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An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis exploring the experiences of language needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for secondary school teachers of English

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Acknowledgments

This thesis is for my fiancé James, who has also put his life on hold the last few years while I pursue this dream. You've always being so supportive and reassuring, I love you. Let's start living again!

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Abstract

Government policy and publications have reiterated the message that all teachers should be teachers of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and meet the varying and diverse needs of all learners within a mainstream classroom (HM Government 2022a; 2022b). Language needs, a feature of a communication and interaction difficulty, is one area of SEND. Within the secondary school context, these difficulties have received little research attention and focus. This research with secondary school teachers of English (N=5) utilised semi-structured interviews and vignettes which provide written case study descriptions of how language needs may present in the classroom (Starling et al., 2011; Ramsey, 2015). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to explore participants' experiences. IPA is a qualitative methodology in which the central tenets focus on phenomenology (experience), hermeneutics (interpretation) and idiography (individual, nomothetic data) (Smith et al., 2022). Four group experiential themes were identified which depicted participants' experiences of being a teacher and supporting language needs and SEND; *Expertise; Interactions; Feeling Challenged;* and *Interpretation.* How participants each related to these individual constructs varied and similarities (convergence) and differences (divergence) in their individual experiences were noted. The research provides a descriptive and interpretive account of the experiences of participants when teaching and supporting students with SEND and language needs. Situating these experiences within an ecological framework of the classroom, appreciates the contextualised experience of being a teacher and the interactions between students, other professionals, systems and structures and the emotive elements that accompanies this experience. Continued and renewed focus and awareness of the presentation of language needs in the secondary context remains pertinent as some teachers felt that they lacked expertise and confidence in this area. Educational Psychology as a profession may be unique in its contribution when supporting schools to consider holistic and ecological influences on the presentation of SEND and

support the problem-solving capacity of the school workforce, particularly in an educational context where access to specialist services is hindered due to scarcity of resources.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Rationale For Research

1.1.1. The Socio-Political Context of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

1.1.1.1. Definition and historical context

In 1978, the Warnock report was published (Warnock, 1978). Prior to this, a medical model for disability was prevalent in the UK education system with the expectation that those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) would be educated in specialist schools and provisions (Blum, 2014). A medical model positions the nature of an individual's difficulties as within the individual, rather than appreciating the impact of social factors and context (Marks, 1997). The Warnock report was seminal as it challenged the medical model and replaced this with a social model of disability, with the expectation that the school and provision around a child should change to meet SEND within mainstream school settings (Blum, 2014). Special schools were considered to be a technique of positive discrimination and there was a movement towards *"a greater proportion of handicapped children, including severely handicapped children, in ordinary schools"* (Warnock, 1978, p.121). Despite the use of now outdated terminology used to describe children with SEND, the report encouraged a movement away from placing children with SEND in special schools with the premise that needs should be met within a mainstream provision. With this movement came the assumption that teachers were now required to adapt their approach to a differing population of students with various SEND (Blum, 2014).

Since this time, several iterations of the SEND Code of Practice have been published (Department for Education, 2015; Department for Education and Skills, 1994; 2001). These provide a framework to guide school staff and educational professionals such as Educational Psychologists in processes which recognise and support SEND. These documents further emphasised the movement towards students with SEND being educated within

mainstream classrooms, with the notion that all teachers are teachers of SEND. One of the eight professional standards for teachers is to *"adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils"* (Department for Education, 2021).

1.1.1.2. Current context

Last year, the government published a white paper (HM Government, 2022b). The focus of this publication was to develop strong schools with *"excellent teachers, who are trained in the best evidence-based approaches"* (p.16), through initial teacher training programmes and deliver a curriculum described to be *"broad and ambitious"* (p.24). Further to this publication was the agenda for children who require targeted support to receive this through prompt teacher assessment and identification of needs, prior to a multi-agency and specialist service involvement. This further reiterates the message that all teachers should be teachers of SEND, responding to varying needs within a mainstream classroom. Teachers and school staff are expected to provide a combination of academic, pastoral and specialist support to their students. This is in the context of an educational system which was deemed by its own government as not to be financially sustainable, as there is a fiscal and workforce resource drift from mainstream to the specialist end of the system (HM Government, 2022a). This publication was provided at a time when workforce morale was low, with difficulties in job satisfaction and retention, and significant proportions of the workforce expressed a view that they might leave the profession (NEU, 2023). School staff report less timely access to specialist support than they experienced previously (Tysoe et al., 2021). Yet, access to services such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and specialist teachers may be appreciated as teachers consider these services to be crucial and valued (Ellis et al., 2012).

Professional services are increasingly working through a consultancy model (Dockrell et al., 2006), meaning specialist practitioners engage in less direct work with children and young people and the responsibility falls

upon school staff to identify, refer and implement support (Dockrell & Howell, 2015). Within this system, teachers play a crucial role in the identification and support of children and young people with SEND. Thus, to understand the context of SEND within education and school settings, the perspectives of teachers as key professionals implementing strategy, should be gleaned and appreciated.

1.1.2. The Significance of Speech, Language and Communication Needs

1.1.2.1. Prevalence and impact

Although all areas of need are important, the prevalence and potential impact of language needs means that this area of SEND is important to research and intervention. Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are the most cited reasons for students to receive SEND support at school ("Special Educational Needs in England", 2023). Estimates suggest that 7-10% of students will have communication difficulties, whereas 50-75% of students from economically deprived areas may experience language delays (Bercow, 2008; Hartshorne, 2011; Locke et al., 2002). However, obtaining accurate prevalence estimates is difficult as identification relies on the accuracy and awareness of school staff, which is something that they can find challenging (Gascoigne & Gross, 2017; Meschi et al., 2010). Experiencing language difficulties may lead to long standing poor outcomes for young people. Students with SLCN are at risk of poor educational outcomes, with the attainment gap accelerating through the school years (Lindsay et al., 2010). With academic achievements being a significant factor for training and post-16 options (Snow, 2016), SLCN may also limit a student's outcomes later in life.

1.1.2.2. Speech, language and communication needs through the age phases

Much of the research and practitioner attention around language needs tends to focus on children within the early years. This has informed the

policy, practice and training available to practitioners. In the United Kingdom (UK), Early years practitioners have a statutory framework to monitor development through the use of the early years foundation stage framework which has indicators for language progress (Department for Education, 2021). From age five, there is no requirement for the continued monitoring of language development (ICAN & RCSLT, 2018). Organisations such as ICAN have published progress trackers to support practitioners and educational staff when monitoring language development through early years, primary and secondary school years (ICAN, 2007; 2011a; 2011b). However, there is no policy or universal practice for educational practitioners in primary and secondary years to track students' progress and identify needs. Education staff have reported that they would like support and effective resources to identify these needs (Dockrell & Howell, 2015; Thurston, 2016). Schools may be limited in their access to resources to recognise language difficulties beyond the early years.

There may also be a lack of training and awareness of these needs. A body of literature has identified the views of education staff, highlighting that staff often report a lack of knowledge in this area and would like further training (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001; Hall, 2005; Marshall et al., 2002a; 2002b; Mroz, 2006a, 2006b; Mroz & Hall, 2003; Sadler, 2005). However, much of this research comes from staff working in primary and early years settings. In the UK, in 2008, language difficulties received political attention when the then Secretary of State for children, schools and families John Bercow was commissioned to review SLCN services (Bercow, 2008). His report recognised that communication, identification and intervention are essential but highlighted variability and a lack of equity in the system to support these needs. The report raised concerns over the lack of expertise of school staff and identified training needs in a workforce in need of significant improvement. This work aimed to understand the context of language needs, how they may be supported and inform government agenda (Lindsay et al., 2010). The publication of nineteen reports, which made up the Better Communication Project, was used to inform government policy and services. In the wake of the Bercow report, researchers and

practitioners have sought to increase the awareness of language difficulties, using internet campaigns and awareness days (Bishop et al., 2012). Much of the contemporary understanding of how these needs present in schools in the UK is the product of the Better Communication Project. However, it is uncertain the effect that this and other initiatives have had on the school workforce as education staff continue to report that they have accessed limited or no training that will enable them to support students with language difficulties (Anderson, 2011; Blackburn & Aubrey, 2016; Dockrell & Howell, 2015; Dockrell et al., 2017). However, post-qualification training opportunities are available and have been accessed (Anderson, 2011; Blackburn & Aubrey, 2016). This research focuses almost exclusively on the perspectives of early years or primary school staff. There is limited understanding of the impact of policy, practice and training for staff working in secondary school settings.

Secondary school pupils with language needs have been described as a 'hidden population' as needs may be unrecognised (Hartshorne, 2011). Comorbidity is common (Lindsay et al., 2010) and SLCN is often categorised as other SEND (Hartshorne, 2011). Due to this a specific exploration of these needs within the secondary context may be warranted.

1.2. Personal and Professional Interest in the Research Area

The researcher has a professional interest in SEND due to her position as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, whereby developing an insight into the experiences of teachers is of relevance to her own professional practice. Prior to this, the researcher developed an understanding and interest in SLCN through her undergraduate research and previous employment as a research assistant working within a child language acquisition psychology department at a UK university. An interest in the impact of these needs through the secondary years was developed through the researcher's own experiences working within a pupil referral unit while supporting students who had been permanently excluded from their prior mainstream setting due to difficulties with behaviour and many also experienced spoken language and understanding difficulties.

While working as an Assistant, and then Trainee Educational Psychologist, the researcher grappled with understanding her own professional role within the context of language needs and the boundaries with other professionals, such as Speech and Language Therapists. This was coupled with the findings that Educational Psychologists can report diverse practice and confidence levels regarding the area of speech and language needs (Nield, 2015; Sedgwick & Stothard, 2019) directed the researcher to the current field of study.

1.3. Research Approach

The current research is situated within the qualitative research paradigm and utilises semi-structured interviews and written case study vignettes (see Starling et al., 2011; Ramsay, 2015) with secondary school teachers of English (N=5). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was the qualitative methodology used to explore participants' lived experiences of language needs and SEND. IPA is a sense-making approach which aims to *'give a voice'* to participants through a psychological perspective (Larkin et al., 2006). IPA is informed by three axis; phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2022) which was felt to align with the researcher's critical realist ontological and social constructionist epistemological positioning.

Qualitative research is positioned to be inherently subjective (Cunliffe, 2016). Reflexivity is a centrepiece for qualitative research and includes processes which aim to illuminate and represent the different relationships and assumptions between the researchers' position, the research question, aims, methods and conclusions drawn (Luttrell, 2010). A reflexive researcher aims to be thoughtful and self-questioning by using practices to articulate their standpoints and influences on the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thus, a reflexive commentary is used throughout the thesis. This includes first person narrative and extracts from the researcher's reflexive journals. The purpose of this is to provide

transparency and clarification of the researcher's decision making and the impact of this on the research process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Through engagement with theory and literature, this chapter details how the researcher arrived at the chosen field of study. A rationale is provided for a focused study on one area of SEND which is language needs within the secondary school context. This is due to unique characteristics and trends which occur during this age phase. An ecological theoretical framework provides a rationale to explore this field from the perspectives of secondary school staff.

The second part of this chapter provides a systematic literature review to explore what is known of the perspectives of secondary school staff regarding language difficulties. Systematic literature reviews are structured methodological approaches which comprehensively bring together the available literature to support an understanding of a research phenomenon (Frantzen & Fetters, 2016). There are several synthesis methodologies and selection of an approach is typically determined by the methodologies of the primary studies identified through the systematic search (Petticrew et al., 2013). A narrative synthesis was selected by the researcher due to the sparsity and diversity of the primary research identified through the systematic search. Justification, procedures and findings are provided which develop a rationale for the current research.

2.2. Literature review

2.2.1. Teachers' Experiences of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

2.2.1.1 The views of school staff

The government invites school staff to share their experiences through surveys, providing an insight into trends, which are depicted through descriptive statistics. For example, in the year 2022, at three time points

data was collected and reports were published (see Department for Education, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). Recently, 63% of teachers agreed that they personally felt equipped to meet SEND, but barriers included increasing numbers of students with SEND and having adequate time to support pupils (Department for Education, 2022c). This means that around one third of teachers surveyed did not feel that they were equipped to meet SEND. Only 2% of schools felt that they experienced no barriers to supporting SEND pupils (Department for Education, 2022c).

Although valuable in some respects, the utility of these approaches to provide an insight into classroom experiences and important individual differences in the context of SEND is limited. Figures provide little insight into the individual differences between teachers which led to their perceptions that they did or did not feel equipped to meet SEND. Although teachers share some societal and educationally bureaucratic experiences, each classroom and school may represent its own social context (Mitchel, 2018). Therefore, important features including individual differences with staff, classroom social interactions, school institutional values and policies are not captured through large-scale government social research. These details could provide a rich picture of the experiences of school staff in the context of education and SEND. As such, researchers have called for an understanding of the classroom context from an ecological perspective, which may offer a theoretical framework which appreciates this complexity, positioning the classroom as its own individual social context, rather than a generic and universally similar experience (Mitchel, 2018).

2.2.1.2. Ecology in the classroom

Ecology is the study of relationships between humans (or living organisms) and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) is a seminal conceptual framework initially developed in the context of child development, which depicts different levels of institutional forces and relationships influencing an individuals' experience and development

(Buchanan, 2020). Ecological frameworks are transformative as they link the individual to the community and wider environment and provide a lens through which to target different levels of change (Tidball & Krasny, 2011).

An ecological model would understand educational experiences at different levels with spiralling interconnections between levels, each with reciprocal influence (Mitchel, 2018). Although simplistic, the model depicted in Figure 1 illustrates layers of influence in the classroom context, based on Ecological Systems Theory.

Figure 1. An ecological model demonstrating differing layers of ecological influence on a child in an educational setting; taken from p.5. Mitchel (2018)

Conceptualising the classroom context through an ecological perspective and Ecological Systems Theory provides a conceptual framework that not only depicts layers of influence which impact on students' development, but different institutional and contextual forces which influence individual experiences and lived realities (Buchanan, 2020). These are applicable to different elements of the education system and other actors, such as teachers. An ecological perspective values the person in context and their

inter-relatedness between different environmental factors and the wider socio-cultural context (Sak & Gurbuz, 2023). As such, factors beyond the individual are important and have bi-directional and inter-dependent influence (Bratkovich, 2023).

Only a limited number of professionals have access to understanding children within the social ecology of education. Teachers are one of these professionals, described as an *'invisible hand',* they play a significant role in guiding social dynamics within the classroom (Farmer et al., 2011). Classroom ecology positions the classroom experience of teaching and learning as a construction of the individuals, relationships, school/classroom structures, objects (i.e. learning materials) and processes (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013).

Ecological perspectives provide a conceptual framework which depict complex social contexts and may be used to describe the classroom environment. Ecological perspectives and Ecological Systems Theory are elusive in describing and clarifying how, and the impact of differing interacting systems, and wider political, economic, social global factors (Christensen, 2016; Neal & Neal, 2013). Researchers may only glean an insight into a classroom ecology through a context-dependent and individualised lens. Adopting an ecological perspective to understanding the experiences of teachers and the context of SEND in education offers the potential for further sensitivity of an idiographic approach to the exploration of an educational research phenomenon. Such positioning aligns with the profession of Educational Psychology, where ecological perspectives offer a guiding framework to consider child development and intervention within complex social systems (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Division of Educational and Child Psychology, 2002).

Reflexive Commentary

My current professional training in Educational Psychology informed the decision to adopt an ecological framework for the current research when conceptualising SEND. The impact of this decision influenced the ways in which research was appraised. For example, forms of literature and evidence which provided individual and rich details of the context of SEND were valued within this framework. The impact of this is evident in the narrative provided in the literature review and how research is appraised in the systematic literature review. This positioning also directed me towards a qualitative design for the current research. It was felt that quantitative methodologies would not capture the depth and complexity of different contextual and interacting variables that provide an ecological understanding of the experiences of teachers and SEND.

2.2.2. Language Development and Difficulties

2.2.2.1. The features of language

Language difficulties fall under the SEND category of need, communication and interaction. Communication and interaction needs include difficulties communicating with others, saying what you want to say, understanding what is being said or following social rules (Department for Education, 2015). Different neurodevelopmental conditions, such as Autism Spectrum Condition can be associated with difficulties relating to communication and interaction, particularly difficulties with social interactions (Department for Education, 2015). The current research focuses more specifically on difficulties with spoken language and understanding.

What constitutes a 'language need' requires consideration of what is meant by 'language'. Definitions of 'language' provided in the literature can be misleading in their simplicity as language is complex and multi-faceted, where children develop knowledge simultaneously in multiple, inter-related domains (Hoff, 2006). There remains no universally accepted categorical definitions of the different features and domains of language development (Tommerdahl, 2009). Arbitrary distinctions are drawn between expressive

and receptive language skills. Expressive, or oral/spoken language includes features such as developing an awareness of phonology (distinguishing letter sounds), morphology and syntax (word order and sentence structure), building lexicon (vocabulary) and pragmatics (social language use, conversation and narrative skills) (Hoff, 2013). Alternatively, receptive language involves decoding, interpreting and understanding the messages of others (Mcintyre et al., 2017). These distinctions are arbitrary in that an interaction between both expressive and receptive skills contribute to an individuals' language experience and both need to develop simultaneously (Tommerdahl, 2009).

Alternatively, researchers have conceptualised language as including three features; form (including the structure of language and morphology), meaning (semantics; word meaning and word knowledge) and use (pragmatics and social language use) (Bloom & Lahey, 1978). Successful communication requires the development of each of these areas simultaneously.

2.2.2.2. Theoretical perspectives to language development and intervention

Understanding how children acquire language and develop proficiency with multiple domains of language skills has been debated for decades. Dominant paradigms present sometimes conflicting schools of thought which theorise the processes underlying language development. The following sections will discuss some of the dominant paradigms.

2.2.2.2.1. Biological perspectives

Pioneered by the work of Noam Chomsky (1972), language development is positioned as an inherently innate and unique process to humankind (Hoff, 2013). Language experiences were considered to be too limited to account for the complexity of language development. Therefore, it was hypothesised that children are born with innate, universal grammar to

support language development (a language acquisition device) (Chomsky, 1972). Furthermore, infants engage with behaviours which support their language development and experience, which suggests an innate basis for language development (for a review see; Hoff, 2013). These behaviours include a preference towards faces (Otsuka, 2014) and early perception and attention of language and speech sounds which may predict differences in the development of language skills (Sorcinelli et al., 2019).

A biological basis which supports language development includes vocal development, neuroanatomy and genetic determinants, meaning some individuals may have a predisposed risk of language impairment (see Hoff, 2013). However, within-child perspectives and explanations of speech production provide little understanding of the processes by which lexical representations develop, or provide much scope for possible intervention as it does not specify the underlying processes (Nield, 2015). Biological perspectives adopt a medicalised and within-child perspective to language development. Language impairment would be positioned as a disorder to the processes underlying language skills or the innate behaviours which would contribute to language development.

2.2.2.2.2. Social perspectives

An alternative and contrasting paradigm positions the development of language as an inherently social process. Early social constructionist theorists such as Vygotsky (1962) positioned language as crucial for cognitive development, with the social world and interactions with 'more expert others' playing a fundamental role. Piaget (1926), another early theorist, provided his theory of cognitive development and viewed language as a symbolic function in allowing an individual to develop mental representations of the world in the absence of physical representation (Hoff, 2013). Language is positioned as a necessary process for cognitive development, both of which are developed through interactions with the social world (Nield, 2015). Both positions convene to emphasise the

importance of a child interacting with others and their environment for language development.

Research has supported this central premise. Diverse research methods have demonstrated specific features of the environment and/or interactions that can influence language development. These include population-level environmental indicators such as specific interactional styles that parents use (i.e. infant-directed speech; motherese) which can support language development (Kemler Nelson et al., 1989; Hoff, 2013). Corpus datasets of spoken language accompanied by statistical modelling and specific experimental designs with children has demonstrated how the language input can account for cross-cultural differences in the development of language and variations in language features, such as grammatical errors children make when using verbs (Ambridge et al., 2020).

At a population level, research has demonstrated that diverse social contexts can produce different opportunities for language development, leaving some exposed to poorer language experiences and creating barriers for their language development (Hoff, 2006). A strong social gradient has been found for those from more deprived areas who are at an increased risk of language difficulties (Dockrell et al., 2014; Meschi et al., 2010). Those in receipt of free school meals, which is used as an indicator of socio-economic deprivation, are 2.3 times more at risk of experiencing difficulties with language (Dockrell et al., 2014). Research which has used recording devices for children in their early years has identified some trends associated with socio-economic status. Children from lower socio-economic status backgrounds were exposed to fewer words from adults, engaged in fewer interactions and produced fewer vocalisations (Gilkerson et al., 2017). However, there was a high level of variability, and socio-economic status alone could not adequately account for language experience. Instead, socio-economic background may provide a risk factor and causal relationships should not be drawn between socio-economic status and language environment. The reasons for these trends are likely complex and multi-faceted (Chapman, 2000). What may be more valuable

is an exploration of the factors related to socio-economic status which impact language environment. Environmental features associated with this socio-economic status may impact children's access to opportunities to stimulate language development such as access to books (Neuman & Celano, 2001) and/or plenty and varied language input (Hart & Risley, 2003). These experiences may delay the development of language skills, which are otherwise developing typically. However, careful consideration should be paid when the understanding of language development swings too far towards the social perspectives, as this could attribute sentiments of blame towards parents or carers (Bishop, 2014).

2.2.2.2.3. Interactionist perspectives

Contrasting biological/medical perspectives with a social perspective encapsulates the age-old argument of nature versus nurture in language development. However, neither perspective alone provides a convincing theoretical position or is able to account for all the features seen in the child language acquisition research. An interactionist paradigm provides the dominant account (Chapman, 2000). An interactionist perspective is compatible with an ecological view of language development and Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) where a child is positioned to be nested within different environmental (systems), each of which exerts influence on that child's development to varying degrees. Systems closer (proximal) to the individual, such as the family or school will have a more profound influence on their development, whereas systems further away and more abstract to the individual (distal) may have a lesser influence (Hoff, 2006). Language development situated within an interactionist, systemic perspective highlights the necessity to take a comprehensive assessment approach and provides multiple appropriate avenues for intervention beyond clinical assessment/intervention, by appreciating the child within the educational context (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2008). A recognition of environment and individual differences in development is needed to appreciate language development.

An interactionist position informs a response to meet the language difficulties experienced by students. Although students may benefit from specialised or targeted intervention focusing on the features of language or difficulties with skills that students experience, balancing biological and environmental contributors when formulating intervention may be beneficial (Bishop, 2014). Terminology used to describe language difficulties may reflect theoretical underlying assumptions of the origins of these needs; namely 'disordered' (i.e. biological) versus 'delayed' (i.e. environmental) (Tommerdahl, 2009). The theoretical positioning of language development within an interactionist perspective is translated to practice through levels (or waves) of intervention, starting at universal (or quality first teaching) approaches, to more targeted/specialist support (Law et al., 2010). Intervention can be either direct, offering specific and individual approaches, often delivered by a specialist, or indirect, through professional training, awareness and consultation with specialist services (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2008). The goal remains to alter the environment and interactions to support language development. There has been a growing emphasis on environmental modifications to stimulate language development within early years settings. This has provided promising outcomes and modifications include child-focused play and parent modelling (Pickstone et al., 2009).

Specialist services may offer support to settings and may be well placed within an interactionist perspective when understanding language difficulties. Specialist services may include Speech and Language Therapists (through the National Health Service; NHS), Educational Psychologists and/or advisory teachers (through the Local Authority). Settings may also access services privately. Access to these services may not be efficient. It has been felt that access to professional services through Local Authorities has become increasingly more challenging (Tysoe et al., 2021). There is also considerable variations in the practice and availability of services at a Local Authority level (Bercow, 2008; Lindsay et al., 2010). There are long waiting times for assessment and intervention, and missed appointments can lead to immediate discharge from services (ICAN &

RCSLT, 2018). Settings may benefit from input from a range of services as different professions may take a slightly different perspective on language needs and development. Some Speech and Language Therapists may hold a deficit understanding to language development and difficulties which may be at odds to an educational perspective, where the purpose of assessment is to inform intervention rather than provide a diagnosis (Gallagher et al., 2019). This can make collaboration between different services challenging. Important to providing support for young people with language difficulties is the recognition of individual strengths and needs, rather than diagnostic criteria (Dockrell et al., 2012). Researchers have called for an interpretation of needs and intervention to support language development to be nested in Ecological Systems Theory thinking (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2008). Educational Psychologists may be uniquely placed to support schools with this type of holistic assessment, enhancing their provision and support the collaboration between services, which is informed by an interactionist perspective and systems thinking (Vivash et al., 2018). However, inconsistencies exist in the educational psychology profession when translating knowledge into practice and establishing professional boundaries with Speech and Language Therapists (Sedgwick & Stothard, 2019). Educational Psychologists may lack confidence in this area and may benefit from further understanding and continued professional development (Nield, 2015).

2.2.2.3. Conceptual ambiguity regarding language needs

Similar in complexity to considering the many and multi-faceted features of language is the identification and conceptualisation of atypical language development or difficulties. Difficulties with one of the many language features/processes may lead to language difficulties. Due to this, those with language difficulties are a heterogenous group, which contributes to the complexity with terminology and the description of language needs (Bishop, 2014). A review of the literature identified that language difficulties can be described with up to 168 combinations of prefixes, descriptors and nouns such as developmental language disorder, speech, language and

communication difficulties or specific language impairment, to name just a few (Bishop, 2014). The descriptor speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is a term referred to in the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015). It is a broad and non-specific term, including both primary and specific language difficulties and difficulties with language due to hearing loss, English as an additional language (EAL), stuttering, or physical causes (Bishop, 2014). Identifying individuals with SLCN is problematic as it does not provide an accurate depiction of students' profile of needs (Dockrell et al., 2012). This creates a barrier for both researchers and practitioners, as identifying children with language difficulties may provide little practical understanding of the nature of those difficulties and may be understood differently by different professionals (Bishop, 2014; Dockrell et al., 2012). In this way, a diagnostic category may provide little clarity or guidance when directing relevant intervention.

Attempts have been made to make terminology more specific, such as distinguishing primary difficulties with language from those who experience impairment with language due to other neurodevelopmental difficulties, using terminology such as specific language impairment (Bishop, 2014). Traditionally, a discrepancy criteria was used to establish whether students met this label, by determining whether they had difficulties with language in the absence of cognitive difficulties (which were within the average range) (Bishop, 2014; Bishop et al., 2017). Even so, specific language impairment is not a distinct syndrome with a clear aetiology and course of action (Bishop, 2014). Furthermore, the use of diagnostic labels to understand these difficulties, akin to a medical perspective, may have a polarising affect, meaning that the focus is on labelling needs and localising the problem within the child, rather than considering appropriate intervention, which may be environmental (Bishop, 2014). Furthermore, the polarising effect of labels may not appreciate that difficulties may appear on a continuum, where more nuanced difficulties which are not as easily identified, become more apparent later in development or with increased environmental or contextual demands, such as development of the curriculum (Dockrell et al., 2014).

Reflexive Commentary

Given the conceptual ambiguity and range of terminology used in the literature, I was met with a dilemma during the research process as to how I might refer to a language difficulty. The descriptor SLCN used in the SEND Code of Practice may also include difficulties with social interaction, such as Autism Spectrum Condition (Department for Education, 2015). As such, I felt this label did not appropriately conceptualised the language needs which were of interest to the current research. It was also important that I adopted a definition and term that would be accessible to participants. The term language need was chosen to represent a speech, language and communication need, demonstrating difficulties with:

> *"Speech that is difficult to understand; Struggling to say words or sentences; Not being able to understand the words being used or instructions; Difficulties knowing how to talk and listen to others"* (ICAN, 2023)

This label and description was chosen as it is accessible and widely replicated in the educational field. However, given a lack of uniformity in conceptualising language and language needs, I acknowledge that other descriptors are available and my construct of a language need might vary from that of other researchers. Importantly, my reflections around how to refer to language needs influenced the research process during the systematic literature review (search terms and research direction) and research process (communicating the area of focus to participants).

2.2.3. Language Needs in the Secondary Context

2.2.3.1 Unique trends in United Kingdom (UK) cohort data

United Kingdom (UK) cohort data, where students' needs were tracked through key stage two to four (ages seven to sixteen years) depicted trends in the identification of students with language difficulties (Meschi et al., 2010). Students who received SEND support for language difficulties in their primary years (measured at year two; seven years old) and through to

their secondary years (year eleven; sixteen years old) fell from 3% to 0.6% by the end of secondary school. The data also depicted movements into and out of categories of SEND, much of this happening on entry to secondary school. Of the students receiving SEND support at primary school for language difficulties, around one quarter moved to a non-SEND category, one third into a non-specified SEND category (i.e. school action, where SEND does not need to be recorded) and one fifth to another SEND category (under this new area of need half continued to receive SEND support and half received a statement of SEND). Students were most likely to move into categories of moderate or specific learning difficulties. This suggests that there was a reinterpretation of language needs in the secondary context.

Some possible hypotheses to describe these data trends may include:

- There may be *movement amongst areas of need* within the secondary context or age phase. These needs may present differently, or co-morbid difficulties are observed (for example, communication needs may later be seen as needs relating to behaviour).
- There may be an *improvement in needs.* Student's presentation of needs may improve or environmental factors may be present, meaning that these needs are supported and/or the impact of the need is reduced in the secondary context.

The following sections will explore the literature around these hypotheses. It is likely that an interaction of various factors may contribute to the trends seen in the data.

2.2.3.2 Movement amongst areas of need

2.2.3.2.1. Co-occurring difficulties with cognition and learning

Co-occurring difficulties between language and learning are consistently documented in the literature. Students with language difficulties are at risk

of poor academic outcomes, with the attainment gap accelerating through the school years (Lindsay et al., 2010; Ziegenfusz et al., 2022).

Possible explanations and theories as to why students with language needs also demonstrate difficulties with learning may date back to social-cognitive theories of development (e.g. Piaget, 1926), where language is positioned to possess a symbolic function for cognitive development (Hoff, 2013; Nield, 2015). These theoretical positions suggest that delays in the development of language may thwart an individual's cognitive development. Neurocognitive research has demonstrated that language can evoke neurological networks, influencing cognitive and attentional states in infants (Perszyk et al., 2021). This suggests some cognitive basis for the impact of language skills and cognitive/neurological development. However, research and assessments with children and adults consistently demonstrates that individuals can experience difficulties with language in the absence of underlying cognitive difficulties (Bishop et al., 2017).

An alternative explanation for the co-occurrence of difficulties with language and learning may be the moderating role of literacy development. Literacy skills are fundamental to access all areas of the curriculum (Scottish Government, 2009). Theories of literacy development specify the role of language. The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tumner, 1986) is a theoretical model which describes reading development as a process of word decoding and language comprehension. Impairment with either or both may contribute to reading difficulties. However, although conceptually helpful, The Simple View of Reading does not describe how readers learn to decode or comprehend (Castles et al., 2018). Alternatively, The Dual-Route Model predicts semantics (word meaning) map onto sight-words to support reading and comprehension (Grainger & Ziegler, 2011). A Triangle Model including phonics, sight-words and semantics (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989) proposes that knowledge of how words sound (phonics) and their meaning (semantics) support reading and map on to orthography (sight-words) (Snowling et al., 2020). Computational modelling provides support for the role of semantics in literacy development, alongside phonics

and sight-words (Plaut et al., 1996; Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989). All perspectives make predictions about language skills for literacy development.

Oral language skills provide a risk or protective factor for developing reading difficulties (Colenbrander et al., 2018). A systematic review of the literature identified students with developmental language disorder showed a vulnerability to lower academic achievement and difficulties with the curriculum in areas such as literacy, reading, spelling, writing and narratives (Ziegenfusz et al., 2022). These difficulties with academic attainment were present in both primary and secondary years. However, there was considerable individual variability, with some students achieving average progress with areas of literacy such as reading, despite difficulties with language. This suggests that language difficulties may present a risk factor for poorer literacy outcomes, but at an individual level, further information is needed to consider alternative variables which may impact educational attainment and literacy development.

Contextual factors may exacerbate difficulties on entry and within the secondary school context. Specific literacy instruction and opportunities to develop reading skills are common through the primary curriculum and intervention is often in place to provide additional opportunities to struggling readers. Children are matched with reading materials to their level of reading expertise using reading schemes, although the impact of this practice to support literacy has been questioned (Solity, 2015, 2017; Solity & Vousden, 2009). Within the secondary school context teachers report feeling unprepared to meet the needs of struggling literacy learners within mainstream classrooms (Merga et al., 2020) with poor literacy skills having a pervasive impact on curriculum access (Ellis et al., 2012).

2.2.3.2.2. Co-occurring difficulties with social, emotional and mental health

Co-occurring difficulties between language and behaviours described as challenging or socially undesirable, often associated with social, emotional

and mental health (SEMH) needs are consistently documented and these links are also present for students with unrecognised language needs (Heneker, 2005; Joffe & Black, 2012; Lindsay et al., 2007). Children with specific language impairment are twice as likely to demonstrate internalising or externalising behaviours (Yew & O'Kearney, 2013). Suspension, sometimes called fixed term exclusions, are when a pupil is removed from the school for a fixed period as a behavioural management strategy (Department for Education, 2022d). Alternatively, permanent exclusions occur when a pupil is no longer able to attend a school setting due to persistent or serious breaches to the school's behaviour policy and/or unsafe behaviours which affect themselves or others (Department for Education, 2022d). Permanent exclusions typically occur following disruptive or uncooperative behaviour, resulting in students being removed from school settings and local authorities to find alternative school placements (Clegg et al., 2009). In this population, elevated levels of language difficulties have been found. In one study, of the fifteen secondary aged pupils who were at risk of exclusion, ten demonstrated language difficulties; five of which were reported to be significant and severe (Clegg et al., 2009). In another study of adolescents who were attending an alternative provision following difficulties with behaviour, 63% demonstrated difficulties with at least one feature of language, which was greater than one standard deviation less than a matched group of peers attending a mainstream school setting (James et al., 2020). A meta-analysis of students with emotional or behavioural difficulties found that across the studies, 81% of students had unidentified language needs and scored 'below average' on various language assessment measures (Hollo et al., 2013). This research suggests that when considering language difficulties having an awareness of the interaction with student's behaviour and social/emotional development may be important.

Possible explanations and theories for the links between language and SEMH needs may relate to individual child development. One possibility, relating to the secondary age phase, is that with development, individuals develop a 'looking glass self' which is their sense of self and social identity

through social interactions with others (Erickson, 1968). It is theorised that social comparisons between ourselves and others in multiple domains develops self-esteem (Harter, 1999). When there is a mismatch between what we would like/think we ought to be and what we are, it may contribute to low self-esteem. However, this description has been critiqued for its simplicity in accounting for individual differences in the development of self-esteem (Moretti & Higgins, 1990). Self-esteem may be the factor which accounts for the association between language and behaviour difficulties. Research consistently shows low self-esteem as being related to many poor psychological and life outcomes, including academic performance and behaviour in school and represents a risk or protective factor for coping with stress (Mann at al., 2004). However, within a population of primary school students with language impairment, elevated levels of behavioural concerns were noted in the absence of lower self-esteem (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000). However, the authors suggested that the primary aged participants may have been too young to be aware of the factors which may have impacted self-esteem, such as negative feedback from failure at school. Young people with language and behaviour difficulties report that they do not feel that they get enough educational support and may attempt to hide their language needs (Simkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2009). Self-esteem and perception of one's own abilities may be directly affected by language skills and adolescents may construe their academic self-concept according to their school performance and others' responses to it (Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000).

Alternatively, there may be possible contextual and environmental explanations for the co-occurring difficulties between language and SEMH needs. The literature has identified several school-based factors which support the development of emotional regulation, one being positive interactions between teachers and students (Wang et al., 2013). The secondary context may also contribute or exacerbate difficulties with behaviour. Students are expected to interact with a range of teachers who may be less familiar to them and their needs. Difficulties experienced in one

class with one member of staff may be amplified in the next by a staff member unaware of what may have happened previously.

