. I am alone since I was young. My father doesn’t allow me to talk to others. When I was a child, I used to play outside, but when I grew up my father didn’t allow me to do that. My mother scolded me everyday. My father also scolded and didn’t allow me to go out after 6 p.m. This curfew is still executed even today.”

“Today I may be home later than 6. I will be scolded for sure, but I don’t care. I am deaf after all.”

It was not clear why the parents were so mean to Chonrudee. Chonrudee herself seems to love her parents very much as she said,

“When I did something wrong, I apologized to my parents and hug them. My laziness makes them mad at me.”

Even though Chonrudee put the blame on her laziness, it was in contrast to what she told me about her daily routine.

“In the morning, my mother wakes me up by stamping on the floor that I sleep on. I wake up with a start. I go to the temple very often. I wake up at 5 a.m. to cook for offering food to the monks. I ride my motorcycle to the temple by myself.”

“Every morning, I walk to the workplace. I work for the homemade perfume. I get 700 baht a month. After finish the perfume at 9 a.m., I go on to water the trees. Then I do the laundry. I work like this everyday. I have no holiday. I do the housework at Miss Ratana’s house. I feed the birds and fish. I change the water for the birds, do the dishes, and do the laundry. After that, I go to do the same thing at Miss Somjai’s house.”

At the time I interviewed her, Chonrudee just finished her work from Miss Somjai's and it was nearly 5 p.m. Chonrudee had to go home and do the laundry, mop the floor, and cook dinner. It does not look like a lazy person to me, but may be it does, for Chonrudee's parents.

Chonrudee wants to go out sometimes. She never leaves Tak. Her parents never took her to anywhere.

"I have been here for more than 30 years. I haven't gone to anywhere. I want to go to Bangkok, Chiang Mai, or to the south. I really want to go to Bangkok. Even the sea, I only see it on the TV."

"If I can change to be hearing, I certainly will."

The story of Chonrudee focuses on her closed life. Her identity stems from the way her parents raised her. No one has a chance to interfere. Parents are everything.

We finished the interview around 5.50 p.m. However, Chonrudee needs 30 minutes to ride her motorcycle to her house. I insisted to take her home or at least go to see her parents to apologize for her late coming. Chonrudee did not want me to do that. She said she was used to it. Chonrudee rode the motorcycle away while I waved to her. Suddenly, I heard the national anthem from the school speakers. I looked at my watch and it was 6 p.m. sharp. Unfortunately, Chonrudee would be scolded because of me.

Pitsanulok

I left Tak to go to Pitsanulok in the next morning. At Pitsanulok, I would interview two-three more participants. I had last been in Pitsanulok since six years ago but my business did not relate to any matter about the deaf. I had no contact in Pitsanulok, but I know there is the department of special education at Rajabhat

Piboonsongkram University. Therefore, I took the chance to go to Pitsanulok. Tak to Pitsanulok is only two hours drive. I arrived in Pitsanulok around 10 a.m. I headed to Rajabhat University and asked for the department of special education. Unfortunately, the department is at another campus out of the town. I got a telephone number of the department. I called the staff there and she told me the way to the campus. It took only 20 minutes to drive.

I met with the staff in the department of Special Education. I introduced myself and told her what I was doing. She was so kind to me. She transferred me to the president of the Club of Disabled People in Pitsanulok. I had to drive to this president's house and ask for any deaf participants from there. It was not my day. I had to go to a couple of disabled people before I could get to my deaf participant. However, I ended up at the small restaurant run by the president of Pitsanulok Deaf Group, Mr. Poramin.

God helped me for this case. It was almost impossible that I could interview Mr. Poramin as he was so busy cooking for his customers. Poramin happened to know the father of my interpreter. The interpreter was also surprised. So that day I waited for the restaurant to close at 5 p.m. and I interviewed Poramin in the restaurant.

Poramin is a 50 year old man. He is the owner of this restaurant. It was good to see Poramin works. The restaurant offers rice with red pork, "Kao Moo Dang", and some kinds of noodle. He has no problem taking order from the customer. He reads customers' lips. Some customers point to the pork or the noodle and Poramin understand what they want. The restaurant is an old small room about 4x6 meters. Its old-look makes customers believe that this restaurant has something good to eat.

Poramin told us later that he has been there for almost 30 years. Let us meet with Poramin.

“The cause of my deafness is that I fell off the horse. My mother took me to the doctor in Bangkok and the doctor tested my hearing. My right ear was deaf but my left ear could hear some sound.”

Poramin was not born deaf. He even had speech when he entered deaf school.

“At the time I was at the Deaf School, I couldn’t communicate with other deaf students. They used sign language and I spoke. We couldn’t understand each other. They forced me to learn sign language until I lost my speech. I continue using sign language until today.”

In his family, Poramin was close to his grandmother and his little sister. His grandmother passed away but his little sister takes care of him.

“I taught sign language to my sisters and brothers. They understand fairly. My brothers and sisters can sit and talk to each other easily, but I’m alone.”

“My parents couldn’t sign well.”

“My little sister can sign and she looks after me. Other brothers and sisters never take care of me. My little sister gives me money, but I never accept. She said that I am deaf, and she has a pity on me.”

“I wrote to my grandmother and my uncle. They couldn’t sign. We understood each other well.”

“I finished school and had no job. My parents told me to take a course of dress making. It was a course for disabled people. I finished the course in six months. I came home helping my father run a restaurant.”

Poramin realized that it is hard for deaf people to build a rapport with hearing people. So Poramin chose not to do anything new. He continues making Kao Moo Dang as his father did.

“Everybody knows my restaurant. I don’t move to any place else. I was here since 1976. I can read lips of my customers when they order food.”

“There was an article about my restaurant in the newspaper. At the time they came to interview me, I asked them to hi-light that this restaurant is run by a deaf person. Since then, my restaurant goes so well.”

Poramin was not born deaf. He had experience of being a hearing person. He prefers to be a hearing person.

“Actually I feel so sad about being deaf, but I have to be patient because it is impossible to be hearing.”

“My mother once took me to the acupuncture. The master put a needle in to my head. I felt I could hear a little but I cannot talk. I don’t know what happened. The master put needles into my whole body. I was 25 years old. I don’t know. Later, I realized that it is impossible to hear again.”

As Poramin does not feel happy to be deaf, he has some negative attitudes for the deaf community.

“The deaf people are unreasonable. They always panic on everything. I don’t like that. I like being hearing.”

“When I was a child, there were hearing boys who did bad things to me. I cried and went to the teacher. The teacher came and hit those boys. When I grew up, I feel bad about that.”

However, as Poramin is successful in his career, he was chosen to be the president of Pitsanulok Deaf Group. Poramin accepted that and allows the members to use his restaurant as a meeting place. Deaf people usually get together here after the restaurant is closed at 5 p.m. As the president of the club, Poramin has to attend several meetings. He complained.

“I don’t like to go out. I like to work. When I go to the deaf conference in Bangkok, I have to close my restaurant. I am tired. I have to go to the conference and I want to sell food as well.”

The story of Poramin focuses on his negative attitude toward deaf people. Poramin lives as he has to. He repeated that he must be patient.

There were some deaf people who came to Poramin’s restaurant. It was about 6 p.m. Some deaf people asked Poramin what he had been doing. Poramin told them about my interview and asked if anybody wanted to join the interview, and Miss Kanokwan wanted to.

She is a small deaf person. She was talkative. She dominated the conversation among other six-seven deaf people there. After I asked her age and her education, she was qualified to be my participant. So I talked to her about my research objectives and she agreed to participate.

Kanokwan is 30 years old. She sells flowers and souvenirs at night. She shares an apartment with other three deaf friends. Kanokwan has been through some experiences that made her tough.

“I don’t know why I’m deaf. I was hearing when I was born, but I always keep quiet. I don’t know the cause. May be it was during the Song Kran Festival that

everybody threw water. Some dirty water may have spilled into my ears. Then I became deaf.”

Kanokwan did not realize that she was deaf until her mother took her to hospital at the age of 7. She had to go to the deaf school at Tak. Kanokwan was afraid of students fighting.

“I attended Tak deaf school and I couldn’t use sign language. I pointed to this and that. I knew I didn’t like it at all. I wanted to go home to be with my mother. I was crying all day. I really wanted to go home.”

“At the deaf school, I was afraid of fighting. The boys always fought. I quit school at the age of 9.”

“During the time I didn’t go to school, I didn’t use sign language at all. My deaf friends told me that my sign language was bad. I accepted that.”

Kanokwan was at home for years. She lived with her mother, brother, and her aunt. Her father left the family long time ago.

“I had to look after my sick mother, so I quit school and stayed home. I worked at home. It was a flower job. I made flower from pieces of clothes. I got two baht a day. I had to be patient. I did the flower until my fingers hurt badly.”

“I stayed home for 8 years without going anywhere. My friends came to me and asked me to go out. I was afraid. One night I sneaked out and my friends praised me.”

Kanokwan went back to school as her mother wanted. This time, she admitted that she liked school.

“I like Tak School for the Deaf. I have lots of friends there. They were so naughty. They even climbed the building of the dormitory at night time.”

But the tragedy came to Kanokwan on one fine day.

“I was at the school and there was a phone call from my home telling the teacher that my mother passed away. I cried to go home but Mr. Boonterm (one of the teachers) was so worried and didn’t allow me to go. I asked Miss Aoy (another teacher) to explain to him so that I could go home for my mother funeral. Then, I took a bus alone to go home.”

Taking a bus alone was not an easy task for a deaf girl, but Kanokwan could do it. She arrived home safely. Her aunt was not so good to her mother lately. Kanokwan was angry.

“I asked my aunt why she hit my mother. She was my mother and I could take care of her.” Her aunt left finally. Kanokwan lived with her younger brother. She taught him sign language.

“My father came to take my brother away from me because I didn’t have money. My brother didn’t go with my father. He decided to live at a temple. He became a monk later.”

“I knew I didn’t have any money so I tried to work hard. I made flower from clothes and I was good at it. They liked what I did and wanted me back to work for them. The money was not good. I followed my friends to sell souvenirs. This job pays me well.”

That was the time Kanokwan turned into the deaf community. Before that, she had lots of hearing friends from the flower making job.

“In the past I was close to the hearing friends, but when I come to sell souvenirs at the bars and night clubs, my hearing friends went away. I didn’t know the reason.”

Kanokwan did not seem to regret that her hearing friends disappeared. She is happy with her daily life with the deaf.

“I like to go to department stores because I don’t like being in the hot weather. Air-conditioned department stores make me happy.”

“I ride my motorcycle. Police caught me for not wearing helmet. I asked my gay friend to play with the police and I was released. Otherwise, I have to pay fine for 500 baht.”

Kanokwan supports herself by selling souvenirs at night. There are some problems and she has to go through it to survive.

“My money was stolen. I feel bad and didn’t know the reason why the thief had to take my money. I know that the thief is one of my deaf friends. I don’t want to have quarrel.”

Kanokwan told me about her routine life at night. She seemed to be satisfied with her work at present.

“I will go to sell souvenirs at the night clubs where the band is playing. Sometimes a man takes some souvenirs and talks to the woman who sits with him. I have to stand there waiting for his decision whether to buy my product or not. Sometimes the man talks too long and I have to ask him if he will take it or not. He gave me 200-300 for six souvenirs. It was a lot of money.”

“After work, we go to one of my friends’ apartment. We eat and drink. Sometimes I got drunk. We go home around 7 a.m. I wake up around noon and do the housework. I have free time in the evening until 6 or 7. I start selling souvenirs from 7 p.m. -1 or 2 in the next morning.”

Talking with Kanokwan made me feel that a deaf person can do things as hearing ones can. Kanokwan is strong. She feels responsible for her mother, her brother, and herself since she was a kid. Kanokwan's identity was constructed from her responsibilities in her life. It makes her strong and being confident.

Pitsanulok was the end of my north trip. I went back to Bangkok and prepared for the northeastern trip in the following week.

The Northeast

I went to four provinces of northeastern Thailand; Sakon Nakhon, Surin, Roi-et, and Nakhon Ratchasima. Sakon Nakhon was one of my pilot trips that I already talked about in chapter three. Therefore, I will take you to the rest of the three provinces and meet with seven participants from the northeastern region of Thailand. Let's go to Nakhon Ratchasima first.

Nakhon Ratchasima

It took about two and a half hours driving from Bangkok to Nakhon Ratchasima or Korat, as her nick name. I had an appointment with Mr. Hes, a deaf man whom I met at the National Conference of the Deaf in Bangkok a month ago. Mr. Hes was kind enough to take me to other deaf persons in Korat. I drove to Korat and met with Hes at the big department store in town.

It was raining when Hes and his two friends arrived at the department store. We had lunch together in a fast food restaurant in the department store. After that, we moved to the office of Korat Development for the Deaf Club. It was a dark and small two-story townhouse on a narrow lane drive way. The club has rented this house as an office.

I met with Mr. Anuwat, the president of the club and talked to him about my research. He agreed to participate in an interview. He also called Miss Nopamas and Mr. Chanachai to join us. We set the camera at the garage because it was the only place that had enough sunlight for the shooting and had a roof to protect us from the rain.

Mr. Chanachai was so kind to join my interview. He had another appointment in that afternoon, so he wanted to be interviewed first. Chanachai is 36. He was born deaf. He is the fourth son of six children.

“My father was poor. He drove a horse truck. He always scolded and hit me. I don’t know why, but my mother was kind. I went to deaf school in Kon Kean and finished Mattayom 3 when I was 16. My father took me to the horse farm and asked the owner for a job. I worked as a horse-keeper for a while. I had to wash the horse and cut grass to feed the horse. It was a dangerous job. I got kicked once. It hurt very much. After a while, I became a jockey until now.”

“I have six brothers and sisters including me. I am not close any one of them. When they want to communicate with me, they point to this and that. I tell them that I don’t understand. They still talk to me and I ignore them. I tell them that I am too lazy to find out what they want. I always think about everything by myself. It is like each one for his life.”

“My parents always fought. I don’t know why. They fought until my father died. My mother had to sell food for living.

Chanachai was not close to his family. He had gone to deaf school since he was 8 and came back home only on holidays.

“My first day at school, my mother took me to school. I told my mom to wait for me while I was in class, but my mother went away and left me. I cried and cried all night. I wanted my mom to take me home. My clothes were dirty and the teacher taught me how to wash my clothes. Later, my mother paid someone to do my laundry.”

“I was okay in school. I liked talking with friends and I liked sports. I was a school athlete. There were some senior students who always picked on me. But I did it back to the new student when I turned senior.”

His daily life was with the horse and deaf community.

“I am a jockey as well as the member of this club. I got money from the horse race and I put some money in this club. We make key chains for sell.”

Chanachai was married to a hearing woman. She left him because he drinks too much. He does not want to marry again because he does not have much money. Chanachai also talked about other deaf people he met in Bangkok.

“It takes time to understand deaf people in Bangkok. I was in Bangkok for a while and it was too complicated, so I came back home.”

Chanachai’s story has an interesting point that he works everything out by himself. He determines how to live his life and he is satisfied with it. He prays for winning the lotto. That what he wants most in his life.

Mr. Anuwat was ready for the next interview. He is the president of Korat Development for the Deaf Club. Anuwat was not born deaf. He fell out of a tree when he was 4.

“At first, my father took me to the hearing school, but I couldn’t communicate. So, my father put me into the deaf school and I use sign language. My parents have

four children and I am the second. My little sister can sign but she works in Bangkok. Other family members talk to me and I write back to them. I wanted to go to college but my father doesn't have enough money to support. I have to be patient. I work and support myself."

Anuwat shared the experience at the deaf school.

"I went to deaf school when I was 7. My father took me to the deaf school in Kon-Kean. I was afraid that everybody signed to each other. I didn't know anything. My father left me at school. I cried to see my father. The senior students forced me to do this and that. They just wanted to discipline me."

"I like the deaf school at last. My father didn't have to pay for anything. If we had to pay, I don't think I can make it."

Anuwat did not talk much about his life experience. So, I asked him about the club. He had a lot to tell.

"We make key chains and souvenirs. We make enough money to pay the rent. I teach the members how to do things. When the products finished, I write a project to send all product to the market. I raised funds and asked for donations to buy materials. NADT does not help this club at all. We have to help ourselves. I collect money from each member 100 baht per year. We manage this amount of money year by year. The club is not in a good location. I think about moving out to the main street."

Anuwat talked about his deafness briefly.

"As being deaf, when I go to the temple, I have to see what other people are doing. No one tells me what the monks say. I don't feel anything. I ever think about being hearing, but I know it is impossible. So to use sign language with my deaf friends is good enough for me. I sometimes pray for winning lotto."

Anuwat did not have much to share. He mostly focused on the club. He wanted the government to know the problems and support the club with some money.

My next participants has story to tell. Miss Nopamas is 30 years old. She is a member of the Korat Development for the Deaf Club. She has been through the negative attitude towards her deafness from her own mother. Here is her story.

“I was born here in Nakon Ratchasima. My parents have three children, my brother, my sister, and me. I am the only deaf child. My father passed away and my mother is at home. I was born deaf and I know nothing. My mother was so worried about me. As I didn’t speak, my mother took me to the hospital in Bangkok and the doctor told her that I am deaf. My father took me to the hearing school but I was shy that everybody else speaks but I couldn’t. So, my mother took me to the deaf school at Kon-Kean. At first, I was so scared seeing deaf people using sign language. However, I finished Mattayom 3. I wanted to continue my study but my mother didn’t allow me to. She made me stay home and did the entire housework.

I couldn’t go anywhere without my mother. She was worried that I might have lost. I didn’t feel like that. My brother and sister could go out anywhere they wanted, but I had to wait for my mother to take me.

There was a letter from the department of welfare telling that there would be a deaf conference. My mother didn’t let me go. My friends knew that I couldn’t go to the conference and they came to see me at home. My mother saw me talk happily with my friends and she looked puzzled. After a while, there was a letter telling that the Korat Development for the Deaf Club is open and invites every deaf person to be its member. My mother allowed me to go to the opening. After that she didn’t allow again. I was so angry and asked her why. She didn’t reply.

Then, I took a course to be a make-up artist. When I finished, I worked in a hair-dresser shop. The owner paid me too low, so I quit. There was a friend asked me if I am interested in selling souvenirs in Malaysia. My mother was so worried that I would become a prostitute.

I did go to Malaysia for two years and came back home. After I came back from Malaysia, I sold flowers at night clubs and restaurants for a while. Then, there was a letter telling that this deaf club will have a meeting to select a new board. I attended the meeting and was selected as one of the committee.”

Nopamas talked inexhaustibly the above story by herself. I would like to know more about her feeling of being deaf, so I probed to the point.

“I want to change to be hearing because I see my brother and sister speak to each other so easy. I am the only deaf person in the family. I can’t speak with them. My mother ever took me to the spirit master. My mother thought that there was some kind of evil possessed me. I was a child and I knew nothing. I went to the deaf school when I was 9. My first day was terrible. I cried for going back home but my mother didn’t let me go home. She left me at the school. I was so lonely at the beginning. I used natural body language until I was 11 that I could use sign language.

I wanted to teach my mother and my brother and sister to know sign language but they ignored. They always speak to each other and when I asked them they seldom tell me what they were talking about.”

This problem can be found in many families that have deaf children. Nopamas also prays for being rich by winning lotto. She offers food for monks and making merit. She follows her mother and other hearing people to the temple. It is like what

some other participants told us about deaf people going to temple. They know nothing and follow the others.

