

Pedagogical Mediation for Visually Impaired Students

**Mediación Pedagógica para Estudiantes
con Discapacidad Visual**

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Abstract

This case study began in the first semester of 2013 as part of an integrated English course offered at a public university in Costa Rica. Data were collected at three intervals—2013, 2019, and 2020—to explore the experiences of several professors who taught visually impaired or blind students. The research is grounded in the personal experience of one of the researchers, who had a blind student in her class. It examines the perceptions and experiences of the participating teachers, as well as the challenges they encountered over time while striving to foster an inclusive classroom environment. The implications for theory and practice are discussed, and recommendations for further research are proposed.

Keywords: visual impairment, teaching English, inclusion, pedagogical tools

Resumen

El presente estudio de caso inició durante el primer semestre de 2013 y se centró en un curso de inglés integrado que se imparte en una universidad pública en Costa Rica. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo en tres periodos: 2013, 2019 y 2020, durante los cuales se obtuvo información sobre las experiencias de varios docentes que trabajaron con estudiantes con discapacidad visual. Este estudio surgió a partir de las experiencias personales de una de las investigadoras, quien tuvo en su clase a un estudiante invidente. Se estudian las percepciones y vivencias de los docentes participantes, así como los desafíos que enfrentaron a lo largo del tiempo en su búsqueda de la inclusión en el aula. Se discuten implicaciones teórico-prácticas y se plantean recomendaciones para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: discapacidad visual, enseñanza del inglés, inclusión, herramientas pedagógicas

Resumo

O presente estudo de caso teve início no primeiro semestre de 2013 e concentrou-se em um curso integrado de inglês oferecido em uma universidade pública na Costa Rica. A coleta de dados foi realizada em três períodos: 2013, 2019 e 2020, durante os quais foram obtidas informações sobre as experiências de vários docentes que trabalharam com estudantes com deficiência visual. Este estudo surgiu a partir das experiências pessoais de uma das pesquisadoras, que teve em sua turma um estudante cego. Analisam-se as percepções e vivências dos docentes participantes, bem como os desafios enfrentados ao longo do tempo em sua busca pela inclusão em sala de aula. Discutem-se implicações teórico-práticas e apresentam-se recomendações para pesquisas futuras.

Palavras-chave: deficiência visual, ensino de inglês, inclusão, ferramentas pedagógicas

The first academic semester of 2013 presented our instructor with an unforeseen challenge: a visually impaired student enrolled in her integrated English course. In addition to the inherent difficulties posed by this condition, the students' language proficiency was not aligned with the expected level for the course. The instructor conducted the necessary inquiries to provide a quality education for her student, but found that the university's support for teaching visually impaired students was quite limited. This reality turned the teaching-learning process more complicated, yet the professor remained committed to helping the student improve his skills throughout the course. This case marked the beginning of a series of new experiences with visually impaired students.

The initial phase of this research originated from the instructor's insufficient professional preparation for managing and instructing visually impaired students. An analysis of the curriculum for the bachelor's degree in English teaching revealed a lack of methodological courses focused on teaching students with disabilities. At the time this research was conducted, there was a significant deficiency in training on effective pedagogical mediation processes for students with diverse educational needs, including those with this need. The second phase of this investigation arose from a comparative analysis of the professional training and support conditions at this public Costa Rican university between 2013 and 2019. By the latter year, partly due to the implementation of institutional initiatives— such as the Research Project 0604-17, known as Project ACCESS, and developed by the researchers at UNA (2019-2021), which designed and distributed accessible materials for visually impaired students — the conditions for both educators and students had improved (Universidad Nacional, 2019-2021). Given that the inclusion of students with visual impairments in the classroom may induce anxiety and uncertainty among educators (Stone, Kay & Reynolds, 2019; Rushahu, 2023; Amponsah & Bekele, 2022; Firat, 2021), this study aims to 1) identify the factors that facilitate the teaching-learning process and 2) propose strategies for developing English lessons that ensure a safe, efficient, and natural learning environment for teachers and students.

This study is situated within an integrated English course at the Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica. This university offers a series of English courses designed to promote the development of foreign language skills among students from various degree programs that are taught.

The course in which this research was conducted is the third in a sequence of four courses. As outlined in the syllabus, this course continues with the development of the four language skills—listening comprehension, oral production, reading, and writing—introduced in previous levels. By the end of this course, students are expected to achieve a basic level of language proficiency, A2.1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) (*Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje* [ELCL], 2008, p. 1).