2.2.3.2.3. Possible explanations for movements amongst areas of need

The links and co-occurring difficulties between language, learning and social and emotional regulation mean that difficulties with multiple areas may be present for students with language needs. Trends depict students with a primary language need may experience a change in need within the secondary context (Meschi et al., 2010). Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985) may offer a psychological and theoretical explanation for these trends. Attribution Theory is a theory of motivation (Weiner, 2010) in which an individual is motivated to attribute a perceived cause to an experience (Wang et al., 2015).

Secondary school students with language needs can experience a change in their primary area of need from language to moderate learning difficulties (Meschi et al., 2010) and Attribution Theory may offer a theoretical explanation for this trend. The co-occurrence of difficulties between language and literacy (Ziegenfusz et al., 2022), which may impede access to the curriculum, might mean teachers are susceptible to attribute the cause of students' difficulties to learning (Cothran et al., 2009). Empirical support has identified that by age eleven, children with language difficulties are eight times more likely to be judged by teachers as having intellectual disabilities than they were earlier in their development (Dockrell & Hurry, 2018).

With needs related to SEMH, Attribution Theory may also provide an explanatory hypothesis for trends seen in UK cohort data. Within the context of SEMH and challenging behaviour, teachers may be susceptible to making causal attributions that the locus of causation was something 'within-child' (i.e. personal characteristics) or home-related factors, rather than teaching interactions and school-related variables (Cothran et al., 2009; Wang & Hall, 2018). As such, these attributions may evoke an

affective teacher response, which influences their behaviours towards students (i.e. helpful or putative responses) (Nemer et al., 2019). Given that positive student-teacher interactions may be a helpful factor for emotion regulation and preventing challenging behaviour (Poulou, 2014), changes in the reinterpretation of language needs to SEMH and challenging behaviour, paired with a cognitive tendency to make within-child/family causal attributions, has the possibility of exacerbating difficulties experienced by students.

2.2.3.3 Improvement in needs

2.2.3.3.1. English as an additional language (EAL)

A small proportion of students may demonstrate significant improvements in their language skills on entry or within their secondary school years. There is a conflation of students identified with language difficulties who have English as an additional language (EAL) (Meschi et al., 2010) and education staff can struggle when distinguishing the effects of EAL from language difficulties (Dockrell et al., 2017). These students have a much higher probability of receiving SEND support for language difficulties than the general population and are more likely to transition in their category of need from SLCN to no SEND (Meschi et al., 2010). This suggests that younger children with EAL may be being identified with language difficulties but through their development their language levels improve, and they are no longer considered to have SEND.

Levels of English proficiency can impact students' engagement with the curriculum and their academic attainment (Hessel & Strand, 2021). Longitudinal data suggests that it takes between five to seven years for students with EAL to become fully fluent in their academic English language proficiency (Demie, 2013). Therefore, a natural attrition of students with EAL incorrectly identified as having language difficulties may be expected as their language learning skills may be typically developing but their proficiency in English is low due to lack of experience. These students may be experiencing delays in their development of English due to lack of input

because of their EAL status, which diminishes over time through access to opportunities in school and other settings.

2.2.3.3.2. The secondary context and provision may support language needs

One possible hypothesis for data trends in the secondary school context may be that the provision available is appropriately supporting language needs, leading to improvements. Researchers have explored how teachers can offer universal strategies to support the language development of all learners. However, much less is known about the strategies that can be used to support language through quality first teaching than that of targeted intervention approaches (Law et al., 2010). Furthermore, much of the evidence comes from research carried out within early years or primary contexts. A review of 31 studies which evaluated universal oral language strategies used in primary schools found that effective approaches included interactive book reading; structured vocabulary programmes and narrative instruction; manualised curricula and approaches involving Speech and Language Therapists (Dobinson & Dockrell, 2021). However, findings were limited by gaps in knowledge about the interventions. There are few large-scale studies available as these studies would be inevitably complex and would require efficacy trials to consider optimal conditions for the interventions (Law et al., 2012). As such, clinicians have very sparse evidence-based practice on which to make decisions about support (Cirrin & Gillam, 2008).

Creating a communication-friendly learning environment is central to universal provision and benefits from the collaboration of education staff with specialist services and researchers (Clegg & Vance, 2015), aligning with social and interactionist perspectives of language development. Researchers have developed a communication-friendly observation tool to be used within primary schools (Dockrell et al., 2010). This includes features of the physical environment and opportunities for structured language learning and adult interaction. Significant differences have been

found between classrooms in how 'communication-friendly' they are, and the tool can be used as an audit or professional development tool to evaluate the environment for language learning. However, there is a distinct lack of research with secondary school students, with the vast majority of research coming from the early years (Cirrin & Gillam, 2008). There is some evidence that secondary school teachers can be supported to change their instructional techniques to support language development in the classroom (Starling et al., 2012). Social and interactionist perspectives may hypothesise that the classroom environment and social interactions may continue to offer opportunities to stimulate language skills at any stage of development, including the secondary years. However, not enough is known about the provision available to students in the secondary context to appraise whether the needs of students with language difficulties are met using universal or targeted provision.

2.2.4. Summary and Rationale for the Systematic Literature Review

Having a language need does not infer anything about the possible cause or direct appropriate intervention to support this difficulty. Interactionist perspectives of language development appreciate the importance of individual differences when understanding children's language development in context and devising appropriate intervention. Schools may be supported by Educational Psychologists in holistic assessment of young people's needs. However, services are stretched, so only a finite number of children will be able to access this specialist support, most likely those with the most profound needs. This means that most children will be supported by teachers and the school workforce. Further exploration of this context may be important for the outcomes and support of these children.

Students who experience language needs, more nuanced language difficulties and/or language development delays will be supported through universal quality first teaching. As such, it may be essential that school staff are aware of these needs and how they may be supported in a mainstream classroom. Understanding of this requires the viewpoints of those on the

‘front line’ when recognising and supporting these needs; the classroom teachers. Research has tended to focus on the early years and primary ages. Without an understanding of the secondary school context, it is difficult to consider how practice may be supported.

Students with identified language difficulties make up a significant proportion of the school population, even larger still when estimating those who may have unrecognised language needs. These students deserve better understanding and advances in practice as they are at risk of poor educational and life outcomes. It is also important to consider that the data (Meschi et al., 2010) and research in which the rationale for this area of study is developed is dated. Political attention may have led to real changes in practice; however, not enough is known about this due to a lack of contemporary research. Given the recent government green paper (HM Government, 2022) and a renewed emphasis on inclusion and upskilling the school workforce further research and exploration comes in at a timely moment

The following section includes a systematic literature review which aimed to explore the perspectives of secondary school staff by answering the following research question:

What does the literature convey about the perspectives of secondary school staff regarding language needs?

2.3. Systematic Literature Review

2.3.1 Narrative Synthesis

Narrative syntheses aim to describe and summarise primary data by arranging findings into homogenous groups (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). Although a narrative synthesis may offer an interpretation and ‘go beyond’ the findings of the primary research, the primary aim is to provide a story-telling account of current research literature with interrogation of the evidence base (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Popay et al., 2006).

Alongside systematic searching and appraisal techniques, narrative summaries integrate different forms of evidence (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). When systematic searching identifies literature which is not sufficiently similar in methodologies to aggregate findings, often including a mix of quantitative and qualitative research, a narrative synthesis may be selected above other approaches (Popay et al., 2006). Initial scoping of the literature identified limited research and diverse methodologies for the focus of this review. Limiting methodologies included in the review would further limit what understanding could be developed from the review. Due to this, a narrative synthesis was considered the most appropriate approach for the current systematic literature review to explore the research question:

What does the literature convey about the perspectives of secondary school staff regarding language needs?

2.3.2. Synthesis Approach

2.3.2.1 Synthesis procedure

A limitation of narrative syntheses is that they often adopt an informal approach, which can limit the transparency and credibility of conclusions (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). With reference to this limitation, the researcher followed recognised guidance (Table 1).

Reflexive Commentary

A rationale for this systematic literature review was developed through the literature review chapter presented previously (stage one). Conceptualised within an ecological perspective, I aimed to explore a holistic understanding of the perspectives of secondary school staff by exploring contextual and individual features. This positioning influenced the research question and how I engaged with and appraised the quality of the research identified through the quality appraisal (see section 2.3.3). Qualitative methodologies were judged to provide a more appropriate methodology to explore contextual details.

Table 1. A table depicting the four stage narrative synthesis procedure, as outlined by Popay et al. (2006)

Stage	Description of Technique
Developing Theory	This stage is relevant to the synthesis of intervention research which aims to answer specific research questions, such as effectiveness or impact (Popay et al., 2006). Due to the exploratory nature of the research question, rationale for the synthesis was developed through the literature review chapter and is further clarified through reflexive commentary, see box below.
Preliminary Synthesis	Individual studies included are summarised (section 2.3.3) and key features tabulated (See Appendix 1). Using both approaches provides comprehensive descriptions (Evans, 2002). This approach is effective for explorative (interpretive) research as a way of identifying any emerging themes from the research. (Evans, 2002).
Critical Appraisal	Individual studies were critically appraised for their methodological quality and trustworthiness (Appendix 2 and Section 2.3.5). An overall assessment of the strength of evidence was provided to evaluate the conclusions provided from the synthesis.
Critical exploration of the relationship between studies	Study concepts are synthesised through visual representation techniques such as idea webbing, concept mapping and conceptual triangulation (Popay et al., 2006). The researcher used concept mapping (see Appendix 3). Concept mapping is a method of visually representing ideas and their inter-relations (Hartsell 2021). Details of the procedure when concept mapping are provided in section 2.3.5 and a critical appraisal of this method is provided in section 2.3.6.2.2.

2.3.2.2 Synthesis search

2.3.2.2.1. Search strategy

Three well-established databases; Web of Science, Scopus and pscyINFO/OVID were systematically searched on 1st August, 2022 using consistent search terms (Table 2). EThOS, a database containing unpublished student research (grey literature) was hand searched on the same date using the search terms. Search terms were developed from initial scoping searches.

Table 2. Terms used for the narrative synthesis systematic search

	Search terms
1.	"teachers" OR "staff"
2.	"experience" OR "views" OR "perspectives" OR "understanding" OR "knowledge" OR "support" OR "practice"
3.	"secondary school" OR "high school" OR "adolescent" OR "teenagers"
4.	"language difficulties" OR "language impairment" OR "language needs" OR "speech language communication"
NOT*	"autism" OR "bilingual" OR "syndrome" OR "aphasia" OR "deaf" OR "injury" OR "dementia" OR "stroke"

**NOT terms limited irrelevant search returns.*

2.3.2.2.2. Inclusion criteria

An inclusion criteria was developed (Table 3). Only papers from the United Kingdom were included. This was due to potential differences in the education system, training route and access to specialist services, which may affect the appropriateness of including papers from other regions in the current review. Although the researcher had hoped for contemporary research in this area, initial scoping searches identified limited literature and a publication time frame was set at 20 years.

Table 3. Eligibility criteria detailing inclusion and exclusion from the systematic literature search

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Research Focus	Language difficulties	Language difficulties is not the primary focus / includes 'NOT' search terms*
Participants	Secondary school staff	Other educational professionals, staff working with other age demographics than the secondary age phase (11-18).
Data	Participant's views, experiences or knowledge	Data is not provided by school staff or the views of school staff cannot be interpreted separately from other participants.
Geography	United Kingdom, written in English	Outside the United Kingdom, written in any other language than English

**See Table 2*

Reflexive Commentary

I was met with a dilemma when synthesising an underdeveloped area of research. This led to a decision point in the research process as whether to appraise an underdeveloped research area; change the research question/focus; or abandon the use of a systematic review. I believed the systematic review was an important step in the development of the current research. Systematic reviews can be *'empty',* containing no research papers and can be published on distinguished forums such as Cochrane where the systematic searching alone provides a critical role in identifying gaps for new areas of research (Gray, 2020). As such, I felt the systematic searching alone would provide an important process in developing a research rationale and the decision was made to continue the synthesis. However, I am mindful of the limitations of the current review due to the paucity of research, which is outlined and critiqued (see section 2.3.6).

On reflection, highlighted through the viva voce examination, was whether the sparsity of literature meant that this research focus was not of importance or relevance to the field. Due to the evidence presented and rationale developed through the literature review chapter (i.e. stage one, developing theory; Popay et al., 2006) I held the belief that this study was warranted. An alternative decision may have been to expand the inclusion criteria to include school staff from other age phases. I felt that doing so would not provide coherence with the rationale developed through the literature review chapter.

2.3.2.2.3. Search and Screen

The search (Figure 2) yielded thirty citations after removing two duplicates. Initial screening of the paper's titles and abstract using the eligibility criteria discounted twenty-one articles. Of the nine papers retrieved, four papers were discounted during the full text screen. A further paper was discounted as relevant data for the review could not be extracted.

Four articles were included in the review (see Appendix 1 for tabulated summaries). Due to the sparsity of research, studies were included which included data provided by other participants, but the data from teachers could be interpreted separately. The focus of the research that was relevant for the current review may have been a secondary research focus of included papers.

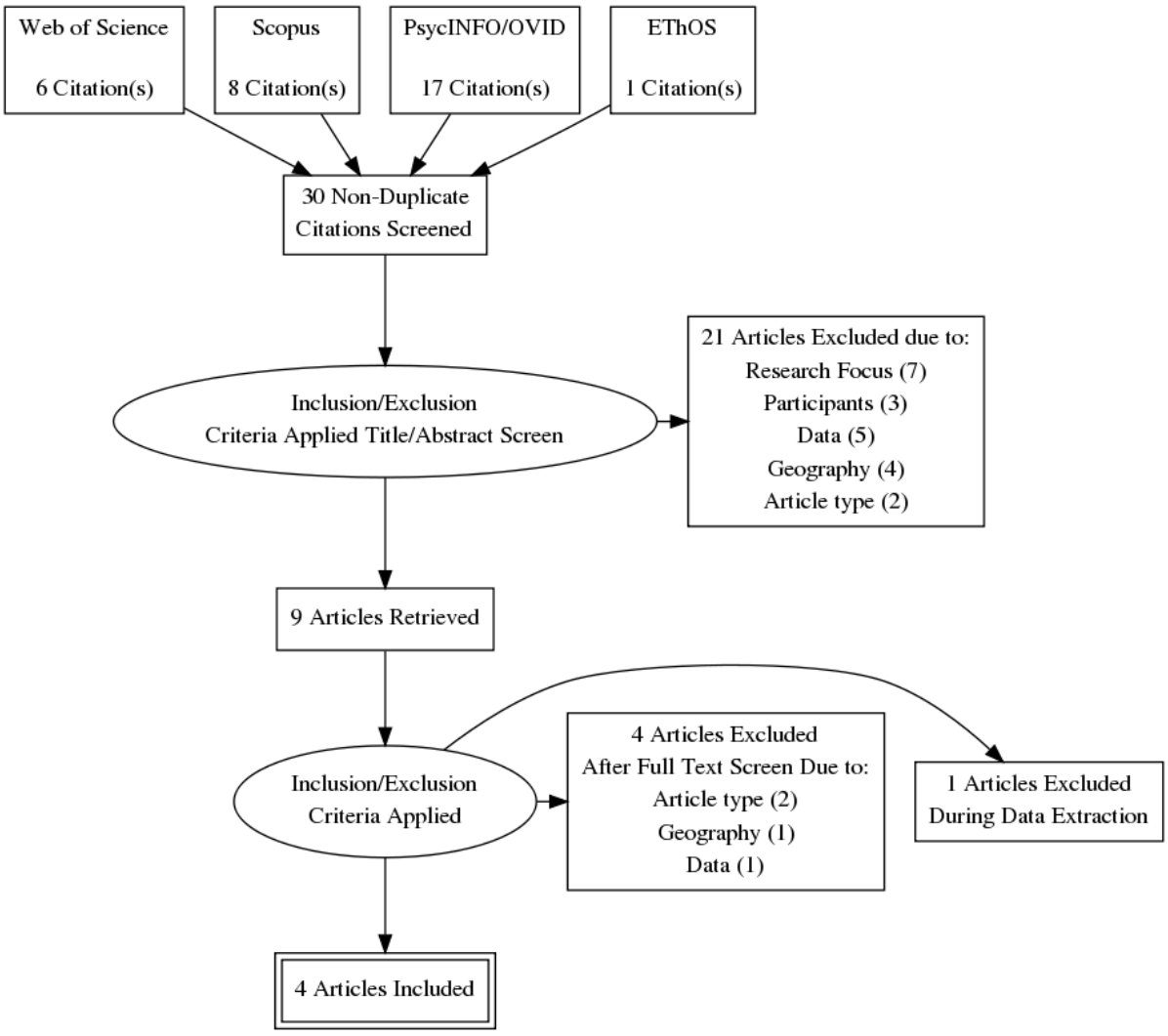

Figure 2. A systematic map of the systematic search and screening process for the narrative synthesis

2.3.3. Quality Appraisal

Studies were evaluated for the quality of their methodology and research findings (Table 4). A quality appraisal is a process designed to judge the trustworthiness of the research and identify factors that may limit findings (Petticrew & Roberts, 2005). There are several approaches. One framework, The Weight of Evidence (WoE) Model (Gough, 2007) provides a tool to judge the overall quality of the research (WoE D) based on its methodological quality (WoE A), methodological relevance to the review's research question (WoE B) and topic relevance (WoE C).

When studies included in the review explored multiple research questions and used various methodologies, only the parts of the research that were relevant for the review's research question were appraised and reported. When appraising the methodological relevance (WoE B), methodologies which allowed participants to openly provide their views (i.e. interviews) received the highest score (A). Surveys with open or closed questions were considered less relevant to the research question as they restricted participants responses and received lower scores (B for open questions, C for closed questions). Where multiple methods were used, studies were judged on the most dominant methodology.

A high score (A) was provided for topic relevance (WoE C) when the primary research focus was on staff experiences of language needs. Lower scores were given when this was a secondary (B) or supplementary (C) focus of the research.

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Table 4. Quality appraisal: Weight of Evidence (WoE)

Author(s) (year)	WoE A Methodological Quality (MMAT)*	WoE B Methodological Relevance	WoE C Topic Relevance	WoE D Overall score
Davies (2009)	Not peer reviewed, risk of bias (participant and questionnaire) C	Method provides a limited tool for data relating to the aims of the review C	Relevant topic for the review was a supplementary focus of the research C	**C**
Dockrell & Lindsay (2007)	No details provided of the participants, recruitment process, measure C	Methods may be appropriate, but very little detail provided C	Relevant topic for the review made up part of the paper B	**C**
Ramsay et al. (2018)	Methodological approaches lack detail and justification C	Methods are appropriate but interviews are used to inform a Q-sort which limits experiential perspective of participants B	Relevant topic A	**B**
Wilson et al. (2010)	Methodological approaches are appropriate but may be limitations with the conclusions that can be drawn from the use of concept maps B	Concepts maps are appropriate but may be methodological limitations B	Relevant topic for the review but the focus was specific to vocabulary and collaborative working B	**B**

*For an evaluation of the entire study methodological quality using the MMAT tool (Hong et al., 2018) see Appendix 2.

2.3.4. Preliminary Synthesis of the Individual Studies

2.3.4.1. Davies (2009)

2.3.4.1.1. Aims and research questions

This research was divided into two papers. Paper one explored the communication and perspective taking skills of students who had or were at risk of exclusion. Paper two explored staff perceptions of these students' difficulties and the young people's experiences of school exclusion. Of interest to this review was the secondary school teacher's perceptions and their awareness of young people's language difficulties. This represented a small section of the research aims and research questions.

2.3.4.1.2. Methodology

Participants worked in several settings (mainstream primary, secondary and pupil referral units). However, only data obtained from secondary school staff (N=40) was included for the purposes of this review. Staff occupied various roles (see Appendix 1 for details). Data was collected from participants using a questionnaire with a 10-point scale where they rated their level of concern in several domains. For this review, ratings relating to the students' overall language skills (question 2) and their social language skills (question 3) were relevant. These concerns were then correlated with students' language scores, using the data from standardised language assessment measures (paper one).

2.3.4.1.3. Analysis and findings

Quantitative analysis was used. The findings reported included data from participants who were not working in secondary school settings and therefore was not included in the review. An appendix document provided raw data that was applicable for the purposes of this systematic review.

Findings suggest that secondary school teachers demonstrated a significant level of concern for student's overall language skills *t(2.531)= -9.869, p<.001* and their social language skills *t(2.406)= -13.603, p<.001.*

Significant correlations were found between student's general communication composite and staff opinions of their overall language skills *R=.723, p<.001* and social communication skills *R=.768, p=<.001.*

2.3.4.1.4. Conclusion and limitations

This study identified that secondary school staff have concerns about students' language skills amongst those who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion. Concerns were present for pupils who did not have recognised language difficulties. The positive correlation suggests that staff report legitimate concerns, meaning that the more profound the language difficulties are, the higher staff rated their concern. However, there are concerns with the findings validity as only a small section of data was relevant for this review.

The methodological quality was identified as a concern (Section 2.3.3 & Appendix 2). The research is presented in an unpublished doctoral thesis and has not been scrutinised under peer review for publication. There are risks of subject bias from the participants in their ratings of concern, as they may have been aware of the research aims. The questionnaire used as rating tool was created for the purpose of this research. There is no information regarding the reliability or validity of this measure.

The research provides limited understanding of the experiences of teachers and the sense that they may make of language needs. The methodology does not provide an insight in what participants experience when they hold concerns and the possible impact of this for participants as this was not a research aim. This further insight would have been valuable for this review. The primary research focus was not closely aligned with the aims of this review. Data included consists of responses from two closed questions,

rated on a 10-point scale which had poor methodological depth and relevance for this review.

2.3.4.2. Dockrell & Lindsay (2007)

2.3.4.2.1. Aims and research questions

This research aimed to explore the transition from primary to secondary school (Year Six to Seven) and what provision is available for children with recognised speech and language needs (receiving SEND support or with a statement of SEND). The research focused on the perspectives of school staff, parents and young people. For the purpose of this review only the information gathered from secondary school staff was included. The research questions were not made explicit.

2.3.4.2.2. Methodology

Secondary School Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos), form tutors and subject specialist teachers participated but no information is provided of the number or distribution of participants.

Questionnaire data aimed to create an understanding of students' strengths, needs and level of additional support. It is reported that the measure captures teacher's perceptions, parental contact, curriculum differentiation and type of support that the student was receiving. Separate questionnaires were provided to subject specialist teachers to explore the curriculum, support and peer acceptance.

2.3.4.2.3. Analysis and findings

Descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages) captured questionnaire findings, but were unclear, reported in text narratives and not tabulated. Claims are sometimes reported but not substantiated with data. Some data is reported of teacher perceptions of progress and the strategies used to support. However, these findings relate to students with language

difficulties and other areas of SEND (learning needs), which were not directly applicable for this review.

Findings are vague regarding the types of support put in place to support language difficulties. Schools report using a range of support including specialist provision for literacy and numeracy. However, no definition is provided as to what this may constitute. Other strategies to support include additional teaching support, learning support assistants' (LSA) time and IT equipment. Additional "support" provided by teachers/LSA is not described. It is uncertain whether this is more of the same teaching approaches or something different.

Form teachers reported that those with language difficulties may have experienced difficulties with other areas, such as transfer (53%), social life (36%), self-esteem (35%) and coping with different teachers (25%). These concepts were not operationalised or described to establish what this may have meant in the context of the questionnaire and/or research question.

43 of 50 SENCos felt that curriculum differentiation was needed to support learning which included using different teaching strategies (95%) and extra support time (96%). It was reported that there was a consensus that educational needs were being met, a claim made without reference to supporting data. It was felt by 17% of SENCo's that student's speech and language needs were not being met.

2.3.4.2.4. Conclusion and limitations

The paper provided some information of secondary school staffs' perceptions of support and provision provided for students in year seven with language difficulties. Although some details are provided regarding types of provision and perceived areas of difficulty, insufficient detail limits findings as claims provided are vague and without detail. Serious reporting issues were identified (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) regarding participants, methods and findings which weaken claims made from the data. The research focus was not aligned with the aims of this review, meaning the

data that was relevant is weak and poor quality. With methodological concerns noted, descriptive statistics may help to identify some trends in the views and experiences of teachers. However, they provide little insight into individual differences in experiences and contextual factors which may provide an insight into an ecological classroom context when supporting SEND/language needs.

2.3.4.3. Ramsay Cowell & Gersch (2018)

2.3.4.3.1. Aims and research questions

This research aimed to explore the links between students' behaviour and language difficulties by asking the research question: what is the understanding of key staff (pastoral managers and SENCos) in mainstream high schools of the relationship between student's behaviour difficulties and their language skills?

2.3.4.3.2. Methodology

The research adopted a sequential mixed methods design. The first part invited SENCos (N=5) and pastoral managers (N=5) to share their views using semi-structured interviews which were developed using themes in the literature. Vignettes provided a discussion tool for participants to consider how language difficulties might present in the secondary age phase. The vignettes were published case study descriptions available in the literature (Starling et al., 2011). Interviews were transcribed and analysed using Thematic Analysis.

The second part of the analysis used a Q-Sort methodology to identify common viewpoints across a larger sample of participants. SENCos (N=10) and pastoral managers (N=10) ranked 40 viewpoints, derived from the interview data. Factor Analysis was used to identify common themes.

2.3.4.3.3. Analysis and findings

Two themes and five sub-themes were developed from the interview data. The first theme was *'Expertise'*, made up of three sub-themes; *'I'm not an expert', 'we know what we know and we don't know what we don't know'* and *'others are the experts'*. The second theme was *'why did I not think of language'*. This comprised of two sub-themes; *'language and behaviour for learning'* and *'other causes more likely'.*

From the Q-sort, four factors were identified which accounted for 47% of the variance. These included; *'Language is important for behaviour', 'subject rather than language development expertise', 'behaviour and causes other than language'* and *'knowledge of students and their difficulties'.*

Reporting of the findings from the interviews and Q-sort provided only details of the themes developed. Descriptions or raw data which contributed to the development of these themes was not provided, making it challenging to interpret these findings and provided little insight from the experiences of participants, relying on interpretation only from the researchers.

The integrated analysis of the interviews and Q-sort identified three meta-themes. The first meta-theme was named *'confidence in professional knowledge and expertise'*. It was felt that staff did not have a clear understanding of the links between language and behaviour and other national training initiatives had taken precedent over training around language development. Teachers saw themselves as subject teachers and concerns related to students' academic progress. Interventions were often not developed holistically. Others (SaLTs, EPs and primary school teachers) were seen as the professionals who identify language needs.

A second meta-theme, *'reliance on professional practice'* related to the views of staff to consider other explanations before language difficulties to explain student's behaviour, such as parental influence, developmental issues, school culture and wider cultural/societal issues. Difficulties accessing the curriculum were their primary concern.

A final meta-theme; *'implementing existing professional practice'* reflected the view that participants felt they had inconsistent knowledge of language development/skills which effected their data collection from students. Data collection was felt to be unsystematic and often positioned within a Behaviourist psychological paradigm (information about rewards/sanctions), which focused on student's behaviour difficulties and guided participant's intuition.

2.3.4.3.4. Conclusion and limitations

Mixed-methods was used to identify themes from the viewpoints of secondary school staff regarding their knowledge and practice of language difficulties for students with behaviour difficulties. It was challenging to judge the methodological quality of the research and interpretative claims made as they were not substantiated with evidence and raw data. Findings lacked detail in the development of themes and the methodology which may have provided the most insight into the experiences of teachers (interviews) was not reported. Findings reported are the researcher's interpretation of the data. Clarity of this interpretative process and clearly contextualised descriptions of themes are not provided meaning themes could be interpreted differently to that intended by the authors. Vignettes were included as part of the study methodology but how they were positioned and contributed to the research findings is not clearly stated.

2.3.4.4. Wilson, Nash & Earl (2010)

2.3.4.4.1. Aims and research questions

This research explored secondary school teacher's understanding of vocabulary instruction and the impact that working collaboratively with speech and language therapists has on the development of knowledge. Research questions were not made explicit.

2.3.4.4.2. Methodology

Participants included three secondary school teachers (geography, science and modern studies) from Scotland. Concept maps were used to explore their knowledge and development. Concept maps are a methodology used to depict the creator's thinking about a particular topic using visual graphics which is Constructivist in its approach (Hartsell, 2021). Concept maps visually depicted participants' understanding of 'language and learning'. Words were selected which related to participant's knowledge and were ranked, organised and linked based on their understanding. Participants created two concept maps, one before and one after ten weeks of collaborative discussions with a speech and language therapist. Two participants met with the speech and language therapist on eight occasions, the third on three occasions due to illness.

2.3.4.4.3. Analysis and findings

Teachers demonstrated variations in their prior knowledge, understanding and thinking of language and learning. All three teachers demonstrated improvements in knowledge and understanding after collaboration with the speech and language therapist, demonstrated through increased complexity of their concept maps.

Teacher A's initial concept map was organised hierarchically and lacked linking between the different ideas, which may suggest a lack of knowledge in this area. Ideas depicted some knowledge that language and learning occurs in subject areas, through accessing the curriculum and is needed for interactions with teachers and peers. Following collaboration, teacher A's concept map became more integrated, demonstrating increased knowledge. Themes included language and learning is affected by reading, demonstrated by knowledge of curriculum worksheets, it is affected by understanding and develops through talking with teachers and peers. However, the concept map continued to demonstrate a level of simplicity.

Teacher B showed more sophisticated knowledge in the area prior to collaboration, evidenced by the linking of concepts. Understanding was organised into three key themes; (1) language and learning is influenced by level of reading and language learnt/used at home, (2) progresses through using words related to the subjects to give opinions and (3) progresses through the school curriculum. Following the input of the speech and language therapist, teacher B's concept map became more complex. Themes became more densely integrated, demonstrating increased understanding.

Teacher C demonstrated an integrated concept map and understanding of language and learning. Initial concepts included; language and learning is supported by prior knowledge; is influenced by [the] teacher; and is held back by reading difficulties. Following collaboration, these ideas became more complex. Concepts included; language and learning is key for pupils to learn new words and develop talking, writing and understanding of text and talk.

2.3.4.4.4. Conclusion and limitations

Each teacher created a concept map which looked different from one another's and included the selection of different concepts, demonstrating individual differences in knowledge and experiences. This variation continued following collaboration with the speech and language therapist. No details were provided as to the features of this collaboration which may have been effective for developing knowledge. All demonstrated progress in the development of their concept map following collaboration.

The utility of findings developed from the study methodology is limited. Although concept maps are a recognised method in the field, research suggests that teachers find it challenging when considering what to include in concept maps when designing them (Hartsell, 2021). Arguably, concept maps may be a poor measure of knowledge. No information was provided of how participants interacted with the study methodology. It is difficult to

determine whether concept maps development accurately represents teachers' engagement with the subject area or whether this is influenced by their ease and willingness to engage with the methodology.

2.3.5. Narrative Synthesis of the Available Literature

Concept mapping is a process of visually mapping inter-relating ideas in order to view the big picture as well as the inter-related aspects (Hartsell, 2021). Key findings from each study (described in section 2.3.4) were grouped together if they were conceptually similar. This involved naming concepts, writing them down and then manually moving different concepts around to consider how the may inter-relate. The final concepts were depicted (Appendix 3). The following section provides a critical narrative account of the six concepts identified.

Reflexive Commentary

Due to the limitations with the individual studies, I considered whether this stage of the synthesis was justified, as there would be limitations to the reliability and validity of synthesised concepts. An alternative decision may have been to discontinue the narrative synthesis after the preliminary synthesis of individual studies. However, the synthesising of information across the studies is a recognised step in the narrative synthesis procedure (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Popay et al., 2006). Therefore, I chose to continue with this stage of the synthesis but aimed to provide an analytic account appreciating limitations of the evidence. I felt this may provide further justification and rationale for the current research and exploration of this field of study. However, I recognise significant limitations to the synthesis findings (see section 2.3.6 for details).

2.3.5.1. Concept one: concerns and priorities

Two of the studies provided data depicting the concerns and priorities of Secondary school staff in relation to language difficulties. In their research, Ramsay et al. (2018) identified that participants viewed academic

difficulties as a higher cause for concern than language difficulties. Their focus was on their own subject area and student's academic progress. Although participants were aware of the training initiatives available, they said that other training initiatives had taken priority.

By contrast, the participants of Davies' (2009) research were reported to have expressed concerns of the language abilities of students excluded or at risk of exclusion. There was a strong positive correlation between staff concerns and students' language difficulties, suggesting that concern was elevated for the students with more profound language needs.

However, methodological concerns may account for these findings. Ramsay et al's (2018) research explored participants perceptions more broadly, whereas Davies (2009) explored concerns relating to a specific student. It may be that generally, staff do not consider language difficulties, but when understanding the needs of individual students, concerns about language are more readily expressed. Alternatively, Davies' (2009) study design may have produced elevated levels of staff concern. Participants were aware of the research focus (communication and perspective taking skills) and self-rated their concern using a 10-point scale for students who had already been identified as having language needs. Access to this information may have influenced scoring. It is difficult to determine whether similar concerns would be expressed without this prior knowledge.

It is important to recognise that Davies' (2009) research is an unpublished doctoral thesis which has not been scrutinised under peer review for publication. It was also rated as poor for methodological quality in relation to the research questions.

The data provided to develop this concept is limited. There is no indication of the features which staff would recognise as a cause for concern and what effect that may have on their practice or response to the student. These details may be helpful when considering how to support practice and identification of language needs.

2.3.5.2. Concept two: the difficulties that students experience

Two studies provided the perspectives of secondary school staff regarding the difficulties students with language needs experienced at school. Dockrell & Lindsay (2007) identified that students who have language difficulties on transition to secondary school may experience difficulties with 'transfer', 'social life', 'self-esteem' and 'coping with different teachers'. However, no further details were provided. It is unclear as to whether these difficulties are perceived to affect students with language difficulties exclusively, or at an increased occurrence or intensity than their typically developing peers. Findings are limited as terms are not operationalised and poorly described.

The participants of Ramsay et al's (2018) research recognised that student's language difficulties might impede their access to the curriculum, which may in turn, lead to behaviour difficulties. This claim provided by the authors, is not supported with data gathered from participants so how they arrived at this insight or how participants expressed this is unknown.

2.3.5.3. Concept three: knowledge and understanding

Two studies provided data of secondary school staff's knowledge and understanding of language difficulties. Ramsay et al. (2018) claim that participants' *"knowledge and understanding continues to be limited"* (p. 8), which is unsupported with data. In their research, interview themes were coined as '*I'm not an expert'* and *'I know what I know and I don't know what I don't know'.* These ideas suggest that data was provided by participants of their views of their own knowledge and understanding. However, no descriptions of data excerpts were provided. Participants felt that their knowledge was limited to their subject area.

Wilson et al's (2010) research provides a visual representation of teacher's knowledge of language and learning using concept maps. These maps suggest that there are individual differences and variations in their knowledge and understanding. No reasons were given to explain the

possible sources of these variations in knowledge (i.e., access to training, support, experience) and exploring this was not an aim of the research. Background details of participants are not provided. The practical significance of these findings are limited due to methodological concerns with the use of concept maps (see Section 2.3.3.4).

2.3.5.4. Concept four: interpreting needs

Only one study (Ramsay et al., 2018) provided a description of participants' views when interpreting students' language needs. The authors suggested that participants tended to consider other explanations for a student's behaviour difficulties, including parental influence, developmental issues, school culture and wider societal/cultural issues. It was also reported that although participants had an awareness of the importance of language for behaviour difficulties, language needs were not understood as a contributory factor. The theme *'why didn't I think of language'* was identified. Participants' practice with regards to data collection was suggested to be affected by their '*patchy knowledge and understanding of how language contributes to behaviour difficulties'.* The focus tended to be on behaviour incidents and academic progress. Further elaboration or raw data from the interviews was not provided to support the claims made. Therefore, the synthesis of these findings provides only a secondary analysis of the authors interpretation of the raw data.

2.3.5.5. Concept five: the role of others

When exploring the views of secondary school staff of the role of others regarding language difficulties Ramsay et al's (2018) research indicated that participants viewed *'others are experts'.* This included educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, although they were not always involved with students. Participants also assumed that these needs would be identified when students were in primary school.

