

**EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON ENGLISH L2
LEARNING BY VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS: A STUDY OF ST.
CATHERINE'S HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS**

BY:

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DECLARATION

I, Julia 'Malesitsi Motsoko (201703569), hereby declare that this thesis titled “**Exploring the Effects of Socio-Cultural Factors on English L2 Learning by Visually Impaired Learners: A Study of St. Catherine’s High School learners**” is my authentic work and has not been submitted or published previously for any purpose. I also declare that all the sources used in this study have been properly acknowledged in-text, accompanied by the list of references.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis has been read and approved as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Humanities, National University of Lesotho, for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Linguistics.

Supervisor: _____

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External Examiner: _____

DEDICATION

This thesis is respectfully dedicated to myself, in acknowledgement of the determination, resilience and sacrifice that have carried me throughout this academic journey despite many challenges. It is also dedicated to my family, whose deep, steadfast encouragement and unwavering support have served as a constant source of strength and motivation. Finally, this work is dedicated to all the learners with impairments who, despite persistent obstacles, remain committed to pursuing their education with determination and perseverance. May this work stand as a testament that your voices are heard, your efforts are meaningful, and your aspirations are worthy of pursuit.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effects of socio-cultural factors on English L2 learning by visually impaired learners at high school level in Lesotho. Its basis is on the understanding that socio-cultural contexts influence how learners with visual impairment learn English as a second language (L2). The study used a qualitative case-by-case study design, guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the Social Model of Disability. Data were collected through the use of interviews with two English L2 teachers, five visually impaired learners and an analysis of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP, 2018), with the aim of uncovering their lived experiences that hinder or facilitate their English L2 teaching and learning. Based on the collected data, the findings indicate that socio-cultural factors, such as limited access to learning materials, inadequate teacher training, peer attitudes, and societal perceptions of disability, have an impact on the learning of English L2. While some learners benefitted from supportive environments, some still faced systemic hindrances to their learning. The study concludes that there is a non-alignment between the policy and the actual implementation in high schools. Socio-cultural factors considerably shape the learning of English L2, and there is employment of individual strategies to overcome barriers by teachers and learners because of a lack of adequate formal structures. According to the findings, the following recommendations are made: there is a need to strengthen the LIEP (2018) through the development of structured guidelines for the implementation of inclusive practices; there is also a need for recurrent monitoring in schools and a mandatory course on inclusive education in pre-service training of teachers and in-service teachers. Additionally, schools should put up support structures that enable collaborative learning, raise awareness about impairment and ensure that the necessary assistive devices are at the disposal of the visually impaired learners. Finally, for future research, the study recommends incorporating diverse stakeholders in inclusive education to gain insights on its implementation in Lesotho and the need to cover the rural areas in future research.

Key words: English L2 learning, high school learners, impairment, inclusive education, Lesotho, socio-cultural factors, visual

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ECoL	Examinations Council of Lesotho
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
L2	Second Language
LIEP	Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NUL	National University of Lesotho
SEU	Special Education Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
VILs	Visually Impaired Learners
VIPs	Visually Impaired Persons

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The learning of individuals with special education needs is a global concern that requires policies to be developed and practices to be adapted. Through United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1994), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) expresses the belief all children have the essential right to education and should have the chance to reach and sustain an adequate level of learning. It also emphasizes that educational systems and curricula must be structured to accommodate the individual features, interests, strengths, and learning requirements of all children. Most importantly, it requires that children with special needs have access to mainstream schools, which should be accommodating and provide child-oriented learning capable of directly meeting their needs.

The Lesotho government recognises impairments as areas that need special provisions in the education system and has followed international principles too and created a policy to outline the goals for inclusive education in Lesotho. This policy is primarily intended to address the negative consequences of exclusion that prevail in Lesotho high schools, and it also aims to combat negative attitudes and a lack of response to diversity that causes exclusion of the learners with special educational needs.

Besides the policy concerns, learners with special educational needs, particularly those with visual impairment, also face personal challenges that affect their learning. Piquart and Pfeiffer (2012), as cited in Phethoka (2020), assert that visual impairment can immensely hamper the students' motivation to engage fully in given learning tasks because of their restricted ability to learn through imitation and observation. Motivation may also be hindered by difficulties in giving meaning to objects, ideas and concepts. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the effects of socio-cultural factors as additional problems to the learning of students with visual impairment, particularly in learning English as a second language.

Emotional and attitudinal factors play a role also in affecting language learning for visually impaired learners, this view is supported by Stern (1983), as cited in Getie (2020), who refers

to them as part of the affective component. Stern (1983), as cited in Getie (2020) argues that affective component contributes just as much and regularly more to language learning than cognitive skills. According to Saracaloglu (1992), cited in Getie (2020), the characteristics of affective domain include values, interests, beliefs and tendencies, which overall shape the individuals' attitudes.

Furthermore, attitude as one of the affective components shapes how the visually impaired learners approach English language learning. According to Getie (2020) attitude is primarily defined by emotional engagement, including feelings, self-perception and social relationships. It highlights the influential role of culture in shaping individuals' experiences and emotions, which in turn affects their attitudes towards the outside world. Additionally, Getie (2020) proceeds to stipulate that social context plays a significant role in shaping people's attitudes towards learning English. The social context encompasses factors such as family or home environment, peer groups, the broader community, as well as the culture of the target language speakers.

Studies conducted in other countries, such as Indonesia by Marzulina, Holandiyah, Harto, Herizal, Amrina and Nopalia (2021) and Pakistan by Zahra, Butt and Bhatti (2022), put forth various challenges that the second language learners of English with visual impairment face in their learning. These studies have shown that the difficulties encountered by L2 learners involve insufficient teaching materials, insufficient motivation, negative attitudes, inadequate teaching methods, poor classroom conditions, lack of expertise, lack of enthusiasm, unrealistic parents' expectations of the teacher and less supportive family environment to do homework.

Moreover, Chataika, McKenzie, Swart and Lyner-Cleophas (2012) focused on the access to education in Africa about persons with disabilities. The advancement of education for children with disabilities, as well as the expansion of education beyond the primary stage appears to be progressing slowly in Africa. The authors have stated that, in Botswana, the government has prioritised the increment of access to education and also attempted to incorporate special needs education modules in teacher training programs to help future educators become more aware of the diverse needs of their prospective students.

The challenges highlighted in the studies conducted in Indonesia, Pakistan and African countries (Zahra et al., 2022; Marzulina et al., 2021; Chataika et al., 2012) such as lack of materials and inadequate teaching methods characterise the education system and learning predicament for the learners with visual impairment in Lesotho. In Lesotho, the government

has created several documents and policies, such as The Curriculum and Assessment Policy, the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy and the Lesotho Education Act 2010, which advocate for education that is inclusive in nature.

In Lesotho back then,

An education policy was passed in the latter part of the 1980s, stating that all learners should have access to the curriculum and an integrated education system. However, policy implementation still remains a challenge. Limited resources such as insufficient teacher training, inadequate staff support and the lack of accountability and monitoring have been some of the barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education and training in Lesotho (Chataika et al. 2012, p. 387).

Currently, the 2018 policy on inclusive education in Lesotho is geared towards removing barriers to inclusion and delivering quality education to learners with special needs in a regular classroom. On the other hand, the curriculum and assessment policy shows the significance of English as a medium of instruction and a foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.

However, in spite of all these efforts by the government of Lesotho through the policies, the learners with visual impairment still face multiple barriers to their provision of quality education, in particular, in Lesotho where there is little to no implementation of the policies. These challenges range from inaccessible learning materials, unaltered teaching methods, negative attitudes amongst peers and teachers to inaccessible infrastructure.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The previous studies have shown that globally, children with disabilities face significant challenges, such as lack of teaching and learning materials. In Lesotho in particular, visually impaired high school students face various challenges, such as a curriculum that is not inclusive and lack of assistive technology.

As is evident, the government of Lesotho has created multiple policies, such as the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018), Lesotho Education Act (2010) and the constitution, as a means striving to promote the provision of quality and inclusive education for all the learners regardless of their disabilities. However, these policies and constitutional provisions are not met since the visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools still face multiple barriers to their learning, such as lack of resources and infrastructure in schools. The goal of trying to

meet the needs of learners with special education needs in Lesotho high schools is futile. Hence, the current research seeks to explore specifically the social and cultural factors that affect English as a second language learning by the visually impaired learners at St. Catherine's High School, Maseru.

1.3 Aim of the Study

As stipulated earlier that the implementation of the policies is still a serious problem in Lesotho, which reveals the gap between the formation of policies and their implementation in Lesotho. Hence, this study aims to unveil the effects of sociocultural factors on the English L2 learning of the visually impaired learners at St. Catherine's High School.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To review how the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) addresses challenges the visually impaired learners in high schools in Lesotho face.
2. To identify sociocultural factors that directly impact the learning of English L2 for the learners with visual impairment.
3. To unveil how visually impaired learners and relevant stakeholders tackle the challenges they both face.

1.5 Research Questions

1. In what ways does the approved Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho address the challenges faced by visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers?
2. What sociocultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of the visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools?
3. How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges?

1.6 Assumptions

The research assumption for the present study is that the visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools face multiple challenges in their learning process. Additionally, relevant stakeholders, like the members of the Special Education Unit (SEU), question setters at the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) and caregivers of the learners with visual

impairment, may be defensive and not open to communicate. Some participants may also not be available at their places of work.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in raising awareness about the challenges faced by visually impaired high school learners in Lesotho, and the findings are intended to influence policy reform and implementation by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and other stakeholders.

1.8 Rationale

Knowledge of the challenges of the visually impaired learners in other countries is relayed, but there are huge gaps in information pertaining to the experiences and needs of the learners with visual impairment, specifically in Lesotho.

1.9 Scope of Research

This qualitative case study has been conducted at St. Catherine's High School in the Maseru district of Lesotho, focusing on the sociocultural factors affecting the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners.

The study has adopted a qualitative method because it allows the exploration of a phenomenon in its context using a variety of data sources. It allows various data collection methods, revealing different facets of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

1.10 Operational Terms

Disability – according to MoET (2018), disability is the interaction between impairments and societal attitudes or environmental barriers that limit people's ability to engage fully and equally in community life. A disability is any condition of the body or mind impairment that makes it more difficult for an individual with the condition to do specific activities and restricts their interaction with the world around them (Neupane, 2022).

Inclusive curriculum – an approach to education that aims to ensure that all the students, regardless of their abilities, have equal access to the curriculum and learning opportunities. It is a process that addresses and responds to the diversity of learners and reduces exclusion in education and increases participation in societies. It involves the adaptation of the content, curriculum, approaches, structures and strategies, as well as teaching methods to suit all

learners. This is guided by a common vision that all the children in the same age group must be in school and that the mainstream school system is responsible for educating every child (MoET, 2018).

Impairment – involves damage, loss or deterioration of a body part caused by disease, trauma, genetic issues or similar factors (MoET, 2018).

Visual impairment – this section explains what visual impairment is. It is a condition where one's ability to see is reduced to a point where their eyesight is not sufficient for everyday activities. It is a visual condition marked by limited or impaired eyesight that cannot be restored through corrective lenses, medical interventions or surgical procedures (Marzulina et al., 2021).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The study aims to unveil sociocultural factors that affect the learning of English L2 learning of the visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools. To set ground for the study, relevant aspects of disabilities, such as inclusive education, the Medical Model and the Social Model of Disability, which serves as the theoretical framework that guides the study, are discussed. Then, the literature related to various challenges visually impaired students face in their schooling journey shall be reviewed. For some studies, impairment and disability are used interchangeably to refer to the loss of vision under discussion.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research leans on the Social Model. The model started with the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976 and was further developed by Michael Oliver in his book *The Politics of Disablement* (1990). Unlike the Medical Model, which sees disability as an individual problem related to impairment that needs medical treatment or personal adjustment, the Social Model of Disability believes that society creates barriers and these barriers come from social structures, attitudes, and practices that exclude individuals with impairments (Massoumeh & Leila, 2012). Furthermore, Massoumeh and Leila (2012) stipulate that this model emphasises that the purpose of education is to remedy, fix and change students with disabilities to make them normal.

According to UPIAS (1976), disability refers to the limitations or barriers in activity that result from the current social structure, which neglects to consider individuals with physical impairments and consequently marginalises them from participating in mainstream social activities. Oliver (1990) expands on this idea by highlighting that disability ought to be viewed not merely because of impairment, but as a socially constructed issue that emerges from the inability of institutions, environments, and attitudes to meet varied needs. He asserts that true inclusion of individuals with disabilities requires systemic change rather than just individual adjustments. Additionally, disability refers to a restriction or disadvantage of activity caused by society through its inhibition of their full participation in mainstream activities of people with impairments (Goering, 2015).

This study examines how sociocultural factors affect visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools as they learn English as a second language. The Social Model is vital to the study because it moves the focus away from the learners' disabilities. Instead, it examines how schools, teachers, communities, and policies help or hinder these learners in their English language education. It also provides a lens that facilitates the understanding of the experiences of visually impaired learners in English language learning. The Social Model of Disability highlights the importance of sociocultural factors, such as people's attitudes and the accessibility of materials and resources, in paving direction for the experiences of visually impaired learners (Barnes & Mercer, 2003). According to Shakespeare (2010), the Social Model of Disability speaks of disability as something structural and public-based rather than an individual problem that strives to remove disabilities in the environment. The Social Model provides a lens through which to analyse not only physical and material barriers, such as the lack of accessible materials or assistive technologies, but also attitudinal and cultural barriers such as stigma, stereotyping or exclusionary teaching practices.

Barnes and Mercer (2003) agree that the Social Model has the advantage of shedding light on how educational policies and other educational practices could be adjusted to cater better for the learners with impairments and modify their overall educational achievements. Therefore, this model is very applicable for the current study as it assists in the identification of the sociocultural barriers that the visually impaired learners face in their learning. Again, explains how the learners, together with their teachers, can overcome challenges; it also assists in the analysis of how the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) can be adjusted where it proves not to meet the requirements of the education of learners with visual impairment in Lesotho high schools.

The approved Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) supports an education system that includes all learners, even those with impairments, in mainstream schools. This study also looks at the gap between what the policy says and how it is put into practice. Oliver (1990) highlighted that simply including students without making actual changes does not solve the reasons behind exclusion. Using this framework, the study aims to find the social and cultural barriers that make it hard for visually impaired learners to learn English as a second language. It also evaluates how to implement inclusive education more effectively in Lesotho.

2.2 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a direct response to the Social Model of Disability, which argues that societal barriers, not impairments, are the sources of exclusion of learners with impairments (Ratief and Letšosa, 2018). Building on this model, inclusive education promotes the removal of barriers within the school environment, ensuring that all learners, regardless of ability, are supported equitably (MoET, 2018). According to Kisanji (1999), there is a historical basis for inclusive education. The majority of nations endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which in Article 3.1 emphasises that basic education must be accessible to every child. Additionally, Article 26 affirms the right of all individuals to suitable education, irrespective of their gender, religion, ethnicity or race.

Inclusive education is education that caters to all learners and embraces their differences. It promotes the placement of learners with additional needs in general education environments. This is also reflected by the MoET (2018) through its Inclusive Policy of (2018), which describes inclusive education as a means of meeting the varied needs of all learners. It promotes the creation of a supportive learning environment tailored to learners' individual needs, enhancing both their academic progress and social growth. The core objective of the policy is to ensure that students with special educational needs are fully integrated into Lesotho's education system, preparing them for independent living and meaningful participation in society.

2.3 Factors Affecting the Learning and Participation of Visually Impaired Students in Schools Globally

In Australia, Opie (2018) conducted a study in Victoria to investigate the experiences of the learners with visual impairment in mainstream secondary schools. Attending local mainstream schools is a norm for the visually impaired learners in Australia. Besides regular teachers, who may or may not have special education training, the specialists visiting teachers (VT) are hired to assist in the teaching of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). They also advise and support class teachers, the visually impaired student, their parents and the school community at large. What was apparently problematic with the visiting teachers was that some lacked enough training to do their expected duties. With this ECC, as suggested the core part of learning for the visually impaired, some teachers and most schools have no clue about it in Australia in as much as they teach some visually impaired learners. The teachers further revealed that they

mostly get training on mobility issues with visually impaired students, not anything more than that.

Opie (2018) also found that employing specialist visiting teachers is costly. Therefore, they come to help scarcely, and this affects learning negatively. Some participants pointed out that they had to deal with negative attitudes from their visiting teachers, class teachers, peers and aides, which sometimes led to them dropping out and being home-schooled. The participants also discussed that the learners with visual impairment could not access the curriculum at the same standard as their sighted peers. They struggled to access tasks provided, and one apparent barrier was that the teachers failed to provide accurate resources despite the learners outlining what they needed beforehand. The participants also relayed that they were excluded from visual aspects of the curriculum, which encompassed subjects, like Science, Sports and Mathematics, without their consent or seeking alternative methods because of the perceived dangers. The teachers said that those practicals are dangerous and stereotypical views of what the learners with visual impairment could or could not do (Opie, 2018).

The importance of the ECC in the education of students with visual impairment is discussed. As an addition to the standard curriculum, the ECC has to be incorporated in the learning of students with visual impairment to maximise and facilitate their learning to the fullest potential. Opie (2018: 76) continues to explain the importance of the Expanded Core Curriculum by stating that:

The Expanded Core Curriculum comprises of [sic] nine areas: compensatory or access skills, orientation and mobility skills and concepts, social interaction skills, use of technology and assistive technology, career education, independent living skills, recreational and leisure skills, self-determination skills and sensory efficiency skills.

Under the Expanded Core Curriculum, social interaction skills are vital to the learning of visually impaired students. Most visually impaired participants in the study responded that they were socially excluded. They could not make friends and often sat alone during the lessons, and this was a drawback because they relied on their sighted peers to read aloud what the teacher was writing on the board so that they did not lag. The ineffective delivery and access to the curriculum proved to be a huge hindrance to the learners with visual impairment. They often felt like a burden when requesting learning materials in accessible formats. It was evident that the participants struggled to advocate for themselves in environments where teachers

lacked awareness and were too occupied to provide materials in suitable formats. In such settings, learners were expected to conform, and seeking help from teachers made them feel as though they appeared incapable (Opie, 2018).

Although Opie (2018) included participants who are learners with visual impairments along with some of their educators, this perspective does not fully capture all elements involved in the educational experience of visually impaired individuals in Australia. This limitation arises because it concentrates on the delivery of the Expanded Core Curriculum by visiting educators who engage with the students fewer than eight times a year. Consequently, the present study aims to collect data regarding the teaching and learning of the standard curriculum provided in secondary schools by regular teachers and students with visual impairments within the context of Lesotho.

Neupane (2022) conducted narrative-based qualitative research within the Nepalese setting to narrate the factors that hinder the learning of visually impaired children at school and at home. Through purposive sampling, in-depth interviews were used, and several factors were discussed there. The perception of the disability of individuals plays an important part in the learning of the visually impaired. Negative attitudes towards disabilities not only disempower the visually impaired students, but they also serve as a pathway for social exclusion and isolation. Those negative attitudes prevail because some society members still believe that impairment is punishment for a sin committed in a past life, while others regard impairment as a burden. Again, poverty is another barrier. Some families are so poverty-stricken that they cannot provide schooling needs and medical intervention needed to assist the learning process of a visually impaired student.

To add on, Neupane (2022) discussed another hindrance that is common, which is societal discrimination. This discrimination is an inequality between people based on illness, impairment, sexuality and any other element of diversity. Furthermore, there is also the factor of accessibility of education where schools proved not to have inclusive curricular and extra-curricular activities. Visually impaired students also complain that teachers misunderstand them and often assume that they cannot participate in some classroom activities even when they can do so.

The above study by Neupane (2022) was limited to only one community school, which does not reveal much information because it is centred around the participants in one environment. Moreover, the crucial element of bringing insight into the role that the government of Nepal

plays is not stipulated. Hence, the current study is going to build on the findings of Neupane's study and also relay some measures that the government has taken to facilitate the learning of learners with impaired vision in secondary schools.

In Southern Africa, Mpu and Adu (2021) carried out a qualitative multiple case study in Buffalo City Metro, South Africa, to evaluate how far South Africa has come as a developing nation concerning inclusive education. The research highlighted the difficulties faced in educating learners with disabilities within regular schools in South Africa. They reported that there is poor physical infrastructure that affects learners with disabilities. There are also poor facilities in schools; a specific example was a set that there are no large print books and braille that cater for the impaired learners. Finally, it was found that stigmatisation and name-calling still prevail in the mainstream schools, and due to lack of knowledge and skills, the teachers still associate impairment with witchcraft. Hence, their negative attitudes towards teaching and interacting with the learners with impairments, and this makes learning difficult for such learners.

