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<https://doi.org/10.52696/MMCQ1574>

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Challenges Faced by Female Students with Visual Impairments in Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Narrative Inquiry Study

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ABSTRACT

The English language is an international language used to enhance communication in all parts of the world. Countries that do not use English as their first language experience challenges while on international forums as their ability to communicate is curtailed. Females, especially those with visual impairment problems, are mostly affected. This study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by visually impaired female students when studying English at Taif University. The study adopted a narrative inquiry approach. The researcher randomly selected the study participants from visually impaired female students who had an average understanding of English. Data were collected by administering structured interviews. Online questionnaires were used to collect data from foreign language instructors. The study finding indicated that learners found learning English easy, though faced with challenges in the classroom, curriculum design that is not wholly inclusive of the visually impaired, and lack of learning materials such as PDFs, audios, and visuals. Simultaneously, foreign language instructors had not attended any course to teach English to the visually impaired. Based on the study findings, teachers and students required training to understand and handle the VI (visually impaired) students with more attention since there is no direct provision in the department.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, learning English, visual impairment, female students, narrative inquiry

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development goals are set goals by United Nations to help the world end poverty and attain equality. To eliminate poverty one must be educated, and enlightened. Access to education by all is a Sustainable Development Goal set to be achieved by 2030. Goal four of the sustainable development goals aim to promote equity in education and end poverty (The Global goals Sustainable development goals, 2017). This goal comes when women are gaining empowerment worldwide. Gender parity is lessening, and women faced with visual

impairment can access education. Disability mainstreaming enables people living with disabilities to access all services enjoyed by their counterparts living without disabilities. Laws and policies exist that support the employment of people living with disabilities in every workplace worldwide. Women federations and the human rights movement states that for gender equity to be achieved today, a government must employ at least thirty percent of women in all their staff. Therefore, women living with all forms of disabilities worldwide are entitled to equal human rights compared to their male counterpart.

The English language is rapidly gaining popularity as the standard communication means around the world. Non-native English-speaking nations are currently introducing English as a second compulsory language in their kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary Universities to enable their students to compete with native English-speaking individuals in the job market around the world.

Sofia (2016) in her study of the challenges visually impaired students undergo while learning English and other languages, in Central Macedonia, Greece, reported that Foreign people learning English always find the language to be difficult. However, questions on how effectively those with visual impairment (blind) learn English as their second language? (Sofia, 2016). Blindness does not hinder the students from learning in school; technology presents visually impaired teaching tools in schools and tertiary Universities.

The literature indicates that despite the easiness of teaching visually impaired students English as their foreign language, challenges exist in teaching the students the language. Ponmozhi and Thenmozhi (2017) in their study sampled 200 students in rural areas to understand the difficulties faced when learning English. The study found that in high school level, there was a high difficulty rate towards learning English. A study conducted on developing 3D Acoustic-based Virtual Environments for the Teaching of English Vocabulary to Visually Impaired Learners reported an improved virtual learning environment using 3D acoustics (Chuah et al., 2018). For example, the teaching materials for the non-visually impaired students are readily available, allowing them to quickly learn the language (Crozet and Liddicoat, 2000). On the other hand, visually impaired students lack their learning materials. Visual impairment is defined as partial or complete loss of sight. It is caused by preventable factors such as cataracts, river blindness, diabetes, trachoma, refractive errors, and childhood factors. Vision has been termed to play a critical role in the learning process of a child. During learning, a child can observe and imitate behaviors from the outside world. Lack of vision affects a child's conceptual development. Lack of vision leads to delayed learning due to a lack of pictures meant to enhance learning.

Studies conducted over the years have indicated clear challenges in teaching a visually impaired individual. Speaking and listening challenges are documented among visually impaired learners. A study conducted in Japan to determine the challenges faced by female foreign learners. Female students with visual impairment are experiencing several challenges during school the study revealed gender inequalities in English learning process (Kobayashi, 2002). These skills are essential in any learning environment. Therefore, students with visual impairment may not be able to communicate with their peers and instructors. However, they have to become good listeners to capture and analyze information explained to them in the forms of figures, details, and facts.