Davies' (2009) research explored the role of speech and language therapists through collaborative discussions as a developmental process for teachers. However, no details were provided of participants' views of this inter-professional working which might have been useful for the review question.

2.3.5.6. Concept six: support provided

Lindsay & Dockrell's (2007) research provided weak findings of the support that school staff proposed to provide. Their research design was afflicted by methodological limitations and was of poor methodological quality (Appendix 2). The findings reported are vague, list-like, with little operational definitions or details provided of the defining features. Reported findings include specialist provision for literacy/numeracy; teaching or learning support assistant support; IT equipment, different teaching strategies and extra time. Sweeping statements are also made without reference to data, such as a "*general consensus that children's educational needs were being met"* (p.111). It is reported that 17% of the SENCo participants felt that the student's language needs were not being meet.

2.3.6. Critique of the Systematic Literature Review

2.3.6.1. Strengths of systematic literature review

A narrative synthesis aims to provide an understanding of the strength of the evidence available (Popay et al., 2006). A strength of the current review is the use of systematic searching and a quality appraisal using the mixed methods appraisal tool (Hong et al., 2018) to evaluate the current research evidence detailing the perspectives of secondary school staff regarding language needs. This review identified that the evidence base appears limited in both breadth and methodological quality. However, this remains an important research area as secondary school staff may hold growing responsibility in identifying and supporting language needs in the classroom. With renewed government focus on upskilling the school

workforce and inclusive education, providing a comprehensive and contemporary understanding from the perspectives of secondary school staff would be well placed to inform understanding, practice and support. Therefore, a strength of the current synthesis is evaluation of the evidence base to provide a rationale for this area of study.

2.3.6.2. Limitations of the systematic literature review

2.3.6.2.1. Primary research limitations

Due to the paucity of research identified following the systematic searching, varied research was included in this review. This included research from one unpublished doctoral research study which had not been scrutinised under peer review. Assessments of the individual studies identified methodological issues with the studies included in the synthesis.

The research aims of the primary research papers deviated slightly from the synthesis' aims and research question. As such, the data presented is ultimately influenced by the research direction of the primary studies. Even studies rated to have higher methodological quality (i.e. Ramsay et al., 2018) were limited in the support for the claims that they provided in their results. As such, this synthesis tends to include an interpretation of the authors interpretation of the raw data. Without the raw data, it is difficult to confer the reliability and validity of the claims made in this synthesis.

Reflexive Commentary

When conducting this systematic literature review, there were decision points where alternative choices may have resulted in a different outcome. However, rationale for these decisions included:

Deciding not to include any primary research which was of low methodological quality.

This would have resulted in a systematic review which included none or one paper (i.e. Ramsay et al., 2018). Systematic reviews can be '*empty*' and contain

no research papers for the purpose of identifying critical gaps in a research area (Gray, 2020). However, it was felt that critically evaluating the research papers would be beneficial in developing a rationale for a research project which may look to address some of the limitations that have been identified in the literature.

Widening the search parameters by adjusting the research question.

Consideration was made to whether adjustments to the research question could be made to potentially identify further research. During the systematic searching, some research was discarded due to the viewpoints of other professionals being included, such as primary school teachers or speech and language therapists. It was felt that although adjustments to the research question may have identified further research, the rationale for the specific research question for this review was important and justified (established through stage one of the narrative synthesis; developing theory). Further expanding of the search parameters was felt to dilute the research question, where theoretical justification and rationale had been developed as outlined in the introduction and literature review chapter.

2.3.6.2.2. Limitations with concept mapping and the reliability and validity of findings

Although the systematic searching and quality appraisal of the current review were considered by the researcher to be a strength, the synthesis and exploration across studies experienced some methodological limitations. The researcher followed published guidance when conducting the narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006). Concept maps are a constructivist methodology used in their approach to depict their creators sense-making and interpretation of inter-related concepts (Hartsell, 2021). As such, a concept map may provide a transparent methodology depicting how the researcher made sense of the concepts between the different primary research. However, by synthesising the findings from the different primary research, which had already been judged to have limitations with

reliability and validity, synthesised concepts used to answer the research question are also limited.

Reflexive Commentary

Although other methodologies are suggested for synthesising findings for narrative syntheses, such as idea webs and concept triangulation (Popay et al., 2006), I felt that the limitation was not due to the methodology *per se*, but rather the methodological limitations of the primary research and their relevance for the review research question. As such, I felt that using a different methodology to synthesise findings would not address this limitation. Rather, the researcher considered removing the narrative synthesis entirely (Section 2.3.5.). In doing so, this may still have satisfied the primary aim of a narrative synthesis; to provide a story-telling account of current research literature with interrogation of the evidence base (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Popay et al., 2006). I chose to include the synthesis as I felt that the descriptive accounts of how different research methodology may have explored similar concepts may be helpful when considering the development of the current research. It was important to caveat this clearly with the limitations of the research findings.

2.4. Conclusion and Rationale for Research

Teachers hold a significant role in the education system when recognising SEND and implementing support. Each classroom may provide its own social context and understanding individual differences in the classroom ecology is important to understand the context of SEND. Language needs (SLCN) is an area of SEND that can have a significant impact on learners and their life experiences, yet research tends to focus on the early years and primary. The research explored within this section found that there is an identified trend, whereby the conceptualisation of young people's needs may change from SLCN to another need when they enter secondary school. Further research is required to explore these trends and appreciate the contextual and social ecological context of the classroom. This may be

explored through the experiences of teachers. The systematic literature review illustrated that research in this area is incredibly limited and any applicable research is of low methodological quality for this specific research aim. As such, the current research aims to address a gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of secondary school teachers in the context of SEND and language needs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a rationale for how the researcher engaged with theory, philosophy and methods to arrive at the chosen research design. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was the chosen research methodology which was determined to be the best fit for the current research. This chapter details the research design and the data collection methods with consideration of research ethics and qualitative reflexivity.

The research aims to explore secondary school teachers' experiences and sense making of the possible language needs of students by answering the following research questions:

1. What sense do teachers create of the language needs of secondary school students?
2. What are the experiences of secondary school teachers when supporting language needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

3.2. Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinning

3.2.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

Logically-related theoretical assumptions guide thinking and research development to provide a systematic account of the research, which supports research integrity and provides a rationale for decision making (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Broadly, there are two major approaches to psychological research; quantitative and qualitative methods (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). Each approach is underpinned by theoretical positions. There has been a significant shift from the use of deductive quantitative approaches in research to inductive qualitative methods which offer the opportunity to address 'what' 'why' and 'how' research questions (Tuffour, 2017). This movement away from typically quantitative methods, informed by positivist principles, within social and educational research may reflect

the assumption that these approaches may be less valid than in other fields, such as the natural sciences, as the research phenomenon may not experience the same regularities and fixed characteristics and it may not be possible to tightly control aspects in the same way (Hammersley, 2005; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Similarly, research findings drawing upon quantitative research may not be rich enough in detail to capture complex social phenomena (Billington & Williams, 2017).

Within qualitative approaches, researchers have highlighted distinctions between 'small q' and 'Big Q' qualitative research (Kidder & Fine, 1987). While small q qualitative research may be used to supplement quantitative findings, Big Q Qualitative research involves the immersion of the researcher and research fully within the qualitative paradigm, underpinned by theoretical assumptions about ontology and epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Big Q Qualitative research reflects the approach used in the current research and the following sections depicts how the researcher engaged with the qualitative research paradigm.

3.2.2 Ontology

Ontology is a theoretical perspective and understanding of the nature of reality (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). A realist position assumes that there is an external objective reality that can be studied and understood independent of human interpretation (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). Alternatively, relativism provides a juxtaposition which inherently refutes these claims and assumes that a single objective reality does not exist. Instead individuals experience multiple subjective realities (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2008). In contrast, critical realism provides an ontological position which may be positioned as a weakened version of realism (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

From an ontological perspective, critical realism assumes that there may be a reality, but this may exist only in the minds of individuals, who interpret its meaning through socially and societally embedded contexts (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). How individuals understand, construe and share their realities is mediated by their experiences, language and culture (i.e.

socially constructed) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These ideas may be more akin to relativism. Where critical realism departs from relativism and moves closer towards realism is the assumption that we can develop some understanding of the social world (albeit an imperfect understanding) by approximating the regularities and noting patterns of thinking (Sprague, 2010) and this understanding can be refined over time to move closer to an imperfect version of 'reality' (Archer et al., 2016).

The current research adopted an ontological critical realist position. The way an individual construes the concept of language needs may be individual and differentiate somewhat from that held by others. However, the meaning and parameters of this construct are likely to be shaped socially, through contact and experiences within a community of practitioners or shared settings and their own experiences and engagement with the phenomenon.

3.2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is a theoretical position of the nature of knowledge and what is possible to 'know' (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). Ontology and epistemology are deeply connected as 'knowledge' (or reality) and 'the knower' (the researcher) can be inseparable (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Davies, 2018).

Objectivism, typically associated with realism, assumes that the researcher can explore reality through research as an objective observer independent of the research phenomenon (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). If epistemological standpoints were positioned on a continuum, objectivism would occupy one end of the continuum with subjectivism or interpretivism occupying the other (Kennedy & Monsen, 2016). This position assumes that to explore realities (multiple and subjective) involves an interaction between the researcher, participants and the phenomenon (Cunliffe, 2016; Powell et al., 2008; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). As such, knowledge is seen as unavoidably subjective and the purpose of research is to capture multiple social constructions and the subjective world of human experience (Mertens, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007). For psychology, the possibility of removing

oneself's thoughts and meaning to study how things 'truly are' to disentangle the existence of 'reality' may not be real or possible (Larkin et al., 2006). Therefore, an interpretivist epistemology aims to develop meaning from socially constructed perspectives with flexible and reflexive interpretation between the researcher and participants (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). This positions the researcher as imposing their meaning (or interpretation) of the reality of participants (Kennedy & Monsen, 2016).

Constructionism, a branch of interpretivism, positions the researcher as active in their role when interacting with the realities of others to create meaning (Kennedy & Monsen, 2016). Through this engagement, constructionist research aims to provide a contextualised understanding of a phenomenon (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). The current research adopts a constructionist epistemological position. The role of the researcher in the generation of knowledge is two-fold. Firstly, the researcher is positioned to have active involvement in the interpretation and sense-making of the realities of participants. Secondly, the researcher and research design interact with the realities of participants around the research phenomenon, such that the research and knowledge generated is a contextualised understanding of language needs. Discourse is one way in which the researcher is positioned to interact with the realities of participants. Discourse in qualitative methods shape the relationship between the knower (i.e. the researcher) and the known (i.e. the phenomenon) (Sprague, 2010). Interviews provide an active meaning-making venture (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) in which the researcher's role is to contribute to the co-construction of meaning through a collaborative social interaction (Mann, 2010).

3.2.4 Qualitative Reflexivity

The inherent position is that subjectivity is unavoidable in qualitative research (Cunliffe, 2016). Reflexivity is a disciplined practice of critically interrogating what we do and how and why we do it to explore the impact and influences this has on the research (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Reflexivity

is a necessary function in qualitative psychological research as the researcher is positioned to be a part of the world (or reality) which they are describing (Larkin et al., 2006). Reflexivity is a centrepiece for the qualitative research process and research design which aims to illuminate and represent the different relationships and assumptions between the researchers' position, the research question, aims, methods and conclusions drawn (Luttrell, 2010). Reflexive research positions knowledge as unavoidably shaped by the research process and researcher and this subjectivity is a strength of the process when aligned with reflexive practices which illuminate the decisions made, the researchers' disciplinary position and how the knowledge was shared (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Essentially, reflexive practices make transparent sources of subjectivity which provide credibility to the product of the research findings – the knowledge generated. Reflexivity should not be considered as an afterthought. Instead, a reflexive researcher is thoughtful and self-questioning and uses practices to articulate their standpoints and influences on the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

The researcher engaged with several reflexive practices suggested in the literature. Some of the methods used by the researcher include:

- Using regular tutorial support with her research supervisor and peer supervision.
- A clearly articulated philosophical position (Braun & Clarke, 2022) (Section 3.2)
- Reflecting on underlying assumptions and personal experiences which shape research interests and development (Luttrell, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2022) (Provided in Section 1.2; Personal and Professional Interest and Appendix 4)
- Reflexive journaling (Gough & Madill, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2022) – this was used throughout the research process with excerpts provided in a reflexive commentary which runs throughout the thesis.
- Reflexive adjustments during the research project in relation to topic choice and theoretical preference (Gough & Madill, 2012) – the researcher made the later decision to change methodologies (from Reflexive Thematic

Analysis to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis) following developments during the research journey. These changes are documented as part of a reflexive commentary through the chapter.

- Bracketing as a reflexive practice during the IPA process to highlight the interpretive process of the researcher engaging and making sense from the data (Smith et al., 2009) – colour coded during the data analysis.
- Evaluating the quality of the current research provided in the Discussion chapter (Section 5.4).

3.2.5 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

A critical realist ontology and constructionist epistemology in the current research was felt to align with the philosophical positions of phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography, the three axis of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This informed the adoption of this qualitative methodology for the current research. IPA is a qualitative methodology involving detailed exploration of how participants make sense of their personal and subjective lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009; 2022; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Essentially, IPA is a 'sense-making' venture, which aims to 'give a voice' to participants through a psychological perspective (Larkin et al., 2006). From a phenomenological perspective, IPA aims to capture the world of participants' experience and develop an explicitly interpretative account of this sense making (Larkin et al., 2006). IPA also provides a flexible methodology which has been used to explore multiple perspectives and participant change (Smith et al., 2022), a feature that was important for the current research.

3.2.5.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the philosophical study of what it is like to be human in our lived experiences and what matters to the individual (Smith et al., 2022). Several philosophical writers have informed the processes, perceptions and meaning making developments of phenomenology in which IPA is rooted.

Husserl is described as one of the founding philosophers for phenomenology (Smith et al., 2022). One of Husserl's key contributions to the field of phenomenology is the concept of *intentionality* (Husserl, 1927, as cited in Smith et al., 2022). Intentionality is the idea of consciously reflecting and orientating attention towards an object or phenomenon to develop perceptions of the world which put aside (or bracket) taken for granted experiences (Smith et al., 2022). Although IPA is most concerned with highly significant and important events for individuals, at its smallest unit, an experience may involve the conscious awareness, reflection and sense-making of any given phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Although Husserl was a philosopher and not a psychologist, much of his writing was regarding conceptual and abstract perceptual processes and consciousness (Smith et al., 2022), Husserl's' contribution to phenomenology is reflected in IPA and the current research through a research design which allows participants the opportunity to pause and consciously reflect on the research phenomenon which may be overlooked in everyday experiences. As such, an individual may move through layers of reflection and engagement with reality (see Table 5 for examples).

Table 5. A table depicting the different layers of reflection that an individual may engage with (taken from Smith et al., 2022, p135-136)

Layer of Reflection	**Description**
Pre-reflective Reflexivity	A minimal level of awareness of 'an experience' which does not interfere with everyday consciousness
The reflective 'glancing at' a pre-reflective experience	Undirected reflection of a pre-reflection.
Attentive reflection of a pre-reflection	'experience' becomes 'an experience' which is registered with some significance and attention
Deliberate controlled reflection	Phenomenological reflection; a mental replay of events

Heidegger extended the work of Husserl to pose ontological questions about the possibility of knowledge without interpretation (Smith et al., 2022). Heidegger wrote of *worldline*ss (Heidegger, 1927; 1962, as cited in Smith et al., 2022), where objects, language and culture cannot be meaningfully detached from experience (Smith et al., 2022). His writings informed the necessity for reflexive self-awareness, viewing the person-in-context and that interpretation of meaning making is central to phenomenological enquiry in psychology. These ideas also lead to the second axis of IPA, hermeneutics.

Merleau-Ponty, another influential philosopher of phenomenology, provided seminal contributions to phenomenology through the concept of *embodiment* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, as cited in Smith et al., 2022) which recognises the relationship between the world being understood and the human bodies whose affective experiences shape their sense-making (Smith et al., 2022). The individual is positioned as 'a being in the world', influenced by relationships and IPA is the process of inquiry into individuals' cognition and affect (Smith et al., 2009). Merleau-Ponty's contribution to phenomenology is reflected in the current study through an exploration beyond the cognitive and intellectual factors which shape and individual's meaning and sense-making of language needs but also recognise the emotional experience for participants and their relationships.

Finally, Satre provided a seminal contribution to phenomenology through the concept of *nothingness* (Sarte, 1943; 1956, as cited in Smith et al., 2022). This idea suggests that things which are absent from our consciousness and sense-making can be as important in how we see the world as those which are present (Smith et al., 2022). It may be important to consider when a concept or experience is not conscious to an individual, what else is. Satre's contribution to phenomenology is reflected in the current research using a design which allowed participants to explore aspects of the phenomenon which may have been initially overlooked through a process of reappraisal.

Different phenomenological contributions have been positioned by researchers to be either complementary or conflicting (Smith et al., 2022). These contributions were considered by the researcher to be complementary, each building on the other to provide a philosophical basis for how phenomenology would be used in the context of the current research. IPA positions the person as embedded in a world influenced by relationships, culture and language, with an interpretative understanding of how an individual make sense and meaning from their lived experiences, which interact with these different factors (Smith et al., 2022). Phenomenology and the individual were positioned as embedded and intertwined with reality (Larkin et al., 2006). Instead 'reality', explored through the individual, may be better understood as an approximation (Larkin et al., 2006).

3.2.5.2. Hermeneutics

IPA's second axis is hermeneutics, which is the theory of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009, 2022). IPA positions research and the researcher as dynamic and active in trying to develop insights into participants' experiences but is unable to do this completely (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The hermeneutic cycle provides a philosophical idea that to understand the whole, you must understand the part and vice-versa, which has inherent circularity but captures the interpretive process which informs IPA (Smith et al., 2022). Meaning is created from individual parts (e.g. single words) and whole parts (e.g. sentences or phrases) through an iterative process which requires analytically moving backwards and forwards to make meaning from the data at different levels (Smith et al., 2022).

IPA assumes participants express meaning through their language and appreciates the connection between talk and participants' thoughts and emotions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). There may be a difficulty in expressing this, which involves analytical reflection of the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2015). IPA attempts to understand the perspectives of participants (empathetic hermeneutics) and raise deeper critical reflection and sense

making of participants' accounts (questioning hermeneutics) (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Accounts of experiences from participants are always seen to be a construction of the interaction between participants and the researcher (Larkin et al., 2006).

It is assumed that humans are inherently sense-makers and IPA involves a process of double hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2009). Participants makes sense of their experiences through the research process, then the researcher analytically interprets their account through the methodology (Montague et al., 2020). Essentially, IPA assumes that the research process follows a hermeneutic process of the researcher sense-making the sense-making of the participants of their experience.

Hermeneutics aligns with the constructionist position of the research and principles of reflexivity more generally in qualitative research. In the context of the current study, double hermeneutics is demonstrated where the participants and researcher interact to create meaning through the research process. Then, through the analysis, which includes both empathetic and questioning hermeneutics, the researcher makes sense of the participants' experiences.

Reflexive Commentary

I felt that Heidegger's contribution to phenomenology was compatible with the ontological position of critical realism which underpinned the current research. The phenomenological principles of 'giving a voice' to participants was not incompatible with a researcher led position of critical realism. Heidegger's contribution to phenomenology recognised the socially constructed context of reality and experience. IPA may be used to provide an interpretive account of individual experiences, but similarities and differences (convergence and divergence) may be noted across these experiences (Smith et al., 2022). I felt that this positioning of IPA aligned with a critical realist position, whereby approximations of shared realities may be noted through interaction with the wider field, but expressed from an individual perspective. The hermeneutic axis

of IPA, which recognises the interpretive role of the researcher in the development of knowledge was also considered to be compatible with a constructionist epistemology, where knowledge is positioned as a social construction, evolving through the language between the researcher, participants and shaped also by the research process. These perceived compatibilities between IPA and my theoretical position contributed to my decision to select IPA as the chosen methodology for the current research.

3.2.5.3. Idiography

The final axis of IPA is idiography, which is a concern with 'the particular' (Smith et al., 2022). In contrast to much research which is concerned with generalisable nomothetic claims, IPA research recognises the utility of single-case experiential research (Smith et al., 2022) and generally involves detailed accounts of small numbers of participants (Larkin et al., 2006) who have been purposively sampled with reference to a significant research question (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Idiographic accounts allow for analysis of points of convergence and divergence (Nizza et al., 2021). A commitment to ideography was present in the current research by providing five detailed individual accounts.

Reflexive Commentary

Within this research, a commitment to ideography was limited by an ethical consideration of the potential impact that the research might have on participants in their place of work. Confidentiality means that the research will not be seen by others, which is not strictly possible in IPA and qualitative research (Smith et al., 2022). Instead, it may be more appropriate to ensure anonymity of participants (Smith et al., 2022). Through the recruitment strategy, senior school leaders acted as gatekeepers to the researcher contacting potential participants. Due to this, the anonymity of participants may be compromised if identifying ideographic features were linked with their accounts.

3.2.6. Alternative Qualitative Methodologies

3.2.6.1 Other methodologies considered

Rarely is there a single methodology which is 'ideal' for a research project (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Several qualitative methodologies were considered for the current research. However, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was the methodology considered with some depth as the methodological assumptions of RTA (see p.8, Braun & Clarke, 2022) aligned with the researcher's critical realist ontology and constructionist epistemology. RTA is a qualitative methodology which can be used flexibly to reflect the values and theoretical or philosophical assumptions of the researcher through explicit and deep reflection, engagement with the data and qualitative sensibility, informed by Big Q qualitative paradigms (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3.2.6.2. Rationale for selecting Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Initially, it was felt that RTA would provide a good fit for the current research. However, with further reading, and upon deeper engagement and familiarisation with the data and through reflection individually and with her research supervisor and peers, the researcher felt that IPA was a qualitative methodology that would provide a better fit for the current research.

IPA and RTA share some similarities, such as a fundamental positioning of researcher subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021), but with greater priviledge n the individual meanings in the case of IPA. Both methodologies had strengths which meant that either may be appropriate if used in the current research. The following section provides a narrative of distinctions in philosophy, research question and methodology which informed the researcher's decision making when choosing a methodology.

3.2.6.2.1. Philosophical features

A strength of RTA is that it provides a flexible methodology which can reflect various theoretical and philosophical positions of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2022). Assumptions of RTA can be seen to align with the

qualitative research paradigm and subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It was felt that these assumptions aligned with the researcher's critical realist and constructionist positioning. Similarly, a strength of IPA is that it has been developed from the philosophical foundations of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2022). These philosophical concepts were not incompatible with the researcher's critical realist and social constructionist positioning (see section 3.2.5). The researcher considered that both methodologies were theoretically compatible for the current research.

3.2.6.2.2. Research question

RTA is a methodology appropriate for explorative research questions which fit the qualitative research paradigm and may evolve through the course of the research, starting broad and ending with something coherent and specific (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As such, this paradigm was suitable for the current study. Alternatively, IPA research is concerned with exploratory research questions of how people '*experience'* or understand (make sense) of a phenomenon due to its phenomenological orientation (Smith et al., 2022). The researcher felt that this positioning better aligned with the essence of the current research, which was felt to be an inherently phenomenological question of *'how teachers experience SEND and language needs'* and the *'sense they create'* of this construct and phenomenon. Similarly, IPA is concerned with situating individual's experiences in context (Smith et al., 2022). This grounding was felt to align with the researcher's ecological theoretical position and rationale behind the current research.

Although IPA was felt to provide a methodology which best aligned with the research questions, a limitation of this methodology is that it is important that questions are about '*experiences*' that are available to participants and are not too abstract for examination of detailed responses (Smith et al., 2022). A consideration for the researcher was whether the concept of language needs would be an experience that was available to participants.

Reflexive Commentary

I felt, based on reading of the limited research base in this area, that language needs may be a construct which teachers may not actively consider in their everyday experiences. Prior research with secondary school SENCos identified a theme of '*why didn't I think of language'* (Ramsay et al., 2018; Ramsay, 2015). Despite this potential limitation, an experience within IPA may involve the conscious awareness, reflection and sense-making of any given phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). These reflections informed the development of a research design which offered participants the opportunity to share their experiences and also reflect on the construct explicitly through vignettes, used as a research artefact (further details provided in section 3.3.3.2).

3.2.6.2.3. Methodological features

Two distinguishing features between IPA and RTA include the methodological approach to developing themes and the idiographic orientation of IPA (Braun & Clarke, 2021). IPA's idiographic angle and analysis of individual cases distinguishes the approach from RTA, which aims to identify themes across cases (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This perspective was considered by the researcher to be a strength in the use of IPA. The idiographic focus of IPA which values the individual (Smith et al., 2022) was felt to align with the researcher's ecological theoretical position and constructionist view on language and allowed the exploration of individual interpretation, change and sense making (through double hermeneutics cycles) which may not be adequately portrayed through the use of RTA.

3.2.6.3. Chronology for methodology changes and implications

The decision to change methodologies during the research process depicts the reflexive ways in which the researcher engaged with the qualitative research paradigm to make active and informed choices during the research process. However, the decision to change methodologies was

made later in the research process at the start of the data analysis procedure (see Appendix 5 for research timeline). As previously outlined, the researcher felt that both IPA and RTA may be suitable methodologies for the current research. However, upon exploration of the data the researcher truly considered that IPA may provide a more suitable methodology for the current research due to the idiographic focus.

Researchers argue that IPA is more than a qualitative methodology, and instead involves a phenomenological researcher with the expectation that the research will be developed with conscious awareness and consideration of the principles of IPA (Smith et al., 2022; Alase, 2017). Due to methodological changes, this was not a primary focus for the researcher in developing and engaging with the research methods (interviews and vignettes) and is a limitation of the current research as an IPA study. Despite this, the researcher felt that a change of methodology was justified as the research question developed was inherently phenomenological by exploring the meaning that teachers ascribe to the phenomenon of language needs and their experiences of this construct.

Reflexive Commentary

In not initially developing this research project as an IPA study, this limitation affected how I engaged in the research interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' experiences (further detail provided in section 3.3.3.1). The flexible nature of this method allows a researcher to respond reflexively to interview content using probing questions (Smith et al., 2022). Principles in semi-structured interviews may be similar for IPA and other methodologies. IPA interviews may look to explore what a phenomenon means to an individual and their interpretation through hermeneutics cycles (Smith et al., 2022). I felt the essence of my research question and methods had been developed intuitively to explore participants' meaning of language needs and hermeneutic cycles were explored through the research process and analysis procedure which provided a rationale for this choice of methodology. However, reflection of the phenomenological and

hermeneutic axis of IPA may have influenced my use of probing questions differently in hindsight. This may also have been limited by my experience as an interviewer. Both of which are limitations of the current research.

3.3. Data Collection

3.3.1. Ethical Considerations

This research was governed by the ethical guidelines provided by The University of Nottingham (see Appendix 6 for ethical approval letter), the British Psychology Society Code of Ethics (BPS, 2018) and the Health and Care Professionals Council standards (Health & Care Professionals Council, 2015). The purpose of ethical guidelines is to provide a framework for decision making for psychologists (and researchers) to engage with ethically aware practice, guided by four ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity (BPS, 2018).

In the context of this research, the research design and data collection procedure encountered ethical dilemmas relating to informed consent, power and impact on environment (confidentiality). These dilemmas are also discussed in relation to the research procedure.

3.3.1.1. Informed consent

Informed consent *"assumes the transparency of a social and psychological reality that enables researchers to provide full and accurate information about the research to autonomous subjects who are able to make informed, rational choices"* (p.129; Halse & Honey, 2010). One aim of the research was to explore how teachers made sense of the possible language needs of students. It was felt that providing participants information of this purpose would prime responses and it would not be possible to address the research aim. Withholding information may be warranted through a research process when it is essential to achieve the research aims (University Of Oxford, 2021). Although there is no research currently available from secondary school teachers about how they appraise the needs of students, research provided of how secondary school SENCos appraise these needs identified

a theme of *"why didn't I think of language"* (Ramsay et al., 2018; Ramsay, 2015). Therefore, this research used incomplete disclosure. Incomplete disclosure *"involves withholding some information about the research aims and process"* (University Of Oxford, 2021). For the purposes of this research, participants were informed that the research would explore their experiences when supporting SEND, without specific mention of one area of SEND; language needs. Incomplete disclosure may only be acceptable for research which is low risk and appropriate strategies to prevent harm are in place (University Of Oxford, 2021). The research was deemed to be low risk, with the content matter (language needs) being unlikely to cause distress for participants. However, the process of incomplete disclosure may have caused participants distress and a prevention for harm strategy was put in place. Firstly, developments to the interview schedule were made to protect the emotions and dignity of participants using a sensitive approach to questioning. Furthermore, consideration was given to how participants would be debriefed. Participants read the debrief document during the interview (Appendix 15). The researcher then highlighted important information from this document using a pre-prepared script (Appendix 16). Participants were then provided with the opportunity to ask questions and the researcher reminded participants that the interview remained voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point during or after the research process until the point of analysis. Seeking additional oral consent is good practice if unanticipated or sensitive issues arise during the research process (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher sought oral consent during the debriefing, following the sharing of information about the research purposes and to continue the interview. A copy of the debrief was sent to participants.

Although no participants expressed a view to be removed from the research or demonstrated distress following the incomplete disclosure, a prevention of harm strategy was in place. Should this have occurred, the interview would have stopped immediately, and emotional containment and support would have been provided. Follow up support would have been offered, if required.

3.3.2. Participants

3.3.2.1. Rationale for sample and inclusion criteria

IPA research uses small, homogenous samples of participants to focus on ideographic principles (Smith & Osborn, 2015). All participants were secondary school subject teachers of English. Given the theoretical links between language development and literacy and reading skills (e.g., Castles et al., 2018) subject teachers of English may have more opportunity than other subject teachers to reflect on language development and needs.

Reflexive Commentary

I did not come from a secondary teaching background. Therefore, a blind spot for me was an understanding of what training and input secondary school teachers receive regarding language development and language needs. To explore this further, I contacted two local teacher training universities to ask about their curriculum and researched this online. No specific information was provided online, and no responses were received from the administrative team of either university.

During the development of the research, I considered different samples of participants that may be selected to address the aims and research questions. One consideration was learning support (teaching) assistants, who are key figures within the social ecology of the classroom. The impact of not including their experiences in the current research will have shaped the findings. The decision not to include non-teaching staff was made on the basis that these members of staff do not have a statutory responsibility for the progress of students and professional experience and training may vary significantly.

When considering the teachers to include, I was reminded of the assumptions that I was bringing to the research process through the inclusion of participants who were subject teachers of English. Although research may suggest theoretical links between language development and literacy (Castles et al., 2018), it was an assumption that these teachers may have more direct

experience of considering language needs than teachers of other subject areas, as previous research has not explored this area. An interesting direction may have been to explore the experiences of other subject teachers, and further research may look to investigate these experiences. In the context of the current research, I felt that limiting the inclusion criteria to only subject teachers of English was important. As mentioned earlier, I held reservations as to how 'available' the construct and phenomenon may be to participants, and I assumed that English teachers may have opportunity to consider this more than other subject areas due to the curriculum focus. However, this was a blind spot due to my limited understanding of the teacher training for secondary school teachers of English.

3.3.2.2. Sampling

Purposive sampling is the methodology most often used by IPA, where generally homogenous groups of participants are selected to provide an insight into a particular phenomenon with significance for the research questions (Smith et al., 2009). The current research used both opportunity and purposive sampling. The researcher, who was also a Trainee Educational Psychologist completing a work placement in a rural local authority in the northwest of England, used opportunity sampling to contact via email all of the head teachers and SENCos across all secondary schools in the local authority. Email contact was followed by a phone call. Information was provided about the research (Appendix 7).

Of the eleven secondary schools contacted, five expressed an interest and offered to support the research by role of a gate keeper. A purposive sampling approach was used where the school gatekeeper (the SENCo or head of English) identified potential participants and provided the researcher the opportunity to share details of the research project through an online meeting and/or by distributing the participant information sheet (Appendix 8). Teachers volunteered to participate in the research by

contacting the researcher directly. Of the five schools which expressed an interest in supporting the research, five participants volunteered from three schools.

3.3.2.3 Sample size decisions

Sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be smaller and focus on more in-depth analysis of each case (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The ideographic nature of IPA involves a case-by-case analysis of small samples with a focus on depth of insight, rather than breadth and generalisable claims (Smith & Osborn, 2015). IPA samples vary, but researchers suggest three participants can provide a useful sample (Smith & Osborn, 2015). However, decisions may be made for pragmatic reasons and new researchers should act with caution so as not to overwhelm themselves with the quantity of data to analyse (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Given the impact on work identified as a potential ethical dilemma in the current research, it was important to protect the anonymity of participants by recruiting a large enough sample so that individual participants could be obscured by those reading the research who might know them. Five participants took part in the research.

3.3.2.4. Characteristics of participants

3.3.2.4.1. Ideography and impact on environment

The ideography tenet of IPA recognises the importance of the particular (Smith et al., 2022) and IPA research aims to provide detailed accounts of small numbers of participants (Larkin et al., 2006). Given the recruitment strategy and potential ethical impact on participants in their place of work and to prevent the anonymity of participants being compromised, ideographic characteristics of the participants are provided without cross-referencing these with the accounts and extracts provided in the findings.

Characteristics of participants varied (Table 6). All participants were subject teachers of English, but some also held leadership roles in school, including the head of English, senior leadership and the school librarian. Levels of experience also varied from those who were newly qualified to those who had around eight years experience teaching.

All schools have access to specialist services through the local authority. These include the Educational Psychology service who provide services through a time allocation system (a minimum of three sessions are provided through the year but schools can purchase more through a traded service) and the SEND support service who top slice funding from schools to provide a 'free' referral service for schools with no limit on the number of referrals a school is able to make.

Table 6. Characteristics of participants and schools

Characteristics of Participant			**Characteristics of School**		
Gender	**Experience**	**Leadership role**	**School Type**	**OFTSTED rating**	**Progress 8**
Female	NQ Year 2	No	Single-Sex multi-academy trust	Outstanding	+1.55
Female	8 years	Yes			
Female	7 Years	Yes	Mixed Comprehensive	Requires Improvement	-0.86
Male	NQ Year 1	No			
Female	8 Years	Yes	Single-Sex multi-academy trust	Outstanding	+1.78

NQ=Newly Qualified

3.3.2.4.2. Characteristics of schools

The schools in which participants worked also varied on characteristics such as their composition (i.e. academy, single/mixed sex), their ratings from OFSTED and their progress 8 scores. Progress 8 scores provide an indication of how pupils compare to national averages on their qualifications and grades. The inclusion of this characteristic is for illustrative purposes to

demonstrate the breadth of student progress of the schools in which participants taught.

3.3.2.4.3. Local context

The local context in which these three schools were situated is a multi-cultural town surrounded by both rural and more urban areas. Levels of deprivation vary across the borough, but some areas are within the top 10% of the most deprived areas in England.

3.3.3 Methods

3.3.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews are a key method of data collection for qualitative and IPA research and provide a methodology with open questioning that allows for in-depth discussion where participants are encouraged to talk at length (Smith et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviewing would reflect an interview guide approach (see Patton, 1980) where the topics and issues are specified in advance, but the exact wording and sequence of questioning may be determined through the course of the interview (Cohen et al., 2007). An advantage of this interview approach is that it is semi-systematic but allows for opportunities to fill in gaps in the data as they arise (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.3.3.1.1. Interview modality

Individual interviews were carried out over Microsoft Teams. It was suggested that these would last around thirty to forty-five minutes. In practice, the length of interviews varied from between thirty-five minutes to one hour. Factors which influenced the length of interviews included the detail in which participants described their experiences and elaborated within the discussion.

All participants had the opportunity to choose between interviews online or in person. All participants expressed a preference to be interviewed via video call and expressed that this would be easier for them to make time for the research within their busy workday.