This adoption of a multiple case study is beneficial for the study because these discussed findings were emergent in multiple schools, not just one school, and that may increase the applicability of some generalisations pertaining the learning of visually impaired learners in South Africa. Furthermore, the use of the interpretive analysis allowed the researchers to successfully identify recurring themes in the schools. However, Mpu and Adu (2021) conducted a study that is limited in scope and primarily focused on South Africa only. The barriers are limited to the availability of resources, infrastructural problems and a curriculum that is not inclusive in relation to all the learners with impairments, and to bridge the gap, the current research strives to bring in the effects of cultural and social elements into the learning atmosphere and narrowing it down from all the learners with impairments to specifically learners with visual impairment.

2.4 Sociocultural Factors Affecting English Learning

In Pakistan, Zahra et al. (2022) investigated the "challenges that teachers face in teaching the visually impaired students English language". Firstly, they complained about lack of resources in schools for the visually impaired learners. The resources include audio aids, braille English books and recorders, which derail their learning progress because they forget since they rely on audio materials.

Secondly, there is a lack of resources at home to assist the learners in carrying out their tasks. This makes it difficult for the teachers to give out assignments. Furthermore, the teachers struggled with the learners who had negative attitudes towards learning English and the lack of English teaching methods and aids for the visually impaired learners. Incorrect and/or inaccurate conversion of visual material to strictly audio proves to be problematic. The findings also revealed that a less supportive family environment for doing homework plays an enormous part in the learning of visually impaired students.

The study was conducted on special education teachers who were highly qualified. The goal of Zahra et al.'s (2022) study was discovering the obstacles that English language teachers faced while teaching English to students with vision impairment at the secondary level. The knowledge gathered does not include mainstream schools; it does not involve the views of the learners as the key participants in the learning of English. Also, it does not consider the factors beyond the classroom. Therefore, the current study will focus on the missing aspects and interview regular teachers in the mainstream schools and their visually impaired learners to explore the factors in and out of the classroom that affect the learning of English as a second language for the learners with visual impairment.

Hamid et al. (2022) carried out their study in three private universities in Indonesia and had their participants as the visually impaired learners to verify that the learners' sociocultural and educational backgrounds immensely affect their motivation to learn English. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a new culture of learning was adopted, learning shifted from face-to-face to online learning worldwide. Hamid et al. conducted a study that assesses this new culture, and they discovered some of the sociocultural factors that affect the learning of English as a second language for the visually impaired learners in Indonesia. The findings of the study revealed that the teachers are more likely to assign group projects in online classes, and the discussion with peers proves to be very beneficial in the learning process of the visually impaired learners since they assert independence through practice, question asking and sharing of assignments.

Hamid et al. (2022) also revealed that learning hugely depends on the use of assistive technology, and this makes accessibility of materials easy for all the students and saves time during the lessons. However, it becomes a drawback for the visually impaired learners because they need more time during the lessons. The visually impaired learners have a hard time understanding materials provided during virtual classes because of their limited vision, and

they also faced difficulties, such as unstable internet connections, lack of finances to buy data and lack of digital literacy, which contribute a lot to the demotivation of learners.

The study of Hamid et al. (2022) provides valuable information on the impacts of sociocultural factors on the visually impaired learners' motivation in online learning. However, it does not consider any physical learning experiences or individual learning styles of the visually impaired learners or the role that the difference in their culture or background plays in their learning. The current research will build on Hamid et al.'s (2022) findings pertaining the motivation towards online learning in Lesotho and further explore the effects of these sociocultural factors in a physical classroom setting, bringing an understanding on some measures that may be taken to combat the barriers identified. The study will also assess the effectiveness of assistive technology in the learning of the learners with visual impairment.

According to Rahman et al.'s (2024) study conducted in Indonesia, they learnt that unlike the sighted learners, the impaired learners encounter increased physical, social and emotional challenges in the course of their education. The study discovered that engaging in informal English activities, like listening to songs and using social media, improves the learning process of English for the visually impaired learners due to a great deal of socialisation. This is also dependent on the socio-economic status, whether parents can provide such conducive environments for their children. This conveys the importance of the availability of out-of-the-classroom materials in English learning of the visually impaired students. Moreover, being immersed in the families that practise socio-cultural norms of watching television, reading books and listening to music contributes to positively influencing the learning of English.

The purpose of listening to those English songs, watching those English movies and joining activities, such as English clubs, was revealed by one participant as effective strategies to enhance their receptive and productive skills. The participant further conveyed that such activities motivated them as the visually impaired learners to practise their speaking skills. This means being in a receptive social environment that allows them to practise what they learnt with their peers without the fear of being wrong (Rahman et al., 2024).

As informative as the study is, it is centred around one participant who is no longer a student, but an adult who was once a student; interviews were administered, and some journal entries were used. This is disadvantageous because it provides information based on issues that were a reality during the participant's time as a learner, which might have changed at the time the research was conducted, the study also focused only on, out of the classroom factors. Bearing

that in mind, the current study focused on, out of the classroom factors and the factors in the classroom that affect the learning of English as a second language for the visually impaired learners who are still in school.

Furthermore, Aryanti (2014) undertook a qualitative case study in Indonesia at a centre of language development at one university to discover difficulties that the learners with visual impairment face in learning English. The instruments used in the study were interviews and observations. Aryanti noted that, in learning English as a second language, there are two major determinants that the successful learning depends on external and internal factors. The external factors include the physical and social environment, cultural settings and formal teaching, while the internal factors include the learner's impairment condition and onset, attitudes towards the second language, motivation, learning strategies and personal intelligence.

Furthermore, seating arrangement is crucial. Visually impaired learners need direct access to the teacher to receive verbal cues accurately with minimal background noise. Teachers should adopt teaching strategies that promote teamwork and incorporate technology. They should also write all language points on the board, spelling out technical terms when needed.

Assessment methods are vital too to monitor the success of the learning process; hence, oral examinations are best for the visually impaired learners. In the instances where assistants are used to read exam questions to the learners, they encounter problems if an assistant is not proficient in English. This puts a visually impaired learner at a disadvantage compared to their sighted peers. Finally, it discovered that the teachers need to make all the learning materials accessible to the visually impaired prior to lessons so that they acquaint themselves with the material for the learners to achieve maximal results in the learning of English (Aryanti, 2014).

Aryanti (2014) made significant observations as a teacher and researcher at the Language Development Centre (P2B) of UIN Sunan Kalijaga about the challenges visually impaired learners face during their process of learning English. Aryanti also noted the strategies that the teachers could employ for successful learning of the language for these visually impaired learners. However, the observations are limited to the researcher's classes, and the internal barriers identified are only relevant to the skills needed to learn English, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The current study will also focus on the internal factors of visually impaired learners using a broader perspective encompassing the influence of sociocultural factors.

Tawfiq (2020) explored the sociocultural influences on second language acquisition in the context of Saudi Arabia. The study identified five key factors believed to impact L2 learning. The first involves personality traits, such as self-efficacy, willingness, extraversion and introversion, which are closely associated with second language development. The second factor is motivation and its role in language learning. The third concerns the influence of stereotypes, while the fourth addresses social distance as a sociocultural factor. The final factor is students' attitudes towards L2. Tawfiq (2020) raised an issue that favourable attitudes towards language learning can be encouraged through the influence of positive role models, such as teachers and family members. By engaging in open conversation, actively listening to learners' views, and offering supportive feedback, these individuals help create an encouraging environment. This, in turn, reduces negative thought patterns and unfavourable perceptions of the second language community. This motivation stems from attitudinal characteristics in the visually impaired learner's home. In this instance, the target community refers to the learners with visual impairment and their willingness to learn English as a second language. It is through Tawfiq's description that the learners' attitudes and lack of positive models in learning English are discovered to be detrimental socio-cultural factors that may hinder their learning of English.

Tawfiq's (2020) study is related to the current study because it assesses the extent to which sociocultural factors affect the learning of English as a second language. However, the current study will focus on visually impaired learners in Lesotho to gauge whether the sociocultural factors discussed above are still applicable to them, or whether their effect is similar.

In Palembang, Indonesia, a qualitative case study was undertaken by Marzulina et al. (2021) to investigate the teachers' problems in teaching English to the visually impaired students. They interviewed the teachers and used document analysis to gain information and understanding of the subject. The findings of the study were that some barriers were the student's attitude, behaviour, lack of instructional materials, equipment and poor classroom conditions. In the instance of visually impaired learners, they cannot use their sight to decipher things around them, such as colours, facial expressions and book illustrations. Consequently, teaching English to the visually impaired learners needs training, eagerness and seriousness of the teacher; so, where such skills lack, it becomes a barrier to the learning of a second language of a visually impaired learner.

Marzulina et al. (2021) utilised document analysis as another method of data collection, just as this current study will adopt this data collection method to analyse the Lesotho Inclusive

Education Policy (2018) document. This would be done to get its effectiveness in mitigating the challenges high school that the visually impaired learners face. The researchers identified challenges in the English classroom solely from the teacher's perspective; however, this approach fails to capture the critical issues experienced directly by the visually impaired learners during English instruction. For this reason, this study will not only look at the challenges from the teachers' perspective but also from the learners' view.

An ethnographic case study was conducted in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, by Susanto and Nanda (2018). It was revealed that learning English for a visually impaired learner can be a struggle where the teachers do not possess enough knowledge to teach them effectively. Some students also thought that their teachers lacked interest in helping them succeed because of the extra effort required to understand and provide for their needs. Some teachers were reportedly insensitive and lacked care for the condition of the visually impaired learners, and this caused frustration for the learners and badly affected their learning of English in the classroom (Susanto & Nanda, 2018).

Susanto and Nanda's (2018) study brought forth informative strategies and assistive tools to use when teaching English to the visually impaired learners. This is because the study was conducted in a special school, which is equipped to teach the visually impaired students and has the resources. Unfortunately, the study did not look at the learning experience of English out of the classroom setting; hence, the current study will add more knowledge by exploring some social aspects that affect the learning of English for the visually impaired in a mainstream school.

Tran and Pho (2020) also conducted a case study that was reliant on in-depth interviews with two visually impaired people in Vietnam to gain information on how they acquired English, the difficulties they encountered, and how they overcame them. The research indicated that a significant obstacle that can impede English learning for visually impaired students is the limited accessibility to adaptive technology and alternative resources. Nevertheless, with support from their families and personal determination, these students are capable of learning English successfully. In the absence of suitable facilities for audio learning, they must depend on explanations from teachers, classmates, and their own recollections because braille lacks transcription systems to convert auditory content into written form to aid in their note-taking.

In addition, English phonetic forms differ from English graphic forms, and this may hinder the learning of a visually impaired learner because braille does not encompass any phonetic forms.

Also, being in contact with native speakers facilitates their imitation skills. However, it is sometimes difficult to learn English if the learner's home language differs from English substantially. This was evident when one participant, who is visually impaired, relayed that she had to migrate from one place to another with different accents being used in those regions. It is crucial for visually impaired learners to receive suitable guidance from educators and sighted classmates, essential assistance from their families and communities, and adequate support from governmental and charitable organizations (Tran & Pho, 2020).

The review of Tran and Pho's (2020) study relates to the current study because it also seeks to answer the same question of how visually impaired learners overcome the challenges to their learning of English. Hence, the findings of their study might be applicable to the context of Lesotho. Further, the current study will build on the available information by conducting the interviews with not only visually impaired learners, like Tran and Pho (2020), but also with the teachers of the visually impaired learners to grasp how they combat the challenges they meet in teaching English to the visually impaired learner.

Guanoluisa, Claudio, Cevallos, Colcha, Taipe, and Pilatasig (2022) carried out phenomenological qualitative research in Ecuador, South America, focusing on the experiences of visually impaired learners in teaching and learning English. The selected participants included two visually impaired students and their instructor from a public school in Latacunga, Ecuador. Data were gathered through interviews and observations, which were then analysed using a thematic analysis framework. One of the evident challenges was the students' negative perceptions. Since there are no available teachers trained in braille. The learners observe their teachers struggle to use braille, and this demotivates them. Also, the students felt that they did not contribute to group work because the teachers organised the groups, which did not enable a visually impaired learner to contribute in their discussion. Learning materials for the visually impaired learners should be prepared in advance to ensure that they are accessible and readily available during the instruction. In the absence of such materials, learning English for those visually impaired learners proved to be difficult. There were also the factors of being underlooked, lack of materials and training of teachers that affected the learning of English for visually impaired learners.

Conversely, the study also viewed how learning of English was successfully achieved by the learners with visual impairment. Guanoluisa et al. (2022) found that the positive views of visually impaired students regarding English learning depended on the cooperation of their

teachers and peers, along with a favourable attitude towards an inclusive classroom that provides equal chances to engage in lessons and enhance their English learning experience without their impairment being a barrier.

The study of Guanoluisa et al. (2022) was conducted in one public school; hence, it would not be applicable to draw any generalisations based solely on its findings. However, some aspects of the above study might also relate to the findings that will be made in the current study in Lesotho because Guanoluisa et al.'s used interviews as one of its data collection methods like the current study, it also portrays how the teachers and learners act to overcome the challenges in the classroom in Ecuador. Similarly, the current study seeks to investigate how the teachers and visually impaired learners combat the challenges that they are faced with in Lesotho secondary schools.

Navarrete and Watson (2013) wrote a paper to assess the impact of language and sociocultural factors on learning in North America. They indicated that educational encounters can be improved by studying in classrooms that are culturally and linguistically diverse, as students benefit from the experiences and beliefs of others that vary from their own. They also learn to remove prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes through interaction with diverse cultures. Additionally, the culture, language and socio-economic status of students vary and have a direct impact on their learning. For example, the students from higher socio-economic backgrounds excel in language and readiness skills due to their early exposure to English than their peers from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Getie (2020) conducted a study in Ethiopia to determine the factors that affect the attitudes of the learners towards learning English. The study concluded that students' attitude and motivation are crucial to the learning process and should be considered a core element of second language teaching. An individual's attitude is strongly influenced by their environment, where being in a positive setting increases the likelihood of success. Moreover, traits such as high self-esteem, willingness to take risks, strong self-efficacy and low anxiety levels further contribute to effective language learning.

Under Brown (2001, p. 61), as cited in Getie (2020), attitude is characterised by an immense proportion of emotional involvement, such as feelings, self and relationships in community. It emphasises the power of culture, shaping one's life, feelings and attitudes towards the external world.

The study carried out by Getie (2020) had a very huge sample group, and that helped the researcher to make some generalisations that the students had positive attitudes towards learning English. Adversely, the focus of the study was on all the learners, but the current study is aimed at certain learners, visually impaired learners. The current study will also narrow down the factors to those that are sociocultural.

In conclusion, most studies revealed that the socio-cultural factors that affect the learning of English L2 can be internal and external. They ranged from motivation, availability of resources, positive and negative attitudes up to lack of knowledge, training and appropriate teaching styles and most importantly, the humongous role that socioeconomic status plays in the facilitation of learning of the visually impaired learners in the classroom and out of the classroom.

2.5 Challenges in the Education of the Visually Impaired in Lesotho

A research study by Matlosa and Matobo (2007) took place in higher education institutions in Lesotho, focusing on the National University of Lesotho and the Lesotho College of Education. Their aim was to assess the level of social exclusion and inclusion experienced by learners with disabilities. In this research, social exclusion refers to the various processes that prevent a learner with a disability from being able to contribute meaningfully to their community's progress due to their lack of access to the quality education they are entitled to. One observation was that the guardians of visually impaired students play a part in their educational exclusion due to their hesitance to enrol them in school, as these children have historically been viewed as a stigma. Additionally, it was noted that the government also contributes to the exclusion of learners with visual impairments. In Matlosa and Matobo's study, it was even discovered that several schools at primary, secondary and tertiary level were ill-equipped to cater for the needs of visually impaired learners. Further, special education was found not form part of the curriculum of Lesotho; hence, there were few teachers who were skilled to teach the learners with various impairments. Additionally, the teachers and lecturers lacked identification and assessment skills pertaining the learners with disabilities; hence, they could not provide necessary intervention for successful learning. Specifically, for learners with visual impairment, there is a need for specialised equipment in their learning, which the teachers should know how to use to assist the learners in using it. However, it proves problematic for the teachers, too. In this regard, the government is held accountable for the exclusion of the learners with visual impairment in learning through lack of adequate training of teachers, delay

in policy formation and implementation, and lack of provision of essential materials for these visually impaired learners.

Still at tertiary institutes, Mosia and Phasha (2020) conducted a qualitative exploratory case study at the National University of Lesotho under the Social Constructionism Model. The Model advocates for a barrier-free society for all the minority groups, including people with disabilities. They used convenience and snowballing sampling techniques to identify their participants and then generated data through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, using interpretative phenomenological analysis. They discovered that, from secondary school up to higher institutions of learning in Lesotho, the learners with visual impairment face multiple barriers, such as curriculum that is not inclusive, inaccessible environments and insufficient support services. The focal point of the study was NUL, where students with impairments face restricted access to educational materials, information and communication technologies, and assistive tools. Mosia and Phasha (2020) proceed to say that their academic options are also limited, as they are often excluded from certain faculties due to presumed limitations. For instance, they are typically admitted into programmes within the Faculties of Education, Humanities and Law, as their perceived difficulties with Mathematics and Statistics hinder their admission into other programmes. This can also be put as a barrier caused by a lack of resources at the University to teach those numerical courses.

Furthermore, Mosia and Phasha (2020) identified some more challenges, such as the state of the physical environment, unsuitable learning resources, staff attitudes and support for their psychosocial needs. The authors discussed that the environment is unsuitable and quite inaccessible for the learners with impairments. Most of the buildings are accessed through stairs and a few ramps only, and this makes navigation for the visually impaired learner quite difficult. It shows that the infrastructure is for the able-bodied. Additionally, the lack of enough paving exposes the visually impaired students to potholes, and the uneven paving also makes mobility difficult for them. The students also talked about lack of support and indifferent attitudes. Lecturers tend not to consider the presence of visually impaired students since they write on the board and point at certain elements during lessons, not catering for those who cannot see. Some do not provide materials after lessons as promised, and the visually impaired learners end up not reporting to management because it appears as though they are seeking attention or are too demanding.

In an attempt to unveil the state of the education of the visually impaired, specifically in the secondary schools, Ralejoe (2019) conducted a study to collect the teachers' views on inclusive education for secondary school visually impaired learners in Lesotho. The teachers relayed some challenges these visually impaired learners faced in their schools. The physical environment is not suitable for the learners with visual impairment. The teachers affirmed that the visually impaired learners faced problems because somewhere on the campuses, some places were inaccessible. This says that the learners with visual impairment could bump into trees or fall into deep furrows that were uncovered. Some support teachers lamented that they were overloaded with work in schools because they had to braille all the material for all the subjects taught on top of having their own classes to teach. Most importantly, lack of Perkins braille for the learners with visual impairment affects their learning because it is ideal for each learner to have their own. The teachers also expressed much concern over the lack of inclusivity of the curriculum because it does not grant inclusive teaching strategies since the learners who use braille need a slower teaching pace because braille consumes a lot of time. This was evident when they disclosed that the content is overloaded for the learners with visual impairment and the teaching time to cover it is limited.

Ralejoe (2019) continues to reveal hindrances pertaining the Lesotho curriculum in relation to these visually impaired learners in secondary schools. ECoL is responsible for setting terminal examination papers, but teachers reported that the brailled versions of these papers were often unclear, especially in sections involving diagrams, which the visually impaired students are unable to interpret. Therefore, they pleaded with the ECoL to cease the malpractice, but to no avail. Delayed school fees payment by the government and guardians made learning difficult because schools cannot buy essentials, like food and teaching materials for these learners.

To evaluate the effectiveness of regular teachers in instructing students with visual impairments in mainstream schools, Tseeke (2021) carried out a qualitative case study using the lens of Social Cognitive Theory. The study collected data through face-to-face interviews and classroom observations. A key challenge that emerged was the participants' limited knowledge and skillset. Teachers in mainstream secondary schools acknowledged their insufficient knowledge regarding how to teach students with visual impairments. The author emphasizes that this gap in understanding how to include visually impaired learners in the classroom and adapt teaching strategies and resources adversely impacts the teachers. This often results in stress, frustration, and negative attitudes toward their roles, consequently affecting the students. Another challenge is inadequate teacher training, which Tseeke (2021: 8) further states that:

Inadequate training that would provide skills and knowledge of how to accommodate learners with visual impairment in inclusive classrooms resulted in teachers' sense of low self-efficacy, which manifested in negative attitudes towards inclusion of learners with visual impairment. A lack of training hampers [the] teachers' ability to address the academic and social needs of learners with visual impairment. Insufficient training in inclusive education leaves teachers unsure and unprepared to handle various learning abilities of learners with visual impairment in their classrooms.