I asked her about the club, but Nopamas refused to mention the club activities. Nopamas's story focuses on her mother's attitude towards her deafness that makes Nopamas so annoyed. From my observation, Nopamas wants to spread out her suppressed feeling caused by her mother. She wants to be able to speak for herself. She is not steady yet. Her identity is unclear.

We concluded our interview around 5 p.m. I thanked all of them and went on to find a place to stay for that night. I had to drive to Surin in the next morning.

Surin

I made an appointment with Mr. Chaiwat, a deaf man whom the snowball bounced to. We would meet in front of the Surin Railway Station. No, I did not take a train to Surin because I need a flexible transportation here and there. I drove my car to Surin and checked into the small hotel before I went out to see Mr. Chaiwat at the station. The interpreter and I had no idea who would be Mr. Chaiwat. All I had his information was that he is a deaf man about 50 years of age. He is the opinion leader of the deaf in Surin.

A man came by bicycle looking for someone at the station. I tried the sign "deaf" to him and he nodded. I walked to him and introduced myself and my interpreter. Chaiwat apologized to us for coming late because he finished work late that day. He invited us to his house. Chaiwat rode his bicycle and I drove my car following him through a crowded street.

Chaiwat's house is one of the three houses in the same area. He also set a corner for the deaf meeting. He told me that he teaches sign language for the

uneducated deaf on the weekend. I asked him if the interview could be taking place at this corner. He said he made another appointment for me at his friend's house and we better do both interviews there. So, we went to Miss Busara's house.

Busara is a short woman. She lives with her old mother and her aunt. Her house is on the main street in the middle of the town. We set the camera and seats in the front yard of the house. Busara was a bit shy. She wanted to see what would be going on for the interview, so she asked me to interview Chaiwat first. Chaiwat began with the cause of his deafness.

"I got a high fever when I was 7 months old. My parents took me to the hospital and the doctor told them that I am deaf. My parents were sad and cried. I grew up and realized that I am deaf. I use natural body language with my parents. I went to a hearing school when I was 9-10. I could write but couldn't communicate. I was there until there was a deaf school open in Kon Kean in 1968."

Most of the deaf schools are boarding school, so is Kon Kean Deaf School. Chaiwat had to stay at school, but he did not like it at the beginning.

"I was homesick and cried. There were ten students and three teachers. They taught me to count and taught me some signs. I was interesting that there were other deaf people in the world. I enjoyed learning sign language."

"I went home and taught sign language to my mother. She could sign a little. Mostly we wrote to each other. My parents had five children. I am the oldest, and the only deaf child. My parents took good care of me. Other four children are hearing. They speak to me and I read their lips. They don't want to know sign language."

Chaiwat's parents were glad that all of their children finish school. Chaiwat's father taught Chaiwat how to raise cows and pigs. He sold the calves for a living.

“I raised cows and pigs until the town was getting crowded. It was unhealthy to have a pig pen in the middle of the town. Also, there was a deaf school open in Surin. I tried to apply for a job as a deaf teacher but I always failed. So I applied for a job at Surin Red Cross Unit. I got a job.”

Chaiwat now supports himself. He works at the Red Cross regularly. He told us that everybody at the Red Cross likes him. Chaiwat is proud to be a Red Cross staff member.

“At first, I worked at Red Cross from 8-12. After that I came home to feed pigs. But later, I prefer to work at Red Cross full time. So I quit raising pigs. Everybody at the unit knows that I am deaf. They are good to me. I like this job because it helps people.”

Chaiwat likes to help others. Another proof is that he teaches sign language to the deaf who do not go to school.

“I teach sign language to other deaf people. I attend conference and training about teaching sign language. I know the problem about deaf people. I saw a name list of about 1000 deaf persons in Surin who do not go to school.”

Chaiwat is a Buddhist. Even though he does not go to the temple very often but he told us that he knows good and bad. He practices meditation and he is concerned about how to improve himself to be better. He makes merit and gives away things to the poor. When asking Chaiwat how he feels about his deafness, he replied,

“I pray for not being deaf again next life. I know it is not certain. I don’t go for any black magic or spiritual master to make me hear. I know they deceive people.”

Chaiwat is the leader of Surin Deaf Group. He represents deaf people from Surin in many meetings.

“I met deaf people from other parts of the country. I think that they are different, especially deaf people in Bangkok. They are arrogant and look down deaf persons from other provinces. They think that they can sign better than others. So, I try to teach deaf Surin to know more sign language.”

The story of Chaiwat reveals that even among the deaf people themselves, they have classes. The stereotype makes Chaiwat put more effort to help other deaf people who are depressed. Chaiwat himself seemed to be satisfied with what he is.

After Miss Busara observed the interview, she agreed to join my research. She was willing to tell us her life story. Now, let us meet with Busara.

Busara is 50 years old. She is the youngest child of her parents. She has ten brothers and sisters. Busara believes that she is deaf because her mother was too old to have a baby at the age of 40. Busara is the only one child who came out short and deaf.

“At first I didn’t go to school because I am deaf. I was at home and there were hearing children came and picked on me. My brother who was working in Bangkok knew that there is a deaf school in Bangkok. He took me to the school when I was 13. I finished Mattayom 3 and came back home. I wanted to find a job but my brothers and sisters told me to stay home and they would support me. Now I live with my mother who is very old and my aunt is also old. They have to use wheelchairs.”

Busara is very close to her mother. She used to follow her mother everywhere. Busara did not pay much attention to friends so she does not have many friends.

“I met with my hearing friends whom I played with in the past. They apologized to me that they picked on me before. Most of them got married. I admit

that I envy them. I am a small person and other may think that I am a child. It's cute, though."

"When I pay respect to the Buddha or the monks, I pray for being able to speak, being tall, rich, healthy, and beautiful."

Busara spends her day taking care of her mother and aunt.

"I prepare hot milk for them in the morning. They will tell me what they want to have for lunch and I will go buy for them. I cook dinner for them everyday. They have dinner at 5 and I will have at 7-8. I close the gate at 6 p.m. and open at 7 a.m."

"I am not lonely staying home. I read books, mostly about Buddhism. Sometimes I go out to the neighbor."

Her brothers and sisters take good care of Busara. One of the sisters stays in the United States. She took Busara and her parents to travel abroad. Busara has a lot of experience of traveling both in Europe and North America. She has no problem communicating with anybody.

"My sister wants me to have more experience. She doesn't want me to be lonely. I always follow my sister. Everybody helps me in everything."

Actually Busara and I talked about 45 minutes but mostly about the places she has been to. She seemed to be happy with her life. Busara has the identity of being a youngest sister to her brothers and sisters. It is an etic identity imposed by the brothers and sisters.

It was almost 7 p.m. when we finished the interview with Busara. I drove Chaiwat home and went on to find something to eat. We stayed overnight in Surin. The next morning I had an appointment at 10 a.m. in Roi-et. It took about an hour and a half from Surin. I arrived in Roi-et about 9.15. I contacted Miss Tubtim, the sign

language interpreter of Roi-et deaf community. Tubtim told me that there would be career training for the deaf in Roi-et and I would have a chance to find some research participants.

Roi-et

I met with Tubtim at the temple where the training took place. Tubtim introduced me to the deaf people there. There were almost 20 deaf people. Unfortunately, I needed a participant who was over 30 years old and held at least a Mattayom 3 certificate. Most of the deaf there did not go to school. They came to be trained how to make keychains as souvenirs for sale. There were only two deaf persons who finished Mattayom 3, the president of Roi-et Deaf Club and the treasurer. I talked to both of them and they agreed to participate in the interview.

Sompong is the president of the deaf club in Roi-et. He is a farmer. He was born deaf. Sompong attended the deaf school in Kon-Kean since he was 10 and finished Mattayom 3 at 18 years old. Now, Sompong is 36.

“When I was 7 years old, my father hired a private teacher for me but I didn’t understand what the teacher said. Until I was 10, that the department of welfare announced that there is a deaf school in Kon-Kean. So I went to the deaf school.”

“I have two brothers, one is older and the other is younger than me, and a younger sister. My youngest brother could sign but he died in a car accident at the age of 21. I was very sad. This brother of mine helped me in everything. He corrected my writing. Other brother and sister do not sign.”

Sompong is married to a hearing woman and has two children, a boy and a girl. They are both hearing.

“I met my wife long time ago. Our fathers know each other. She came to my house and we met. I talked to her by writing. I was good looking and she liked me. She went to work at the south and we always wrote letters to each other. When she came back home on holidays, I asked her to marry me. We have been married for 12 years and never fight. I teach her sign language. She can help me when someone talks to me badly.”

Sompong and his wife are farmers. They grow rice and they are poor. Sompong's wife suggested that Sompong should join the deaf club in town so he can have a steady income.

“I have to stay in town because it is 55 kilometers from my house to town. I miss my children very much, but my wife told me that the income from growing rice is not enough for the family.”

“I stay at this temple. I go back home every Friday evening and come back here on Monday morning. I take a bus because my motorcycle is too old to ride for a long distance journey.”

Sompong talked about his deafness. He believes that he is deaf because of his father

“My father did bad thing in the past, so our family is poor and I am deaf. I married and always make merit, so my children are normal.”

“I teach my children that they don't have to be shy for having a deaf father. Other people can talk, their father can sign. It is the same thing. My children listen to me well.”

“I didn’t know what is deaf until I went to the deaf school. I saw sign language and I liked it. I practiced signing from a handbook of sign language. The deaf friends at school were good. We had fun even sometime we fought.”

“I met with other deaf people from other places. The signs are slightly different, especially the sign of Setsatien School. Their signs based on ASL (American Sign Language).”

Sompong works hard for his family. He has to pawn rice in order to have money for the children to go to school. Sompong used to drive a truck for a while but the police always check on the truck drivers.

“When the police checked on me, I showed them the disabled identification booklet. The police laughed at me and let me go.”

The story of Sompong tells us that he has an identity of being a person. His deafness is not salient to him. He feels secure with his wife. Communication is not a problem at all.

After the interview, Sompong went back to join the training. Mrs. Ankana, the next participant, was talking to others. I walked around to observe the training process. It was a third day of the five-day training. There were about 17-18 deaf people in the training. They got together at the common hall of the temple. They sat on the floor as groups of four-five people. Everybody was making a tiny pair of shoes from pieces of leather. There was an instructor from a government agency that deals with the career training for disability people. The instructor did the sample and explained the process step by step. Miss Tubtim, the interpreter, signed what the instructor said to the deaf trainees. Mrs. Ankana finished talking with the other person and she came to tell me that she was ready for an interview.

Ankana is 35. She works as a treasurer of the Roi-Et deaf club. She is well-off as her family is wealthy. She volunteers to help the deaf community. Ankana was born to a family of goldsmiths. Her deafness is hereditary. She has a deaf brother and sister.

“I was born deaf. When I grew up, there was no deaf school in the area. My brother and sister who are also deaf were studying in Bangkok. So, my parents sent me to Bangkok. I finished Mattayom 3 and came back home. My parent didn’t want me to study more. I stayed home helping family business for two-three years. I met my husband and we got married. My husband went to work in Bangkok and I moved with him. I had my first baby in Bangkok. My parents didn’t want me to work hard. They supported me for the dress-making course for one year. My husband and I decided to go home and we had our second baby.”

She does not seem to be sorry for being deaf. She has lived an ordinary life without any struggle. Ankana did not have any fulltime job. She volunteered to help the deaf community.

“My deaf friend asked me to set up a deaf club. I contributed so many things to the club. We asked for an establishment fund from the NADT, but we failed. So I support the club and am a treasurer.”

Focusing on her deafness, Ankana told us that her hearing brother hates deaf people.

“He doesn’t like sign language and he hates deaf people. He never helps me in anything. My fifth sister who is hearing helps me. My parents like to write and speak not to sign.”

“My kids are hearings. I am happy that they can hear. My mother doesn’t have to be embarrassed. I always make merit so that my kids can hear. I know it is

impossible for me to hear. My mother ever took me and my deaf brother and deaf sister to some places that could cure our deafness. It was a hoax. I don't believe that I can hear."

"I wanted to be an air-hostess on the plane. I like it a lot. But I am deaf."

I asked her about the deaf community. Ankana has chances to meet deaf people from other parts of the country.

"There is a problem of misunderstanding between deaf people from other parts and deaf people in Bangkok, especially the deaf people graduated from Setsatien School. The sign language is different from the deaf."

She also added that the Roi-et deaf community needs more support.

"If the government could help, we need some money to use in training course. I have a pity on our deaf club. I want to set up more training for the deaf people."

Ankana's story shows us a life experience of a wealthy deaf woman. Ankana's identity is stable. She has enough to give out in terms of money and time.

It was at noon when we finished with Ankana. I calculated the time and decided to drive back to Bangkok in the afternoon. I arrived home around 10 p.m. It was quite a week for me.

The South

I went to the south in the last week of April 2004. It was the time that I had to go after several postponements. The situation in southern Thailand was calm after there was a violent attack on a military depot and fire set to burn 18 schools in one night on January, 4th, 2004. No one wanted me to go to the south, but I must go to complete my field trip.

My intention to go to the south was that I wanted to see if there is any difference of the deaf life in the south from other parts of Thailand. Southern part of Thailand is unique as the Muslim population is the majority people there. I went to Had Yai, where the office of the Southern Deaf Club is situated. Miss Pan, the interpreter of the deaf community, was my contact person for my southern trip.

Song Khla (Had Yai)

The distance from Bangkok to Had Yai is too far for me to drive to work. It would take 13 hours to drive. So, I decided to fly and rent a car to use in local area. My interpreter and I took off from Bangkok International Airport on Monday morning and arrived at the office of the Southern Deaf Club around 1 p.m. Miss Pan was there waiting for me as we had made the appointment. When I met her, she greeted me with a surprise that I dare to come to the south in this time. Miss Pan had made the appointments with deaf participants in the provinces of Songkhla (Had Yai), Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Yala for me. On that day, I would have three participants, Mr. Artit, Mrs. Roongrat, and Mr. Chuchart, to interview in the meeting room of the Southern Deaf Club. I started with Mr. Artit.

Artit is 47 years old. He is the owner of a Para rubber farm in the south. He experienced some difficulties in selling the rubber to the hearing middle man. Artit also has negative attitude towards government officers and bankers that they discriminate against the deaf people.

“When I was 9, I still had speech....I went to play with my friends and I got a tick in my ear. I didn’t know what happened but it hurt. I was crying all night. My mother tried to get it off by herself. My father wanted to take me to the hospital but my mother said that she could handle it.”

Artit's deafness is a sad story that his mother and Artit himself never forget.

"I feel bad that my mother made me deaf. I even cursed on her but I never hurt her. I cried."

"Three months later I went to school. The teacher called my name Artit but I didn't respond. The doctor said that a nerve line is torn."

"When I turned deaf, some of my hearing friends called me names. I didn't pay any attention to them. I didn't fight. Some of my hearing friends played with me as usual. We played soccer. I still talked to them without hearing. They talked to each other. They waved a shirt to call my attention in a soccer field. I understand them well. Sometimes we used body language for easy words such as eating, taking shower. I nod to them as I understood."

Artit faced the problem at school. He was in the hearing school before he turned deaf, but after that, he had to go to the deaf school. Artit shared with me that there was a problem entering the school as well as a problem in the deaf school that made him quit.

"I entered the hearing school at the age of 12 and go to deaf school at the age of 14. Actually I was 18 when I went to deaf school. The school didn't accept me. My mother went to the registration office and changed my age to 14...She went to the district office and changed my birth year."

"There was no deaf school in my area at the time I needed. There were few in Bangkok, where my parents didn't want me to go. In 1974, a school for the deaf opened in Hat Yai, Song Khla province. I went there and the teacher taught me how to speak. When I was with the deaf students, I used sign language. I was at the school until I finish Pratom 4 (primary education)."

“The Deaf school is a boarding school. I went home every weekend. My older sister who worked near the school picked me up every Friday. Students who went home every weekend were considered wealthy. One of the teachers thought that I was a rich boy. He told me to ask my parents for money. I lent him some money and he never paid back. I didn’t like it that way, so I quit school.”

Artit quit school and became a farmer. He grows fruits and owns a rubber farm, which is the main agriculture product of the south. He complained that living a deaf life in the south is suffering.

“I cut the rubber and took it to the middle man. The man cheated on me. I was so disappointed. I went home and re-calculate all the numbers. I found that it wasn’t right. I went to the man and talked to him. He admitted everything. It was my luck that I was in school and learned how to read and write. How about other deaf people who don’t know the language? Deaf people in the south have been cheated a lot, especially about the rubber selling.”

“I grow rubber and sell rubber. I don’t hire workers. I can do the job by myself. My wife helps me very often.”

Artit is married twice. He divorced his first wife and married again to a deaf woman. Artit loves his sons so dearly.

“I was married to a hearing woman. She left me because I am deaf. I didn’t know that she had an affair. The neighbor told me, but I didn’t believe. She came home late and we got divorce. I have a son with my ex-wife. He lives with his mother. When we meet each other he respects me well.”

“I’m now married and have two sons, 17 and 15. They all can sign. My wife and I raise them ourselves. At first, my mother took my first boy to Chaing Mai, as my

wife and I are deaf. My wife missed her son so much, so we went to Chaing Mai to take our son back. He grows up and speaks well.”

“When we have the second boy, my older son takes care of his brother very well. He speaks for his little brother. When a little boy cries, my older son touches me, so I know there is something wrong. Then my wife feeds the little boy. When I am out for work, I would tell my big son to look after the little boy. He will run to me if anything happens.”

It has been a happy family for Artit for a long time until the teenage sons show some reaction to their parents’ deafness.

“In the past, my sons loved me so much. When they grow up, they follow their friends. Some of their friends tease them about having deaf parents, and my sons disappointed. I don’t blame them. They are grownups. They used to sign with the parents but not now. They are embarrassed among their friends.”

“My sons are embarrassed when other people point that their parents are deaf. They don’t even look at my face. I told them that it’s okay. They don’t bring their girlfriends home.”

To the question how he feels about being deaf, Artit said that he is okay with it now. However, Artit has many other matters in life to think.

“I don’t feel sad anymore because I’m a grown up.”

“If I have problems I keep them to myself. I’m always serious about money, a car, and a house. I haven’t had chance to buy a car because I have to spend money for the boys; for their school expenses. When I am tense, I go to the temple. I go to make merit. I go to the funeral. After I make merit, I come home. I think about my good health. However, I still tense”

Communication is one of the problems, but Artit can cope with it well.

“I can speak a couple of short words. I can speak in a group of two or three persons, not more than that.”

“I do both write and speak to my parents. I speak short words and write long sentences. My mother doesn’t sign at all. I taught sign language to my little brother. He can sign well.”

Other than his wife and sons, Artit is close to his little sister. Even though she lives far away, she never forgets to send her love and care to her deaf brother.

“I love my little sister the most. I raised her. She left to study at Chaing Mai until she graduated a master degree. She feels pity on me and sends money to me very often. I have two children and work as a farmer growing rubber. If it rains in any day, I can’t cut the rubber. It means that I wouldn’t have rubber to sell. I write to my little sister, and she sends some money to me.”

Artit talked about the discrimination that deaf people have to face.