3.3.3.1.2. Strengths and limitations of online interviewing

Using digital communication technologies in qualitative social research has become increasingly common in recent years (Weller, 2017), particularly for doctoral researchers following the COVID-19 pandemic (Sah et al., 2020). For IPA research, online interviewing may be useful in expanding the reach of participants and mitigating some costs in participating, such as time restraints (Smith et al., 2022). Researchers have identified that in-person and video interviews yield similar findings in terms of the volume of data and breadth of discussion (Krouwel et al., 2019). Internet video calls may not be inferior to physical interviews. With good quality connection the physical distance can be advantageous, allowing participants to feel at ease and establish a rich interaction (Weller, 2017).

Important to all interviews is the development of rapport (Alase, 2017). Rapport and establishing comfortable interactions during qualitative interviews is necessary to build trust and allow a richness to come from the discussion (McGrath et al., 2019) In the context of video interviews, this process remains salient but may be markedly different, with a focus on technicalities, rather than small talk (Weller, 2017). Important for rapport building is a sense of proximity (McGrath et al., 2019). This may be more challenging to achieve when the researcher and participant are not sharing the same physical space. However, rapport can still be established during video interviews through supportive interchanges and feeling present in the interview (Weller, 2017). Additional barriers which may disrupt rapport and emotional connections during online interviews will need to be managed by the researcher, such as interruptions and disruptions to internet connection (Weller, 2017). There are ethical considerations for the use of online interviews, particularly as it may be more difficult to determine whether

participants are experiencing distress and respond accordingly (Smith et al., 2022). Table 7 displays the strengths and limitations of online interviewing for the current research.

Table 7. The strengths and limitations when online interviewing

Limitations	Strengths
• Interruptions which are not able to be controlled by the researcher. • Participants scheduling insufficient time for interviews and feeling rushed leading to variability in length. • Internet connection issues.	• Ease and preference of participants and opportunity to fit in the time to be interviewed in a busy workday with competing demands. • Ease for the researcher in reaching participants who could be challenging to get in contact with. • Ease with transcribing interviews using software available.

Reflexive Commentary

Although there were some limitations to using online interviewing, within the current research I felt that this approach generally worked well. Face-to-face interviews may mitigate these limitations and may be a consideration for replication or future research. However, although this may be a preference for myself, other researchers and/or the research process, this may not be a preference for participants, who may feel increased pressure participating. This may lead to further costs to the research. I feel flexibility in methods to support participants to feel comfortable to participate is an important role of the researcher and the development of research.

3.3.3.2. Vignettes

3.3.3.2.1. Definition

Some experiences in IPA research may be more difficult to access, such as when participants have not spoken or given much thought to the research phenomenon (Smith et al, 2022). Multi-modal approaches offer an

artefact which scaffolds dialogue and supports participant reflection and richer accounts of a phenomenon (Smith et al, 2022). Vignettes may provide one method. Vignettes are artefacts related to a research topic which may take the form of a short story, visual scenario or a concrete example of individuals and their actions (Törrönen, 2018). Their purpose is to elicit interviewee responses of the issues that arise from a specified topic and explore participants' perceptions, beliefs or ideas about alternative chains of events (O'Dell et al, 2012; Törrönen, 2016). Vignettes allow the researcher to bring the 'here and now' aspect of a research topic to an interview (Törrönen, 2018).

3.3.3.2.2. Theoretical foundations

Vignettes may offer an opportunity to explore participants' knowledge of the research topic but they do not reveal how participants would act in given circumstances, which will be influenced by a range of factors including context and motivation (Jenkins et al, 2010). Vignettes provide an exploratory artefact which encourage interviewees to engage with discursive constructions of the phenomenon, this reality is mediated by the vignettes themselves, the discourse and the questions posed (Törrönen, 2018). This theoretical position would provide a limitation for the use of vignettes for research paradigms where the ontological and epistemological position would be to uncover an objective and real external reality. As such, the theoretical foundations of vignettes are not compatible with realism and positivism (Törrönen, 2018).

Vignettes are more appropriate in the context of interpretivist or constructionist research. There may be several functions of vignettes relating to how they interact with reality (see Törrönen, 2016). Vignettes may provide a clue and object for participants to fill gaps, consider actions and elicit variations in responses to social situations. Alternatively, vignettes may offer a microcosm which brings pertinent features of a research phenomenon to the foreground, introducing a concrete and layered reality as a reference point to direct questioning. With this, vignettes may bring to

the forefront personal experiences and histories (O'Dell et al., 2012). Finally, vignettes when used as a provoker, offer a neutral and acceptable way for the researcher to address sensitive topics, traditions and norms (Törrönen, 2018).

How participants relate to the vignettes may be depicted in their language. There may be multiple voices in participants' talk demonstrating the multiple ways that reality may be represented (O'Dell et al., 2012). This can make interpreting vignette research challenging. There may be an interactional positioning of the participant, depicted through their language. Participants may depict a reality where they shift between themselves, the character and what ought to happen. This provides another dimension through which the language can be scrutinised (O'Dell et al., 2012). How participants interact with their individual reality and the vignettes may be positioned through their language, through the use of 'we', 'thou' and 'they' expressions (Jenkins et al., 2010). Participants may adopt a range of perspectives when commenting on vignettes, including from the position of the character, peers, others or themselves (Hughes & Hubby, 2004). Research has identified that participants move between characters and themselves through language, which can highlight contradictions in their multiple constructions of self (O'Dell et al., 2012). Documenting and analysing these artefacts of the discussion can provide a richness and depth to understanding the reality of participants.

3.3.3.2.3. Vignettes in the research field

Vignettes have been used in IPA research for the purposes of exploring health care professionals' experiences of dementia (Mole et al., 2019), university students' experiences of bullying (Buglass et al., 2021) and coping (Denovan & Macaskill, 2013) and children's understanding of emotional difficulties (Dixon et al., 2012) and cruelty to animals (Wauthier & Williams, 2022). Vignettes provide a compatible method to be used with IPA which can be used as a stand-alone tool or integrated with open questions in interviews.

There has been some limited development of vignettes in the immediate research field. Starling and colleagues (2011) developed two written case study vignettes which included descriptions of the educational and psychosocial impact of language impairment on secondary school students following a review of language impairment in the secondary context. The purpose of these examples was to support professionals in their awareness of how language impairment might present in secondary schools. In her doctoral research, Ramsay piloted and subsequently revised these vignettes for use when interviewing secondary school SENCos (Ramsay, 2015).

3.3.3.2.4. Vignettes in the current research

A social constructionist standpoint would position the research itself and the interaction between the researcher and participants as the construction of its own social reality where participants would bring their experiences and individual realities to shape the nature of the discourse. It was felt that the use of vignettes would be theoretically compatible with the researchers critical realist and social constructionist position when used in the current study. Furthermore, vignettes might also offer a depth and richness to the research topic and data.

In the current study, vignettes were positioned to offer a microcosm, bringing pertinent features of the research phenomenon to the foreground. Given the conceptual ambiguity between researchers and practitioners as to what is a language need and how it is described (see Bishop, 2014), it felt necessary to use vignettes as a similar position may be occupied by participants and asking direct questions about a topic may be difficult as there may be some distance from participants' everyday thinking and experiences. This may affect the richness of their constructions and interview responses.

The plausibility of vignettes is important so that participants can relate to them from their own experience (Jenkins et al., 2010). Piloting of vignettes is an important stage of the research process to ensure that vignettes are

used ethically and consideration is paid to the emotional presentation of participants (Törrönen, 2018). It felt appropriate to use vignettes which have been developed, piloted and used in previous research. As such, the vignettes developed by Starling and colleagues (2011) and revised when piloted with Ramsay (2015) were used in the current research (see Table 8).

Table 8. Table including the vignettes used in the current research, developed by Ramsay (2015)

'Tom' Tom is in Year 8. There were concerns at primary school regarding his ability to form peer relationships and with acquiring literacy skills. Following additional support for literacy in Year 7 Tom acquired functional literacy and the additional support was withdrawn. Tom's teachers find that he sits at the back of the class and talks to other children and he likes to act the 'class clown' making inappropriate comments. Tom does not like to be asked a direct question and will guess at an answer, make an inappropriate response or shrug his shoulders. Tom's teachers describe him as refusing to follow instructions and frequently getting the work wrong. Tom is sometimes involved in incidents during the unstructured times of the day when play fighting gets out of hand. It can be difficult for Tom's teachers to find out exactly what happened. Tom enjoys sport and he is a good football player. He does well in Physical Education lessons. Tom likes doing models and he will work on the computer and likes computer games, although he can find research projects using the Internet frustrating.

'Lucy'

Lucy is in Year 9 and she is working well below her age group in literacy and numeracy. She will use avoidance tactics when she is asked to do things she is less confident with.

Lucy's mood can be unpredictable and she can be non-compliant. Lucy struggles to manage her anger in school particularly when she becomes frustrated. Lucy has had violent outburst which involve threatening and abusive behaviour both to adults and children.

Lucy has difficulty following verbal instructions and she relies on visual and other clues to generate answers when she is asked a direct question.

Lucy has had 1:1 counselling support but she finds it difficult to expand on her ideas an often only gives a one word answer in response to questions. Lucy continues to have difficulties with self-esteem and self-awareness and needs support in developing positive social contact with peers and adults.

Lucy responds to praise, she cares about her personal appearance and she enjoys working with younger children.

3.3.3.2.5. Limitations of vignettes and implications for the current research

Significant methodological limitations occur when vignettes are used in research with realist and positivist underpinning, as their use is inherently social constructionist (Törrönen, 2018). Despite this, even when used within a social constructionist or relativist paradigm, vignettes may experience some limitations with the level of trustworthiness that can be established, interpretation and relationship between belief and actions (Erfanian et al., 2020). Considering of these limitations and implications for the current research are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9. Limitations of vignettes and implications for the current research

Limitation	Implications
Trustworthiness	Vignettes were positioned in the current research to provide an imperfect representation of reality and the research phenomenon in which they describe. This positioning was aligned with the critical realist and social constructionist nature of the current research.
Interpretation	The researcher recognised that participants may interpret the vignettes differently and the direction of the discourse would be shaped by the vignettes. In the current research, using a social constructionist paradigm, the researcher positioned the construction of the discourse to be an interaction between the researcher, participants and methodology. With, or without the use of vignettes, the researcher positioned the discourse to be shaped by the researcher and the interview process. Therefore, the use of vignettes aligned with this position and provided transparency and uniformity between participants as to how the discourse was shaped. However, for the current research question, it is important to acknowledge that the ideas which emerge, and the experiences of participants may not be a perfect representation of participants' experiences, rather a construction of ideas which arise through prompts provided by the vignettes.
Belief/action	The use of vignettes in the current research and teacher's relation to them and experience of the phenomenon was not espoused to provide a reflection of reality. As such, what participants may espouse to do in the context of the vignettes may not provide an accurate depiction of their action in the classroom.

The trustworthiness of vignettes remains one of their most significant limitations and their ability to accurately depict the social reality in which they intend to describe (Erfanian et al., 2020). It remains important that participants are able to relate to vignettes plausibly from their own experiences (Jenkins et al., 2010). The world is complex and when depicted through vignettes may be overly simplified and potentially unrealistic (Murphy et al., 2021). Piloting vignettes is an approach to improve their trustworthiness (Törrönen, 2018; Murphy et al., 2021). Vignettes may be most effective when they seem real and relate to participants' experiences (Erfanian et al., 2020).

Vignettes may make assumptions about how the information is interpreted and lead to particular responses (Erfanian et al., 2020). Vignettes may also lead the conversation and direct the ideas that emerge from subsequent discourse. A further concern with the use of vignettes is the relationship between belief and action (Erfanian et al., 2020). Vignettes may be a poor methodology to consider how participants may act in a real life situation under the given circumstances (Jenkins et al, 2010).

Reflexive Commentary

A methodological consideration for the current research was whether to develop my own vignettes with participants. The possibility for doing this was limited by the tight research timeframe (see Appendix 5). A further consideration with this choice was whether teachers would have the insight into the phenomenon which would allow the level of detail and depth to describe how language needs may present in the secondary school age phase and context. The vignettes selected had been developed by researchers (Starling et al., 2011), piloted and revised (Ramsay, 2015), which were strengths for their development. When used in the current research, teachers appeared to relate to them and several participants spoke of how *'Tom'* and/or *'Lucy'* reminded them of a child that they had worked with, suggesting that they were plausible for their experiences. Future research may look to develop vignettes further through co-production with researchers and educational staff.

3.3.3.3. Development of research methods

3.3.3.3.1 Ethics – power imbalances

Imbalances of power exist between the researcher and participants in interviews, as the researcher tends to impose the dialogue through the course of the discussion (Plesner, 2011). Due to the partial disclosure, a change in direction of the discourse to focus on language needs may not have been anticipated by participants. Using open and curious questions is both a way to develop rapport (McGrath et al., 2019) and to address this power imbalance, which was a consideration in the development of the interview schedule. The researcher attempted to be explicit in this change of direction to address differences in power, support participants to feel aware of the process and allow them time to consider their responses. The researcher remained respectful of participant's responses.

3.3.3.3.2 Piloting and interview schedule

The interview schedule was developed through a reflexive and collaborative process between the researcher and her supervisor and piloted with a secondary school teacher of science. Changes were made to an initial interview schedule (Appendix 9) following piloting. A second draft of the interview schedule (Appendix 10) documented changes to the wording of questions so that they brought about a more appreciative stance. This interview schedule was used for the first participant.

Reflexive Commentary

Initial changes to the interview schedule focused on reducing and combining the overall number of questions from fifteen to six. In doing so, questions were reframed for clarity. For example, the question; *'What are your thoughts about what you have read? Does anything stand out for you?'* was considered potentially ambiguous. It was reframed; *'What are your thoughts about Lucy/Tom? What may be happening for this young person and how may you address these needs?'.*

Following further research tutorials and reflection with the researcher's supervisor, further semantic changes were made to the interview schedule with reference to ethical considerations of the role of the researcher and power. The finalised interview schedule was used with all subsequent participants (Appendix 11). These revisions looked at the ways in which language needs were introduced. This included being explicit in a change of direction; *"I'm going to change the direction of the interview slightly to focus on one area of SEND which is language needs".* The reason for doing this was to allow participants to feel informed and clear of the unfolding interview process, respect their autonomy and prevent them from feeling thrown by subsequent questions. Furthermore, given the ambiguity of language needs as a concept, which may mean different things for different people, questions were introduced to explore participants' constructions of language needs; *'What does language needs mean for you? Have a couple of minutes to think about this if you would like.'* The features and a description of language needs was provided and prompted a discussion to establish a shared understanding.

Reflexive Commentary

It had not been my intention to continue making changes to the interview schedule following the interview with the first participant. The rationale for continued changes was felt to be justified, based on research ethics and supporting further participants to feel comfortable during the research process. Due to this change, all but one of the participants received the same interview schedule (Appendix 11). The first participant was interviewed using an earlier interview schedule (Appendix 10). I made the decision to include the first participant within the final data set as I felt that much of the changes to the interview schedule were semantic, and therefore the 'essence' of the interviews remained the same. Importantly, I felt that as the first participant was not aware that their interview would be used as a pilot, and not including them would not be ethical as they had given their time and candidly shared their personal experiences. The lack of uniformity with interviewing is a

recognised limitation of the current research but reflects the realities of real-world research and continued reflexivity. However, I felt that these variations in interviews could be reconciled due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, meaning that each interview was expected to be slightly different due to adaptations in the moment and further questioning.

I attempted to be explicit in how I actively contributes to the co-construction of reality and knowledge from a critical realist and social constructionist standpoint. This was through the sharing of the vignettes, a definition and inviting the discussion and reflection of participants. Reflecting on the power dynamics during the interview, the revisions to the interview schedule were an attempt to mitigate a perception of me as a 'knower' attempting to 'assess' the experiences of participants. This may have been the perception given as I held the knowledge that the focus of the interview was on language needs, rather than SEND more generally. Rather, the attempts were to approach the discussion from a more curious and open position. From an ontological position, conveying this position was important, as I positioned participants and their experiences to be the source of knowledge and them to be the 'knowers' of their own reality. Furthermore, from a phenomenological standpoint, the purpose of the research was to explore the sense making and experiences of participants, rather than 'objective' knowledge of language needs. The concept of language needs exists in the reality and experiences of participants, which was the purpose of the research.

Revisions to the interview schedule also included scripts to recognise the ambiguity of the vignettes and the concept of language needs;

'The term 'language needs' is quite vague and can mean several different things to different people and can be called many different names in practice, which is why I asked you that question'

'Looking back at these vignettes, although there may be many other possible and valid reasons behind the students' presentation,

considering their descriptions now through a lens that they may have a language need, what behaviours do you think could suggest that? [a language need]'

The purpose of this question is to encourage participants to reflect on their interpretation of the vignettes while also recognising that language needs may not be something that was considered initially. This question is to encourage participants to now consider language needs when making sense of the vignettes.

Questions were also reframed positively to focus on strengths and what was going well;

'What personally or professionally have you found helpful when working with language needs? (It may be helpful to consider what helped for yourself or the student, how you may know that it helped/worked well, any skills, strengths or resources you may have or that you were supported with from others)'.

Reflexive Commentary

A further consideration was how to refer to language needs within my research in a way that would be understood by participants and recognising that many different terms are used and understanding may vary. A reflection written in my reflexive log during this development includes;

"my conceptualisation of language needs is broader than just recognised SLCN (speech, language and communication needs). It also encompasses language delays due to experiences. What I mean by 'language needs' may be distinctly different to others/participants conceptualisations. A role of the interview schedule is to explore the meaning for participants, but also to create a shared understanding which can be reflected on through the interview process"

3.3.4. Procedure

3.3.4.1. Recruitment

Participants were provided with the information sheet (Appendix 8) prior to scheduling the interview. The researcher contacted participants through a gatekeeper in school. Those who wished to participate in the research contacted the researcher directly.

3.3.4.2. Interview procedure

The interview started with displaying the information sheet (Appendix 8), GDPR statement (Appendix 13) and consent form (Appendix 14) through Microsoft Teams. Participants were able to ask questions and were reminded that the interview was voluntary and that they would be able to stop and withdraw from the interview without explanation at any point during or after the process, prior to the analysis of the data. Participants completed a consent form. Interviews were audio recorded using a secure device and transcribed through Microsoft Teams. Audio recordings were deleted once transcribed and anonymised. Raw data was stored securely on the University OneDrive.

The interview followed the procedure outlined in the interview schedule but there was flexibility in the questioning as topics arose. Opportunities to elaborate and expand on the discussion is a feature of semi-structured interviewing (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview could be conceptually divided into discrete phases (see Appendix 11). The first section aimed to gather background information about participants' role, professional experiences and experiences when supporting SEND in the classroom.

Next, the researcher displayed the vignettes on the screen (Appendix 12). Participants were invited to read the descriptions and then engage with discussions directed by the researcher's questioning. At this point, questioning remained open to explore participants' constructions of the vignettes in relation to their experiences and the concept of language needs was not raised by the researcher (unless initiated by the participant). Following this discussion, the researcher introduced the concept of

language difficulties and invited participants to discuss their experiences, reappraise the vignettes and explore experiences further.

Towards the end of the interview, participants were provided with the debrief (Appendix 15), which was displayed on their screen for them to read. This was also sent to participants after the interview. After reading the debrief, the researcher, used a script (Appendix 16) to thank participants for their participation, bringing attention to important features of the debriefing document, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw. The researcher sought verbal consent to continue with the interview, where participants could discuss and question the researcher. All participants expressed a wish to continue with the interview and final questions provided an opportunity to make any comments after receiving the information from the debrief.

3.4. Data Analysis

The following section will provide a description of the data analysis procedure that was used to address the research questions:

What sense do teachers create of the language needs of secondary school students?

What are the experiences of secondary school teachers when supporting language needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

The researcher followed the process for IPA outlined by Smith & colleagues (2022, p.79-108). Although presented in a linear sequence, the process is intended to be fluid and the researcher moved backwards and forwards through the stages.

3.4.1. Transcription, Reading and Re-reading

Immersion in the data involves data familiarisation, where the researcher reads, re-reads and listens to audio recordings of the interviews.

Reflections may be recorded in a notebook as a parallel process. Active engagement with the data during this stage is important for developing an understanding of how narratives of different sections of the interview may relate.

During this stage of the analysis the researcher edited interview transcripts that were generated through Microsoft Teams. Engagement with the data was recorded in the researcher's reflective log and comments through Microsoft Word (See Appendix 17 for an example). A template document was created in Microsoft Word which would allow for the different stages of the data analysis. Transcripts were copied into this template in preparation for next steps.

Reflexive Commentary

The process of data immersion was enlightening. Engaging with the data allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the data and meaning from the interviews with individual participants. Having the opportunity to explore the interviews in more depth during the data immersion phase allowed me to compare how the dialogue changed. This illuminated the meaning participants brought to the interview and vignettes pre- and post- introduction of the concept of language needs. This process contributed to the decision to change methodologies from RTA to IPA. It felt important for the research aims to capture idiographic accounts and variability in experiences (see section 3.2.6.2.).

3.4.2 Exploratory Noting

Exploratory noting is a flexible process which involves a process of condensing the data. There are several levels to exploratory noting. Descriptive and linguistic notes may aim to stay close to the participants' meaning and semantic content. Alongside this, codes may be evaluative, conceptual or interrogative, which capture continued reflection and engagement with the data.

This process may use handwritten paper or typed notes using everyday word processing software. The researcher used typed transcripts and added exploratory notes through Microsoft Word. The same data could be coded at different levels (descriptive, linguistic, evaluative, conceptual/interrogative) and notes were colour coded to support the researcher when re-immersing in the data as data analysis took several weeks.

Specific to the current study and evidenced through linguistic codes were how participants used language to engage with the vignettes (see Appendix 18 for examples).

Reflexive Commentary

There can be a tendency during this phase of the analysis to focus too heavily on the descriptive features of the transcript at the detriment of more abstract and conceptual noting (Smith et al., 2022). Colour coding levels of noting during this phase was a helpful visual reminder for me to engage with different levels of noting. It also provided a visual audit trail of how I actively contributed to the creation of meaning and knowledge.

3.4.3 Constructing Experiential Statements

When constructing experiential statements, the researcher attempts to reduce the volume of data (raw and exploratory notes) which reflect the sense made by participants of their experiences (Smith et al., 2022). This includes discrete chunks of transcript and exploratory noting and involves a process of reorganising the data to produce more precise summaries. These summaries should reflect a clearer understanding of the sense making and meaning (see Appendix 18 for examples).

Reflexive Commentary

Staying too close to the original data can lead to high volumes of experiential statements. It may be helpful to ask whether experiential statements reflect the analytical work of the exploratory noting or provide a reconfiguration of the

data (Smith et al., 2022, p.90). This can provide a helpful punctuation point for researchers when reflecting on this process. Reflections recorded in my reflective log during the time document falling into this practice and the iterative engagement with the data during this stage of the analysis;

'I needed to go back and re-do my experiential statements because on reflection they were just my exploratory notes and there were far too many of them. When re-writing my experiential statements I kept thinking – what is my interpretation and what is the most interesting/important thing about this part of the data?'

I believe that this reflection highlights the active and interpretative role of I adopted during this stage of the analysis and engagement with hermeneutic cycles.

3.4.4 Searching For Connections Across Experiential Statements

This stage involves charting or mapping how experiential statements relate, appraising them for their importance and may involve discarding those which are not relevant to the research questions. When initially constructing experiential statements, the researcher kept a running log of the experiential statements from the transcript in order to cross reference them and avoid repetitions. The researcher referred to the data which informed the experiential statements (transcript line numbers) and printed and cut out the experiential statements to organise on a large flat surface (as outlined by Smith et al., 2022) (see Appendix 19 for examples).

3.4.5. Naming Personal Experiential Statements, Consolidating and Tabulating

Experiential statements were clustered for their meaning to develop personal experiential themes, which were assigned a name to describe their meaning. This process can then be depicted using boxes, where personal experiential themes provide the highest organisation of the concept and experiential statements can provide subthemes, linked with

excerpts of the raw data to provide an evidence trail. Personal experiential themes for each participant are tabulated (Appendices 20-25).

Reflexive Commentary

During this and subsequent stages of the analysis I grappled with how best to analyse the data to capture participant change during the different stages of the interview (i.e. pre- and post- introduction of language needs). Initially, I looked to analyse the data and organise experiential statements as two separate parts to make comparisons. This would reflect how researchers have used IPA in longitudinal designs (Smith et al., 2022) where themes are developed tied to a particular time point (Farr & Nizza, 2019). However, it was felt that there were large numbers of personal experiential themes which were undeveloped. When the data was analysed as a whole, I felt this strategy to be more helpful in developing richer themes. Contradictions within the themes were noted to identify participant change. Reflections were recorded in my reflective log;

'I feel that analysing the data in two parts is not working. I'm developing numerous personal experiential themes – some of which have similarities, others differences. I feel that to reduce the volume of data and analysis and to make it easier to make direct comparisons of similarities and contradictions I should re-analyse the data as a whole and explore what gives a better account and understanding of the participant's experience'

'I'm comparing the analysis where I have separated out the experiential statements and combined them when developing personal experiential themes – when cross referencing the personal experiential themes my conclusion is – I'm getting pretty much the same outcome except that when the data is analysed as a whole, the personal experiential themes have more experiential statements, are better developed and are clearer. The verdict – I think that this method of analysis is clearer and provides a better account of participants' experiences'

3.4.6 Developing Group Experiential Themes Across the Cases

Although the analysis may finish at the level of individual cases, researchers may continue the analysis, using similar processes used with individual cases to develop group experiential themes across the data set (Smith et al., 2022). This process is not to develop generalisable findings but rather to identify areas of convergence and divergence in the experiences and sense-making of participants. Noting convergence and divergence involves a process of recognising similarities (convergence) and differences, or idiosyncrasies (divergences) between the language and experiences of participants (Nizza et al., 2021).

The process in which the researcher developed group experiential themes reflected the process described by Smith and colleagues (2022). The personal experiential themes developed from the experiences of individual participants were laid out on a flat surface and the researcher engaged with a creative process of arranging personal experiential themes into groups of conceptually similar experiences (see Appendix 25). This process was iterative as it required the researcher to trial different connections across the data set and track the data back through earlier stages to the raw transcripts. Themes from concepts were also merged to develop group experiential themes and sub-themes. Group experiential themes and sub-themes were recorded in tables (see Appendix 26 for tabulated data).

Reflexive Commentary

IPA may be carried out at an individual case level. However, I chose to continue the analysis to develop group experiential themes, as it felt that this approach aligned with the philosophical underpinned of the research which informed my decision making. Critical realism assumes that reality is socially and societally shaped (Cuthbertson et al., 2020) and an imperfect understanding of reality may be approximated by depicting the regularities and patterns of thinking (Sprague, 2010), which may be refined over time to move closer to an imperfect version of 'reality' (Archer et al., 2016). By noting convergence (similarity) and divergence (idiosyncrasies), group experiential themes were

developed by recognising shared constructs and appraising how participants related to these individually.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Introduction

The current research used individual interviews and case study vignettes. The use of vignettes in the current research were positioned as a research artefact that create a 'microcosm' and brings to life the research phenomenon for participants during the research process (see Törrönen, 2018). This provided participants with the opportunity to share their experiences of SEND. Then, through a further hermeneutic cycle, reappraise these experiences through a lens of a language need. The researcher played an active and interpretative role when creating meaning from participants' experiences.

This chapter summarises participants' individual experiences through their personal experiential themes (Section 4.2). To adhere to the ideographic nature of IPA, shared themes are not intended to provide generalisable findings. Rather, they provide points of discussion in the convergence and divergence of individual experience. Participants are provided with a pseudonym and female pronouns to protect their anonymity.

4.2. Personal Experiential Themes

4.2.1. Alex

Alex's experiences were illuminated by four personal experiential themes (Appendix 20). The first; '*the particular things which one gets from effective SEND processes'*. These processes provided Alex with structure, confidence, support and information about students. The second theme; '*teachers are experts in the curriculum, not language development'.* Within this theme, Alex felt confidence in the curriculum, the curriculum supports language development and teachers are responsible for the curriculum, not language development. '*The ways in which needs are identified'* included intuition, focusing on learning and behaviour, getting a second opinion, using the curriculum (but this was not conclusive as to whether a student had SEND) and balancing what she knew of the effects of disadvantage

without discriminating against pupils. The final theme; '*the multiple roles in SEND'* involved students, who could be influenced by their motivation and confidence, the roles of others in providing guidance around SEND and students, learning support assistants who bridge the curriculum for learners and teachers' role in being aware and accountable for students with SEND.

4.2.2. Brenda

Brenda's experience was illuminated by four personal experiential themes (Appendix 21). Brenda experienced '*working with SEND as a journey',* steered by whole-school agendas, co-ordinated by the SENCo and limited by lack of training, feedback and variations in the implementation of SEND support. It was felt that *'working with SEND is hard',* which was encapsulated by experiential statements such as; we're trying our best, there is a lot of need and we're all at different stages. A third theme related to Brenda's experience that '*language needs are not in everyday consciousness',* informed by a focus instead on students' learning and behaviour and informed by her perception that she had limited knowledge and understanding of language needs. The final theme; '*the ways in which needs are supported',* was experienced by pre-planning, adapting and building relationships with students.

4.2.3. Charlie

Charlie's experiences were organised into four personal experiential themes (Appendix 22). Charlie's construction of language needs was informed by '*EAL and expressive language difficulties are features of language needs'.* A second theme; '*teachers bridge the curriculum and offer support'* and Charlie felt this support should be bespoke, but often consisted of generally used strategies for different SEND. Charlie experienced '*teacher-student interactions influence the presentation of needs and support'* and *'sources of support and guidance for SEND'* included expert others, hands on experiences and needs understood through diagnoses and curriculum comparisons.

4.2.4. Dana

Three personal experiential themes detailed Dana's experience (Appendix 23). The first; '*the particular things that inform an understanding of SEND or language needs',* included an assumption that students with SEND will have a support assistant, causal attributions, a focus on behaviour, where language needs were not routinely considered. The second theme; '*what it is to be a teacher'* was felt to be something that was not easy, that teachers bridge the curriculum and that others provide further guidance on SEND. The final theme was a concept that Dana valued and found significant; '*the importance of classroom environment and interactions'.*

4.2.5. Ellen

Ellen's experience was organised into four personal experiential themes (Appendix 24). The first related to the '*processes used to make sense of needs'.* Ellen drew on personal, lived experiences, interpretive and cognitive processes, SEND processes which provide structure and guidance and the expertise of others. The second theme; '*what it means to be a teacher'.* Ellen experienced this as something that was not easy but that she felt competent with. Differentiation for Ellen involved pre-planning, responding to students in the moment and evaluating. The final themes related to Ellen's construction that '*spoken language difficulties impact student's behaviour'* and '*the importance of the classroom environment and interactions'.*

4.3. Group Experiential Themes and Sub-Themes

Group experiential themes and sub-themes are displayed in Table 7. Four Group experiential themes were identified which were significant for most participants. Blue dots are used in Table 7 to depict which participants shared aspects of their experience which contributed to the development of the group experiential theme and sub-theme.

Table 10. Group Experiential Themes and Sub-Themes

Group Experiential Theme	Sub-Theme	Participants*				
		A	B	C	D	E
Expertise	The Significance of Language Needs	●	●	●	●	●
	Curriculum Expertise	●		●	●	
	Others are Experts	●	●	●	●	●
Interactions	Building relationships		●	●	●	●
	Planning and Responding		●	●		●
	Student engagement	●		●		
Feeling challenged	Being a teacher is hard		●	●	●	●
	Supportive SEND processes	●	●			●
Interpretation	Personal interpretation	●	●	●	●	●
	Disentangling needs and behaviour	●	●	●	●	●

** Alex (A), Brenda (B), Charlie (C), Dana (D), Ellen (E)*

4.3.1. Group Experiential Theme One: Expertise

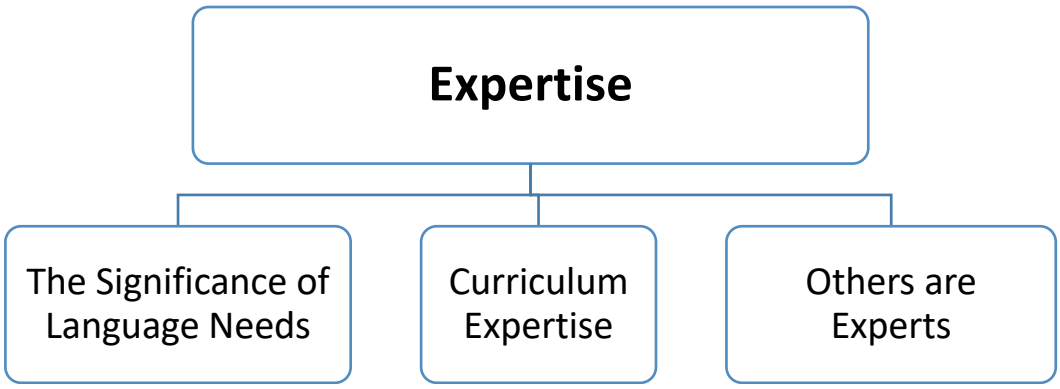

Figure 3. Depicting the group experiential theme of 'Expertise' and related sub-themes

4.3.1.1. The significance of language needs

This sub-theme illustrates that for some participants their experience of language needs was not a construct that had particular significance for their everyday practice and role. Gaps in understanding were acknowledged; *"I*

don't know much about what that is" (Brenda: 176), *"I don't think I have that knowledge"* (Alex: 364-365), *"it's hard to put into words"* (Charlie: 186). This experience was captured by Alex:

> *"I think it's not an area that we to be frank, it's not something we look at in detail…If you were to ask me at what rate people develop, kids, adolescents in particular develop etcetera, I don't think I'd be able to give you an answer"* (Alex: 354-357) *"…we stopped looking at language development once the kid has stopped being a child and once the child becomes a teenager, it's no longer a real issue for us"* (Alex: 380-381)

Alex's linguistic tone is direct with *'to be frank'*. When recognising gaps in her understanding, this is accompanied by the belief that this is a concern for earlier in child development and not for the secondary age phase; *'it's no longer a real issue for us'.* Alex holds a senior leadership position. This experience may provide context to the sense of confidence with which Alex expresses her experience, the clear construction she holds of the parameters of her role and articulating that language needs and development is not an area of significance for her experience as a teacher.

Alex distances language needs from her everyday experiences and what she holds to be significant. This may be informed by the belief that these needs are of low prevalence:

> *"Do I think that [language needs] impacts the learners? Yes, I think that, the majority of our learners are fine. They'll be absolutely fine. There's a small percent and a smaller cohort that is still struggling [sic]"* (Alex: 358-359)

The repetition and Alex's choice of words reiterate and emphasise her belief. This belief is shared by Brenda:

> *"I haven't had, like, too much experience working with pupils with, a variety of pupil with those needs [sic]. I'll be honest,*

maybe just a handful over the past seven years" (Brenda: 226-227)

Ellen's experience diverges from other participants. Personal, lived experiences of language needs mean this construct holds more significance for Ellen. She uses this experience in her sense making of the world, demonstrated through her engagement with the vignettes and meaning that she creates from them;

"Lucy reminds me a lot of [person]. [Person] has word-finding difficulties" (Ellen: 185-186)

"Tom, he reminds me of someone, a child that I'm working with…I would say there's obviously a lack of focus there…he's hiding maybe a lack of understanding" (Ellen: 120-124)

Ellen's language depicts how her reality and lived experiences interact with the social reality and sense making created when reading the vignettes. Ellen's nuanced understanding of language needs is advantageous for her when picking up on subtle cues in the descriptions which may suggest *'Lucy'* and *'Tom'* have a language need.

