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Instructional Strategies for Teaching Basotho Deaf Learners English Writing Skills

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Abstract

English writing skills are essential for school success and job opportunities for Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners (DHHs) in Lesotho. However, many struggle to express their ideas through writing in school, social activities, and working environments. Engaging teachers in research about their instructional strategies and challenges is essential to improving writing instruction from early grades. Five teachers in grades 4 to 7 in two schools for DHHs participated in semi-structured individual face-to-face interviews. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Saldaña's (2012) thematic data analysis approach. Teachers reported using strategies such as the fill-in strategy and a bubble map. They also reported challenges relating to the following themes: 1) language and communication difficulties, 2) vocabulary writing difficulties, 3) limited writing opportunities, and 4) limited teacher preparation and resources. Recommendations for future directions are discussed.

Keywords: Deaf, hard of hearing, English writing instruction, strategies, challenges

Introduction

Writing skills are essential for Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners (DHHs) to express their thoughts and ideas and engage in meaningful interactions with other people, especially those who do not use sign language (Kellogg, 2021; Leigh & Andrews, 2017). However, developing writing skills among DHHs has been a persistent global challenge, with learners demonstrating difficulties, with limited vocabulary and grammar, expressing themselves in written English (Alamargot et al., 2018; Easterbrooks & Stoner, 2006; Lederberg et al., 2013; Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2013), which inevitably impacts their education and employment (Glaser & van Pletzen, 2012). Graham (2019) argues that effective teaching is a key factor that can improve writing development; however, research on writing instruction for DHHs is limited compared to research on reading (Mayer & Trezek, 2018). Studies meant to increase writing research for DHHs must address teachers' instructional concerns and improve their strategies.

In Lesotho, the ability to write English is a skill assessed in national examinations (Khalanyane &

Hala-Hala, 2014; Khati & Khati, 2009) for learners to advance to higher grades, pursue higher education, and gain employment opportunities (Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2015; Nkome, 2015). Research shows that at the primary school level, from grades 4 to 7, Basotho DHHs need assistance with writing English (Morai, 2020; Morai et al., 2024). They have difficulty learning independently and understanding content when sign language interpreters are absent from school (Lehloa, 2019; Majoro, 2021; Makatse, 2021) and face significant challenges in learning, leading to high dropout rates and restricted access to higher education (Makatse, 2021; Morai, 2021; Palime, 2020). There has been limited research on literacy instruction in schools for DHHs (Matlosa, 2010). Previous research has revealed that teachers have limited training in instructional strategies to improve DHHs' English writing skills (Morai, 2020; Palime, 2020), and there is an absence of specialized teacher-training programs for deaf education in Lesotho's higher institutions (Adigun et al., 2023), compounding the challenge of effective instruction for DHHs. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate teachers' strategies and challenges of English writing instruction in schools for DHHs in Lesotho by answering the following research questions:

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- (1) What strategies do teachers use to provide English writing instruction?
- (2) What challenges do teachers face in teaching English writing skills?

Literature Review

Many DHHs go to school with a limited understanding of language to express themselves, and teachers need specific instructional strategies that cater to their needs (Lederberg et al., 2013; Wolbers et al., 2020; Wolbers et al., 2023). DHHs may have limited language due to limited access to spoken language and lack of exposure to sign language from birth (Cannon et al., 2022; Henner et al., 2016). Language deprivation appears to be a more likely cause of poor language outcomes for DHHs (Hall, 2017). This deprivation can negatively affect language processing, comprehension, and production, leading to poorer learning outcomes (Adigun & Ajayi, 2015).

Research in sub-Saharan Africa shows that DHHs struggle to learn in school due to limited English skills required for learning. They may be exposed to the same materials and textbooks as their hearing peers but struggle to acquire and use English language skills effectively to express themselves, hindering their academic progress (Kodiango & Syomwene, 2016; Obosu et al., 2016). Further research shows that many DHHs start school at an older age than their grade levels, leading to learning delays and communication barriers (Swanwick et al., 2022). Others (e.g., Kelly et al., 2020) found that DHHs often struggle to communicate with their teachers due to teachers' limited training to understand their unique educational needs. Additionally, Musengi et al. (2012) found that teachers sometimes use spoken language due to limited sign language skills.

