HANDLING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ESL READING TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

The general objective of this paper is to disclose the lived experiences of the ESL reading teachers of learners with special needs in the mainstream classes. This qualitative research made use of the phenomenological research design and gathered rich data through the in-depth interview. Ten teacher participants were purposely chosen to help answer the research questions. The experiences of the ESL reading teachers handling LSENs were all audio-recorded, coded, and analyzed through thematic analysis. The participants provided both the positive and negative feedback on the reading skills of the LSENs in the mainstream classes. The actual experiences of teachers, in terms of struggles and difficulties in handling LSENs, gave rise to crucial themes such as: paying special attention to special needs, the importance of parental and school support, conducting a class in a way that all students progress, LSENs have intelligence, reaching out to the LSENs is challenging, and normal classmates can help. On matters of coping mechanisms employed, the following themes were observed: getting help from specialist teachers is a must, undergoing trainings is needed, setting targets is a must, understanding and patience must be observed, using creative strategies, never thinking of quitting, and facing up to the challenge. With regards to the insights shared by the reading teachers to their peers and the whole community, these themes were established: LSENs need special attention and patience, help the LSENs become more independent readers, audio-visual and braille methods help most, other creative approaches are also needed do the extra mile, and give equal opportunities to students.

Keywords: *special education, reading skills, lived experiences, coping strategies, phenomenology, ESL reading teachers, Philippines*

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INTRODUCTION

An inclusive educational setting is an environment that guarantees learning to both learners with and without special needs regardless of their specific needs (Thwala et al., 34). Teaching Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) is believed to be a challenging and demanding job among the teachers especially in schools where teachers raise questions regarding their experiences in the reading performance of the said learners (Kao & Mzimela 1). The inclusion of the LSENs in

mainstream classes considerably increases the role that the teachers play in such circumstance as they are now faced with making better informed decisions about the said learners (Rens & Louw 1). For this reason, many teachers, school administrators, and parents are concerned about the outcome of enrolling learners with special needs in mainstream schools, more so because of the significant lack of teachers' academic training and experiences of handling learners with special needs (Gathumbi et al., 130).

The importance of the conduct of this study lies in the fact that the population of learners with various forms of special educational needs rises in public education, thus, the need for teachers who are better prepared for working with them also increases. In this case, this study will be of great help for the ESL reading teachers to share their experiences in handling LSENs in mainstream classes. This study may also give light among the learners with special needs that there are ways which could be done to improve their reading skills.

In the Philippine context, the government makes considerable efforts in improving effective delivery and access to special education services in the whole nation with the implementation of the Republic Act 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. However, there have been many problems encountered by the teachers in teaching learners with special needs. In the City of Iligan, most of the primary teachers in their division are not trained to provide special education among the learners with special needs (Allam & Martin 39) thus, trainings and necessary professional developments are indeed important under such circumstance.

Despite the widespread implementation of mainstreaming initiatives, and, more recently, inclusive education for children and young adults with special educational needs (Gathumbi et al., 130), minimal researches focus on documenting the experiences of ESL reading teachers handling LSENs most especially on the difficulties being experienced and the coping mechanisms applied in the light of the reading development of these learners. Given the problem of an ever-increasing gap between LSENs and those who are non-disabled ones, this study is considered pressing as it seeks to gather data deemed significant in the context of teaching LSENs.

This research study is anchored on different research philosophical paradigms. Inclusive education is a concept which generally means the act of accepting the learners with special educational needs and promoting their inclusion in the classrooms by the mainstream teachers. It is the willingness to address and adapt to the unique needs of the learners through an increasing engagement in school and community activities, thereby raising the standard of the "education for all" goal of the Department of Education (Ralejoe 128). Global efforts to establish inclusive education have risen during the past twenty years. While most of the teachers tend to support the idea of inclusion, many also are faced with significant challenges in the implementation of inclusive education as they need to simultaneously maintain a high standard of instruction while adjusting their teaching strategies to the special needs of their students (Crispel & Kasperski 1).

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With the realization of the goals and objectives of Education for All also known as the EFA, equal education for learners with special needs has become critical in the success of the implementation of inclusive education (Sesay 1). The United Nations has adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) mandating all states to take adequate measures in ensuring that reasonable accommodation is given to learners with special educational needs and recognizing the need to provide accessible education to the mainstreamed students with disabilities thus, making it a challenge for teachers in the inclusive classrooms (Ralejoe 128).

Despite the paradigm shifts in the implementation of inclusive education, educators also have various preconceived perceptions regarding its effective practices in the classroom, literature has shown that the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers contribute to their conduct of inclusive education to learners with special educational needs (Sesay 21). However, even with the constant drive toward inclusive education, literature revealed that most of the teachers have far less than optimistic views towards learners with special educational needs and their participation in the mainstream classrooms as they were not equipped with relevant trainings on how to handle such learners (De Jesus 250).

For a reason, inclusive education of learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms instigated significant issues most especially among teachers. Most of the teachers handling learners with learning disability stressed that they did not receive any special educational trainings thereby making them feel that they are not competent and skilled to teach the learners of a specific case (Allam & Martin 37). In response to the issue of the lack of training on how to handle LSENs, special education teachers build collaboration and request for additional trainings specifically in areas where they felt the less skilled or confident. With that, teachers believed that they would be able to master their engagements in special education (Crouse et al., 137).

On the other aspect, the concept of reading has long been considered critical to success, especially in learning a second language with the prime objective of helping every individual make sense of what they read (Thuy and Thuc 38). Reading skills are important not just for non-disabled children, but also for children with special needs as it is vital for children to be prepared for modern society and to have a high standard of life regardless of whether they are disabled or not (Safak 38). However, in most cases, when it comes to academics, LSENs tend to have one or more identified weaknesses that include reading which made them even if in middle school years have a below grade level in reading (Khalid and Anjum 3). A study has shown that English Language Learners (ELLs) with disabilities were not able to establish decoding, understanding, and fluency abilities for them to become qualified readers thus, throughout the school life they encounter reduced academic achievement (Schoen-Dowgiewicz 14).

In the same way, the lack of necessary enabling resources was also seen as a major problem among teachers who are handling learners with low vision. Literature has shown that low vision learners lack writing and reading stands as well as books in larger prints which are deemed essential in enhancing their reading skills thus,

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they have to be provided with printed materials having large prints to enhance their retinal speed (Yalo et al. 063). In a sense, teaching has become way more challenging as teachers are not provided with resources that would help learning become meaningful among these students.

Consequently, teachers are tied up with a more challenging job as they play one of the most essential tasks which is to encourage LSENs on how to read with the utilization of whatever materials that would be best suited to their special needs. Over the years, teachers have opted to employ whatever creative approaches and strategies in class that would be most helpful and suitable among the LSENs and the regular students. Consequently, for the learners to develop positively, innovation must entail the effective application of creative concepts and strategies inside the inclusive classroom (Ovbiagbonhia et al. 399).

Theoretical Lens. One of the major theories which this study is anchored is the Scientific Management Theory of Frederick Taylor which was established in the year 1910. This theory provides the idea that with the implementation of special education, the focus should shift on improving the efficiency of every teacher handling LSENs (Gaytos et al. 1248). With that being said, teachers require specific educational expertise and training to achieve the desired outcome of inclusive education (Aldabas, 201).

Further, Taylor (1910) also emphasized the idea of increasing the production and efficiency of every teacher with the use technologies which may support the learning of every LSEN. The use of technology in the teaching-learning process has played a vital role most especially on helping students overcome their difficulties thereby achieving academic success, Literature revealed that, among learners with hearing impairment, they found that outlining text and supporting captions with digital learning materials resulted in a consistent educational achievement for students with hearing impairments (Pantrakool & Chanchalor 69).