Others draw on their own experiences when sharing their constructions of language needs. Restricted experiences and limited prior consideration mean that these constructs focus on specific characteristics of language which were more easily identifiable, such as having English as an Additional Language (EAL); *"so English as an additional language would be a language need"* (Brenda: 175), *"I've got quite a few English as an additional language pupils"* (Charlie: 265). For Charlie, this construct of language needs being so tightly affiliated with EAL influenced her interpretation of *'Tom's'* description and the possibility of whether she would consider a student to have these needs if they did not have EAL:

"…if English is [Tom's] first language and then then [sic] that would have eliminated sort of any communication sort of

initially [sic]. You know, that that [sic] he's able to sort of articulate and talk it for himself [sic]" (Charlie: 121-123)

For Charlie, being a native English speaker 'eliminates' the possibility of communication difficulties and with that the possibility that Charlie would consider a language need for *'Tom's'* presentation.

Expressive language difficulties feature more significantly in Dana and Charlie's construction of a language need:

"…their ability to be able to talk and communicate and be able to sort of adjust for differing audiences…Whether they're still talking through things that they've learned through osmosis or if they're able to take on explicit sort of new vocabulary" (Charlie: 182-184)

"they don't really speak in full sentences…they'll reply with one or two word answers" (Dana: 245-246) *"…children who are finding it difficult to articulate their speech. You know, having that confidence to be able to speak properly"* (Dana: 180-181)

For Dana, she experiences students with understanding difficulties frequently but interpreting this as a language need was not something previously considered. Following deeper intentional reflection about language needs Dana shared:

"I'd say understanding instructions is a, stood out [sic], because you do repeat yourself a couple of times in lessons, and they'll still, they'll still [sic] put their hands up two minutes later and be like, what are we doing? And you're like, I've just said it four times" (Dana: 205-207)

Dana shared this insight following a discussion with the researcher about the various features of a language need, one being understanding. There is the insinuation that Dana may have attributed students not understanding instructions as being careless or inattentive. This insight through the

process brings to the forefront everyday experiences with new meaning for Dana. She continues to share her insights through the discourse. Following the debriefing discussion, Dana shared:

> *"Yeah, it's really interesting actually…It's true. I I [sic] would say they are a hidden population…it's not something you automatically think of when you think of SEND pupils. The things that mainly come to your head are like autism, ADHD, behavioural issues, emotional issues, things like that or dyslexia. You don't think of speech and language as one of the main ones. So it's interesting to read that…Umm but yeah it's made me think of it differently now. Interesting"* (Dana: 326-330)

The repetition of 'interesting' captures Dana's new meaning of the phenomenon and insights into her experiences that she has developed through the research process. Language needs was not a concept of particular significance for Dana but was brought into a space for intentional reflection and conscious awareness. Through this process, Dana shares insights into the ways in which she may typically make sense of students' needs through what she perceives to be the areas of need and difficulties which *'mainly come to your head'* or her causal attributions.

4.3.1.2. Curriculum expertise

This sub-theme illustrates participants' perceptions that the expertise they held was in their knowledge of the English curriculum. Alex expressed this with confidence; *"we have a very strong English curriculum and fantastic results"* (Alex: 324-325) and it was important to her to prioritise the core curriculum offer over intervention:

> *[intervention is] "…part of our curriculum yes, aligned to our curriculum, yes, but not done within the curriculum time…Other schools might choose to do this within the curriculum time, but*

again, we felt we've got a solid curriculum offer and then detracting and stuff like that [sic]" (Alex: 333-336)

Alex's comparison to other schools insinuates the perception that what her school is doing is different from others. She is mindful not to detract from the curriculum and experiences pride in her expertise and school offer, emphasising ('*but again'*) how important this is to her and her school.

Others described their curriculum expertise, although not with a comparable sentiment of pride and confidence. Alex's senior leadership role and investment in the development of her school's curriculum provide a context of personal and professional investment. This may explain the emotive discursive elements when sharing her experience, which may not be felt by other participants without the same level of investment.

In articulating her curriculum expertise so clearly, Alex also describes how she experiences language development not to be within the parameters and expertise of her role:

"…beyond knowing what a curriculum relation expectation [sic] is for a learner and what they'll be able to show me at the end of a particular term or a year group or a year, I don't think I I [sic] have that knowledge. Is there a training requirement? Um, I don't know. I don't know that it is" (Alex: 363-365)

"…we stopped looking at language development…We just need them…to learn and learn quicker every single day. So I think… if we're saying that language development is corresponding with the amount of words student [sic] knows…and by knows, I mean how well they can use those words, then we have a fair idea of that. But if we're looking at cognitive processes and what's happening in the student's mind, that we don't [sic] have a fair idea of that, or certainly I as a teacher don't. I'm sure our SENCo can give you all sorts of stats [statistics] and stuff. But equally what I'm saying to you is I don't know if I need to know" (Alex: 380-387)

The effect of Alex verbalising her own thought processes through questions; '*do I think it is a training requirement?'* suggests that despite her apparent ambiguity, (i.e. *'I don't know'),* there is a cautious certainty that language needs and development is not a training requirement or necessary to understand and achieve what she perceives to be her primary purpose; '*to get them [students] to learn quicker every day'.* There are two constructions to what Alex believes to be language development; what students can demonstrate in the classroom and the cognitive underpinnings of language. Alex appears not to value to the same extent an understanding of the cognitive processes for her role and believes her curriculum knowledge provides her with the understanding of language use in the classroom context. This belief is supported by the belief that the curriculum intuitively supports language development:

> *"the literacy curriculum is primarily to do with vocabulary, expressing yourself, being able to receive vocab [vocabulary] and understand it, and to be able to to [sic] use that vocab [vocabulary] to express yourself as well. And then there's the idea of being able to speak to different contexts"* (Alex: 263-265) *"…Our literacy curriculum is designed to ensure that the students are able to read, write, speak, listen better"* (Alex: 270-271) "…*we take it for granted that when they go through our curriculum, they will just develop"* (Alex: 350)

Others, although less confidently articulated than Alex, also position their expertise and professional focus in the curriculum. Charlie, following a discussion with the researcher about language needs and how they present, fell back on teaching, which she believed to be her primary purpose when reappraising '*Lucy's'* vignette:

> *"I'm hopefully here to teach them…so long as all the safeguarding requirements and assuming that that that that [sic] it's nothing to do with that that's leading to these these [sic] sort of symptoms. Then yeah, that would be…my approach to it, to say that there's there's [sic] potentially gaps that Lucy's*

displaying and these are manifesting as as [sic] XY and Z but, and [sic] we need to look to sort of [sic] bridge these gaps" (Charlie: 243-247)

Charlie, Dana and Alex shared the perception and experience that their curriculum expertise could offer the opportunity to identify students' needs through gaps, slower progress or the ways in which students respond to learning;

"…establishing what those gaps are and looking to support them" (Charlie: 141)*"…A really good tell sometimes is, you'll sometimes get a student who when you ask them to write a question, response to a question, they'll actually just copy a text out or they'll copy, and that's usually quite a good tell that they perhaps don't understand the the [sic] level of language that they need to"* (Charlie: 31-34)

…"what they're reading age is, and obviously it is [sic] many years below they're actual age. We know that there's, you know, something there, something that we need to have a look at" (Dana: 53-54)

"Spelling that is it [sic] there's no logical pattern for that spelling to be wrong…handwriting that is illegible and constantly illegible" (Alex: 145-148)

Yet, despite this opportunity provided by the curriculum, identifying SEND in this way is vague:

"So if there's already an attainment gap, you can't put the kid on to a SEND register and say this is the problem" (Alex: 251-252) "…*slow progress or slower attainment does not equal a complex need"* (Alex: 184)

"I've got year 10s who have got a reading age of 6-year-olds, so you wouldn't necessarily say that the language problem is [sic] they've got gaps in their knowledge" (Charlie: 232-233)

There appears to be a competing construction for Alex and Charlie that the curriculum is their method of identifying need, but not meeting age-related expectations means curriculum struggles, not necessarily an opportunity for deeper reflection and consideration as to the factors which may underly this or present a barrier for students when accessing learning.

4.3.1.3. Others are experts

This sub-theme illustrates how participants positioned their experiences as interlinked with the expertise of others. The SENCo plays a prominent role:

"…obviously the SEND coordinator…any concerns would go to and all the training comes through her" (Brenda: 231-232).

"…if I needed any other kind of help in terms of, I've identified a need and I think oh there's something there, I'm not quite sure, it would be the SENCo who'd say, who'd help with me [sic] in that case" (Ellen: 105-106)

"so hopefully it will go through that [a referral process to the SENCo] and be able to sort of establish ways of which we can support" (Charlie: 21-26) *"…the SENCo team to sort of assess him and and [sic] sort of move forward that way"* (Charlie: 255-256)

There is the sense from these participants that the guidance and support provided by the SENCo is valued for problem-solving a situation where they feel stuck. For Ellen, this input is received at a time where she is *'not quite sure'* and for Charlie, SENCo involvement allows her to *'move forward'* by *'establishing ways'.*

SENCo's may offer their expertise through explicit guidance and it is the experience of teachers to follow these recommendations; *"I will always give advanced warning because I've been asked to"* (Alex: 101-102), *"We have our SEND lead like I said, who essentially tells us if there's any updates on them, if there's any strategies we should be putting into place"* (Dana: 75-76). There is also the sense that the SENCo can share some of the responsibility for students when it is felt that needs and learning gaps are too significant to be bridged by the teacher:

> *"Depending on the size of those gaps, I mean some of them can be sort of bridged and…some of them can't"* (Charlie: 141-142)

> *"…it's not in my hands. I've done as much as I can, and now they need additional support"* (Alex: 258-259)

Charlie and Alex appear to have an intuitive demarcation where the support they can offer is no longer sufficient ('*I've done as much as I can', 'some of them [gaps] can't [be bridged]'*). Alex expands on this distinction:

> *"I'm not sure if it's a special educational need or just support that's required in literacy. And again, that's something that we have distinguished between that kind of English department itself support him and we probably could [sic]. Or does it really require the SENCo support?"* (Alex: 211-213)

There is a polarising effect to her interpretation of whether support from the English department is sufficient or not. In this interpretation, SEND becomes the responsibility of the SENCo and English support the responsibility of the English department. In doing so, Alex may perceive herself to be a teacher of English, rather than a teacher of SEND. Charlie appears to hold similar sentiment and felt it to be unfamiliar when hypothesising about needs, believing this to be the responsibility and expertise of others:

"I don't find it helps me to sort of try and diagnose or sort of label them in any way…Obviously there's a series of tests and medical people that would then diagnose him. I would just try and look to support him to…achieve in class" (Charlie: 125-128)

Charlie experiences a delineation in the construction of her role, namely to support students '*to achieve in class*' and the roles and responsibilities of others who diagnose. The linguistic tone is ambiguous and that it is beyond her expertise and the role and responsibility of '*medical people'*. A group presumably Charlie does not identify with from her perception of self as a teacher. The effect of this being Charlie devalues her own interpretations and insights.

Colleagues provide another source of expertise; "*this guidance just comes from…asking teachers [who] have already experienced this"* (Dana: 82-83), "*we can talk amongst ourselves as a department…other teachers expertise and sort of time served sort of [sic] does serve as a good reference point"* (Charlie: 71-73), *"I will usually raise that that with my direct line manager first to say this is what I'm picking up"* (Alex: 129-130). There is a sense that sharing amongst teachers is helpful to check one's own interpretation and share similar past experiences.

For Ellen, the expertise offered by her Learning Support Assistant (LSA) colleagues is highly valued; "*I would speak first and foremost to the LSA"* (Ellen: 137). Ellen's value of LSA's expertise likely comes from her own lived experiences in that role; "*my LSA experience working in the SEN department has really helped"* (Ellen: 91) and the time spent with young people;

"the LSA who knows the child better then [sic] anybody else really because they're with that child from from [sic] 8 o'clock in the morning till 3 o'clock, so they understand that child really well. And it's really working together" (Ellen: 107-108)

Charlie, Dana and Ellen, whether they are looking to the expertise of other teachers or LSAs, converge on the shared value they place on expertise developed through practical and hands on experiences with students who have similar needs then sharing this experience. Participants who recently qualified as a teacher highly value this sharing of experiences and the expertise of others has a profound effect on Charlie;

> *"There's always something that we can learn…to embed into my teaching and my practice to help support the students better"* (Dana: 290-293)

> *"I've still got lots to learn and there's lots of experts out there…you get an experts opinion on sort of things [sic] and their view and and [sic] it can be sort of like a light bulb moment. You know, sometimes you can be struggling with a pupil and you think I'm really not getting to where I need to. And then suddenly their sort of take on it and you sort of think Wow, that, yeah, that actually makes a lot of difference and and [sic] sort of, you know it can change the whole dynamic of of [sic] how things happen in your classroom…I hope I'll never be in the position when I say, well, actually, no, I know everything and I don't need to worry about it because I think that's the worst thing I could possibly do as a teacher. So I'm, yeah, I'm very, I'm very [sic] open to the fact that I know nothing and I'm very open to the fact that I'm happy to be sort of shown and guided and sort of I can [sic] take people's opinions and guidance and expertise. Yeah pretty much any time"* (Charlie: 289-300)

What Charlie and Dana are articulating is how they experience their role to be a continuous journey where there is *'always something to learn'* and an openness to drawing on the expertise of others to develop their own experience as a teacher. Charlie uses metaphor to compare her change in perspective to a *'light bulb'* with connotations of enlightenment. The use of *'wow'* emphasises how impactful this experience was. There is a sense

from her account that the apparent value of others' expertise is the movement of a problem forward in a new and unexpected direction which can have a ripple effect on the classroom experience. Charlie emphasises the importance of her construct of a professional development journey with language that is definitive in it's tone (i.e. *'never', 'always' 'worst thing I can possibly do'*).

4.3.2. Group Experiential Theme Two: Interactions

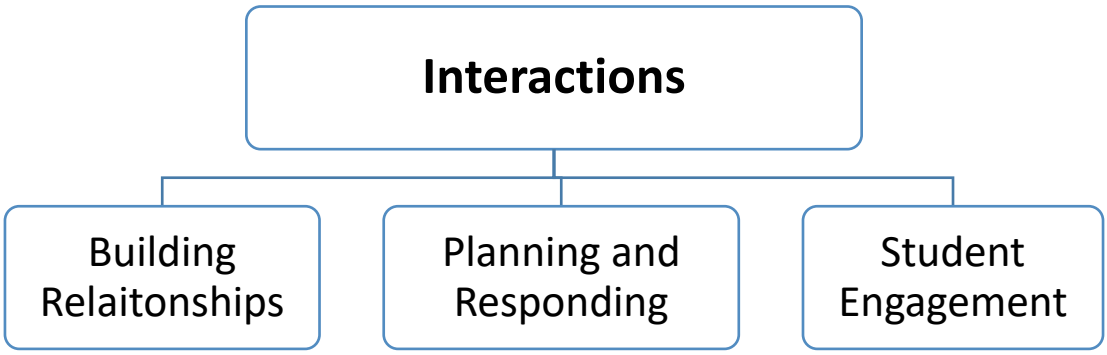

Figure 4. Depicting the group experiential theme 'Interactions' and related sub-themes

4.3.2.1. Building relationships

This sub-theme captures the value that participants denote to the human interactions at the centre of their teaching experiences; *"I think it's really important for pupils with SEND and SEMH [Social Emotional and Mental Health needs]"* (Brenda: 144), *"first and foremost the relationship, so he would allow me to support him"* (Ellen: 137), *"I'd certainly look to build a relationship with him [Tom]"* (Charlie: 101). Brenda, Ellen and Charlie use language features to emphasise their values (i.e. *'really', 'first and foremost', 'certainly'*) and their experiences of these relationships allows students to be receptive of the support they provide.

There is divergence in perceptions of what features of the relationships are conducive to supporting students:

> *"I don't think you can necessarily help anyone if you don't show them that care and that you want to understand them. I think a*

child's never going to work positively for you if you don't have that, you know, mutual respect for each other" (Brenda: 142-144)

Brenda experiences relationships as reciprocal, founded on mutual respect and developed by demonstrating care and understanding. Similarly, trust is a key characteristic of these relationships for Dana:

"I've been trying to do that with some of the SEND pupils…just to build that relationship and to build that trust, to build that confidence with them, within us, so they're able to reflect that in their class work as well" (Dana: 275-278)

"when I took the same class that I've got now last year…we were just trying to figure each other out, how our relationship is going to work. And now that I've taken them through…we do have that good relationship where they feel as though they can trust me and they'll do their work, they'll make mistakes, but they know, you know, it's fine. We'll get it corrected and we can move on from it actually" (Dana: 282-286)

Dana attempts to 'try', suggesting a conscious effort in developing relationships which takes time. Good relationships for Dana equate to a sense of safety, allowing students to take educational 'risks' where they may get things wrong but ultimately supports their development and access to learning opportunities.

Positive reinforcement and praise are purposeful approaches adopted to facilitate the building of relationships:

"…continuing with positive reinforcements, which always work" (Dana: 150-151)

"It's about giving him the positives and bringing him closer in terms of in class. That helps, because he feels like, he's got you're your [sic] attention" (Ellen: 162-163) "… *if I was to …*

maybe even raise my voice. It doesn't work. I think lots of positive reinforcements really helping [sic] settle him down" (Ellen: 158-160) "…*and praise, praise really does help… and then knowing that they are, it's inclusive [sic], so they're not being kind of, kind of [sic] pushed to the side of the class. Really making it inclusive. Bringing them to the front really does help, rather than having them at the back of the classroom, where they feel like they're out of place"* (Ellen: 377-380).

"if we praise him, if we spend some more time one to one with him in lesson, I mean there's only nine children in this class. So I have the ability to to [sic] work one to one with him at some point, but I think that really helps praise and encouragement" (Brenda: 137-139)

For both Ellen and Brenda the concept of 'closeness' with students is important both figuratively and with physical proximity. There is a sense from Brenda's account that relationships are used to facilitate a sense of school belongingness for young people in her classroom, supporting inclusion which is possible due to smaller class sizes. Ellen also perceives class size as a barrier to support and building relationships. Both Ellen and Dana value providing students with the opportunity to have a voice:

"the smaller classes…being able to have a voice would would [sic], helps anybody" (Ellen: 221-222)

"we speak with the child, we ask them what their barriers are, what they find difficult in each subject" (Dana: 58-59).
"Obviously it's easy for us to just observe what he's [Tom's] doing, but without him telling us what he's really feeling, what he's finding difficult, we can't make the appropriate adjustments" (Dana: 129-130)

Along with positioning interactions and relationships as a positive resource to support students, interactions with students were also experienced to contribute to the presentations of needs and students' behaviour; *"I have*

kind of checked with somebody that's not me [sic] and my teaching style just being terribly off-putting" (Alex: 154-155), *"I think how you respond to that [behaviour] will have a lot to do with it [how needs present]"* (Charlie: 150). Teachers shared the experience where escalating their own behaviour had an adverse effect on the students and the situation they were trying to manage:

> *"…at all cost, avoid ever escalating…I don't feel so raising my voice or shouting is is [sic] sort of any kind of solution to to [sic] whatever's happening in the classroom. Whereas if you role modelled the behaviour that you're sort of looking for for them, eventually they'll come a turning point where they, sort of, model that back to you"* (Charlie: 150-153)

> *"something that works with me is just being really overly nice and kind to them. And they respond better"* (Dana: 167-168) *"…I'd say positive reinforcement. So, if even if he does something very little, that's obviously the good [sic], I'd just praise him with it massively, just encouraging him to continue with that positive behaviour"* (Dana: 111-113) *"…one thing we do like to do is just we never raise our voice at them, always speak to them even if they are doing you know something that they're not supposed to be doing…just never raise your voice at them because it does sort of trigger them"* (Dana: 162-164)

> *"I find that whenever there's a negative…and if I was to say, Oh, well, well [sic] come on sort yourself out, the tone was raised, I would maybe even raise my voice. It doesn't work. I think lots of positive reinforcements really helping [sic] settle him down"* (Ellen: 157-160)

Charlie, Dana and Ellen are definitive in their expression and their use of language (i.e. *'never', 'avoid ever', 'it doesn't work'*) when recognising that the outcome that they are hoping to achieve when working with students impinges on the response that they choose to use when interacting with

them. There is a consciousness and purposefulness in the ways that they espouse to respond to students.

4.3.2.2. Student engagement

This sub-theme illustrates how participants experience their role as an interaction with students. Important to this interaction is the student's response. Alex and Charlie held the belief that students had some responsibility to engage with the support provided, by indicating that they require help:

> *"I have that conversation directly with the student when she comes in, that we're going to be doing XYZ today. You at any point if you need support, you just put your hand up, or if you don't want to do that, in our planners, we have rag cards red, amber, green cards for the kids. So, if you just turn your rag card to red then I'll know and you just leave it on your desk and I'll know that means that you're stuck on something and I'll come and visit you myself"* (Alex: 110-114)

In the interaction Alex describes, she positions her responsibility using the first person; *'I have that conversation', 'I'll come and visit you myself', 'I'll know'.* This is to be received by students who are receptive. In this, there is a sense from Alex's experience that should pupils be engaged and proactive, that supportive response will be provided. She describes providing different non-verbal indicators a student can use to initiate an interaction and supportive response. However, student engagement may not be taken as the norm; "*it's the standard does not want to engage sort of issue"* (Alex: 197). Alex's language use of '*standard'* suggests she frequently experiences students who do not want to engage. This experience is shared;

> *"sometimes you find that the pupil, sometimes they want it [support], sometimes they don't. So it's, you know, often it sits with them and if you want to apply for it, but often I will just*

leave it on the desk and just say well it's there if you if you [sic] need it" (Charlie: 282-284)

For Charlie, there is a sense of resignation to her account where students are not receptive or motivated to engage and this appears to be challenging for her. In these experiences, support materials are left for pupils with a hopeful change of mind. The repetition of 'often' also suggests students frequently respond this way; *"I've got quite a few older pupils…but there [sic] refuse to engage in the processes that they need to support themselves"* (Charlie: 35-37). Charlie provides an insight into her experiences of the factors she perceives to be important for student engagement;

"you do seem to find is [sic] the younger the pupil and the earlier you pick it up and start supporting, the more open they are to accepting that help. This [sic] sort of haven't developed that internal barrier. Having said that, I've inherited a year 10 and a year 11 a group and I've picked up on some things with the, with the [sic] pupils and they do seem appreciative that they're going to be supported in that way. It's sort of, feel like [sic] they're being cared for in in a way, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to take things on and with open arms, it's still a bit of a challenge sometimes with them, but they do tend to to [sic], you know, be pleased that you sort of notice them type of thing" (Charlie: 46-52)

Charlie appears to value early identification of needs and intervention. Relationships provide an opportunity to demonstrate care, which is perceived as an important factor for student engagement. Although identifying a positive experience, it seems important for Charlie to balance this with how challenging and fluctuating these experiences can be. There is the sense that unpredictability is a source of challenge and tension.

4.3.2.3. Planning and responding

This sub-theme illustrates how participants experienced the reflexive nature of being a teacher to involve preparation and responding in the moment to students' SEND. Preparation involved planning of the classroom environment;

> *"I'd make sure he's sat next to someone positive in the class…I'd make sure that he's in the right place within the class so that he can be focused and feel safe as well"* (Brenda: 161-162)

> *"…the children that need the most help, she'd [the LSA] have her assigned children and then I could rotate and support those that would need less help"* (Ellen: 83-84)

There is the sense from both Ellen and Brenda's account that organising how the classroom environment functions involves an appreciation of both student and staff location. Brenda attributes feelings of safety when a student's location has been carefully considered.

Preparation also included planning how lesson content was to be communicated. For Brenda, this involved considering how discussions may unfold; *"…ensuring that you've planned the questions that you're going to ask and whereabouts in the lesson children are going to have that opportunity for exploratory talk"* (Brenda: 29-30). Whereas for Ellen, communication adaptions involved her communication style, which may be a reflexive response in the moment; *"a lack of understanding, it would need maybe reinforcements, in terms of repeating yourself…in the most simplified manner possible"* (Ellen: 201) *"…really slowing the pace down"* (Ellen: 344). Ellen's planning and differentiation was a method to try to make lesson content accessible using visuals, hands-on learning and prioritising the core learning;

> *"What I use as a kind of given with most my my [sic] lessons are images…they've got to have an image…they needed an*

image to be able to visualize what was…expected of them. And, if they knew the rule, they could then build on that. That helps, images. I would say, videos. It give [sic] you access to, if we do poetry, for instance, just having a a [sic] reading on the…screen for them to be able to see. At times, I think role play works with my year eight class, massively. It's the only way that they able to keep that retention in place" (Ellen: 97-104)

"…holding some of the lessons back in terms of we don't have to do the whole breadth of the lesson. It's about breaking it down so they understand the core. And it is going back to maybe key stage one and developing it at key stage two. But that's where their understanding was. And we had to kind of break it back, take it back and then build on it" (Ellen: 365-370)

There is the sense from Ellen's account it is important for her that learners are getting to grips with the basics, whether that be returning to earlier stages of learning and/or using multiple concrete, visual and interactive ways to engage learners and support retention. There is the sense that teaching students is active and adaptive and requires looking at where an individual may be in their own understanding; '*that's where their understanding was at'.* The context in which she teaches affords her the opportunity to move away from age-related curriculum content to address learning skills prioritised at an earlier key stage. Not all teachers experience this same flexibility. For Charlie, there is the sense that gaps in learning cannot be bridged in the context which she works; *"depending on the size of those gaps…some of them can be bridged…some of them can't"* (Charlie: 141-142). She may not have the opportunity to provide such flexibility in lesson content.

Ellen values whiteboards as a method to explore individual responses; *"Whiteboards work, are great, because what the students can do, you'll see they [sic] individual response"* (Ellen: 376-377). Whiteboards allow Ellen the opportunity to evaluate each student as an individual, a practice that may

be challenging in a classroom context. Brenda also values whiteboards but as a tool for interactive modelling;

"I got them to verbalised [sic] some speech. I asked them to write it out on the whiteboard and then I brought a few to the front and said, you know, which one of these do we think is right? They're all actually wrong. So they've once [sic] we discussed the misconceptions we had a model on the whiteboard picked that apart and so that they [sic] have that to refer to next time. But it was just really going back to that skill and addressing that misconception. So it can't be, well, it will be made again, but so that at least if it is made again, we have that shared understanding of why it's wrong"
(Brenda: 95-100)

For Brenda, there is the sense that whiteboards provide a tool for students to contribute and for her to actively respond to students' understanding, correct mistakes and provide a model answer. There is a reflexive nature to which Brenda describes interacting with students during this learning process.

Charlie also speaks of her experience being reflexive and the importance of an individualised response;

"there's no one-size-fits-all. It really depends on the pupil" (Charlie: 46) *"…it helps you to sort of nuance sort of your approaches as you as you're [sic] going through it with the individual pupil that you're having front [sic] of you"* (Charlie: 13-14)

The approaches that Charlie speaks of appear to come from a bank of generally SEND-friendly strategies that may be used with various young people with differing needs and it is about trying approaches to see if they are effective for a young person;

"I know it sounds like the same brush strokes for the same thing, but often you can find that what might work for somebody

with ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder] sometimes works with somebody that's that's [sic], you know, EAL as well…things like sentence starters and tick lists but sort of that extra scaffolding that you might do for somebody. So just breaking things down, sort of maybe being a bit more child-friendly in your explanations" (Charlie: 270-274)

There is the sense from all participants that they experience teaching as an active process. Although the curriculum is important and an area that they may feel a level of expertise, there appears to be more to participants' experience of teaching than just delivering the curriculum. What it means to support SEND is to reflect and adapt to how a young person is responding. For Brenda this reflexive nature is 'inevitable' to her experience as a teacher;

"this might just come from being comfortable with it, but, just responding to the needs within the lesson. I don't think you can always prepare for what's going to come up. You've just got to be ready to adapt in the moment to whatever is there in the classroom on that day" (Brenda: 88-90)

For Brenda, she positions this experience with feelings of *'comfort'*. There is the implied meaning and perception that in other circumstances or for other people this reflexivity may provoke feelings of discomfort. For Brenda to experience teaching in this way was something that she would have to feel comfortable with.

4.3.3. Group Experiential Theme Three: Feeling Challenged

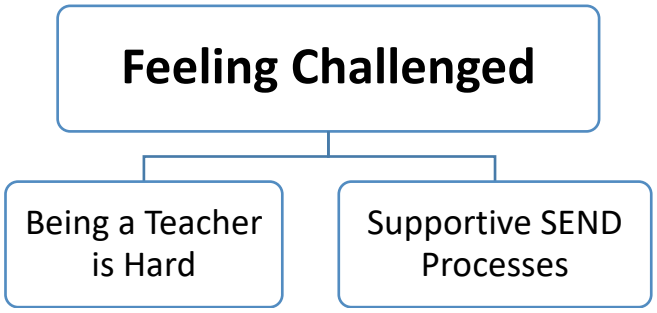

Figure 5. Depicting the group experiential theme of 'Feeling Challenged' and related sub-themes

4.3.3.1 Being a teacher is hard

This theme illustrates the affective experience of feeling difficulty and being challenged in participants' role. Most participants identified with this theme, using language such as '*struggling*', '*challenge*' and '*difficult*' to describe their experiences and interactions to support students with SEND;

> *"…you can be struggling with a pupil and you think I'm really not getting to where I need to"* (Charlie: 293) *"…it's still a bit of a challenge"* (Charlie: 51)

> *"…it was tiring at times…I teach them now and I would say it is, again, very challenging, very difficult"* (Dana: 11-14)

Both Charlie and Dana are recently qualified and are direct in their experiences of finding the role challenging. For Charlie, she appears to contextualise these difficulties as part of her perceived inexperience, which she is very open about; *"I'm very open to the fact that I know nothing and I'm very open to the fact that I'm happy to be sort of shown and guided"* (Charlie: 298-299). There is the sense that Charlie perceives because she is just starting her career and feels her level of knowledge to be low, i.e. *'nothing'*, this is why she experiences challenge in her role. There is almost the expectation that she would feel this way, at least initially. In contrast to Charlie who appears to have come into the role with an awareness to this affective experience, Dana appears to be surprised by the feelings of being unprepared for the realities of teaching after university placements;

> *"That school [her placement school] is very different to the school I'm at now…so there were obviously some cases of SEND, but nowhere near as much as how much we have here, which was like a culture shock really because I've never really worked with children like that before"* (Dana: 5-7)

Dana's description of '*shock*' depicts a stark difference between what her previous experiences and expectations would be and the realities of the role. Charlie's description of her university experience is interesting and

seems to position this as an enjoyable activity, but not necessarily something that prepared her for the reality of teaching and the role;

> *"University is very much sort of theoretically based. Which was good and and [sic] quite enjoyable. But being in school was very much how to apply and the real world…In theory, things work first time every time, and in practice and reality that isn't the case"* (Charlie: 10-12)

Feelings of challenge are also expressed by teachers with more experience who are further along in their teaching career. For Brenda, there is a sense from her account of trying her best but feeling that she could do better; *"we're doing all we can, but I'm sure there is more that we could be doing"* (Brenda: 246-247). Brenda depicts her feelings of challenge from a group perspective, with her use of the plural '*we*'. This may reflect a shared experience amongst colleagues. Also, possibly due to her leadership position, she may hold some responsibility for students and for other staff members. The practice of colleagues contributes to her feeling of challenge in her role;

> *"we're doing a lot of work on that across the school. But I still think there's some inconsistencies in what good modelling looks like and being able to verbalise your thought processes, I think that's really important"* (Brenda: 70-72) *"…I think for a competent and confident teacher it can go into practice straight away, but then obviously we're all at different levels"* (Brenda: 251-252)

Recognising that staff are at different stages in their practice and experience appears to be at odds with Brenda's values and practice which she believes to be '*really important'*, possibly leading to tension in her experience when leading other members of staff. This role is situated in a context which is challenging for Brenda with high levels of need; "*for our school we've got such a high percentage of [SEND] pupils"* (Brenda: 245) with competing demands and expectations in the classroom;

"We know it's hard because of all of the different needs within the classroom. Obviously you've got some pupils that need certain coloured paper, I've got one child in my class who needs blue paper. But then I've got another child who's partially sighted and one who is colour blind. So it's like, what do I do within that lesson when everyone needs different coloured paper? What colour shall I do my PowerPoint?...you can't necessarily tailor to every individual need in the classroom, but you need something that's going to work for all, and especially your SEND pupils" (Brenda: 76-81)

For Brenda, navigating and making sense of this challenging context is epitomised by her question to herself *'what do I do?'*. There is a feeling of being stuck between different expectations and having to find '*something*' which will work for everyone.

For Ellen, there is the sense that the emotional challenge and burden of her experience as a teacher of SEND is so significant that it does not stop at the end of the day and spills into her personal life;

"obviously the workload was quite heavy and I kind of decided to take it easy with things that were going on at home. I just thought I needed a little bit of ease" (Ellen: 5-8).

For Ellen, there is the sense that the workload is incompatible with managing challenging personal experiences and the use of '*ease*' at temporarily leaving teaching suggests that she experiences her role as anything but easy. For Ellen, emphasising workload demands seemed important to reiterate; "*there's only six students in that class. But, by no means is the kind of, the workload any less"* (Ellen: 68). There is a definitiveness to the way in which Ellen portrays the workload as *'no means less'* and it seems important to Ellen to emphasise this. Yet despite these challenges, Ellen expressed she remains optimistic of her competence in her role;

"I'm hoping I can, I'm I'm [sic] spotting it and I'm kind of picking it up. It does seem that it's working for the students. They seem happy…they're making progress and that's what the key [sic], you know, that shows that maybe somethings working" (Ellen: 403-405)

4.3.3.2. Supportive SEND processes

As a contrasting experience, supportive SEND processes were identified to mitigate to some extent feelings of challenge felt by some teachers. Alex was the only teacher whose experience did not seem to align with the challenge aspects of the role shared by other participants. Supportive SEND processes were an artefact of Alex's experience as a teacher which appeared to weaken aspects of challenge and she spoke positively of the structure this provided; "*our school is highly efficient, very organised"* (Alex: 20-21).

Alex and Ellen's schools had invested in a literacy intervention programme and by doing so this experience offered a structured approach for them to consider how to target support for students by looking at specific skills or waves of intervention;

"the programme, so it works on three levels, one level is vocabulary, so it just gives all learners a fantastic opportunity to engage in interactively [sic] with vocabulary…the other two levels of [name of programme] are linked quite literally for students who are struggling quite a bit. One is the comprehension level…and one is that a decoding sort of module [sic]" (Alex: 328-338)

"we have three different programs. We have a universal which is for every child and that's just looking at vocabulary. For the the [sic] readers who are struggling, and generally the readers who are plus two years below their reading age, we would look at a decoding module. So it's looking at the phonics and going all the way back and building on their phonics skills…Then

once they've built their phonics skills and they the [sic] word level, they move onto a comprehension module, which is more kind of a comprehension approach where, you know, their using the the [sic] deducing, retrieval, prediction, all them skills…embedded within our programme" (Ellen: 42-48)

There is the sense from Alex and Ellen's accounts that the experience of an intervention programme provides them with a structure to consider skills which underpin literacy and a confidence to share what processes they are targeting. Ellen uses her experience of the programme in her sense-making of the vignettes; *['Lucy' would] "…most likely would be on the decoding. Then maybe there's a…lack of understanding in terms of phonetics"* (Ellen: 203-204).

In Alex's account there is the sense that having a programme provides an alternative to the core literacy offer which is viewed favourably due to pupil progress; "*it's been fantastic…over the course of one term, their reading age would have improved by almost 10 months"* (Alex: 314-318). This programme is situated in a context where SEND systems provide support, help answer questions and have someone identified to turn to;

"What was more useful for us was having a good mentor or a coach in school. And for me, that person who was [sic] my line manager would be managing me weekly, watching my lessons, giving feedback" (Alex: 27-29) *"They'll never be a a [sic] case where I've got a question about a learner and I don't know who to go to about that question"* (Alex: 297-298).

Alex's experience appears to differ from other participants in this respect as structures of support are formalised, rather than ad-hoc. It appears that the regular coaching from a manager was welcome and felt to be *'useful'*. Brenda, who did not share this experience identified this as something that she would find beneficial; "*So maybe people could be coached around SEND strategies that they we're doing it right"* (Brenda: 254-255).