During writing and reading sessions, students who are visually impaired are slower than their counterparts. Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of teaching culture to enable the students learn English. The extensive literature on teaching culture is important in learning English to help visually impaired students. They frequently pause during the reading and writing sessions. They are incapable of constructing their sentences properly due to low visual (Sofia, 2016). Instructors of EFL to visually impaired students are entitled to effectively transmit the content to their learners without losing its meaning. These could be costly and time-consuming, especially in developing countries where most visually impaired students have little resources to provide learning. AL Ghafri (2015) conducted a research on how visually impaired learners acquire language. In his study he mentioned many ways in which knowledge acquisition for the visually impaired can be improved. Resources such as CD's recorded audio lessons were recorded for the students to listen. More information and meaning are lost while converting the actual object to audio forms meant to provide meaning to the blind.

Handwriting has been cited as a significant problem encountered when learning a foreign language. Writing is a challenge to the visually impaired when using the different forms of Braille—learning how to use a Braille slow their writing speed because they have to identify the letters by feeling on the Braille machine (AL Ghafri, 2015). As a result, the automation of the writing skill among the visually impaired students enables them to write. Lack of financial stability in most schools and countries reduces most Universities acquiring the Braille machines.

Braille users have recorded confusion when learning a foreign language. To avoid confusion, each learner should demonstrate a good command of his or her mother tongue. The mother tongue helps learners code foreign language on their Braille machines (AL Ghafri, 2015). Dictionary use in finding meaning is a challenge to the visually impaired because they cannot read the dictionary. It makes them miss the excellent use of the dictionary that allows finding the meaning of English words easier. Teachers have to avail of mobile signs and audio devices such as computers, CDs, and audios. However, the challenge still lies in the selection of the required audio content.

Learning theory explains the diverse nature of learning taking place in learning institutions (Kaya & Akdemir, 2016). The authors describe different learning theories that guide learners towards their ability to learn and understand a language. The theory encompasses various theories used to understand mechanisms used by students in class while acquiring knowledge (Kaya & Akdemir, 2016). Constructivism is a learning theory that allows students to learn on their own. Visually impaired students employ constructivism alongside the instructional learning design to understand English as their second language. Khalil and Elkhider (2016) presents a candid explanation of how constructivism is valuable to learners when learning a new skill. In this study, English language learning among the visually impaired females in Saudi Arabia demonstrates the urge of the students to earn the language.

Isolation of the visually impaired by their families and communities reduces the chances of these individuals' ability to trust other people (Ponmozhi & Thenmozhi, 2017). In class, while learning English as their foreign language, a student with visual impairment should be close to her/his instructor. Teaching visually impaired students calls for the teachers to access

relevant teaching materials such as Braille, Pdfs, text to audio devices among others (Baltisberger, 2019; Susanto & Nanda, 2018). Institutions should strive to manage the needs of visually impaired students. The closeness could bring about confidence and, as a result, boost the ability of the student to learn the foreign language. Learning English as a foreign language enables visually impaired students to be equally competitive and communicate effectively among their peers (Lourens & Swartz, 2016). However, despite the cost of ensuring that the female students learn English, governments must create policies and set aside funds for disability challenged individuals to access education.

The following research questions guided the study.

- a) What challenges do visually impaired female students face in learning English as a foreign language?
- b) What are some ways of addressing the challenges faced by visually impaired female students?

METHOD

Narrative inquiry is the method that allows the society to develop knowledge based on the narration of a phenomenon (Huang, 2018). Narrative research design is chosen for the study to capture the real-time experiences of the visually impaired students and their instructors on the challenges they encounter while in-class teaching and learning English. The narrative research design refers to how people use their experiences and organize meaningful episodes. According to Huang (2018) human beings live collectively by narrating their experiences. He argues that narrative is a mode of knowledge that accommodates dilemma and ambiguity. He reinstates that human beings live by narrating their experiences to justify their actions and thinking. Narrative design is a very fulfilling method of gathering information on the challenges faced by female students who are visually impaired when learning English.