Although technology in education produces excellent learning outcomes, instructors play a critical role in facilitating the distribution and use of educational technology as the lack of understanding on how to properly use it considerably defeats its purpose. Contrary to the general belief regarding the wide access to technology, special education teachers also revealed that the lack of access to efficient technological infrastructure and the lack of materials particularly intended for learners with special needs continues to be a barrier in the pursuit of integrating technology in the teaching-learning process (Cagitlay et al., 201).

Another theory which may help describe the experiences of the ESL reading teachers is Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) Theory of Kohler and Mishra which was established in the year 2009. The teaching of reading is considered to be one of foundation of all learning, however, it becomes way more challenging if teachers have to teach learners with special needs (Kao & Mzimela 1). With consideration of the aforementioned issue, the researcher sought to determine the Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) which the reading teachers should possess to effectively teach learners with special educational needs.

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TPACK is one of the frameworks for effective teaching in which associations between the teacher's content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK) are well choreographed (Park & Hargis 2). In a very simple way, in order for teachers to be effective in an inclusive classroom, they need to have a knowledge on how to utilize technology, knowledge of the subject or content that they are to teach and the instructional or pedagogical techniques that would aid the learning of the students and the ways in which technology might be integrated to support such methods. Findings of the study conducted by Kao and Mzimela in 2020 revealed that teachers handling visually impaired learners appeared to have fairly limited understanding of literacy. While they may have the knowledge on the appropriate tools that may be beneficial in helping the VI learners read and write but then, there is a significant lack of the modernized Braille technology and they appeared to be inexperienced of the instructional methods and approaches that may enhance learning of both visually impaired and sighted learners (10).

Considering the nature of this study where the use of high-tech or modernized materials was believed to be one of the helpful means in presenting knowledge among learners with special needs, TPACK is regarded as one of the appropriate theories that would support this study wherein the three areas of knowledge---technological, pedagogical and literacy content knowledge are all significant in teaching learners with special needs.

Another theory which may support this study is the Componential Theory of Creativity which was introduced in the year 2012 by Teresa Amabile. This theory supports the understanding of the role that the teacher plays to realize the goal of inclusive education. The idea behind this lies on the concept of creativity as the generation of ideas or results which are suitable to achieve a certain goal. Literature revealed that, in special education, creativity is a crucial and complementing issue. Thus, education professionals need to understand that all students, including those with special educational needs, need to engage in creative learning experiences (Acharya & Rodriquez 26).

This theory also emphasized three dominant components which include: domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and task motivations. In every component, there are factors to be considered and these factors depend on each other for the realization of the said components. In a sense, creativity involves the convergence of all the factors where creativity should be at its maximum when an individual who is genuinely driven and who possesses a high level of domain expertise and creative thinking ability works or is situated in an environment that offers many opportunities for it.

With consideration on the nature this study, this theory supports the understanding of the role that the reading teachers play in an inclusive classroom. The advent of inclusive education in the Philippine context demands every teacher to possess that knowledge, expertise and even technical skills of creativity-relevant processes. More than that, their motivation to undertake creative tasks is also a significant aspect in realizing the common goal of helping the LSENs achieve academic success in the mainstream classrooms.

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For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined operationally: Reading Teacher refers to English as a Second Language teacher who teaches Learner/s with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) mainstreamed into his/her regular classes and Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) pertains to learners with assessment and clear manifestations in any of the following cases: Visual Impairment, Low Vision, Hearing Impairment, Learning Disability, and Emotional and Behavioral Disorder.

Despite the advent of inclusive education in many schools here in the Philippines and the general administration of mainstream education in regular classes (Gathumbi et al. 130), there is minimal research which focuses on the actual experiences of the teachers handling the LSENs along with the regular students most especially on the aspect of reading. Given the problem of an ever-increasing gap between the students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, this study is considered pressing since there have been teachers who are not trained to teach the said learners but were left with no other choice but to accept them in the mainstream class.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of English as Second Language (ESL) reading teachers handling LSENs of a particular case on the development of their reading skills. This research also explores the coping mechanisms used by ESL reading teachers towards handling LSENs and their personal insights which they could share to their peers and to the academic community. A phenomenological research methodology was chosen as a design for this research to illustrate a clear picture of the experiences of reading teachers handling different cases of LSENs. Participants for the IDI are individually interviewed to gather data relevant to the study. Responses from the teacher-participants are then thematically analyzed to arrive at the major themes for every research question.

As the population of learners with various forms of special educational needs rises in public education, the need for teachers who are better prepared for working with them also increases. With that, this study identifies several significances: In the global aspect, this research study contributes to the improvement of the education as it exposes the difficulties, coping mechanisms, and interventions done by the reading teachers to improve the reading skills of LSENs not only on the faculty where the research has been conducted but also in other universities. Further, this study is significant concerning social change. This study will give a wide range of understanding for every person in the society towards accepting and realizing the worth of every learner with special educational needs. And by understanding the interventions which are appropriate for them, educators and people in the wider community can now be better prepared to help create positive experiences for these types of learners.

Additionally, this study also provides benefits to the Department of Education sector, particularly among its stakeholders for the following reasons: first, this research may be groundbreaking as this exposes the similarities and differences in the difficulties and interventions of teachers who are teaching LSENs thus, new teaching methods for teaching these learners particularly on the development of their reading skills arise. Secondly, parents of these learners would gain a better

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understanding of the challenges faced by teachers and the strategies used by them which is deemed helpful in the improvement of their reading skills. Lastly, this research is also significant to the learners themselves as this gives a positive idea that there are ways that could have been employed to help them improve their reading skills and be at par with their non-disabled peers. Finally, for future researchers, this research would present useful information related to teaching LSENs. The coping mechanisms and insights that will be provided by the teachers will serve as recommendations on what are the best ways to teach LSENs particularly on the development of their reading skills.

In a qualitative study, limitations played an integral part. There are several limitations of this study that may have affected the findings. This includes the respondents being limited to providing information through interviews. The honesty and the accuracy of information were also necessary to gather relevant information for this study. Also, the qualitative data in this study was limited by what the reading teachers exposed about their difficulties in handling LSENs, how they coped up and what are the insights they can share to other teachers and the wider community in the aspect of handling LSENs most especially in the development of their reading skills. On the other hand, the delimitations of this study included secondary teachers in the one of the secondary schools in the City of Mati Division handling LSENs mainstreamed in their regular classes

METHOD

This section presents the method and procedures implemented in the conduct of the study.

Study Participants

Participants in the study were English as a Second Language (ESL) reading teachers in a class with mainstreamed learners with special needs, carefully selected to bring appropriate experience and expertise as they responded to the in-depth interview. According to Creswell in 2013, with phenomenology as a research design, researchers may opt to interview five to 25 participants who had undergone the same experiences in order to achieve the goal of representativeness and commonality as a baseline from a small number of participants. However, 10 to 15 people are sufficient as long as they can give in-depth descriptions of the common phenomena being studied.

Further, for this phenomenological study, purposive sampling was considered as the most suitable sampling technique as it primarily entails identifying respondents for special or unique situations (Ishak & Bakar 32). This sampling technique was also seen to be appropriate in phenomenological study as the researcher intended to seek in-depth understanding of the experiences of ESL reading teachers handling specific cases of LSENs. The researcher then selected those ESL reading teachers handling LSENs in their mainstream classes as the participants to provide the best information for the study.

This research also adhered to the criteria as to who has been included as participants on the in-depth interview. Prospective participants who are part of the study are expected to possess the following characteristics: a reading teacher of a

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learners with special educational needs mainstreamed in his/her regular class, has provided an informed consent to maintain ethical conduct of the study, and one who intends to remain within the area during the period of study. On the other hand, this study adhered to the following exclusion criteria which make any recruited population become ineligible for the study: one who is not a teacher from the school to which the study was taken and one who does not teach any LSEN. Lastly, this study adhered to the following withdrawal criteria: one who wishes to withdraw his/her consent to be one of the participants in the study due to reasons they are not required to disclose and one who seeks to transfer to another school within the period of study.