“Deaf farmer cannot put the rubber to pawn. We have to sell it away. Hearing farmer can do anything. I don’t understand. Also, the bank doesn’t allow deaf person to have a loan. I think it is not right to discriminate, but I don’t know what to do. I feel sorry for all disabled people in Thailand. We are depressed. Deaf people here are developing themselves, but just a little.”

Artit’s story tells us that a deaf person like himself could be depressed in so many ways. He has been discriminated since he was a student in a hearing school. He was deceived by the greedy teacher when he was in deaf school. He was also hurt by his hearing ex-wife. The middle man in rubber business cheated on him as he is deaf.

And now, his two teenage sons are embarrassed that their parents are deaf. Artit still accepts everything and get so tense to himself. He is really a tough man.

We spent about an hour interviewing Artit. Miss Pan had Mrs. Roongrat were waiting for the next interview. I took a five-minute break and was ready for the next interview with Mrs. Roongrat.

Mrs. Roongrat is 41. She comes to talk with other deaf friends here at the deaf club very often. She likes to bring her 11 years old hearing daughter along to the club. She said that her daughter could learn sign language. Roongrat is deaf as she had high fever when she was a little baby. However, from her story, her deafness seems to be hereditary.

“My father told me that when my mother delivered me, I had high temperature. Then I became deaf. My older sister is also deaf. I met deaf adults in my neighborhood and I was confused. There were very few deaf persons as I knew in my childhood. Others were hearing people.”

In her pre-school years, Roongrat used body language to communicate as she told us.

“When I was young I didn’t go to school. I used natural body language. The thumb means father and the index finger means mother. The middle finger was my sister and the ring finger was me. I didn’t know anything until I went to school.”

“My parents raised me since I was a kid. My father was a school janitor and my mother worked in a rubber field. When my mother passed away, my father married again. My grandmother took care of me. I had to walk into the wood with my grandmother. It was a very long way to walk.”

Roongrat did not want to go to school. Her father insisted that she had to go to school.

“The deaf adult taught me some signs. That was natural body language. My parents wanted me to go to school, but I didn’t want to. I was home alone for a while. My mother passed away. My father took me to the deaf school. I saw everybody was using sign language. I was a little girl. I cried. After a while I finished Pratom 4 and went back home in Yala.”

It is interesting that Roongrat, as well as Artit, stopped studying when she finished Pratom 4. It was the same deaf school that Artit quit when he finished Pratom 4, the primary level of education system in Thailand.

“I was expelled from school. The principal was not good. There was a hearing man wrote a letter to me asking me to meet him. I refused to go, but the teacher blamed me. After a while, the hearing man gave me present and the teacher told the principal the other story. The principal expelled me.”

Roongrat came back home in Yala and looked for a job. She told us that she was sad with what happened to her.

“I am sad that I am deaf. I couldn’t write the right words. The hearing people are lucky that they can improve themselves. But for the deaf people, they cannot. My mother passed away and I couldn’t support myself. My family couldn’t help me. I was sad. I had no money even to buy food to eat everyday. I did everything for food.”

“Finally, my father hired me to do the housework. I washed clothes and mopped the floor. After a while I had a quarrel with my older sister....I came to Had Yai and got a job. I sold soybean-milk at the market. I worked like that for seven years and got married.”

Roongrat is married to a deaf man in Had Yai. The couple lives in an old cottage near the husband's family.

"I moved to my husband's family at Had Yai. They gave us an old wooden house for free. My husband's relatives also help us about the tuition fee of our children."

"My husband and I work hard to get 100-300 baht a day. I do the laundry and get 50 baht. My husband's sister hires me to peel fruits and gives me some more money. My husband was a driver. He earned 150 baht a day which could not cover if he had to pay a policeman. He quit driving job and worked at home. His family can take care of him. My husband works as a manager of his family fishing pond."

Roongrat has two children, a girl and a boy. They are both hearing and Roongrat has an interesting belief for testing a baby's hearing.

"All of my deaf friends who have children have hearing children. When I have my own children they are hearing. I have two children. When my daughter was delivered, she cried. It's a sign of hearing. If she didn't cry, she is deaf."

"I have two children. When I had my first daughter, I fed her for a month and my sister-in-law took care of her for the first year. I had her back and took her to practice speech at my sister-in-law's house once a week. She sometimes takes my daughter out for places."

Other than her own family and her husband's family, Roongrat is not close to anybody else.

"I don't love anybody in my father's family at Yala. We always have quarrels. Everybody separated from the family. I like living with my husband and children. I don't like all of my siblings."

Roongrat lives her daily life by peeling fruits and doing some housework. She said that she had just enough for the kids to go to school. Sometimes she had to ask her husband's family to help.

"Sometimes they win lotto and they give some money to my children. Sometimes they take my children out for movies or department stores. On Chinese New Year, they give money. Being with this family (the husband's) is a happiness."

However, Roongrat has to suffer the moment that her children begin to ignore her and her husband.

"My children are embarrassed of having deaf parents. One day, I asked them to take me to the doctor. When we arrived at the clinic, I sign to my children. They had to be my personal interpreter. They felt embarrassed when there were people looking at us. After that, they don't like to go to the doctor with me."

"When there is a parents meeting at school, my children don't allow me to go because I am deaf. I have to stay home. They take the relatives instead of me. They said Deaf parents would be a burden in a meeting."

"When we go together anywhere, sometimes my husband call the children. The kids are embarrassed because others can hear a strange voice of their father. They told their father to stop calling aloud. The father didn't know because he is deaf. The children were embarrassed. They both would tell their father to keep the voice low."

Roongrat is not happy for being deaf. She sees that hearing people are cleverer than deaf people.

"I want to be able to speak as everybody. They are clever. But deaf people write the wrong words, switch words. Deaf equal blind."

“When I look back to my past, I feel sorry for being deaf. But I have to be patient. But for this moment, I am happy to come here (the deaf club). I talk to friends and learn things. Sometimes there are people from Bangkok or other provinces come by. I will take my daughter with me. She can try her sign language.”

Roongrat’s story let us know that she struggled to have a better life. She had to support herself since her mother passed away. Her family did not help her at all. Roongrat runs for her life. As everybody does both deaf and hearing.

Let us meet with the next participant, Mr. Chuchart, a 34 year old man. Chuchart is the staff of the deaf club. He is in charge of member services. Chuchart works at the club for years. He wishes for the equality between deaf and hearing people.

Chuchart was born deaf. He told us that he is deaf because his parents always fought during the pregnancy.

“My father and my mother got married. They always fight each other. My father went out and has another wife during my mother’s pregnancy. So, I was born deaf. I asked my brother why I am deaf. He told me that the parents was having quarrel when I was in a womb. So, I was born deaf.”

Chuchart has five younger brothers. He is the big brother. Chuchart is concerned very much that he is the big brother but he could not take care of his brother. Moreover, his brothers take care of him.

“I am deaf and I am the oldest son. All my brothers have good jobs. They earn good money and they even give me some. They have cars and motorcycles. My second and third brothers get a good job. My fourth brother doesn’t get a good job. If I have a good job, I can take care of my brothers. I will be happy. But the fact is that my

brothers have to take care of me. I feel so ashamed. I'm not happy. I want the deaf and the hearing to be equal. I feel so tense because I am the oldest brother."

"My brother next to me can sign. But it is a homemade sign language. For example, "Dad and mom want to see me at home now". When I talk to my parents, this brother is my interpreter. He is important to me. I talk to him when I have problems."

"Actually I raised my brother. I gave some money to my brother. When I was short of money, I could borrow from my brother, and paid back when I had some. He refused to take my money because he earns a lot more than I do. I think that it's because I used to give him some money, and he earns more than I do. He sees that I am deaf. My next brother always gives me money."

Chuchart also mentioned his school years. He did not finish Mattayom 3, and he gave the reason.

"When I was 9-10 years old, my mother took me to the kindergarten. I didn't want to go. I cried. I went to deaf school at Song Khla in a year 1976. I met lots of deaf students. I saw the deaf students signed to each other. I was so terrified. I cried and told my mother that I didn't want to go. My mother insisted that I must go. I didn't know anything. I studied at the deaf school until the forth or the fifth year. I knew things more and more. I was at the school for eight years. I felt that the teacher didn't have anything to teach. I didn't know anything more. So, I quit."

Chuchart played with both deaf and hearing friends. When the hearing gangsters picked on him, Chuchart went to discuss with his brothers and the boys had consensus to do something.

“Some of my friends even tapped on my head. They sometimes called my parents names. I didn’t know that was bad. I told my brothers what my friends did. We went to them and had a fight.”

“After the fight, we remembered each other faces. When we grew up, I finished school and came back home, we met each other again. My friend said hello to me first. I was surprised that he was polite to me. He said sorry that he played hard on me in the past.”

Chuchart realizes that to go to school has changed the way others look at him.

“Before, I didn’t go to school and I couldn’t write. Now, I finished school and I can write. I write to this friend of mine. We have fun. He and I are equal now.”

“When I grew up I use sign language with my deaf friends. Other people see me sign and they think I’m dumb and uneducated. I went to the restaurant and tried to order food. I asked for a piece of paper and a pen and wrote to the waiter what I wanted. The hearing people, next table, were stunned that I can write. They came to talk to me and said that I was clever.”

Chuchart was looking for a job since he was a student. He has been close to the Southern Deaf Club years ago.

“At the very first year of the deaf club, I was a student. The Club was at the old shabby room. When I came to learn about being the committee and about accounting, they taught me everything. When their time was up, they supported me. I want to be like them. I will help the deaf people to develop.”

“After I became a member of the deaf club, there was a conference in Bangkok. The conference opened for all deaf people in Thailand. I met several deaf people from the north, the northeast, and the central. They came from everywhere.

The conference held by NADT. It was a very exciting event for me since I knew nothing before. I know a lot more when I grow up.”

No doubt, Chuchart noticed some differences between deaf people in the south and others.

“Deaf people in the south are different from deaf people in other places. My deaf school taught ASL (American Sign Language). When I met other deaf people they said I should sign Thai Sign Language.”

“Deaf people who are educated from the same school can talk to each other fine. But when they move to Bangkok and we meet again, I notice that they have changed. I don’t think it is right to do that. We should be united. Deaf people in Bangkok are arrogant. They think that their sign is the best, it is not true. I went to the north and I think they (the deaf people) have good relationship with each other. I went to the northern deaf club and they ignored me. I think they should cooperate with the members of other deaf clubs. It is better than hating each other. My sign language and their sign language are slightly different.”

We came back to his personal feeling towards deafness. Chuchart has regret that he is deaf. He does not want his children to be deaf. He knows that there are lots of troubles for one deaf life.

“The problem is that I cannot develop myself. I’m sorry about that. My brothers can develop themselves and my parents love that. My parents abandon me and love my brothers.”

“If I have a hearing child, it would be good that my child can help me when I need interpreter. For example, my children can take me to the doctor and tell the doctor which part of my body gets hurt.”

“However, if my child will be deaf, I will love him or her as well. I wish that my child would have any other organs, arms, legs, and etc. completely normal. I can teach my child and I would never abandon my child for sure. My child has flesh and skin as I do.”

Chuchart has a strong determination to develop himself and other deaf people to be equal to the hearing.

“I quit school to work as a poster painter. I applied for a job at the poster shop and got 100 baht a day. I worked there three years. I quit the painting job to another job. I am able to do so many things. I got lots of experiences. I worked with the hearing people. I am the only deaf person in my work place. They drew picture for me to paint the poster. I knew what to be done. I measured and cut as they wanted.”

“If there is a company accepts me to work and teaches me how to do things, I can do it well. I will earn equally to the hearing people. I can look after my family or even my brothers.”

Chuchart is an activist in the Deaf Club. He always feels bad when no one listens to what he wanted to say in the meeting. He is even upset with the community interpreter when the interpreter is afraid of interpreting his strong feeling to others.

“When I attend the meeting at the NADT in Bangkok, I raised my hand to tell the problems. They told me to sit down. I was confused. I think they don’ want to develop. I wish the government can help.”

“When the interpreter goes to government office with the deaf person, she seems scared of what she is going to interpret. I think the interpreter should show that the deaf is uneducated and pity so that they can get the support money. The money will come to develop all the deaf people. Actually the government is ready to help. I

don't know the reason why the interpreter is so scared when facing government officers."

Chuchart reveals his experience that he had suffered for being equal to the hearing. He disclosed at the end that he was ignored by his parents. This made him feel regret for being a deaf person. Chuchart copes with his sad feeling by trying his best to be equal to the hearing person. His identity is still shaky as long as he has to fight with the word "inequality."

I finished with three participants in Had Yai. Miss Pan told me that there will be a meeting of deaf people in Yala on the next day. Miss Pan has made an appointment with the president of Yala Deaf Club at 10 a.m. and the meeting will be at 5 p.m. I agreed to come to the office to pick up anybody who wants to go to Yala in the morning with me. I plan to interview two-three deaf Muslims in Yala before they will have a meeting.

Yala: The Group Interview

The next day, I arrived in Yala about 10 a.m. and met with Miss Jundra, the president of the Yala Deaf Club. She told me that the members would come to the office for the meeting in evening time; however, there would be no deaf Muslims coming. I was surprised because most of the population in Yala is Muslim. Miss Jundra told me that there are deaf Muslim in Yala, it was only they would not come to the meeting that evening. So, I had to go to them.

Mr. Usaman, one of the staff at Yala deaf club was kind enough to take me to the houses of deaf Muslims. I drove the rental car out of the town to the urban area of Yala. There were plenty of rubber trees along the road sides. We arrived at the house of Mr. Jehwe, a Muslim deaf person. Mr. Usaman went to talk with Jehwe and came

back to tell me that we should go to the shop of Mrs. Somjai, another deaf woman. Jehwe would ask another deaf friend to come and follow us to Somjai's.

It was very challenging that I had to solve the problem at the point that my deaf Muslim participants did not want to give an interview to the camera. From the lesson I have through my pilot study, it is impossible to note down anything when attending the sign language conversation. Loosing eye contact with the deaf person is like the termination of the running story. I had not much time to find other participants and I did not know if I would face the same problem again. I decided to conduct a group interview in stead of one-to-one interview. The participants agreed to have a videotape recorder at last.

In the group of three, I have Jehwe, Sa-me, and Somjai. As I did not prepare for this kind of group interview, I used the same set of questions asking the participants one by one. The following is the summary of what I got from the group interview.

Jehwe, Sa-me, and Somjai were born deaf and live in Yala. They did not go to school. Jehwe and Sa-me are Muslim but they said they are different. Most of the men in Yala wear cloth in stead of pants. Jehwe dressed up with an ankle-length skirt, long-sleeves white shirt, and a Muslim hat. Sa-me wore shorter cloth with a shabby t-shirt. Somjai is Buddhist. She sells food for a living.

Jehwe was once going to hearing school but he could not understand anything. The teacher treated him bad, so he quit. He learned the Muslim way from the religious master who came from Iran. There was a person who wrote to Jehwe what the master said. Jehwe is a worker in a rubber farm. He cuts the rubber trees in the early morning for its liquid. He also picks fruits in the garden. He has no steady income. He has to

ask for food on a daily basis. Jehwe met other deaf persons who came to the mosque but he said he could not communicate with them. Jehwe always follows his father to the mosque. He does not know much about the meaning of the Islamic rituals. He just did what other did. Jehwe wants to be a hearing person. He does not like when he cannot understand other people. He wishes there would be more sign-language interpreters in the deaf community.

Sa-me makes and sells bird cages. He never goes to school. He is married to a deaf woman and has three hearing children. Sa-me sneaks away from Islam ritual. He went into the woods and his father took him out. His father gives him some land to grow fruits and rubbers. Sa-me almost never met deaf people from other provinces. He stays home all the time. But he said he can understand sign language fine. Sa-me complains about his work. He was cheated by some hearing people. He said he needs an interpreter.

Somjai is married to a deaf man from Had Yai. Somjai did not go to school either. But she is so confident that she can read. Somjai is Buddhist and she likes to offer food to monks every morning. Somjai has two hearing children. The children work in town. Somjai told us that her husband hits the children very often, so she does not want them to be home. Somjai sells food for her living. She never meets other deaf people out of Yala. Somjai said that she has no problem because she can understand her customers well.

“I don’t have any problem of being deaf. I can survive.”

The group interview did not give much to the study. However, it tells me that deaf people in the far south as Yala are seldom open to the out-group member. It is not only me that they are not open to, but also other deaf people. It relates to what the

president of Yala Deaf Club told me before that Muslim deaf will not come to the meeting.

The trip to Yala was mostly to observe the Muslim deaf life. After finishing the group interview, I drove to drop Jehwe at his house. He wanted me to go inside and meet with his family. His house is a one-story brick house. There was a main door to enter at the front. My interpreter and I followed Jehwe into the house. There were a group of four men and a group of five women sitting separately on a cement stage-like floor that was about two feet higher than the ground. Jehwe introduced me to his father who is hearing but he speaks Jawi language. The other man sitting in the far back can speak Thai and he told me that Jehwe's father just greeted me. I had not prepared for being among Muslim culture, Jehwe's father gave me his hands and I just greeted him with the Wai, Thai way to greet other. I know afterwards that it was not proper to wai a Muslim person who gives you his hands. One should receive the hands by one's hands and put the feeling of honor on to one's face or head.

The southern part of Thailand has a unique culture and language that sometime causes the misunderstanding between people. I asked some hearing people at Somjai's shop if they ever afraid of the violence that happens very often in the area. They said that they are afraid of the bad situation, but they have no choice. It is their hometown, too. And they have no money to move out of the area.

After having a glass of water in Jehwe's house, it was almost 5.30 p.m. I decided to drive back to Had Yai instead of spending a night in Yala. I had to go to Nakon Sritammarat where I had another appointment at 10 a.m. on the next day. Had Yai is the half way to Nakon Sritammarat from Yala. So, I left Yala in the evening of

April 27, 2004. I drove pass Pattani province, where it is the heart of a controversial violence area.

Nakon Sritammarat

I met with Mr. Tinakorn and Mr. Somyos at the Nakon Deaf Club, which is situated at Tinakorn's house and he is the president. Tinakorn uses the garage as the meeting place. There is a big wide blackboard on one side of the wall and the meeting table is set in U-shape in front of the blackboard.

I set the camera and two chairs in the center of the meeting table. Tinakorn was the first participant to be interviewed that day. Let me introduce you to Tinakorn.

Tinakorn is 38 years old. He has no job. He lives with his mother and little brother. Tinakorn turns a part of his house into a local deaf club. Deaf people in the area come to talk with each other at his house. Tinakorn's mother does not like that because she has to pay for whatever Tinakorn takes to serve his deaf friends; but she told us that she would continue to pay as long as her son is the leader of the group.

Tinakorn was accidentally deaf because he fell off the second floor of his house while it was under construction.

"I was born hearing. When I was 2-3 years old, I climbed to the second floor of the house which was under construction. The carpenter shouted at me to go down. I was shocked by his loud voice and fell off. My head hit the ground but I wasn't dead. Unfortunately, I'm deaf. My mother was so sad. I had to go to deaf school"

"I was puzzled with the sign language at first, but I didn't cry as anybody else. I liked to learn how to sign."

Tinakorn was in school until he finished Pratom 6. His mother did not support him for further education. He stayed home since then.

“My little brother can sign a little because I teach him.

Tinakorn has two brothers and he is the middle son of the house. He has no job and he is concerned about the matter.