Additionally, the methodology of these courses follows an eclectic approach that integrates the development of various language skills. The instructor assumes the role of facilitator, implementing a series of communicative activities, both oral and written, while focusing on meaningful contexts relevant to the students (ELCL, 2008, p. 3).

Background and Theoretical Framework

With the enactment of *Ley 7600*, the Law on Equality for Persons with Disabilities, on May 29, 1996, the reality for Costa Ricans with disabilities significantly changed. This legislation has expanded opportunities for many individuals whose prospects were previously limited, particularly in the realm of inclusive education. For instance, Article 2 of this law provides a definition of the concept of accessibility: According to *Ley 7600*, measures taken by public and private institutions ensure that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and other services and facilities open or provided to the public or for public use. These measures also include identifying and removing such barriers. (1996; authors' translation).

We can then understand that, until the enactment of this law, people with disabilities were likely unable to access the basic, everyday aspects mentioned in Article 2, which have generally been taken for granted by those who enjoy these privileges. Likewise, this law defines disability as the condition resulting from the interaction between people with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments and attitudinal conditions that act as environmental barriers preventing their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (*Ley 7600*, 1996). *These two definitions may seem basic, but they are crucial for ensuring that individuals understand their condition does not determine their future. Since 1996, the doors have been opened to begin the road to inclusion in Costa Rica. According to Consejo Nacional de Rectores, Programa Estado de la Nación (2017):*

In the 2015-2016 admission process, *Centro de Asesoría y Servicios a Estudiantes con Discapacidad* [the Centre for Advice and Services for Students with Disabilities] (CASED) of the University of Costa Rica (UCR) with the support of *Comisión Interuniversitaria para la Accesibilidad en la Educación Superior* [Inter-University Commission for Accessibility in Higher Education] (CIAES), affiliated to the Consejo Nacional de Rectores [National Council of Rectors] (CONARE), coordinated the assessment and registration of 1,977 individuals who required adaptations an Academic Aptitude Test (PAA) due to visual, motor, hearing, emotional, learning, attention deficit, and multiple disabilities, across various regions of the country. (CONARE, Programa Estado de la Nación, 2017)

Valverde (2018) documented the registration process for students with disabilities at Universidad Nacional between 2012 and 2017, noting that since 2012, there has been a significant increase in applications for admission of students with disabilities to the National University (p. 6).

Consequently, just as people with disabilities have gained access to a wider spectrum of possibilities, so too have foreign language classrooms had to consider more aspects to make lessons accessible. It is necessary, then, to categorize *disabilities*, which are expressed in English classrooms with greater diversity. This diversity is constituted not only by the disabled population but also by the entire student body with their different needs and learning styles. Therefore, we must consider this population a heterogeneous group. Among individuals with disabilities, there is a significant influx of those with some form of visual impairment. This condition ranges from mild to severe impairments to blindness. Within the category of blindness, there are subcategories based on severity. The medical field, as well as specialists in optometry and ophthalmology, refer to this population as blind individuals, individuals with low vision, and individuals with temporary visual field restrictions. Among them, those people with retinitis pigmentosa, who fall into the latter category, experience a progressive reduction in their vision over time.

According to Naipal and Rampersad (2018), visual impairment (VI) is a condition of visual performance that cannot be remedied by refractive correction glasses or contact lens surgery, or medical methods, and consequently results in functional limitations of the visual system (p. 1). The causes of these conditions differ depending on the region in which they develop. Some of the consequences of VI, which are worth emphasizing, primarily involve the debilitating effect on the individual, affecting their performance by impacting their quality of life and daily activities. According to the authors, 80% of learning occurs through sight. Thus, if VI occurs in the early stages of childhood, it will affect the individual's performance from a very early age, which is why 90% of children with VI-related conditions are deprived of education (Naipal & Rampersad, 2018, pp. 1-3).

From experience, we have concluded that there are aspects related to the processes of acceptance and the stages individuals must navigate as a result of the changes their condition generates. For example, students who enter university with favorable vision but experience a rapid decline due to environmental factors, such as stress and extensive reading across various environments or interfaces, may find themselves unprepared to accept this change. This period has been identified by authors such as Cholden (1958) as a phase of mourning (p. 75). It is crucial to emphasize that each person understands and accepts their condition in a unique way. These aspects will influence their performance and their tolerance of adaptations and accommodations. Adaptations are implemented for students with special educational needs, while accommodations refer to changes made to planned activities (Harrison et al., 2013; Martínez Hernández & Bellés-Fortuño, 2021).