One important finding of Tseeke's (2021) study was that MoET (2018) does not extend enough support to mainstream teachers by offering in-service training and employing more teachers. Finally, there is a factor of support and resources; just like most research showed earlier, lack of resources is also evident in Lesotho. There is a shortage of materials, such as braille, large-print textbooks and computers. Without teaching and learning materials, teachers find it hard to help students with visual impairments. This makes it difficult for these students to remember information, which is important for their referencing and revision (Tseeke, 2021).

According to the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ, 2023), the children with impairments, inclusive of those with visual impairment, still face exclusion in Lesotho. After assessing the situation in Lesotho, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) identified several barriers, including the lack of a fully inclusive education system, experiences of stigma and social exclusion, financial difficulties such as insufficient funding and high fees, weak policy implementation, limited capacity for monitoring progress, inconsistencies and gaps in legislation, poor infrastructure, restricted access to educational resources, and insufficient teacher training.

To begin with, the education system falls short of being fully inclusive. Many children with disabilities continue to be left out of mainstream schools across the country. In approximately 4,000 schools in Lesotho, only less than 20 schools can accommodate the learners with disabilities, and as a result, it is a vast possibility that most impaired children do not go to school. Secondly, they face stigma and social exclusion in schools and within the society because of misinformation about disabilities in government officials, school staff and parents. This leads to those children being bullied and kept hidden at home. Thirdly, there is a crisis of financial constraints: funding and fees. The government allocates funding for regular education, but a limited portion is spent on inclusive education. School workers revealed that

the funding covers mainly the teachers' salaries, and as a result, they opt for funding from parents and external donors. When that fails, the learners with disabilities sometimes decide to drop schooling due to a lack of resources that facilitate their learning (ICJ, 2023).

Further, the ICJ (2023) discovered that there is an inadequate implementation and monitoring of the policy. The delayed review of strategies hinders the government from effectively implementing the policy in a targeted manner, and the MoET officials who were interviewed reported a lack of transport and basics to visit schools regularly. Most importantly, The Special Education Unit (SEU) is understaffed and lacks expertise to perform its basic functions of screening, identification and assessment. Additionally, the paper talks about inaccessible surroundings and inadequate learning materials. Seemingly, the government and its partners, including United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), provide assistive devices that are inadequate. There is a report of shortage of basic assistive devices, like glasses, hearing aids and wheelchairs. In addition, school infrastructure remains largely inaccessible, and the curriculum has not been modified to accommodate learners with disabilities. As a result, these learners are more likely to repeat grades compared to their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, ICJ (2023) highlights a lack of sufficient teacher training. There is a noticeable gap in both pre-service preparation and ongoing professional development focused on inclusive education. Teachers already working with learners with impairments receive little to no in-service support, which contributes to the inadequate adaptation of teaching methods and classroom environments to meet diverse learning needs.

Lebona, Monyane, and Mukuna (2024) LSEN as individuals who encounter problems in participating and fully benefiting from educational offerings as a result of persistent physical, cognitive, emotional and communicative challenges, which lead them to learn differently compared to their peers without disorders. It is based on the definition that visually impaired learners are part of the discoveries made in this research. In rural areas of Lesotho, the learners with special educational needs lack appropriate infrastructure, lack of resources and lack of teachers suitably trained to teach LSEN, and this negatively affects those learners' academic performance and their eventual achievement, which causes them to drop out of school eventually due to this uncondusive environment that does not accommodate their diversity and limitations (Lebona, Monyane and Mukuna, 2024).

Many of the studies mentioned earlier have examined the challenges that learners with visual impairments encounter in educational settings, both in secondary and tertiary institutions.

Regarding Lesotho, research has been done on visually impaired learners, but none has specifically analysed how societal and cultural factors impact their learning of English. Matlosa and Matobo (2007) focused their research on certain higher education institutions in Lesotho, including the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and the National University of Lesotho. Similarly, Mosia and Phasha (2020) conducted their case study at NUL, using Social Constructionism as their theoretical framework. In contrast, Tseeke (2021) performed her research in secondary schools, deliberately selecting the location and participants to ensure the collection of rich data.

Most research in Lesotho has concentrated on higher education institutions, except for Ralejoe's (2019) and Tseeke's (2021) investigations, which were carried out in a secondary school. As noted, Mosia and Phasha (2020) employed the theory of Social Constructionism, which aligns with the Social Model framework used in this study that posits disablement is a result of societal factors affecting visually impaired learners. However, this study applies the framework specifically to secondary school students, unlike the study by Mosia and Phasha (2020), which focused on tertiary learners. In contrast, Tseeke's (2021) research utilised a different theoretical framework; therefore, the current study diverges from it because of the differing theoretical perspectives, potentially resulting in new insights from the chosen secondary school demographic. Most critically, these studies were conducted in Lesotho with an emphasis on the general learning process, whereas this current research specifically examines the learning of English for visually impaired students. Thus, the present study aims to explore a different pathway compared to the existing literature in Lesotho. Additionally, it seeks to ascertain whether sociocultural issues faced in other countries are relevant to the context of Lesotho and if the proposed strategies can be adapted for use here.

2.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter compared two models of disability, one traditional and the other more modern, to gain a clearer understanding of their principles and relevance to the current study. The comparison highlighted the medical model, which tends to promote the exclusion of learners with disabilities by focusing on changing the individual to fit the existing curriculum and educational structure. The research also explored the Social Model, that moves away from the notion of fixing these students by promoting their inclusion in society and the adaptation of the curriculum and other elements to accommodate their diversity.

Additionally, a review of the literature concerning the education of learners with visual impairments was conducted. The difficulties they face in their learning were examined from a global perspective; subsequently, the conversation shifted to the sociocultural influences impacting English L2 learning. Additionally, a narration of the situation of the learning of visually impaired learners was contextualised to Lesotho to give a vivid picture of where Lesotho schools are in relation to inclusive and quality education for the learners with visual impairment. Finally, the research gap was identified and detailed out to position the current research in the Lesotho's educational context.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section outlines the approaches utilised in this research. Methodology means the overall approach and reasoning that guide a research study. It acts like a roadmap for designing, conducting, and analysing the research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). This study looks at how social and cultural factors affect English language learning for visually impaired students in high schools in Lesotho. It is essential to develop a strategy for addressing the subsequent research questions:

1. In what ways does the approved Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho address the challenges faced by visually impaired learners and teachers at high school level?
2. What socio-cultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools?
3. How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges?

The chapter details the research paradigm, design, strategy, research type, study population, sampling procedures, research site, data collection methods, and procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical compliance

3.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm in qualitative studies provides the underlying philosophical perspective that influences how a researcher perceives and interprets reality (ontology), knowledge known as epistemology, and the methods used to study a phenomenon (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Paradigms influence how researchers understand the world and interact with participants and data. This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism focuses on understanding the meaning of experiences from the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon. Charmaz (2006) describes interpretivism as a way of understanding that focuses on personal meaning and how individuals interpret their experiences, rather than seeking an objective truth. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) explain that interpretivism looks closely at different factors, especially cultural and contextual elements, that shape various realities. It is

based on a relativist view of reality, so people create their understanding of the world through social interactions and shared meanings.

By adopting this paradigm, the researcher aimed to explore how socio-cultural and policy-related factors influence the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners, as understood by both the learners and their teachers. The interpretivist approach supported interviews as a primary data collection tool, enabling the researcher to engage deeply with participants' experiences and perspectives. As the study strived to understand and interpret individual and collective realities rather than produce generalisations, the interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for guiding the research process.

Within the interpretivist paradigm, knowledge is understood as being socially constructed and shaped through human interaction. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) assert that the core of interpretivism lies in grasping the subjective world of human experience. Researchers attempt to understand participants' meanings, thoughts, and interpretations within their unique social and cultural contexts. In this philosophy, the emphasis is placed on understanding the views and meanings of the participants, not those of the researcher. Reality is therefore considered being multiple and relative, shaped by individuals' interpretations of their lived experiences.

This approach was particularly appropriate for the current study, which investigated the experiences and perceptions of visually impaired learners and their teachers at St. Catherine's High School. As Mustofa (2023) explains, interpretivism recognises the diversity of learners, their individual needs, and the shortcomings of standardised or one-size-fits-all educational models. In inclusive education, this approach looks at how students with visual impairments learn English as a second language. It also examines how their experiences are influenced by their cultural and social surroundings, as well as the institutions they interact with.

Further, Pham (2018) notes that interpretivist research seeks to understand human actions and social phenomena from the point of view of those directly involved. It rejects the notion of a single objective truth, instead valuing the multiple realities expressed by participants. In this study, each participant's account was treated as a valid and meaningful representation of their lived experience. This enabled the researcher to gain deep, contextual insights into the ways socio-cultural factors influence English L2 learning.

Interpretivism is especially advantageous in qualitative research because it allows for deep engagement with complex human experiences. Through interactive, semi-structured

interviews, the researcher could access participants' thoughts, beliefs, values, and emotions. This philosophical stance aligned well with the study's aim to understand how visually impaired learners and their teachers experience and respond to the challenges and opportunities presented in inclusive English L2 learning in Lesotho.

3.2 Research Approach

As noted by Cohen et al. (2018), a research approach consists of a set of strategies and methods utilised in a study, serving as a framework to collect data that corresponds with the goals and essence of the research. There are basic approaches to research: qualitative approach, quantitative approach and mixed methods approach (Rahman, 2017). This current study adopts a qualitative research approach.

Qualitative research is a type of research that generates findings, which are not arrived at through the measurement of frequency of occurrences or statistical values; rather, it gets its findings through studying phenomena in subjective and social contexts (Rahman, 2017). Qualitative research explores individuals' lived experiences, actions, emotions, and perceptions, along with organisational dynamics, cultural trends, social movements and international interactions (Rahman, 2017). Rahman (2017) proceeds to clarify that qualitative research does not rely on statistics; instead, it embraces various realities and interpretations to gather non-standardised information. It also involves analysis of sentences and images rather than focusing on figures and statistics as seen in quantitative research.

According to Rahman (2017), one advantage of using a qualitative research approach is that it provides a thick or detailed description of the phenomenon. Here, the thick description entails the learners' and teachers' feelings, opinions and experiences regarding the learning process of English L2. As stated, this approach supported the description of the visually impaired learners and their interpretation of daily occurrences. Furthermore, the assessment of language in epistemological terms of qualitative research states that it is impossible to separate language assessment from the culture, context and beliefs of the setting in which it takes place. The current study acknowledges that society and culture influence the usage and learning of English; hence, the study unveiled the socio-cultural effects on English L2 learning of visually impaired learners at high school level.

The definition provided earlier by Rahman (2017) justifies why the study is qualitative; it does not seek any statistical data, rather it described the experiences of the visually impaired learners

during their English L2 learning process. Not only did the study focused on the perspectives of the visually impaired learners, but the approach also permitted other stakeholders to narrate their perspectives regarding the phenomenon. The study adhered to the nature of qualitative research, that embraces multiple dimensions and perspectives. Furthermore, as stated in the previous chapter, the Social Model as a theoretical framework is very applicable for the current study to assist in the identification of the socio-cultural barriers that the visually impaired learners face in their learning. The approach also supported how such learners, together with their teachers, overcome challenges. It further assisted in the analysis of how the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) can be adjusted where it proves not to meet the requirements of the education of learners with visual impairment in Lesotho high schools. As a result, conducting this study qualitatively aligned with the principles of the Social Model of Disability to arrive at the core of the phenomenon under review.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that a qualitative study is used when one seeks to describe the nature of certain situations, settings, people or processes. Sometimes it is used for interpretive purposes, where a researcher can gain new information about a particular phenomenon, create new concepts or theoretical perspectives about that phenomenon or, ideally discover the problems that prevail in the phenomenon. Finally, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) assert that a qualitative approach can be used for evaluation because it channels a means through which a researcher can evaluate the effectiveness of certain policies, practices or innovations. Hence, it is an appropriate approach that is used to study the L2 English learning phenomenon of visually impaired learners in this research. This approach further assisted in the evaluation of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) when answering the research question that enquired ways in which the Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho addresses the challenges faced by visually impaired learners and teachers at high school level. By understanding the experiences and barriers that the visually impaired students face, the researcher could get a clear picture of the impact the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) has on them.

Kabir (2018) points out that qualitative data is primarily non-numerical and typically descriptive or nominal in nature. This implies that the information gathered is generally expressed in words and sentences. Additionally, Kabir (2018) notes that a qualitative approach focuses on the how and why of the subject being examined and often uses unstructured data collection methods to allow for a comprehensive exploration of the topic. Additionally, Leedy and Ormrod (2005) describe the qualitative research method as unique compared to other methodologies because it puts its focus on the occurrence of phenomena in natural settings

and/or the real world. It also studies the phenomena in all their complexities; meaning that it observes that what is under study has multiple dimensions and layers. For this reason, qualitative researchers strive to show issues under study through their multifaceted forms. The nature of the third research question, which delves into responses of relevant stakeholders to the challenges faced by the visually impaired learners and those learners themselves, aligns with one of the strong points of qualitative research: its ability to explore things in the real-world context. It further allows the use of unstructured and semi-structured methods of data collection. This explains why semi-structured interviews were used for the study; to allow full exploration of the phenomenon by allowing the participants to provide a full insight of experiences through their perspectives and realities.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative single case study design to explore the effects of sociocultural factors on English L2 learning by visually impaired learners. According to Coombs (2022), a case study is a methodological research design that seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of a current issue or phenomenon within a bounded system. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) further describe a case study as a focused examination of a specific instance involving real people immersed in real-life contexts. A case study acknowledges that a single case can involve multiple variables and therefore often employs two or more methods of data collection to depict these variables clearly. It involves an in-depth investigation of an individual, group, or event to understand a real-life phenomenon comprehensively.

Essential features of case studies involve a precise definition of the time and location relevant to the case, along with the application of multiple data collection techniques like interviews, focus groups, field observations, and document analysis to facilitate a comprehensive understanding. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with visually impaired learners and their teachers to gather detailed insights, while document analysis of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) provided contextual grounding and supplemented the interview data.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explain that case studies are often conducted when a particular individual, group, or programme is studied in depth over a specific period. They note that a single case study is particularly useful when the case is unique, offering valuable understanding

that can inform similar situations. This design is especially suitable for investigating little-known or poorly understood phenomena.

Therefore, this research employed a qualitative single case study design focusing on St. Catherine's High School in Maseru, which is the only inclusive high school in the district admitting visually impaired learners. The school was purposefully selected as a unique and information-rich context to explore the English L2 learning experiences of visually impaired learners within an inclusive education setting. This design allowed for a close look at how both students and teachers view and practice English language teaching and learning. The study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine the data. It aimed to provide logical insights into the sociocultural factors that affect English language learning for visually impaired students in a mainstream high school.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Population

Sampling is an integral part of data collection in this research. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) define sampling as the process of selecting particular people, events, objects, or documents to gather information; these form the sample. Cohen et al. (2018) classify sampling techniques into probability (random) and non-probability sampling, the latter including purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling involves selecting participants based on the researcher's judgement, convenience, or preference. Consequently, purposive sampling was employed in this study.

According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022), qualitative samples should focus on selecting participants who can provide specific insights about the topic rather than trying to represent a broader population. For this study, the participants included visually impaired students and some English language teachers from St. Catherine's High School. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explain that purposive sampling helps researchers choose individuals who are likely to provide valuable information on the topic. Here, purposive sampling made sure that the participants reflected typical visually impaired students and their teachers, allowing the researcher to collect detailed data that connected with the research questions.

Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom and Duan (2015) describe purposive sampling as identifying cases rich in information, maximising the use of limited resources. St. Catherine's High School was chosen because it admits many visually impaired learners from across Lesotho, offering diverse experiences relevant to the study. Additionally, the school's accessibility to the researcher facilitated data collection within resource constraints.

Coyne (1997) emphasises that purposive sampling focuses on depth by selecting small samples or single cases purposefully suited to the study. Initial informants may have general knowledge or typical experience of the phenomenon. Musarrat, Ranajee, and Sudepta (2019) further highlight purposive sampling's strength in enabling in-depth exploration of information-rich cases. Therefore, this study focused on learners with visual impairment, excluding other students at the inclusive mainstream school, and included teachers closely involved with these learners to provide relevant insights on mitigating learning challenges.

Besides purposive sampling, convenience sampling influenced site selection because of the school's accessibility, allowing effective data collection with limited resources. Convenience sampling selects based on proximity and ease of access (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Quota sampling helped include important groups—like visually impaired students, teachers, and relevant documents—to gather different viewpoints. This method selects participants based on specific traits that represent important subgroups (Etikan et al., 2016). Using these strategies allowed thorough data collection within the study's limits.

3.5 Study Area

This section indicates the context (school) where the research was conducted. The location of the study is St. Catherine's High School in Maseru. It is a girls' school that makes an exception for the visually impaired male students. It was established in 1906 by the Anglican Church of Lesotho as a Girls Teacher Training College, and became a Girls High School in 1975 when it began admitting the students with visual impairment, too. It was mainly chosen because it is the only inclusive mainstream high school in Maseru that caters for the visually impaired and because of its accessibility to the researcher. The school also offers a range of subjects, including Sesotho, Mathematics, Accounting and English language, amongst others. English language is a mandatory subject and also one main area of interest for this study.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This part describes the methods employed to collect data for the research. Data was obtained through two main approaches: semi-structured interviews conducted with educators of visually impaired students and also with certain visually impaired learners, as well as an analysis of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy 2018 (LIEP).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), in a case study, extensive data is collected on individuals, events, or programmes around which the research is focused. This data may be

collected through interviews, observations, audio-visual materials, or documents. In this study, interviews served as the primary means of collecting rich, detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences, while the document analysis helped contextualise the findings and verify relevant policy-related themes.

The use of semi-structured interviews aligned with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, which values participants' subjective meaning-making and allows for flexibility in the questioning process. This method enabled the researcher to probe further into the participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to English L2 learning within the inclusive school setting.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews were a key method of collecting data in this study. They allowed participants to share their experiences of learning English as a second language in an inclusive education setting. McLeod (2024) explains that in qualitative research, interviews—especially semi-structured or unstructured ones—are commonly used to gather detailed information through open-ended questions. These questions help participants express their experiences in their own words. Additionally, they allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarification or more details when needed.

Smith et al. (2022) highlight that open-ended interviews allow discussion to flow freely without the researcher imposing their views, which keeps the participant's voice genuine. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) point out that interviews in qualitative studies are usually not fully structured; instead, they follow key questions but remain open to new ideas. These interviews can provide useful information, including facts, personal beliefs, motives, emotions, and reflections on past and present experiences.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both visually impaired learners and their English language teachers. These interviews explored the socio-cultural barriers affecting English L2 learning and the participants' perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018), particularly regarding its provisions for visually impaired learners. The semi-structured format allowed participants to share their views openly, while also enabling the researcher to probe deeper when necessary.

3.6.1.1 Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was designed to align with the study's three major research questions, allowing the participants to reflect on their lived experiences related to socio-cultural factors that affect English L2 learning. The interview questions were semi-structured to enable flexibility but retaining guidance. Learner participants are labelled as LP and teacher participants as TP. It is worth mentioning that the participants were quoted verbatim to keep the authenticity of the responses.

3.6.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis was employed in this study as a complementary data collection method to support and validate findings from interviews. Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as the process of reviewing or evaluating documents, whether printed or electronic, to examine and interpret their content to derive meaning. As a data-gathering process, document analysis is highly applicable in qualitative research, including the current study, as it provides a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. Bowen (2009) further explains that one of the key advantages of using document analysis is its contribution to data triangulation, where multiple methods of data collection are used to corroborate findings. This helps reduce potential bias and strengthens the credibility of the research outcomes.

Other advantages of using document analysis include providing valuable information on background and historical views on the phenomenon; it provides the researcher with an explicit understanding of the roots of what they are researching (Bowen, 2009). Analysing documents can also help a researcher to generate new questions that they had not initially thought about, which are derived from the process of analysis of a relevant document; this analysis may even make the researchers aware of what to observe during interviews and activities. Another benefit is that the data deduced from documents could be used to supplement research data and become valuable additional information on which the research data is based. Documents help track changes and developments related to the research topic. They can also be analysed to confirm findings from other data collection methods and support evidence from different sources (Bowen, 2009).