Although teachers' preparation and knowledge to teach writing can be affected by each country's social, political, cultural, and historical factors (Graham et al., 2022), Graham (2019; 2021) posits that effective teaching can improve writing development. Researchers have aimed to understand writing instruction across different contexts, with several national surveys used to assess teachers' preparation to teach writing, instructional practices, and efficacy beliefs to teach writing in primary education (Malpique et al., 2023). However, to enhance writing instruction, researchers need to build collaborations with teachers and learn about each other's concerns,

constraints, and ways of working together to devise instructional strategies that address their concerns (Snow, 2017). Knowing teachers' concerns could help researchers develop additional intervention strategies to augment their existing strategies (Wolbers et al., 2020). The current study leveraged the opportunity to work with teachers in schools for DHHs to explore English writing strategies and challenges they face to consider ways to improve writing instruction in their classrooms.

Method

The current study employed an exploratory qualitative design method to seek teachers' strategies and challenges in English writing instruction for DHHs in Lesotho. All teachers provided written and verbal consent to participate in this study. The teachers were individually interviewed in their classrooms using audio-recorded semi-structured interviews that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Interview questions were:

- Which strategies do you currently use to teach English writing skills in your classroom?
- What specific successes do you have when implementing these strategies in the classroom?
- Can you provide examples of how your learners write?
- What challenges do you face while using these strategies?
- Do these challenges reflect in your learners' writing skills?
- Could you provide examples of your learners' difficulties during writing instruction?
- What suggestions do you have for improving writing instruction in your classroom?

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Hiroshima University Research Ethics Review Board (HR-HUM-001130). The current research was also approved by the Ministry of Education and Training, Lesotho. All participants consented to participate prior to being interviewed. No names and grade levels are used in this article to protect identity.

Setting

Lesotho is a landlocked country in South Africa, with an estimated population of around 2 million (World Bank, 2023). Different languages are spoken in Lesotho, including Sesotho, English, Xhosa, Phuthi, and Ndebele (Kolobe & Matsoso, 2020). Sesotho, the

primary language spoken by most people living in Lesotho, is the medium of instruction from grades 1 to 3 and is also taught as a subject in schools. On the other hand, English is the language of instruction in grades 4 to 7 (Moloi et al., 2008). Other languages like Xhosa, Phuthi, and Ndebele are not taught or used in schools. Lesotho sign language (LSL) is also not taught in schools but is used as a mode of communication in schools for DHHs (Morai, 2023).

In 1981, the first school for DHHs was established in Leribe district to equip DHHs with reading and writing skills. It provides elementary education for DHHs from grades one to four. From grade five, learners are integrated into the neighboring inclusive school. In 1991, the second school was founded in Berea district to equip DHHs with literacy skills that would empower their academic and social lives. It provides primary-level education from grade 1 to grade 7. Both schools are residential, providing education and boarding for all Basotho DHHs from all over Lesotho.

Participants

The participants were five teachers in grades 4 to 7. They were all hearing teachers, and their first language was Sesotho. They all reported using total communication to teach English in their classrooms, which entailed using different communication modalities, such as signing, writing, speaking, lipreading, gestures, and fingerspelling according to learners' communication language needs. Teachers' qualifications ranged from a diploma in primary education to a bachelor's degree in special education. All teachers worked individually in their classrooms without teaching assistants or sign language interpreters.

Data Analysis

Audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word. Thematic analysis was conducted following Saldaña's (2012) four-step process: (1) identifying codes, (2) creating categories of codes and developing high-level categories, (3) reviewing and synthesizing these categories to generate themes, and (4) applying the themes to the study's research questions (Saldaña, 2012; 2021).

Results

There were two key themes identified in the data: strategies for providing English writing

instruction, and challenges in teaching English writing skill. Within each of these themes there are a number of sub-themes. These themes and subthemes will be explored further below.