In this research, the personal experiences of the visually impaired learners and their instructors were captured using the narrative method. The power of narrative research lies in its flexibility. It allows the researcher to understand various challenges faced by female visually impaired students, their opinions on what could solve their challenges, and increased awareness of the teaching instructions to the visually impaired by age, gender, and educational level (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Narrative inquiries have disadvantages, which include presenting one's opinion based on their experiences. Therefore, it will be impossible to generalize the results to reflect a larger population (Miller, 2017). Despite a lack of generalization, the narrative method increases confidence between the researcher and the respondent since it is conducted face to face.

Sample Size

The researcher interviewed the visually impaired female students at Taif University. Four visually impaired female students with pseudonyms of Daria- 21 years of age, Maha- 19 years of age, Asha- 24 years of age, and Daleen- 25 years of age. They all had an average understanding of English. Additionally, 40 foreign languages department (FLD) instructors answered an online questionnaire relating to the study.

Data collection

The focus was on the challenges faced by visually impaired females learning English at Taif University. In this study, the researcher conducted data collection on the Taif University

disability office and English department. Data was collected using interviews and online questionnaire administration on the challenges experienced by female students with visual impairment while learning English and challenges encountered by foreign language department instructors when teaching students foreign languages.

Online questionnaires were used to get the opinions and views of teachers when they are teaching visually impaired students. The questionnaires were divided into gaining consent from the teacher participant, questions with the aim of understanding how the factors that determine how teachers plan themselves before teaching visually impaired students. The questionnaire sought to understand the strategies used by teachers while teaching visually impaired students, and how teachers support the students during teaching and learning sessions.

Procedure

The researcher used an inquiry approach for data collection. The data collected was recorded interviews, which were later transcribed to get the actual stories and experiences presented by the four visually impaired female students. Before conducting the interview session, the researcher sought consent from the four visually impaired female students. The researcher conducted interview sessions according to the convenience of students. Daria, Maha, and Asha interviews were conducted through WhatsApp recordings. Daleen had her interview conducted through telephone. The researcher conducted two interviews in English, and the other two interviews in Arabic were later transcribed and translated into English. The researcher sent online questionnaires to all the FLD instructors; however, the researcher would only use 40 FLD instructors' responses in the study.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data following the four steps of qualitative analysis. The data was first coded and placed in categories. Each participant's experiences on the challenges of learning English were identified and categorized into sub-themes. The researcher grouped all the information into groups, identified a pattern, and identified significant emerging themes from the participants' stories. Data were analyzed by taking into consideration the significant themes of the study. The thematic analysis provides theme identification. The themes identified were used to address the visual impairment among the foreign EFL female students.

Online questionnaire data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, counts and percentage as shown in table 1 below. The frequency and percentage were used to describe teachers' responses and views on teaching visually impaired female students and to understand the teacher's perceptions on teaching visually impaired female students, the challenges and strategies used to overcome their teaching.

RESULTS

Research question 1: What challenges do visually impaired female students face in learning English as their foreign language?

The thematic analysis presented various themes from the study, including attitudes to the English language, learning challenges, strategies students use in learning English and recommendations. The study findings indicated that some of the visually impaired female students had different attitudes towards learning English.

Attitudes to the English Language:

Learning English at Taif University is a self-driven initiative. The Department of Foreign Languages offers English lessons to both the visually impaired and the fully sighted students. In my interview sessions, with the four visually impaired students, I found that most learners enjoyed learning English. A participant expressed her positive attitude towards learning the English language. One participant mentioned the following to express her satisfaction with learning English.

"I didn't face any problem learning the language at all because I had learned it at a young age. I speak it every day. I've learned English from reading, listening, practicing, and speaking it. I treat it as not my second language but as my first language, precisely like the Arabic." **(Daria)**

However, some participants found it hard to learn English, citing difficulties in accessing learning materials.

"Learning English is difficult because there are no devices available, so it is difficult for me. Most of the teachers do not understand our situations well, while a few of them are more aware of our needs and are more collaborative." **(Daleen)**

Learning Challenges

a) Classroom challenges

Classroom challenges included the inability to see the board and read the teacher's contents written on the blackboard. The font size was a challenge since the visually impaired students could not read small fonts due to visual problems.