Based on the discussed advantages of using document analysis, particularly its use in tracking changes and developments about a phenomenon being studied, it proves to be an appropriate data collection method when gathering information pertaining one of the main research questions in this study that seeks to find how the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018)

addresses the challenges faced by visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers. This study analysed the LIEP document to understand the official view of inclusive education in Lesotho. This helped ensure that the findings were relevant to the country's education system. The policy provided valuable information that revealed problems in how the policy was implemented for students with visual impairments.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

Maintaining trustworthiness in qualitative research depends on ensuring both reliability and validity. In qualitative studies, reliability pertains to the consistency and dependability of the data-gathering process, along with the degree to which results can be reproduced in similar settings (Cohen et al., 2018). It involves ensuring that the research process is transparent and that the methods used produce stable and consistent results. Validity, on the other hand, concerns the degree to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure, as well as the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. Cohen et al. (2018) further explain that in qualitative research, validity also relates to the meanings participants assign to the data and how sound the researcher's inferences are.

To enhance both reliability and validity of the research, the study utilised data triangulation by incorporating various data collection techniques. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the issue from multiple viewpoints, thereby strengthening the credibility of the results. As noted by Denzin (1978), triangulation refers to the use of multiple methodologies in examining a single phenomenon, ultimately boosting confidence in the outcomes. In this study, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were employed to verify and complement the data, reducing potential bias and improving the study's overall trustworthiness. The semi-structured interviews, in particular, encouraged participants to express their views openly and in detail, generating rich, authentic information that contributed to the reliability of the findings.

3.8 Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is a systematic yet flexible process aimed at making sense of large volumes of non-numerical data. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) note that there is no single correct way to analyse such data; however, what is common across most qualitative studies is that researchers begin by working through large amounts of information gathered during the data collection phase. Thereafter, through inductive reasoning, they proceed to sort and

categorise the data into understandable themes that are emergent (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). This study adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its methodological approach. According to Smith et al. (2022), IPA is a qualitative research method that focuses on understanding how people interpret and give meaning to significant events in their lives. Access to these experiences is gained through what the participants narrate about their experience. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is always interpretative. Although IPA concerns itself with lived experiences of the participants, at the end, the analysis involves the results of how the data analyst makes sense of how the participant makes sense of occurrences. Therefore, it is acknowledged that analysis of data in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is characterised by being subjective.

Some strategies that are used in carrying out IPA successfully (Smith et al., 2022). Each participant's experiences, thoughts and concerns were carefully examined through detailed, line-by-line analysis. This process was then followed by identifying recurring themes within the data, which might emphasise unity and opposites, commonalities and subtle differences, beginning with single cases then across many cases. Smith et al. (2022) discusses that there is also a dialogue developed between a researcher, their analysed data and their psychological knowledge to produce a new interpretation of what certain experiences mean to the participant. Furthermore, a structure showcasing the relationship between the themes that were experienced. Equally important is arranging the data systematically, making it easier to trace the progression from preliminary observations to more detailed analysis, to initial clustering and development of themes, into the last structure of the experienced themes. Finally, there is the development of a full narrative that may be accompanied by visual guides to serve as evidence (Smith et al., 2022).

According to Smith et al. (2022), the analysis of data through IPA is conducted through various steps. The first step involves reading original data and transcriptions multiple times, and if the transcript is derived from an interview, it is imperative to listen to the recording to assist the researcher to imagine the participant's responses during interviews to help with making a more complete analysis. Therefore, data analysis for this study was conducted once the data was gathered. Transcriptions of audio-recordings were done to enable the switch between listening and reading about a single case to gather every element.

Smith et al. (2022) explain the second step, which is exploratory note-taking. At this stage, the analyst grows familiar with the data through noting anything that spikes the analyst's interest

within the transcript while still keeping an open mind. Here, the language use of the participant, their understanding of issues and context are paid attention to. The aim of this step is for the researcher to produce comprehensive and detailed notes and comments related to the data at hand, and this is achievable through division of data into meaningful units that have comments attached to them. As a result, once the first step of familiarisation with the data collected was complete, dividing the data into meaningful units began. The identified themes were noted down, and the comments that were aligned with how the participants narrated and explained their experiences were written on each theme.

For the third step, Smith et al. (2022) proceed to say that the researcher is bound to develop experiential statements. This is a crucial step where the researcher's thoughts are clarified; the focus shifts from working primarily with the transcript to using the exploratory notes. The transcript and notes created in the second stage have caused a larger data set; hence, it is important to reduce it through exploratory notes, which need to retain the most important data – what should decrease is the volume of data only. Just as the prior steps of analysis, the researcher embarked on this step of reducing the transcriptions of recorded interviews, other data collected and the comments that were attached into meaningful exploratory notes that depicted the thoughts of the researcher.

Additionally, Smith et al. (2022) name the fourth process as reviewing themes. The duty of the analyst is to evaluate and refine initial themes. Since the initial data went through multiple stages to build a comprehensive unit, it is important for the researcher to retreat and check the developed themes against the raw data to maintain accuracy of representation of the participants' experiences. Following is defining and naming the themes that represent the participants' experiences. After the process of reviewing initial themes to maintain accuracy, the themes might need to be refined by splitting some themes or combining some themes into one unit to ensure clarity and comprehension of the themes. Once that is completed, the themes need to be assigned meaningful names through the use of language that captures and reflects the participants' experiences and aligns with the study's research questions (Smith et al., 2022). Without fail, the themes were reviewed to be following the initial data that were gained through document analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, and patterns were established across different participants. Finally, the themes were built into comprehensive units that still captured the key concepts of the research and were still aligned with the philosophy used, the theoretical framework and the context of Lesotho. Figure 1 summarised this analytic tool.

Figure 1: The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Process



3.8.1 Data Analysis Procedures

As noted, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is appropriate for qualitative research aimed at understanding how people interpret and find meaning in their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2022). The analysis was meant to explore how socio-cultural factors affect English L2 learning for visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools, while also looking at broader educational challenges they face.

Using the IPA, the researcher identified emergent themes, then moved on to refine the initial codes into comprehensive themes that will be discussed in the next chapter. The study was guided by the assumption that visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools face multiple challenges in their learning process. It also assumed that some key stakeholders, such as Special Education Unit (SEU) members, question setters, teachers and caregivers, might be defensive, less communicative or unavailable. Through the data, the researcher examined the underlying beliefs, identifying recurrent themes that were drawn from the interviews conducted with the visually impaired learners, their teachers, as well as analysis of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) that reflected or contradicted the assumptions. Additionally, to uphold the validity of the findings, the data underwent a thorough process of cleaning and systematic organisation. Each interview was transcribed word-for-word and repeatedly reviewed to develop a deep understanding, as previously mentioned. Manual coding was then applied to

the transcripts, with initial codes developed based on recurring phrases and participant experiences. These codes were subsequently clustered into broader themes that corresponded with the study's main research questions.

Each of the three major research questions was addressed by grouping responses that arose under the interview questions thematically. Verbatim quotations were used in the findings to clearly show the participants' views and to offer support for the interpretations that were made.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research are vital steps ensuring that the participants are protected and the findings of the research are credible. They are defined as morals that determine what is right and wrong, and what the researcher has to do. These ethical considerations revolve hugely around the binding responsibilities that a qualitative researcher has towards all the participants of their study whether in schools or communities, and they include: informed consent, respect and conflict of interest, trustworthiness, relationship with participants, reporting back to participants, anonymity and confidentiality (Mirza et al., 2023).

According to Mirza et al. (2023), the ethics is expanded as follows: ethic of informed consent, where research is solely intended for what the researcher says it is for; hence, the researcher requests voluntary informed consent of every participant before the data collection phase begins. According to Mirza et al. (2023), the ethic of informed consent which states that research must only be conducted for its stated purpose. The researcher must obtain voluntary informed consent from each participant before data collection. A consent letter should be issued to participants explaining the study's aims, objectives, and ethical guarantees, such as anonymity and confidentiality. Mirza et al. (2023) further highlight the ethic of respect, which demands that all participants be treated with dignity regardless of their gender, religion, beliefs, or any differences from the researcher. Another important component is the ethics of trustworthiness. To ensure data credibility and reduce bias, the researcher must establish trust through engagement before, during, and after data collection, and enhance reliability by using data triangulation—that is, drawing from multiple data sources.

To honour the ethics in conducting the research and ensuring that the rights of the visually impaired learners and teachers were respected, informed consent was given to all the participants. It explicitly stated what the research was about, its objectives, and how it is beneficial for learners with visual impairment. Further, the informed consent stipulated one

important aspect: the participants were allowed to withdraw at any moment they felt uncomfortable. It further relayed that the participants were going to be anonymous and their information would be kept confidential by the researcher. Finally, respect was granted to every individual who came in contact with the researcher regardless of any age gap, differences or impairment. In the following sub-section, the researcher describes the application of the principles of ethics and the access to the field.

3.9.1 Ethical Application and Field Access

Access to the research field presented several challenges that required flexibility and initiative. A formal introduction letter from the supervisor addressed to St. Catherine's High School, where the study was to be conducted, was presented. However, the delivery of the letter happened when the school had recently closed for the winter holidays. This made it difficult to reach the intended participants: visually impaired learners and teachers of English L2, as they were no longer on the school premises. Then, initiative was taken to obtain the personal contacts of both the teachers and the learners who met the criteria for participation. They were contacted directly to introduce the study to them and to request their voluntary participation. Some individuals declined to partake, some did not respond at all, and respect was offered to their decisions in line with the ethic of voluntary participation. Others agreed to participate in the study.

Once they had confirmed, all the ethical procedures outlined were followed. Informed consent forms were issued to the participants and clarified for those who needed further clarity. Each participant was provided with a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any point when they felt uncomfortable without fear of any repercussions. Further explanation was given that they would be protected since their identities would be kept anonymous, and their data would be kept safe and confidential and only accessible to the researcher. Every effort was made to ensure comfort, and all the interviews were administered at times that were convenient for the participants.

Despite all the efforts and preparations, some ethical challenges were encountered when contacting the participants. Some learners were hesitant to participate, some teachers felt they were not the appropriate people to approach to participate in the study, while some teachers talked about their limited experience that made them feel as unfit participants. Overall, the ethical procedures of the research were upheld in principle and practice to ensure protection, dignity and voluntary participation of all people who were involved.

3.10 Summary

This chapter focused on detailing the methodologies that were used in carrying out this research at St. Catherine's High School and the justification why they were deemed quite relevant in addressing the research questions. It also explored the ethical measures taken to uphold the dignity and rights of all participants involved in the research process. It further discussed some data analysis techniques employed for the study. Though the investigation was carried out at just one school in Maseru, Lesotho, this was because of financial constraints. St Catherine's High School was also selected because it is the only high school in Maseru that enrolls visually impaired students. Its accessibility and convenience to the researcher also influenced the choice. The information gathered was qualitative and provided valuable insight into the education of the visually impaired secondary school students in Lesotho. This insight was obtained through the chosen participants, who provided rich data relevant to the study, including visually impaired learners enrolled at St. Catherine's High School and other relevant stakeholders.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

Following the discussion of methodology in the previous chapter, this section presents the findings derived from both interviews and document analysis, along with a detailed interpretation of the data. As stated earlier in Chapter Three, in a qualitative study, a researcher begins their analysis of data from a huge body of information they have gathered in their collection of data. Then, through inductive reasoning, they proceed to sort and categorise the data into understandable themes that are emergent (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). It is that the presentation of results in this chapter is done following the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and the presentation is aligned with the study's three main research questions.

1. *In what ways does the approved Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho address the challenges faced by visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers?*
2. *What sociocultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools?*
3. *How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges?*

4.1 Demographic Information of Participants

This section outlines key characteristics of the participants as illustrated in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, such as their age, degree of impairment, teaching experience and contact with visually impaired learners, which made them suitable contributors to this qualitative study.

Table 4.1: Demographic information of visually impaired learners

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Grade	Degree of impairment
LP1	Male	19	11	Totally blind
LP2	Male	16	8	Partially sighted
LP3	Female	20	10	Partially sighted
LP4	Male	16	9	Totally blind
LP5	Female	19	9	Partially sighted

Table 4.2: Demographic information of English teachers of visually impaired learners

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Teaching Experience
TP 1	Female	57	B.Ed. + B.Ed. Honours in Psychology in Support Teaching	29 years of teaching
TP 2	Male	45	B.Ed. + Narrative Therapist & Community Worker + Masters in Pastoral Therapy	20 years of teaching 18 years of counselling in the school setting

Table 4.1 presents details of the visually impaired learners who participated in the study, including their age, grade level, and level of visual impairment. Table 4.2 provides similar information about their teachers, such as teaching experience, subjects taught, and involvement with visually impaired learners. This background information is important for contextualising the participants' responses and understanding the varied experiences and perspectives they bring to the study. The inclusion of both learners and teachers enhances the depth of the findings by allowing for cross-validation of the themes that emerged. In addition, data drawn from the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) was used to supplement and triangulate the interview findings. The following section presents the analysed data in line with the research questions, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to highlight themes that reflect participants' lived experiences.

4.2 Implementation and Impact of Inclusive Education Policy on Learners with Visual Impairment

In addressing the research question, *In what ways does the approved Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho address the challenges faced by visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers?*, the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) was analysed. Given the first research question, this section discusses both the learners' and teachers' views regarding the teaching and learning of English as a second language amongst visually impaired learners.

4.2.1 Learners' Views on Their Learning of English L2

As highlighted before, the interviews were conducted to capture the lived experiences of the visually impaired learners, challenges and views in relation to learning English L2. Besides the interviews, the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) was analysed to provide a policy-based context of the educational environment that such learners are exposed to. It is worth to note that each primary research question was addressed using unique interview questions that allowed the learner to reflect on their experiences. As a result, themes are established and discussed under every interview question. Each subheading was made up of the key research questions where the interview questions were used as prompts for discussion of themes.

Do teachers provide special support or materials that help you learn English L2 better?

The themes identified from their responses under this interview question were: individual support and adaptation of materials, direct verbal instruction of teachers, impartial classroom practices, inaccessible learning materials, reliance on assistive technology and peer support. The first three themes are seen in Table 4.3 below. However, the last three themes are reflected in Table 4.4, as they answer another interview question.

Table 4.3: Learner participants (RQ1, Interview Q1)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Individual Support and Adaptation of Materials	LP1: Extra lessons LP2: Brailled notes LP4: Special notes for VILs LP5: Typing on an apex device
Direct Verbal Instruction	LP1: Freedom to ask anything LP3: Reading for us LP4: Clarifying for us
Impartial Classroom Practices	LP1: Ability to conduct extra lessons and facilitating LP5: Example setting to retain focus of VILs

4.2.1.1 Individual Academic Support and Adaptation of Materials

Based on the responses in Table 4.3 above, it is found that English teachers went the extra mile during the English lessons to offer the learners with visual impairment personal support in English L2 lessons. The teachers also change the materials used into accessible formats for them. Another important factor that the participants highlighted relates to the experience of the teachers, which enables them to provide individual support for the visually impaired learners.

LP1 stated:

- (1) *For some tasks, my teacher types the work for me and let me have it as a soft-copy so that I can refer back to it at any moment through text-to-speech feature on my tablet. In my several years here, I have also realised that experience counts for teachers. Experienced teachers conduct extra classes for us to understand, and they are very helpful because I become free to ask anything because we are few.*

LP2 echoes this by saying:

- (2) *My teacher gives me special notes that differ from others so that I can understand.*

LP 4 continues to say:

- (3) *Some teachers give us reading tasks and even go through the trouble of sitting down and read for us so that we understand. They even prepare special brailed work for us. Our teachers are different; some teachers make an effort of carrying out extra classes for us as visually impaired learners alone.*

LP5 cements other participants above by sharing:

- (4) *If our teachers have provided a task on the board, they help us by typing it on our Apex device, then we go to our computer lab to emboss the task. They also retain our focus in class by setting examples using us.*

The learners' responses show that their teachers make commendable personal efforts to provide support for the visually impaired learners in English lessons. To accommodate the needs of the learners, they provide support, such as soft copies, and they also read to the learners. Some

learners talked about additional support that happens outside the classroom of conducting extra lessons that creates a more comfortable space for visually impaired learners, which allows the teachers to tailor lessons to their needs. This practice is also in line with one of the principal objectives of MoET (2018), discussed on page 14, of adapting the curriculum to conform with inclusive education principles in schools. These activities help to mitigate some challenges these learners face in learning English as a second language. However, the different responses that the learners provide suggest that the teachers' support is inconsistent rather than guided, and this indicates a gap between policy and practice. Therefore, the data implies that the Inclusive Education Policy (2018) does not fully mitigate the challenges faced by visually impaired learners. The teachers are aware of the policy but execute it differently in their classrooms. This shows a gap in the policy, and a lack of guidelines on the execution of inclusive practices at classroom level.

4.2.1.2 Direct Verbal Instruction of Teachers

This study also observes another important aspect that the teachers seem to be excelling, which is ensuring that, indeed, the visually impaired learners are following what is being done in the classroom by approaching them and verifying personally that they do follow, as evidenced in excerpts (5) to (7).

LP3 shared:

(5) We feel included and supported by our teachers during English classes. They write questions on the board and then come to us individually to ask us if we understood the questions so that they can explain further to us.

Similarly, **LP2** shared:

(6) My English teacher gives me support by reading out loud for me what she has written on the board during the English lesson. Therefore, I do not have to depend fully on my classmates to help me out by reading what is on the board for me.

LP5 added that:

(7) If we do not understand what is being taught in the class, a teacher comes to us as VIPs to teach us alone and clarify.

The results show that the emphasis of verbal explanation done by teachers for visually impaired learners in English classes is not just a courtesy, but a reflection of their inclusive practices that enable active learner participation. The findings also reveal that they possess an understanding of how to support visually impaired learners, particularly those who depend primarily on auditory resources to learn English language and compensate for their loss of vision. In relation to the Social Model of Disability, the teachers have removed the barrier of written materials that are inaccessible to the visually impaired learners by readily providing auditory instruction to ensure that they are included in the classroom, instead of expecting the learners to adapt to the practice that they deem ‘normal’ of writing on the board.

Because it is evident that the practice is not uniform in all the English L2 classes since some respondents do not mention it, it still proves to be very valuable for the learning of the visually impaired learners. Most remarkably, the data further show that this practice is in line with one of the special provisions that the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018), which states that,

“Inclusion can be achieved when all learners have access to curricula content conveyed in an appropriate mode of instruction” (MoET, 2018, p. 14).

4.2.1.3 Impartial Classroom Practices

Moving on from the individual practices that accommodate the visually impaired learners, one learner showed that their teachers practised fairness during English lessons.

LP3 discussed:

(8) For us, partially sighted learners, when there are drawings displayed on the board, our teacher approaches us and asks us first what we see on the board.

This act done by the teacher displays fairness by granting the partially sighted learners an opportunity to respond first before the sighted learners can provide responses that are accurate because of their sight advantage. This shows that the teacher is aware of the presence of visually impaired learners and the importance of probing their participation that is fair to enhance their interest in learning. This is because such learners know that their teachers want them to learn effectively in the classroom alongside their peers.

Another interview question was:

Are learning materials, like textbooks, audios or technological tools, accessible to you in English L2 classes?

In response to this interview question, the data gathered from the visually impaired learners were analysed into these themes: inaccessible learning materials, reliance on assistive technology and peer support. Consider Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Learner participants (RQ1, Interview Q2)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Inaccessible Learning Materials	<p>LP1: No braille textbooks and audios</p> <p>LP2: Problematic textbooks</p> <p>LP3: No textbooks</p> <p>LP4: No inclusive textbooks</p> <p>LP5: No braille or large-print textbooks</p>
Reliance on Assistive Technology	<p>LP1: Use of voice recorder (Daisy), magnifying tablets and c-pens</p> <p>LP2: Voice recorders</p> <p>LP3: Voice recorders</p> <p>LP4: Use of recorders</p> <p>LP5: Recorder and Apex</p>
Peer Support	<p>LP1: Consultation of peers</p> <p>LP3: Reading textbooks for us</p> <p>LP4: Type for us on computers</p>

4.2.1.4 Inaccessible Learning Materials

All the participants repeatedly lamented that there are no English materials that are directly in an accessible format for them in their classrooms. Recurrent materials that could facilitate their learning but are inaccessible are braille textbooks and audio materials.

LP1 responded:

(9) There are no braille textbooks or pre-recorded material for us to use.

LP2 shared:

(10) Textbooks are problematic; there is a struggle that we are facing of not having textbooks that we can read. Instead, they read to us what is in the book.

LP3 continued to say:

(11) *There are no textbooks, but voice recorders also make our learning easy.*

LP4 added that:

(12) *There are no inclusive textbooks.*

LP5 stated:

(13) *There are no brailled textbooks or large print textbooks that are appropriate for our level of sight.*

The above responses portray a contradiction between the practices that go on in high school and the provisions that the Inclusive Policy of (2018) made. The Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) has the provision of inclusive education at all levels as its mandate. LIEP (2018, p. 14) states that:

Inclusion can be achieved when all [the] learners have access to curricula content conveyed in an appropriate mode of instruction, [sic] in consideration of this [, the] MoET shall: ensure adaptation and modification of the curriculum to cater for diverse educational needs of learners at all [the] levels of learning. Also, [sic] provide appropriate instructional material and learning resources in accessible formats depending on individual needs in order to ensure effective inclusion.