“I am unemployed. I help doing housework and in the afternoon I teach deaf people who didn’t go to school. I am serious that I have no job. My brothers have good jobs, but I don’t. I used to work at the bakery nearby, but they laughed at me and paid me too little. Many workers quit and so did I.”

Tinakorn is a Buddhist. He goes to the temple regularly. He even wanted to be ordained but it is prohibited to have a deaf man being ordained in Buddhism.

“I want to get rid of bad things inside me. I wanted to be a monk but it is impossible. I can’t say a prayer in the ordination ceremony. When the monks say a prayer, I don’t know the meaning. I only make a wish that I have a job and have money.”

Tinakorn is concerned that his mother still supports everything for him even though he is 37 years old now.

“I have a problem that my mother still pays for me. I cannot apply for a job.”

“I am sad that I am deaf. I want to be a hearing person. I want to speak to other people. Being deaf is troublesome. The hearing sees deaf people sign and they laugh. The hearing people don’t know that there are deaf people who go to school.”

Tinakorn has an unpleasant experience about being discriminated by hearing people.

“I went to the dentist clinic. I signed-in the queue. When it was my turn, the woman skipped me and called the next person. I walked to her and asked. She said I have to wait. I don’t know what to do. I have no interpreter with me at that time.”

We ended the conversation with Tinakorn's opinion on the deaf problems.

"The family members must understand a deaf person in the family. They have to give deaf person a chance. So the deaf person will have an equal opportunity to hearing person."

As I mentioned before, I also met with Somyos. He is a member of the deaf club. He is from another district in Nakhon Si Thammarat. He came for my interview especially.

"I was born deaf. I am the youngest son. I asked my father why I'm deaf but he couldn't answer. When I grew up, I went to the deaf school when I was 8. It was a boarding school. I finished only Mattayom 1. I quit school and went to Bangkok with my neighbor."

Somyos worked at the factory where he experienced the inequality between deaf and hearing workers.

"My friends at the factory were fine but the chief was mean. He made me do hard work, much more than the hearing workers. I felt unequal."

The factory was across from the school that has deaf and hearing students learn together. He came to associate with the deaf students in the evening. On weekends, Somyos always hung out with deaf friends at the department store. He had a hearing girlfriend once. But she broke up with him.

"I had a girlfriend, the hearing one. We worked together in the factory and we went out together on weekends. We wrote to communicate with each other. I always went to the MBK department store where it is the meeting place of hearing people on weekends. My girlfriend wanted to see movies. I let her go and I talked to my deaf friends. She said that I paid too much attention to my friends more than to her."

Somyos worked at the garment factory in Bangkok for 12 years. He just moved back home in the south as his parents are getting older. He is married to a deaf woman. No hearing friends from Bangkok came to his wedding.

The couple has not had a baby yet. Somyos has a strong determination that he wants to have a deaf child.

“I want to have a deaf child. I want to raise my child to graduate the college degree. I’ve been saving up money for my child so that my child will have enough money to use.”

“If my child can hear, I will let the hearing person raise my child. When my child grows up, I will teach my child sign language. My child will be my personal interpreter.”

Somyos’s story reveals that he is depressed for being deaf. His experience at the factory in Bangkok might have made him feel inferior.

Somyos was the last participants for my trip to the south. I drove back to Had Yai that afternoon. As I listened to the radio in the car, the headline news chocked me.

PATTANI, Thailand, (IslamOnline.net & News Agencies) – Clashes between security forces and Muslims in southern Thailand on Wednesday, April 28, left at least 127 dead in the bloodiest day in the history of this troubled region.

I called Miss Pan to ask if the group that went to the meeting in Yala were safe. Miss Pan told me that they just arrived to the office in Had Yai safely an hour ago. The next morning I went to the office of the Southern Deaf Club to thank all of the staff that helped me through the mission in the south. I flew back to Bangkok in the afternoon.

Central Thailand

Deaf people in the central part of Thailand, especially of the provinces neighboring to Bangkok have some influence from the deaf schools in Bangkok. However, life styles and the career path for the deaf persons are not much different from the ones in other parts of the country.

For the central part of Thailand, I have interviewed deaf participants in the Provinces of Ayuthaya, north of Bangkok, and Nakon Pathom, west of Bangkok. As I met several deaf people in the National Conference in March, I have made a couple appointments with some of them. My trip to Ayuthaya was one of my appointments. I had to drive to the district of Bangpahun in Ayuthaya to meet with three participants, Mr. Somkiet, Mr. Nipan, and Mrs. Somwang.

Ayuthaya

I actually talked with Mr. Somkiet at the conference in Bangkok. He is the leader of the deaf people in Ayuthaya. He told me to come to Bangpahan market because there are some deaf people and I could do several interviews in one place.

I had a chance to interview Mr. Somkiet. Somkiet is 48 years old. His house is in the district of Ayuthaya city, but that day he came to Bangpahun district so it would be easier for me to interview him, as he told other two deaf persons to join my interviews.

Somkiet was born deaf. He also has two other deaf brothers and one hearing sister. Somkiet introduced himself as a summary for the interview.

“My name is Somkiet. I was born in Ayuthaya. I was born deaf and I knew nothing. I can’t speak. When I was 7-8 years old, my parents put me in the hearing school. I didn’t understand how to read and write. Teacher taught me to write number

1..2..3..and I understood and I could write. But all other than numbers I couldn't. I didn't know anything. When they pointed at things I didn't know. I went on at school until Pratom 1. Someone saw me that I used body language. This person told my father that here is a school for the deaf in Bangkok. My parents took me to Bangkok and left me at the school for the deaf. I looked at the deaf students who were signing and I was puzzled. I looked at my hands and I didn't understand. I cried and wanted to go home. Someone took me to another room and gave me sweets and desert. I follow this person to another room which had pictures of hand-signs for mother, mango, father, and so on. I followed those hand-signs and I improved my sign language. Teacher taught me to read lips. Some deaf students brought me pictures of hand-signs. That is a summary of my story."

That was certainly not enough. Somkiet had more to tell after I probed him.

"When I was a kid, I played with hearing friends. At first, we pointed to this and that. When I know sign language, I couldn't use with my hearing friends. It's too hard for them. We used natural body language. I think I can understand them better with body language."

"My mother looked after me. She cannot sign. She uses body language and homemade sings with me. It was hard to understand each other. When I finish school, I write to my mother. That is the very important thing between me and my mother."

"My relatives can't sign. When they talk, I don't know what they are talking about. To make them write to me seems to be more complicated."

"My hearing friends never did bad things to me. Sometimes they sign dirty joke, and we know that they just tease me. We are still friends until now. They have pity on me as I am deaf."

“My parents seldom talked to me, so I went out to explore things by myself. I was always hit. When I grew up, my father let me do things more. I was interested in going and meeting with deaf people. I got a lot of experiences with the deaf community because I can’t discuss with hearing people.”

Somkiet seems to be happy with his life. He sells pictures at Sukumvit Road in Bangkok every night. He earns 20,000 baht a month. As he earns lots of money, Somkiet has to support his hearing brother. He is concerned about people borrowing his money.

“If a hearing person borrow my money, I would tell him or her that he/she has to pay me back next month. If that person doesn’t pay me back, it would be hard to follow-up because I can’t communicate with hearing persons easily. If a deaf person borrow my money, it’s easy to follow. I must be cautious.”

Somkiet is married to a deaf woman and they have a baby boy.

“I am married and have a one year old son. He cannot sign anything yet. I know when he reaches 5-6 years old he will sign. My deaf wife and I raise our own son. If he cries, my mother and my grandmother who are down stairs will bang the ceiling with the stick.”

It is interesting to know that Somkiet rarely consult deaf persons when he has problem. He told us that hearing people could help him fine.

“When I have problems, I write to ask a hearing person. When the person replies, I understand. I can’t sign to ask the hearing person. He/she wouldn’t understand. Sometimes I switch words but hearing person can understand. Sometimes I ask the hearing person to make a phone call for me. I ask hearing person to go with me to many places. They help me well.”

Unfortunately, Somkiet's experiences left him with a bad impression from the NADT.

"I have some problems working at Sukumvit. Sometimes deaf persons got arrested without doing anything wrong. There is no interpreter to help us. I call NADT but no answer."

Somkiet has interesting opinion on deaf problems. He focuses on the using of different sign language.

"I've met deaf students that they use unfamiliar signs language. I couldn't understand. I blame the teacher. When these student finish school, they adapt their sign language to the community they live in. It helps a lot."

"I think deaf people are different from other disabled people. I think the school for the deaf should be separated so that the deaf students can study more. If they still study together with other disabled people, deaf student would have less chance to pick up knowledge. It will be better to have a co-ed school, so the hearing students can help deaf students, too."

Somkiet ended our conversation as he is the leader of Ayuthaya Deaf Club who can see the problem of deaf community quite thoroughly.

Somkiet was kind to introduce me to Mr. Nipan. Mr. Nipan is 36 years old. He lives with his parents and his brother and sister at the Bangpahun market. They own the lighting supplies shop in the market. Let us meet with Mr. Nipan.

Nipan was born hard of hearing. Even though he told us that he was born hearing, but his later statements show that he was wearing hearing aids until he turned 11.

“I was born hearing and I turn deaf when I was 11. I don’t know why. My parents didn’t tell me why.”

“I played with my hearing friends and I was always beaten up. I went to tell the teacher. At that time I wore hearing aids. I could speak to the teacher. After that I grew up deaf. I don’t recall why.”

Nipan went to deaf school in Bangkok when he was 11. He had to start at the kindergarten level. Nipan said that he liked to learn sign language.

“I didn’t know anything and I liked to watch deaf people sign. I kept practicing and I could sign. Before I entered deaf school, someone told me that they teach sign language in deaf schools. I entered and knew nothing until I was 18 that I could understand sign language.”

Nipan finished Mattayom 3 and stays home with his family. He works at the family lighting supplies shop.

“My mother sells lighting stuff. I try to learn the price of this so that I can help my mother. My mother may let me run her shop after her. However, I know that my mother will let her hearing children run this shop. I feel sad. They discuss with each other and ignore me because they have to use sign language with me which they can’t sign.”

“I don’t have permanent job. My mother pays me whenever she thinks she should pay. My mother gives me little money per month. I tell my family that I want to go to work in Bangkok and get more money. My mother doesn’t allow me to go. I ask for 2000-3000 baht a month, but she gives me only 1500 baht a month.”

Nipan was unhappy to work at home because there is no one he can talk to. Nipan graduated from the deaf school in Bangkok, so he misses talking to his deaf friends.

“I help everyone in my family when they work hard. I have no one to discuss my problems with at Ayuthaya. I have my deaf friends in Bangkok whom I can share my problems. That’s why I want to go to Bangkok.”

Nipan even feels that his mother and other family members do not like deaf people. This makes Nipan feel different.

“I feel sad that I am deaf. The hearing people take advantage of me. I know that I am deaf but my parents don’t like me. I can feel that my parents don’t like deaf people. They don’t support me to go to college but my hearing brother and sister finished bachelor degree.”

“I liked going to school. I tried to learn more words. If they didn’t teach I would be sorry. I tried hard to study how to write. Therefore I can write to others. Talking with only sign language is hard for others. Sometimes it helps when I sell things in the shop. However, my written language is not good enough. I had to move back home. I really want to learn more. Why don’t they let me?”

Nipan talked about his deafness and other deaf people that he does not want to be deaf and the deaf people have lots of problems.

“Actually I wanted to be a hearing person. I want to go to college. But I am deaf. My left ear can hear a little and my right ear is deaf. When someone speaks and I can’t hear, I’m sad. Sometimes my mother wanted to teach me how to speak, but I couldn’t hear. My mother said that I have to go to a school for the deaf. With my

family, they all write to me. My mother cannot sign. She writes to me. I feel sad that my family doesn't sign to me."

"I do make merit but I don't say a prayer. I don't know the words in those sayings. If there are the sayings that can change me to hear I want to have it."

Even though Nipan seems to be quite happy with his life at present; he still has something in his mind about his mother's feeling towards sign language. He is even worried about the deaf community as a whole. Nipan sees that the family support is the most important part to the life of a deaf person.

"My mother hates sign language but I want the sign language to be known wider. I want deaf people to be united. Parents must give money to the deaf children so that they can go out and face the wider world. I don't know why they give money to the hearing children but not to deaf children. I ask my mother why she gives houses to hearing children not me. My mom said that she will give me a house next year."

Nipan feels it is easier to talk with deaf people. He likes to go to Bangkok which is only one and a half hours from his house.

"I like being with deaf people. I like to sign with them. I feel uncomfortable being with hearing people. I don't know what to sign to them. If I work hard (with all hearing workers), I feel tense and my brain has no development. If I use sign language talking with others, I will understand things better."

A conversation with Nipan reveals that he wanted to have someone to talk to in his language. Nipan repeated about his mother giving money to his other brother and sister but not to him, and he told us that his mother will give him a house. Nipan wants to be treated equal to his brother and sister.

We moved to Mrs. Somwang's place. It was at the other side of the market. Mrs. Somwang was recovering from a motorcycle accident and she could not walk easily at that moment. She was so kind to let me interview her in her bedroom.

Somwang is 36 years old. She is the big sister to four brothers and one sister. Somwang is the only one who is deaf.

"I am deaf from birth. I asked my parents why I am deaf. They told me that my mother was sick during her pregnancy. She went to the doctor and had injection. There were not much choices of doctor at that time, so I was born deaf."

Somwang did not have much to tell. May be it was because she was sick.

"I hardly recall stories in the past. I was so little. When I grew up, my mother took me to deaf school and I cried to go home. My father had pity on me and wanted to take me home, but my mother denied. She said I should study to be clever. I was patient and grew up clever."

"I was 6 when I entered deaf school. I can't recall the past. When I grew up, signing is fun. I work hard. I was punished, but I was patient. The teacher gave me lots of work to do and I did them all. I finished deaf school at the age of 16 and I continued to a commerce college. I studied with hearing students. I tried my best I finished commerce with very low GPA. I can type English and some Chinese."

Somwang was close to her family, especially her little sister because of the sign language. Her mother did not sign much and she always looks at Somwang as a little girl.

"My parents raised me, they loves me so much. My little sister can sign. I taught her and she can be an interpreter for me. My father can't sign but my mother

can sign a little. It has to be an easy word that my mother can sign. My father can't sign. He writes to me. My sister can sign and she is my interpreter."

"I hardly communicate with my mother. My mother always got angry when I was young and hadn't gone to school yet. My mother got angry and I was quiet. It was like I behaved badly to my mother and she got angry. She was right and I was wrong. When I grew up, I know that I was wrong. My mother told me to behave nicely and talk nicely. I listen to her. When I got angry to my mother, she would say, "Don't do that to me." She told me to keep studying. I accept everything she taught."

Somwang is married to a deaf man in Ayuthaya and her husband sells loot at the market. The couple has a hearing son and Somwang loves her son dearly.

"When he was 6-7 months old, he saw his parents signed. He looked puzzled, but he remembered. When he was a year old, he started to sign. He remembered some words like animals and he understands well."

"My son is not healthy. He got an allergic rhinitis as I did. I take care of him as my mother took care of me when I was young. Sometimes he doesn't behave nicely, I would tell him and he would listen to me well."

Somwang seems to be satisfied with her life. She mentions the help from the government.

"I don't want the government to help me. I will help myself. I will work with my family even I would get low income. I will survive."

When the camera was off, Somwang came to me and tried to communicate with me without the interpreter. She told me that she wants to study more. She said that she wants to be able to write an official letter the way I did in an introductory letter sent to her before. She tried to write the word "thesis", in Thai language, but she

switched words. She even showed me the picture of herself traveling abroad with her family. I felt that she tried to tell me that she could do anything except continuing her study because she is deaf, and she feels regretted about that.

I thanked everybody and left Ayuthaya around 5 p.m. I kept thinking about the things Somwang told me at the end. I wrote it down as soon as I reached home.

Nakon Pathom

I had another two interviews at the province of Nakon Pathom, west of Bangkok, a couple of days later. Nakon Pathom is not far from Bangkok. It is about the same distance from Bangkok to Ayuthaya. I went to the Nakon Pathom School for the Deaf to meet with Miss Pannipa and Mr. Jumpod.

Miss Pannipa is one of the two participants who have the highest level of education in this study. She got a bachelor degree from a hearing university in Thailand. She is profoundly deaf. Pannipa is 32 years old. She works at the Nakon Pathom School for the Deaf as an assistant to the teacher of the class of small children. Pannipa is the example of the deaf persons who were trained to use speech more than sign language.

“My parents got married and have me and my brother. My mother told me that at the time of my delivery, the doctor used some kind of pliers to take me out of my mother’s body. The pliers may be pressed too hard on my head and damage my hearing. It was an accident.”

“My parents tried to call me but I didn’t respond. I don’t remember what happened in my babyhood. I know that I was sent to a hearing school and I was so puzzled the way other students were talking to each other. I didn’t understand them. I was silent at school. I didn’t understand what the teacher taught. I couldn’t catch her

lips. My parents took me to the hearing test and the doctor recommended my parents to send me to a deaf school in Chonburi.”

“At the deaf school in Chonburi, I was trained to read lips and speak. They didn’t teach sign language. I never knew sign language until there were some students transferred from Setsatien School for the Deaf in Bangkok. These students sign. I learned how to sign from them. The teachers at Chonburi School didn’t allow students to use sign language. We signed when the teacher was out of the room. I had fun. There was a rumor that whoever signs will be cut off hands. So I trained speech and sign at the same time.”

It was the matter of a double standard of the deaf schools around the country. As there were double standards, Pannipa’s story reveals that the deaf persons who were trained to speak and read lips would be able to mingle with the hearing society easier than ones who use only sign language.

“I had been in the Chonburi School for the Deaf from kindergarten to Mattayom 3. Then I wanted to continue my study at Setsatien School, but my parents didn’t have any connection. So I decided to take the intensive course at the vocational college. I passed the entrance examination to the vocational college and finished the associate degree. My mother wanted me to continue to the bachelor degree at the university and I did it.”

Pannipa has lots of experiences to be in class with hearing student. She talked about the matter with happiness.

“At the vocational college, I thought that I couldn’t make it. My mother pushed me to do it and I passed the exam. My mom was very happy. On the orientation day, I was sitting among other hearing students. No one knew that I am

deaf. Some of them talked to me and I just nodded. There was one student talked to me and I told him that I am deaf. He didn't believe me. After the orientation, we went into the classroom the teacher came to say something that I totally didn't understand. My friend asked me why I didn't say anything. I told her that I am deaf. She didn't believe me."

Communication problems seem to be the barrier for Pannipa to study.

"I suffered a lot while studying with hearing students. There was no sign language interpreter for me in the college. Sometimes I asked my friend to help, but the answers were different from person to person. I was tired of catching up with my friends. I told my mom that I was so tired and I couldn't do it anymore. My mom went to the college and asked the teacher to look after me as I am deaf. The teacher was kind that she told all my friends to help me. The problems were decreased and I finished the college certificate."

Pannipa continued her study to the university level.

"After finished college, I wanted to find a job, but my mother said no. She wanted me to study more. I chose home economics as my major. The reason was this major emphasizes on practicing more than lecturing. I knew I did better in the practice section. I did better than some hearing students."

Pannipa started her work life as a clerk at the small construction company. As the discrimination against disability is still the issue in Thai society, it is interesting that the private company accepts a deaf person. However, Pannipa was treated unequal to the hearing staff.