"Font size is the greatest difficulty in learning. The hardest thing in learning the language is the font size because if it is clear, you will read quickly and translate everything faster." **(Asha)**

b) Inadequate learning materials

Learning materials were a challenge to the VI female students since they felt that the teachers did not understand their situation. Some of the participants mentioned the need for PDFs to enlarge the contents enough to read.

"I need PDF files. Sometimes the Pdf files are not provided. Also, sometimes I have to research the PDF files myself. The resources are not quite enough because sometimes you need to use resources from websites, and some sites do not zoom in. I mean, they are not always conveniently available." **(Asha)**

c) Teacher related challenges

Visually impaired students faced teacher-related challenges when learning English. The participant reported teachers experiencing challenges with their pronunciation, while others' voices are not clear, some classes are noisy, so the recordings of lectures are not clear. The

teachers do not provide PDFs, and they buy their magnifiers. Teachers need to describe pictures, maps, and symbols or not include them in exams. The participants, however, felt left out in their study and that teachers were not professionally prepared to handle their needs.

"The role of the teachers is that they should be sufficiently experienced, professional and trained to know how to deal with our case and to have full knowledge of what we feel and take into account our feelings. Also, there should be a trained advisor in the department to train teachers on dealing with us and how we differ from other students to guide us step by step. Also, the materials should not be the same as normal students. The subjects are supposed to be fewer and easier because we suffer from visual problems, and I think this is enough for us." **(Daleen)**.

d) Curriculum design

The curriculum designed for learning English did not present the needs of the visually impaired students, and most of them had to find the resources suitable for themselves while learning English.

"The curriculum used in the Department of Foreign Languages is not appropriate for me because I need PDF files, and sometimes the PDF files are not available. I have to search for the PDF files from the Internet by myself." **(Asha)**

The study identified that most of the participants lacked adequate resources and equipment to facilitate their learning.

Questionnaire Findings

The teachers reported various challenges when handling the visually impaired students, which included lack and inadequate knowledge in using the resources of the visually impaired present within the university. 100% of teachers reported a lack of training to handle the visually impaired students and the inadequacy of the resources meant for those students.

Demographic data of teacher respondents

The study findings reported that the qualification for teaching VI students as follows; approximately 66.7% of the teachers had Ph.D. qualifications, while 33.3% had M.A. Most of the teachers had taught English for some time; 50% had taught English for between 2-4 years, 7.1% had taught for more than 12 years. And 14.3% had taught English for 5 to 8 years. Among them, 42.9% had specialized in linguistics, 28.6% in the literature, and 28.6% in language skills. Irrespective of their educational backgrounds, none of the teachers were certified to teach English to visually impaired students. Also, the teachers had not taken any courses to help them teach in English.

Research question 2: What are some ways of addressing the challenges faced by visually impaired female students?

Strategies Students Use in Learning English

a) Self-learning

Despite experiencing challenges from the learning environment, the participants reported adopting their strategies to enhance English language learning. The following strategies were reported to improve the self-learning of the English language among visually impaired students.

The students have a screen reader (voice-over screen from apple), iPad, and iPhone. They used to record audios. Sometimes they could get peer support from their classmates.

"I don't take any notes. I used to record, but I don't take notes. This is a problem because there's no time to take notes. If you're blind, there's no time. The only solution is to record. The best method that I use is listening, practicing speaking, and reading audiobooks. Those are the main methods that I use." **(Daleen)**.

b) PDF readers

Some of the participants use their iPad to download PDFs, and also they use some PDF readers. They write notes on iPad, and they use symbols; they rely more on understanding than on taking notes. They write words and their meanings in cards so they can remember them.

"I use my iPad to download PDF files so that I can read through, and also I use some PDF readers... I use cards. I bring cards and write on them words that I want to learn and their meanings. I write the important things that I hear on the iPad. Also, I write shortcuts. I do not write everything. I mainly don't take many notes, and I try to understand more." **(Maha)**

c) Adequate teaching materials

Other strategies used include enlarging the font of the words on the blackboard. This helps the female students with visual impairment to read them. Adjusting the teaching materials and curriculum design to fit the visually impaired with the average sighted students is essential. Any school teaching English as their second language should invest in improving their teaching resources; these include teachers who are well trained to cope with the demands and needs of the class.