Contrastingly, the responses provided by the visually impaired learners at high school level prove otherwise. The policy planned to adapt the curriculum and make it accessible to ensure quality education for all; even so, there are no audios or textbooks for English classes that are tailored for different visual impairments. This is an apparent gap between the policy planning and provisions and implementation.

4.2.1.5 Reliance on Assistive Technology

Because of lack of accessible textbooks and audiotapes that are pre-recorded, the learners with visual impairment have to be overly reliant on the tools that are made accessible to them. During their interviews, they mentioned that they rely on assistive tools, such as voice recorders, Apex Braille devices, magnifiers, Braille Note Touches and C-Pens. The learners gave the following information:

LP1 noted:

- (14) *Where I feel like the notes are too much for me to type in class, I consult one of my classmates to read them out for me, then I will record them using my voice recorder. This recorder has a special name called Daisy. Not every learner has a tablet at school, but it is a need for us, totally blind students. Partially sighted students use magnifying tablets. Those tablets are put on a stand to magnify the handwriting on the board for them. We also use C-pens. They scan printed text; only then turns it into a soft-copy that can be converted to audio [sic].*

LP2 shared:

- (15) *Voice recorders used in class also make our learning easier. We take voice recorders to class, and they are very useful in that we can put our notes on them so that they can read for us.*

LP3 stated:

- (16) *Voice recorders make learning easier for us in class.*

LP4 revealed:

- (17) *There are no inclusive textbooks. However, the school provides us with recorders to use in the classroom.*

LP5 responded:

- (18) *We have useful voice recorders that we use in English classes. Where a task is given, sighted learners have the task written on the board for them, while the teacher reads the task for me to record. We also have an apex for blind students and partially sighted learners to use to type and use braille, too.*

Apart from humans, the abovementioned tools act as the major support structures that make the learning of the visually impaired learners in English classrooms possible. It is also through them that they can partake in activities that are assigned. They serve as major crutches that they lean on to compensate for their sight since they learn mostly in an auditory manner, and most tools mentioned have an auditory feature. These tools seem to enable independence of visually

impaired learners because they can operate most of the tools by themselves, as apparent in the responses provided.

4.2.1.6 Peer Support

Oftentimes in the absence of support granted by the teacher, when classwork is given or whenever it is convenient, the learners with visual impairment seek assistance from their peers. This peer assistance plays a vital role as observed in extracts (19) to (20).

LP1 expressed:

(19) *I consult one of my peers to read notes for me if they are too many, copy the recording to my computer and then send the notes to others who might need them.*

LP3 shared:

(20) *During lessons, sighted learners help us by reading English textbooks to us. Where we are given classwork to do, they also help us by reading the task so that we understand. They also clarify for us where we do not understand.*

LP4 offered another distinct account:

(21) *My classmates are different. Some help us when they are in the mood, but others are always eager to help us in class. Others type for us on our computers so that we can turn the soft-copy into braille.*

From the responses provided above, it is apparent that the support that the peers provide is not consistent. Some exercise their empathy and are always willing to help, while others help them selectively. This shows that the visually impaired learners come to class unsure whether they will get the full support that they need on a particular day. This assistance provided by sighted learners is an important factor in the learning of these visually impaired learners besides the support and accommodation they get from their teachers and the assistive tools that they use in the classroom. It is unfortunate, however, that the provision of this support from their peers is inconsistent and depends on external factors, such as how busy one is and their mood.

In the provisions made by the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018), discussed on page 16 of the policy, there are different stakeholders that are mandated to provide support for the visually impaired learners, and amongst them are learners. The policy states that, for successful

inclusion, learners have to respect their peers irrespective of their ability or disability. Further, they are expected to support each other, which seems to be taking place in the school where the sighted learners agree to help their visually impaired classmates wherever necessary. Disadvantageously, the policy does not provide any structured strategies that will ensure that the peer support is consistent.

Overall, the above discussion is in response to the key research question one. It is evident through the learners' responses in the interviews that their learning environment is not fully conducive. Their reality is not as articulated in the policy, and the study has identified several gaps, especially those related to their English learning. The Policy made provisions to accommodate visually impaired children at the high school level. The provisions included integration of learners with disabilities into mainstream schools; it advocates to include learners with visual impairment in regular classrooms and promotes their participation alongside peers without disabilities, teacher training and support, provision of assistive technology, provision of accessible learning materials and inclusive infrastructure. In relation to the data discussed earlier, it is apparent that the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), through LIEP (2018), still falls short in most aspects. The impaired learners are successfully integrated into this mainstream school; however, the teachers still seem not to have received adequate training to support these learners. Furthermore, during English learning, materials are still hugely inaccessible, and the learners have to depend on assistive devices and their peers most of the time. However, these visually impaired learners persevere and take accountability for their own learning where circumstances prove not to be inclusive. This is exemplified by their strategy to seek support from their peers to assist them in reading and being resourceful enough to pass on the recorded information from one visually impaired learner to another.

4.2.2 Teachers' Perspectives on English L2 Instruction for Visually Impaired Learners

In order to understand teachers' views on teaching English L2, the researcher seeks to gain deeper insights into the instructional methods they employ, classroom challenges and teachers' experiences in supporting the learners with visual impairments. Similar to the section on the learners' views, the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) was still analysed to provide the context on how national policy and curriculum facilitates or limits inclusive practices in the English language classroom. It should be comprehended that the use of interviews allowed the teachers to narrate their experiences fully, while the LIEP (2018) served to connect their realities to the provisions that were made to guide inclusive education in Lesotho.

In response to this primary research question, the teacher participants provided information that occurs in their individual classes to respond to every interview question. Individual accounts of every teacher are given.

4.2.2.1 The Impact of Inclusive Education Policy on English Classes

One question asked was: *How has the Inclusive Education Policy (2018) affected your teaching practices especially in English classes?* It is essential to understand that the evaluation of the accounts prepared by teachers will be approached distinctly. Overlapping themes will be presented in Table 4.5 form then, individual accounts will follow.

Table 4.5: Teacher participants (RQ1, Interview Q1)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Shift in Teaching Practices	Classroom adaptations	Shift from segregation to inclusion
Role of the Policy	Instructs for tailored lessons	An enabler of inclusion
Assistive Devices	Braille pads and tactile tools	Modern devices introduction

TP1 responded:

(22) *As a teacher, I was forced to tailor my teaching methods in order to cater for diverse teaching methods. Since my mainstream class incorporates learners with visual impairment, I had to adopt teaching styles that are accommodative for them. I had to do more oral teaching and incorporate touching in my lessons; I give them objects to touch when teaching. I also allow them to bring their braille pads to class to allow them to take notes, do classwork and some reading. I also read for them sometimes and spell words for them. Lastly, to include the visually impaired learners, I had to slow-track the pace of my classes.*

On the other hand, **TP2** responded as follows:

(23) *There was segregation of visually impaired learners, but now there is inclusion, and they can learn in mainstream schools because we have been trained to accommodate them. The machinery they now have, especially the apex, makes it easy to teach them with others because it is not as noisy as the*

old Perkins brailers they used, which caused disturbance. Lastly, this policy has helped these learners to fit into the mainstream school.

The teachers emphasise the changes that accommodate the vision impaired learners in their classrooms. Their responses also align with the 2018 policy, which promotes the integration of learners with disabilities into mainstream education and underscores the importance of sufficient teacher preparation to accommodate these learners and the provision of assistive technology. However, it is clear that adaptation of teaching styles is dependent on an individual teacher because there are no set strategies they are advised to use.

4.2.2.2 Resources and Training

Regarding resources and training, the researcher asked, *Are the resources and training provided enough to accommodate and support visually impaired learners during English lessons?* Table 4.6 describes overlapping themes extracted from the responses for this interview question.

Table 4.6: Teacher participants (RQ1, Interview Q2)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Training Gaps	Lack of pre-service training for new teachers	No trained support teachers
Support Strategies	Absence of support for learners with multiple disabilities	Removal of effective support teachers
Learner Resources	Insufficient resources for visually impaired learners	Lack of braille books but availability of assistive tools
Teacher Readiness	Worry about new teachers' lack of training	Enabled through tools and training

Teacher participants discussed diverse gaps that they identify in the learning of the visually impaired learners. However, they also talked about provisions that are beneficial for the teaching and learning of English, which are in place already.

TP1 noted:

(24) *There is lack of support teachers on individual subjects and no special support for learners with multiple disabilities (visual impairment and any other impairment). There is a challenge of lack of resources for individual students. Yes, they have Perkins for note-taking, but they are not enough for each visually impaired learner. Also, they do not have brailled textbooks so that they can partake in reading in class, and that is a challenge.*

I did my support teaching Honours, which taught me how to cater for different disabilities. In the past, I was also invited by the school to participate in the training held by the association of the visually impaired on how to handle the learners with visual impairment, but I lack training in reading braille. However, there is zero training on inclusive education for the incoming teachers. New teachers here now do not have an idea of how to handle the learners with visual impairment.

TP2 highlighted that:

(25) *There was a good initiative by the Ministry to support the teachers who helped visually impaired learners, but the Ministry has let go of it. Personally, I got exposure to dealing with learners with impairments through some training at an inclusive school in South Africa. With support teachers, I give them the lesson plan prior to the class so that they can prepare for the visually impaired learner and be besides the learner when the class progresses. The resources are good, it's just that we lack support teachers. They face a challenge of lack of braille textbooks, but their current assistive devices compensate for it. They can now listen, and the devices can change text into braille. We can also provide them with comprehension passages that are turned into braille.*

Based on the above excerpts (24-25), it is evident that the LIEP (2018) provides resources to help visually impaired learners, such as assistive tools. However, some need trained support teachers to help fully include these learners. There is also a lack of training in the school, with no reports of pre-service or in-service training from the Ministry of Education and Training for incoming teachers. Similarly, English teachers see the value of having brailled English textbooks to support learners. One educator highlights that some learners have multiple impairments, and their situation is particularly poor because there are no strategies in place to help them.

4.2.2.3 Provisions from the 2018 Inclusive Education Policy

Another interview question was: *What specific provisions within the 2018 Inclusive Education Policy in Lesotho benefit visually impaired learners at the high school level?* Below is Table 4.7, which introduces themes, that were identified for this interview question.

Table 4.7: Teacher participants (RQ1, Interview Q3)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Assistive Devices and Tools	Braille pads, embossers and Perkins braille	E-pens, apex, computers
Human Support	Special support teachers	Specialists in the production room
MoET Involvement	Securing donations	Establishment of production room

The majority of the answers given by the teacher participants demonstrate the actions that the Ministry of Education and Training takes to ensure that the visually impaired learners are catered for.

In relation to special provisions for visually impaired learners, **TP1** recounted:

(26) *There are embossers. I send the learners' work to Catch Centre to specially trained teachers who act as our support. They transcribe my tasks into braille. There are braille pads that are portable and work just like our smartphones but with braille keys. Furthermore, there are Perkins, special papers used by the visually impaired learners and specialists that are hired by the school. Lastly, the MoET sources the resource people and then applies for assistance.*

TP2 added on:

(27) *We have a production room that came about because of special education. There is a well-trained person to ensure the materials and devices that the visually impaired learners use are available, such as calculators, e-pens and computers. There is also Catch Centre, which has always been here since inclusive education, where the visually impaired learners read.*

Through the accounts of the teachers, the findings show that most of the provisions made by the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) are met, such as the provision of assistive devices and professional support. Both teachers show their appreciation for the availability of other professionals who help them with the teaching of the visually impaired learners. They give information on how materials are adapted to cater to the visually impaired learners.

In summary, the teachers' responses reflect a positive view of the implementation of some aspects of the Inclusive Education Policy, particularly in terms of the support systems available at the school. Both teachers acknowledged the contributions of transcribers and resource centre assistants, and described how materials are adapted through braille and audio formats to address learners' diverse needs. However, their accounts also suggest that while some support is in place, challenges remain with teacher training, access to specialised resources, and the full execution of inclusive practices. These insights offer a clear view of the inclusive education system. They support the perspectives of learners and add depth to the analysis.

4.3 Socio-Cultural Factors in Second Language Learning amongst Visually Impaired Learners

The second major research question in this study is: What socio-cultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools? This question was answered by both the visually impaired learners and the teacher participants.

4.3.1 Learners' Perceptions of the Socio-Cultural Influences in their L2 Learning

As indicated, the visually impaired learners were engaged in semi-structured interviews. From their responses, several themes are identified under each interview question. The first interview question was: *What about your school or personal life makes it easier or harder for you to learn English as a second language?*

The following themes were emergent in response to this question: lack of resources, effects of auditory learning, teaching practices, L2 English-speaking environment and technological support, as illustrated in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Learner participants (RQ2, Interview Q1)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Lack of Resources	LP1: Lack of dictionaries

	<p>LP4: Lacking textbooks and dictionaries</p> <p>LP5: Lack of textbooks and unavailable dictionaries</p>
Effects of Auditory Learning	<p>LP1: Inheriting mistakes of sighted learners</p> <p>LP4: Problematic spelling</p> <p>LP5: Disinterested peers that need begging</p>
Teaching Practices	<p>LP1: Reduced writing on the board and focus retaining examples</p> <p>LP4: Extra classes</p> <p>LP5: Not reading or spelling what is on the board</p>
L2 English-Speaking Environment	<p>LP1: English L2 as a medium of communication and constant exposure to English</p>
Technological Support	<p>LP2: Adjustable speaking speed of recording device</p> <p>LP3: Talkback on phones</p>

4.3.1.1 Lack of Resources

The results show that, in several instances, the visually impaired learners disclosed their struggle to learn English as a second language in high school. This is because of inadequate resources, which often lead to them being unable to learn independently and to their fullest capabilities. The lack of resources contributes to their dependency and frustration because without the resources, learners must ask for assistance from other sighted learners, which consumes time, so it is difficult on their part.

LP1 relayed:

(28) *We do not have dictionaries to get meanings.*

LP4 uttered:

(29) *Lack of textbooks and dictionaries makes our learning harder because we struggle with spelling in English, and having to ask someone questions about the spelling of words or a particular word depending on the situation consumes a lot of time.*

LP5 added:

- (30) *One thing that makes it harder to learn English is the lack of textbooks. Also, the unavailability of dictionaries disturbs our learning.*

Hence, their learning of English becomes problematic because of those unfavourable circumstances but not because of their impairment.

4.3.1.2. *Effects of Auditory Learning*

It is clear that learners with visual impairments continue to encounter ongoing difficulties in accessing essential resources that would support their English language acquisition. Written English plays a fundamental role in learning the language, yet these learners often lack exposure to it. This stands in contrast to the Inclusive Education Policy (2018), which calls for accessible learning materials, such as appropriate textbooks and large-print formats, for students with disabilities. The lack of these resources highlights how, in line with the Social Model, the educational environment itself contributes to the obstacles faced by learners with impairments. Most of the participants talked about their learning in English classes, which is mostly auditory in nature. They also expressed how such learning hinders other aspects of their English proficiency, like their spelling. This occurs because of their limited exposure to the written forms of English, which serve as another major contributing factor to the learning of English L2. In spite of depending on oral-dominated learning mostly, they still encounter problems that add to their vulnerability. These visually impaired learners narrated their experiences as discussed in extracts (31) to (33) below.

LP1 revealed:

- (31) *Due to our reliance on our peers for notes where the teacher did not provide us with any notes, we inherit mistakes that the person who is helping us has made. During the process of reading their notes for me while I type, they tend to read out their errors, so I have them in my notes, too. The participant continued to say: The culture of speaking mostly as a compensation for reading puts us at a disadvantage of not knowing spellings; hence, I consider spelling the hardest part of learning English.*

LP4 added that:

(32) *Lack of textbooks and dictionaries makes our learning harder because we struggle with spelling in English.*

LP5 shared that:

(33) *We, VIPs, need our peers to help us read if we are given an assignment so that I can do the work, and I know that it is not a must for them to help me. However, sometimes they show disinterest, and I have to beg them, and they keep declining, wanting me to beg constantly; and that is pain I can't get accustomed to.*

The analysis reveals the vulnerability that the visually impaired learners are exposed. They are already experiencing hardships learning the language due to their visual impairment and lack of appropriate primary resources, like textbooks and dictionaries, which are neither in braille nor large print. Now, being exposed to errors unknowingly uncovers yet another academic vulnerability that adds on to their existing vulnerability. Not only do they lack first-hand access to information but also involuntarily assimilate the errors that are made by their peers because of a gap that arises when the teachers do not fully accommodate these learners. Further, the strain of always seeking help from peers, and then sometimes being rejected, adds some emotional baggage to the learners that makes them feel like burdens to others. Occurrences such as this one might lead to these visually impaired learners retracting from others and avoiding to seek help due to the pain they harbour and the fear of rejection.

4.3.1.3 Teaching Practices

In the course of the discussion, diverse opinions were gathered from the visually impaired participants. Some shared the teaching strategies that their English teachers used to make their learning easier, while others relayed information pertaining the hardships, which they encounter because of some teaching strategies that are employed by their teachers. These diverse narrations are valid because they add up to the individual realities of these visually impaired participants.

LP1 shared:

(34) *Most teachers include us by citing examples about us as visually impaired learners. This is advantageous because it keeps us focused during the lesson. Also, teachers avoid writing on the board so that we learn at the same pace as our classmates.*

LP4 revealed that:

- (35) *Extra classes are helpful for us because some of us are shy to ask questions in the class, but during extra classes, we become free to ask and seek clarification. Additionally, teachers get to redo what was done in class during the extra lessons.*

Conversely, **LP5** disclosed:

- (36) *Sometimes teachers promote our exclusion in English classes by writing examples on the board and not bothering to read for us, or sometimes write a word on the board and ask the class what it means without spelling it out for us. When this happens, we are excluded, and when the lesson continues, we are lost.*

The analysis of the data has earlier shown that some teachers try by all means to fill any gaps that arise during the teaching and learning of visually impaired learners in their English classes. However, others fail to successfully include them due to their inability to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate the visually impaired learners. Through the reflections of the learners, it can be deduced that the exclusion that happens is not deliberate, but it is a reality they face. This also portrays the lack of a systematic instruction put in place for the teachers to use in classrooms that have visually impaired learners. Instead, the degree of inclusion is based on the personal strategies and capabilities of each English teacher.

4.3.1.4 English L2-Speaking Environment

Learners disclosed that their school environment does not encourage the use of their L1 being Sesotho, but the use of English L2 as a way to communicate. The consistent use of English to communicate seemed to be another important contributing factor to their English fluency.

LP1 explicitly stated:

- (37) *English is a medium of communication at our school; therefore, it assists us in speaking English. Also, in my case, I am surrounded by friends and people who are close to me, and they like conversing in English, so I get to speak English a lot, too.*

This reflection shows the importance of being in constant exposure to English. Throughout the interviews, the participants showed no problems with spoken English but with written English

because of their lack of exposure to it. Furthermore, social life seems to also contribute to the learning of English, where one student showed that their cycle contributes to their English skills. Speaking English in a social setting beyond the classroom also allows the dynamic use of English besides the formal tone used in lessons.

4.3.1.5 Technological Support

The findings indicate that assistive devices play an enormous role in facilitating their learning in and out of the English L2 class. The learners can also operate most of these devices independently. The participants shared their individual experiences with assistive technology.

LP2 noted:

- (38) *Being given notes through my recorder makes learning easier because, unlike human beings, I can choose a speaking speed that is suitable for me. I can either slow down the pace or increase the speaking pace.*

LP3 added:

- (39) *The availability of talkback on our phones is very helpful because it matches the actions one makes on the phone and it serves as our eyes.*

These tools make it easy for the visually impaired learners to learn English due to their nature. Decreasing or increasing the speaking pace of the recorder enables the learner to absorb and learn English at a pace that is suitable for them. This also enables one to listen to the lesson over and over until they grasp the content they need to know. Lastly, their reliance on talkback as a screen reader on their phones assists them in learning English because the interaction between it and the visually impaired individual is in English only.

Another interview question asked was: *Can you describe any experiences where you felt unfairly treated or negatively treated by teachers or other students and how did that make you feel?* From the interviews that were conducted, several accounts were narrated by the visually impaired learners pertaining experiences that negatively affected them, and some themes were identified: pedagogical exclusion, disguised hostility, stereotyping and displaced anger.