“Even though I got a bachelor degree, this company paid me 3000 baht a month which was just a half of the national rate of employment. I worked there only three months and moved to Chonburi School for a teaching job.”

Unfortunately, the deaf school also paid Pannipa 3000 baht for being a teaching assistant.

“I worked at Chonburi School for the Deaf as a teacher, but not the teacher who teaches children. I was a kind of nanny to the children. I’d worked there for a while then there was the news that Ratchasuda College and Gallaudet University would set up a training program for sign language. I decided to go for the program.”

Pannipa had been trained to use speech for years. She had to adjust herself to the sign language.

“I speak since I was a kid. But my voice sounds strange. People who don’t know that I’m deaf would laugh at me but I get used to it. Sign language is better for communicate with the deaf people.”

“I speak to my mother and brother. They are familiar with my voice that they know what word I speak. My mother and brother never sign to me. They don’t know sign language. Sometimes we write to each other. We understand each other fine.”

I asked Pannipa about her future. She mentioned that she prefers deaf boyfriend to the hearing one.

“When I was in college, there was a hearing man came to me. We dated for a while and we broke up. I felt that there is a communication problem between deaf and hearing. So I think I will choose a deaf man to marry. But for the children, if I have, I think I am okay with either both deaf or hearing kids.”

Pannipa's story focuses on her experience in studying with hearing students. Her mother was always behind the scene to push Pannipa to the bachelor degree. Pannipa's mother is suffering a paralysis. She is at home in Surin. Pannipa has to go to her mother every other week.

Another participant from Nakhon Pathom province was Mr. Jumpod. Actually, Jumpod was born at Chachengsao province, southeast of Bangkok. Jumpod works at Nakhon Pathom School for the Deaf as does Pannipa. Jumpod finished Mattayom 6. He worked for a while and continued study for a bachelor degree in deaf study from Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University.

Jumpod had just graduated a month ago when I did the interview. He joined the Nakhon Pathom School for the Deaf for a month. The story he told was mostly about his childhood and his school years. Let us meet with Jumpod.

"When my mother was pregnant, she got rubella, and I came out deaf. After that my parents took me to the hospital and checked my hearing. It was none.... I have five brothers and sisters. I am the sixth. I am the only deaf person in my family. I love my fifth sister more than others. I was raised with her."

"In the past, my parents didn't know where to take me to school. They took me to a hearing school. I was the only deaf student there. The hearing students were talking about this and that and I didn't know anything. I copied what the teacher wrote on the blackboard without knowing any meaning. The teacher gave homework and I knew nothing. The hearing students made fun of me. I felt bad and went to the teacher, but the teacher couldn't understand me. I felt sad and cried. After that, my mother had heard about deaf school and she took me there."

Jumpod had to attend a boarding deaf school in Kon Kane, in the northeastern part of Thailand. It was because the deaf school in Bangkok was full. To be away from home made Jumpod lose contact with his brothers and sisters.

“Actually I hate all of my siblings because I can’t communicate with them, except my fifth sister. But all of them still show that they love me. They give me money to buy food. They think it is that easy. I had a quarrel with my third brother. He couldn’t sign. He said bad things to me but I didn’t know what he said.”

He also talked about his father.

“My father seldom looked after me. He was a fortuneteller but he never told me what would happen. Also, he never took me to any kind of super-natural practices. I never asked him because I was young. He died when I was in Pratom 6. If my father was still here, I would ask him to tell me what will happen.”

Jumpod is a Buddhist and he goes to the temple very often, but he hardly knows what the Buddha taught. The feeling about going to the temple is quite the same as other participants in this study. The deaf people rarely know the meaning of rituals or any prayers.

“When I was young, my mother prepared food in boxes and went to the temple every morning. I had to go get those boxes back in the afternoon. I didn’t understand what she did until I entered school. I knew that I must pay respect to the Buddha image and the monks”

“I had no feeling when I was in the temple. I didn’t know what should be done or thought of. I followed others.”

Jumpod suffered not only the lack of meaning of any prayers, but also the lessons in deaf school.

“In the past, teachers at the deaf school weren’t keen on sign language, facial expression, and syntax. They wrote on the blackboard and told the students to copy from the board into a notebook. We didn’t know the meaning of some words.”

“In the deaf school, deaf students sign to each other and we understand easily. When I went out, the hearing people saw me and my friends signed, they laughed. I didn’t understand why they laughed. I felt furious and uneasy...I didn’t dare to fight with them. They had more people in the group than I had. I was afraid.”

“I ever sneaked away from school. My friends induced me to go out. I was young and knew nothing. I went out with my friends. The teacher did the daily students check and found that I was not in. The school called my parents. I was hit. I cried and my mother was sad, too.”

Jumpod liked to be with deaf people. He is not happy to be home because there is no one to sign with him. Jumpod is close to the deaf people in Bangkok more than deaf people from other parts of the country. He has an interesting opinion about deaf people in Bangkok.

“I think deaf people in Bangkok and other places are different. Deaf people in Bangkok see each other very often. We understand each other easily. Deaf people in Bangkok sign fluently and sometime overstate. Deaf people outside Bangkok sign fairly. They mostly use natural sign language or homemade signs.”

Jumpod did not give much detail on his present status. It might be because he just graduated a bachelor degree and joined the new work place for only a month; therefore, Jumpod may be dealing with the states of being certain.

I left Nakon Pathom School for the Deaf and went on to Ratchasuda College. I would meet with Mr. Vinai, one of my Bangkok participants.

Bangkok

Vinai is a travel-van driver. He drives his van taking the travelers around the country. Vinai serves both deaf and hearing customers who rent his van. Vinai has an experience meeting with deaf people in many regions of the country. However, today Vinai has some stories to talk about, starting from his childhood.

“When I was young, I didn’t know that I am deaf. I was sad when I knew I am deaf. I played as a boy. I knew nothing. I didn’t know anything about my father. He died since I was very little. After he died, our family got lots of problems. Some of my sisters and brothers had to drop school and work. We suffered a lot until my third brother got a permanent job. He supports our family.”

“My house was at the big circle in Thonburi. My family was poor. My father passed away and everyone was sad. My third brother was lucky that he got a job in a company. He had pity on me. He gave me money and didn’t take it back. He is rich now. I have seven brothers and sisters and I am the sixth. My third brother got married and moved out, others stay together. My third brother gives money to my mother for the food and he sometimes gives me on Chinese New Year.”

“I was 11 years old when I entered deaf school. I was puzzled to see deaf students. At first, I was puzzled. I saw deaf children cried. My second sister dropped me at school and picked me up in the evening everyday until I could take the bus by myself.”

Vinai went to the deaf school in Bangkok. There were both boarding and non-boarding students. Usually, the students who come from other provinces would board at school. The students whose hometown is in Bangkok would choose to go home everyday. Vinai was one of non-boarding students.

Vinai finished Mattayom 3 and went to work. His brothers supported him well.

“After I finished Mattayom 3, my brother asked me if I want to go to work in Singapore. I said no. He knew that I like machine and engine, so he asked if I want to be a mechanic. I said no. I tried a car-washing job. It was so tiring. My brother told me to take some vocational courses, so I did. I took courses about leather craft. I was good at making leather bag. I could make and sell leather bags at Central Department Store. I did the bags for 10 years. I earned a lot of money. But when it reached the point that I had to increase the prices of my bags. I couldn't do it.... After that, I went to sell souvenirs in Hong Kong for one month. It was so tiring but the income was good. However, my brother talked to me to come back to Thailand..... My brother bought me an old van and told me to fix it. I made it as a travel van for rent with driver, who is me. Now I still drive a travel van for a living.”

“I study maps. My third brother finds me customers. If my van has problems, I consult the handbook. I keep my van maintenance as instructed in the manual.”

Vinai has interesting comments on his customers.

“Deaf people come to my service and ask for a discount. I give discount for the young deaf. The hearing customers treat me so nice. Sometimes the hearing customers even give me a big tip.”

“However, I think each person has his or her own style. I will see what kind of people that person is and I will act accordingly. If I see that the person is kind, I will go to talk with him or her.”

As a driver, Vinai had a chance to travel around Thailand and met with many deaf people. He sees that there is no difference among the deaf people.

“Deaf people in Bangkok are the same as deaf people in Chiang Mai. Even other provinces are about the same. I can understand their signs.”

Talking about the deafness, Vinai did not know that he is deaf for quite sometime. When he was young, he almost got hit by a train as he told me.

“I was almost hit by a train. I always ran far away from home. I was almost hit by a bus, too. I played a kite near the railroad. When the train came, hearing people called me and spoke something but I couldn’t understand. I continued playing kite. I saw a train approaching very close. I jumped off just in time. After that I played nearby my house.”

“I didn’t know what a deaf person is like. I just play. When I grew up, I went to school. I knew that I am deaf and I was sad.”

Sign language is part of his life. He could not recall how he gets it but he likes it.

“How did I learn sign language? I don’t know. It just came into me. I liked to talk with the deaf persons who sign fluently. I liked to see senior students sign. I liked to follow senior students at school. They taught me too.”

Even though Vinai said that he likes sign language, he admitted that he wants to hear.

“Most of the time I write. My mother loved me so much, but she couldn’t sign. She also couldn’t write. I have to ask my sister to be an interpreter. I want to hear. Sign language is not for everyone.”

From the stories he told, Vinai is fine with his life at present. Vinai did not mention about the inferior feeling whatsoever. He was not treated badly. He works for

a living like everybody else. He avoids fighting and returns good to whoever is good to him. We thanked Vinai for his cooperation and headed back home for that day.

There was one person left to interview in Bangkok, Mrs. Lamai. I went to Mrs. Lamai's house on Saturday morning as she agreed to give the interview on that day. Mrs. Lamai is on one of the committees of the Central Deaf Club. She is in charge of member services. At her house, she lives by herself and a dog. There are lots of medals and trophies in the living room. Lamai was a fine badminton player. She played for the region 10 which represents Bangkok metropolitan.

Lamai's childhood is sad but we will see if it has any effect on her identity.

"I have five brother and sisters. I am the sixth. When I was 1-2 years old, someone made me fell off the cradle. I became deaf. My mother took me to the doctor. My ears were swollen and there was some water in my ears. At that time I still heard voice. My left ear was deaf and my right ear could hear a little. When someone spoke I just sit quiet. I became deaf. If I could hear, I could speak."

"When I was young, my mother carried basket full with desserts to sell around. I ran and played around too. I was close to my fifth sister, we played together. My mother hated deaf people. There was a poor woman asking my mother to have me as her daughter because she has no children. Her house was in the deep jungle. She asked my mother to have me and my mother said yes to her. I had no idea because I was very young. My fifth sister went to school. The poor woman tried to take me to her house but I cried. My mother helped her by carrying me and walked along with the poor woman into the woods. The house was so old and the roof made of palm leaves. When we arrived, we sat together and I fell asleep. That moment, my mother sneaked away and the poor woman was happy. When I woke up I called for my mother. I ran

out and cried. The poor woman told me that my mother will come back for me. I waited for my mother until the night came and my mother didn't come. The poor woman told me to take a bath and eat but I didn't because I missed my mother. Until next morning, my fifth sister loved me so much. She looked for me and asked my mother. My mother was silent. My sister had a thought that my mother knows a poor woman. My sister came to me. She walked into the wood and found me. The poor woman was away. My sister and I sneaked away together. We went to our father at the barber shop. My father was a barber. My father went to speak to my mother and I could come home. The poor woman came to take me back but my father didn't let me go. My parents had a quarrel and my mother was silent. My father said, "She is our child, we have to raise her."

"I grew up and my five brothers and sisters went to school in Bangkok. My mother sent me to the temple. I had mopped the floor and swept the ground. I stayed at the temple. I got 2-3 baht sometimes. My mother died when I was 5. I missed my sister in Bangkok. I picked flowers and made garland for sell. I woke up 5 o'clock in the morning to pick flowers. I sold garland and saved up money with my aunt. The money is for going to Bangkok. I missed my brother and sisters very much."

"I went to Bangkok and my second sister came to see me. She took me to the deaf school. I didn't know anything. I was 9 years old at that time. The school told me to start school at the age of 10. So I waited for another year. ...I taught my fifth sister sign language and she could sign to me. ...I finished Pratom 6 when I was 15. After that I got a job and took a dress making course."

“I asked my aunt for my money that she kept for me but my aunt denied giving it to me. Actually she also kept another sum of money that my father gave me. I let her have my money as making merit.”

“After I finished deaf school, a hearing person induced me to play badminton. I trained badminton for three years and I entered several competitions. I have won several medals. I even was a member of the national team.”

“After badminton, I came back to my dress-making job. After a while I quit the job because I couldn’t communicate with the customers. I had to sit at the back of the shop all the time. They paid me too little. I quit job and stayed home. My sisters and brothers told me to stay home and didn’t have to do anything.”

“I got married in 1979. After a while, we always had quarrels. My husband went out and got drunk everyday. I cooked and waited for him. When he’s back, I asked him where he was, and he said don’t mind his business. After that he was away for two days. I changed the key. My friend told me that she saw my husband with other woman. I came to them and asked my husband why he didn’t come home for two days. He said that he had no keys. He needed to change clothes. That night we talked and he admitted with me that he got another woman. I cried and asked him why. He said that he was drunk and slept with that girl. I was afraid that he might have AIDS, so I told him to go. My sisters came to see me and told me to divorce my husband. Two years later he came back. I let him come to the house but only for talking and eating.”

Lamai told the whole story without my probing. However, we talked a little bit more in detail. Lamai mentioned that she can stay by herself because she has a wonderful neighbor and a dog.

“I have a hearing friend lives next door. She helps me a lot. One day I slipped and hurt my leg. I drove to the hospital. My left leg was hurt. I used only my right leg to drive a car. My left leg was in a plaster cast. I had to call her and she picked me up at the hospital and dropped me at my house. Later, I was in the conference and I got sick. I had to be admitted to the hospital. I was worried about my dog at home. I have this dog for a long time. My friends gave me. It knows sign language and obeys my orders. At 4 o'clock in the morning, I called my friend to pick me up at the hospital and drop me at my house again. She was so nice to help me so I could feed my dog”

Lamai can help herself in so many things; however, she has her way to contact help.

“I stay home alone with my dog. I can do everything by myself. If there is anything I need help, I will send messages via mobile phone. And when I want to buy things I would point. If there is a hearing person come to talk with me, I would keep quiet.”

Lamai contacts with sisters regularly. Her sisters live in England but come to see Lamai every two years.

“My two sisters come to visit me regularly every other year. My big brother hasn't come to me. If my sisters go to visit my big brother, I will go with them. My sister will be an interpreter between me and my brother. My sisters give me money. It's enough. They transfer the money to me 100,000 baht each time. I spend lot of money on my car because it needs repairing.”

Lamai had been to England twice. Her sisters wanted her to see the world. Lamai mentioned about the deaf people in other countries.

“I’ve been to many places. I joined the bowling tournament at Taiwan. I’ve been to England twice. My second and fifth sisters live there.”

“Deaf people in other countries use facial expression a lot. My sister let me take the English course for six months. All of the students were deaf of all ages. I tried to learn but their sign language was different.”

Lamai admitted that she wants to be hearing and she also has a good heart for other deaf people

“I want to be a hearing person. Hearing people can hear and understand things very easy. They are happy. They are majority. ...If the government wants to help, help other deaf people, not me. I am fine with what I am. I want the government to help other deaf people who need it.”

Lamai was the last deaf participant I interviewed for this study. She showed that she is satisfied with her present life.

Summary of the Findings

From 34 interviews, this study found many interesting stories that the deaf participants had been through in their lived experience. All stories had the participant as the center, started from themselves and echo out to the stories of family, school, work, etc. that the participant had interacted with. To summarize the findings in this section, I will present the findings according to the surrounding categories.

Biological Surrounding

According to Eisenberg, the biological surround for an individual are electrochemical and genetic pattern that shape human development. For this study, the fact that all the participants are deaf is the biological surround for each of them. This fact has a direct effect on their development in life.

All deaf participants in this study are the children of the hearing parents. Their deafness was initially unknown to their fathers and mothers. Those hearing parents did not know how to handle deaf child. Some kept a deaf child in the back room. For example, Chonrudee, Nopamas, and Nipan were not allowed to go out with deaf friends. Moreover, the fact that hearing parents have deaf children makes some of these parents frustrates and treats their deaf children badly. Chanachai mentioned that his father always scold to him. Chonrudee was hit and Lamai was abandoned.

Hearing parents did not know what kind of education would fit to their deaf children. Most of the participants were sent to the hearing school at the beginning. None of those who started with the hearing school could make it through. They suffered from not being able to hear what the teacher said as well as not being able to answer questions. Moreover, the deaf children were treated badly by the hearing students. Eventually, the deaf children were sent to the particular school for the deaf.

“At first, my father took me to the hearing school, but I couldn’t communicate. So, my father put me into the deaf school...” (Anuwat/Nakon Ratchasima)

“My parents sent me to study with the hearing students. I was always treated badly. I didn’t like that...” (Ladda/ Chiang Mai)

Being a deaf person is the biological surround that takes part in the process of identity formation. Deafness separates the participants from their hearing family. Deafness is also a factor that makes the participants different from the majority hearing people in the society.

Spiritual Surrounding

Spiritual surrounding refers to the cosmological concepts, values, and behavior. Throughout this study, most participants are linked to the Buddhist teaching in terms of making merit to have a peaceful mind. All Buddhists participants have some experience of going to the temple and offer food for monks.

Wirat makes merit for his father. Malai offers food for Buddhist monks even though she lives with a Muslim family (her husband's).

However, some of the participants expressed that the religious practice is hard to understand as the deaf persons had no one to tell them what it is all about and for what purpose.

"I don't say a prayer and I don't know the words in those prayers. If there is the prayer that can change me to hear I want to have it." (Nipan/ Ayuthaya)

"I just followed what they did..., if my mom didn't make it a strict order, I didn't want to do at all." (Supa-art/ Chiang Mai)

"I rarely go to the temple. When I go, I just sit still. I don't know what they are talking about. I feel uneasy. They talk and I sit quiet." (Somkiet/ Ayuthaya)

This burden applies to the Muslim deaf participants, too, as Jehwe just followed what his father did in the mosque and Sa-me sneaked away from the mosque. He went into the wood and his father took him out.

To go to the religious places such as temples and mosques for the religious practices is not the choice of most of the deaf participants. However, participants believe in the rule of karma. They believe that what they are in this life is the result of what they did in the past. Deaf participants do not believe in a supernatural power that can cure their deafness. Some of them have tried black magic, spirit medium, and

even acupuncture, but nothing changed. Some deaf participants knew beforehand that all kind of supernatural power is a hoax. However, some of the participants still pray for winning lotto.

In sum, deaf participants feel uncomfortable to be among the hearing people who gather together for religious practice, but some of them still hold religious beliefs to ease their mind. The spiritual surround does not differ among deaf participants from all regions.

Cultural Surrounding

Eisenberg defines cultural surround as assumption, values, ritual characterizing, and social group. The meaning of those assumption, values, and ritual must be communicated among people in the society. In order to communicate, deaf people use sign language to transfer thoughts and feeling to each other. For them, sign language is the crucial sign of deaf identity. Sign language generates assumption, values, ritual, and sense of a group for the deaf people.

In this study, deaf participants learned sign mostly from the deaf school. However, there are many homemade signs which the participants used with their family before they went to deaf school.