Online questionnaire findings on strategies to improve VI female students English learning

a) Teaching materials

Approximately 53.3% of the teachers appreciated graphic organizers and visual maps while teaching visually impaired students. Hands-on learning opportunities were available to 60% of the students. Most teachers were unsure whether the use of wait time during exams was beneficial in enhancing the English learning among these students. However, 26.7% of the teachers appreciated the use of wait time to answer the questions and finish the assessments comfortably. Adopting a modeling behavior was very important in enhancing the learning of English among visually impaired students. The teachers considered students' abilities to help teach English, such as English reading, writing, speaking and comprehension abilities, prior knowledge of the concept, and second language proficiency. According to the teachers, all these abilities were essential in ensuring that the visually impaired students could learn English as their second language.

Teachers considered the cultural and age appropriateness of the English material to be important when preparing teaching materials; however, none of them used the students'

native language. The difficulty of the material to be read was critical in ensuring that the course content was relevant to the subject matters. The meaningfulness and accessibility of the materials used in class determined the deliverables delivered to the students.

b) Supporting the learning of visually impaired students

All teachers (100%) reported to have not taught Braille to visually impaired students. The teachers were not aware of the services and equipment for these students available at the university. Likewise, they were not sure whether these students were aware of the services.

Table showing: Teachers' views of teaching and supporting visually impaired students

Questionnaire Items	Not Very Important		Not Important		Not Sure		Important		Very Important.	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
9. Second language proficiency	1	6.7	1	6.7	0	0	11	73.3	2	13.3
10. English reading ability	0	0	0	0	2	20	8	53.3	4	26.7
11. English writing ability	0	0	0	0	10	66.7	1	13.3	2	20
12. English speaking ability	0	0	0	0	1	13.3	11	73.3	1	13.3
13. English comprehension ability	0	0	0	0	0	13.3		80		6.7
14. Prior knowledge of the concept taught	0	0	3	20	4	23.3	6	40	2	13.3
15. Cultural and age appropriateness of the English material	0	0	0	0	4	26.7	8	53.5	2	13.3
16. Difficulty level of the material to be read	0	0	0	0	2	13.3	12	80	10	67
17. Meaningfulness of the material	0	0	0	0	11	66.7	3	20	2	13.3
18. Accessibility of the materials	0	0	0	0	10	67	2	20	11	73
19. Graphic organizers (visual maps)	0	0	0	0	2	16.7	5	33.3	3	20
20. Multi-sensory approach for instructions (i.e., using more than one sense like sight and hearing) *	0	0	0	0	4	26.7	8	53.5	2	13.3

21. Hands-on learning opportunities (i.e., learning by doing) *										
22. Use of wait time	0	0	0	0	4	23.3	6	40	2	13.3
23. Grouping the student who is VI with other students in the classroom	0	0	3	20	4	23.3	6	40	2	13.3
24. Modeling the behavior	0	0	3	20	4	23.3	6	40	2	13.3
25. What are other instructional strategies you follow when planning your materials.	0	0	0	0	5	33.3	2	13.3	8	53.3
25. Have you taught Braille to a student who is VI?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26. Are you aware of the university's type of services and equipment to VI students?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27. Are your VI students aware of services and equipment provided by the University to them? *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28. Did the students begin instructions with you already know some braille in the native language? *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29. Did the students begin instruction with you already know some braille in English? *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30. Did you prepare materials for the students in their native language to	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

facilitate learning English?										
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F=Frequency

P=Percentage

The above table presents the views of the teachers in teaching visually impaired students at Taif University.