Table 4.9: Learner participants (RQ2, Interview Q2)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Pedagogical Exclusion	LP3: Lack of explanation of what is written on the board

Disguised Hostility	LP4: Uncomfortable games
Stereotyping	LP1: Negative assumptions of teachers
Displaced Anger	LP5: Negative reaction of teachers to alternative learning methods

4.3.1.6 Pedagogical Exclusion

The participants revealed that several times before how they feel excluded in classrooms sometimes and their different accounts unveil the complexity of the matter. The inability of a teacher to provide verbal explanations of what is taking place on the board and continuing to conduct the lesson results in feelings of exclusion for the visually impaired learner.

LP3 emphatically articulated:

(40) *If what is written on the board is not explained to me by the teacher, this affects me negatively because I become angry and hurt, and feel like giving up.*

This narration shows how emotions come into play in the classroom to affect the motivation of learners. This action of teaching continuously without catering for the visually impaired learner, which is done by the teacher unintentionally, affects the learner emotionally. What one can interpret as a minor mishap of exclusion through continuous teaching is evidently a big obstacle for them that hurts them emotionally and has a potential to make the visually impaired learner consider quitting school totally. These acts carry an upsetting reminder that, for the visually impaired learners and being a minority group in a class, they can easily be forgotten. Most importantly, the learners are not rendered hopeless by their impairment or incapability but by the inaccessible practices done in the classroom.

4.3.1.7 Disguised Hostility

Participants shared how occurrences beyond the classroom affect them negatively because of the treatment they get from their peers that they deem unacceptable. They also share how they get exposed to rough or inappropriate games for their impairment that their peers mask as just jokes.

LP4 recounted:

(41) *Some sighted learners play where they are not supposed to play, and it appears as though we are teasing them when we walk past there. Also, some play rough games with us and say that they are just joking with us.*

The visually impaired learners find themselves exposed to the situations that they find to be questionable and uncomfortable for them. Their interpretation of these events was that their peers were not joking, but they intentionally put them in harm's way. This makes the visually impaired learners unable to voice their discomfort due to the fear of being labelled fragile, whereas they indeed feel uncomfortable with the negative experiences their peers tend to subject them to. The wording of the narration clearly conveys that sometimes visually impaired learners feel targeted socially by their peers instead of feeling included and accepted.

4.3.1.8 Stereotyping

One participant provided a response, which shows the unfair treatment they sometimes get from their teachers, as visually impaired learners. This unfair treatment is a result of negative preconceptions that some teachers have that visually impaired learners behave similarly.

LP1 narrated:

(42) *Our teachers regard us as lazy because we delay submitting, but that is a result of external factors that hinder us from completing work on time. Also, they paint us using the same brush; they bring problems that they encounter with other visually impaired learners to our class; they judge us based on what others do.*

Data Analysis

This shows that the teachers assume that all the visually impaired learners behave in the same way and end up transferring their frustrations to the wrong learners. This makes the learners to feel unfairly treated. Additionally, teachers label the learners as lazy but fail to acknowledge the barriers they face, such as limited time to complete the task and a need to use the computer lab first to convert the work into accessible formats.

4.3.1.9 Displaced Anger

Participants also expressed how they find themselves subjected to the displaced anger of their teachers in the class. Yet again, due to the absence of inclusive instructional methods, the

visually impaired learners disclosed that they had to take initiative to bridge the gap so that they do not lag behind in the class by finding alternative means to catch up but were met with reprimands and irritation from their teacher.

LP5 begrudgingly stated:

(43) *When a teacher provides a written example on the board and does not read out for me, to avoid being excluded I am forced to ask my neighbour what is written on the board, while the lesson is progressing; and teachers do not tolerate that behaviour. They regard it as disrespect even though they failed to accommodate us.*

The participant relayed this hurtful form of exclusion of being overlooked by their teachers in the class during teaching. The inability of the teacher to provide verbal explanations that are vital for the learning of the visually impaired learners makes them feel disconnected to the class. Learners also feel that the teacher's inability to cater for them is the root cause of their talking during the class so that they can ensure that they follow what is going on. This disruption is justified and does not deserve the negative feedback from the teacher, according to the learner, because it is a compensatory action for the teacher's inability to include them.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Pham (2018) discussed the importance of the interpretive philosophical worldview that there is no single truth. Rather, one phenomenon may be interpreted in several ways; researchers gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in all its complexities and all the unique contexts in which it occurs instead of trying to gain generalisations for an entire population. Therefore, this justifies why it is imperative to treat every response as important because it narrates the lived experiences of the visually impaired learners as individuals. Hence, each account narrated by the participants in the above excerpts was offered respect as it held its truth and unique interpretation of events as per participant contributed.

Overall, the identified themes align with the Social Model of Disability, which argues that the visual impairment is not the one that disables the learner to participate fully during their learning but the disabling society through its barriers related to structures, practices and attitudes.

The third interview question was: *As a visually impaired learner, how is your experience like learning English as a second language in high school?* Notable themes were identified in

response to this interview question based on the diverse narrations made by the visually impaired participants. The themes were: spoken and written fluency, English as a functional tool and inadequate resources.

Table 4.10: Learner participants (RQ2, Interview Q3)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Spoken and Written Fluency	LP1: Effects of exposure to mostly spoken English L2
English as a Functional Tool	LP2: Used to operate assistive devices instead of L1 LP3: Facilitates communication and comprehension
Inadequate Resources	LP4: Always being read to

4.3.1.10 Spoken and Written Fluency

There is a visible difference between verbal and written language skills of the visually impaired learners. While the learners show that it is easy for them to speak English, they encounter insurmountable problems with writing. This is a result of their heavy reliance on spoken English than written English.

LP1 explained:

(44) *It is difficult learning English as a second language at high school level because we can speak English, but difficulty arises with writing. Our spelling is wrong due to exposure to a lot of spoken English than written English; hence, we tend to spell words the way we say them.*

This reflects the dilemma faced by many visually impaired learners who cannot access written formats of English first-hand, and as a result, they lack in their spelling skills. This affects the confidence of the learners with spelling words because they just hear how they are pronounced but not how they are written.

4.3.1.11 English as a Functional Tool

Despite the difficulties of learning English, the participants communicated the importance the language plays in their daily lives, especially in an era that is very dependent on use of technology to ease life. For these learners, their proficiency in English is not only for academic purposes but for accessing devices, like mobile applications and computers - most of which operate in English.

LP2 explicitly stated:

- (45) *Learning English is difficult but advantageous to us. I feel that it is important to continue learning it because the tools we use do not operate in Sesotho but English to operate.*

Similarly, **LP3** added:

- (46) *Learning English is a hard experience but very helpful because it helps us in learning communication, and we can listen to talk back on our phones and operate computers.*

The data suggests that there is a practical use of language learning, where despite hurdles the visually impaired learners are motivated to persevere and learn English because it is a vital skill in their overall life. This portrays that goal-oriented learning may assist in the motivation each learner has or the attitude they have towards English learning.

4.3.1.12 Inadequate Resources

The study has also found that the challenge of learning English is further characterised by the lack of accessible learning materials, such as braille textbooks or audiotapes. This challenge leads to the learners being reliant on being read to by their teachers and peers. The experience is not only draining but also not an ideal learning style for some learners.

LP4 articulated this frustration:

- (47) *It is very hard learning English at high school level for us due to lack of resources. Lack of textbooks that are accessible to us affects us because we rely on being read to, and that is not ideal for me.*

The results illustrate how lack of appropriate formats of learning materials for these learners strains them. They find themselves depending on whatever help available, even if it not being their preferred mode of learning. As a result, this can affect their performance in learning the language or the speed at which they grasp content. This is exactly what Mustofa (2023) explains in defining what the interpretivist philosophy is about in Chapter Three – a philosophy that criticises a one-size-fits-all curriculum that does not take account of distinct learning styles of individuals. This practice that puts all the learners under one method of learning, which is auditory, hinders some learners from excelling to their fullest potential. In response to the

question, all the participants' reflections show that learning English as a visually impaired learner is shaped by various factors, such as internal motivation and structural barriers.

The researcher also asked the learner participants to *tell her about a time they felt like giving up because of some circumstances related to their learning*. The findings indicate that the feelings of giving up in the learners are mostly evoked by external features, such as the structural barriers that they face in their school. These barriers range from a lack of autonomy to a lack of appropriate learning materials. The identified themes based on the provided data were: emotional exhaustion and lack of autonomy.

Table 4:11: Learner participants (RQ2, Interview Q4)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Emotional Exhaustion	LP5: Constantly seeking help
Lack of Autonomy	LP4: No liberty to choose subjects we do

4.3.1.13 Emotional Exhaustion

The study reveals that, in some instances, the emotional baggage of constantly having to seek help from their peers becomes overwhelming and a huge contributing factor in making the visually impaired learners consider dropping out of school.

LP5 uttered:

(48) *Not getting the assistance we need makes me feel like giving up most of the time. I wish we would have our own school for visually impaired learners only. These obstacles that I face, for me to have notes, I have to seek help constantly, make me feel like I do not deserve to be here.*

The findings reveal that this statement is a portrayal of effects of inaccessible materials on the emotional-wellbeing of visually impaired learners. The learner feels that she does not belong to the school because of the lack of basic materials that she has to seek help to gain access to. This is the result of structural shortfalls that burden the learner with the weight of seeking alternative methods to learn unlike their sighted peers, who are catered for. Additionally, the wish to be taught in a special school showcases the depth of the isolation the visually impaired learners feel in their classrooms, and this shows that the school has not yet attained meaningful inclusion of the visually impaired learners.

4.3.1.14 Lack of Autonomy

One learner also recounted a unique but powerful and relevant factor that makes their life unbearable at school and makes them feel like giving up. The detailed account of the lack of autonomy the learners face is discussed in the quotation that follows.

LP4 detailed out that:

(49) *I often feel like throwing the towel because we do not have the liberty to choose the subjects that we are interested in doing. They choose the subjects that are hard for me; hence, I feel like giving up because we still have to deal with inaccessible materials on top of that. Also, the timetables also clash. Two subjects I am forced to do are taught at the same time; therefore, I alternate between classes weekly, and I become left behind because I tend to focus on one subject at a time.*

This narration of events uncovers the hardships that the visually impaired learners face due to the lack of autonomy for choosing subjects that they ought to do. The findings indicate that being subject to circumstances beyond control fuels the demotivation that the learners face. It is evident the teachers choose the subjects that are less complex for the visually impaired learners due to a lack of accessible learning materials, but that is not how the learner interprets the occurrence. They feel like it is better to struggle on a subject that they are interested in and had the freedom to choose for themselves rather than struggling on a subject that was imposed on them. The alternation that happens between the required classes is inconvenient for the learner and creates a gap that widens with time because they cannot receive information first-hand in the subjects they already refer to as difficult.

4.3.2 Teachers' Views on Socio-Cultural Determinants of English L2 amongst Visually Impaired Learners in Lesotho

The study still focuses on the second research question: *What socio-cultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools?* The information gathered from the interviews with the teachers of the visually impaired learners will be presented under each interview question as done in the previous sections.

4.3.2.1 Teachers' Observations on Socio-Cultural Influences in English Language Learning

The first question and its follow-up questions that belongs to the mentioned theme was: *As a teacher, what do you notice about how visually impaired learners from different backgrounds learn English? Do you see any differences based on where they come from, their culture, or how their families speak at home? Are there any challenges that you see related to these things?*

The thematic grouping of the information provided by the teachers is discussed in a table form below.

Table 4.12: Teacher participants (RQ2, Interview Q1)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Rural vs. Urban Exposure	Benefits of more exposure to English	Effects of less exposure to English
Cultural Influence	Culture influences the interest of learners in English learning	Culture limits exposure to English
Background and Behaviour	Influence of one's background on their conduct in classes	Influence of background on confidence
Self-Perception	Uncontrollable behaviour	Segregation by visually impaired learners themselves

Both teachers are aware of the various socio-cultural factors, such as background and exposure to the language that influence the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners. Each of them narrates their experiences in their classes, shedding light on how these external influences manifest in daily teaching and learning processes.

TP1 expressed:

(50) *Learners have different ways of learning English-based on their backgrounds. One of my Grade 11 students is part of a musical band. He is also a rapper, and that helps him to learn words. He is urbanised; he learns a lot of vocabulary through listening to his favourite artists, according to him, but he just struggles with spelling. Another one comes from a rural area, and it shows; but he can learn new things here, whereas another one comes from the rural areas, too, and is not interested in learning English. All he*

talks about is home, herding cattle and doing gardening. Some learners come from unstable family backgrounds and are unnecessarily rude to others; they do not follow instructions and are uncontrollable. Visually impaired students differ, but background plays a huge role, too. Those from rural areas struggle with English, but those who come from urban areas excel in learning the language because they use an auditory style of learning, so they get to listen to people in the city speak, then they learn.

TP2 responded:

(51) *There is disposition, which means where one positions their self in society. By being visually impaired, such learners segregate themselves from others. Most of them are from disadvantaged families that cannot pay for expensive schools while others come from St. Bernadette, which is not an English medium school, so their English differs from that of English medium school learners, and they shy away from seeking help from others. Also, due to one of their sensory details being disadvantaged, which is their sight, they are not exposed to as many things as their sighted peers, so their speaking abilities are already compromised, too. Age gap also contributes; some are exposed to English at an older age; now it takes them time to adapt. Lastly, some come from rural areas, and they are not as exposed to the language as others.*

Both **TP1** and **TP2** provide deep responses that highlight how important the background of each visually impaired learner comes to influence their motivation and behaviour towards learning English as a second language. Much emphasis is put on early exposure and continuous exposure to the language in different contexts, which assists in the mastery of English. Factors such as low socio-economic status and unhealthy family backgrounds affect the conduct of learners in class and out of class.

4.3.2.2 Attitudes towards the Visually Impaired Learners

Here is another interview question, which has follow-up questions: *Do any attitudes towards disability portrayed by the society impact the participation of visually impaired learners in English learning? Do any cultural beliefs or social perceptions affect their confidence or classroom behaviour?* Therefore, Table 4.13 below displays the themes that emerged in the responses provided by the teachers of the visually impaired learners.

Table 4.13: Teacher participants (RQ2, Interview Q2)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Learners' Environment	Safe space and inclusive	Lack of confidence because of society
Emotional Support	Learners are confident and supported	Learners are withdrawn and defensive
Learners' Conduct in Class	Full participation	Minimal participation

In the excerpts that follow, the teachers are quoted verbatim to give a full and precise account of their responses.

TP1 expressed:

(52) *There are no barrications [sic] in our school; the school has levelled things for visually impaired learners. Learners are conscientised about them, and they are treated like other sighted learners. These visually impaired learners are free and confident in my class. I help them to accept their disabilities and see that they are capable. I have created a friendly and accommodative atmosphere in the classroom for these visually impaired learners. I have ensured that sighted learners have accepted them as part and parcel of their classrooms so that they can work in groups and also assist each other.*

TP2 held some powerful views also, that:

(53) *The misconception that the society, together with other teachers, have that totally blind learners have exceptional hearing skills, which is not the case, affects their learning because they feel they do not meet societal standards. Additionally, society tends to pity them, and they drag their feet and become playful without any effort to push themselves. Some negative society remarks cause them to have low self-esteem and not even raise their hands in class; you will only realise through what a learner has written that they did not understand. They have also formed a defence mechanism since they are constantly reminded of their impairment by the society, and they might even bring that attitude of being defensive to class.*

Evidently, there is a contrast in the accounts presented by the teachers. **TP1** focused on the enabling attitudes that the school has planted in the school. She put her focus on the society within the school, and her efforts, too, as an educator, to foster an accommodative environment

in class that empowers them and builds their confidence. On the other hand, **TP2** brought insight into how the larger society's perceptions and stereotypes spill into the classroom to affect the behaviour and learning of visually impaired learners.

4.3.2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors towards Success in English

The participants were also asked this question: *How do you think socio-cultural factors, such as family expectations, social stigma or community attitudes, affect their ability to succeed in English?*

Teacher participant 2 narrated different events in response to this interview question, and the following themes were identified: self-segregation, family expectations and internalised stigma.

TP2 responded:

- (54) *Every parent expects their child to pass despite any other contributing factors. For example, the syllabus has changed and needs someone who reads a lot, and comprehension passages have become complex, but the child is pressured to perform according to the family expectations. Parents want them to be treated specially; they sometimes question why they are given similar tests to those of sighted learners. Sometimes parents pity them and want them to proceed to the next class even though they failed. By being visually impaired, they already carry the stigma that they do not see, and society is always putting them under a "gaze." They are always watching what they are doing. As a result, these learners carry that stigma to heart and segregate themselves in school. They avoid walking amongst others, going to the staffroom and conversing with others because they judge themselves. Lastly, they have fragile confidence because they are afraid that people will laugh at them.*

Learners and teachers both agree on important points about the social and cultural factors that affect learning English as a second language. They both see that the lack of accessible resources, like braille materials and audio dictionaries, is a major challenge. They also agreed that auditory learning plays a central role for visually impaired learners, often resulting in poor written English and spelling. Furthermore, teacher participants acknowledged how rural backgrounds and minimal home exposure to English contribute to learners' limited proficiency.

There was also agreement that social stigma and stereotyping negatively impact learners' confidence and participation. Learners recounted feeling judged and excluded, which made them hesitant to speak or seek help, while teachers recognised how internalised stigma and high expectations from families often cause learners to withdraw. However, divergence arose in how these issues were perceived. Learners described their classroom experience as emotionally exhausting, even expressing a desire to transfer to special schools, while some teachers viewed the environment as inclusive and supportive. Teachers also tended to interpret late submissions or disengagement as a lack of discipline, whereas learners linked these behaviours to structural exclusion and inaccessibility.

These differences reflect the core ideas of the Social Model of Disability, which frames disability not as a deficit within the individual but because of unaccommodating systems and societal attitudes. While there is shared recognition of certain barriers, misunderstanding between how learners experience those barriers and how teachers interpret them points to the need for deeper awareness and structural reform.

4.4 Responses and Coping Strategies of Visually Impaired Learners

The final research question that this study aims to address is: *How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges?* This main research question three focuses mostly on the strategies that are working for the visually impaired learners and other stakeholders, and suggests strategies to combat existing challenges. Just like the previous section, this section is divided into the learners' and teachers' perceptions.

4.4.1 Challenges and the Learners' Adaptive Strategies and Resilience

The first asked interview question in this sub-section was: *What challenges do you face in learning English at school?* In response to this question, two themes were identified, namely: exclusion and dependency in accessing learning and discrimination.

Table 4.14: Learner participants (RQ3, Interview Q1)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Exclusion and Dependency in Accessing Learning	LP1: Delay in submission because of insufficient time Reliance on peers for reading Rejection

Discrimination	LP1: Unfair treatment LP3: Seen as incapable, peers setting traps
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4.4.1.1 Exclusion and Dependency in Accessing Learning

According to the study, a recurring pattern has been discussed of dependency of the visually impaired learners on others to access basic learning materials, especially for reading and carrying out assigned tasks. The learners showed that their access to information is reliant on the availability and willingness of others to help. Additionally, when they are given support, they find themselves having to deal with time allocation that is not inclusive.

LP1 responded:

(55) *I have to rely on someone to read classwork or homework for me. This happens at the convenience of the person who is going to help me. On the other hand, other people claim to be too busy to help as just a cover-up for them not wanting to help me. Furthermore, we are often behind with submissions because we need question papers sometimes due to the length of the activity. Additionally, since braille consumes time, I might not finish the activity during the allocated time, then I have to move on to the next class and submit later or the next day, and that is a challenge.*

The study suggests that this rejection that the visually impaired learners face affects their learning because they cannot carry out tasks at the expected time due to the unavailability of individuals who are free to help them. This also causes some emotional distress for the visually impaired learners because they interpret some actions as deliberate avoidance to help them when they are in need. Where support is available, they find themselves subject timelines that are too short for them. This shows that the timetables are created systemically without providing for the extension necessary for braille reading and writing.

4.4.1.2 Discrimination

Visually impaired learners gave an account that they not only experience discriminatory and hurtful acts from their peers but also from their teachers. They talked about unfair treatment that prevails even when they have participated in the same manner as the sighted learners. They also clarified how their peers take them for granted.

LP1 narrated:

(56) *If visually impaired learners happen not to perform well in a test, some teachers tend to scold us more and tell us painful words despite the sighted learners failing like us, too. That is not a pleasant experience.*

With evident emotional strain, **LP3** noted:

(57) *People do not treat us well and think that we are incapable and do not possess any knowledge. For instance, in group work, when we give our input, our peers take us for granted and do not write our responses. Sometimes they keep reminding us that we do not see and set traps with chairs so that we trip and fall because we do not see properly.*

Visually impaired learners are evidently subjected to harsher circumstances by their teachers than their peers for unsatisfactory feedback, and this shame that they face in classes does not sit well with them. The humiliation and discrimination that they face in groups is huge. Denying them the opportunity to partake like others in groups makes them to feel inferior. Lastly, the visually impaired learners are put in harm's way just for the amusement of their group mates who, without fail, remind them that they do not see. These accounts underline that English L2 learning of the visually impaired learners is not difficult due to their impairment alone, but because of socio-cultural practices that put them at a disadvantage.