Strategies for Providing English Writing Instruction

Teachers shared using a range of instructional strategies to teach English writing skills, which were organized into two sub-themes: sentence completion strategies and vocabulary development strategies. These strategies will be examined below. Each of the strategies used will be explored under the two themes: sentence completion strategies and vocabulary development strategies.

Sentence Completion Strategies

With the fill-in strategy, teachers aim to support DHHs in understanding how to write correct sentences. They reported that by asking learners to fill in the missing words in sentences written in English grammatical structure, they guided them in understanding and memorizing the basic structure of simple English sentences. However, they reported that DHHs often resorted to drawing rather than writing when not guided or writing incorrect answers in the fill-in spaces. For example, *My name is____*, the learner will fill in their surname or the name of their friends.

Teachers further explained that learners usually memorize the words they see in sentences and assume they need the same answer whenever that word appears. For example, when they say "name" in any sentence, they assume they must write their names. The name of my school is____ and they write their names. One teacher explained,

When I guide them with fill-in sentences, they sometimes write correct answers in the wrong spaces. For example, they can write their names where they are supposed to write the name of their school. If they see the word 'name' they always assume it is their name, whereas the sentence is 'the name of my school is____'.

Other teachers shared, "Sometimes I provide fill-in-the-blank sentences for my learners, and while they correctly identify the letters to complete the words, they often select words that do not fit the context. For instance, in the sentence 'The boy is t_ll,' I intended for them to fill in the letter 'a' to form the word 'tall.' However, they sometimes fill in other letters such as 'e' instead, resulting in the word 'tell,'

“Using a fill-in strategy is challenging because learners forget vocabulary. For example, when asked to fill in the missing letters in f_th_r, learners repeat the same letter ff, thth,rr or write a different letter or nothing at all” showing learners’ limited understanding or knowledge of the words or instruction.

Teachers explained that learners often forget many things they are taught, even with guided support. “For a long time, as teachers of the deaf, we have struggled to teach our learners to remember things they are taught, we can repeat as many times, but they will still forget it.” For example, teachers often introduce new vocabulary words and engage learners in discussions about these words while incorporating concrete objects to aid understanding. However, when learners are asked to fill in missing words using a fill-in-the-blank strategy the following day, they frequently struggle to recall the target word. “When I teach them one word today and ask them to fill in the missing words the following day, they have already forgotten the word.” Another teacher explained, “Sometimes they remember the words but write them incorrectly or in the wrong spaces. For example, My surname is__and they fill in the name of their village or their friends’ names.”

Another teacher explained, “I sometimes help my learners memorize the words by making them face a different direction and make them memorize the words, but the next day, they have forgotten.”

Teachers explained that to use the fill-in strategy, learners first had to understand the vocabulary around a topic and learn how to structure English sentences. “When using the fill-in strategy, learners just follow the structure given to them with limited understanding of the words used. I realized that they struggle with reading some of the words they have written.” “Every time I try to help them write sentences and break down a topic into small pieces, they still do not understand even though they say they do. We only see when they are assessed that they did not understand.” These insights from teachers emphasize the importance of foundational vocabulary knowledge and its comprehension in enhancing learners’ memory and writing skills.

To further guide learners, teachers asked them to answer *WH* questions incorporating a simple question structure, such as “What is your name?”. Learners were asked to answer in complete

sentences using guidance from the fill-in strategy or independently. For example, what is your name? What is your surname? How old are you? What is the name of your school? Then, teachers would assist learners in responding to those questions by writing fill-in sentences such as, My name is __. My surname is _____. One teacher explained, “*WH* questions are difficult for the learners to understand, for example, what did you see on your first day at school? Learners do not understand how to answer the question”. Questions asked are not clear to learners; one factor is limited vocabulary and the flexibility of teachers to use different ways of asking questions.