Linkages between online questionnaires and interviews

The teachers reported several challenges, which include lack of training, prior knowledge of handling visually impaired students. This was in agreement with the interview sessions had with students who reported the teacher to be one of the challenges they faced while learning English. Teachers were unable to provide an adequate curriculum design to help visually impaired female students learn English. Despite their number of years of experience in teaching, they have not developed adequate teaching skills that can help visually impaired students. This finding agrees with student findings, stating that the teachers do not provide PDFs, and students buy their magnifiers. Teachers need to describe pictures, maps, and symbols or not include them in exams. The participants, however, felt left out in their study and that teachers were not professionally prepared to handle their needs. However, they have managed to develop strategies that can help these students increase their learning in English. The teachers have also recommended training to help them train the students on using the Braille machines available at the university.

DISCUSSION

Research question 1; what challenges do visually impaired female students face in learning English as their foreign language?

A common finding on the learners' attitudes towards learning English was that the three participants (Daria, Maha, and Asha) found learning English easy. On the other hand, Daleen found learning to be complicated. Visually impaired female students showed a positive attitude towards learning English. The four participants encountered challenges in the classrooms when they were learning English. They felt not being inclusive of the class activities since the fonts used were too small, they could not see the board, and needed reading materials to be provided to them in PDFs, but the teachers did not give them. Küçükler (2018) in their study, noted that most of the teachers found it hard to prepare for the students with visual impairments, and it took their initiatives to ensure that the content taught in class was accessible to them. According to the questionnaires given to the teachers, most teachers (100%) of those who answered the questionnaires reported to have not attended any course to enable them to teach the visually impaired. They also reported that teachers and students were required to be trained to understand and handle the VI students with more attention since there were no special provisions for the VI students.

Visually impaired students face several challenges in any learning environment due to visual materials in a classroom. Continued chalkboards, images, writing, and pictures in a classroom while teaching pose a challenge to visually impaired students (Ling, 2015). Kapur (2018) in their study on the challenges of visually impaired students, identified similar challenges as those identified in this study. With the current technological advancements, the teaching aids in a classroom should allow the students to comfortably appreciate learning English by using speed listening gadgets, Braille, and magnifiers.

Some teachers were not aware of the learning needs of visually impaired students. Teachers' responses indicated that at least 66.7% of the students were not aware of using a Braille machine, and most of the teachers found it challenging when teaching the VI students. They attributed the challenges of teaching Braille to lack of training; on the same, 100% of the teachers who answered the questionnaire had not taught Braille to their English learning students with VI. They could not offer a reasonable explanation with audible voices. The clarity of teachers' voices was also confusing, and since the visually impaired could not see the board, that could affect their learning skills. Students with visual impairment are different from those with full sight. In a classroom, the students with visual impairment require special attention to help them meet their needs of education (Cárdeas & Inga, 2019). Therefore, teachers must prepare their lesson plans by considering the visually impaired learners (Ling, 2015). Teachers teaching two groups of students with varying needs pose a challenge to the visually impaired students, often having in few numbers in a classroom (Küçükler, 2018). The participants mentioned that some teachers in the class were not aware of the needs of visually impaired students. The participants in this study suggested that the teachers should have clear voices, enlarge pictures. Also, teachers should understand the students' needs and ask them if they need help, enlarge the font size. Teachers might forget about their existence in the classroom. This study finding is in tune with research conducted in various parts of the world that showed that most teachers were not trained to cater for the needs of the visually impaired students in class, and they were using the materials meant for the sighted students while teaching both the sighted and the visually impaired students (Küçükler, 2018; Khofifah & Rusandi, 2018).

The visually impaired students felt that the curriculum design for teaching English at the university was not meant for them (Cárdeas & Inga, 2019). However, as Khofifah and Rusandi (2018) found out in their study, the curriculum doesn't need to be changed. Still, the curriculum can be designed to meet the need of the VI learners, availing learning resources such as Braille, magnifiers, and provision of the PDFs by the teachers for the reference materials used in class could help in streamlining the curriculum to meet the desired needs by the visually impaired learners (Küçükler, 2018). The participants derived their means of learning English among themselves. Most of them bought their magnifiers, Braille and PDFs. This was because there were no resources that could help visually impaired students learn English and their needs to learn English.

Research question 2: What are some ways of addressing the challenges faced by visually impaired female students?