The participants learn sign language from school directly and indirectly. There were some deaf schools that placed an emphasis on speech training more than on sign language. The teachers encourage deaf students to speak and read lips. No matter how great the loss of hearing, students in this kind of school must not use sign language in class.

“At the deaf school in Chonburi, I was trained to read lips and speak. They didn’t teach sign language. I never knew sign language until there were some students transferred from Setsatien School for the Deaf in Bangkok.” (Pannipa/ Nakon Pathom)

The sign language is embedded in the way of life of deaf participants. Not only is it the primary mode of communication, but sign language also gives the sense of who they really are.

“I don’t feel any embarrass when talking to my friend with sign language. We have the right to talk in our own way as the hearing people have.” (Prasert/ Chiang Mai)

“Hearing people can talk to each other, so do the deaf.” (Panom/ Chiang Mai)

“It was fun talking (signing) with friends at school, but talking with parents at home, I wasn’t happy at all.” (Jumpod/ Nakon Pathom)

However, the deaf participants realized that sign language is not practical in the hearing society. Many of them try to write. Deaf persons who can write are praised.

“...I asked for a piece of paper and a pen and wrote to the waiter what I wanted. The hearing people there were stunned that I can write. They came to talk to me and said that I was clever.” (Chuchart/ Song Khla)

“Hearing people can write but the deaf switch words when they write. I have to practice writing more and more...” (Panom/ Chiang Mai)

Somwang, Poramin, Nipon, and Prasert have the similar opinions about deaf people switching words when writing. They all think that they have to practice more and more. Some deaf people write a sentence with a wrong word order because the

syntax of sign language and written language are different. Most deaf people are used to the sign language more than to the written language.

Most of the deaf participants write to the hearing person. However, some of them avoid contact with hearing persons. If they have to contact the hearing person, they would use a sign language interpreter.

Most deaf participants mentioned about gossiping. This can be counted as cultural surround of a deaf person that has influence in identity formation. As Dr. Poonpit states that telling story is essential to the deaf life, telling the stories of others is counted as one of the aspects of the deaf culture. However, there are some deaf persons do not appreciate this perspective of the deaf culture.

Buncha told us that deaf persons like to gossip and take every matter so serious. Buncha does not like that. Poramin thinks that the deaf people are unreasonable as they always panic on everything. Somkiet does not count on deaf friends when he has problems. Noticeably, Buncha (Chiang Mai), Poramin (Pitsanulok), and Somkiet (Ayuthaya) have had a lot of experience in dealing with hearing people.

Sign language is a visual language perceived by eye. People who are used to spoken language may feel awkward when seeing deaf persons sign with extreme facial expressions. The facial expressions represent the tone of the story being told. No matter how the sign language is used, it represents deaf culture and is counted as a cultural surround that affects the deaf identity construction.

Economic Surrounding

Economic surrounding includes ideas and behavior regarding the exchange of material resources. This study focuses on the way the participants earn for their living.

From the interviews, most of the participants are poor and have to struggle against discrimination. Deaf people do not have equal opportunity to the hearing. They have to do the labor work and get low wage. Kanokwan got two baht a day when she worked as a labor making flower from pieces of clothes. Pannipa gets half rate of the regular salary even though she has a bachelor's degree and works in the public deaf school. Ladda always get a harder job than the hearing janitor. Somyos had to work harder than hearing workers in the same garment factory. These are the situations of the deaf participants who are employed by hearing employers.

However, there are some deaf participants who have their own business, for example, Buncha has a game shop, Poramin owns a small restaurant, Artit owns Para rubber farm, and Vinai owns the travel van. Some participants even have good family support, so they do not have to work for their living expenses: Busara, Malai, Lamai, Ankana, and Jehwe.

Chaiwat and Nipon are different. They work in the institutions that even the hearing people would love to work for. Chaiwat works for the Red Cross unit in Surin province and Nipon works as a painter at the Lan Sang Waterfall National Park and is allowed to wear a ranger uniform. They are so proud of what they are.

Among all careers of deaf participants, there is an interesting issue about selling souvenirs. In this study, there are many deaf participants who earn their living by selling key-chains or flowers as souvenirs. They are trained to make little souvenirs and distribute the products to department stores or sell direct to the customers, especially at night. Vinai and Nopamas even went to sell souvenirs in Hong Kong and Malaysia. From asking Anuwat about making and selling souvenirs, he said, "We make enough money to pay the rent and wages for ourselves."

Kanokwan mentioned about the good money to be made by selling souvenir, “...I made flower from clothes and I was good at it... The money was not good. I followed my friends to sell souvenir. This job pays me well.”

Compared to the hearing people in society, deaf participants are discriminated against. The participants expressed that they want to have equal opportunity to have a white collar job. Economic surrounding seems to depress deaf participants to be inferior in terms of income and type of work.

Societal Surrounding

Eisenberg talks about the societal surround as the acceptable rules or laws pertaining to membership in a society. Deaf people live in two societies at the same time: the hearing and the deaf. The participants have to deal with rules and laws that applied in both societies.

Within the deaf society, sign language is the rule of being member. The participants have to use sign language in communication. There is an interesting issue about the difference among sign language that leads to the separation among deaf people.

From the interviews, participants from the north, northeast, and the south have similar opinion that the deaf people in Bangkok are arrogant as the deaf people in Bangkok think their sign language is the best.

“I had a friend who grew up with me in the south. I met him again in Bangkok. I went to say hello to him but he ignored me.” (Chuchart/ Song Khla)

“I think deaf people in Bangkok and other places are different. Deaf people in Bangkok see each other very often. We understand each other easily. Deaf people in Bangkok sign fluently and sometime overstate. Deaf people outside Bangkok sing

fairly. They mostly use natural sign language or homemade signs.”(Jumpod/ Nakon Prathom)

“I have met deaf people from Bangkok. We can understand each other well. But I feel different when I meet deaf people from other regions” (Nipan/ Ayuthaya)

The reason behind this matter is that a deaf school in Bangkok taught sign language based on the American Sign Language (ASL), while other deaf schools outside Bangkok had not yet emphasize on teaching sign language. The students in those schools were using Thai Sign Language (TSL) which was not yet accepted as an official language for deaf Thai as well. The deaf students, therefore, might feel different when signing to deaf people from Bangkok.

Another interesting issue is that among the deaf people, there is the separation of the deaf and the hard of hearing. Deaf persons who finished from the school that emphasized on speech training would be considered as hard of hearing, no matter how great their loss of hearing is. The hard of hearing persons are not welcome into the deaf group. However, the deaf persons who can sign and have speech would be able to associate with both deaf and hearing society easier than the deaf person who can only sign. Pannipa can do both as she said, “I speak since I was a kid. But my voice sounds strange. People who don’t know that I’m deaf would laugh at me but I get used to it. Sign language is better for communicate with the deaf people.” Pannipa got a bachelor’s degree from a hearing university.

Supa-art is one of the deaf persons who use only sign language. He said he prefers being deaf. He feels uncomfortable when people write to him.

The deaf people also live in the hearing society. The participants in this study are the children of hearing parents. They have to live in the hearing norms and values,

including laws and regulations. The participants have no choice but to live their lives with an unfair job opportunity. In terms of communicating with the hearing people, most deaf participants would write. Some of them would use a sign language interpreter, and some use natural body language. When facing problem with hearing people, the participants solve the problem by themselves. Sometimes they even keep the troubles inside.

Deaf participants still live in the mist of discrimination in hearing community. They have to conform to the particular ways of life which sometimes unfair to them. As in Tinakorn's story, he was cut in by another hearing patient when he was queuing at the dentist clinic. He did not know what to do. He said that he did not have access to any interpreter at that time. Kanokwan shared with us that she had asked her friend to flirt with the police in stead of paying fine for not wearing helmet.

The most painful norm of the hearing society that applies to the deaf is that being deaf is discriminated. Some hearing family members embarrass to have deaf member in the family. Ankana prays for not having deaf children to embarrass her mother. Malai's daughter does not want Malai to meet with her friends. This hearing norm seems to hurt deaf participants but they have to be patient with it.

Societal surrounding for deaf participants in this study is the norms, rules, and regulations of both deaf and hearing communities. The participants seem to have no choice but to survive within these constraints.

Interpersonal Surrounding

This study focuses on the intimate relations of the participants with the persons surround them. The participants are surrounded with both hearing and deaf persons.

Communication problem between hearing family members and the deaf participant is common.

Some hearing parents over protect their deaf children so that the deaf have fewer friends and are mostly grounded. Chonrudee has to arrive home by 6 p.m. Nopamas was not allowed to join deaf community. Nipan has no chance to study more as his mother said that Mattayom 3 is enough and wanted him to be in her sight. Some parents abandoned their deaf child as Lamai's mother gave her away to a poor woman who lived in the wood or Ladda's mother left her with the grandma.

Most of the hearing family members seldom pay attention to what the deaf member wants. Chanachai has 6 brothers and sisters. He is not close to any one of them. When they want to communicate, they point to this and that. Chanachai does not understand.

Those are the difficulties in interpersonal surroundings that happened to the participants. No single participant claimed that he or she did not have these kinds of difficulties with the hearing parent or hearing family member. Even Nipon, who seems to have a happy life, he said, "I felt sad, sometimes very sad that I couldn't speak while everybody else could..."

It is even sadder to know that the hearing children are embarrassed to have deaf parents. Deaf participants who have children have the hearing ones. From the interview, they love their children so dearly. They raise the hearing children by themselves with some help from hearing relatives to teach the hearing children to talk. These hearing children sign with their deaf parents as the parents taught them. They went to hearing school and it was all right until they become teenagers. Deaf

participants revealed that their hearing teenagers have negative reaction when they have to sign with the deaf parents.

The daughter does not want Malai to greet her friends. Artit's son is 17, he embarrass when others point that their parents are deaf. They don't even look at Artit's face. Roongrat's children do not let their deaf mother to go to the parents meeting at school. They said deaf parents would be a burden in a meeting.

From 34 deaf participants in this study, 16 are married. Fifteen participants are married to deaf spouse. Most of them had experience dating with hearing boy/girlfriends and it had to be broken up because of communication problem.

As summarized here, the result shows that deaf participants conform their living to the surroundings. The way deaf participants interpret their surroundings would affect identity construction of each of them. The following chapter will elaborate and discuss how the findings answer the research questions

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

From the beginning, this researcher held an assumption that deaf people in Thailand are the depressed minority, framed within the social norms and values such that they do not have choices to live otherwise. Resulting from their lack of the sense of hearing, deaf people would struggle under the pressure of uncertainties that surround them. Their identity of being one of the social members would have been unsecured. This study, therefore, was conducted to explore how the deaf participants live their lives through all the uncertainties in Thai society.

Deafness is an unseen disability; no one can tell who is deaf without seeing her or his interaction with others. With this fact, most of the deaf people stand on a shaky ground of identity. A deaf person can enjoy being normal as everybody else in a hearing world as long as she or he can hold the need of communication to herself or himself. But the truth is no one can deny communication or interaction with others; therefore, the deaf people are seen as different from and incompatible to the normal hearing world whenever they communicate.

The findings from all of the in-depth interviews illuminate the struggle of deaf participants against the discriminate attitude in the major hearing world. The stories reveal different kinds of action that the participants took in order to survive. We can see some passive relationship between the participants and their surroundings, whereas, some participants had fought for equal human rights.

Influences from Geographic Environment

This study was conducted in four regions of Thailand. I found differences when comparing the deaf participants in Bangkok and provinces around Bangkok with the ones in other regions. Bangkok is a full-option, materialistic city. All the developments happen first in Bangkok. Deaf people in the north, northeast, and in the south are mostly farmers, whereas the deaf participants in and around Bangkok have more opportunity to choose their career. Living in and around Bangkok, Somkiet is the artist selling his own paintings in central Bangkok. Vinai is a travel-van driver. Lamai was the champion of badminton, and Pannipa is the teacher in the deaf school.

Deaf people in the north, northeast, and the south see the deaf in Bangkok as arrogant. Malai (from Chiang Mai) mentioned, “Deaf people in Bangkok are arrogant. I really don’t like the way deaf people hating each other like this.”

Wittaya (from Nakhon Phanom) said, “Deaf people in Bangkok sign very quickly. They always overstate every matter. I had been in Bangkok for a while and I know that they usually tell lies. It is different from the deaf people in other provinces.”

Chanachai (from Nakhon Ratchasima) has experience, “It takes time to understand deaf people in Bangkok. I was in Bangkok for a while and it was too complicate, so I came back home.”

Another support comes from Chuchart, “Deaf people who are educated from the same school can talk to each other fine. But when they move to Bangkok and we meet again, I notice that they have changed. I don’t think it is right to do that. We should be united. Deaf people in Bangkok are arrogant. They think that their sign is the best, it is not true.”

Those are the comments from deaf people to deaf people in Bangkok. As I talked to the deaf participants in and around Bangkok, I found that the characteristic of a big city, full of options for one's life has influence on the way of life of the deaf people.

Nipan (from Ayuthaya) feels it is easier to talk with deaf people. He likes to go to Bangkok, which is only 1.30 hour from his house, and talk to his deaf friends.

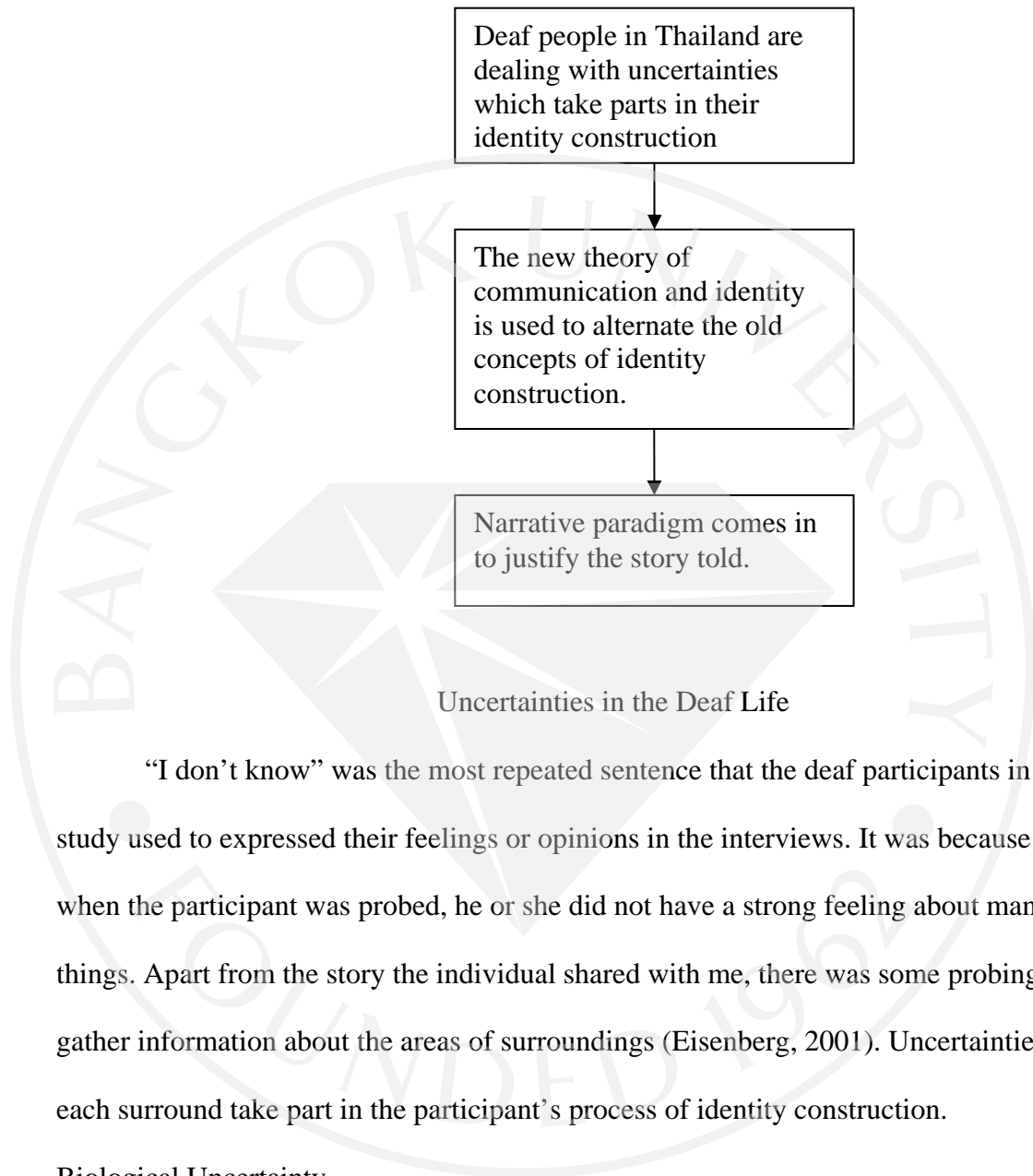
Jumpod (from Nakhon Pathom) mentioned, "I think deaf people in Bangkok and other places are different. Deaf people in Bangkok see each other very often. We understand each other easily. Deaf people in Bangkok sign fluently and sometime overstate. Deaf people outside Bangkok sign fairly. They mostly use natural sign language or homemade signs."

To summarize the topic, the characteristic of a capital city has influence on the way of life of the deaf people in and around Bangkok. Deaf people in Bangkok have more opportunity to live their lives than deaf people in other regions have. However, the fact that they are deaf is the dominant characteristic of all participants. Deafness affects the way of life of these participants no matter where they are.

Set aside the geographic influence and all participants face similar matters in living a deaf life. They have to deal with several uncertainties which will be discussed in details throughout this chapter.

Dealing with uncertainties in everyday life in order to survive in the hearing Thai society is the heart of the findings of this study. This section of the chapter will analyze the findings according to the conceptual framework as follow:

Figure 5.1 : Conceptual framework of the study used in the analysis process



Biological Uncertainty

Due to the fact that all of the participants are deaf, they face the very first uncertainty in life. There is no difference between those born deaf and those who are deaf because of an accident or illness after their birth. Deafness causes them an uncertain feeling about how they should react to the world. As they are not able to

hear naturally, deaf people feel they are a burden on the family. Most of them are dependent. Many deaf participants in this study feel they are different from other family members. Because of their deafness, these participants were discredited by a normal society. As Reilly (1995) said, “Deafness is perceived as an inevitable loss to intellectual and social capacity. Considered to be uneducable in ordinary setting, they are sent to residential schools which remain the predominant placement worldwide” (p. 164).

This is an uncertainty that occurs from the biological surround. Because they are deaf, they are treated differently. According to Goffman (1963), they are stigmatized. People who are discredited by stigma live in uncertainty; they do not know exactly where they belong. The difference makes them lost, even in their own family as Prasert told us:

“I was born deaf and know nothing. When I grew up, I saw my parents and my sister talked to each other. I asked them why they could talk but I couldn’t. No one helped me at all. They replied that it is hard to talk. They also asked me if I could write which I could. So we write to each other in the family. However, I preferred talking.”

It was the biological effect that made participants stand on the shaky ground. They are deaf. They are different and feel uncertain when they had to face the hearing world. The level of uncertainty varies from person to person according to other supporting surrounds.

Goffman (1963) said that the stigmatized individuals have reason to avoid mixed society and construct their own group. That is, they form a certain deaf identity, partially, from their biological uncertainty.