It has been observed that individuals with visual impairments must navigate various stages of adjustment, particularly in terms of accepting the changes their condition entails. For instance, students who begin university with normal vision but experience a rapid decline due to environmental factors, such as stress and extensive reading in diverse settings, may struggle to accept these changes. This process of adaptation can be challenging, as it involves coping with emotional and psychological responses (Wright, 1983) and requires the individual to gradually adjust to new limitations (Livneh & Antonak, 2005). Additionally, the environmental factors—such as academic demands and the need to interact with different interfaces—can exacerbate the challenges of acceptance (Reeve, 2002; Schneider & Black, 2003). These factors highlight the importance of providing adequate support systems to help students navigate these changes and foster successful adaptation (Friedman & Owen, 2007; Tinto, 2012; Wright, 1983).

According to Evans et al. (2017), several models have attempted to understand disability throughout history. The first of these is the moral model, which emerged before the 19th century and viewed disability as a moral failing or a consequence of sin, often associated with divine punishment or moral wrongdoing (Goffman, 1963). This model stigmatized individuals with disabilities, framing them as deserving of pity or exclusion. The medical model, which took root in the 1800s, categorized disability as a pathological condition to be cured or managed. This model reinforced the idea that the “normal” individual was the ideal, positioning people with disabilities as exceptions to the standard of normalcy (Oliver, 1996). In response to this, the functional limitations or rehabilitationist model emerged in the late 19th century. This model focused on the medical and functional aspects of disability and institutionalized those who did not conform to societal norms, often separating them from mainstream society for their own rehabilitation (Shakespeare, 2006). In contrast, the social model of disability, which developed in the mid-20th century, emphasized that disability is not an inherent trait of the individual but rather a social construct, shaped by societal barriers, prejudice, and discrimination (Barnes, 1991; Oliver, 1996). This model shifted the focus from medical interventions to societal changes that would eliminate obstacles and promote inclusion. Finally, the sociopolitical minority group model emerged in the late 1970s as an extension of the social model, arising from the disability rights movement and critiquing the medical model's paternalistic approach. This model reframes disability as a political issue, emphasizing the rights and autonomy of individuals with disabilities, and calling for societal and legislative changes to address the oppression they face (Charlton, 1998; Stone, 1984). These models reflect the evolving understanding of disability, from a moral and medical issue to one of social justice and human rights, underlining the importance of an inclusive society that supports people with disabilities through both policy and cultural change.

This historical perspective allows us to understand that individuals with disabilities and their families have faced numerous struggles to gain access, at least partially and legally, to rights common to all people, regardless of disability status. It also highlights

that this population has taken considerable time to assert their rights and establish themselves as individuals in a society that validates what it considers normal, often relegating those who do not conform to these parameters to a secondary or lesser position. Hence, it is crucial to consider the challenges and opportunities that an adequate assessment of the difficulties faced by the disabled population and by foreign language teachers in this context can offer.

During the supervised professional practicum, educators often encounter significant challenges when working with visually impaired learners. As Kocyigit and Artar (2015) note, it is not surprising that teaching a student with a visual impairment can be demanding, especially from the teacher's perspective (p. 3). They argue that although all educators are expected to adapt their teaching methodologies to accommodate diverse learning needs, teaching a student with a visual impairment presents unique challenges for both inexperienced teachers and those without prior experience with this population (Kocyigit & Artar, 2015, p. 3). In a similar vein, Castellana and Salas (2005, p. 31) highlight the critical importance of specialized teacher training in this context, noting that participants unanimously agreed on the need for educators to receive specific training to address the needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, they discuss the discomfort and insecurity often experienced by teachers when students with disabilities are present in the classroom, noting that these feelings are a common barrier to effective teaching and interaction (Castellana & Salas, 2005, p. 8). This aligns with Florian's (2014) findings, which emphasize that including students with disabilities can present both challenges and opportunities for teachers, and that professional development is crucial to overcoming these challenges. According to Ainscow (2005), inclusive education requires a shift in educators' mindsets, in which understanding and responding to diverse needs become integral to fostering a supportive learning environment. Moreover, Miyauchi (2020) suggests that teachers' attitudes toward students with visual impairments are influenced by their training, experience, and the support systems available to them.