Alternatively, teachers would ask learners to recall the sentences from the fill-in strategy and write without support. For instance, one teacher stated, “After we complete the fill-in-the-blank exercises together, I ask my learners to write the sentences independently the next day, but they usually struggle to write without support.” Another teacher explained, “Our learners have a very limited vocabulary, they struggle with writing even simple words, let alone construct sentences. They do not retain most words, and the steps taken to write sentences.” These challenges persist across grades, and teachers have limited knowledge of the strategies to address them as they always use the same strategy despite its challenges in addressing learners’ writing difficulties.

Strategies to Promote Vocabulary Development

Teachers incorporated other strategies to promote vocabulary development, such as the bubble map strategy, which is a visual tool used to help learners generate and organize their thoughts and ideas around a topic using pictures, and concrete objects to help learners develop and use vocabulary for writing in different contexts. Teachers explained that bubble maps helped learners describe ideas around the topic, understand different words used to describe the topic and write within the context, which is beneficial to the learners’ vocabulary development.

Vocabulary words, especially the keywords in communication, were difficult for the learners to understand; for example, what did you SEE on your first day at school? Learners do not understand what “see” means. So using the bubble map, we put the picture of the eye, write the word “see”, then describe what “see” means,

and write the things learners “see” around them

Teachers used the bubble map with pictures and concrete materials to enhance learners’ understanding of vocabulary in sign language and English. Teachers believe this strategy allowed learners to understand different ways of developing vocabulary, thinking, and collaborative writing. As one teacher explained, “Bubble map helps learners familiarize themselves with the word, and use it in different contexts.” Another teacher explained, “Bubble map helps learners know that words they know can be used in different contexts and ways. For example, our learners know the school as their school, but using the bubble map helped them describe different schools and their written names, not just sign language names.” These findings show that the bubble map also supported learners’ development of sign language by encouraging them to express their thoughts in various signs and written English.

However, teachers reported learners having challenges with writing compositions as the bubble map does not guide them in writing grammatically correct sentences independently. “A bubble map strategy supports the development of vocabulary. However, learners do not independently write their ideas in sentences.” Another teacher explained, “The use of bubble map strategy supports vocabulary development rather than developing an understanding of sentence structure. For example if we develop a vocabulary on the topic “myself” we create the vocabulary about names, surnames, home, school. When learners write sentences, they write “Myself name is___”. As is evident from teachers’ quotes, developing vocabulary skills led to an increase in knowledge and the number of words learners write. Furthermore, all teachers mentioned the challenges in moving from vocabulary development to sentence writing.

Challenges in Teaching English Writing Skills

Four sub-themes were identified in relation to challenges with teaching English writing skills: language and communication difficulties, vocabulary writing difficulties, limited writing opportunities, and limited teacher preparation and resources. Each of these sub-themes will be explored.

Language and Communication Difficulties

Teachers explained that the age range of

learners and mixed-grade classrooms make it challenging to cater to their individual language needs, as most DHHLs start school without sign language and writing skills and need assistance in understanding each signed or written word. The limited language background of the learners also makes it difficult for teachers to identify the appropriate communication modes to use. Hence, all teachers reported using total communication as a basis for teaching and learning. Total communication entailed using Sesotho speech, sign language, lipreading, visuals, and fingerspelling. However, the language backgrounds of the learners, mixed-age classrooms, and different languages, including sign languages used in other parts of Lesotho, make it challenging for them to cater for their learners’ language needs. One teacher said,

Many of our learners come from remote areas in Lesotho, where sign language is not used, and there are no televisions or internet to learn sign language from other people. Their parents are not deaf, and they do not know sign language. Some of them come to school with no language skills and start learning Sesotho, English, and sign language here. It is challenging to teach them sign language, Sesotho, and English together while also trying to cover the contents of the syllabus.

Another teacher explained,

Learners are sometimes asked to write or read short paragraphs in tests or examinations, but they always struggle with writing or answering comprehension questions. Their challenge is limited language skills, not only in writing but also in reading and signing. We have tried to teach them writing for many years but to no avail. We get blamed when they go to inclusive schools with limited writing and reading skills, yet we try our best to teach them effectively. We need support to teach them effectively.