School A is one of the biggest schools in the city of Mati. The school already embraced inclusive education thereby giving opportunities to every learner with special needs to have an opportunity to be included in a mainstream class. With the advent of inclusive education, the school accommodates LSENs of different cases. Thus, school A was the ideal setting for the interview since it allowed the researcher to obtain a plethora of important data, unique perspectives, and unique ideas from the actual experiences of the ESL reading teachers handling LSENs as required by the study.

Materials and Instrument

In order to gather a data related to the research interest, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with each teacher-respondent. The researcher had formulated a semi-structured interview question where a formal set of questions were asked towards each interviewee while it was being recorded. Also, the same predetermined questions were asked among all of the respondents, followed through with probing questions when necessary.

The research instrument used was a researcher-made instrument. The researcher considered the criteria of semi-structured interview approach set by Jung and Jong in their research study in the development of the interview guide. With the said criteria, investigative study is employed to explore varied strategies such as but not limited to; probing questions and establishing rapport (31). With that, general interview questions are asked first before the probing questions. The interview guide went a process of validation with the expert validators and it has earned an average validation rating of 77 described as satisfactory.

Design and Procedure

This study is a qualitative research type which aimed to explain the phenomenological event being experienced by the ESL reading teachers handling LSENs in their mainstream classes. Qualitative research “investigates the quality—the identifiable, core concepts, experience and action as lived by individuals” (Dodge 38). Specifically, this study utilized phenomenology as a research design. In a sense, a phenomenological study was employed to offer a detailed descriptions or analysis which is drawn from the personal experiences of the subject.

Phenomenology as a research design was chosen for this research to better illustrate a clearer picture of the experiences of reading teachers handling different cases of LSENs. According to Creswell in 2014, phenomenology is a method of understanding and analyzing the significance that people or a group of individuals accord to a human or social issue. In a sense, a phenomenological research design

was utilized as a platform for the participants to share their lived experiences about how classroom practices have been applied in the classroom and how they have dealt with the challenges accordingly.

This study gave further understanding on how the ESL Reading teachers shared their daily experiences and challenges encountered most especially on the reading skills of the LSENs. This also unraveled how these teachers deal with the challenges faced and eventually provided insights that these teachers shared as a reference for other researchers or those who are interested with the topic under study.

In the analysis of the results of the study, thematic analysis was employed. In this way the researcher was able to systematically organize and examine the data being gathered (Dawadi 62). With the extensive reading and re-reading of the transcribed data, significant themes were identified. Dawadi in his study, further noted that thematic analysis can be done in both deductive and inductive way (63). This study adhered with the inductive way of analyzing the themes as it involved allowing the data gathered to determine the themes of the study.

The researcher of this study ensured that enough detail is provided for the readers to assess the credibility and validity of the work. To achieve the said purpose, the researcher had gone through variety of processes and responsibilities which made this study more reliable. The responsibility of the researcher consequently started right after the *identification of the research problem and the construction of the research questions.* The researcher *ensured that research questions were all clearly written, provided and validated* by the experts. The researcher also took the role of *introducing the philosophical paradigm* which best fits the study and to provide the study with a clear direction to reach its goal. On top of that, my role as a researcher was to *keep in touch and contact my co-ESL reading teachers to participate*. Since I have years of experience of working as an ESL reading teacher towards LSENs. I bracketed out my own experience (Creswell 61) thereby putting off personal experiences, opinions and perception to avoid biases without interfering with the information gathered from the interviewees.

Before the data gathering had finally begun, the researcher had gone through the following procedures: First, the researcher ensured that the research instruments at hand followed the guidelines set forth by the University of Mindanao before it has been sent for the approval of the panelists. Upon approval of the research instruments, the researcher secured a UMERC Certification and started the conduct of the study by asking permission from the authorities for the actual data gathering procedure. The researcher submitted the manuscript to UMERC to ensure its adherence to the ethical protocols in conducting research. Afterwards, the researcher has sought permission from the Professional Schools' Research Office of the University of Mindanao to formally conduct the in-depth interview towards the research participants.

The researcher had also asked permission from the office of the Superintendent of the City of Mati to conduct study to the selected ESL reading teachers in one of the secondary schools in the Division of the City of Mati. Upon the approval, the letter of endorsement is sought to accommodate the researcher to

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administer the interview session to the respondents of the study. In addition, the researcher made another letter to the school head to ask permission to formally conduct the study to the ESL reading teachers in their respective schools. The researcher asked for approval from the school head to conduct an interview with the respective teachers of the school who were subjects of the study.

During the process of data collection, the researcher had personally conducted the interview and explained the research materials and its purpose towards the respondents. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with individual participants and documented their responses with every question being raised. Each participant was interviewed for 15-20 minutes and the interviews were audio-recorded. Additionally, the researcher had also maintained notes to keep a remark on the behavior, contextual circumstances and nonverbal cues which were not caught by audio-recording. In the same way with how the audio-recording has been kept, the notes were also secured as it contained sensitive information pertinent to the study.

All the data collected was coded so all information can be categorized to generate rich descriptions and themes. The thematic analysis of the study was guided by steps suggested by Saraswati in the year 2020 in his study *'Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step-by-Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners'.* The analysis has started with a crucial step, the familiarization with the data. In this step, the researcher sought to familiarize the data to figure out the themes that might be developed from the data.

The second phase of the thematic analysis involved the creation of initial codes as an important step prior to searching significant themes. Then, broader themes were analyzed in order to identify an important component of the data which corresponds to the research question. In this phase, transcriptions were read several times and the relevant codes were collated and combined into potential themes.

Consequently, in qualitative research, when speaking of trustworthiness, will simply pose a question of "How congruent are the findings with reality?" (Stahl & King 26). True to all study with qualitative designs, the same criteria apply to this paper which include: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Credibility is the correspondent of internal validity in qualitative research and this is primarily concerned with the "truth-value" aspect of the study. In this study, the researcher ensured its credibility through the strategies which are being employed in the conduct and analysis of the study. The researcher ensured that through the following strategies: prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field with the participants, triangulation and member checking. The researcher also invested enough time in identifying theoretical foundations which were used to direct and understand the findings of the study.

Additionally, to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, dependability is observed. The researcher ensured the dependability of the study by employing the process called "peer debriefing". For Stahl and King, peer debriefing is one of the ways in creating trust (27). The idea of using another researcher or peers to react to one's research is a form of validation which conveys a sense of self-credibility.

In the same way, the concept of confirmability was also observed with the concern for objectivity. This is done in order to ensure that the findings of the study

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are results of the ideas and experiences of the participants and not based upon the preference and characteristic of the researcher. In this aspect, the researcher promoted confirmability by emphasizing triangulation for the purpose of mitigating the influence of biases which may be incurred by the investigator. The researcher had also acknowledged the weaknesses in the methodology of the study and possible consequences.

Lastly, transferability was also one of the criteria being observed in this study to obtain its trustworthiness. The researcher had described not only the behavior and experiences, but also its context in order to make these behavior and experiences be more meaningful. The researcher had also been responsible for giving enough background information as well as the description of the phenomena under investigation to allow the readers to make such a transfer.

When it comes to matters concerning research ethics, this study was conducted with the strong observance of the ethical protocols and guidelines set forth by the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee. Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher ensured that UMERC certification was sought first with the approved UMERC protocol number (UMERC-2021-226). The researcher religiously requested and secured the corresponding permission necessary to complete this research. The researcher had also conducted a review of the level of risks and measures to alleviate these risks (including physical, psychological, and social-economic).