Spiritual Uncertainty

Thailand is considered a Buddhist country. Ninety-five percent of the Thai population is Buddhist. Buddhism has a lot of influence in Thai ways of life, with implications for both deaf and hearing. Therefore, it is very useful to know before hand about the core of Buddha's teaching which we call 'Dharma'.

Podhisita (1998) summarized the basic premise of Buddhism. The very simple fact is that life is suffering. Suffering is a central and very important concept in Buddhism. Suffering, as defined by Buddhism, arises from the fact that everything in the world is changing and thus impermanent. There is no such thing as real "self." Ideally, the aim of all Buddhists is to free themselves from suffering. Every Thai man should be ordained once in his lifetime. It is believed that monkhood is one way to be free from suffering. Also, to be ordained is one way to make great merit for the parents.

However, as Podhisita said, it is an ideal, it is hard to be certain that all Buddhists would understand the real meaning of 'free from suffering', especially deaf people who hardly understand the meaning of Buddhist teaching. Deaf people know Buddhism from their surroundings. Jumpod shared with me, "When I was young, my mother prepared food in boxes and went to the temple every morning. I had to go get those boxes back in the afternoon. I didn't understand what she did until I entered school. I knew that I must pay respect to the Buddha image and the monks."

The findings from the interview show uncertainty in a spiritual sense. Without a sign language interpreter, deaf participants feel uneasy when they have to sit still in front of the chanting monks. They do not know the purpose and meaning of the

prayers. Wirat and Poramin spoke for other deaf people that going to the temple and practicing the religious rituals are not easy for the deaf.

However, Buddhist influence encourages Thai men to be ordained as a monk once in a lifetime. Deaf male participants are concerned with this matter and some of them wanted to be ordained. Interestingly, Prasert was ordained to be a monk while Tinakorn was not allowed to be ordained as he is deaf. According to the Buddhist rules, there is one rule states that a man who is deformed cannot be ordained (Sri-on, 2000).

This confusion happened to my family as well. My mother was so upset about having a deaf son. She once went to the fortuneteller and was advised that my deaf brother should be ordained in order to release him from the sin in the previous life and he will hear sound eventually. We did not know that there is a rule forbidding a deaf person to be a Buddhist monk. My brother went through the ordination and lived in the monkhood for seven days. This happened 20 years ago and my brother has not yet improved in his hearing. My brother said to my mother that he admits being deaf and needs no more spiritual curing. At present, my brother is a fine deaf lecturer at Ratchasuda College.

There is no official support on religious matters for the deaf society in Thailand. Thai society cannot afford to have sign language interpreters at every temple, church, and mosque. Sign language interpretation is rare. I know one volunteer sign language interpreter at the Catholic Church. She is one of the teachers in a special education school. She is a Catholic and goes to the church regularly every Sunday. She can sign, so she interprets the mass. I also know two Buddhist monks who tried to learn sign language in order to be able to teach Dharma to the deaf

people. After they attended the sign language class twice, they never come back again. Later, they came and told the instructor that a monk is not supposed to move his hands as much as in signing. It is considered not being humble.

The lack of interpreters to convey the meaning of religious teachings and practices causes uncertain feeling in the deaf people. A deaf person perceives the spiritual surround as something they never really understand. They do not have a concrete idea of what being religious means to them. Deaf people do not have a steady spiritual pole to lean on. This situation reflects the unstable identity of the deaf people.

Cultural Uncertainty

It is obvious that deaf people in Thailand are living among cultural uncertainty. Thai culture condemns deaf people to be different and unacceptable. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1984), Thai culture possesses the characteristic of collectivism, high power distance, and high uncertainty avoidance. These three dimensions of Thai culture affect the way deaf Thai see themselves. I will elaborate more on each dimension.

Collectivism. Collectivism is characterized by a rigid social framework. People expect their in-group to look after them, and they feel they owe absolute loyalty to the group. It emphasizes the views, needs, and goals of the in-group rather than oneself.

Speaking of a group, there are two groups mentioned in this study; the group of the majority or hearing people, and the group of deaf people in Thai society. Based on the findings of this study, deaf participants were born to hearing parents who did not know anything about deafness. Hearing parents are the members of the majority hearing group. When they faced an unexpected problem, like having a deaf child, the

parents sought help from someone in the in-group whom they knew. From the interviews, the parents took their deaf child to several people that they thought could cure the deafness: physician, acupuncture master, audiologist, and even to supernatural power.

The reason behind these parents' action was that deafness is not accepted in the parents' hearing society. They must turn their deaf child into a hearing child in order to be in harmony with the hearing society. The study of parents' expectation on the deaf child social activity conducted by Anchalee Danwirunhvanich (1996) reveals that the parents have no positive thinking on social attitude toward their deaf children.

From this study, Ankana revealed that she prayed for having a hearing child so that her mother would not be embarrassed again. This is the same reason some of the hearing parents hurt some of the deaf participants. Chonrudee was not allowed to go out and talk to anybody. Nopamas was prevented from seeing her deaf friends or even to use sign language. More than that, to get rid of the problem, Lamai was given away to the poor woman who lived in the woods.

Deafness is different. The deaf participants in this study feel they are different from other hearing people in the society. Even though some participants said that they are satisfied with their present lives; everybody admitted that once in a while they wanted to changed to be hearing and speaking like everybody else in the society. Collectivistic Thai culture poses a certain kind of identity to the deaf people, the kind of different.

High Power Distance. Power Distance is the extent to which a society accepts that power in relationships, institutions, and organizations is distributed unequally. People in high power distance countries believe that power and authority are facts of

life. Everybody has a rightful place that is not equal. This concept leads to the passive lifestyle of deaf people in Thailand. Based on the findings of this study, there is no aggressive Deaf culture salient in any deaf communities.

Hofstede's power distance concept is somewhat similar to the concept of hierarchy in the Thai worldview. One's status in the hierarchical system is believed to result from accumulated past karma in the form of merit and demerit. Podhisita (1998) explains that karma refers to volitional action. Karma can be merit or meritorious act if it is good and yields desirable result; otherwise, it is referred to as demerit or demeritorious act. The "high-ness" or "low-ness" of an individual's status in the hierarchy is believed to vary according to his or her store of merit and demerit (Podhisita, 1998). Physical deformity is perceived as the result of demeritorious act. To be born disabled, into slavery, or into non-human form is seen as evidence of bad deeds in a past life (Arthayukti, 2001, Sri-on 2000). Deaf participants posed this view to themselves that they must have done something bad in the past. They accept their position of inferiority to the majority hearing world.

Ladda said, "When I make merit, I always think that I did something bad in my past life. Really want to change to be hearing." Chaiwat makes merit by giving away things to the poor. When asking Chaiwat how he feels about his deafness, he replied, "I pray for not being deaf again next life." Sompong's answer confirms this matter as he said, "My father did bad thing in the past, so our family is poor and I am deaf. I married and always make merit, so my children are normal." Moreover, most deaf participants accept the inferiority posed by the hearing society. These participants expressed that they have to be 'patient' and 'understand'.

Those are the examples showing that deaf participants accept an unequal position in the society. They do not protest for equal rights. Some participants even said that they are satisfied with their present lives. The concept of high power distance shades the light on the passive way of life of some deaf people in Thailand.

High Uncertainty Avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance is the term indicating the extent to which a culture feels threatened by uncertainty and ambiguous situations. High uncertainty avoidance cultures try to avoid uncertainty by providing stability for their people, establishing formal rules, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise. This concept affects the lives of deaf people in Thailand.

As stated above, being deformed is unacceptable in Thai society. There were ways to avoid uncertainty in the matter of having deaf people in the society. The school for the deaf is the place through which hearing parents would avoid uncertainty in raising deaf children. Parents trust schools and put their deaf children into the residential deaf schools. Reagan (2002) provides an interesting thought about deaf residential schools. He mentioned that the rise of residential school for the deaf in the United States in the 19th century clearly mirrors similar developments targeted on the insane, the criminal, and so on.

Even though the deaf schools in Thailand have no evidence of being established upon the concept similar to Reagan's thought, sending deaf children to the boarding school has given the sense of abandonment to the deaf participants. As many of the participants mentioned their first day of school, they felt that their parents left them and they cried. Parents search for certainty in raising their deaf children by leaving them the scar in their hearts. Again, deaf participants realized that they are

different and have to be sent to the certain place for a certain way of education. They learn the certain language in school which cannot be used elsewhere.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions illuminate the cultural uncertainty in a deaf life. This cultural uncertainty plays an important part in the process of identity construction which will be elaborated later in this chapter.

Economic Uncertainty

Deaf participants are treated as a second-class population in Thai society. They were cheated on wages, salary, and prices of products sold. Some of them are forced to do harder work compared to the hearing worker in the same position. Deaf persons are not trusted by the banks. Artit had an experience that he could not get the loan in the way that hearing people could get. He had to pass the complicated process in paper work and reference. This is evidence of a double standard in the economic surrounding of deaf people. Some participants complained about their fortune, as Anuwat said, "Being deaf is hard. No one wants to hire deaf employee. Deaf can only sell the keychain."

The economic difficulties nailed down the concepts of inferiority and unacceptability to the deaf participants. It also reflects in the identity construction process.

Societal Uncertainty

Despite the fact that societal surrounding for deaf participants is the norms, rules, and regulations of both deaf and hearing communities they live in, the uncertainty in cultural surround overlaps the part of the uncertainty in hearing community. Therefore, I would narrow down the societal uncertainty to the norm of the deaf community.

Apart from living in the majority hearing society, a deaf person is a member of the deaf community. Using sign language is the norm of the deaf community. The data based on interviews and observations revealed the uncertainty on the matter of sign language. It is the big uncertain matter that divides deaf people into groups.

Sign Language in Thailand. From the observations and interviews, there are at least two types of sign language used among deaf people in Thailand: Thai Sign Language and Signed Thai. Sri-on (2000) explained the distinction of the two.

Signed Thai refers to the use of signs, fingerspelling, and finger-spelt patterns to represent spoken Thai. It is a manual code version of spoken Thai. Each sign is produced in the same word order as spoken Thai on the basis of one sign for each word. If there is no sign for the word, then the word is finger-spelt.

Thai Sign Language refers to the process by which deaf people communicate with each other through signs that have often been thought of simply as gesture. This communicative process is recognized as a full language in its own right. The language is expressed not by speech, but by the precise movement of hands, face, eyes, and body. A single sign might stand for a concept.

Sri-on explains that even when Thai Sign Language has been recognized as a true language, many educators have still not accepted it as a viable medium of instruction in school. They often claim that it acts as a barrier to learning the Thai language and so they continue to promote the use of Signed Thai in the context of a total communication philosophy. As a result, these educators have “downgraded Thai Sign Language as being inferior” (Sri-on, 2000, p. 149).

The uncertainty in using sign language separates deaf people into groups. The findings confirm what Sri-on found in her study. The participants said that Thai sign

language was not the popular teaching medium in the deaf schools. Some schools even objected to the use of Thai sign language among the students. Deaf participants said that they had to speak in class and signed with their friends when the teacher was not in sight. Some schools emphasized speech training. The deaf students who were trained in speech would have the ability to read lips and sign Thai. It is interesting to know that deaf people who can speak and read lips are considered hard-of-hearing, regardless of how great their hearing loss is, and not welcome into the deaf group that use Thai sign language.

Moreover, deaf participants in the north, northeast, and the south have similar feelings that deaf people in Bangkok are arrogant because they are fluent in signing. Some deaf participants said that they have to practice more to be able to sign fluently. The issue of using different sign languages is the uncertainty among deaf society. It has the direct effect on where a deaf person positions himself or herself in the deaf world.

Interpersonal Uncertainty

The uncertain relationship with intimate persons is another key factor that affects self perception of the deaf participants. Communication barriers framed deaf people to have few intimate persons in life. They were born to the hearing parents and stayed with them for a while. In-house communication was with the homemade signs which cannot be used elsewhere. After that, they went to deaf school. They learned sign language which, again, cannot be used in the world outside. Some participants can write. But their writing is somewhat incorrect because they do not practice Signed Thai. The deaf persons usually switch words according to their Thai sign language.

These communication barriers make it harder to build up intimate relationships with others.

Intimate persons surround deaf participants are parents, spouses, and their children. Before going to the deaf school, deaf participants communicate with their families using natural body language and homemade signs. When they came back from school, they know Thai sign language or signed Thai, but their parents do not. Vinai shared with us that he always wants to communicate with his mother, but his mother is a Chinese immigrant and she does not know either sign language or Thai written language. Prasert mentioned about his father refused to learn sign language which upset Prasert.

Some deaf participants have experience with having hearing girlfriends or boyfriends. Somyos admitted that his hearing girlfriend left him because she was fed up with the sign language and the deaf community. Pannipa broke up with her boyfriend because of communication problems. All but one deaf participant who is married chose a deaf spouse. Sompong is the exception. He is married to a hearing woman whom he had been writing letters to for several years. After the marriage, Sompong taught sign language to his wife and they sign to each other.

Hearing children of the deaf parents are another group of intimate persons in the participants' lives. It is the uncertainty that these hearing children showed to their deaf parents. The children obeyed well in their childhood. They even know sign language and acted as the personal interpreter to their deaf parents. These children changed when they grew up and entered their teenage years. They are embarrassed to sign. They are even embarrassed to have deaf parents. This attitude hurt the deaf participants so much. Some deaf parents try to point out the fact to their hearing

children that deaf or hearing people are equally human and deserve the right to be counted as one. Other deaf participants who have no children yet prefer to have hearing ones. Somyos is the exception. He has a strong determination to have a deaf child. He said that he will push his deaf child to the highest level of education. However, some deaf participants who have hearing children said that they accept the children's attitude.

The communication barrier isolates deaf participants from their intimate persons. Hardship in interpersonal communication makes deaf participants insecure. They are not accepted as equally human even by their intimate persons. The interpersonal uncertainty has put the deaf participants in an unstable position in everyday life.

From what we have observed, the uncertainties in surroundings affect the way a deaf person looks at his or her life. The invisible deformed biological condition of a deaf person gives the sense of uncertainty. With this biological uncertainty, deaf persons in Thailand do not belong to the common places of the hearing community.

Eisenberg (2001) proposed that how we respond to the fundamental uncertainty of life shapes everything we do and is driven in part by how we think about our place in the world, or our sense of identity. As we can see, the surroundings are not mutually exclusive. The biological surround and cultural surround have more influence on how each participant perceives himself or herself. The participants see the fact that they are the deaf persons living in Thai collectivistic society. The other surrounds exert partial influence on the deaf participants.

Identity Construction of Deaf Thai

The first research question concerned identity construction. Most identity theories emphasize reducing uncertainties by interacting in social activities (Burke, 1969; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1967; and Stryker, 1980). Burke suggested that an individual would identify with the group in order to have a sense of belonging. Goffman stated that a person plays a certain role in order to save the social show. Mead mentioned the symbolic interaction activities that individuals involve in while acquiring identity. Stryker talked about how social structure constrains individuals in social interaction. These theories try to manage uncertainties in a person's life so the person would have a steady sense of self.

Deaf persons are not in the same situation as hearing ones. A deaf person could not identify himself or herself with the hearing group in order to have a sense of belonging. A deaf person even feels insecure within his or her own family. A deaf person is seen in the certain role of disabled in the social show which requires no effort to play the role. On the contrary, the deaf person who wants to play the role of a normal person has to pretend to be the hearing one. The concepts of identity construction from Burke, Goffman, Mead, and Stryker do not fit with the deaf people in Thailand.

From the result of this study, the life of a deaf individual in Thailand is threatened by uncertainties in the surrounding. Biological surround imposed the deafness which cannot be denied for entire life. Spiritual surround could not afford to give the certain meaning of religious practices to the deaf people. Cultural surround is the most powerful factor that shakes the ground of deaf individuals. Thai culture framed the thoughts and behavior of its people which condemn deaf people as

different. Deaf people are treated unfairly in the economic surround. Within their own deaf society, there are two types of sign language that separate deaf people. The interpersonal surround of deaf persons is so uncertain that communication barriers would terminate the intimate relationships.

It seems that deaf people have no choice but to live with all uncertainties throughout their lives which coincides to Eisenberg's new theory of communication and identity. For Eisenberg, identity can be build upon uncertainty through the sense making process as presented in chapter two. (See figure 2.1)

To apply to deaf participants, the first sub-process of the sense making process deals with the biological aspect. Eisenberg stated, "all surroundings in one's life affect the emotions, brain chemistry, and mood" (2001, p. 544). Base on the findings from this study, it is hard to find a single statement to represent all participants' mood of being deaf. Some said they were satisfied, some expressed that they have to be patient, and some might even be angry to be deaf. In relationship to the surrounds, deaf participants interact with the surrounds differently.

The second sub-process relates to personal narrative. People would edit their personal story with the influence of surroundings. From this study, Thai culture seems to have an influence on the story telling of the participants. They were mostly timid and shy at first. None of the participants could tell the whole story alone without probing questions. However, it is noteworthy that almost all deaf participants have revealed their personal experience to the unknown researcher. The two Muslim deaf participants were different, which might relate to Muslim culture.

The other deaf participants show no sign of offense in telling their personal story. As Dr. Poonpit Amatyakul (personal communication, October 9, 2003) said, the

story telling is essential to the entire deaf life. The more a deaf person expresses, the more that person develops the brain function. The person would, in turn, generate intelligence for himself or herself.

Eisenberg (2001) also suggested that the personal narrative depends on the personal preference of certainty. If the person feels certain in life, he or she would tell the same story over and over, and hold that story as the truth of his or her life. As the researcher probed, the participants revealed more stories and more details about themselves. This shows that the deaf people are used to uncertainties and they get along well with them.

The third sub-process is the process in which the participants would reveal their self-concept. It is the communication style that participants chose to tell their stories. In this study, all participants were open to the researcher. It confirms Dr. Poonpit's statement that story telling is crucial to the deaf people. They were willing to tell stories without any force. This shows that deaf participants are open to the world. It is the world that shut the door to the deaf people.

To show the construction of deaf identity, we can see that each deaf participant in this study builds up his or her identity on the uncertainties within the surroundings. Following Carty's stages of identity development, all deaf persons have to go through the stages of confusion, frustration, exploration, identification, ambivalence, and acceptance (Carty, 1994). All deaf participants in this study have gone through those stages. They make sense of their surroundings along the way as they walk through each stage.

The identity of the deaf people in Thailand is not static. It is like the water that can change its form according to the form of container. The water always holds its

qualification of liquid substance. It is similar to the deaf person that they are always deaf. The shape of the container is similar to constraints of surroundings that shapes the participants' sense of self. All of these sense making processes were expressed throughout the open style of communication.

The Deaf with the Others

The second research question focused on the sense making of the deaf participant to their deafness when interacting with others. The findings show that deaf participants accept their difference in the hearing world. They realize that they are deaf and different from others. The influence of Buddhist society that believes in karma makes the participants tolerate the difference. Instead of demonstrating violence in asking for the equal rights, deaf people in Thailand focus on making merit for the next life. They do not perform any violent protest. Based on this study, deaf people in Thailand realize their inferiority and hold the complaints to themselves and spell the out only when someone asks for it. They like telling stories of themselves.