Alex also had access to formalised structures of student training and awareness which she described as *"not onerous"* (Alex: 95). This appears to be a quality that is important for Alex and hints to anything that would be perceived as onerous being a source of challenge; *"…the monitoring [of students] has been so small in the way it's done and it's not sort of burdening the teachers to do lots and lots of stuff"* (Alex: 75-76). There is the sense from Alex's use of language with *'onerous'* and '*burdening'* that these feelings are uncomfortable for her and she places value on practices which do not contribute to these affective states;

> *"…on inset day is we have [sic] the general sort of let's reset expectations training…These are the kids on the SEND register. So it's very specific to our school and to the learners. So they'll literally say the name of every child. So everybody's well aware because sometimes if you say to teachers to go away and look, yeah, that might not always happen"* (Alex: 52-56)

The structures described de-burden staff, who if required to *'go away and look'* themselves might not do so. Providing protected time at the beginning of the year for staff to engage with this process is viewed favourably.

Ellen's experience appeared to speak of SEND structures in the classroom as supportive; particularly smaller class sizes;

> *"There is a variety [of needs]. So, it's about strategically placing them in [sic] where they can be easily accessed within the class…and make it accessible for for [sic] myself to walk around and keep them in, kind of a place where they'd get the the [sic] support they need…It's depending on the class, sizes are very small…within my year seven class I only have 12 students. And within my year eight class, I think there's only six students in that class"* (Ellen: 63-68)

For Ellen, the support that she espouses to provide for SEND students appears to be feasible within small classes; "…*support in terms of just keep*

your eye on him. If it's a smaller class" (Ellen: 152-153). Ellen appears to emphasise that support is 'dependent' on class sizes but there is the perception that this is achievable as school structures allow her to teach smaller groups.

4.3.4. Group Experiential Theme Four: Interpretation

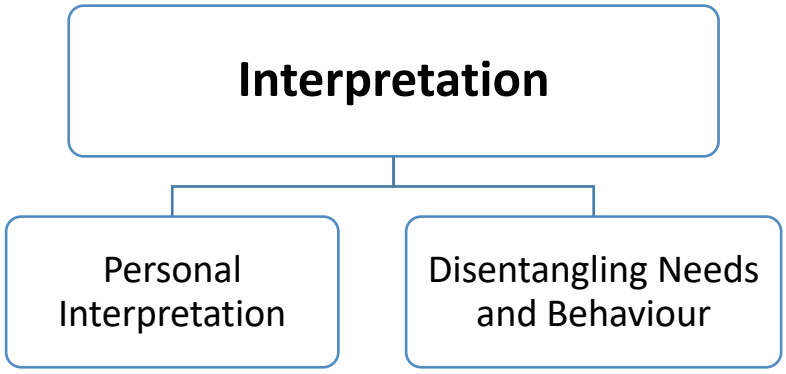

Figure 6. Depicting the group experiential theme of 'Interpretation' and related sub-themes

4.3.4.1. Personal interpretation

Understanding students' SEND requires a degree of personal interpretation and sense-making. Participants varied in the extent to which they verbalised their cognitions, problem-solving and hypothesising around students' needs. However, this theme illustrates some of the personal interpretative processes that participants engaged with through the interview and in relation to the vignettes.

The concept of hypothesising about a student's needs, as opposed to solely considering their response was something that felt unfamiliar to some teachers. When asked what they considered the needs of *'Tom'/'Lucy'* to be as depicted in the vignettes, Brenda, Charlie and Dana met this question with their own; "*What do I think her need is?"* (Brenda: 111), "*Do you mean would I look to diagnose him?"* (Charlie: 92), "*Urm So what would I do to support him?"* (Dana: 103). There is the sense from these participants that explicitly identifying needs is something that was unexpected and Dana's response to ask about support may suggest this is something that she feels more confident to talk about.

In contrast, Ellen appears to be more comfortable with the process of verbalising her hypothesising and sense-making and draws on several interpretive processes;

> *"he's good at physical education, so he's got his fine motor skills…And maybe that is the attention because he can, he can [sic] structure it within his modelling. Modelling isn't easy for young children. So I would say, yeah, maybe there needs to be a bit of a, some adjustments made within literacy…I can see that he likes computers. For instance, so maybe the visual is helping him and that's what he needs in terms of, to support him [sic]. And it's just tailoring the learning for that particular child to make it accessible"* (Ellen: 173-178)

> *"…she enjoys working the [sic] younger children. And actually enjoys working with younger children, maybe because she can, speak on and it's that level that she's at her [sic]. She enjoys working with younger children rather than children her age, maybe"* (Ellen: 298-300)

There is the sense from Ellen's account that it seems important to understand a young person's needs in relation to their skills, strengths, resources and comparisons with other contexts.

Alex spoke of an intuitive nature to her sense-making; "…*it's just innate teacher radar to pick stuff up in the classroom"* (Alex: 156-157) and curriculum comparisons provide a reference point for personal interpretation;

> *"…if a student's continuously spell stuff and then I can't pick up why she's doing it like that rather than just being a bad speller, then that might be something that raises like alarm bells. Sometimes handwriting that is illegible and constantly illegible. That also raised alarm bells"* (Alex: 145-147)

The use of Alex's language with '*radar'* and '*alarm bells'* provokes imagery and speaks of Alex's experience of being alerted to something not seeming quite right. For Alex, she relies on this personal intuition in her sense-making as she reports that she is not provided with guidance to be alert to specific needs; "*We don't usually have a list of stuff that, you know, look out for XYZ"* (Alex: 157).

For Alex, this intuition and personal interpretation is not straightforward, and she grapples with balancing recognising needs and what she knows of disadvantage;

> *"…we come from a school which has got students from very, very and we don't like to use this word but disadvantaged areas. Now that means that naturally, some of these students will not speak as well as their peers who come from wealthier families or. Yeah, I don't know, better areas or whatever it might be. So there's always a danger that we take somebody's disadvantage and translate that into this child needing more support, etcetera for special educational needs"* (Alex: 266-270)

For Alex, her use of '*danger'* to describe the balance that she is trying to find between recognising needs and discriminating those from disadvantaged backgrounds emphasises her uncomfortableness with this experience. Even using the word disadvantage appears to be something she is uncomfortable saying.

Dana's personal interpretation is shaped by beliefs and assumptions she holds which are informed by her lived experiences. These beliefs shape Dana's sense-making of the vignettes and her own experiences of SEND. One of Dana's beliefs is that students are always supported by a teaching assistant;

> *"…each pupil who's got special educational needs has their support teacher with them at all times in each lessons…there's*

obviously always an LSA. So a support teacher available with them" (Dana: 71-74)

There is a sense of certainty from Dana's language of her belief with the use of *'obviously'* and the perception that this experience is without exception (i.e. *'always'* and '*at all times in each lesson'*). This belief informed the meaning Dana created from the vignettes;

"it does say he he [sic] has additional support for literacy, but it was withdrawn, so maybe it isn't just the speech thing, it is just the way he is" (Dana: 237-238) *"…would need more information on whether or not he would need…a support teacher"* (Dana: 110)

For Dana, her construction of SEND may be so intrinsically linked with the role of a support teacher that the absence of this member of staff may shape her understanding of a pupil's needs and possible SEND.

Ellen's personal interpretation was also shaped by her lived experiences. These experiences were valued and provided a frame of reference for her interpretation and sense-making;

"I have to say my…experience…really helped in, kind of, supporting students. I had two students that I supported for a year and a half and and [sic] it does help. You can kind of understand, pick up certain needs and support students better 'cause you have an understanding in place" (Ellen: 91-93)

Ellen draws explicitly on personal and professional experiences when creating meaning from the vignettes;

"I'm looking at that direction cause he usually sits there this young boy does" (Ellen: 148-149)

"Lucy reminds me a lot of [person]. [person] has word finding difficulties. I would say that there is a lack of understanding there" (Ellen: 185-186).

Ellen's language demonstrates a shifting between her own social reality and the reality of the vignettes. In her account, she makes explicit the individuals and experiences that inform the meaning that she creates from the written vignettes.

4.3.4.2. Disentangling needs and behaviour

This theme illustrates that for most participants, the focus of their attention and sense making of students needs was directed towards students learning and behaviour;

> *"It seems like a mild learning disability to me, but a lot of it seems to stem around SEMH as well"* (Brenda: 114)

> *"…her behaviour with literacy and numeracy and avoiding tactics, it's clear she's going to have gaps in our [sic] knowledge"* (Charlie: 139-140) *"But certainly deal with any bad behaviour as a as a [sic] choice and consequence sort of setup"* (Charlie: 113-114)

Brenda and Charlie's sense-making of the needs depicted in the vignettes is a construction of behaviour difficulties (or SEMH needs) and learning needs. A focus on learning may be unsurprising given the expertise in the curriculum theme previously identified. Alex was also drawn to behaviour features and made sense of *'Lucy's'* needs as a behaviour concern;

> *"I think what we what I [sic] would do is…manage this as a case of behaviour first, to see whether it's behaviour issues. And behaviour issues for is just mean [sic]. If she's responding to the school behaviour system…if we find that that's not working, then we usually escalate this through pastoral route to ask her head of year to get involved and look at whether there's any sort of concerns at home"* (Alex: 172-177)

One possible causal attribution that Alex explores relates to within-child factors and the family context. Although this is not the only hypothesis that

Alex explores when making sense of the vignettes. Exploring these hypotheses would direct a response which involves others in school. There is the sense from Alex's account that when she experiences needs relating to 'behaviour issues' there is the expectation that students will respond in a particular way to the school's behaviour system, but should that not be achieved the responsibility for how to respond to student's behaviour is shared amongst staff.

When revisiting the vignettes, Alex reflects on some of her previous assumptions and following a discussion about language needs holds questions about disentangling these needs from behaviour;

> *"I think that in…your case studies of Lucy and Tom, the clues in there if we can call them clues about their language development and stuff. I think I probably, would probably say [sic] is, I stick to what I said in the beginning, which is, that it's really difficult sometimes knowing whether it's a language issue or a behaviour issue, and I know that everybody will say, well behaviour stems from an unmet need or whatever, but that's not always the case. As a teacher you often realise sometimes kids…will just misbehave because they want to misbehave. I was like that in school myself. I had no unmet need I just decided to be extremely difficult. But I I [sic] think that this is probably my comment on it, that how would you know? Meaning, as a particular within your line of work how would you know whether it is that the student has got a language difficulty or whether they just decided not to play ball?"* (Alex: 398-407)

This insight appears to have a profound effect on Alex. She draws on her own experiences in school at that age to make sense of the presentation of students. In this way, her construction of reality is shaped through her own social construction. Her question *'how would you know?'* emphasises how ambiguous she finds this context to be. Alex grapples with how to understand the causal attributions she may draw upon in her sense making of needs which she describes as *'really difficult'.* The way she describes

‘everybody will say that behaviour stems from an unmet need or whatever’ suggests a distrust for this statement from her own experiences which is *‘not always the case’.*

Similarly, Dana makes sense of needs with reference to behaviour and appears to also use within-child and family causal attributions as one of many possible hypotheses to inform the sense that she makes of the vignettes; *“outbursts of abusive behaviour might be something that's just innate or something that she's learned at home and it's the way she acts”* (Dana: 145-146). Dana finds the reflective process introduced in the interview enlightening. She creates new meaning from the descriptions;

> *“it's interesting now. So it says she has difficulty following verbal instructions…maybe there is some sort of language speech barrier there. Interesting because I didn't really notice that before it was more to do with behaviour”* (Dana:219-225)

Ellen also expressed that reappraisal of the information provided new meaning;

> *“it's interesting though, to see how your kind of interpretation changes in terms of when you, when you [sic] put a need in there, you can identify it”* (Ellen: 438-439)

The use of interesting by both Ellen and Dana suggests that this insight is thought-provoking. What Alex, Dana and Ellen appear to suggest from the interview process is that when given a need as a frame of reference, interpretation of behaviour (or descriptions in the vignettes) can take on new significance and meaning. Dana provides further insight into this experience;

> *“It does say he doesn’t like to be asked to direct question [sic] and will guess at an answer, but I wouldn't say that's more to do with him understanding. I'd say it's more just him being the way he is. Whereas Lucy, I feel like she she [sic] does really struggle with being able to understand something and not*

finding the right words to say it, because Tom will just guess at an answer. He doesn't really. He's not really thinking or caring I would say…so maybe it isn't just the speech thing, it is just the way he is and his behaviour is the main concern. Rather for Lucy, I would say there is probably a more speech barrier, speech and language barrier" (Dana: 232-239)

There is the distinction from Dana's account that *'Lucy's'* needs are genuine; *'I feel like she does really struggle'.* Whereas for '*Tom',* there is an element of choice to his behaviour; '*I'd say it's more just him being the way he is'.* Dana may hold some internal causal attributions for *'Tom's'* behaviour which may be one hypothesis she uses to make sense of the information she reads about *'Tom'*. It appears from her account that the factors which may contribute to this are his ability to guess at answers, which is taken for carelessness. Strategies which *'Tom'* may utilise to mask difficulties may contribute to Dana's perception that he chooses to act in the way that he does and behaviour is his primary concern.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The current research was exploratory. A detailed interpretation of participants' experiences is provided in the previous chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to explore aspects of these experiences contextualised with theory, literature and the UK socio-political and educational context. This chapter is structured by the following research questions:

What sense do teachers create of the language needs of secondary school students?

What are the experiences of secondary school teachers when supporting language needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

Suggestions for future research and implications for policy, school practice and Educational Psychologists are provided throughout. IPA provides an ideographic account of the experiences of participants (Smith et al., 2022). As such, findings are not intended to be generalisable to the wider population and future research may adopt alternative theoretical and methodological positions to explore any of the themes identified from individual or group experiences which are presented in the findings chapter. The original contribution and respective merits and limitations of the current research are provided.

5.2. Research Question One: What sense do teachers create of the language needs of secondary school students?

5.2.1. The Experiences of Language Needs (Phenomenology and Consciousness)

IPA is a methodology concerned with the consciousness of experience (Husserl, 1927 as cited in Smith et al., 2022). Language needs were socially constructed and shaped by participants lived experiences. As such,

participants' consciousness and intentionality[1] to direct and orientate their attention to the phenomenon of language needs was shaped by their personal histories and experiences. Ellen's personal, lived experiences meant that she was more conscious of this phenomenon than other participants. This influenced the meaning she created when engaging with the vignettes and she paid attention to subtle cues in the description that may suggest *'Lucy'* and *'Tom'* had difficulties with language and/or understanding.

Other participants may have had a less clearly formed construction of what a language need was, or less experiences of reflecting on this need day to day. Brenda and Alex felt that they had gaps in their knowledge of language needs and Charlie found it challenging to articulate what this construct meant to her. These perceptions mirror the experiences of early years and primary school practitioners (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001; Hall, 2005; Marshall et al., 2002a; 2002b; Mroz, 2006a, 2006b; Mroz & Hall, 2003; Sadler, 2005) and secondary school SENCos (Ramsay, 2015; Ramsay et al., 2018). Education staff report limited training experiences regarding language difficulties (Anderson, 2011; Blackburn & Aubrey, 2016; Dockrell & Howell, 2015; Dockrell et al., 2017). None of the participants in the current research shared experiences with the researcher of receiving specific training or CPD opportunities around language needs.

The research process encouraged participants to move through layers of reflection and attention to the construct of language needs. This was achieved by engaging with discussions and reading the vignettes un-primed, followed by a reflective discussion about language needs and a second review of the vignettes through this more specific lens. This element of the research process illuminated the different lived experiences that shaped participants' constructions. Alex, Charlie and Dana focused more

[1] Intentionality (Husserl, 1927, as cited in Smith et al., 2022) is the phenomenological concept of consciously reflecting on and orientating attention towards an object or phenomenon to develop perceptions of the world which put aside (bracket) taken for granted experiences (Smith et al., 2022). See Section 3.2.5.1

significantly on difficulties with expressive language, possibly due to these features being more readily observable. Receptive language (understanding) difficulties have received considerably less research attention, particularly in the secondary age phase (Ebbels et al., 2014). For Dana, her construction of language needs, that was tied so heavily to difficulties with spoken language, appeared to influence the sense that she made of the needs described in the vignettes of '*Lucy'* and '*Tom'* (details of these vignettes are provided in Appendix 12). In '*Lucy's'* vignette, who seemed to have a word-finding difficulty, her language needs appeared more genuine than *'Tom's'*, who was perceived to be careless *"he's not really thinking or caring"* (Dana: 236), and would guess at an answer.

Reflexive Commentary

The research design was developed to encourage participants to engage with reflection on language needs. However, it is an assumption of the researcher that this reflection was achieved. Some participants were explicit in their reappraisal of previous thinking regarding the needs displayed in the vignettes, others were less candid in sharing their thinking. Therefore, I feel that although the research design aimed to provide a reflective opportunity, self-reflection is an individualised and personal experience. Although the research process may have encouraged this, I recognise that some participants may not have moved through layers of reflection. Alternatively, some participants may have engaged with reflection through the interviews, but this may not have been illustrated through their language and discussion in the interview.

EAL featured in Brenda and Charlie's construct of a language need, shaped by their interactions with students who have EAL. When interpreting *'Tom's'* vignette, Charlie, assuming *'Tom'* was a native English speaker, eliminated communication difficulties as a potential hypothesis for *'Tom's'* difficulties. Charlie's perceptions may be shared by others, as teachers can struggle to distinguish the effects of EAL and language needs (Dockrell et al., 2017) and EAL students are more likely to receive SEND support for language

(Meschi et al., 2010). The suggestion from the literature from research conducted in early years settings and demographics suggests that students with EAL may be at risk of being overlooked for language support (Nayeb et al., 2021). However, Charlie's experience suggests that instead native English speakers may be at risk of being overlooked. Trends in UK cohort data depicts students with EAL may be identified as having a language need, but within the secondary context, this support trails off with development (Meschi et al., 2010). This is possibly due to the difficulties that students experience may be lessen with increased proficiency and exposure to the language. Students may have typically developing language skills but require time to develop their language proficiency (Demie, 2013).

It is important to clarify that engagement with the vignettes is not espoused to provide a window into an objective reality (Jenkins et al, 2010). Charlie's experience may not reflect her practice and sense making in the classroom with real students. More research may be needed to explore EAL support in the secondary age phase and teacher practice in this area, particularly as students with EAL are not a homogenous group and have different language experiences, age of acquisition and levels of proficiency (Rosamond et al., 2003). Further research attention and understanding is pertinent in a growing multi-cultural UK education system with increasing numbers of multi-lingual learners (Teravainen-Goff et al., 2021; "Schools, pupils and their characteristics," 2022). Teachers report feeling least prepared to work with these students (Ginnis et al., 2018; Spencer, 2021).

For participants, there were several ways in which they distanced themselves, their role and their experiences from language needs. As teachers, there was a professional sense that their role and expertise was in the English curriculum. Alex felt that this curriculum intuitively supported language development. Spoken English is one branch of the English curriculum with an aim that *"pupils should be taught to speak clearly…develop their understanding"* and *"develop vocabulary actively"* (p.10–11, Department for Education, 2014). Social and interactionist

theories for language development position language experiences as a core process for language development (Hoff, 2006, 2013; Chapman, 2000). From this perspective, teaching and learning opportunities provided by the curriculum may stimulate language development. However, teachers of English may face challenges with variations in students' language skills due to individual differences in personal and educational experiential opportunities to develop language, leading to language delays and students who are unprepared for the language demands in a secondary school context (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005). This may mean that the demands of age-related expectations are out of reach for some students' current developmental language skills.

Alex and Brenda held beliefs which may have shaped the value they placed on language development and needs. Both held the worldview that incidences of language needs in secondary school were infrequent. These beliefs may fuel the narrative presented in the literature that those with language needs in the secondary context are part of a 'hidden population' where needs go unrecognised (ICAN, 2011; 2017). Alex also felt that language was an area of focus for earlier in development. This perception was shared with secondary school SENCos who felt that this was an area of focus and expertise for primary school teachers (Ramsay et al., 2018; Ramsay, 2015). Secondary school class teachers report their involvement with SEND tends to focus on the implementation of provision and monitoring of SEND, as classifications of needs typically happen prior to joining secondary school (Ellis et al., 2012). Similar beliefs may inform Alex and Brenda's experiences and perceptions of language needs and if shared more broadly in the profession, may provide a continued rationale for increased professional awareness of language needs.

5.2.1.1. Implications for practice

Although there have been attempts to increase awareness of language difficulties through internet campaigns and awareness days (Bishop et al., 2012), continued attention may be beneficial. Government policy may look

to support teachers' knowledge and awareness of language needs and its links with the English curriculum. Teachers of English may be well placed to explore language development. However, there may be a disconnect between the curriculum and the practical application of language skills. Alex believed she had a good understanding of language skills in relation to the curriculum, but understanding practical, age-related language expectations was something that she felt was unfamiliar, yet felt was not particularly significant for her role.

Researchers have called for policy development in relation to grammar, the curriculum and it's practical application (Cushing, 2019). Conceptualising grammar in technical terms provides very little insight into real life language use and application to other contexts such as reading and writing. Researchers may be well placed to inform policy development and may look to develop tools to support teachers to evaluate students' language development. Although tools are available for teachers and educational practitioners to evaluate students' language development at age-related expectations (for examples see ICAN, 2007; 2011a; 2011b), beyond the early years there is no requirement for continued monitoring of language development (ICAN & RCSLT, 2018).

5.2.2. Reflective Experiences During the Interview

5.2.2.1 Attributions

The phenomenological notion of 'nothingness' (Sarte, 1943; 1956 as cited in Smith et al., 2022) refers to the idea that concepts which are absent from an individuals' attention and sense-making can be important in how individuals' perceive the world. In the absence of using an understanding of language needs to make sense of the vignettes, participants used causal attributions as one strategy in their sense making of the needs of *'Tom'* and *'Lucy'*, attributing difficulties to needs relating to learning and behaviour. Comorbidity is common (Lindsay et al., 2010) and SLCN are often categorised as other areas of SEND (Hartshorne, 2011). Consistently documented in the literature is the co-occurrence of difficulties between

language and behaviour/SEMH (Clegg et al., 2009; Heneker, 2005; Hollo et al., 2013; James et al., 2020; Joffe & Black, 2012; Lindsay et al., 2007; Yew & O'Kearney, 2013) and learning (Colenbrander et al., 2018; Lindsay et al., 2010; Ziegenfusz et al., 2022). The descriptions in the vignettes reflect this co-occurrence (Starling et al., 2011). When presented with the vignettes without the context or focus on language needs, participants made sense of these needs as a behaviour and/or learning difficulty. This perception would reflect previous findings, where the same research vignettes were used with secondary school SENCos and a theme from the discourse was identified and named *'why did I not think of language?'* (Ramsay et al., 2018; Ramsay, 2015).

Teaching is inherently a sense-making and reflective practice (Geerinck et al., 2010). Within a fast-paced classroom environment, teachers are required to make judgements about students' learning and their response to teaching instruction to make adaptations. Teachers may be susceptible to 'fast thinking' where they attribute students' areas of weakness to conclusions which they jump to too readily and notice evidence which would continue to support this hypothesis while ignoring information that may be contradictory (Cain et al., 2019).

Attribution Theory offers a psychological perspective to patterns of causal attributions made by teachers and poses that humans are motivated to understand why an event has occurred (Weiner, 1985). The literature depicts that teachers may be susceptible to making causal attributions where the locus of causation is something 'within-child' (i.e. personal characteristics) or home-related factors, rather than teaching interactions and school-related variables (Cothran et al., 2009; Wang & Hall, 2018). Previous research has identified that managing behaviour difficulties is a priority for teachers and there is the perception that students' behaviours are becoming increasingly more challenging in the classroom, attributed to societal and family causes (Ellis et al., 2012). Within the current study, there was some evidence that teachers drew on within-child causal attributions in their interpretation and sense-making of the vignettes. For example, Alex

felt she would want to investigate any *"concerns at home"* (Alex: 177) and Charlie spoke of *"bad behaviour…as a choice"* (Charlie: 113). Dana spoke of *'Tom'* being *"just the way he is"* (Dana: 238), assuming a personal characteristic and *'Lucy's'* outbursts as *"innate or something that she has learnt at home"* (Dana: 145-146). These trends in perceptions and causal attributions reflect the previous literature.

What is perhaps most important to note from the current research is that although some evidence of within-child and family attributions informed the sense that some participants made of the vignettes, this was not the only attribution that participants used in their sense-making when interacting with the vignettes and sharing their experiences in the classroom. Alex spoke of considering situational influences when checking it was *"not me and my teaching style just being terribly off-putting"* (Alex: 154-155) and fundamental to most participants' experiences were their interactions with students. Charlie, Dana and Ellen spoke of how needs and behaviour presenting in the classroom can be intensified as a response to how they approach these interactions. This sense making suggests that teachers experiences may be well situated within a social-ecological framework as some participants inherently considered layers of influence within the classroom context. Teachers' causal attributions can vary and although the literature suggests teachers may be susceptible to making particular attributions, caution should be made of sweeping generalisations (Jager & Denessen, 2015). The use of vignettes in the current study may have prompted participants to consider within-child of family attributions as descriptions focused on the child, rather than the child in their wider context. Exploring teacher attributions was not a primary aim of the current research and future research may aim to explore this further.

Reflexive Commentary

Jager & Denessen (2015) highlight the importance of caution when considering causal attribution and generalisations. In the context of the current research, this caution appeared to be particularly appropriate as although there was some evidence of within-child and family causal attributions being used when

hypothesising the needs presented in the vignettes, I felt it was important to balance this with other forms of attributions and sense making that participants engaged with during the interview process and I was struck by the sometimes-deterministic ways in which attribution research is portrayed in the literature for teachers. Through my reading, at times it appeared the literature's portrayal of teachers' attributions held a sense of blame for students. Within the current research, the research design and use of vignettes may have primed teachers to consider within-child causal attributions, as very little contextual information was provided of the descriptions of *'Lucy'* and *'Tom'* displayed in the vignettes. It was not a suggestion of the research/researcher that the vignettes provided a perfect depiction of how teachers may make sense of students' needs in reality.

In the current research, situating experiences within an ecological framework, I felt findings may provide a more balanced depiction of causal attributions. Themes identified alternative salient factors for participants' experiences and sense-making, such as their own interactions and structures within the classroom or school. Although within-child or family factors were considered, what was more salient was the interactive and dynamic experience of teaching and participants' experiences where relationships were positioned to be at the centre of this. These findings may offer a punctuation point to dominant (and potentially oppressive) narratives around teacher attributions, offering a possibly more empathetic perspective. The teachers in the current research appeared to make sense of their experiences by also considering the classroom environment and their interactions with students.

5.2.2.2 Intuition

In the current research, some teachers held beliefs which they described as intuition. One teacher described this as *"innate teacher radar"* (Alex: 156-157). Some of these included beliefs about SEND and always having *"a support teacher available with them"* (Dana: 74); a tendency to focus on

other areas of need *"it's not something that you automatically think of"* (Dana: 327); a belief that language difficulties are low incident *"just a handful"* (Brenda: 277); or that language development belongs earlier in child development *"we stopped looking at language development once the kid has stopped being a child"* (Alex: 380). Teacher intuition is significant in how teachers respond to students (Sipman et al., 2019) and teachers tend to make decisions based on intuition, rather than data (Vanlommel et al., 2017). Intuition is a complex phenomenon, but through reflections, teachers can be supported to develop an awareness of their judgements and their effects in the classroom (Sipman et al., 2021). More research may be required to understand further the processes which inform teacher intuition, particularly in a UK context and as a response to initial teacher training programmes.

5.2.2.3 Reflections

Within the current research, reflection was prompted by the researcher during the interview process. This led to new insights by allowing participants the opportunity to reflect on their previous interpretation of '*Lucy'* and *'Tom's'* vignettes by bringing to their attention the concept of language needs. For Dana, her new insight reflected the narratives in the literature regarding students with language needs belonging to a 'hidden population' as from her experience, other needs took precedence in her sense-making. Ellen and Dana reported that they found the research process of reflection interesting in changing their perceptions. Dana spoke of the process of deeper, guided reflection allowing her to notice new things and think differently. Ellen spoke of the process allowing for changes in interpretation. Although there may have been an element of conformity, this experience for participants may reflect the potential powerful impact of self-reflection for interpretation and appraising attributions and experiences. Previous research using case study interviews reported that teachers value the opportunity to speak about SEND, inclusion and find it beneficial for critically reflecting on their practice (Ellis et al., 2012). Changing thinking patterns requires cognitive effort (Cain et al., 2019). However, through

guided reflection, teachers may revisit their initial interpretations through a research-informed lens addressing intuitive 'fast thinking' with the possibility of transforming professional practice (Cain et al., 2019). This form of professional development is well suited to a socio-cultural perspective of organisational learning (Cain et al., 2019) Teacher development may be positioned within an interactionist framework recognising the importance of an ecological approach and consideration of the context (Tang & Choi, 2009). Professional development is personalised, connected to practice, and provides opportunities to develop decision making capacity and also autonomy (Tang & Choi, 2009).

5.2.2.4. Implications for practice

Researchers have called for a re-professionalisation of the teaching profession following a continued movement towards a role of teachers in providing textbook delivery of a curriculum (Torrance & Forde, 2017). Teaching is inherently a reflective practice (Geerinck et al., 2010) and researchers have called for a transformative mindset where teacher intentional reflection is used as a powerful CPD tool for change and growth (Tang & Choi, 2009; Thornberg et al., 2022). This includes a paradigm shift for teacher training where reflection is used as a key tool for learning and transforming practice (Svojanovsky, 2017). This involves a movement away from passive CPD learning opportunities facilitated by providing information, to shared experiential professional learning opportunities facilitated by a teacher or educational professional (Svojanovsky, 2017; Van Themaat, 2019). There are drives for educational practice to align with research in the support for organisational learning and CPD to be informed by teacher reflection and decision making (Tang & Choi, 2009; Cain et al., 2019).

Educational Psychologists may be well placed to support reflective practice and problem-solving by looking at taken for granted assumptions, attributions and 'fast thinking' as a way of supporting professional practice. Interventions such as Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) (Kennedy et al.,

2011) is an applied educational intervention which focuses on attuned interactions and positive relationships between students and staff or parents (Rogers et al., 2023). Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) (Kennedy et al., 2015), is the application of VIG as a model of professional development, underpinned by the same principles, focusing on developing professional practice (Soni, 2021). These forms of intervention would be well situated in a social ecological framework of the classroom environment. However, the evaluation of VIG as an ecological intervention in education settings has limited evidence due to its complexity and focuses primarily on interactions within early years settings (Rogers et al., 2023). When used with teaching assistants in the secondary school context, VIG offers an opportunity for staff development, attributional shifts and may offer an effective practice for supporting students' behaviour and classroom management (Hayes et al., 2011). VERP has been used with early years professionals to support reflection, staff confidence and understanding of children (Soni, 2021). However, research around the use of VIG/VERP may still be in its infancy, and application of the methods tends to be within the early years sector (Murry & Leadbetter, 2018; Soni, 2021; Rogers et al., 2023). Further research may look to consider how these methods are applied within the secondary context using coaching frameworks to support reflection and professional development. Educational Psychologists may be well placed to support the implementation and monitoring of evidence-based practices such as VIG and VERP (Murray & Leadbetter 2018). Research can be used to inform reflection (Cain et al., 2019) and Educational Psychologists may offer the bridge between research and practice. Schools may look to protect time for teachers to engage in reflection. This protection may be particularly important as teachers report high workloads, where over half of teacher respondents surveyed judged this to be unmanageable (National Education Union, 2022).

Educational Psychologists' unique contribution in this area may be the support they can offer schools with holistic assessment and enhancing their provision, informed by an interactionist perspective, systems thinking and collaboration (Vivash et al., 2018). Teachers value this input, yet

inconsistencies exist in the Educational Psychology profession when translating knowledge into practice and establishing professional boundaries with speech and language therapists (Sedgwick & Stothard, 2019). Educational Psychologists may lack knowledge and confidence in this area (Nield, 2015). Educational Psychologists may benefit from opportunities to share practice, understanding and build confidence in this area through CPD and working groups.

5.3. Research Question Two: What are the experiences of secondary school teachers when supporting language needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

The phenomenological concept of '*Embodiment'* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, as cited in Smith et al., 2022) positions the individual as a 'being in the world' whose relationships and affective experiences shape 'an experience' and sense-making (Smith et al., 2022). This concept was apparent from participants' experiences, and to understand what it meant to *be* a secondary school teacher supporting SEND also meant understanding how these experiences were shaped by their emotive responses and interactions with others.

5.3.1. Interactive Experiences with Other Professionals

The SENCo played a prominent role in participants' experiences by offering guidance and holding some responsibility for SEND students. Alex and Charlie held an invisible distinction between the support they could offer and what would then become the responsibility of the SENCo and the SEND department. Government rhetoric is that all teachers should be teachers of SEND, following a movement that teachers are required to adapt their approach to a differing population of students with various needs (Blum, 2014) and an emphasis on inclusive mainstream educational provision (HM Government, 2022b). However, Alex and Charlie's experience suggests that the SENCo is an important figure in how this is experienced in practice.

The expertise that teachers attribute to the SENCo may not be perceived by them personally. In their research which utilised a Q-sort methodology, Ramsay and colleagues identified common viewpoints from SENCos which included; *'I'm not an expert', 'we know what we know and we don't know what we don't know'* and *'others are experts'* (Ramsay et al., 2018; Ramsay, 2015). This suggest that the SENCos in their research questioned their own expertise and relied on the expertise of others (professional services and primary schools). Primary school SENCos identified barriers to their role, including high workloads, pressures to provide immediate information about students to colleagues and colleagues who have limited understanding of SEND (Smith, 2022). These pressures may be further intensified in a larger secondary school setting with greater numbers of staff and pupils. Access and support from specialist services and local authorities has decreased (Tysoe et al., 2021). This possibly intensifies the pressures felt by SENCos. Teachers feel tensions have amplified as a response to austerity and funding cuts when SEND provision often exceeds funding (Ellis et al., 2012).

Teaching colleagues also provided a valued resource, experienced by Alex, Dana, Charlie and Ellen. Teachers appeared to intuitively form problem-solving groups where they shared experiences and expertise. None of the teachers spoke of these problem-solving groups being part of a formalised SEND support system in school.

Problem solving groups for teachers has received considerable research attention. Problem solving groups are defined as *"groups which provide a clear facilitated structure for group discussion, with the primary aim of supporting problem-solving independent of any formal monitoring or management process"* (p.95, Muchenje & Kelly, 2021). With a co-operative group structure, these professional problem-solving contexts may afford teachers the opportunity to build understanding and resolve cognitive conflicts where past lived experiences are an important resource (Lam, 2006). Participation in problem-solving groups can lead to wider classroom benefits for staff and pupils and offer a forum for group learning, emotional

containment, safety and belonging (Muchenje & Kelly, 2021). Problem-solving groups are an ecologically valid intervention and are well situated in a social-ecological framework of the classroom environment and support due to the 'ripple effect' and systemic implications for school environment by targeting concepts such as causal attributions (Muchenje & Kelly, 2021).

5.3.1.1. Implications for practice

Problem-solving groups are well situated in an ecological framework of the classroom and SEND. Factors which impact their implementation include school environment, planning, preparation, group structure and the availability of time and space (Muchenje & Kelly, 2021). Schools may look to formalise their systems of support, staff reflection and problem-solving through SEND processes which include protected time for problem-solving groups. Teachers value a facilitator for problem-solving groups who is external from the schools senior leadership team (Muchenje & Kelly, 2021). Educational Psychologists may be well placed to offer their skills in facilitation and have received training in various group problem solving approaches, such as solution circles and process consultation (Brown & Henderson, 2012; Muchenje & Kelly, 2021).

The experiences of teachers have some important implications for the school workforce. Professional lived experiences of working with students with SEND were a valued resource to support the problem-solving of other teachers, particularly those who had recently qualified. In the context of a teaching workforce where high numbers of the most experienced teachers are leaving or planning to leave the profession (National Education Union, 2022), this will likely have an impact on real and perceived levels of expertise within the teaching workforce. Policy may look to find ways to retain experienced teachers and prevent them from leaving the profession.