The foundation of ethical conduct of research is 'informed consent' (Fleming & Zegwaard 210) thus, authorization and consent were also obtained from the respondents of the study, in which they were assured that all their rights would be fully protected, specifically in handling the data such as, but not limited to: Voluntary participation, Informed Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality, Risks, Benefits, Plagiarism, Fabrication, Falsification, Conflict of Interest, Deceit, Permission from Organization/Location, and Authorship.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter described the results of the qualitative phenomenological study about the experiences of the reading teachers handling Learners with Special Educational Needs in their mainstream classes. The results presented included the thematic analysis of the lived experiences of the reading teachers in handling LSENS.

Ten of the secondary school reading teachers handling learners with special needs mainstreamed in their regular classes were the participants of this study and took part in the in-depth interview. For each of the cases identified, the researcher interviewed two of the teachers handling it. As shown in Table 1, different codes were given to ensure utmost confidentiality and to maintain data privacy of each participant.

Table 1. *Profile of the Research Participants*

Codes of the Participants	Sex	Year Level Taught	Learner Handled
IDI.EB1	Female	Grade 8	Learner with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder
IDI. EB2	Male	Grade 10	Learner with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder
IDI. HI1	Female	Grade 8	Learner with Hearing Impairment
IDI. HI2	Female	Grade 7	Learner with Hearing Impairment
IDI. LD1	Female	Grade 7	Learner with Learning Disability
IDI. LD2	Female	Grade 9	Learner with Learning Disability
IDI. LV1	Female	Grade 8	Learner with Low Vision
IDI. LV2	Male	Grade 9	Learner with Low Vision
IDI. VI1	Female	Grade 7	Learner with Visual Impairment
IDI. VI2	Female	Grade 10	Learner with Visual Impairment

Experiences of ESL Reading Teachers Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs)

Based on the recorded lived experiences of the participants during the in-depth interview, the researcher coded their individual responses. Further, the researcher also generated resembling core ideas in each research question, categorized them, and identified their major themes accordingly.

As seen in table number 2, the experiences of the reading teachers handling Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENS) have been categorized and contained indispensable themes presented in the table below.

Table 2. *Experiences of ESL Reading Teachers Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENS)*

MAJOR THEMES	CORE STATEMENT/IDEAS
Pay Special Attention to Special Needs	I have to be specific and give more activities which really suit my learners' needs.
	Their attention span is short; reading skills are not good.
	I have to adjust my activities for the LSEN.
	Letting them comprehend what they read is a big problem because they may or may not relate to the text easily
	Double preparation for the normal students and the LSEN.

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	I modify teaching strategies for that learner.
Parental and School Support is Important	It's not really that hard because parents will support their child especially this time of pandemic.
	I was given advice because our school where I am teaching is specializing in LSEN.
	Trainings are really very crucial in my part as receiving teacher.
Class has to be Conducted in a Way that All Students will Progress Smoothly	I make the class as interactive as possible without branding anyone as different or disabled.
	Be particular in treating in LSEN students along with the normal ones.
	Do not sacrifice the normal ones.
	Accommodate the needs of every learner in that classroom, including the learner with special needs
The LSEN also have Intelligence	I think this kind of learner has intelligence.
	It is not really hard to teach this kind of learner; some excel in class.
Reaching Out to the LSEN Learner is Hard and Challenging	Classroom instruction might not be smooth.
	'A roller-coaster ride'.
	The LSEN cannot read words with multiple syllables.
	The learner is withdrawn from his classmates.
	The learner does not participate in the class sessions; is always very quiet.
	I was actually shocked that they are in grade seven, and they could not read.
	I have to double my preparation.
	Learners cannot read even mono-syllabic words.
	There are even those the learners who cannot memorize the alphabet.
Normal Classmates can Help	There were times that I would tend to forget about his situation and it was his classmates who would remind me.
	I did not treat him special. I did not treat him different. I treated him just like his normal classmates.
	When there are groupings, I always let him feel that he could be part of any group.
	I never treated that particular learner differently from my other learners.

The analysis of the data gathered yielded six important themes on the experiences, both positive and negative, of the ESL reading teachers handling LSENs in their regular classes. **Paying special attention to special needs** was one of the themes derived from the responses provided by the participants handling EBD and LD learners. With respect to handling learners' special needs, teachers have exerted an effort of being specific and giving more activities which really suit the needs of the learners and even go as far as modifying their teaching strategies. This perception coming from the teachers is further substantiated by the findings of the investigation conducted by Dodge (2) about the teachers' perception in handling learners with special needs, where it is revealed that teachers need much of the preparation and training which are considered valuable in their respective field.

According to the teacher participants, handling LSEN was not really that hard because of the **support received from the parents and school**, especially during the time of the pandemic. This is corroborated by the result of the study conducted by Bariroh (55) where the influence of the involvement of parents in the learning of their children with special needs offers a significant impact on their achievement and motivation in class (112).

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On the other hand, the teacher-participants who are handling learners with hearing impairment and learning disability also revealed the bright side of being given support coming from the parents and school to attend training in establishing a smooth-sailing teaching and learning process. However, the results of this study revealed a significant lack of training among teachers in the mainstream class. This finding is further corroborated by the study conducted by Khalid and Anjum (13), that teachers in private or public schools need to be trained to be able to adapt to the challenge of handling learners with learning disabilities. In the same way, the aforementioned is supported by the findings of Ralejoe (132), where teachers handling the visually impaired sought to be trained in reading and writing through the use of braille as a beneficial step in helping visually impaired learners achieve reading competency.

The importance of having special education teachers be well-trained in handling LSENs supported the Scientific Management Theory, which emphasized the help of having teachers handling LSENs be equipped with skills they need in the inclusive classroom by attending to relevant training (Gaytos et al., 1248). Because they must pay special attention to the demands of each LSEN, they also need to be equipped with the knowledge to effectively teach such learners. While many of the teachers are not given equal opportunities to attend training, many of them seek advice from their fellow educators. This is authenticated by the results of the study conducted by Crouse, Rice, and Mellard (139), where teachers have depended their professional development on their colleagues as they embark on their early years in teaching learners with special needs.

Another theme which posed a challenge among the ESL reading teachers handling LSEN was **the need to conduct class in a way that all students progress smoothly**. Challenges included the need to make the class as interactive as possible without branding anyone as different or disabled and the need to prepare activities which are applicable not just for the learners with special needs but also for the regular students. This claim was backed up by the result of the study of Allam and Martin, that equality should be given to every student, and in dealing with learners having special educational needs, their individual needs must be addressed, and their rights to access an education that they deserve should be respected (44).

In contrast, the ESL reading teachers saw the challenge of providing quality education to the students with or without disability as they do not have relevant trainings. Hence, teacher-participants handling LDs saw the importance of being able to prepare activities which are applicable to both LSENs and regular students. This further reinforced the results of the study conducted by Chitiyo, Kumedzro, Hughes, and Ahmed (68), where teachers emphasized the importance of training to prepare them with the abilities that they need to handle learners with special needs.

Teachers also reported that **LSENs have intelligence**, and some actually excel in class along with their non-disabled peers. This further confirmed the study findings conducted by Aldabas about the performance of visual students on high-stakes tests, which significantly revealed that the VI students were proficient and advanced in reading (14).

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As a result, LSENs were seen to excel in class with the variety of reinforcements given. For the teacher-participants handling EBD learners, providing reinforcements among the said learners keep up their performance in class. This result was further supported by the study findings conducted by Johnson et al. (55), that it is important that whatever strategies employed in class should be reinforced, and self-monitoring of academic behavior was one of the many ways of doing so.

