WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES THAT VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS FACE IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY?

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Abstract

This paper investigates the academic and psychological challenges that visually impaired students encounter in learning English as a second language at Sultan Qaboos University. It sheds light on the major needs of visually impaired students which is learning the four language skills; reading, writing, speaking and listening. It raises the issue of whether or not teachers who work with this population are trained and qualified to teach a second language to visually impaired students as well as the issue of how classroom environment and assessment can be sources of challenges to students with visual disabilities. The paper discusses two case studies conducted with two visually impaired students who are the only students whose major is English from visually impaired students' population at SQU. The data of this study obtained through observations, individual interviews with five teachers who have some experience in teaching students with visual disabilities at SQU. The results show that writing is the main challenge that the blind student faces in learning English as a second language; however, the main challenge that the low vision student face is classroom environment. The paper concludes with some recommendations to reduce the challenges that visually impaired students face in learning English at SQU.

Keywords: visual impairment, second language learners, challenges, blind, low vision