5.3.2. Interactions with Students

Fundamental to participants' experiences were their interactions with students. Brenda, Ellen, Charlie and Dana positioned these interactions as the most significant aspect of their experience when supporting students with SEND. Participants described being mindful to the ways they approached student interactions and its intended effect. Using positive reinforcement, Brenda felt this showed students they were valued. For Ellen, positive reinforcement supported inclusion and for Dana it built trust and allowed students to have a voice. Charlie described being self-aware by modelling the behaviour and responses to students in which she would hope to see students use back in their interactions. Charlie, Dana and Ellen spoke of avoiding escalating the behaviours of students at all costs.

The interactive experience of SEND situates teacher-student relationships within an ecological context (Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2020). The affective experiences described by participants or that they felt students experienced from these interactions reflect features described in the literature such as care, trust, respect, affect, openness and cooperation which is important of these interactions in fostering student development, achievement, belonging and supporting teacher accountability (Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2020). Teacher-student interactions can impact the presentation of students with social and emotional difficulties (Poulou, 2014) and support learning (Fraser & Walberg, 2005). Classroom environment can be positively influenced by high levels of teacher praise and low levels of reprimand. However, in reality, teachers may use more reprimand than praise, which tends to be general rather than behaviour-specific (Floress et al., 2022). This suggests that teachers may be supported to reflect on their espoused approaches and their approaches in practice. Evidence for praise as a behaviour management tool is mixed. However, anecdotally teachers express that it is effective (Moore et al., 2019).

Practitioners can be coached to modify their interactions with students. Within the early years context, improving the quality of their interactions with students produced gains in areas of school readiness (literacy and

understanding skills) and learning (Pianta et al., 2021). The features which were significant in these interactions were engaging in more cycles of intervention (i.e., observations and feedback) and improved quality of instructional interactions. Supporting peer coaching approaches offers an intervention which is perceived to be feasible and strengthens interactions (Johnson et al., 2017). Within the secondary context, training in instructional language techniques may offer the opportunity to improve the language skills of adolescents with language needs (Starling et al., 2012).

Alex and Charlie held expectations that students had some responsibility in engaging with the support and provision provided to them. Student motivation appeared to be significant to their experiences as a teacher of students with SEND. Both Alex and Charlie shared experiences where students were reluctant or unmotivated to engage with support provided to them. Developing student motivation can be one of the most challenging aspects of being a teacher (Ellis et al., 2012). Factors such as gender and grade can be a moderating influence for student engagement (Strati et al., 2017). This reflected Charlie's experience where she felt that those whose needs were identified earlier were more receptive of teacher support. Research suggests that teacher-student relationships can be predictive of student engagement and focus groups with students identified two dimensions to this interaction and the perception of what made a 'good teacher' (Thornberg et al., 2022). The first included the teaching approach and classroom management strategies. The second included interpersonal characteristics and affective features such as feeling safe, being kind, caring, helpful, funny and fair. Both dimensions were considered crucial for school climate and student engagement.

5.3.2.1. Implications for practice

The experiences of participants situate their teaching within an interactive social ecological classroom. Teachers value approaches and interventions that take the least amount of time to facilitate, such as whole class positive student-teacher interactions which may be less time intensive than

facilitating individualised approaches (State et al., 2017). Growing international support has been developed for the role of relational approaches, focusing on student-teacher interactions as a whole school ethos to promote positive development of students in schools based on interpersonal interactions and are well situated within an interactionist perspective (Aspelin, 2017). Building relationships at different levels of the school organisation (i.e., teacher-leader, teacher-teacher and teacher-student) may be supportive for teacher resilience and wellbeing (Gu, 2014). As such, schools may look to prioritise the development of relationships in school improvement agendas. Educational Psychologist may be well situated to support schools in implementing these agendas through their experience, understanding and available tools to support organisational change (Chidley & Stringer, 2020).

5.3.3. Teachers' Affective Experience

Most participants were unified in a shared experience that they found teaching challenging. Participants expressed their affective experience through emotive language such as *'struggle'* (Charlie), *'challenge'* (Charlie and Dana), *'difficult', 'tiring'* (Dana), and *'not easy'* (Ellen). Feelings of challenge were perhaps felt most acutely by the recently qualified teachers, but also with this came a sense of resignation that this experience was to be expected. Dana spoke of feeling unprepared for the role. Newly qualified teachers may need support to reflect on their beliefs and emotional experiences related to their role as they may feel a 'reality shock' when comprehending the overwhelming complexity experienced in the classroom (López, 2020).

It is consistently documented that teachers experience their role as challenging. Nearly three quarters of teacher respondents felt unprepared to teach the wide range of SEND experienced in schools (Ellis et al., 2012). Secondary school teachers report the role to be emotionally laborious for both recently qualified and experienced teachers (Kinman et al., 2011). In the UK, job satisfaction and retention are areas of concern and estimates

suggest that 44% of teachers who responded to a survey from the National Education Union plan on leaving the profession by 2027 (National Education Union, 2022). This is happening in a context where teachers are currently striking due to pay and conditions and overall workforce morale may be low.

The factors impacting the affective experience of teachers can also be conceptualised within an ecological model of the classroom environment. Factors which contributed to teacher burnout could be present at the student, teacher and organisational level and although causal inferences cannot be drawn, the cumulative effect of experiencing multiple stressors may be a contributing factor for teacher burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). At a student level, rising numbers of SEND students was a factor related to teacher burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). This was a tension experienced by Brenda. A protective factor associated with lower levels of burn out is the support of teaching assistants (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Ellen valued the support provided by learning support assistants.

Smaller class sizes may be a protective factor for teacher burnout and subject teachers who rotate round large numbers of students may experience burnout most acutely (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). This experience is typical in a secondary school context. Ellen, who was able to teach smaller classes, found this to be helpful, offering more individualised support and opportunities to build relationships. Smaller class sizes allow for more opportunities for teacher-student interactions (Folmer-Annevelink et al., 2010).

Self-efficacy is a cognitive process linked with motivation, attributions and an individual's belief about their capacity to perform a certain task (Wang et al., 2015). Teachers with stronger self-efficacy beliefs who feel they have more personal control in making changes, managing occupational stress, engaging students and managing classroom interactions report, lower burnout, less frequent illness, greater job satisfaction and weaker intentions to leave the profession (Wang & Hall, 2018; Wang et al., 2015). Supporting self-efficacy attributions may provide a source to develop staff wellbeing.

Although the research base for teachers attribution intervention and wellbeing is limited, researchers have encouraged initiatives which promote teacher wellbeing and motivation to also incorporate attribution-based interventions (Wang & Hall, 2018).

SEND processes were valued and appeared to alleviate some of the affective demands in school by providing support and structure, experienced by Alex and Ellen. Brenda felt that coaching would support practice in her school. Contextual influences on teachers may be just as important as individual factors when considering the affective experience of teachers and consideration of the professional environment should be a priority for teachers wellbeing (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Influential contextual factors such as workload, management support and school culture may positively impact staff resilience and wellbeing (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). This perspective positions resilience within a social ecological framework (Ungar, 2011; Ungar et al., 2013).

5.3.3.1. Implications for practice

These findings and the narratives presented in the literature suggest more needs to be done at a policy level to support teacher resilience and wellbeing. Educational Psychologists may be well placed to support the development of school SEND systems which support the professional wellbeing and resilience of teachers who can experience challenge in their role, particularly in the context of challenging classroom behaviour (Gibbs & Miller, 2014). Teachers can become part of a cycle of causal and self-efficacy attributions, while Educational Psychology consultation may offer a punctuation point to develop self-efficacy, help to generate solutions, provide emotional containment and support realistic goal setting (Gibbs & Miller, 2014).

5.4. Evaluation of Current Research

5.4.1. Strengths of Current Research

IPA is a methodology which allowed for a richer depth to the analysis of participants' lived experiences. The current research utilised semi-structured interviews, supplemented by vignettes to help access the lived experiences of participants. The focus on language needs is an area that is under researched in the secondary school context. This research allows for a more nuanced understanding and attention to be paid to this important area of development and difficulty.

Vignettes in the current research provided a social microcosm, where pertinent features of a research phenomenon were brought to the foreground to introduce a concrete and layered reality as a reference point (Törrönen, 2018). Plausible vignettes are important for their credibility in the research context (Jenkins et al., 2010). Participants' language depicted how their lived realities interacted with their interpretation of the vignettes. Participants shifted between references of their lived experiences in the classroom and interpretation of the vignettes, strengthening the credibility of their use in the current research.

Using IPA as a methodology to explore the lived experiences of teachers gives voice to a group whose experiences are often not documented in this level of detail. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of the experience of being a teacher from idiographic (rather than typically nomothetic) accounts. The current study situates knowledge and understanding within a socio-ecological framework. This provides a unique angle, which differs from the available literature and provides contextual details of the experiences of participants.

This research provides a rationale for actionable implications for practice at various levels of the system; teachers/schools, Educational Psychologists and policy makers. Actions could potentially be transformative for the wider system. It may also provides further clarity for Educational Psychologists as to how they may use their skill set within the context of language needs,

which may be an area where the profession lacks confidence and uncertainty in boundaries with other professional services.

5.4.2. Limitations of Current Research

5.4.2.1. Limitations of IPA

IPA may be limited by an unsatisfactory recognition of the role of language (Tuffour, 2017). As language is used as the method to explore participants' experiences, IPA may provide a method to explore participants' talk, rather than their experience itself (Willig, 2013). For some participants, engaging in discussion may be more challenging and under these circumstances the use of IPA may be less appropriate (Smith et al., 2022). IPA aims to provide rich individual accounts, informed by its ideographic approach, but it has been used to provide light descriptions without adequate recognition of wider social and societal influences (Braun & Clarke, 2020). IPA aims to understand lived experiences but may not explicitly look to understand why these experiences occur in relation to triggers, histories or socio-cultural factors (Tuffour, 2017). The current research attempted to bridge this limitation of IPA through discussions provided in the Literature Review and Discussion chapters.

Researchers have identified limitations to IPA, which most commonly stem from improper use or depth of engagement with IPA and its principles. Good IPA is more than a methodology and requires the researcher to adopt phenomenological principles in their exploration of a research phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2022). A limitation of the current research is that it was not initially developed as an IPA study (for a discussion of this limitation see section 3.2.6.3). The researcher attempted to address this limitation through engagement with IPA and self-evaluations. Several quality criteria have been developed to support researchers to audit their engagement with qualitative research more generally (e.g. Levitt et al., 2018) and IPA specifically (e.g. Alase, 2017; Nizza et al., 2021; Smith, 2011). The purpose of these tools is to explore the quality and

trustworthiness of research. The researcher evaluated the quality of the current research using various tools (see section 5.4.3).

5.4.2.2. Limitations of the research base

This research was explorative as there was very limited literature to inform the current research in shaping research questions and the methodology. As such, the research was informed by some assumptions held by the researcher, such as the expectations of what secondary school teachers should be aware of regarding language needs. The researcher, who was not a secondary school teacher and had not worked within the secondary schools of the participants in this study, recognised that she was an 'outsider' when researching the experiences of teachers and due to this, would have gaps in her understanding of their experiences (for a discussion of this limitation see section 3.3.2.1). The findings of this research may be important for shaping future research in this area.

5.4.2.3. Methodological limitations

The current research was a real-world study and changes to the methodology happened through the course of the project. Changes to the interview scheduling meant that one participant was interviewed using an earlier schedule (for a discussion of this limitation see section 3.3.3.3.2), and online interviewing meant that the researcher experienced disruptions and scheduling difficulties (for a discussion of this limitation see section 3.3.3.1).

Vignettes were used as a methodology that were positioned as a microcosm (Törrönen, 2018). However, the use of vignettes in the current research may have trustworthiness limitations when accurately depicting reality, exploring what individuals may do under given circumstances, and priming a version of reality that is depicted by participants when relating to the vignettes (Erfanian et al., 2020) (for a discussion of this limitation see section 3.3.3.2.5).

5.4.3. Quality of Current Research

The current research is positioned within a qualitative paradigm and adopted a critical realist ontology and social constructionist epistemology. Due to this, in-depth, idiographic accounts were prioritised above objective and generalisable claims. Characteristics of good qualitative research are used to mitigate perceived limitations of subjectivity. Yardley (2000) identified four characteristics which included, sensitivity to context; commitment to rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance. Descriptions of these criteria and how they were demonstrated by the researcher in the current research are provided in Table 11. The researcher used suggestions provided from recognised auditing frameworks that were both general to qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2018) and specific to IPA (Nizza et al., 2021) to supplement her evaluations of the quality of the current research.

The current research used many and diverse methods to demonstrate its methodological quality and provides a contemporary explorative piece of original research which was able to achieve the research aims; to explore the experiences of Secondary school English teachers. Future research may look to explore any of the themes that arose and their implications for practice.

Table 11. Quality markers demonstrated in the current research, organised by Yardley (2000) four quality characteristics

Characteristic	Evidence in Current Research
Sensitivity to Context	**Theoretical and use of relevant literature** (Yardley, 2000) – A comprehensive literature is provide (Literature Review; Chapter 2) and findings are interpreted with reference to relevant theory (Discussion; Chapter 5).

Sensitivity to context	**Empirical data** (Yardley, 2000) – Raw data is provided to strengthen interpretive claims (Findings; Chapter 4). Further tabulated data is provided (Appendices 20-26) **Socio-cultural setting** (Yardley, 2000) **where questions are framed in context** (Levitt et al., 2018) – A description of the UK socio-historical educational context is provided (Introduction; Chapter 1). Rationale is developed for specific area of focus and research questions (Literature Review; Chapter 2) and findings are contextualised within this current context (Discussion; Chapter 5). Reference is made of the individual characteristics of schools in which participants worked (Methods; Chapter 3). **Participants' perspectives** (Yardley, 2000) **and close analytic reading to participants' words** (Nizza et al., 2021) – Idiographic accounts are provided and grouped experiential themes are described with reference to nuances in participants' perspectives. Detailed excepts provided of raw transcript data linked with claims made of the researcher's interpretation (Findings; Chapter 4). **Ethical issues** (Yardley, 2000) – Ethical issues are outlined and informed the development of research methods and data collection (Methods; Chapter 3).
Commitment to Rigour	**In-depth engagement with the topic** (Smith, 2011; Yardley, 2000), – Depth and prolonged engagement of study (Appendix 5), breadth of literature (See References). **Methodological competence/skill** (Yardley, 2000)**; consistency to analytic process** (Levitt et al., 2018) **and commitment to theoretical principles of IPA (phenomenology, hermeneutics, idiography)**(Smith,

Commitment to Rigour	2011) – The researcher use of recognised qualitative methodology and procedure (Methods; Chapter 3), supported with extracts and evidence (See Appendices 17-19). A commitment to phenomenology was outlined (Methods, Chapter 3) and findings contextualised to phenomenological concepts (Findings, Chapter 5), an active commitment to engage with analysis as a phenomenological researcher, supported through peer/tutor supervision and reflection. A commitment to hermeneutics was demonstrated through the development of the research, and documented (Methods, Chapter 3). Researcher subjectivity and hermeneutic cycles informed the data analysis and different levels of interpretation was documented as examples (See Appendices 17-19). A commitment to idiography was evidenced by providing individual experiential accounts when detailing group experiential themes (Findings, Chapter 4). **Thorough data collection** (Yardley, 2000)**;** d**etails provided of participants, recruitment process, searches, data collection** (Levitt et al., 2018) – Detailed chronology and flow charts provided of systematic literature review (Chapter 2). Detailed descriptions of data collection methods and procedure (Methods, Chapter 3). **Depth/breadth of analysis** (Yardley, 2000)**; methodological integrity demonstrated by demonstrating researchers' perspectives, grounded in evidence, meaningful, contextualised and coherent contributions** (Levitt et al., 2018) **and developed through a rigorous experiential account** (Nizza et al., 2021) – Engagement with the methodology

Commitment to Rigour	and phenomenology through reading, peer/tutor support and self-reflection. Documenting phenomenological experiences and linkage to philosophical concepts (Methods, Chapter 3; Discussion, Chapter 5).
Transparency and Coherence	**Clarity and power of description/argument** (Yardley, 2000)**;** c**laims made are warranted** (Levitt et al., 2018)**; constructed in a compelling narrative attending to convergence and divergence** (Nizza et al., 2021) **and where sufficient participant data is provided for each theme** (Smith, 2011)– Findings provided with detailed excerpts from participants, presented in a narrative format and attention paid to idiographic details by noting convergence and divergence (Findings, Chapter 4). Tabulated format to display which participants contributed to the development of Group Experiential Themes (see Appendices 20-26). Interpretation is supported by raw data from multiple participants. **Transparent methods of data presentation** (Smith, 2011; Yardley, 2000)**; methods described coherently and written in a chronology or narrative** (Levitt et al., 2018) – Methods provided in a narrative, steps of analysis outlined and supported by appendices documents which are chronological for data analysis procedure (Methods; Chapter 3). **Fit between theory and method** (Yardley, 2000)**; summarise design, analysis strategy and philosophical perspective** (Levitt et al., 2018) – A rationale for the methodology used is provided with

Transparency and Coherence	reference to philosophical position and supported by reflexive commentary (Methods; Chapter 3). **Reflexivity** (Yardley, 2000), **researcher description detailing prior background** (Levitt et al., 2018) – Researchers positionality provided (Introduction, Chapter 1 and Appendix 4). Detailed account of research development provided (Methods Chapter 3). Demonstrated through reflexive journaling, including extracts in the appendices and a reflexive commentary for transparency.
Impact and Importance	**Theoretical (enriching understanding)**(Yardley, 2000) – Research is original and novel (Introduction, Chapter 1). Findings contextualised with theoretical insights and literature (Discussion; Chapter 5) **Socio-cultural** (Yardley, 2000) – Findings contextualised in UK socio-cultural education system (Discussion; Chapter 5) **Practical (for community, policy makers and health workers)** – Implications for policy, schools and Educational Psychology practice provided (Discussion; Chapter 5)

5.5. Original Contribution

The systematic literature review included within the current research identified that research exploring the context of language needs within the secondary age phase and settings is limited. As such, this research offers an original contribution to research in this field. This research is timely, as language needs may have lasting poor outcomes for students relating to academic attainment (Lindsay et al., 2010; Ziegenfusz et al., 2022) and post-16 training opportunities (Snow, 2016). 'Early identification', often

confused to mean intervention in the early years, actually means prompt intervention at any age with the aims of offsetting the trajectory and the potential impact (Bercow, 2008).

As far as the researcher is aware, the use of IPA to explore teacher's experiences of their role, SEND and language needs is novel. Idiographic accounts provide a contrast to typically nomothetic approaches to collecting data from teacher viewpoints, which neglect an understanding of important individual and contextual details. Idiographic accounts of the experiences of teachers can be contextualised within a social ecological framework. Although accounts are not intended to be generalisable to the entire profession, the experiences of participants in the current research offer ideas for future research and implications for practice, provided in the current chapter.

5.6. Conclusion

The current research was able to address a primary aim – to provide a descriptive and interpretive account of the experiences of secondary school teachers of English when supporting SEND and language needs. Dominant themes from these experiences highlight how participants' individual experiences are shaped by layers of contextual and environmental phenomena – influences which are present within their classroom ecologies. Participant views also suggest that their experiences are shaped by distal factors such as school policy and ethos highlighting the interaction between and within school-related systems.

Four group experiential themes were developed from the personal experiential themes of participants. The first theme, *'expertise'* detailed how for some participants, the construct, experience and reality of language needs was not something that was highly significant or conscious to their everyday lived experiences - as teachers or their sense-making of the needs of students. For example, participants' expertise was positioned by some participants to be situated in the English curriculum rather than the

forte of all teachers as part of language development. Aligned to this then was the belief that the expertise of others in school was a valued resource.

A second theme of *'interactions'* was positioned by some participants as the most important aspect of their experience as teachers and supporting young people experiencing additional or, special educational needs. The 'relationship', as positioned by some participants, requires teachers to be pro-active in creating and ensuring positive interactions which foster a sense of trust and belonging. Of note, this phenomenon was also experienced as a tension for teachers when students were unmotivated to engage within these interactions. These interactions were an active process, including pro-active (i.e., planning) and reactive (i.e., responding) responses.

A third theme, *'interpretation'* detailed the challenges experienced by participants when disentangling needs from behaviour. All participants appeared to grapple with this experience in some way and shared individual insights. For some participants, factors relating to the family or within-child (i.e., diagnoses, learning difficulties, personal temperament or choice) were considered. However, teachers appeared to consider their experiences more broadly to consider the impact of interactional and environmental factors.

A final theme of *'feeling challenged'* captured the difference between teaching SEND and *experiencing* this, with the affective influences on the individual being the core to the experience. Most teachers shared experiences which contributed to the development of the sub-theme; *'being a teacher is hard'.* Here, there was a significant emotive aspect to their experiences as teachers and, the demands and tensions felt within their role. As an alternative, SEND processes (real or hoped for) were positioned as a resource which could relieve the affective experience of challenge within participants' roles.

The professional implications of the current research provides a space for the voices and experiences of teachers to be highlighted at a period where

this depth of understanding is timely, due to workforce dissatisfaction (i.e., National Education Union, 2022) and recent government publications highlighting the expectations on teachers (i.e., HM Government, 2022b). This understanding may have relevance for educational professionals, such as Educational Psychologists and policy makers when considering the context of SEND and teaching and how support may be provided through developing supportive school processes and spaces for reflection and problem-solving. This may include support or strategic input at different levels such as:

At a systemic / strategic level

- Through prioritising the development and use of tools within the secondary context to support teachers to evaluate and understand the profile of language needs and their presentation.
- Supporting senior leaders in their development of SEND processes such as providing supervision to support the affective aspects of teaching offering emotional containment.
- Supporting schools to develop further the interactions between students and teachers.
- Positioning CPD as a reflective tool to support development through shared experiential learning opportunities and the sharing of practice and experiences.

At a classroom / individual level:

- Awareness that teachers may not have had explicit training around language needs and other areas of SEND and to develop understanding and offer support.
- Staff level support via educational psychology consultation and supervisory processes to help create a shared and holistic understanding, identify solutions and provide emotional containment

Future research may look to explore and propel any of the ideas put forward in the current research given the clear paucity of research in this area, while

also recognising that the purpose of this research is not to provide generalisable claims, but rather, detail the individual experiences of secondary school teachers of English.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Tabulated Summaries of the Studies Included in the Narrative Synthesis

Author(s) (year)	Title, Research Focus and Research Questions (RQs)*	Participants*	Relevant Methodology*	Findings
Davies (2009)	Title: Communication and perspective taking of pupils excluded or at risk of exclusion from school: An investigation into deficits in communication skills and implications for intervention Focus: The development of communication skills and perspective taking with adolescent excluded or at risk of exclusion from school. RQs: Are the staff in young people's educational settings aware of any language difficulties?	Class Teacher (N=6) Teacher in some lessons (N=5) Deputy Head teacher (N=1) Pupil's individual support (N=3) Teaching Assistant (TA)/ Small group support (N= 3) TA/In class support (N=2) Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) (N=3) ECM manager (N=2) Mentor (N=9) Other (N=6)	Questionnaires using likert scales to explore staff concerns for young people's overall and social language skills. Staff opinions and students' language scores were correlated. Staff provided ratings for particular students where the student's language skills had been assessed.	As the data included ratings of staff working in primary schools and pupil referral units, data provided in the findings could not be included in the review. Supplementary data provided in the appendix explored the correlations between staff opinions and student's language difficulties which was divided by age demographics. Significant correlations were found between secondary school staff level of concern for students overall and social language skills and students' language skills

Author(s) (year)	Title, Research Focus and Research Questions (RQs)*	Participants*	Relevant Methodology*	Findings
Dockrell & Lindsay (2007)	Title: identifying the educational and social needs of children with specific speech and language difficulties on entry to secondary school RQs: How do school staff, appraise he transition from primary to secondary school for students with specific speech and language difficulties.	Form Tutors, SENCo and secondary subject specialist (N= not provided)	Data was gathered using questionnaires Form Tutor / SENCo questionnaire explored: the perceptions of children's difficulties during transfer; the amount and type of parental contact; curriculum differentiation; the amount and type of support received; and strengths and needs of children. Subject Specialist teacher Questionnaires examined: curriculum; support and peer acceptance using forced choice questions, rating scales and open ended questions.	SENCo's reported language difficulties are supported with: specialist provision for literacy and numeracy; additional teaching support; learning support assistant (LSA) time; and IT equipment. The majority of SENCos (43/50) felt that curriculum differentiation was needed to support learning which included using different teaching strategies (95%), extra support time (96%). It was felt by a "general consensus" (no data provided) that educational needs were being met, except 17% felt that speech and language needs were not being met Subject specialist teachers reported that students with language difficulties were doing worse than typically developing peers in Maths, English, Geography, Science, Modern foreign languages (no comparative data was provided). Form teachers reported that students with language difficulties were experiencing difficulties with transfer (53%), social life (36%), self-esteem (35%) and coping with different teachers (25%)

Author(s) (year)	Title, Research Focus and Research Questions (RQs)*	Participants*	Relevant Methodology*	Findings
Ramsay et al. (2018)	Title: How do school staff understand the relationship between problem behaviours and language difficulties Focus: An exploration of how SENCos and pastoral managers understand the links between language and behaviour difficulties. RQs: What is the understanding of key staff in mainstream high schools of the relationship between students' behaviour difficulties and their language skills?	Interviews: Pastoral managers (N=4) SENCos (N=4) Q-Sort: Pastoral managers (N=10) SENCo (N=10)	Mixed methods - Semi structured (N=8) interviews and Q sort (N=20). Interviews: developed from themes identified in the literature and included case study vignettes. Concourse for the Q sort: developed from interviews. Reduced to 40 statements. Thematic analysis used to analyse interview data. Factor analysis for the Q sort	Schools continue to have a limited understanding of the links between language and behaviour. Interviews identified two themes: Expertise – I'm not the expert; we know what we know and we don't know what we don't know; others are experts. Why didn't I think of language – language and behaviour for learning and other causes more likely QSort data – common viewpoints: Language is important for behaviour; Subject rather than language development expertise; Behaviour and causes other than language; Knowledge of students and their difficulties Integrated analysis – 3 meta themes: Confidence in professional knowledge and expertise; Reliance on professional expertise; Implementing existing professional practice

Author(s) (year)	Title, Research Focus and Research Questions (RQs)*	Participants*	Relevant Methodology*	Findings
Wilson et al. (2010)	Title: supporting students with language learning difficulties in secondary school through collaboration: The use of concept maps to investigate the impact of teachers' knowledge of vocabulary teaching. Focus: Explores collaborative practice between secondary school teachers and speech and language therapists with regards to vocabulary instruction	Teachers (N=3) of geography, modern studies and science from two secondary schools in Scotland. All teachers taught at least one pupil with a specific language impairment.	Teachers' knowledge and understanding of vocabulary pre and post collaboration with a speech and language therapist (SaLT) was explored using concept maps. Teachers created concept maps about language and learning Collaboration involved discussions with a SaLT about why vocabulary knowledge is required, what is robust vocabulary instruction and how to integrate meaningful activities into lessons. 2 Teachers met with the SaLT on 8 occassions, the third teacher met on 3 occassions due to absence.	Teacher A: Pre-collaboration – demonstrated a range of concepts but little linking Post-collaboration - joining of words but concepts not integrated, suggesting an increase in knowledge but continued lack of understanding Teacher B: Pre-collaboration – some evidence of cross-linking ideas relating to reading, the curriculum and using words. Organised hierarchically suggests some concept knowledge. Post-collaboration - many more crossed links – increased knowledge and understanding Teacher C: pre-collaboration - good prior knowledge, evidence of cross links Post-collaboration - changes to the organisation of the concept map Variations in prior knowledge and understanding and thinking of vocab teaching. All demonstrated improvements in this knowledge and the complexity of their ideas (concept maps) following collaboration with SaLT but to varying degrees

*Only research questions and methodology and participants relevant for the review are included in this table

Appendix 2. Methodological Quality Analysis of the Studies included in the Narrative Synthesis using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (Hong et al., 2018)

Davies (2009)

Category of study designs	**Methodological quality criteria**	**Responses**			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?	X			
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	X			
	Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.				
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	X			*Purposive sampling approach*
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	X			*a range of staff, but does not give details as to the number of settings?*
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?		X		*Measurement may not be appropriate to answer the research question on it's own, no information on reliability/validity of questionnaire.*
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?		X		*Risk of bias – participants were aware of the research aims so there may be response bias with participant ratings. Non-peer reviewed as it was part of a doctoral thesis.*
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	X			

Dockrell & Lindsay (2007)

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?		X		Research aims are outlined but clear research questions are not provided
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?			X	Difficult to determine due to a lack of clarity with the research questions
	Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.				
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?			X	Clear sampling is provided of the children participants (not relevant for review), details of how the staff participants are sampled is not provided
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?			X	No details provided of the number of staff participants and the spread of their roles.
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?			X	No details of the questionnaire used are provided
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?			X	Difficult to determine as there are no details of the participants, recruitment process or measures.
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?			X	No details provided. Claims made sometimes without reference to any data (i.e. "the concensus was…")

Ramsay et al. (2018)

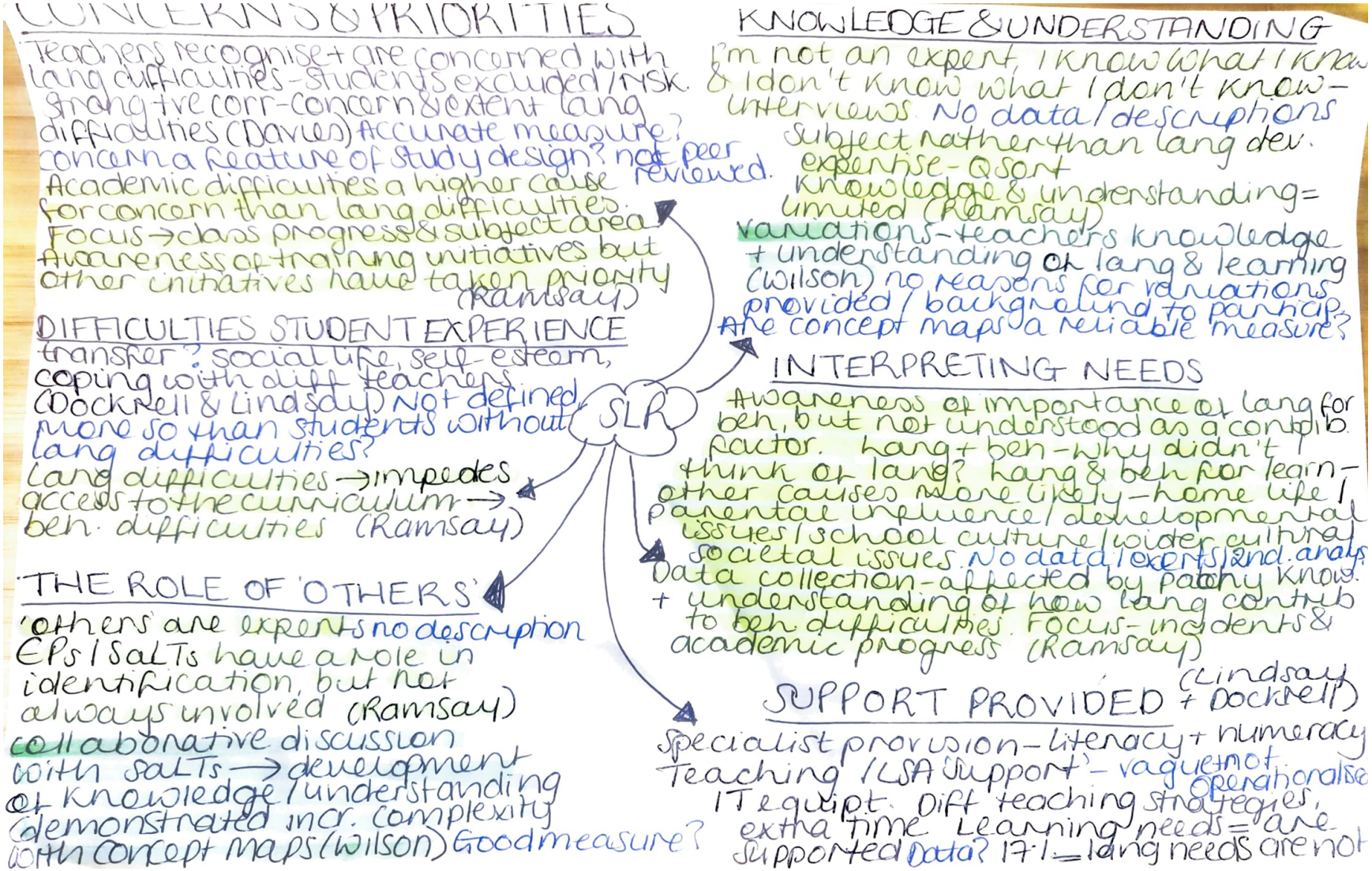
Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?	X			
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	X			
	Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X			
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	X			
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?			X	No information given to how the themes are developed and not supported with any of the interview data
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?		X		
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?			X	Raw data not provided
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	X			
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	X			Demographic details of the participants included in an appendix with the published document
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	X			.
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?			X	No details provided about who was invited to participate but did not.
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	X			

5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	X			Theoretical orientation made explicit, sequential design explained the two elements of the mixed methods
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	X			
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	X			
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?			X	No mention, no inconsistencies as qual methods informed quant
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?		X		Qualitative data findings are poorly substantiated with data and themes not operationalised

Wilson et al., 2010

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?		X		Research aims stated, research questions implied
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	X			
	Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X			
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?		X		Concept maps depict development of knowledge but may not provide a clear representation of the participant's knowledge and understanding
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	X			
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	X			
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	X			

Appendix 3. Visual Representation of the Narrative Synthesis



Appendix 4: Initial Personal and Professional Reflexive Exercise

Braun & Clarke provide dimensions for which researchers can reflect on their personal and professional experiences and assumptions, supported by prompts and questioning (p.16-18, Braun & Clarke, 2022). This was used as a guide to support the researcher to engage with this reflexive practice.

Personal Reflexivity:

Personal Background: I occupy positions of social privilege being white, young, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle class, educated. These characteristics have likely shaped my worldview and sense of social justice. This fuelled a drive to enter the profession of Educational Psychology due to a vocation to try to make a difference to a system which could support opportunities for all.

Political and ideological commitments: My political and ideological commitments align with a left-wing political orientation. This positioning informed a personal and professional interest in this area, with a focus on educational reform and equality.

Functional and disciplinary reflexivity:

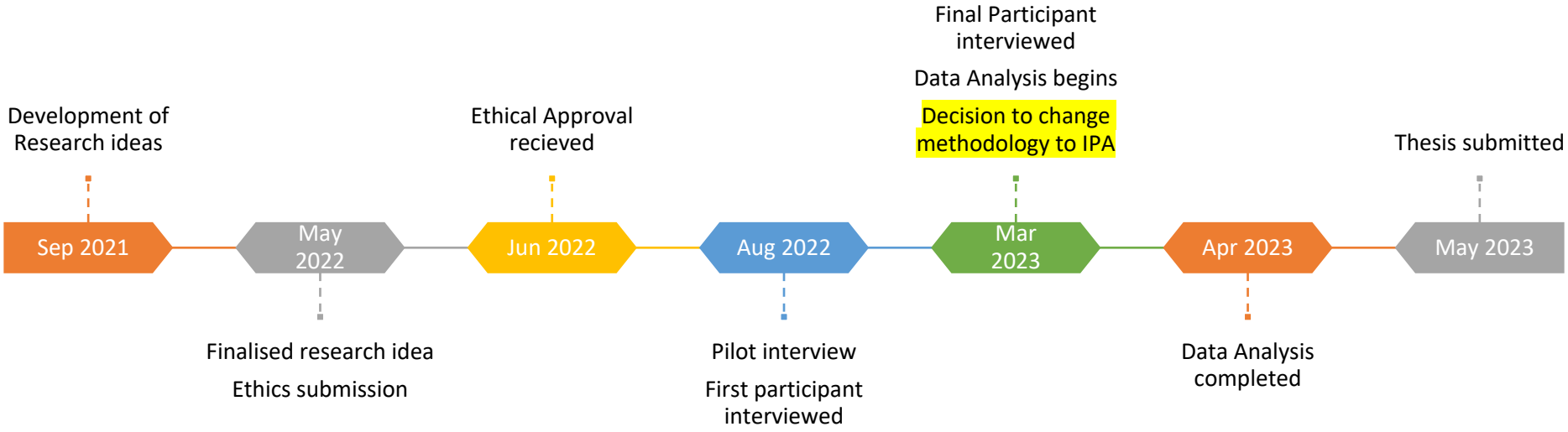
Research training and experiences: I have professional experiences working within a UK university, this research was informed by positivist principles. It has been an active process to avoid the 'positivist creep' (Braun & Clarke, 2022) through this research process. Research tutorial has been important for discussing these influences on the research process.