Like the teacher, the student with visual impairment also faces challenges both outside and within the educational context. According to Judith Kormos and Anne Margaret Smith (2012), as well as Martínez-Hernández and Bellés-Fortuño (2021), disability has been perceived as a social barrier for some years now. From this perspective, students with a disability face the initial challenge of demonstrating that they can function adequately in social and educational contexts. Kormos and Smith (2012) also mention that educational institutions tend to take the implementation of disability legislation relatively seriously (p. 10). However, in some cases, students or even parents assume that special education institutions are a better option for these learners. In other cases, the students or their parents decide that it is best for them to learn alongside regular students by making use of curricular adjustments that allow them to be integrated into the school. These accommodations allow them to be present, but without the expectation of access to all the activities and facilities to which other learners are exposed (Kormos & Smith, 2012, pp. 10-12).

As can be seen, attention to diversity encompasses various aspects. In a truly inclusive educational model, additional support for people with disabilities would not be necessary, as all teachers would teach with the aim of including all members of the class. Materials would be presented in a variety of formats, eliminating the need for adaptations, and assistive technology would be available to all (Kormos & Smith, 2012, p. 12).

The classroom environment presents significant challenges for teachers and students with visual impairments. From a social context perspective, there are notable deficiencies and high expectations that are not always achievable. This highlights the importance of raising public awareness and promoting initiatives that normalize inclusion in educational settings. In some cases, addressing educational needs can be resolved more swiftly due to the simplicity of the situation or the specific characteristics of each learner. For visually impaired students, their needs are often categorized as special needs. Teachers frequently find themselves preparing specifically for a blind student while also trying to engage the majority of the class. Various needs are associated with this special condition (Aquino Zúñiga, García Martínez, & Izquierdo, 2012). Among the most crucial is the need to establish a relationship with the student as an individual, rather than focusing solely on their impairment (p. 11). Additionally, it is essential to foster students' autonomy, acknowledge their limitations, and understand the characteristics of their condition to respond appropriately (Aquino Zúñiga, García Martínez, & Izquierdo, 2012).

In recent years, this topic has received growing attention as increasing numbers of students with visual impairments enroll in mainstream institutions that are not specifically designed to address diverse educational needs. Research by Robles et al. (2024), Martínez-Hernández and Bellés-Fortuño (2021), Tinto (2012), among others, underscores the importance of this issue within the field of second and foreign language education.

Methodology

This study is based on an interpretive or naturalist paradigm, as it seeks to uncover the feelings of professors who have worked with blind students. From an epistemological standpoint, this research is grounded in a social model (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000; Olkin, 2009) that conceptualizes disability as a social construct, shaped by societal perceptions. It is also non-experimental, as it was conducted without deliberate manipulation of variables (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista, 2006, p. 205) and involved collecting data on events, communities, contexts, variables, or their relationships at multiple points in time to evaluate changes. The selected time intervals (2013, 2019, and 2020) were determined by the enrollment patterns of students with visual impairments in the integrated English courses. Data collection was conducted only during the semesters in which such students participated, which

explains the irregular spacing of the study periods. The research also aligns with the interpretive research paradigm, which, according to Cohen et al. (2011), focuses on understanding and explaining the intersubjectivities that shape individuals within a specific context (p. 17).

In terms of depth, this research aims to understand human actions, social facts, and culture through interpretation, as noted by Gadamer (1999/1960, p. 317). From this methodological lens, the goal is to uncover various types of explanations, depending on the individuals interacting in the foreign language classroom and the meanings they attribute to their relationships and to themselves in that context. Thus, this research adopts a qualitative methodology, considering the perspectives of various individuals involved in the teaching-learning process of students with visual impairments at different points in time. These individuals include teachers who have taught students with varying levels of visual impairment and the visually impaired students themselves. More specifically, the study adopts a case study design because the “researchers focus[ed] on a unit of study known as a bounded system (e.g., individual teachers, a classroom, or a school)” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2016, p. 444).

Data collection was conducted at three distinct time frames. In 2013, three professors were surveyed via email using a questionnaire. In 2019, the same questionnaire was administered in paper form to seven other instructors, and in 2020, it was conducted via telephone interviews with three more professors. The instrument, comprising five open-ended questions, was distributed exclusively to educators teaching students with visual impairments at the time. Triangulation was achieved by incorporating class notes and observations from one of the researchers.