Another theme that the ESL reading teachers were required to address was **the difficulty of reaching out to the LSENs**. Challenges included the difficulty of addressing these learners due to the lack of knowledge and training that would equip them most especially in helping them develop their reading skills. Teachers reported that reaching out to the LSENs has been a lot more challenging as some of these learners cannot read even the mono-syllabic words. This claim is substantiated by the study results conducted by Khalid and Anjum (3) that, in certain cases, most especially in the aspect of academics, LSENs were reported to have a below grade level in reading even if they are already in their middle school years. Teacher participants also reported that there are those learners who cannot even memorize the alphabet.

The research participants handling learners with hearing impairment and EBD also expressed their difficulties as a reading teacher of these learners, which included the difficulty of teaching reading among these learners just as how difficult it is to get their attention as they become withdrawn from their classmates. This verified the study result conducted by Sheaffer et al. (102) that disengagement is one of the attitudes that the learners with EBD usually display. This also includes walking around the vicinity of the classroom during activities, and all the more challenging is sleeping inside the classroom while the class discussions and activities go by.

A lack of understanding about how to appropriately address LSEN properly was one of the difficulties experienced by the teacher-participants handling learners with Visual Impairment (VI). For the participants, not having enough training on how to use the Braille as a system of writing for these learners contributes to a more challenging job of teaching reading to VI learners. The study of Ralejoe (132) revealed that the use of braille for visually-impaired learners was indeed a significant aspect in achieving academic success, most especially in reading. Since these learners cannot see the texts in print, braille is now considered their system of writing. Thus, teachers need to first provide the reading text written in braille before formally discussing the idea of the selection given.

With all the difficulties experienced by the teachers in handling LSENS, the teachers were still hopeful as they believed that the **normal classmates can help**. Some of the insights presented include the fact that normal classmates can help, especially in reminding the teacher of the case of the LSEN, letting the LSENs be part of any group during group activities, and treating the LSENs just like his/her normal classmates.

Reading alone was a problem for most of the learners with special educational needs. Thus, teacher-participants have resorted to having them read along with their non-disabled peers, who, in the process, also helped in assessing their performance afterward. This is proved by the result of the study conducted by

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Thuy and Thuc (43), where in the case of these LSENS, they become dependent on their teachers or someone who is well-trained and who can assist them over time as they work on becoming more independent readers.

Accordingly, in the context of handling LSENs, most of the responses of the participants implied the need for intensified training in order to properly handle the LSENs. This includes but is not limited to the knowledge of how to utilize the materials beneficial for their learning, lesson planning, and curriculum development.

Coping Strategies of ESL Reading Teachers Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs).

The next research objective was identifying the coping mechanisms employed by the reading teachers in a class with mainstream learners having special educational needs. Seven meaningful themes were identified and helped describe the coping mechanisms employed by the reading teachers of LSENS. These themes mainly expressed the helpful means of the reading teachers in dealing with the LSENS. These are further introduced with its core ideas in each theme in Table 3.

Table 3. *Coping Mechanisms of the ESL Reading Teachers Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs)*

MAJOR THEMES	CORE STATEMENT/IDEAS
Getting Help from Specialist Teachers and Experts is a Must	The teacher specialist advised me to be more patient and to know the learner's background and how to handle this kind of learner.
	The specialist teacher gave me advice that I have to be more creative on my strategies.
	I frequently share and ask different insights from my department head and the school LSEN coordinator.
	By asking a lot of questions, especially of their elementary teachers; doing research on how to handle them properly.
Undergoing Trainings is Needed	We had one time a training, a webinar that collectively rekindled our commitment to cater LSENs.
	I had attended training for high school teachers for SPED learners.
	There were sessions on the description of the different disabilities, the different learners with special needs and how to cater to them.
	At the University of the Southeastern Philippines, I got two semesters of special education program.
	We had special education teachers from the elementary level, to teach us techniques and ways on dealing with low vision learners.
	The discussions were on how to develop or how to make learning easier for these students.
Targets Must be Set	I have targets to unfold learners' reading development in class.
	They just told me to do close monitoring and assess every time I encounter problem
	I do have my own notebook and chart especially for their assessment
Patience and Understanding must be Observed	In the first place, I really have to understand the need of that kind of learner.
	I need to be patient & be more creative.
	The advice that I should love them, that I should teach from the heart because whenever I do that, I also feel happy and fulfilled.
	Modifying the instructional materials used for that learner.
	'If you can't be with someone you love then you love that someone you are

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	with'
	These kinds of learners really need more creativity.
Use of Creative Strategies	I really do creative activities when I plan my activity.
	You must give a clip of scenarios which are related to that reading selection.
	During pandemic, I interact with them through chats. We do calls with few activities to do like reading with Q&A afterwards.
	Remediation or enrichment and reading reinforcement sessions.
	Providing that learner with a study buddy especially when the teacher is not around.
Never Think of Quitting	No, I have never wanted to quit and it never entered my mind to quit.
	As a teacher, I cannot call myself a teacher if I am a quitter.
	Quitting was not an option. I just made myself better for my learners in answering their special need.
	Dealing with the parents in denial stage is hard. It's making me quit.
	It's always difficult to follow other people's advices based on their personal experiences, but with my patience, I was able to get through it.
	There wasn't a time that that I'd said I would give up because we should be versatile and flexible.
	Sometimes I feel demotivated, but I never felt like quitting because this is part of my job; it is very fulfilling.
Face-up to the Challenge	Handling LSENS is an additional job to a teacher, especially that we now have a mainstream classroom.
	I have to double the preparation.
	I was taught that I should really be doing the learner's needs assessment before the start of the school year.
	I don't need a Braille for the LSEN to be able to read, only that it is visible enough for that specific student.
	I make sure that that spare time that I have, instead of doing nothing, I spent time with students with special educational need, specifically low vision.
	I asked him to visit my office and also do one-on-one session with them.
	I would be giving those activities like audio activities, using the Braille of course, and then the talk-back application in the cell phone.
	I did not consider her poor in reading because she is already good in reading because of Braille and that app in the cell phone.

With every problem, comes a solution. This has always been one of the mantras that the teacher-participants lived up to. Considering all the difficulties and challenges faced being a reading teacher of LSENs, the participants have shared their unique coping strategies based on their experiences in teaching LSENs along with the regular students in a mainstream classroom. The following themes were identified based on the responses of the participants: ***Getting Help from Specialist Teachers and Experts is a Must, Undergoing Training is Needed, Targets Must be Set, Patience and Understanding Must be Observed, Use of Creative Strategies, and Never Think of Quitting.***

The shared experiences of the reading teachers handling LSENs in their mainstream classes led the way to proving that the learners with special needs can be independent readers with the right and sufficient intervention provided to them. The coping strategies employed by the ESL reading teachers of LSEN were

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supported by the theory introduced by Kohler and Mishra, which was the Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) Theory.

This theory provides an idea that effective teaching is composed of the teacher's knowledge on the following aspects: content, methods on how to carry out the content, and utilization of technology that would support meaningful learning (Park & Hargis 2). Thus, the three essential knowledge should go together in order to cope with the challenges experienced by the reading teachers in an inclusive classroom. The founding of new technologies, and the significant teamwork of the teachers in order to gain knowledge and understanding on the best ways to help LSENs learn and improve their reading skills in the inclusive classroom were well documented by this study through the in-depth interview which provided significant insights from teacher-participants.

Getting help from a specialist teachers and experts was one of the themes generated from the second research question. For the teacher-participants, this is one of the ways for them to be able to gain knowledge on how to handle LSENs and the best methods which could be employed to help them develop their reading skills. They have solicited insights from the former teachers of the LSENs they are handling as to what are the reinforcements which they've applied in the light of helping these learners learn and read.