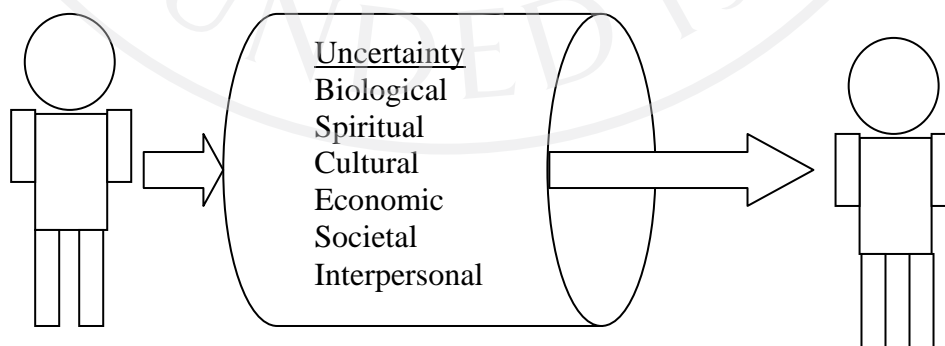
Narratives of Deaf Thai

The stories collected from the interviews reflect the life of deaf people in Thailand. According to Fisher (1958), any story can be a story of good reason. The most important thing is that we should not block the possibility of any story from being told. One of the five presuppositions of the paradigm is that the world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation. The stories of the deaf participants in this study reflect the world of deaf Thai. Stories reveal how the deaf participants see themselves and how they put themselves in the society. The stories even tell how deaf participants construct their identity.

Deaf participants narrated their lives willingly. They told me about their deafness and that they wish they did not have it. The participants revealed their stories through sign language which is the communication mode of preference of the deaf people. The stories told are of good reason. Deafness is the major defect of their lives and it is the reason that these people were selected as the participants in this study. The stories are rational in terms of representing participants' real lives.

Hunt (2000) suggested that chronic illness shakes the ground of personal identity and narratives about the chronic illness “explain the experience of the illness and reconfiguring the social identity” (p. 89). Deafness is in some way similar to chronic illness and affects the identity construction of the deaf participants. Narrative in this study is the approach to which the participants revealed their self concept in the interaction with their surroundings. All of the surroundings are the narrative elements of one person. The story of a person has to be related to each and every element in one way or another. In other words, the person has lived the story told, as shown in figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 : Narrative elements a person has lived through



Storytelling is the essence to the life of deaf people (Riley, 1995). When the deaf person tells the story, it reflects self-concepts in terms of values and beliefs that person holds. Dr. Poonpit (personal communication, October 9, 2003) suggested the concept of story telling. He mentioned that there are two types of stories to be told; the story of oneself and the story of others. Both story types reflect the thoughts about the narrator's self.

When a deaf person tells the story of himself or herself, it reflects the inner language so clearly. The participants in this study disclosed their personal experience which they have few chances of telling anywhere else. Dr. Poonpit emphasized that the inner language is the rare treasure of a deaf person. Once the deaf express their thoughts, the brain will enhance its capacity. Telling a personal story also reflects the self-protection sense. The interview with Kanokwan supports this claim.

Kanokwan began her narrative with the statement that reflects her pride. Kanokwan said, "I was at the Tak School for the Deaf and there was a phone call from my home telling the teacher that my mother passed away. I cried to go home but Mr. Boonterm didn't allow me to go. I asked Miss Aoy to explain to him so that I could go home for my mother funeral. I took a bus alone to go home."

Dr. Poonpit also said that when a deaf person narrates the stories of other people, he or she reflects three kinds of thought. First, the good thought in terms of the narrator's intelligence, cleverness, ability to organize data into a story, and ability to evaluate text. The proof of this claim can be seen in Chuchart's narration.

Chuchart shared the story of the sign language interpreter, "When the interpreter goes to government office with the deaf person, she seems scared of what she is going to interpret. I think the interpreter should show that the deaf is uneducated

and pity so that they can get the support money. The money will come to develop all the deaf people. Actually the government is ready to help. I don't know the reason why the interpreter is so scared when facing government officers.”

Second, the bad thought reflects in the story of distrust and negative encouragement. Panom's statement supports the claim. He told, “There are deaf people that always have quarrel, who always panic in everything, and who talk too much. There are deaf people who borrow money, who get divorce. I see that deaf culture and hearing culture are different. Sometime deaf people talk over days and nights. I think it's their way of life. I talk to my friend for a while and I go home. I think there is nothing good to talk too long.”

Third, the pride in oneself reflects in the story that show the narrator's ability to present in a public place, the ability to gain trust from the other. This pride induces a deaf person to repeat the same story again and again. There is no specific example for this claim.

Implications of the Findings

Theoretical Implication

The identity theories that focus on uncertainty reduction in everyday life would have predicted that deaf participants would have been trying to identify themselves to the major group in the society in order to be safe. Also, stigmatized participants would have set their own group with a strong sense of Deaf identity. On the contrary, deaf participants in this study neither tried hard to blend in to the hearing world nor did they hold a strong Deaf identity. Even though the life experience of some participants were not pleasant, the study found no case of hardship or unbearable way of living a deaf life in Thai society.

It is not wrong to say that the new theory of communication and identity that Eisenberg suggested can be used to explain identity construction for the deaf people in Thailand. The theory emphasizes building up identity on the uncertainties by giving the self a chance to make sense of its surroundings. This theory promotes a new way of thinking about fixed truth, as Eisenberg suggested, “once we give up an idea of fixed truth, we can begin the process of world building with a new and unprecedented perspective” (2001, p. 549). Deaf participants may not know that they are exercising this kind of thinking. As discussed above, deaf participants cannot physically free themselves from deafness, they, therefore, accept what they are and make a living out on the uncertainties of surroundings.

In the Thai collectivistic culture, social norms and values are framed by a Buddhist worldview (Podhisita, 1998). The concept of good and bad deeds, or karma, is embedded in the thought of every Thai person. The inferiority is believed to be the result of bad deeds. Minority groups in Thailand must have faced the discrimination problem as the deaf people do. I would suggest that the new theory of communication and identity can also be used to explain identity construction of other minority groups in Thailand.

Implications of Empowerment

The new theory of communication and identity also has a practical aspect which the members of a stigmatized group should consider practicing. The new way of thinking that identity is not static is helpful in surviving among uncertainties in life. This thought would ease the feeling of sorrow and disappointment as being inferior to the majority group in the society.

Furthermore, as found in this study, deaf people are open, and willing to tell the story, so the narrative research method should be a very useful method to study deaf life. Dr. Poonpit recommended that the more deaf people express their stories, the more they enhance their brain capacity. To have deaf persons telling their stories would generate positive attitudes toward themselves. However, the process of interpretation should be carefully considered. It would be very helpful that the researcher can sign fluently to the deaf participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

As they live in silence, deaf people in Thailand need a lot more channels for them to express themselves. Any kind of research that brings the deaf life into the attention of their hearing friends will be essential. However, to be related to this study, I would recommend scholars investigate deeply the interactions between deaf persons and each surround. The case study should be most appropriate way for this thorough investigation. Moreover, the participants in this study were spread out too much in terms of demographic characteristics. The future research may consider soliciting the stories from participants in the specific groups such as the specific career group, the group of similar education level, or the group of the same religion.

The importance of sign language

It is important that future research about the life of the deaf people should be done totally through sign language. Sign language is the most important key to unlocking the treasure of a deaf life. Communicating with the deaf through sign language makes the deaf feel safe. They would reveal their life story more and more when they feel safe. The lesson is learned from this study that I need to know sign language as if it is my major language in life. I could not get enough of what I really

wanted from the interviews. I encountered the difficulties when I wanted to probe more deeply in some points, but I could not sign. I encourage the future researchers who may be interested in exploring the deaf life to be fluent in sign language.

The lack of promoting sign language in public is also the problem. There are many hearing people I know who are interested in sign language. These people can be the researchers who study the life of the deaf people in various aspects.

Deaf people in Thailand are friendly and willing to share their stories to the hearing world. This study makes me think that it is not these deaf people who are deaf. Instead, it is the hearing people who turn the deaf ear to them. Research of all kinds that represent the deaf life-story would act like a hearing aid to the people in the hearing world.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, there are the stories of the deaf life told in so many aspects. Every story reflects identity of the narrator. Deaf people in Thailand see themselves as inferior to the majority hearing people. Deaf people have their own way of balancing the feeling toward the fact that they are different in the major society. To spell out the depressed feeling is one way to keep a balance of life.

Due to the collectivistic character of Thai culture, deaf people in Thailand need to be counted as members of Thai society. The narratives of deaf Thai reveal that even though they cannot hear sounds, deaf people in Thailand can feel the ignorance in the eyes of hearing people in the society. The deaf Thai are waiting for more chances to say something to the world. They need support of all kind to deliver their thoughts and introduce themselves to the society. This study is one of the rare opportunities for the deaf people to share their worldview. The narratives of deaf Thai

in this study disclose the fact that there are deaf people in Thai society who deserve recognition from other social members.



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APPENDIX



Appendix A

Letter to the NADT asking for the list of deaf member

๘๐ ซอยลาดพร้าว ๑๑๕ ถนนลาดพร้าว
แขวงคลองจั่น เขตบางกะปิ
กรุงเทพฯ ๑๐๒๔๐

วันที่ ๑๔ มกราคม ๒๕๕๖

เรื่อง ขอความอนุเคราะห์เข้าค้นคว้าข้อมูลในการทำวิจัย
เรียน นายกสมาคมคนหูหนวกแห่งประเทศไทย (ผ่านผู้จัดการสมาคมฯ)

เนื่องด้วยดิฉัน นางสาวสิรินทร พิบูลภาณุวัธน นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพ กำลังทำงานวิจัยเรื่อง
“Establishing Identity: Narratives of Deaf Thai (การสร้างอัตลักษณ์: เรื่องเล่าของคนหูหนวกไทย)” โดยมี
วัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาหาความเป็นตัวตนของคนหูหนวก ซึ่งสามารถวิเคราะห์ได้จากเรื่องราวต่างๆ ที่คนหูหนวกจะเล่าให้ฟังในการ
ให้สัมภาษณ์ งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มุ่งเน้นที่จะยกย่องศักดิ์ศรี และสิทธิในความเป็นมนุษย์ของคนหูหนวกในสังคมไทยให้เป็นที่รู้จักและ
ยอมรับในวงกว้าง

อย่างไรก็ตาม งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ต้องใช้กระบวนการเก็บข้อมูลอย่างถูกต้องตามหลักวิชาการทำวิจัย ผู้ที่จะถูกสัมภาษณ์ต้องถูก
เลือกขึ้นมาแบบไม่มีอคติ และต้องเป็นคนหูหนวกที่ขึ้นทะเบียนเป็นสมาชิกของสมาคมคนหูหนวกแห่งประเทศไทยอย่างถูกต้อง
ดิฉันจึงมีความจำเป็นต้องใช้รายชื่อสมาชิกสมาคมคนหูหนวกแห่งประเทศไทย เพื่อค้นหาผู้ที่มีคุณสมบัติตรงตามทำงานวิจัยนี้ระบุไว้
คือ

๑. มีอายุไม่ต่ำกว่า ๓๐ ปีบริบูรณ์
๒. สูญเสียการได้ยิน ไม่ต่ำกว่า ๘๕ เดซิเบล
๓. สูญเสียการได้ยินตั้งแต่อายุไม่เกิน ๓ ปี
๔. ได้รับการศึกษาไม่ต่ำกว่าชั้นมัธยมปีที่ ๓
๕. ไม่มีการย้ายภูมิลำเนา
๖. จำนวน ๓๐ คน

ทั้งนี้จึงเรียนมาเพื่อขอความอนุเคราะห์ให้ดิฉันเข้าค้นคว้าหาข้อมูลดังกล่าวจากฝ่ายทะเบียนหรือฝ่ายบริการสมาชิกของ
สมาคมคนหูหนวกแห่งประเทศไทย โดยหากได้รับการอนุมัติแล้ว ดิฉันจะติดต่อประสานงานเรื่องวันและเวลาในการเข้าค้นคว้า
ข้อมูลต่อไป ขอขอบพระคุณล่วงหน้ามา ณ โอกาสนี้

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

(นางสาวสิรินทร พิบูลภาณุวัธน)

ผู้วิจัย

: สิรินทร พิบูลภาณุวัธน / โทรศัพท์-โทรสาร ๐-๒๓๓๕-๑๒๑๔ โทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ ๐๑-๘๖๘๖๒๔๒

Appendix B

Sample of the lay summary sent to the president of regional deaf clubs

80 ซอยลาดพร้าว 115

แขวงคลองจั่น เขตบางกะปิ

กรุงเทพฯ 10240

วันที่ 25 เมษายน 2547

เรื่อง ขอความอนุเคราะห์ข้อมูลเพื่อการวิจัย

เรียน ประธานกลุ่มสมาชิกคนหูหนวกภาคใต้ (คุณยืน ขวัญสกุล)

เนื่องด้วยดิฉัน นางสาวสิรินทร พิบุลภาณุวัฒน์ นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก มหาวิทยาลัยกรุงเทพ กำลังทำงานวิจัยเรื่อง “Establishing Identity: Narratives of Deaf Thai (การสร้างอัตลักษณ์: เรื่องเล่าของคนหูหนวกไทย)” โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาหาความเป็นตัวตนของคนหูหนวก ซึ่งสามารถวิเคราะห์ได้จากเรื่องราวต่างๆ ที่คนหูหนวกจะเล่าให้ฟังในการให้สัมภาษณ์ โดยงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มุ่งเน้นที่จะทำความเข้าใจ ยกย่องศักดิ์ศรี และสิทธิในความเป็นมนุษย์ของคนหูหนวกในสังคมไทยให้เป็นที่รู้จักและยอมรับในวงกว้าง

การเก็บข้อมูลงานวิจัยต้องใช้วิธีการสัมภาษณ์พูดคุยกับคนหูหนวกไทยในภาคเหนือ ภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ ภาคกลาง ภาคใต้ และกรุงเทพมหานคร รวม 50 คน ทั้งนี้เพื่อวิเคราะห์ถึงความแตกต่างของวัฒนธรรมประจำภาคที่อาจมีผลต่อความรู้สึกนึกคิดของคนหูหนวก

ดิฉันเห็นว่ากลุ่มสมาชิกคนหูหนวกภาคใต้ เป็นศูนย์กลางข้อมูลคนหูหนวกไทยในภาคใต้ จึงใคร่ขอความอนุเคราะห์เข้าพบกับท่านประธานกลุ่มฯ หรือผู้ประสานงาน เพื่อขอคำแนะนำไปสู่สมาชิกในภาคใต้จำนวน 10 คนที่มีอายุตั้งแต่ 30 ปีขึ้นไป และใช้ภาษามือได้พอสมควร โดยดิฉันและผู้ช่วยวิจัยจะมาพบท่านใน ณ สำนักงานกลุ่มสมาชิก อำเภอหาดใหญ่ จังหวัดสงขลา วันที่ 26 เมษายน 2547 เวลา 14.00 น. เป็นต้นไป

จึงเรียนมาเพื่อโปรดพิจารณาให้ความอนุเคราะห์ จักเป็นพระคุณยิ่ง

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

(นางสาวสิรินทร พิบุลภาณุวัฒน์)

ผู้วิจัย

Appendix C

Table C 1: Gender

Gender	Number of participant
Male	22
Female	12

Table C 2: Region

Region	Number of participant
North	11
Northeast	8
Central	7
South	8

Table C 3: Age

Age	Number of participant
30 – 35	7
36 – 39	14
40 – 45	4
46 – 49	4
50 – 55	5

Table C 4: Education

Education	Number of participant
Bachelor degree	1
High Vocational Certificate	1
High School	3
Mattayom 3 (Grade 9)	22
Lower than mattayom 3	7

Table C 5: Condition of Deafness

Condition of deafness	Number of participant
Born Deaf	30
Born Hard of Hearing	2
Accidentally Deaf	2

Table C 6: Participants who were born deaf

No.	Region	Province	Name
1	North	Chiang Mai	Malai
2	North	Tak	Wirat
3	North	Pitsanulok	Kanokwan
4	North	Chiang Mai	Panom
5	North	Chiang Mai	Prasert
6	Northeast	Nakon Panom	Wittaya
7	Northeast	Roi-Et	Ankana
8	Northeast	Roi-Et	Sompong
9	Northeast	Surin	Busara
10	Northeast	Nakon Ratchasima	Nopamas
11	Northeast	Nakon Ratchasima	Chanachai
12	South	Song-Khla	Roongrat
13	South	Song-Khla	Chuchart
14	South	Nakon Sritammarat	Somyos
15	South	Yala	Jehwe
16	South	Yala	Somjai
17	South	Yala	Sa-me
18	Central	Bangkok	Lamai
19	Central	Bangkok	Vinai
20	Central	Nakon Pathom	Pannipa

(Continued)

Table C 6: Participants who were born deaf (continued)

No.	Region	Province	Name
21	Central	Nakon Pathom	Jumpod
22	Central	Ayuthaya	Somkiet
23	Central	Ayuthaya	Somwang

Table C 7: Participants who became deaf later in life

No.	Region	Province	Name	Age
1	North	Chiang Mai	Supa-art	9
2	North	Pitsanulok	Poramin	12
3	North	Tak	Nipon	5-6
4	North	Tak	Chonrudee	very young
5	North	Chaing Mai	Buncha	2
6	Northeast	Surin	Chaiwat	7 months
7	Northeast	Nakon Ratchasima	Anuwat	4
8	South	Song-Khla	Artit	9
9	South	Nakon Sritammarat	Tinakorn	2

Table C 8: Participants who were born hard of hearing (HOH)

No.	Region	Province	Name
1	North	Chiang Mal	Ladda
2	Central	Ayuthaya	Nipan

Appendix D

The Interview Protocol

Questions used in in-depth interviewing deaf participants

1. Please tell me about yourself and your family including your parents, brothers, sisters, your education, your job, etc. You may start on any topic you want. I will listen to your story without timing. I am sure that it will be the great benefit to this study.

- The first question focuses on the story of participant him or herself. The purpose of this question is to analyze the thought, belief, and attitude the participant has toward him or herself with the influence of the family and education.

2. Please tell me about your deafness. What do you think about being deaf?

- This second question intends to analyze the participant's attitude toward him or herself in terms of being a deaf person.

3. Who are the important persons to you? Why are they important? Please tell me the story that you think he or she is important.

- This third question intends to analyze the influence of other people that affect the participant's self perception.

4. Please tell me about your present living, your daily life. What do you do? Where do you go? Are you satisfied with it?

- This fourth question wants to analyze the influence of other factors and surroundings that affect the participant's life.

Appendix E
The Interview Guide

Check list for question 1

- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- The special belief about his/her birth date
- Religious
- Who are the parents? Deaf/Hearing
- How many brothers and sisters/ what do they do/ deaf or hearing
- Where were you raised up?
- Who raised you? Did you like it? Why?
- How old were you when you go to school for the first time?
- Where did you go to school? Did you like it or not? Why?

Check list for question 2

- The cause of your deafness
- First reaction when meet another deaf person, like/dislike, why
- How do parents, siblings, and relatives communicate to you?
- How did you feel about being deaf?
- How do you feel now?
- What made your feeling change?
- What is the advantage and disadvantage of being deaf?
- What is the most memorable event related to you as a deaf person?

Check list for question 3

- Who is/are your significant person/s?
- What are the memorable events the other people did to you?
- What have your parent done to you that you like/dislike the most?
- Any other persons you want to talk about?

Check list for question 4

- Daily life
- The favorite place to go. Why?
- Are you living as you wish for? Why?
- Any obstacles in living daily life? What are they?