This research initially involved three teachers from the integrated English courses who worked with a blind student during 2012 and 2013. Each professor was responsible for a different course. One of the researchers was the instructor for the student in the third course, allowing her to conduct participatory but non-intrusive observation, as she was familiar with the student. According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2016), this type of observation is advantageous as it enables the researcher to gather information and build a relationship with the participants, which would not be possible through non-participatory observation. However, this method also has drawbacks, such as potential bias from the observer’s proximity to the participants and the challenge of simultaneously participating and collecting data (p. 382). To mitigate these issues, interviews were conducted with all the instructors who taught the first blind student.

Over the years, the number of students with visual impairments at this public university has been increasing. Consequently, in the second phase of the research, conducted during the second academic semester of 2019, a group of seven professors who were responsible for eight students with visual impairments was included as participants. Some of these instructors had previously taught students with visual impairments, while others had this as their first experience. The educators were asked

the same five open-ended questions that were administered back in 2013. However, this time the questions were provided on paper, allowing the professors to respond in their own handwriting, thereby reflecting their personal feelings and experiences.

The final data collection stage of this study occurred in 2020. By this time, the educational context had changed significantly, marked by the presence and support of two notable projects, namely, ACCESS and UNA Educación de Calidad [UEC] (Universidad Nacional, 2025). Three students with visual impairments were enrolled, prompting telephone interviews with the three instructors responsible for these groups. The instrument used was the same one designed and applied in 2013 and again in 2019.

Since conducting research, it is desirable to utilize multiple sources of information; this study employed three distinct methods of data collection. The first two methods included the professor-researcher's class notes and classroom observations. Additionally, interviews were conducted with three instructors who had worked with the student before and after the start of this research.

During the first phase, professors were contacted to request their participation, and the questionnaire was sent to their email addresses. In the second phase, the same questionnaire was administered via written interviews; participants received a document containing the five printed questions and were given time to respond. All interviewees in this phase completed the instruments simultaneously.

Due to the pandemic and associated health restrictions, telephone interviews were conducted with the three participants. As in the previous stages, the same five questions were used. One of the researchers collected, recorded, and transcribed the participants' information.

The class notes and observations obtained by the examiner include detailed descriptions of class activities, the teacher's perceptions of the student, the methodologies employed, and the student's interactions with classmates. These notes reveal how the teacher responsible for the visually impaired student chose to look beyond the student's disability and establish an academic relationship. Through this relationship, the instructor successfully taught the visually impaired student and emphasized the student's responsibility within the course context.

During each class session, the educator assigned student tutors to assist the blind student, allowing the professor to address the needs of the other learners in the group. These tutors were responsible for reading printed information and describing accompanying images. The tutors played a supportive role for both the student and the educator. Once the group was organized, the instructor worked more individually with the blind student.

The questionnaire administered to professors included questions designed to explore various topics related to their experiences, such as the following:

- Feelings and emotions
- Pre-training
- Methodology used
- Challenges faced
- Support received from the university

To complement this study, the student's learning process was monitored by another educator who participated in the second stage of the research process and taught the student in a subsequent course. In this second stage, the research initiated in 2013 continued through interviews with professors who had taught students with visual disabilities and with the respective students who were willing to participate in this research.

The study also benefited from collaboration with administrative units, such as the institution's Registry Department. In this office, the person responsible for addressing educational needs provided data on the increase in the number of students with visual disabilities admitted from 2013 to the present.

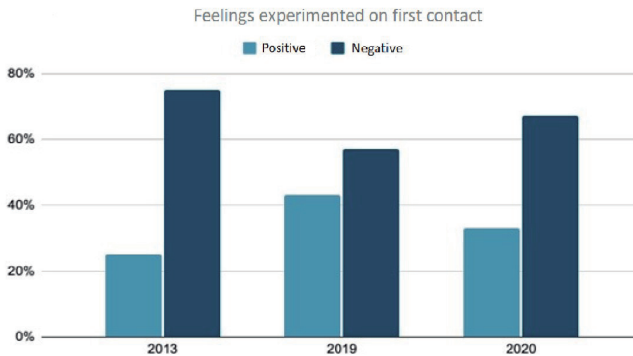
Data Analysis and Results

In this section, we present a detailed analysis of the surveys conducted with the professors. This analysis involves comparing these instructors' perspectives and examining how such perspectives have evolved over time for each question answered by those who have taught students with visual impairments.