This is supported by results of the study conducted by Accardo, Xin and Shuff (61) which emphasized the fact that based on the results of the study they have conducted, constant collaborative interaction between the SPED coordinators as well as the teachers is indeed essential as the lack of communication between the would result to a serious gap between the expectation set by the government and the quality of education produced by the teachers who are handling learners with special needs.

The need to undergo training was also one of the major themes generated from the responses of the participants who are handling visually-impaired learners. The interview session revealed that the participants have limited knowledge on the use of braille. Thus, instead on giving much emphasis on understanding the meaning of the reading materials read, teachers have allotted most of their time in preparing materials by writing through the braille. Kao and Mzimela (7) similarly reported that findings of their study revealed that teachers of visually impaired learners have limited knowledge on teaching reading among the said learners as they mainly focused on understanding the braille codes and the rules underlying it and there is a clear indication that the teachers lack pedagogical knowledge on how to best teach reading among the LSENs.

In contrast, other participant handling VI learners revealed that attending trainings most especially for receiving teachers of LSENs, helped them gain pedagogical and technological knowledge in order to make the teaching of LSENs easier. This claim is corroborated by the results of the study conducted by Accardo, Xin and Shuff (64) that, trainings programs relevant to handling learners with special needs and professional relationship and communication among teachers are indeed important most especially for receiving teachers in the light of preparing them to effectively address the needs of the LSENs in an inclusive classroom

Another study that supported these results was done by Allam and Martin (2021), highlighting the vital role that a SPED coordinator played most especially in matters of establishing modernized training sessions for teachers and more innovative plans for the learners. It has been emphasized that special education coordinators should institute training programs which are deemed helpful for the teachers who are handling learners with special educational needs and be able to lead in looking for suitable materials and educational aids for the learners (39).

With all the challenges that the teachers had faced in a class of regular and mainstream students, they also have believed that one of the ways in overcoming the said challenges is being able to **set targets**. The research participants have shared that preparing an assessment chart for every learner and undertaking close monitoring and assessment in every problem encountered is helpful. Unfolding learners reading development in class was also mentioned. For the participants, handling EBD learners is one of the most significant aspects of their teaching experience as managing the behaviors of EBD learners has always been an extra challenge on their part.

This claim is supported by the result of the study conducted by Kumm and Maggin (8) wherein results and findings revealed that with the challenge of handling behaviors of EBD learners, goal-setting has been a beneficial intervention that teachers use to deal and manage the prevailing behavior of the said learners. With goal-setting, the development of the students is constantly monitored so teachers are able to identify which part of the predefined goals need to be intensified and given more attention in the light of helping these learners improve their reading skills.

Some of the challenges faced by the ESL reading teachers LSENs included the difficulty of paying special attention to their special needs which leads to another theme for this study which teacher participants believed to be beneficial in handling LSENS. The participants believed that **patience and understanding must be observed in the class.** Teacher-participants handling EBD and LD learners shared that as a reading teacher, they really have to understand the needs of every learner and teach them from the heart. This claim is backed-up by the results of the study conducted by Allam and Martin (45) that understanding the difficulties and struggles that the LSENs have is indeed significant in providing a classroom environment where their needs and difficulties are highly considered.

In the same way, the reading teachers of VI and LV learners mentioned that modifying instructional materials used for these learners was also one of the coping mechanisms they have established in class although it was hard at first since they do not have enough of the knowledge to do such changes. They believed that the instructional materials should be relevant to the needs of every learner, may they be the mainstreamed learners or the regular ones. This is verified by the study of Efendi et al. (975) where the result has been significant and insightful on how teachers in an inclusive classroom have been required to meet the demands of the learners and their diverse learning needs following the implementation of inclusive education among the public schools.

Another point mentioned by the reading teachers of HI learners handling the LSENs along with the regular students was extra challenging on their part, but with

patience and creativity they are able to cope with the challenges faced. From the responses of the participants handling HI learners, they have provided instruction through pictures and visual presentations. For reading teachers of EBD learners, they provided clip of scenarios relevant to the materials being read to hook the learners' attention. This claim is validated by the results of the study conducted by Allam and Martin (41) where one of the major themes include acceptance and patience towards the LSENs. Most of the special education teachers noted that teachers should be patient and considerate with the LSENs.

With all the challenges experienced by the reading teachers handling LSENs, teacher-participants have shared the help of **using whatever creative strategies** in teaching reading towards the said learners. Considering the results of this study, the participants found it hard to properly addressed the needs of their LSEN as they lack the knowledge on how to operate technological materials beneficial in imparting learning towards the said learners, however they have made an initiate of giving clips of scenarios relevant to the materials being read so as to hook the attention of the said learners.

This was likewise supported by the results of the study done by Mathews et al. (476), wherein results and finding revealed that learners with EBD need highly effective and creative reading instructions. These effective reading instructions are believed to be practices or activities in which they are highly engaged and focused. This considerably supports with the idea of the reading teachers who are handling EBD learners as they give clips of scenarios related to the reading materials read to hook the attention of the learner. EBD teachers believed that increasing engagement of the learners is a better way to start helping them read.

Planning creative activities for learners with hearing impairment, learning disability and low vision was also one of the salient points considered under this theme. Teacher-participants revealed the help of technology in achieving a creative classroom instruction. This is authenticated by the results of the study conducted by Ahmed (136) on the effects of technology-assisted reading interventions for learners with special needs. It has been emphasized how the utilization of web-based tools helped the learners enhance their vocabulary which is an important aspect of the reading process and reading comprehension as a whole.

Further, as the teacher-participants shared their personal ways of coping with the challenges faced as a reading teacher of LSENs, they have shared that *to* **never think of quitting** as a perspective was deemed beneficial for them. The participants have shared that what they have undergone was not an easy job. However, quitting was not an option for them. The participants handling LV and LD learners have resorted to being flexible and versatile in catering the needs of these learners instead. This is supported by the results of the study conducted by Lubke et al. (14) on the roles that flexibility among teachers plays in realizing the goals of inclusive education. Findings have revealed that the flexibility of teachers in teaching LSENs is indeed significant and is considered to be a hopeful start in the fulfillment of the aims and goals of the inclusive classroom.

Challenging but fulfilling, this is how the participants handling VI and HI learners described their experience. Teachers have mentioned the significance of

helping the students develop their skills and abilities not for any personal purpose such as promotion but to help the LSENs be able to cope with their disabilities and difficulties as well. This is reinforced by the results of the study conducted by Allain and Martin (45) wherein teachers have revealed the challenge of teaching learners with special needs and how they have worked hard in helping these learners become successful.

Lastly, in the context of **facing up to the challenge**, the participants also shared that they need to be able to keep abreast with the challenges and continue to live for the purpose of helping the LSENs develop their abilities most especially in the aspect of reading. The participants revealed some of the challenges they have to keep up with which include the following: preparing the content of the lessons beneficial for both the mainstream and the regular ones, modifying instructional strategies, learning to use the materials (technology-based) helpful for the learners, and doing learners' needs assessment before the start of the school year.

For teacher-participants who are handling LD and EBD learners, they need to face the challenge of preparing a lesson beneficial for both the mainstream and the regular ones. This claim was corroborated by the study conducted by Allain and Martin (44) on the issues and challenges in special education wherein results and findings revealed that in dealing with the mainstream learners along with the regular ones, fairness should really be observed and the unique needs of every learner must be addressed. Thus, every learner is entitled to access fair and quality education that they deserve.

Aside from that, the significance of learning to use the materials which are helpful for the learners was also given emphasis. For the learners who are visually-impaired, Braille is considered to be their system of reading and writing. For most of the participants, handling VI learners indeed required an extra effort on their part as they embarked themselves on learning how to use the braille to help the VI learners develop their skills in reading. This is substantiated by the study conducted by Duarte et al. (669) wherein results and findings revealed that the continuous training of teachers involved in teaching VI learners with the use of braille is critical in ensuring the learners with an access to autonomous knowledge.