Teachers who answered the questionnaire reiterated a lack of suitable teaching materials and strategies for teaching English to the VI students (Munkhtsetseg, 2017). However, despite the Braille machines within Taif University, none of the teachers has been trained to handle and teach the students using the Braille machines. Ling (2015) in their study found out that the number of students taught by the teachers was more, and the latter lacked adequate training in teaching using Braille machines. In this case, the VI students could only get the basics and not the full content of the subjects taught. Therefore, for Taif University to be useful for visually impaired and fully sighted students, proper teaching materials and resources such as PDFs, notes with big handwriting, audio lectures, and Braille teaching techniques available could be made accessible to the VI students since 66.7 % of the teachers reported their students not being aware of the resources available at the university. Despite

these resources within the university, teachers teaching VI students need to be trained to use Braille machines while teaching. Teachers should train VI students to use Braille machines in learning English (Miyachi, 2020; Topor & Rosenblum, 2013). The students should be handled with care and ensure that their learning needs are catered for. Giving students enough time during exams could also be important in improving their reading and writing skills.

Stigma among the visually impaired students deprives them of the confidence to interact freely with other students. Khofifah and Rusandi (2018) found that the VI students faced challenges with social integration with their fully sighted counterparts. The students cannot interact freely with them due to the existing stigmatization of their inability to read as fast as them (Lourens & Swartz, 2016). However, the teachers identified a collaborative class to help enhance the reading and speaking abilities of the VI students.

CONCLUSION

This study was able to identify the challenges faced by visually impaired female students learning English at Taif University, Saudi Arabia. The students faced challenges in their learning environment from the classroom, teaching practices, curriculum, and the supply of resources meant for the visually blind students. The students used their strategies to ensure that they could learn English irrespective of non-inclusion in both the classroom and curriculum. The teachers could also point out the significant challenges they encounter when teaching VI students something they have no background in. 100% of the teachers reported to have never taught Braille before, and they did not know how to use Braille machines. The university should collaborate with the English department and ensures that the resources required by the VI students are available to them. These resources include; audio lectures, PDFs and train the teachers on how to teach students using Braille. The teachers should entitle the visually impaired to their particular class to give full academic and psychological support. This study also found that if the VI students can work in groups, they can overcome their academic fears and challenges.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions for Visually Impaired Female Students

Please answer the questions below. All of the information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study to improve the education of students with visual impairments at the university.

1. Talk about your experience as a foreign language learner (e.g. Is learning a foreign language easy or difficult for you?)
2. What are the major challenges you faced in learning English as a foreign language at Taif University?
3. What learning materials are provided for you at the university?
4. Do you think the provided resources at the university are enough for you? Explain
5. What are other unavailable learning resources you think they can support English language learning at your inclusive university?
6. Talk about anything you use in the English class which helps you with your Visual Impairment. Do you have any special devices or programs?
7. What kind of assistance do the head of FLD and your university give?
8. Talk about the role of your English language teachers or assistant teachers. (e.g. what can foreign language teachers do to make the foreign language learning experience positive for a blind or visually impaired student?)
9. How do you feel in inclusive classrooms? why?
10. How do you take notes during lectures?
11. Do you only depend on listening to take notes during lectures? Is the pronunciation of the English teacher good and clear enough to help you in taking notes? Explain
12. In your opinion, what are the most suitable and appropriate second language teaching methods used by the English teachers in your classrooms?
13. What are the best methods and activities of learning English you use outside the classroom?
14. What adaptive technology is used in your university that may help to learn English as a foreign language? Do you know how to use this technology?
15. How will you achieve the written communication with the sighted classroom teacher?
16. How can visual teaching aids such as pictures, maps, and presentations be adapted for the visually impaired female students to use?
17. Are you given extra time during your exams? If yes, how much?
18. What do you think of the curriculum used in FLD suit the learning needs of students with visual impairments? If no, what do you suggest?
19. What effective strategies do you use in learning English as a foreign language?
20. What recommendations do you have for new visually impaired students who want to learn English language?
21. What recommendations you have for EFL teachers teaching visually impaired students?