The first question in the questionnaire asked professors about the feelings they experienced upon learning that students with visual impairments were present in their classrooms. The second question studied whether instructors possessed the necessary pedagogical tools to effectively teach students with visual disabilities. The third question examined the methodological changes required to accommodate these students. The fourth question addressed the challenges faced by both teachers and students from an academic perspective. Finally, the fifth question pertained to the support received from the university.

When analyzing the results for the first question, illustrated in Figure 1, it can be observed that all teachers surveyed in 2013 expressed concern and anguish upon learning of the presence of blind or visually impaired students in their classrooms. In contrast, in 2019, 57% of the teachers surveyed reported experiencing negative feelings, such as bewilderment, fear, and surprise, while the remaining 43% reported positive feelings, such as confidence and comfort.

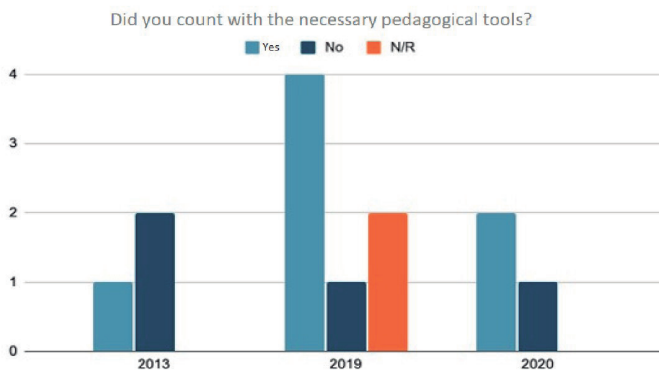
Figure 1. Range of feelings experienced by academics at first contact with students with impairments



Note: percentages derived from the professor's survey responses collected in 2013, 2019, and 2020

When asked in 2013 whether they had the necessary pedagogical tools to address the challenge, as illustrated in Figure 2, 33% of the academics indicated they had the required tools, while 67% reported they did not. In 2019, 57% of respondents stated they had the necessary tools, 14% indicated they did not, and 29% did not respond to the question. Similar percentages were observed in responses from 2020: 67% of the teachers surveyed reported having the necessary pedagogical tools, and 33% reported not having them.

Figure 2. Teachers' perceptions of having the necessary pedagogical tools



Note: percentages derived from professors' survey responses during 2013, 2019, and 2020.

The third question inquired about the changes in teaching methodology that teachers had to implement. The academics surveyed in 2013 reported a series of methodological changes or adaptations, among which the most commonly used strategies were constant communication with students and adjustments in exam administration. Other changes mentioned included providing additional explanations, using digitized teaching materials and recordings, allowing oral responses when written answers were required, and assistance from classmates, among others. In 2019, educators indicated that they had used digitalized materials (57%) and made changes in test administration (43%). The remaining percentage in 2019 is divided among providing personalized attention, using a laptop with appropriate materials, conducting individual tutorials, and positioning students at the front near the teacher's space. In 2020, 67% of the teachers surveyed reported using laptops with suitable materials and digitized teaching materials. The remaining 33% reported that they had not made any specific methodological changes, instead offering the same considerations to all students.

The next question explores the challenges faced by both teachers and students. In 2013, teachers identified the greatest challenges as overcoming negative feelings, integrating the student into the group, time constraints, and learning to teach a student with disabilities. In 2019, the responses varied, with teachers indicating challenges such as time limitations, digitizing the textbook, verifying the materials to be used, designing and adapting additional materials, creating evaluations, accessing multimedia materials, and assigning a person to assist with notetaking for the student. Similarly, teachers surveyed in 2020 expressed that the main challenges were time constraints, using virtual environments, and providing support in writing and spelling for visually impaired students.

Finally, the last question addressed the support received from the university. In 2013, teachers indicated that the most significant support came from UNA Educación de Calidad (UEC)—a project that oversees the provision of inclusive education opportunities at UNA (Universidad Nacional, 2025). Additionally, professors and students received support from other students in the group, from other teachers who had experience teaching students with visual disabilities, and from tutors from the Academic Success Program, provided by the Student Services Department. The experience in 2019 highlighted the support from UEC (Universidad Nacional, 2025). However, added support instances also emerged, such as the university's Department of Guidance and Psychology, which provided students and professors with a student note-taker. Finally, instructors surveyed in 2020 indicated only three sources of support: 1. other educators who had already had the same experience, 2. receiving the digitized teaching material, and 3. follow-up by Project ACCESS, whose objective was to provide digitalized, adapted material for students and professors.