Teachers also expressed significant challenges in teaching Sesotho and English together using sign language as the sign language vocabulary is the same. DHHLs must learn to write one sign using two languages and remember to write them correctly and in context when writing Sesotho or English compositions. Teachers added that their learners sometimes write Sesotho words when writing English, and vice versa, but mostly write Sesotho words shorter than English words, such as “*mme*” instead of “*mother*.” Without early language

intervention programs that develop Lesotho sign language skills for learners, parents, and teachers, teachers reported their challenges being far from being addressed. Teachers explained that DHHs usually forget vocabulary when they go home for long school holidays due to limited sign language use at home, which causes limited communication between parents and their children.

One teacher explained,

Our learners come to school with no language. We try to teach them sign language, Sesotho, and English concurrently. We also try to ensure they develop the vocabulary to understand the syllabus content. However, when they go home for long school holidays, they come back with limited language skills, and we have to start afresh to teach vocabulary. So, we can never finish the syllabus within a year because we also have to focus on developing our learners' language skills throughout grades, which is different from mainstream schools where learners start school with a background in Sesotho and English. However, we are expected to cover the syllabus at the same time as other schools using the same instructional strategies.

Another teacher said,

I focus on teaching learners sign language in all grades because if they do not understand it, instruction will be more complicated for us. I also use pictures and concrete objects to guide them in understanding the syllabus contents. However, they often forget the vocabulary, and we have to repeat it many times until they can understand and use it independently, which is usually not the case because they continue to struggle with writing independently.

Teachers explained that total communication supported them in using different modes of communication to assist learners in developing language skills. However, persistent challenges exist with retaining and using vocabulary when presented with different contexts. Limited knowledge of learners' language backgrounds also results in limited knowledge of the appropriate instruction and communication modes, as teachers do not have full background information about their learners' degree of hearing loss or their speech intelligibility. Teachers explained: "We often begin the school year with a limited understanding of our learners' language backgrounds. Parents may share that their children are deaf, but they might not provide

detailed information about the extent of their hearing loss due to lack of assessment." "I taught a learners for two years without realizing they had moderate hearing loss and could speak." "We must assess learners by ourselves when they come to school, but we are not trained." As discussed by teachers, early assessment and support are needed before parents bring their children to school.

The difficulties with retaining vocabulary in class after long holidays and even in the examinations indicate that some learners may need different instructional strategies to understand and remember signs and words used in the classrooms to reuse them in their daily communication with their peers, teachers, or parents. Some learners' limited sign language skills may hamper their understanding of the detailed meaning of the words when used in different contexts. Some learners misunderstand the words and signs used in the classrooms due to different sign languages used at home and at school.

Vocabulary Writing Difficulties

The teachers explained that many DHHs needed more knowledge of the topics they had to write about. The teachers explained that learners write on many topics, and usually, they do not have background knowledge of these topics, so it is challenging for them to write individually. Some learners always need support to write only a few words; some write many unclear words, and others write nothing. Teachers explained that they must always help them break down topics into smaller pieces to enhance their background knowledge in signing, writing, and understanding new words. One teacher explained,

Our learners struggle to write independently. They do not write or write less when I let them describe a topic alone. They always need me to work with them to develop words by fingerspelling the correct spelling to them. For example, they write words reversely: Father, "rehtaf." Or they repeat questions. For example, how old are you? Learner: How old are you? Eleven. They have limited vocabulary to write on their own.

As teachers explained, they sometimes use a fill-in approach or a guided approach, a teaching approach that relies on filling in blank spaces in sentences. They explained that these strategies might contribute to limited vocabulary knowledge for

learning to write English with limited language skills. According to their experiences, DHHLs often face difficulties constructing sentences or compositions. They tend to repeat questions, provide incorrect answers and spelling, or write less when required to write without assistance.