Another interview question asked was: *What do you do to overcome or minimise the challenges you face?*

Visually impaired learners recounted different strategies that they employ to overcome and/or minimise the challenges that they face in their learning. Strategies were categorised under the following themes: negotiation skills, emotional resilience and seeking support from trusted people.

Table 4.15: Learner participants (RQ3, Interview Q2)

Theme	Learner Participants' Responses
Negotiation Skills	LP1: Typing instead of reading LP4: Willing sighted learner to read
Emotional Resilience	LP4: Overlooking challenges LP5: Forced to be strong

Seeking Support from Trusted People	LP3: Confiding in trusted people LP4: Removal of barriers
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4.4.1.3 Negotiation Skills

Participants shared that, where support is not provided at all or it is inadequately provided, they take the initiative themselves to find alternative methods to gain the information, and this is dependent on their negotiation skills.

LP1 shared:

(58) *When people are too busy to read for me, I alternatively give them my tablet to type the questions for me or go directly to the teacher to request them to type for me or give them my voice recorder.*

LP4 echoed this:

(59) *One has to personally take the initiative to find a sighted learner who is willing to read for them while they type on the apex.*

The findings show that sometimes, for the learners to get the assistance they need, they have to be persistent and even provide alternative quicker means for their assistants to use. The problem-solving skills each learner has assisted them in overcoming structural barriers that they face instead of pitying themselves and depending solely on the teacher to accommodate them.

4.4.1.4 Emotional Resilience

Some participants' responses show they are aware of their struggles; however, the lack of supportive structures causes them to accept these challenges as a normal part of their experience.

LP5 highlighted:

(60) *Some challenges are beyond us, and we can't plead our case to anyone, so we have to be strong and soldier on.*

LP4 also added:

(61) *We often just overlook the challenges we face.*

The responses suggest that, at some point, the learners deal with emotional baggage that might affect their learning because they have no support structures put in place to cater for them, feeling like they would be exposed to some retaliation if they openly pleaded their case.

4.4.1.5 Seeking Support from Trusted People

Unlike some participants who may shy away from seeking help, some visually impaired learners shared that, when they faced challenges that emotionally burdened them, they had to seek assistance and counselling from professionals, their teachers or to confide in someone they trust. In some instances, their teachers take the initiative themselves to minimise the challenges these learners face.

LP3 highlighted:

(62) *When we face challenges that hurt us, we go to social workers so that they counsel us. Sometimes we confide in our teachers or any other person we trust.*

LP4 also shared that:

(63) *Sometimes our teachers ensure that barriers in the environment are removed so that our mobility becomes smooth.*

The findings indicate that some teachers take action to ensure that the learners are comfortable and not battling any struggles. However, it was revealed in one interview that there are no social workers at their school. For one to consult a social-worker, it has to be outside the campus. It shows also that the learners are appreciative of the non-academic support provided by their teachers. This calls for the integration of other relevant stakeholders, like school counsellors, so that the visually impaired learners can offload situations that cost them emotionally with a potential to negatively affect their learning.

Following was this interview question: *What support do you wish you had that would make your English L2 learning easier than now?*

Regarding the support, the visually impaired learners need to address the challenges they face through the following themes identified: accessible and individual learning resources, trained and attentive English teachers, assessment of needs by the government and their physical wellbeing.

Table 4.16: Learner participants (RQ3, Interview Q3)

Theme	Learner Participant Response
Accessible Resources	<p>LP1: Extensive coverage Wi-Fi</p> <p>LP3: Individual computers</p> <p>LP4: Brailled textbooks and dictionaries</p> <p>LP5: Brailled textbooks, large print textbooks</p>
Trained and Attentive Teachers	LP3: Assignment of personal tutors
Assessment of Needs	<p>LP1: Assessment of needs by the Government officials</p> <p>LP3: Public platform to talk about needs</p>
Physical Well-being	LP5: Long-lasting meals

The visually impaired learner participants suggested diverse support strategies that they need to feel fully accommodated and ready to learn English L2 at their school. A recurring need that was mentioned was the need for brailled textbooks. One participant even revealed the necessity to braille every chapter as a stand-alone to avoid them being overwhelmed by a big book due to braille using a lot of pages just for limited information. They also expressed the need for dictionaries in the classrooms. It could be deduced from the response of another participant that there is a need for a larger coverage of Wi-Fi not just in their computer lab, so that they can access online dictionaries in the classroom.

The learners also expressed their frustrations, having to share assistive tools and expressed the need for computers that are enough for each learner to avoid delays with submissions. The participants also suggested that the government officials should come to them and assess their needs to avoid providing them with what they do not need. They further called for the government or the *Ministry of Education and Training* to assign the school additional adequately trained teachers of English, who will cater for their individual needs in the classroom. Also, the Ministry assigns them personal tutors who will give them attention and help them with learning English out of the classroom.

The visually impaired learners expressed their desire to be given a chance to relay their needs on public platforms, like the National Television of Lesotho. Lastly, they talked about the necessity of getting good, long-lasting meals as learners so that they can retain focus in the classrooms and avoid being sleepy in the class because of hunger. Overall, it is evident that the

learners need holistic support, including teaching and learning materials, professional support and physical provisions to ease their learning of English L2.

4.4.2 Support Mechanisms by Teachers and Schools

In response to this last primary research question, *How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges*, multiple interview questions will be used as prompts to answer.

4.4.2.1 Strategies Used to Support the Visually Impaired Learners

To address the final major research question, one of the interview questions stated: *What strategies do you use to support visually impaired learners in your English classes, and which strategies seem to work well?*

The responses provided by teachers are still analysed using the IPA to identify emergent themes, and Table 4.17 presents the identified themes.

Table 4.17: Teacher participants (RQ3, Interview Q1)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Collaborative Learning	Group work	Peer support
Extra Support	Extra classes	Remedial lessons
Teachers as Facilitators	Assigns inclusive groups	Takes a support teacher role

In line with the richness of the data analysed, the diverse responses provided by the teachers are also detailed out in the paragraphs that follow.

TP1 expressed that:

(64) *In my class, I assign group work. It helps them because I spread the visually impaired learners throughout the groups in the class. I avoid having them in one group so that they can share ideas with their peers and also as a strategy to abide by the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018). Another method that works wonderers for me is the extra classes that I organise for them.*

Alternatively, **TP2** gave a detailed account that:

(65) *There is a seating arrangement in my class. I make them sit at the front. I assign them one boarding school learner who excels in English to assist them and read for them always; so in the class, I make such a learner to sit near them. I tell them my objectives for the day so that they know what is expected. I always have them in mind; hence, whenever I have written on the board, I explain what I have written, and if it is a word, I spell it out for them. I ensure that I know their names and call them by their names. When they seem not to understand, I do a follow-up through remedial lessons. They like dodging, so they know it is a must for them to attend my class unless a teacher tells me that they are definitely writing a certain test. I also take the role of a support teacher for them; I tell them what we are going to do in our next class beforehand so that they can go, read, do their research, and they excel at it. I also learn what they like so that I know the strategies to use. They struggle with spelling, so I make them write down at least 7 words every day.*

Both teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to making sure that the visually impaired learners are fully included and catered for in their classes. They also enforce collaborative learning through their different strategies, which seem to be fruitful for them and their learners. What **TP2** does in knowing the visually impaired learners by name makes them feel as part of the class. This does not only minimise their behaviour of being reserved but also increases their participation, which allows the teacher to assess their understanding.

4.4.2.2 Current and Needed Support

Another interview question was: *What type of support, whether currently available or still needed, helps/would help you to teach English more effectively to visually impaired learners?*

Responses provided by the two English teachers were analysed, and the themes that were identified are presented in tabular form.

Table 4.18: Teacher participants (RQ3, Interview Q2)

Theme	Teacher Participants' Responses	
	TP1	TP2
Technological support	Use of Duxbury, braille pads and magnifiers	Requests more materials
Support personnel	Reliance on support staff	Asks for more specialists

Administrative support	Spreading visually impaired learners	Requests collaboration with VILs' past schools
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The teachers provided different but detailed narrations of how they are currently receiving support from the administration, some professionals and materials. They also indicated the type of additional support they would like to receive to facilitate their smooth teaching of visually impaired learners in their classrooms.

TP1 narrated:

(66) *The management of the school paves the way to making the environment friendly for the learning of the visually impaired learners by creating acceptance from the sighted learners. They also ensure that the learners are not crowded in one space but spread through different classrooms. The learners use braille pads, which have software called Duxbury that automatically transcribes text into braille, and then turns their brailled work into normal print. Learners use magnifiers to read what is on the board. In some instances, I make the specialists aware of prescribed texts so that they can emboss them for the learners to read using the computer. The support staff or specialists help us a lot as teachers. If we have a problem with a visually impaired learner, they can advise us on what to do because they are close to the visually impaired learners.*

Contrastingly, **TP2** responded:

(67) *The support that the administration can provide for the betterment of the teaching and learning of visually impaired learners is through provision of additional material. We are in need of an advanced whiteboard with audio features and technological tools that allow the visually impaired learners to draw. The learners should be given minimal time being at their centre during school time so that they can learn to interact with their peers and not segregate themselves. We also need in-service training. As teachers, we need to assign time to talk about how to handle the learners. Furthermore, we need psychologists and psychiatrists, and other professionals who will assess the level of impairment of the learner and let us know the capabilities and limitations of the learner. Additionally, there is a need to establish relations with the past schools of these learners so that we are aware of their behaviour and performance history. Lastly, establishment of extra-mural activities that allow the visually impaired*

learners an opportunity to showcase their talents would be beneficial in making them feel fully included.

TP1 conveyed the support available at the school to make the teaching of English to visually impaired learners effective. Conversely, **TP2** highlighted issues that need to be addressed to improve the inclusion of learners in his class. He offers suggestions to better integrate visually impaired learners into the school. Both accounts provide valuable information that demonstrate how well the school accommodates visually impaired learners.

This part highlights both the similarities and differences in the ways that visually impaired students and educators perceive and react to challenges in acquiring English as a second language. Both groups recognise some common barriers, like the lack of accessible learning materials such as brailled textbooks and assistive technologies. They also understand the emotional impact these challenges have on learners. Additionally, they agree on the importance of peer support, group work, and teacher facilitation as helpful strategies, but these are often applied inconsistently.

However, the experiences of discrimination and exclusion voiced by learners including emotional harm, peer bullying and unequal treatment by teachers, are largely absent from the teachers' narratives. Teachers try to include students and adjust their teaching, but students often feel these attempts are not enough or not consistent. As a result, some students feel left out or treated like children, even with the teachers' efforts.

Another key difference is in the interpretation of learner resilience. Learners often rely on personal coping strategies, such as negotiation skills, emotional suppression, or seeking support outside the school system, such as social workers, whereas teachers place greater emphasis on their classroom interventions and expect learners to comply with established routines.

Finally, both groups identify the need for additional support, including technological tools, trained personnel, and administrative and/or governmental backing. Yet, learners stress their unmet needs more urgently, calling for personalised tutors, needs assessments, and even proper meals, highlighting a more holistic understanding of inclusion than what is reflected in the teachers' accounts.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on presenting and analysing the information gathered from visually impaired students and their English L2 teachers at St. Catherine's High School in Maseru. In total, there were seven participants: five students with visual impairments and two educators.

The results of this study validate the research hypotheses, especially concerning the various difficulties encountered by visually impaired students and the insufficient involvement of certain stakeholders. The findings further reveal that the English L2 learning experiences of visually impaired learners at high school level are driven by the relationship between the socio-cultural factors, policy implementation and individuals. Although the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) has clear provisions aimed at promoting access of education for all the learners, its implementation is inconsistent. The support strategies offered in the English L2 classes are hugely dependent on personal experiences and initiatives of the teachers rather than the guidelines of the policy. This suggests that while the policy advocates for inclusive education, it only partially mitigates the challenges faced by the visually impaired learners in reality. Furthermore, the study has highlighted that, in the settings that are supportive, the visually impaired learners could cope and learn, while lack of supportive environments resulted in less academic and social participation of the learners. Finally, the findings of the study have revealed that, to overcome most challenges, the visually impaired learners and relevant stakeholders had to be more resourceful and resilient.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the main findings of the study, which were derived mainly from interviews and document analysis. It also offers conclusions and suggestions based on the results. The research was guided by three central questions, which this chapter aims to address focusing on the lived experiences of visually impaired learners concerning their learning of English L2 within a mainstream high school in Lesotho. The chapter, therefore, draws connections between the findings and the literature reviewed in chapter 2, while making reference to the theoretical framework underpinning the study – the Social Model of Disability and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Following the discussion, the chapter offers conclusions based on the major findings of the study. Further, it provides practical and policy-related recommendations aimed at addressing the barriers faced by the visually impaired learners in learning English L2. Lastly, it highlights the limitations of the study and presents final reflections on its overall contribution.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research examined how socio-cultural factors influence the learning of English L2 among visually impaired students at the high school level in Lesotho, with a particular focus on St. Catherine's High School. The study was structured around three main research questions:

1. *In what ways does the approved Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho address the challenges faced by visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers?*
2. *What sociocultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools?*
3. *How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges?*

This research utilised a qualitative methodology grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, applying IPA to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of the learners with visual impairment and their teachers. Semi-structured interviews and LIEP (2018) served as the

primary data sources, within the framework of a single case study design with the participants chosen purposefully from St. Catherine's High School – the only inclusive high school in Maseru that admits visually impaired learners.

The Social Model of Disability served as the guiding theoretical framework, allowing for an in-depth examination of the social and environmental factors that barricade English L2 learning amongst the visually impaired learners. The analysis revealed numerous socio-cultural factors that shape the learning experience of these learners, including limited access to resources, teacher attitudes and training, peer relations, home and school environment, and the overall societal perception of disability. Again, the study found that while the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) advocates for equity and inclusion, its implementation is limited and inconsistent. The study also talked about the resilience of learners and different modified strategies employed by both visually impaired learners and teachers of English L2 in overcoming the teaching and learning challenges.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

This section presents the study's main findings in relation to the three core research questions and objectives. The conclusions drawn have implications for inclusive education in Lesotho and are based on the analysis provided in the previous chapter. The discussion is framed through the perspectives of the Social Model; IPA and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The findings highlight both encouraging and challenging aspects of teaching and learning for visually impaired students, the resilience these learners employ, as well as significant gaps in policy implementation and support strategies for the visually impaired learners. The findings highlight a vital need to transform the policy provisions and commitments into applicable and long-lasting practices.

5.2.1 Research Question 1

In what ways does the approved Inclusive Education Policy (2018) in Lesotho address the challenges faced by visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers?

5.2.1.1 Limited Policy Effectiveness

With an objective to review how the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) addresses the challenges that the visually impaired learners in high schools in Lesotho face, the findings have revealed that, although the LIEP (2018) articulates a clear vision for equal access to education, the implementation of the policy is partially ineffective at the school level. The participants

consistently reported a difference between the policy's provisions and their daily learning experiences. For instance, the policy commits to remove physical, social and instructional barriers; however, the learners reported persistent challenges such as

1. Lack of assistive technology such as audio materials and computers
2. Insufficiently trained teachers
3. Inadequate adaptation of classroom practices

The teachers had similar sentiments, stating that, although they, as old teachers, had received some individual training in inclusive education, newly recruited teachers often lacked such training. As a result, teaching remained largely inconsistent. This is apparent in the qualifications they possess that were discussed in Table 4.2 that were related to the provision of inclusive education. Some teachers can modify their strategies for teaching visually impaired learners, especially **TP1** and **TP2**, as evident in their accounts, while others are not adequately equipped to do so and that is portrayed in the narrations of different learner participants. The lack of continuous in-service training also added to the problem because it made it difficult for all the teachers to implement inclusive strategies effectively.

These findings support earlier research reviewed in Chapter Two by Tseeke (2021), and Mosia and Phasha (2020), who highlighted similar gaps between policy and practice in Lesotho's education system. They further align with the findings by Marzulina et al. (2021) in Indonesia, which emphasise that inclusive policies should be supported by funding and training of teachers to be effective. This also reflects the Social Model of Disability, which views barriers as not from the individual but as social constructs that are removable. As a result, failing to fully implement inclusive practices has created barriers to the learning of visually impaired learners.

Overall, while the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) makes provisions for inclusive education, its partial implementation, lack of monitoring and insufficient support services limit the policy's effectiveness in mitigating the challenges faced by learners with visual impairment in Lesotho's high schools.

5.2.2 Research Question 2

What sociocultural factors directly impact the L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools?

The second objective of the study was to identify socio-cultural factors that directly impact the learning of English L2 for the learners with visual impairment. In relation to the objective, the results have revealed that visually impaired learners are affected by various socio-cultural factors within the school environment and the larger society. These factors play an important role in their learning of English as a second language.

5.2.2.1 Lack of Resources and Infrastructure

The learners reported that they often struggle because of insufficient resources, such as brailled books, audio materials and access to digital content, such as online dictionaries. The physical environment of the school: uneven surfaces with stones, also hinders the free movement of visually impaired learners. These limitations create the conditions where visually impaired learners are forced to rely on others, often leading them to feel dependent, excluded and rejected. These findings align with the studies conducted in Lesotho by Tseeke (2021), Mosia and Phasha (2020), and Ralejoe (2019) where material and physical barriers in Lesotho schools were documented. Moreover, the Social Model of Disability adds that these barriers are not due to the learners' impairments, but because of the environment that fails to accommodate them.

5.2.2.2 Effects of Auditory Learning

Due to loss of vision, the visually impaired learners rely on auditory style of learning. Some learners disclosed that they benefit a great deal when the teachers read aloud to them. However, when teaching is overly visual or there is poor explanation, it becomes harder for visually impaired learners to comprehend and understand what is being taught. The lack of resources and occurrences where the teachers fail to verbalise what is taking place on the board further heighten the challenges. This is also reflected in the research conducted by Aryanti (2014) and Tran and Pho (2020), who discuss the importance of clear verbal instruction and accessible audio materials for English L2 learning by the visually impaired.

5.2.2.3 Teaching Practices and Teacher Attitudes

The participants highlighted that teaching strategies do not always accommodate their needs. Some teachers still write abundantly on the board but fail to be fully inclusive due to their inability to provide explanations or spellings of what is on the board for a visually impaired learner. Experienced teachers were commended for the efforts that they apply by explaining and conducting extra lessons, while incoming teachers were described as unequipped on how

to deal with and include visually impaired learners effectively. This is a reinforcement of earlier research that was reviewed in Chapter Two (Mpu & Adu, 2021; Susanto & Nanda, 2018), which points out the teacher's attitudes and knowledge as vital socio-cultural factors in inclusive education.

5.2.2.4 English-Speaking Environment and Social Interactions

The social environment, both in and out of the classroom, influences the learners' English proficiency. Some learners shared that they benefit when surrounded by the individuals who communicate in English regularly, while others stated that being excluded from participating in group discussions affects them. The minority of the participants also disclosed that they were left out of group tasks due to the underestimation of their sighted group members. This confirms the findings by Rahman et al. (2024) and Guanoluisa et al. (2022), who emphasise the role of inclusive peer interactions and the immersion in the target language environment in enhancing L2 learning.

5.2.2.5 Technological Support and Access at Home

The evidence has revealed that socio-economic status of the families of visually impaired learners influenced their access to essential exposure to quality education, such as English medium schools. The learners are more exposed to the language at a later stage than others. Also, there is a need for basic technological tools that ease the learning of these visually impaired learners. As Tawfiq (2020) and Hamid et al. (2022) disclose, the home environment and socio-economic status are important in facilitating exposure to the language, motivation and access to materials.

In summary, there are multiple socio-cultural factors affecting the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners, such as learning materials, attitudes, instructional factors and environmental hindrances. These findings align with the Social Model of Disability by detailing that the factors that hinder the learning of English L2 of visually impaired learners stem from the factors that are external rather than the impairment itself. When examining the ages of the learner participants, it is noted that **LP1**, **LP3**, and **LP5** are between 19 and 20 years old, which is typical for learners in Lesotho at the tertiary level. As a result, this could directly reflect the challenges they encountered during their high school education, likely because of insufficient resources and a shortage of trained educators, as frequently mentioned by the learner participants in their feedback.