Insights Shared by the ESL Reading Teachers Handling LSENs to their Peers and to the Academic Community

Based on the challenges and the struggles faced by the teacher-participants as a reading teacher of LSENs, they have come up with some of the lessons and insights that they can share towards their peers and to the academic community. During the in-depth interview, some of the participants have been passionate while some have been very emotional in expressing the lessons and insights that they have learned considering that some of them had been first-time teachers of LSENs.

In the table below, six meaningful themes were identified and described from the responses of the respondents. These themes with its core ideas are presented in the table below.

Table 4. *Insights Shared by the ESL Reading Teachers Handling LSENs to their Peers and to the Academic Community*

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MAJOR THEMES	CORE STATEMENT/IDEAS
LSEN Students Need Attention and Patience	LSEN students really have our attention, our patience, and we really play a big part of their learning and of their studies.
	I've always praised a student for being able to cope really well with the other students
	It's really difficult to get their attention, to make them be interested with just a text.
	You cannot understand why students are interested in chitchatting but they're not interested with the stories in the text with really good lessons and words they can use to enrich their vocabulary.
	I want them to be more independent and the focus should be there, and the attention.
	I actually would want them to read or to be able to read at the end of the school year or if they cannot read at the end of the school year; by next year.
We have to Help them to Become More Independent Readers	I want them to be more independent and the focus should be there, and the attention.
	I actually would want them to read or to be able to read at the end of the school year or if they cannot read at the end of the school year; by next year.
	We still have a lot of things to prepare, especially when it comes to the materials or the resources.
	We still don't have a resource classroom.
Audio Visual and Braille Methods Help Most	With the use of Braille, everything follows.
	Apply Braille in all your materials.
	Using the audio-visual presentation.
	Visual Reading Strategy.
	The best strategy is giving them or reading to them the selection at the same time they have something to see based on what you have read.
Other Creative Approaches are also Needed	“Read More to Tell More Project”. is my best reading instruction practice? My students just love it and are now book lovers.
	The reading task emphasized is comprehension and understanding the meaning of the printed words.
	Students are directly taught strategies for both decoding and comprehension with an emphasis on comprehension.
	I would suggest this approach the Guided-Reading Approach.
	The bottom-up wherein, I should start with letters before teaching them the monosyllabic words and that actually helped a lot.
We Should Really Do the Extra Mile	I have to go beyond what’s the original or regular way of teaching.
	A lot of times learners really go to the reading center, because the reading center is air-conditioned, and then there is enough lighting.
There Should be Equal Opportunities for All Types of Students	I want to see them improve like anybody else in the class.
	I always wanted a class arena with fair and equal opportunities as a teacher.
	Students should feel there's an equality, especially in education.
	I would like to add the touch of the affective domain.
	Learners are encouraged to read when they are placed in a conducive environment.
	As a teacher, you have to go with the eclectic approach; have to consider different worlds.

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	One of the things that I think helped them develop their reading comprehension is using a text magnifier.
	My personal goal for that visually-impaired student is that I would like to make that student become fast and a more independent reader.

As introduced by Teresa Amabile in the year 2012, the Componential Theory of Creativity supports this study's understanding the role that the teachers play in realizing the general objective of inclusive education. The advent of inclusive education in the Philippine educational system should be supported by teachers who are ready to face the challenge of understanding the needs of every learner in the inclusive classroom. More so, inclusive education necessitates the teachers to go beyond the line by exploring whatever creative strategies helpful for the LSENs. Based on the insights shared by the participants, this was clearly proved to be successfully employed as they embark on the challenge of being creative in class of mainstream learner with special needs. In addition, according to Acharya and Rodriguez (30), there was a necessity to establish a creative classroom space that would encourage learners with special needs become critical thinkers and creative individuals as well.

Throughout the discussion with the teacher-participants, an earnest appeal was shared as they revealed the insights which they have learned along their journey of being a reading teacher of LSENs. **LSENs need attention and patience***.* This is the first theme that emerged in the third and last research question. For the teacher-participants, when it comes to handling EBD learners, attention and patience played a big role. This is supported by the results of the study conducted by Allain and Martin (45) wherein understanding and helping the EBD learners manage their behaviors is one of the helpful ways a teacher can do as a way of paying attention to their difficulties and struggles thereby manifesting a classroom environment where their needs and difficulties are given importance.

In addition, the teacher-participants also shared the importance of getting the attention of learners with learning disability and low vision learners to be interested with the text being read. With the fact that these learners have a hard time reading even the mono-syllabic words, the participants have come up with an insight of helping these learners be interested with the text as a first step in helping them develop their reading skills. This is reinforced by the study conducted by Almutairi (133) wherein results revealed that one of the aspects that help learners with learning disability improve their reading comprehension is the connection they have with the text they read. The more that that material read is personally connected to them, the more that they get attentive and motivated to read.

Help the LSENs become more independent readers was the second insight shared by the reading teachers. For the participants, helping the LSENs be able to read at the end of the school year brings a different sense of fulfillment. For the teacher-participants who are handling learners with visual impairment believed that accessible reading materials such as braille is truly important as this is the primary material that would help the said learners read. This is corroborated by the study conducted by Nkiko et al. (51) wherein results and findings suggested that the use of resources such as but not limited to information technology should be intensified as it

helps in transcribing the reading texts into a more convenient format for learners with visual impairment.

In contrast, the lack of enough materials and resources was considered as another challenge the teachers needed to face. For the teacher-participants, teaching these learners with insufficient materials ignites them to be resourceful in finding possible ways to teach the LSENs. This is also backed up by the results of the study conducted by Allam and Martin (46) wherein in the absence of instructional materials provided for the teachers handling LSENs, they have resorted to finding IMs in the Learning Management Resource System that will help them in identifying which relevant skills and competencies to teach among the learners.

Another point expressed by the participants was. Conferring to the responses of the participants, the efforts that the school has invested in preparing the materials was well appreciated most especially in providing resources which are beneficial to the learning of every Learner with Special Educational Needs. Thus, to cater the diverse needs of the LSENs, teachers need to be provided with adequate resources in their respective schools and classrooms as well. This serves as an assistance for every teacher in the mainstream classroom as they work towards embracing inclusive education (Mokaleng and Möwes 82).

The **use of audio-visual and braille methods** was also considered to be most beneficial. For students with visual impairment, braille is most helpful while the use of visuals is helpful among EBD learners. These strategies surely allow the teachers to have a convenient teaching process. Without the braille, it is impossible for learners with visual impairment to read. Although it has been challenging for the teachers to learn and use the braille as it would mean an additional workload, they are also tied up with the responsibility to write the teaching materials in braille as this is the only support that they can give among the visually-impaired learners Ralejoe (135).

Another thing which helped in overcoming the difficulty of teaching reading among EBD and LV learners is the Visual Reading Strategy. The use of visual aids as an accompaniment of teaching the content of the text read is seen to be beneficial among the aid learners. This is supported by the claim of Batur et al. (43) that visual reading strategy is a critical approach with the idea that this approach will let the readers analyze and understand the visuals presented in order to grasp the idea it conveys.

The **use of other creative approaches** such as bottom-up approach was also deemed important for the reading teachers of learners with learning disability. For the teacher-participants, teaching reading to learners with learning disabilities needs more creativity. As these learners have difficulty with reading even the mono-syllabic words, teachers resorted to teaching the basic ones first before proceeding to more complex reading texts. Thus, the process of reading begins with understanding the letters and its sounds before proceeding to words and its corresponding meanings (Suraprajit 455).