The teachers felt the fill-in strategy could assist learners in understanding questions and answering them to write compositions. They also believed the strategy would help learners understand questions in school tests and examinations to be able to write answers independently. However, they showed that learners mostly repeat the questions and write answers at the end when not guided by the fill-in strategy. For example, what is your name? Tom. As one teacher explained, “Our learners’ biggest challenge is understanding ‘WH’ questions: What is your name? They repeat, What is your name? followed by their names.” Another teacher said, “When they write examinations, they repeat the questions and write answers afterward. A few may try to answer with sentences, but they will be in sign language structure, and some will use Sesotho words. However, most struggle to write their own sentences to answer questions”.

The fill-in approach is mostly used to teach sentence construction from grade one in schools in Lesotho, however teachers believe it creates structural difficulties in teaching basic and complex sentence construction skills for DHHLs. They believe a better foundation of writing skills is needed when learners have limited language skills, such as DHHLs, and have to write independently from the fourth to higher grades. Hence, teachers in all grades showed concern about their learners’ limited vocabulary when writing independently.

Teachers also explained that DHHLs have challenges answering WH questions in daily conversations, specifically *why* or *how* questions that require them to narrate or explain. Teachers believe this may be due to limited sign language vocabulary or understanding of the questions. One teacher explained, “The challenge is writing and signing; if they are asked WH questions when writing or in daily conversations, they do not respond correctly.”

The teachers explained that being unable to answer questions correctly prohibits DHHLs from explaining their thoughts in tests, examinations, and daily communication. They emphasized that it is important to support learners to understand questions and how to answer them. However, they

required support for more strategies to do so. Teachers also had views about using the bubble map strategy. One teacher said,

Bubble maps help my learners think about words before they write. They had limited vocabulary for writing English or Sesotho, but this map is helping us develop vocabulary. I am always surprised learners have many ideas when using the map. I need to help them write them correctly. I use fingerspelling to guide them in writing words correctly.

Another teacher explained,

The bubble map helped us break the topic into smaller parts to develop the vocabulary and present the ideas in written words or pictures. After that, we use the ideas generated to write about the topic. My learners like the bubble map, too; their motivation to write and participation in the classroom have increased since introducing the bubble map strategy.

The bubble map strategy helped learners improve their understanding of the vocabulary and complemented the fill-in strategy by giving an understanding of the words they were using in guided compositions. Answering WH questions is also aided by the bubble map strategy. For example, one teacher noted, “I use the bubble map to describe the ‘WH’ questions; for example, I put ‘who’ in the middle of the map and ask learners to write the names of people or their jobs. I usually guide them with questions like, ‘Who ate breakfast?’ ‘Who works at the hospital?’”

Teachers also described the challenges of using a bubble map. They believed it helped develop vocabulary, but it was difficult for learners to construct sentences around one topic. One teacher said: When they write about the topic ‘Myself’ learners develop ideas about themselves correctly. When they write sentences, they write, “My name is ___. My surname is ___.” I model writing, “My name is ___. I am ___ years old,” to help them understand how to construct sentences.

Another teacher explained,

Learners always seem to understand how to use bubble maps. However, when writing sentences, they encounter challenges constructing them. They sometimes list the words from the bubble map in isolation or write short sentences such as “see boy,” “school go,” and “friend mine” due to trying to generate sentences from the vocabulary they have.

While learners may understand how to use bubble maps to organize their thoughts, teachers emphasized that they struggle to articulate them coherently in written form. These difficulties often lead to the writing of isolated words or fragmented phrases rather than fully formed sentences.

Limited Writing Opportunities

Teachers showed that writing compositions and letters were no longer assessed at the end of primary school-level examinations; therefore, there needs to be more practice in writing in the classrooms to ensure that the skill is consolidated at the primary school level. Furthermore, teachers showed that DHHs often communicate using sign language in and outside the classroom and need more opportunities to practice writing. They also have limited homework to practice writing after school. Limited writing practice from curriculum limitations hinders the practice of English writing skills. One teacher said,

At the end of primary school, learners no longer write letters and compositions, so we do not have a specific time allocated to teach them to write compositions. They only write short sentences during tests or when copying teachers' notes.