5.2.3 Research Question 3

How do visually impaired learners themselves and relevant stakeholders respond to these challenges?

The final objective of the study was to unveil how the visually impaired learners and relevant stakeholders tackle the challenges they face. Hence, the findings of the study have further revealed various responses by the visually impaired learners and their teachers pertaining to the challenges they encounter in the teaching and learning of English L2. The responses centre around individual initiatives and support of the teachers and peers in mitigating the socio-cultural effects and educational challenges.

5.2.3.1 Learner initiative and adaptive strategies

The study has discovered that the learner took initiative to facilitate their own learning, especially where they are not catered for. Several learner participants mentioned that they relied on listening in class and seeking explanation from their peers or teachers where they need clarification. Others mentioned that they use assistive devices, such as recorders or magnifiers, in the class. Some adapted by forming relations with some sighted learners who would assist them in reading assignments or class-work for them or typing out on their devices when they cannot read for them.

These findings aligned with both the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and the Social Model of Disability. On the one hand, the IPA has shown how the learners made sense of and responded to their unique learning experiences. On the other hand, the Social Model of Disability has been incorporated to show how the learners were limited by the environment instead of their impairment, and how they found creative means to mitigate those challenges they face.

5.2.3.2 Peer Collaboration and Support

Some participants gave accounts of diverse experiences with their peers' support. Some peers were reportedly showing enthusiasm and constant support by reading for them, explaining what is written and typing on their devices, while some learners were inconsistent in their assistance. Such peers helped out depending on their mood, they helped when they were in a good mood only. This highlights the effect of over-reliance on informal support structures and volunteering. This corroborates literature by Rahman et al. (2024) that socially inclusive

environments promote more active participation and English engagement for visually impaired learners. However, the uneven support reflected in this study suggests a need for more effective mechanisms to enforce peer support and collaboration.

5.2.3.3 Teacher Effort and Experience

The study discovered that the teachers played a significant role in mitigating the challenges faced by the visually impaired learners. The participants stated that the experienced teachers facilitated extra classes for them, which allowed them to seek clarification freely without the pressure of the mainstream class, and this boosted their confidence. However, the teachers complained that new teachers lacked appropriate training to teach the learners with visual impairment. This reflects a gap where the individual teacher efforts have to cover up for missing structures that are designed to cater for the learners.

To summarise, the responses to the challenges encountered by visually impaired learners portray a mixture of personal efforts, the teacher facilitated support and peer support. These strategies together assist in bridging the gap that is caused by the partial implementation of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy. It is worth noting that reliance on individual support instead of that of the institution highlights a major limitation in Lesotho's current approach to inclusive education in relation to visually impaired learners.

5.3 Conclusions

It has been shown that this qualitative study aimed to unveil the effects of sociocultural factors on the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners at St. Catherine's High School. Conclusions are drawn based on the three major research questions, objectives and the findings that were discussed earlier. The conclusions affirm that, despite the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) making provisions, its implementation proves to be challenging for different stakeholders, especially in English L2 classes of visually impaired learners.

Based on the Social Model of Disability and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the researcher gained insight into the lived experiences of visually impaired learners at high school level and teachers of English L2 concerning the effects of socio-cultural factors on the learning of English L2. The data were collected using interviews with five visually impaired learners, together with two English L2 teachers, and through document analysis.

It has been established through the findings of the studies, which are grounded in the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants, that there were similarities in the participants' responses and some inconsistencies were present, too. For instance, some participants acknowledged that some experienced teachers of English L2 demonstrated inclusive strategies that catered for them, such as conducting extra lessons for visually impaired learners only, adapting their teaching strategies to include them. However, some participants highlighted in their responses lack of support and inclusive teaching strategies in the classroom, and that made them to feel left behind. This suggests that, despite the LIEP (2018) laying the foundation for inclusive education, the incorporation of inclusive practices is present in the classroom, but it is largely dependent on the individual initiatives of teachers and learners rather than system-guided practices. This highlights that the curriculum itself is not entirely inclusive. The three major conclusions below encompass such complexities. The major conclusions are: partial implementation of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy, socio-cultural factors significantly shape English L2 learning, and individual strategies portray that systemic support has gaps that need to be bridged.

5.3.1 Conclusion 1

The study revealed that, while the LIEP (2018) promotes inclusive education in its provisions, the implementation is limited and inconsistent, and the visually impaired learners still face multiple barriers in their learning. The participants reported barriers, such as learning materials that are not adapted to suit the learners, lack of adequate assistive devices, a lack of constant training of teachers, and a nonalignment between the policy and the actual implementation at high school level. Although some teachers had received some training, some had received none concerning inclusive education. These findings portray a gap in the implementation of the policy, particularly where the availability of inclusive teaching is dependent on an individual teacher because of the lack of a fixed method that guides the provision of inclusive education in classrooms.

5.3.2 Conclusion 2

The study also revealed that different socio-cultural factors considerably shape the English L2 learning experiences of visually impaired learners. The learners' experiences are influenced by diverse aspects, such as classroom activities, societal attitudes, peer interactions, family background and availability of resources. The negative perceptions of disability, inconsistent peer support, low socio-economic status and limited exposure to English L2 on a daily basis

are all challenges to the learning of English L2 for visually impaired learners. Conversely, positive attitudes, exposure to English media, use of assistive technology and inclusive practices promote better learning of English L2 for visually impaired learners. However, the positive influences were discovered to not always be at the disposal of the visually impaired learners. Both findings here bring validity to the Social Model of Disability that puts emphasis on the effects of external barriers and shows that the learning of the visually impaired learners is shaped mostly by external factors than their impairment.

5.3.3 Conclusion 3

The findings indicated that the learners and their teachers use individual strategies to overcome the shortcomings of the schooling system and curriculum. The participants highlighted that the visually impaired learners relied on their resilience, memory and peer collaboration mostly to ensure their learning continued amidst challenges. However, the teachers, especially those with training and experience, use supportive activities, such as extra lessons and modified teaching strategies. These strategies are often driven by personal initiative rather than formal support structures put in place to guide the teaching and learning of visually impaired learners.

Having discussed the conclusions that were emergent in the study, it is appropriate to state that there are promising strides towards inclusive education at school, but the learning environment is inconsistent and needs adequately structured principles to improve the learning of the visually impaired learners. In conclusion, the complexity of the provision of inclusive education, where inclusive strategies and exclusive practices co-exist, portrays a reality in which the principles of policies are not always met or matched by the reality on the ground.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study offers vital insights into the experiences of English L2 learning of visually impaired learners in Lesotho. However, the study focused on just one inclusive school, St. Catherine's High School, and involved a few participants that comprised the visually impaired learners and their teachers. Initially, the study proposed to also collect data from some relevant stakeholders, such as parents and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) officials but because of time-frame mismatch, the researcher could not interview them. Thus, the sample cannot be truly representative and satisfactorily generalisable. This limits the understanding of how the challenges are addressed at the family level and policy level. Additionally, the research was conducted in an urban context, which does not reflect the lived realities of visually impaired

learners in the rural areas of Lesotho, and it affects the generalisability of the findings. Lastly, data collection and analysis happened at a relatively short period, hence limiting extended engagement with the participants to gather any developing perspectives that may arise.

5.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of the study encompass the vital implications for educational policies, classroom conduction, teacher training development and future research in inclusive education in Lesotho. The implications are grounded in the Social Model of Disability and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The study highlights how the factors that are not impairment-centred but are socially based shape the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners.

5.5.1 Policy Implications

The partial implementation of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018) shows the gap between the intentions of the policy and its implementation. This implies a need for the creation of systemic guidelines for how provision of inclusive education in mainstream classrooms, especially concerning language learning for impaired learners and constant monitoring schedules of the provision of inclusive education by the MoET.

5.5.2 Pedagogical Implications

Teaching strategies are inconsistent in the classrooms, with inclusive practices dependent on teacher experience and willingness rather than formal training. This implies a need for teacher training related to inclusive teaching strategies.

5.5.3 Theoretical Implications

The findings portray the importance of using the Social Model of Disability in examining the realities of learners with impairments. Through its usage, the study frames the challenges based on the social and environmental barriers, not the personal impairment. Further, the IPA allowed this study to show how the visually impaired students and teachers experienced teaching and learning of English L2, and how they interpreted their unique experiences. Therefore, the IPA is advantageous because it does not only highlight recurrent themes but also embraces unique experiences, which are very important when understanding the realities of the visually impaired learners.

5.5.4 Research Implications

The study uncovers several potential areas for further research, such as the lived experiences of the learners with visual impairment in rural areas, the perspectives of parents and caregivers and policy-makers. The contradictions that occur because of inclusive and exclusive experiences of different learners call for further comparative research across different schools that practise inclusive education.

5.5.6 Reflection on the Research Assumptions

This study was guided by two research assumptions in a qualitative method. The first research assumption for the present study was that the visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools face multiple challenges in their learning process. Based on data collected from teachers and learners with visual impairment, this assumption is confirmed. There are significant barriers caused by the lack of materials, negative attitudes, lack of adapted teaching strategies and uneven classroom practices.

Additionally, the study assumed that relevant stakeholders, such as the members of the Special Education Unit (SEU) and question setters at the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL), and the caregivers of learners with visual impairment may be defensive and not open to communicating. Some participants may also not be available at their places of work. During the research process, it was not possible to include the abovementioned stakeholders as participants. As a result, this assumption could not be tested in the current study.

5.7 Recommendations

The recommendations are made based on the study's findings and conclusions for the betterment of the English L2 learning experiences of visually impaired learners in Lesotho high schools. The recommendations are divided into three parts: policy recommendations, practical recommendations and future research recommendations.

5.7.1 Policy Recommendations

There is a need to strengthen the implementation of the Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (2018). The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) should develop a structured guideline on the implementation of the policy at different levels and also develop a monitoring schedule to be carried out by the Special Education Unit (SEU) by being in constant contact with the schools to assess the needs of the teachers and learners and to also assess practical and

impractical strategies in the curriculum. Again, there is a pressing need for implementation of compulsory teacher training programmes. Inclusive education should be studied mandatorily in teacher training schools, and there should also be in-service training programmes that are implemented for the teachers who are already in schools. This will ensure that all the teachers, whether old or new, are well trained to deal with and teach learners with visual impairment.

5.7.2 Practical Recommendations

Assistive devices that ease the learning of the visually impaired learners should be easily at their disposal. The learners highlighted a need for individual computers and audio recorded material to assist in their learning. Also, there is a need for brailled English textbooks to facilitate independent learning for these learners. Also, schools should put in place support structures that enable collaborative learning, where there are formal peer support programmes that will minimise emotional burdens of visually impaired learners while also promoting full inclusion. Finally, there should be promotion of inclusive cultures in schools where management in schools can foster a regular awareness raising culture about impairment in the school to combat misconceptions held by some learners and some teachers so that through the constant awareness raising programmes that they get to understand the visually impaired learners fully.

5.7.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should aim to incorporate other relevant stakeholders, such as parents or caregivers, Special Education Unit (SEU) officials and Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL) personnel, to gain a more complex and deep insight on the education system of Lesotho pertaining inclusive education. Additionally, this study focused on one urban school where there are a lot of resources, future studies should expand the research to the rural areas settings to gain unique challenges experienced in those remote areas.

5.8 Final Remarks

This research explored how sociocultural factors influence the English L2 learning of visually impaired learners at the high school level in Lesotho. Utilising the Social Model of Disability and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the research emphasised that learning is influenced not only by the disability itself but also by various elements such as the societal context, cultural background, and the educational institutions that the learners attend. Although

Lesotho has implemented an Inclusive Education Policy since 2018, obstacles related to implementation, teacher training, and a lack of resources continue to exist.

This research ultimately contributes to the knowledge advocating for more inclusive education systems. By giving voice to the visually impaired learners and their teachers, the study facilitates a perspective that draws away from viewing disability as an individual issue, but as a societal and systemic issue that hinders full inclusion. Finally, this research highlights the resilience of visually impaired learners and the critical role of educators in shaping inclusive learning environments. It also draws attention to the complex relationship between individual learner experiences and broader systemic barriers. The findings aim to contribute to ongoing academic discussions and to inform practical efforts towards strengthening inclusive education in Lesotho and comparable settings.

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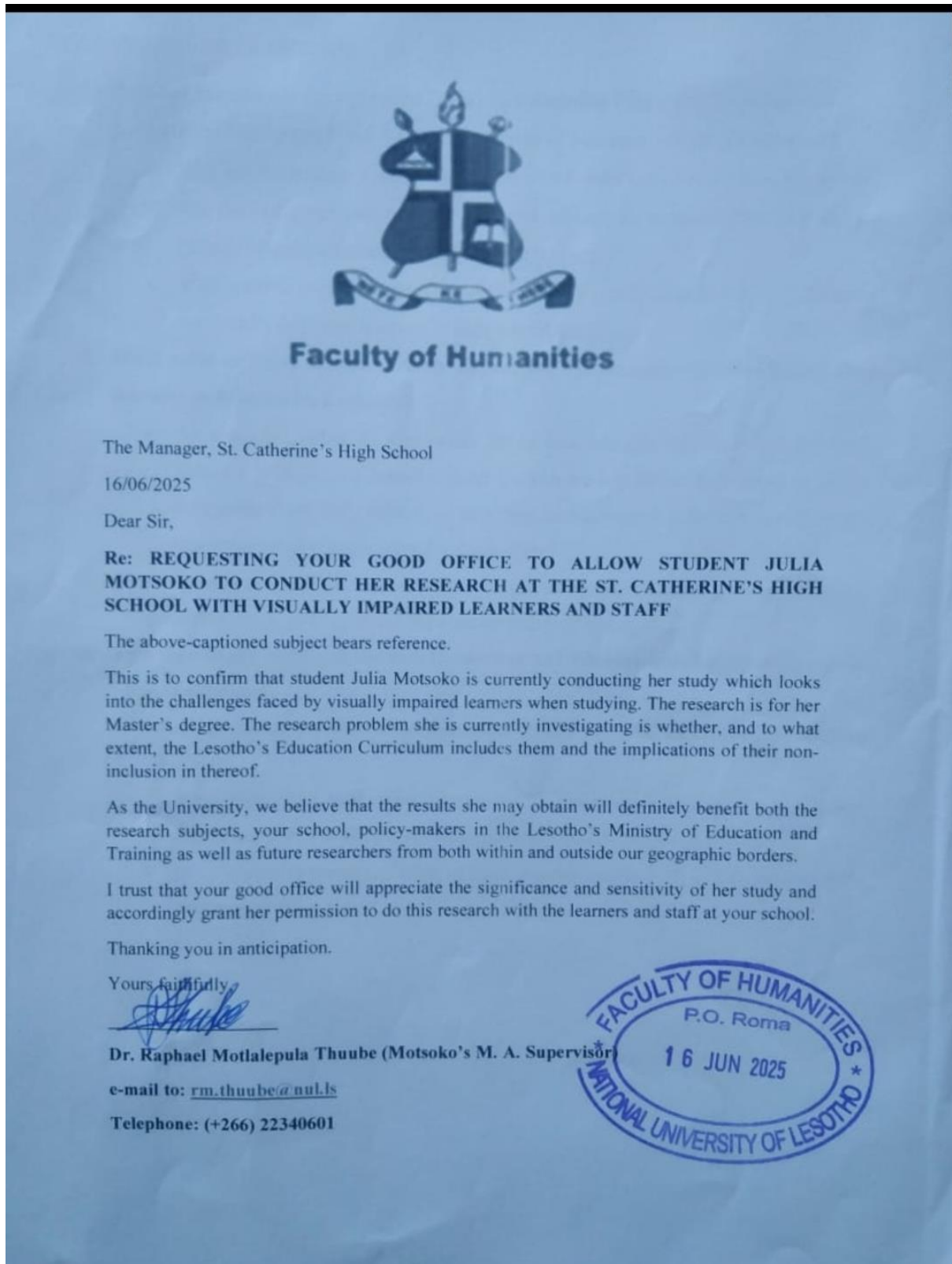
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter from the Supervisor



Appendix 2: Consent Form for Learners and Teachers

Informed Consent Form

I understand that I am being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Miss Julia 'Malesitsi Motsoko from the National University of Lesotho in this school: St. Catherine's High School. This research will explore the effects of socio-cultural factors on English L2 learning by visually impaired learners. If I agree to participate in the study, I will be interviewed about the effects of socio-cultural factors on the learning of visually impaired learners at high school level and also about strategies that are used to combat the challenges they face.

I am informed and assured by the researcher that there are no known risks associated with this study.

I realise that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and I may withdraw from the research any time I so wish. I understand that if I refuse to participate in the research, my refusal will not affect me in any negative way whatsoever.

I understand that all the information (data) I provide will be kept confidential. However, this information may be used for identifying strategies that may improve inclusive learning experiences for visually impaired learners and that I will remain anonymous as one of the key informants in the research.

The research study has been explained to me and I have read and understood the consent form. All my questions and queries have been answered and I agree to participate in the research.

NAMES _____

TITLE: [Dr.], [Mr.], [Mrs.], or [Miss]

Please tick [✓] the appropriate box

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Learners

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

Main Research Question 1

1. Do teachers provide special support or materials that help you learn English L2 better?
2. Are learning materials, like textbooks, audios or technological tools, accessible to you in English L2 classes?

Main Research Question 2

3. What about your school or personal life makes it easier or harder for you to learn English as a second language?
4. Can you describe any experiences where you felt unfairly treated or negatively treated by teachers or other students and how did that make you feel?
5. As a visually impaired learner, how is your experience like learning English as a second language in high school?
6. Tell me about a time you felt like giving up due to some circumstances related to your learning.

Main Research Question 3

7. What challenges do you face in learning English at school?
8. What do you do to overcome or minimise the challenges you face?
9. What support do you wish you had that would make your English L2 learning easier than now?

Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Teachers: Linkert Scale for Teacher Responses

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Main Research Question 1

1. How has the Inclusive Education Policy (2018) affected your teaching practices especially in English classes?
2. Are the resources and training provided enough to accommodate and support visually impaired learners during English lessons?
3. What specific provisions within the 2018 Inclusive Education Policy in Lesotho benefit visually impaired learners at high school level?

Main Research Question 2

4. As a teacher, what do you notice about how visually impaired learners from different backgrounds learn English? Do you see any differences based on where they come from, their culture, or how their families speak at home? Are there any challenges that you see related to these things?
5. Do any attitudes towards disability portrayed by society impact the participation of visually impaired learners in English learning? Do any cultural beliefs or social perceptions affect their confidence or classroom behaviour?

Main Research Question 3

6. What strategies do you use to support visually impaired learners in your English classes, and which strategies seem to work well?
7. What type of support, whether currently available or still needed, helps/would help you to teach English more effectively to visually impaired learners?

Main Research Question 1

Theme	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Adapting Teaching Practices to Inclusion					TP1, TP2
Use of Assistive Devices (e.g., braille pads, e-pens)					TP1, TP2
Role of Catch Centre in Transcription Support					TP1, TP2
Availability of Trained Specialists					TP1, TP2
Lack of Braille Textbooks					TP1, TP2
Need for More Teacher Training					TP1, TP2
Presence of Production Room with Devices					TP2
Reliance on MOET for Donations/Resources					TP1
Support Teachers no longer Available.					TP2
New Teachers lack Disability Training					TP1

Main Research Question 2

Theme	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Urban VILs outperform rural VILs in English due to exposure					TP1, TP2

Learners from disadvantaged homes show low motivation.					TP1, TP2
Self-isolation due to disability stigma					TP2
Internalised low confidence amongst VILs					TP2
Auditory exposure helps urban learners.					TP1
Behavioural issues linked to unstable homes.					TP1
Teachers can foster inclusion and confidence.					TP1
Misconceptions (e.g., sharper hearing) create unfair expectations.					TP2
Societal pity lowers academic resilience.					TP2
Parental pressure is unrealistic or contradictory.					TP2

Main Research Question 3

Theme	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Use of Group Work and Extra Classes as Inclusion Strategies					TP1
Explicit Verbal Instruction and Classroom Objectives					TP2

Peer Support and Name Recognition to Build Belonging					TP2
Remedial Lessons and Previewing Topics					TP2
Use of Duxbury Software, Magnifiers, and Specialists					TP1
Support Staff Familiarity with Learners Enhances Teaching					TP1
Advanced Assistive Tech (audio-enabled boards, drawing tools)					TP2
In-service Training and Inter-school Collaboration					TP2
Teacher Collaboration Time and Psychosocial Support Staff					TP2
Early Provision of Brailled/Large Print Textbooks					TP1
Financial Support for Low-SES Learners					TP1
Frequent Ministry Monitoring and School-Based Research					TP2
Extramural Activities for Holistic Inclusion					TP2
Regular Parent-Teacher Meetings					TP1