The participants who are handling learners with visual impairment and low vision also suggested the use of a creative approach such as Guided-Reading Approach in helping these learners enhance their reading skills. The use of this

approach was believed to be remarkable most especially in helping learners become self-sufficient as they begin to believe in themselves and think that they have the ability to perform more and attain their personal goals. This is further reinforced by the results of the study conducted by Thage et al. (985-986) wherein results and findings show that the use of English language effectively is just one of the instances that the guided reading approach helped among learners which lead them to passing even the examinations in their class subjects.

The teacher-participants of this research study also shared insights on how **going the extra mile** contributes to the success of helping learners with special needs develop their reading skills. The research participants proved that going beyond what's the regular way of teaching is one of the special efforts they have made to achieve independent reading among the mainstream LSENs. In handling VI students, teachers exerted an effort to read and write through the braille. This is substantiated by the results of the study conducted by Ralejoe (134) wherein teachers have shared how fulfilled and delighted they are to be teaching in a class with diverse abilities and disabilities as they also believed that inclusive education helped them become flexible individuals in dealing with whatever challenges they have to overcome for their learners. Thus, teachers of visually impaired learners should know how to read and write using the braille as the very important skill they should possess in helping VI students improve their reading skills (Kao and Mzimela 2).

Teachers handling learners with Learning Disabilities (LDs) suggested that doing the extra mile means proving a comfortable learning environment for the said learners. Teachers have reported that the learners have shown excitement every time they will be invited to go to an air-conditioned and well-lighted reading center. This is supported by the claim of study conducted by Allam and Martin (45) that the students with learning disability generally necessitate more comfortable classroom adjustments to enhance their educational experiences.

Giving equal opportunities for all types of learners was also deemed significant for the reading teachers of LSENs. The participants handling EBD, VI, and HI learners suggested that teachers should let the LSENs improve like anybody else in the class. This was supported by Abraham (47) who claimed that the perception of teachers toward inclusive education is vital in acknowledging the necessity of providing fairness in opportunities to all students regardless of abilities and disabilities although this might be the most challenging task that a teacher should face (De Neve and Devos 357).

Teachers handling learners with learning disabilities also suggested letting every learner feel that there is equality most especially in education. A teacher-participant has mentioned that a class should always be an arena where fair and equal opportunities are provided to all learners as a way of embracing inclusive education. This was corroborated by Efendi et al. (968) which claimed that the presence of LSENs in an inclusive classroom always corresponds to providing these learners the right to experience quality education which they deserve. This was also backed up by the results of the study conducted by Okech et al. (100) where teachers have perceived that inclusivity is indeed necessary most especially among

primary learners. With that idea, teachers who are handling learners with special needs may be zealous and enthusiastic in embracing the diversity of every learner.

The use of Eclectic Approach to reading is also suggested by the teacher-participants handling learners with low vision. For the participants, there is no single approach that can be used which is effective in helping the LSENs enhance their skills in reading. The best approach includes the combination of many approaches used based upon the needs of every learner. Thus, this supported the idea of the study conducted by Al-Khasawneh (18) where the use of eclectic approach enables the teachers to decide on resources that are most effective in their classes' unique situations. For a reason, adopting eclectic approach in their classes gives every teacher an idea of not relying on one single teaching method but on many creative strategies.

Implications for Practice

The themes developed from the recorded lived experiences of ESL reading teachers handling learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom explicitly stated a paradigm shift which reinforced their understanding of the significance of the roles, responsibilities, and engagement that they play as agents of change. The job description of a teacher is not an easy one. With the advent of inclusive education, it has become a lot more challenging to teach in a mainstream classroom. Teachers may be burdened with attending to too many obligations but, as teachers, it was still in their nature to seek out solutions they believed to be helpful in overcoming the setbacks at hand.

The coping mechanisms that the ESL reading teachers of LSENs employed showed that getting help from the specialist teachers and undergoing training relevant to handling LSENs are two most helpful things for the teachers to overcome the challenges faced and provide the LSENs the quality education that they deserve. Learning from the experiences of the skilled and trained teachers allow them to modify and devise teaching methods which are deemed beneficial for the reading development of the LSENs.

The significance of setting targets will also help the teachers in identifying the needs of every LSEN. Discussing about setting targets, this is what almost all fields or disciplines do which they can benefit from. They can do close monitoring and assessment in every problem encountered. In the aspect of reading, the ESL reading teachers of LSENs indicated the use of a personal notebook and chart especially for their assessment where the needs of every learner most especially the aspects which are still target for improvement are carefully assessed and dealt with accordingly.

With all the challenges that the teachers faced in the inclusive classroom, patience and understanding was suggested to survive the responsibility of providing quality education among the LSENs. Understanding the needs of every learner, modifying the instructional materials used for their benefit and to help them become independent readers are a few of the suggested strategies. Moreover, the teacher's positive attitude towards handling LSENs---not thinking of quitting and trying the best to face up to the challenge will help improve and contribute to the development of educational plans beneficial for the LSENs.

The use of creative approaches was highly encouraged. There are lots of approaches provided for every case of LSEN to achieve the goal of helping them achieve their full potential most especially in the aspect of reading. The use of varying creative approaches depending on the case of the LSEN handles gives every LSEN the opportunity to improve regardless of the disability they have thereby achieving the shared purpose of helping these learners improve in an inclusive classroom.

Implication for Future Research

This study limits its participants to the number of ESL Reading Teachers Handling Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) in their mainstream classroom selected by the researcher in the identified secondary school in the division of Mati City, particularly in Mati Central District. That being the case, the researcher only identified and interviewed 10 teacher-participants. Unfortunately, with the advent of inclusive education, the methods employed by the 10 teacher-participants from a particular school in Mati Central District may not be representative of the whole ESL Reading teachers of LSENs in Mati central District or even in Mati City.

Thus, the conclusions and findings of this study will not be generally applicable to other circumstances outside these 10 individuals. The researcher hopes that additional studies relevant to handling LSENs in the mainstream classroom and on the ways and means of improving their reading skills be made and undertaken not just in Mati City but also in any part of the region or even in the whole country as an addition to the personal experiences and coping mechanisms shared by the participants of this study. The researcher further recommended that future researchers explore and delve deeper into a myriad of strategies which could benefit both the LSENs and the regular students in the mainstream classroom and how these strategies be best employed not just for the present learners but also for future generations.

Conclusion

As a secondary school teacher who teaches in a class with mainstream Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs), I took the privilege to study the reading development of the LSENs focusing on the experiences of the secondary school reading teachers handling the said learners with their regular students. For me, the inclusion of LSENs in the regular classrooms imposes a more challenging job for every teacher with the fact that there is not enough training provided for them. Thus, I have found this as an important problem that needs much attention as a concerned teacher in one of the inclusive schools in Mati City.

I utilized a phenomenological study to conduct a thorough analysis of the issue having the experiences of reading teachers handling a specific case of LSEN explored. With hints from significant learning theories, the idea of Scientific Management Theory was strongly emphasized in this study. As teachers pay special attention to the needs of every LSEN, they also need to equip themselves with the knowledge from relevant trainings to effectively handle the said learners. Also, the

Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge Theory (TPACK) was observed in this study. Reading teachers in the inclusive classroom should be able to recognize the importance of the association between their knowledge of content, pedagogy and technology necessary to achieve academic success not just for the learners with special needs but also to the regular students. Lastly, the Componential Theory of Creativity likewise suggested that to deliver a meaningful teaching-learning experience towards the LSENs, the generation of creative ideas which are suitable to achieve a certain goal in the inclusive classroom is indeed important.

I personally have seen the struggles faced by the fellow reading teachers who are handling LSENs and how teaching reading to these learners have been a lot more challenging. This study's main purpose was to understand how the ESL reading teachers handling LSENs in their mainstream class cope with the challenges and difficulties confronted. The insights shared by the teachers handling LSENs may give light to the novice teachers who would be dealing with the same situation in the future.

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