Although writing compositions and letters are excluded from examinations, teachers explained that their learners did not perform well because writing compositions was difficult and caused them to perform poorly. Teachers, however, believed the removal of composition and letter writing from national examinations reduced the writing skills of DHHs and other learners in Lesotho due to limited time spent on writing in schools.

Limited Teacher Preparation and Access to Resources

Teachers mentioned they had yet to receive training to teach writing to DHHs in their pre-service teaching programs. They also experienced limited support for improving writing instruction in their schools. Furthermore, limited access to teaching materials, such as pictures and charts, to help DHHs understand and use vocabulary independently, was a challenge. They stated that they looked for pictures in magazines and newspapers, but some were unavailable when they needed to use them. They suggested that unlimited internet access in their classrooms and iPads could help them access pictures when needed and help

learners practice writing. One teacher explained, "Sometimes, explaining topics takes a long time because we must ensure our learners understand them. Our learners have very low writing and reading skills. We need assistive materials, such as iPads, to allow them to practice learning to write and read independently." Another teacher explained, "Assistive technology could help them write in English and develop sign language skills concurrently if they could learn new signs, see them, and practice writing them independently with technological devices such as iPads." Teachers emphasized that continuous sign language training was also needed for them and learners to improve communication during instruction. One teacher said, "Sign language signs in Lesotho change constantly; we must constantly update to new signs. If not, our learners will not understand because sometimes they know the updated signs that we do not know but that we use for instruction." Thus, sign language training is essential to improve communication between teachers and learners.

Teachers also emphasized the presence of multiple disabilities among their learners, specifically intellectual disabilities, which make it challenging to teach writing. One teacher explained, "Some of our learners have intellectual and learning disabilities; teaching them writing or any other skill is more challenging. However, we always try to teach them using visuals such as pictures or other activities." Teachers explained that writing is already challenging for DHHs, especially compositions, which require knowledge of several ideas about a topic, many words to explain those ideas in writing, knowledge of English grammar to write them clearly, and paragraphs that cohesively combine all ideas. This makes it more challenging to teach DHHs with intellectual disabilities who also have limited language backgrounds.

Discussion

The results of the current study extend the findings of previous studies on teachers' challenges in teaching DHHs in Lesotho (e.g., Lehloa, 2019; Morai, 2020; Morai et al., 2024) and research on limited language skills, which include limited or lack of access to visual language, such as sign language and writing, which can cause poor language outcomes in DHHs (Hall, 2017; Lederberg et al., 2013). The results of the current study reveal that the limited sign language and English skills of

DHHLs and a lack of early language programs pose a significant challenge for teaching English writing skills. DHHLs need both early access and improvement of language skills in sign language and writing languages like English and Sesotho. Teachers posit that early language intervention is important to assess DHHLs and identify the types of language instruction opportunities they need from an early age.

Teachers also mentioned that DHHLs face challenges in remembering the vocabulary they are taught. Because teachers must follow the school curriculum and teach language and syllabus content together, they try to teach vocabulary simultaneously to cover the syllabus. Lesotho has several languages, including Sesotho, English, Xhosa, Phuthi, and Ndebele (Kolobe & Matsoso, 2020), and different sign languages, which, when teachers are not trained to teach learners from those language backgrounds, could affect vocabulary instruction. The literature has suggested that linguistic diversity within the DHHLs can pose additional challenges to vocabulary development and writing skills (Alamargot et al., 2018; Mpofo & Chimhenga, 2013). Teachers' observations regarding learners' limited vocabulary when writing and signing are consistent with Adigun and Ajayi (2015), who found that teachers strongly believe that a wide gap exists in the language and vocabulary development of DHHLs when writing, which may result from different language backgrounds that are not identified and could be used to improve communication during instruction.

