



# WHAT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND WHILE TEACHING VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*This article discusses the issue of the teaching language for the learners with visual impairment: the problems and challenges that they face in particular. The main focus is given to the analysis of the researches done on the field and based on their analysis some suggestions and tips are provided for the teachers.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Visually impaired, degrees of vision, low vision, limited vision, sighted, braille code.*

## INTRODUCTION

In modern methodology all category of learners are approached in teaching foreign languages. The category of learners that we want to discuss in this article are visually impaired. As it is known this type of learners have difficulty in vision and so that materials based on visualization is not the solution for them. Mainly they are approached by listening, still this way could not be always used as language is required written communication as well. So, what any teacher should keep in mind while teaching the language for such learners. Further in the article we will try to list out these parameters.

## OBJECTIVES

Visually impaired learner perceps world in another way and so with education. Visually impaired leaners refer to the category of loss of vision. As such students' impairment significantly differ, individual teaching conditions should be created: even if they can use eyeglasses or corrective lenses, they need individual approach to learn the language. However, it does not mean that they are too limited in learning the language. Researches done on the field stated that blind learners cannot percept things as sighted ones and due to this; they cannot develop some of the concepts. It is hard to get concept of perspective for the learners who are blind from childhood (Vanlierde et al.2005). However, according to Rosel et al (2005) in both cases, children create conversation within a small group. Additionally, Atkinson (2004) calls such situation as "small culture".

## LITERATURE REVIEW

It stated that visually impaired learner percepts the language via verbalism, which has been a controversial in the learning environment of a blind children recommending ideas to avoid visually imaginary materials while teaching. The use of BAD and BED is a common case to all language learners, for example; the real question is the way to approach in teaching of its difference to both category of learners. Especially in our case to make clarification of the use of any new linguistic uses or concepts is challenging. Scholars specified the nature of blind students by exemplifying everyday language word they use. Accordingly it is pointed out that visually impaired people often use words such as "I have seen", "show me" that defines visual concepts, even they may face difficulties in defining them and their structures. So that researchers concluded that children with visually impairment and sighted have no much difference in acquiring the language (McGaha G, Farran DC, 2001). The only difference is in the social behavior of both categories. For example, sighted children play differently; they spend much time near other children and actively participate in interaction, while blind ones do them less, spending more time alone or near the teacher. However, learners with visual impairment interact and learn differently and as a compensation, use verbalism strategy in learning the language.

## METHODOLOGY

Sighted learners learn language based on the strategy and approached that teachers provide through different materials such as photos, pictures,



movies and videos, flash cards, demonstrations and pantomime, which are helpful for them. They associate the language with concrete, real-life examples. Coming to the practical point of teaching learners with visual impairment it should be stated that materials as visuals, pictures, flashcards, demonstratives etc. would not work with blind students. For them such materials and resources should be explored by the sense of touch. Accordingly, one way to help visually impaired learners in learning the language should done via realism. Sense of touch works well with them and teachers should provide some real objects which learners could touch exploring topic related vocabulary by possibility. This strategy delivers vocabulary concept more clearly to them, and they can build certain concept as well.

The next practical way is teaching through listening. Here teachers could deliver materials based on the listening sensory. Though, it is challenging to teach/learn written language via listening and different coding systems for visually impaired learners as braille, slate and stylus systems could solve the problem. For example, Braille code system is helpful to visualize written handouts for them, but the problem is that not all are fluent in using it: not all blind learners are taught the Braille. That is only those students who are fluent using Braille coding in L1 could easily use it in learning L2, in opposite this systems cannot work at all.

Of course it works different as the degrees of their vision are diverge, some may got blindness from the birth, some get it from injuries, disease or other health reasons having experience of being sighted before, and some have low or limited vision, some have no light. Therefore, the main problem they have is the difficulty or inability of reading. Still those who have any light to see could do it but with a great difficulty: reading close or far. So, what should be kept in mind while teaching learners with visual impairment.

According to Scott Baltisberger (2019) there are some challenges which teachers may face teaching such learners, and each teacher should keep in mind them while teaching:

- Learners' self-esteem
- Learners' motivation
- Learners' feeling on the importance of literacy is high and they may feel that they will not get it
- Braille code format could be unknown for both teachers and/or learners
- Learners may feel disconnected from peers
- Learners could not read gestures and body language
- Teachers always have to modify own materials

- Teachers or helpers may overcompensate (e.g., inadvertently giving answers away by placing stress on the correct or incorrect word)

Not all visually impaired learners get education in special educational establishments. Many are studying with sighted peers at schools, colleges and universities. One of the important matter that have to keep in mind is treating them as equal with the rest in the classroom. As usual, disabled people appreciate when they are treated equally and to show special care for them demonstrating their disability can abuse them. In addition, it is natural to modify activities for visually limited ones; still sighted learners should not suffer from the created situation. Educators always should modify activities to help visually impaired learners to be engaged. Scott Baltisberger (2019) stated that activities mentioned below should be carefully modified while teaching English in language learning classrooms with visually disabled learners.

- Spot the differences
- Describe one's surroundings
- Match the vocabulary to the definition
- Comment on the chart or diagram
- Comment on or play with flashcards (unless large size for visually impaired)
- Complete picture-based exercises
- Fill in the blanks
- Unscramble the words

Besides all above Scott Baltisberger (2019) suggested some tools and aids, which simplify the life of both teachers and visually impaired learners. The only case is the budget. They certainly beneficial for the learners and they may have some of their own. The following tools and devices are also important in teaching the language for blind students.

- screen readers
- touch screens with voice
- Braille devices
- MP3 players
- podcasts
- audiobooks
- video galleries
- magnifying glasses
- magnified screens
- real objects
- large wall charts
- table lamps
- large print books

Having analysed researches done on the filed we can conclude that educators teaching language for visually impaired classes or classes that include such learners should keep in mind the following suggested tips.



- It is essential always to be near the learners and control them regularly to clarify if they need any help. Here teachers should be very careful and help them only if they asked.
- As blind learners need for help any time, asking and assigning sighted learners to help visually impaired mates to move in the classroom if they need will avoid challenging situations.
- If questions or clarifications, educators better to speak directly to the student. This could raise learner's individuality.
- As they mainly base on sensory skills, minimizing background noise could create effective learning atmosphere.
- Eliminating physical objects in doorways and aisles promotes safety from injuries.
- Highlighting all main points of a lesson should be done orally, as they receive information via listening better.
- Always addressing with the name to the student and identifying name of student who is speaking encourages to study;
- Sharing videos ahead of time so that the learners can preview provides effective timing and learning;
- Providing a larger workspace or table to accommodate laptop or other tools help them to feel comfort, avoid feeling discomfort in little space.
- The form of receiving (electronically or verbally) feedback and assessment is better to be discussed with the students and define the form they want to receive.

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## CONCLUSION

Visually impaired students as above discussed need for special and sometimes individual way in teaching the language since they are diverge in the disability they have. For some category who have low or limited vision big posters with a big and bold letters are effective, for other categories special coding system is essential in getting writing literacy and so on. However, teaching strategies for both sighted and blind students are approximately the same as discussed in this article. The only thing is the teachers' effort and engagement in modifying and building proper learning atmosphere, where they could follow presented suggestions and tips. If to care on the worries of their progress, I do believe that they can learn the language as effectively and get best results in the same step as sighted learners.