The professors stated that not all were adequately prepared, despite their professional training, to support students with visual impairments in their English learning. Factors such as limited initial support, insufficient materials for these students, and time constraints significantly impacted the educational experience in the described context. On the other hand, according to the surveys, some teachers noted that, initially, the assistance they received was minimal, and they had to learn and adapt as they progressed due to their lack of prior experience.

The class observations analyzed pertain to one of the researchers' initial experiences with a blind student. These observations highlight the challenges faced by the student and the professor. Both experienced frequent frustration due to the lack of resources, trained personnel, and the instructor's inexperience in such contexts. Additionally, the student, enrolled in a foreign language course, had limited strategies to implement and often relied entirely on his classmates and professor, who diligently assisted and learned alongside him.

Another relevant aspect of the teaching process was the participation of tutors provided by an instance under the tutelage of the Vice-Rectorate for Education at UNA (n.d). This office assigned an advanced student from one of the university's English teaching programs as a tutor for the blind learner. The tutor's role was to accompany and reinforce content throughout the course. However, as the professor noted, due to a lack of experience and preparation, the tutor sometimes hindered the process by completing exercises and tasks for the student rather than providing the intended support.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study highlights significant gaps in the curricula of higher education institutions that offer English-teaching programs. Specifically, there is a lack of courses that adequately prepare students to address various forms of disability. The findings clearly show that this curricular omission has a direct impact on teachers' preparedness, contributing to the feelings of uncertainty, helplessness, and stress reported by the professors who participated in the study. The data analysis indicates that these curricular deficiencies contribute to the feelings of helplessness and stress reported by the professors who participated in this study. This research identifies a significant opportunity for higher education institutions to enhance their support for blind and visually impaired students. While there are existing entities that provide educational support, the evidence suggests that these efforts remain fragmented and insufficient; there is a promising potential to further develop and maintain a cadre of qualified personnel specifically trained to guide and support this population. Strengthening these structures would allow universities not only to respond to students'

immediate needs but also to establish long-term, sustainable practices for inclusion. By addressing this factor, universities can create more accessible and inclusive learning environments, fostering greater equity and inclusion within the academic community. Based on the results, the following actions are recommended:

Advocate for Strategic Curriculum Reform: Encourage curriculum developers to integrate courses that equip future English teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively support students with disabilities. Such integration should not be optional or peripheral but embedded as an essential component of teacher preparation programs.

Promote Faculty Development: Motivate faculty leaders to incorporate workshops and training sessions that prepare current teachers to support students with disabilities. These initiatives will foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Continuous professional development should be aligned with emerging challenges and informed by the experiences of instructors who have worked with visually impaired students.

Establish Support Networks: Encourage faculty to create and sustain commissions or support groups among academics with experience teaching blind or visually impaired students. These groups can provide both emotional and professional support to new teachers, thereby enhancing their ability to teach this population effectively. Such networks can also help create institutional guidelines and best practices that reduce the sense of isolation often reported by teachers.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of professors who have worked with visually impaired or blind students in the integrated English course at Universidad Nacional. However, limitations must be acknowledged and addressed via further research. First, the study was based on a small group of professors from a single institution, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the reliance on teachers' perceptions and self-reported experiences may introduce a degree of subjectivity, as the voices of students with visual impairments were not directly included in the data. Third, the study focused on specific time intervals (2013, 2019, and 2020), which, while useful for comparison, do not capture the full evolution of inclusive practices across a longer span of time or in different institutional contexts. Finally, the research design was primarily qualitative, which limits the possibility of establishing broader patterns or statistical relationships.

Given these limitations, several recommendations should be adopted in future research and practice. Studies with larger, more diverse samples, including participants from multiple universities or educational settings, would help increase

the generalizability of the findings. Incorporating the perspectives of students with visual impairments themselves would provide a more holistic view of the challenges and successes of inclusive English language teaching. Furthermore, integrating mixed-methods designs that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches could enrich understanding and yield more robust conclusions. On a practical level, teacher training programs should prioritize the development of pedagogical tools and strategies tailored to the needs of visually impaired learners, ensuring that inclusion is both a theoretical and practical commitment in English language teaching.

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