Additionally, teachers believe that using total communication to teach English can address DHHLs' linguistic backgrounds; however, they still need to know learners' language backgrounds to use total communication effectively to support English instruction. All teachers come from Sesotho-speaking communities and often use oral Sesotho when teaching English in total communication. However, some DHHLs come from Phuthi or Xhosa or other language backgrounds; hence, strategies included in total communication, such as lipreading, may not be helpful to learners who do not have Sesotho or English backgrounds, as those are the languages they do not speak at home and have limited experience to lipread Sesotho or English, specifically the vocabulary used in the education context. Similarly, DHHLs from Sesotho-speaking families may find it challenging to understand lipreading

Sesotho words used in the educational context. These challenges may limit their vocabulary development if their language backgrounds and needs do not inform total communication. Hence, visual cues may be important to use to aid their understanding.

The absence of specialized teacher preparation programs in Lesotho (Adigun et al., 2023) also limits teachers' knowledge of using different strategies to improve DHHLs' writing skills. Limited understanding of strategies, scarce research on addressing their challenges, and limited support with pre-and in-service training in instructional strategies leave teachers' challenges and concerns unaddressed and learners' writing difficulties unimproved.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although teachers use various strategies, the findings reveal that they need to consistently receive training and support to improve their instruction. Despite the absence of deaf education programs in Lesotho and limited in-service training opportunities, the strategies used by teachers across grades, such as fill-in strategies, bubble maps, and including pictures to improve writing skills, could lead to instruction promoting DHHLs' language and writing skills if augmented with other strategies that target the development of learners' diverse language and writing difficulties.

Furthermore, identified language and communication challenges, vocabulary writing difficulties, and limited teacher preparation and resources can be addressed through collaboration between teachers, researchers, and higher institutions of training to address them by providing the necessary support through in-service training, school visits for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategies and learners' progress throughout school. Further collaboration among teachers from special, inclusive, and regular schools, involving higher institutions and the Ministry of Education and Training, to share knowledge about practices and strategies for educating DHHLs and instructional strategies in literacy development can help develop current and future teachers' skills to improve writing instruction in their classrooms. Furthermore, support and interventions in writing instruction should include DHHLs' participation in English fairs, school debates, poetry, and writing competitions with their hearing

peers to help generate opportunities for them to improve their language and writing skills.

Limitations and Future Research

This study sought teachers' strategies and challenges when teaching DHHLs English Writing Skills. Future studies could examine the writing challenges from learners, perspectives to inform research about their writing strategies and challenges and provide broader insights into improving English writing instruction. This study focused on only schools for DHHLs. Therefore, the teachers' strategies and challenges cannot be considered representative of all the teachers of DHHLs in Lesotho, especially those in inclusive or regular schools. A similar study in different schools that include DHHLs is needed to obtain another picture of the teachers' and learners' strategies and challenges in those settings. Another limitation is that the results of the current study are based on five teachers, which constitutes a small sample size, and the current study cannot assume that this group is representative of teachers in general. Further research focusing on teachers' strategies and challenges from other grades to higher grades could help give more insights into their strategies and challenges in English writing instruction.

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レソト王国における聴覚障害児に対する英語書字スキル指導に関する成果と課題

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レソト王国の聴覚障害児にとって、英語の書字スキルは学業の成功や就労機会において極めて重要である。しかし、多くの聴覚障害児は、学校、社会、職場において自らの考えを文章で表現することに困難を感じている。初等教育段階からの英語書字指導の改善に向けては、現場の教員が実践する指導法や直面する課題を明確にする研究が不可欠である。本研究は、レソト王国国内のろう学校2校に勤務する4～7年生担当の教員5名を対象に半構造化インタビューを実施し、指導における戦略と課題を調査した。インタビューは音声で記録され、文字起こしを行い、Saldañaのテーマ別データ分析法を用いて分析した。その結果、教員は補充形式やバブルマップといった指導法を使用していることが報告された。また、言語・コミュニケーション上の課題、語彙に関する書字の難しさ、書字機会の不足、さらに教員の準備やリソース不足といった多様な課題が明らかとなった。加えて、今後の英語書字指導の改善に向けた方向性についても提言した。

キーワード：聴覚障害児、英語書字指導、指導ストラテジー・課題、英語書字スキル、レソト王国