Topic Reflexivity:

I recognise that I am an outsider researcher of this topic as I have not been a secondary school teacher. My role is to fairly depict the experiences of secondary school teachers without having been one personally. Participants may also perceive me as coming from a position of power as I occupy a Trainee Educational Psychologist position alongside my role as a researcher. These reflections were important considerations when designing my interview schedule, using support from my supervisor in tutorials.

Another consideration was that my understanding of the research phenomenon would be linked with my pervious educational and employment experiences, knowledge and reading. I considered knowledge of Language Needs to be socially constructed and appreciated that my perspective of the phenomenon, shaped by my history and experiences may be different to that of the participants I interviewed. This informed the decision to create a shared understanding of the phenomenon through the research process and the necessity of using vignettes as a research artefact. I am recognising my role in influencing the direction of discourse and the development of knowledge.

Appendix 5: Research Timeline



Appendix 6: Ethical Approval Letter – The University of Nottingham

The University of Nottingham
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SJ/tp

Ref: **S1433**

Tuesday 7th June 2022

Dear Laura Doherty and Victoria Lewis,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research *'How might secondary teachers consider language difficulties when interpreting students' needs?'*

That proposal has now been reviewed and we are pleased to tell you it has met with the Committee's approval.

However:
Please note the following comments from our reviewers;

Reviewer One:

- Please, delete '[For online studies]: By clicking the button above I indicate that the study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.]' from the consent form.

Reviewer Two:

- The applicant does not outline your process for the recording, transfer and digital storage of interviews and transcriptions. The applicants should use a digital recorded with passcode protection (where possible), ensure that interviews are deleted from the recorder immediately after the content is uploaded digitally, store the interviews and transcripts in a GDPR compliant location (e.g., university OneDrive rather than on the password protected computer of the researcher) and delete the recordings as soon as transcription has been completed and these are no longer needed for analysis.
- Please also advise participants on the following points in your information sheet:
- The timeline for withdrawal of data (i.e., up until transcription has taken place and data is anonymized).
- You have included the standard line in the consent form of sharing data with other researchers if it is anonymized. Consider whether that is possible in this context and if not, remove it, and if you keep it, discuss where and how the data would be shared with other researchers (open science websites for publications or at the request of the author).

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice.

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The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Jackson
Chair, Ethics Committee

Appendix 7: Research Information for Headteachers send via email when initially reaching out to schools during research recruitment.

A study to explore the experiences of secondary school staff when teaching students with additional needs.

Contact Details: laura.doherty@nottingham.ac.uk

Dear Headteacher,

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist working within the Educational Psychology Service. However, I write to you from my other role as a university doctoral research student. I am writing to you to inform you of my research and ask for your support in facilitating contact with teachers whom I may invite to participate.

As you may be aware, the recent government publication of the White and Green papers has placed an emphasis on levelling up the teaching workforce, improving student outcomes and supporting Special Educational Needs (SEN). My research is situated within this context to explore the views and experiences of secondary school teachers when supporting these needs within an inclusive, mainstream education setting.

I am hoping to invite English teachers who qualified from their teacher training within the last 10 years to participate in a confidential interview about their experiences. Teachers across secondary school settings in the local authority will be invited to participate. It is hoped that through understanding teachers' experiences, an understanding can be provided of important factors when identifying and supporting SEN, which may inform training and further support. Findings will be made public to read but will not identify individual schools or the teacher who participated.

Should you be happy for members of your teaching community to participate in this research, what I would ask is that the attached information sheet be provided to teachers who would meet the criteria[2]. Interviews should take no longer than 40 minutes. These can be facilitated either face-to-face or virtually, via Microsoft teams. The timing and location of these interviews can be negotiated.

Thank you for your consideration.

Many thanks,
Laura Doherty

Doctoral Research student,
Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology,

[2] English secondary school teachers who qualified from their teacher training within the last 10 years.

The University of Nottingham,

Appendix 8: Participant Information Sheet

School of Psychology

Information Sheet for participants

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

A study to explore the experiences of secondary school staff when teaching students with additional needs.

[Ethics Approval Number: S1433]
Researchers: Laura Doherty
Supervisors: Victoria Lewis
Contact Details: laura.doherty@nottingham.ac.uk

This is an invitation to take part in a research study on a date to be confirmed.

Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

This research is interested in the experiences of Secondary school staff when supporting and teaching student who have additional needs.

If you participate, you will be invited to take part in an interview, which will be audio recorded, so that it can later be transcribed. This interview can be facilitated virtually, via Microsoft Teams, if required. During the interview you will be asked about your experiences teaching secondary school students with additional needs. I will insist that all discussions about your work with specific pupils remain anonymous. Identifying features of students will not be discussed. You will also be invited to read some case study descriptions of fictional students and comment on features of these descriptions. The whole procedure will last no longer than 40 minutes.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. Withdrawal after the study will be possible up to the point where the data has been transcribed and analysed. All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. It will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act. Anything that you discuss during the interviews will not be identifiable to you, as a number of teachers across different schools will be invited to participate.

If you are happy to participate or have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask now or contact me on the email address above. I can also be contacted after your participation.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 9: Initial Interview Schedule (Version 1)

Information sheet and consent form are provided. Participants are allowed the opportunity to ask questions. Introductions are made, confidentiality and right to withdraw are outlined. Participants are reminded that they may have experiences working with students which they want to discuss and are relevant to the questions, they should ensure that when providing information about their experiences, please refrain from providing any personal information (such as names) and be cautious when providing any information which may identify the students.

The researcher will also be explicit in her role as a Researcher. Although she does hold a role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), working within the local authority (and possibly the school), her role today is not as a representative of the local authority or Educational Psychology Team. Instead, as an impartial researcher.

1. Can you start by telling me a little bit about background, your role, experience, and training that you have received?

General Questions about practice/understanding:

2. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences teaching students with additional needs in the classroom? What does this look like? How may these needs present?
3. How may you determine if a student has additional needs? Would you do any assessments?
4. How would you plan and deliver intervention? Does anyone support with this (internal/external)? Can you think of typical ways you may offer intervention/support/differentiation?
5. How would you monitor this student's progress?

Vignettes are introduced
Participants are given the opportunity to read through the vignettes which describe different case study examples

General questions about the vignettes:

6. What are your thoughts about what you have read? Does anything stand out for you?
7. What do you think is happening for this student?
8. If this student was in your class, how may you teach/support them?

General questions about the vignettes and their experiences:

9. How do these vignettes compare to your experiences working in school? Does anything sound familiar/unsurprising?

Questions specific to language difficulties

10. Have you considered that any of these pupils may have a language difficulty? What may suggest that?
11. How relevant is language needs to your teaching work with students?
12. What is your understanding of language needs?
13. What may make you consider language needs?
14. How would you support language needs in your classroom?
15. What are the barriers/facilitators around supporting language difficulties?

Any other comments?

Appendix 10: Amended Interview Schedule (Version 2)

Information sheet and consent form are provided. Participants are allowed the opportunity to ask questions. Introductions are made, confidentiality statement and right to withdraw are outlined. Participants are reminded that they may have experiences working with students which they want to discuss and are relevant to the questions, they should ensure that when providing information about their experiences, please refrain from providing any personal information (such as names) and be cautious when providing any information which may identify the students.

1. Can you start by telling me a little bit about background, your role, experience, and training that you have received?

General Questions about practice/understanding:

2. Can you till me a little bit about the ways in which you recognise and support additional needs in your classroom?

Vignettes are introduced
Participants are given the opportunity to read through a range of vignettes which describe different case study examples

General questions about the vignettes:

3. What are your thoughts about Lucy/Tom?
4. What may be happening for this young person and how may you address these needs?

Questions specific to language difficulties

5. Have you considered that this young person may have a language difficulty? If so, what features may suggest a language need?

6. Can you tell me about your experiences with students with language difficulties? (additional prompts: training, knowledge, assessments, support, prevalence, confidence, role, barriers)

Any other comments?

Appendix 11: Finalised interview schedule (Version 3)

- *Information sheet and consent form are provided.*
- *Participants are allowed the opportunity to ask questions.*
- *Introductions are made, confidentiality statement and right to withdraw are outlined.*
- *Participants are reminded that if discussing experiences working with students please refrain from providing any personal information (such as names) and be cautious when providing any information which may identify the students.*
- *Consent form completed.*

Section one: background and general practice

16. **Can you tell me about your professional background including your teacher training, further CPD and current and previous roles?**

General Questions about practice/understanding:

17. **Can you tell me about your experiences when recognising special educational needs in your classroom?** This may include school policies or practices, tools you use or what you may be looking out for or anything else which if important.
18. **How may you support special educational needs in your classroom?** Are there any universal/targeted strategies you commonly use, where/how/who you receive guidance/support from, or anything else which you think is important when you are supporting special needs.

Section two: Vignettes (General)

Vignettes are introduced
Participants are given the opportunity to read through two vignettes. After reading each vignette, they are asked questions 3 and 4.

General questions about the vignettes (questions asked individually for both Lucy and Tom):

19. **What may you consider to be Tom/Lucy primary or secondary special educational needs?**
20. **If Tom/Lucy were in your class, what actions would you take in immediate, short and longer term?**

Section three: Language difficulties

*** Introduction of the focus on the area of language needs***
Purpose is to create a shared understanding to explore this further.

We'll come back to those vignettes shortly. I am going to change the direction of the interview slightly to focus on one area of SEND which is language needs.

21. **What does the term language needs mean to you? Have a couple of minutes to think about this if you would like.**
(prompts, how would you define language needs? What are your experiences working with students with language needs?)

The term 'language needs' is quite vague and can mean several different things to different people and can be called many different names in practice, which is why I asked you that question. For the rest of the interview, when we talk about language needs, I would like you to consider difficulties relating to:

- ***Students who may not understand words that are being used, or the instructions they hear***
- ***Students who may have difficulties knowing how to talk and listen to others in a conversation***
- ***Students who struggle to say words or sentences***
- ***Speech which is difficult to understand***

I'll give you a couple of minutes to think about what I've said and please ask any questions if you need some further clarification.

22. **Do you have any thoughts about that definition?**

Questions relating to the vignettes:

23. **Looking back at these vignettes, although there may be many other possible and valid reasons behind the students' presentation, considering their descriptions now through a lens that they may be have a language need, what behaviours do you think could suggest that?**

(go through each vignette)

vignettes are put away

Solution-Focused/Coaching questions

24. **What personal/professionally have you found helpful when working with language needs?**

It may be helpful to consider what helped for yourself or the student, how you may know that It helped/worked well, any skills, strengths or resources you may have or that you were supported with from others.

25. **What types of experiences do you feel you needed more support with?**
    (what could be improved with your work in this area?)

*** provide debrief and opportunity to withdraw***

26. **Before we finish the interview, is there anything other comments that you would like to make?**

Appendix 12: Research Vignettes (Ramsay, 2015)

Research Vignettes

Tom

Tom is in Year 8. There were concerns at primary school regarding his ability to form peer relationships and with acquiring literacy skills. Following additional support for literacy in Year 7 Tom acquired functional literacy and the additional support was withdrawn.

Tom's teachers find that he sits at the back of the class and talks to other children and he likes to act the 'class clown' making inappropriate comments. Tom does not like to be asked a direct question and will guess at an answer, make an inappropriate response or shrug his shoulders. Tom's teachers describe him as refusing to follow instructions and frequently getting the work wrong.

Tom is sometimes involved in incidents during the unstructured times of the day when play fighting gets out of hand. It can be difficult for Tom's teachers to find out exactly what happened.

Tom enjoys sport and he is a good football player. He does well in Physical Education lessons. Tom likes doing models and he will work on the computer and likes computer games, although he can find research projects using the Internet frustrating.

Lucy

Lucy is in Year 9 and she is working well below her age group in literacy and numeracy. She will use avoidance tactics when she is asked to do things she is less confident with.

Lucy's mood can be unpredictable and she can be non-compliant. Lucy struggles to manage her anger in school particularly when she becomes frustrated. Lucy has had violent outburst which involve threatening and abusive behaviour both to adults and children.

Lucy has difficulty following verbal instructions and she relies on visual and other clues to generate answers when she is asked a direct question.

Lucy has had 1:1 counselling support but she finds it difficult to expand on her ideas an often only gives a one word answer in response to questions. Lucy continues to have difficulties with self-esteem and self-awareness and needs support in developing positive social contact with peers and adults.

Lucy responds to praise, she cares about her personal appearance and she enjoys working with younger children.

Appendix 13: GDPR statement

Research participant privacy notice

Privacy information for Research Participants
For information about the University's obligations with respect to your data, who you can get in touch with and your rights as a data subject, please visit: www.nottingham.ac.uk/utilities/privacy/privacy.aspx.

Why we collect your personal data
We collect personal data under the terms of the University's Royal Charter in our capacity as a teaching and research body to advance education and learning. Specific purposes for data collection on this occasion are to explore the experiences of special school staff when supporting adolescents.

Legal basis for processing your personal data under GDPR
The legal basis for processing your personal data on this occasion is Article 6(1a) consent of the data subject.

How long we keep your data
The University may store your data for up to 25 years and for a period of no less than 7 years after the research project finishes. The researchers who gathered or processed the data may also store the data indefinitely and reuse it in future research. Measures to safeguard your stored data include;

- Storing the data on the university SharePoint, which is encrypted and only accessible by the researcher and her supervisors. This includes audio recordings and transcriptions of the interviews.
- Anonymising the data to ensure that participants are not identifiable by using pseudonyms.

Who we share your data with
Extracts of your data may be disclosed in published works that are posted online for use by the scientific community. Your data may also be stored indefinitely on external data repositories (e.g., the UK Data Archive) and be further processed for archiving purposes in the public interest, or for historical, scientific or statistical purposes. It may also move with the researcher who collected your data to another institution in the future.

Appendix 14: Participant Consent Form

School of Psychology
Consent Form

A study to explore the experiences and practices of school staff support secondary school students in 'behaviour' special school settings

Ethics Approval Number: S1433

Researcher(s): Laura Doherty [laura.doherty@nottingham.ac.uk]
Supervisor(s): Victoria Lewis [lpavl2@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk]

The participant should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable)? YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? YES/NO (at any time and without giving a reason)
- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO
- Do you agree to take part in the study? YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: L. Doherty Date: 10/4/2022

Appendix 15: Participant Debrief Document

School of Psychology
Debrief Form

University of Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

A study to explore the experiences of secondary teachers when teaching students with language needs

Thank you for your participation in this study.

The exact nature of this study was withheld. Initially the title of the study was provided as;

A study to explore the experiences of secondary school staff when teaching students with additional needs.

However, this study aimed to uncover understanding and experiences relating to language needs. It was necessary to withhold this information, as not to prime your responses to the questions. One consideration was whether language difficulties were considered as a contributory factor when considering a student's needs, difficulties and approaches to teaching them.

Rationale for research

Speech, Language and Communication Needs is the most cited reason for students to receive SEN support at school ("Special Educational Needs in Endgland", 2020). Within the secondary age phase, students with these difficulties are often described as a 'hidden population' as these needs can go unrecognised and unsupported (Gascoigne & Gross, 2017). Therefore, within demographics of secondary school pupils, there may well be higher levels of language difficulties that initially supposed.

The availability of specialist practitioners such as speech and language therapists and Educational Psychologists is limited, due to capacity constraints (Dockrell et al., 2006; Heneker, 2005; I CAN, 2011). Therefore, most students with these needs are supported by the school workforce. Therefore, it is important to understand secondary school teachers experiences when supporting these needs.

Research Methods

This study utilised semi-structured interviews and vignettes (written descriptions of fictional pupils) to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers. The case studies outlined in the vignettes are broad and interpretative. However, they may provide a picture of how language difficulties may present in the secondary age phase, without explicitly stating that a possible origin of the students' difficulties was a language need. This information was withheld to explore whether when making sense of a student's needs and presentation, language was considered as a contributory factor. Then when this was considered, what behavioural features may be important.

Your participation within this study remains voluntary and you still have the right to withdraw from the study, where your responses will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to ask now. We can also be contacted after your participation at the above address.

Appendix 16: Debriefing Script

please have the opportunity to read the debrief document

Thank you for reading the debrief. I just want to point out several things from this document

- Firstly, thank you for your participation so far and this participation remains voluntary, even though we have started the interview. You still have the right to withdraw and the information you have shared will be destroyed.
- There was a withholding of the true purpose of this research – although the research is still interested in your experiences supporting additional needs, there is one form of additional needs which was of particular interest for this research and that was language needs. The sole aim for withholding that information was to not prime your responses for the interview to develop a realistic picture of how teachers come to understand, interpret and support needs in this area.
- Please do not be alarmed if this was not something that you initially considered. This actually reflects what is already published in the literature and provides an understanding of what may be needed in terms of systems and levels of support, possibly from other services which are needed in this area.

Appendix 17: Example of reflexive thoughts captured during data familiarisation

who'd say, who'd help with me in that case. And alongside the LSA who knows the child better then anybody else really because they're with that child from from 8 o'clock in the morning till 3 o'clock, so they understand that child really well. And it's really working together with that we can build that relationship to best support any students that we have.

LD:
Yeah. OK. Fantastic. Yeah, that's brilliant. So I'm going to share my screen now, if that's OK? I'm going to put up the written case study descriptions, the vignettes. If you can see this?

P5:
Yep.

LD:
So you've got Tom there. So if you'd like to give Tom a read and then we'll have a little discussion about him afterwards.

P5:
Perfect.

LD:
OK. So have you had a chance to read that description of Tom?

P5:
Yeah.

LD:
OK. So if Tom was in your class, what would you be considering where his, kind of, primary or secondary needs? And what would be the actions you'd be taking in, like, the immediate, short term and long term for Tom?

P5:
With with Tom, he reminds me of someone, a child that I'm working with. And I would. For me, I would say this obviously lack of focus there. Being the class clown, there is, I would say

Appendix 18: Examples of Exploratory Noting and Experiential statements

Alex

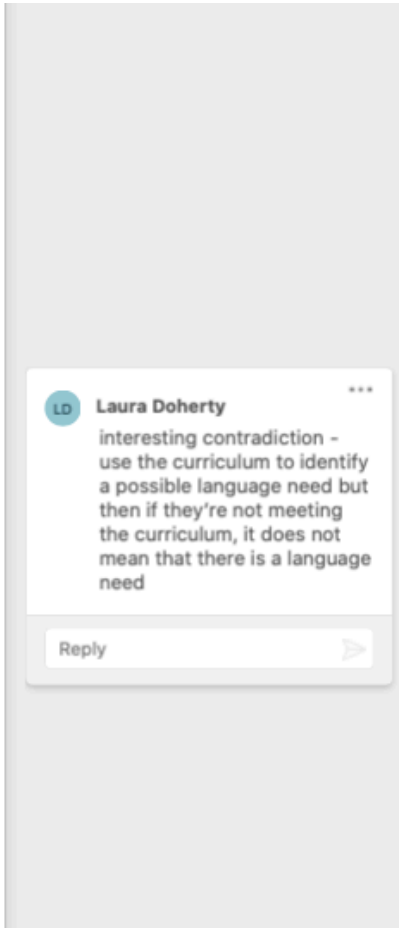
	things that may identify SEND	
257. And then do that support in Lucy's case and Tom's case, if they didn't respond to that prepared earlier, 258. preparing for whatever it might be, then I would probably say if that's it, you know, it's not my hands. 259. I've done as much as I can, and now they need additional support.	Passing on the problem – done my part – Construction of doing all that is possible in the confines of her role, then additional support is needed – but this additional support is to be provided by the teacher? Or someone else's responsibility? Confined by only so much she can do in her role?	Escalating concerns passes the 'problem' to 'others' p13.
260. [L]: Yeah. OK. So from what you were saying that it does it, do you think the kind of the literacy 261.curriculum helps identify those language difficulties within with students and it's, you know, how does 262. that kind of progress in language development be mapped? I guess within the literacy curriculum.		
263. [P1]: So for us, the literacy curriculum is primarily to do with vocabulary expressing yourself, being able 264. to receive vocab and understand it, and to be able to to use that vocab to express yourself as well. And 265. then there's the idea of being able to speak to different contexts.	Curriculum focuses on vocabulary which offers the opportunity to explore students' speech in different contexts	Curriculum opportunities to develop speaking and listening p12, 13
266. I think she the other thing is that we come from a school which has got students from very, very and we 267. don't like use this word but disadvantaged areas. Now that means that naturally, some of these students 268. will not speak as well as their peers who come from wealthier families or. Yeah, I don't know better 269.areas or whatever it might be. So there's always a danger that we take somebody's disadvantage and 270. translate that into this child needing more support, etcetera for special educational needs. Now if our 271. literacy curriculum is designed to ensure that the students are able to read, write, speak, listen better.	Links between disadvantage and poor speech. Teacher does not like using the word disadvantage and make feels the links are clear 'naturally' Use of the word 'danger' – mistaking disadvantage for need – danger of what? Feeling as though students are singled out/discriminated? Feeling uncomfortable about this??	Balancing awareness of disadvantage without discriminating p13.

Brenda

231. P2:So I know that we've got obviously the the SEND coordinator that any kind of concerns would go to and all the 232. training comes through her. We also have an acorn room where the pupils with you know quite profound needs can 233. go there for for help as well.	SENDCo – concerns go to her and she co-ordinates training. SEND provision for profound needs.	SENCo co-ordinates training and provision
234. LD: Yeah. 235. [connection disrupted] OK, brilliant. That sounds great. Erm and is there anything around, you know, any types of 236. experience that you'd feel you know, as a school or personally, that would be helpful for your own development or 237. support you know, is there any areas of your kind of work with SEND or language difficulties that would be helpful 238. to be supported with I guess?	Interesting in how her appraisal of this training experience has changed coming back to it – before it was described as much more impactful, now it is almost minimised 'it was only an hour long' – continuity in her experience of this training being 'so useful'. Frequency and duration of training is not enough. High levels of SEND, more tools and CPD is needed. 'doing all we can' but there may be more – trying her best but you don't know what you don't know.	
239. P2: Sorry, will you just say that again for me?		
240. LD: Yeah, sorry I kind of went around in circles there with what I was saying. From your kind of experiences, is there 241. any areas that you feel you could be or the school could be supported with further any Yeah.		Training/CPD is needed- currently infrequent and short
242. P2: Yeah, absolutely. I mean we, we've had one session on how to support pupils with SEND and it was only an hour 243. long but it was so useful. We all took away strategies. But I'll be honest, that's the first time I've had it since my 244. first year working here. So that's you know, once every four years isn't current enough and enough and I know for 245. our school, we've got such a high percentage of pupils that we could do with having more tools, more CPD knowing 246. you know how best to support these pupils, because we're doing all we can, but I'm sure there is more that we 247.could be doing.		Trying our best
248. LD: And then how does it feel? You know, obviously you said it was quite useful having that training, but when it 249. goes into practice, do things become diluted or, you know, how does? How does putting that training into practice 250. work? if you yeah.		
251. P2: Well, I think for a competent and confident teacher it can go into practice straight away, but then obviously	Distinctions between competent (and not-competent teachers) what makes a teacher competent for this participant? Competent/confident teachers are able to embed training into practice straight away.	Competent teachers implement training

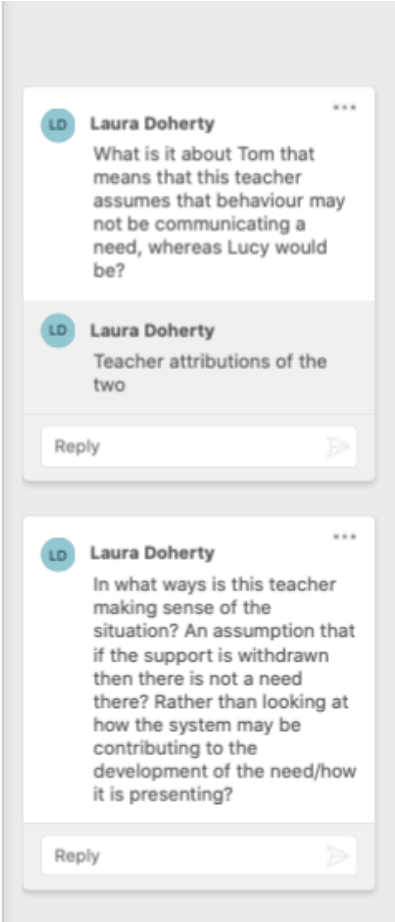
Charlie

225. LD: If there's nothing that's kind of, yeah. It's, because they're so broad. It's, you know, it's very interpretive. So it's, 226. you know it if there's anything that may stand out stand out from that perspective and there's OK. It's OK if there 227. isn't.		
228. P3: Yeah, you see, I mean, I could, obviously I can read what she struggles to follow verbal instructions. She's relying 229. on visual stuff around, so that would potentially be indicative of somebody who's trying to interpret what what 230.you're saying to her that there's a, there's a a loss in communication somewhere along the line. And I mean, trying 231. to establish what that gap would be. I mean, and it's, what's well below. I mean, are we saying that she's still sort of 232. Key Stage One key stage two level? You know, is her reading age at, I've I've got year 10s who have got a reading 233. age of 6 year olds, so you wouldn't necessarily say that the language problem is they've got gaps in their knowledge 234. and they've not developed that that sort of vernacular that they need to succeed as adults or to transition across 235. into adults. So so yeah, I would. It's certainly something that maybe I would perhaps focus on or what would 236.happen I'd be quite open and broad in my forage and then hopefully get to narrow it down as sort of the the 237.support around me sort of is able to sort of say actually this is more specific in regards to what she's going to need 239. moving forward.	Understanding needs in relation to the literacy curriculum. Construction of need is focused on areas of understanding in relation to curriculum and the pupil's distance to where they 'should' be at. Would not consider gaps in knowledge to reflect a language need. Attempts to be open in ways of supporting then 'hopefully' would look to others to provide further guidance/input about the nature of specific needs to narrow down on specific support.	Needs understood in relation to the curriculum Gaps in knowledge does not mean a anguage need
240. LD: Umhm, yeah. OK, so you bring in the links in between the curriculum there and that might be, am I right in 241. thinking your first, kind of, port of call be looking at, the how the gaps in the curriculum may link with the way she's 242. presenting .		Others provide more specific guidance on needs for teachers
243. P3: Possibly. I I mean I'm hopefully here to teach them so to to, to teach her so you know, so long as all the 244.safeguarding requirements and assuming that that, that, that it's nothing to do with that that's leading to these 245.these sort of symptoms. Then yeah, that would be my, my, my, my approach to it to say that there's there's 246.potentially gaps that Lucy's displaying and these are manifesting as as XY and Z but, and we need to look to sort of 247. bridge these gaps.	Role to teach and safeguard. Focus on gaps in the curriculum. Distancing of role of that to understand the nature of needs?	Role of teacher to safeguard and bridge the curriculm
248. LD: OK, fantastic. So I'll scroll up to Tom and then just the same thing, if, you know, if anything from that new kind 249. of lens of a language need or language difficulty, if anything kind of resonates. And that's OK, if not, if it, if there 250. isn't.		
251. P3: Yeah. So, potentially with Tommy's. It sounds like if if you're looking at it as as maybe a a, a language difficulties 252. he's developed coping strategies to sort of avoid sort of addressing it or avoid it being picked up on. And certainly 253. sort of his whole profile could be suggestive that, that there's a difficulty with him sort of communicating in some 254. way. So again, I'd maybe take a look at his previous Key Stage scores and see sort of where he is with that. And and	Tom may have developed coping strategies to mask a language need. Response would be to explore his curriculum scores/progress.	Students behaviour may reflect copng strategies



Dana

226. LD: Yeah. And I mean that, you know that may well be there may be well be needs around behaviour it's you know, 227. we're just looking at a different lens, so. OK, fantastic. So I'll, I'll share the screen for Tom now as well. Is there 228.anything with this new lens that would be sticking out for Tom from those descriptions?		
229. P4: Not as much as Lucy, I would say.	Tom's behaviours seem less like a language need.	Internal attributions make needs appear less 'genuine'
230. LD: Mm-hmm.		
231. P4: Umm [pause]	Internal attributions for Tom's behaviours. Difficulty seeing past his behaviour. Lucy's needs interpreted as more 'genuine'.	
232. It does say he doesn't like to be asked to direct question and will guess at an answer, but I wouldn't say that's 234. more to do with him understanding. I'd say it's more just him being the way he is. Whereas Lucy, I feel like she she 235. does really struggle with being able to understand something and not finding the right words to say it because Tom 236. will just guess at an answer, he doesn't really. He's not really thinking or caring I would say.		
237. Umm it does say he he has additional support for literacy, but it was withdrawn, so maybe it isn't just the speech 238. thing, it is just the way he is and his behavior is the main concern. Rather for Lucy, I would say there is probably a 239. more speech barrier, speech and language barrier in place, yeah.	Support has been withdrawn for Tom – assumptions about the role of an LSA – support withdrawn means that need withdrawn? Difficulties in moving past behaviour as the main area of need?	Assumptions about the links between SEND and LSAs
240. LD:Yeah, that's brilliant. That's fantastic. So I'll stop sharing my screen now. So still on this kind of topic of speech 241. and language needs. I wondered from your own kind of professional or personal experience, you know, have you 242. worked with any students that have these needs and what has been helpful in those experiences?		
243. P4: Umm.		
244. LD: It could be helpful for...	Experiences of students speaking in short/1 word sentences. Attempts to model the language for students with a language need. A focus on the speech side? Rather than understanding?	
245. P4: The thing is with. They they don't really speak in full sentences, which is what we've been working on quite a bit 246. recently. So when I asked them a question and they'll reply with one word or two word answers, and I always say to 247. them you need to use what I'm saying and start your answer off with that. So if I'm saying, just even for example, 248. just how are you, they'll just say good. But I'm like no. You'd say I am good. Just little things like that, which will 249.obviously improve their articulation. And just being able to grow their confidence or I know with my bottom set 250.you're 11, they do get embarrassed and they don't like reading because they they know that they are going to get		



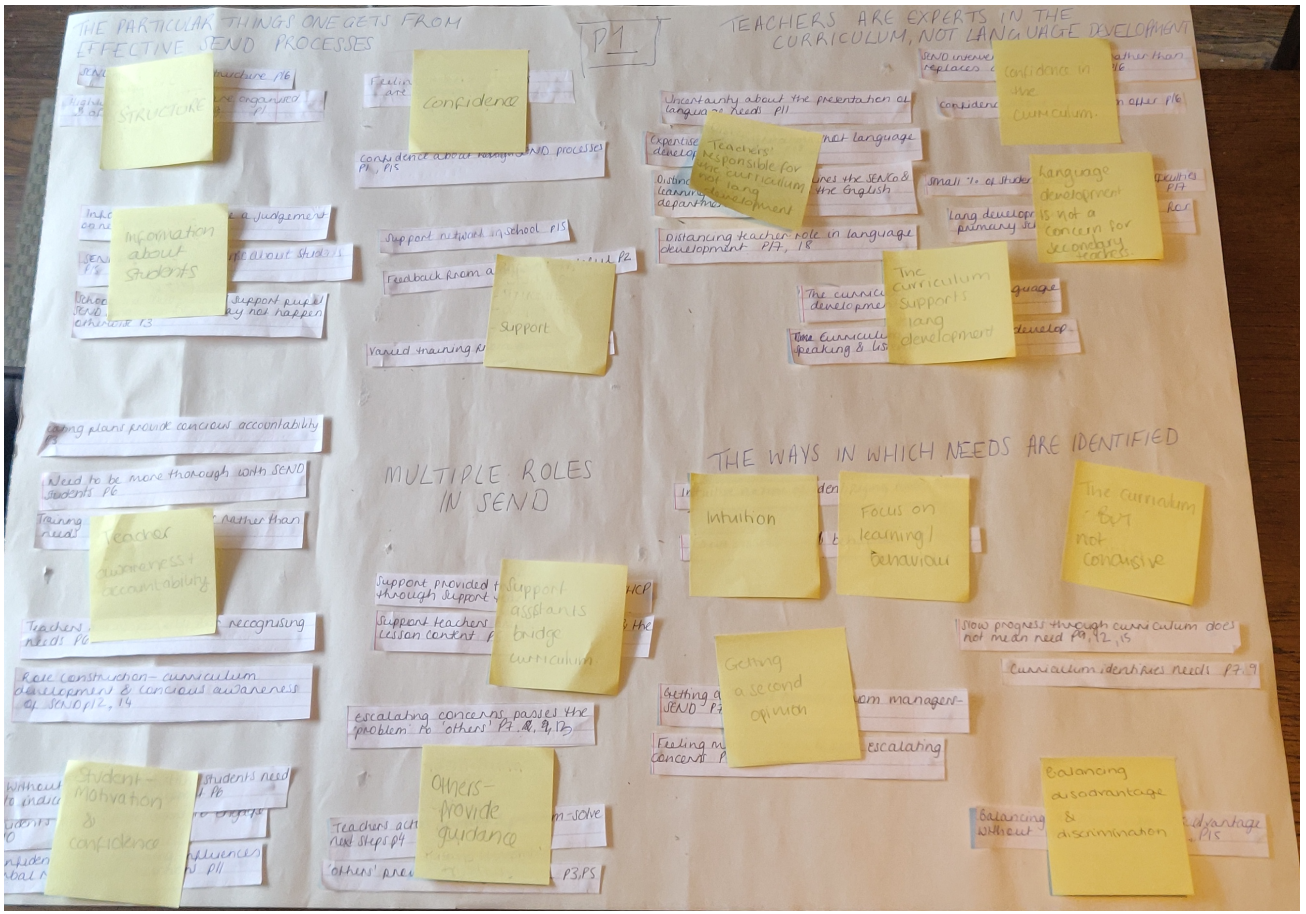
Ellen

148.maybe them, you know how I said the images, the videos and looking for some form of how it would best, I'm 149.looking at that direction cause he usually sits there this young boy does. And and just see what works for him. 150.Maybe try and multiple things. The video, you know, what type of a learner he is. If the images are working, maybe 151. scaffold his, his, the texts. And I mean I'm only speaking from a English background because that's where kind of I'm 152. working from. So maybe give him small chunks and scaffold the learning for him, just regular, kind of, support in 153. terms of just keep your eye on him. If it's a smaller class. 154. LD:Yeah, Fantastic. So it sounded like you were saying it's a bit of kind of trial and- to see what he's responding well, 155. well to is that what you you would suggest? 156. P5: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, that is a bit trial, because I find that when there's a child, I mean, we've got one who's, a 157. young boy whose going into a, he's being tested for ADHD. And I find that whenever there's a negative and I've 158.spoken, and I know he's he's behaving in a certain way. And if I was to say, Ohh, well, we'll come on sort yourself 159. out, the tone was raised, I would maybe even raise my voice. It doesn't work. I think lots of positive reinforcements 160. really helping settle him down. And it's understanding that, you know, we've tried, little fidget toys with him and 161. we've noticed the more fidget toys we give him, actually, it's not, it's not really helping him. He's working with. It's 162. about giving him the positive and bringing him closer in terms of in class. That helps, because he feels like, he's got 163. your your attention. 164. LD: Mm-hmm. 165. P5: So I think there's different strategies that we're kind of trying while he's getting, he's going through his diagnosis 166. at the moment. 167. LD: Mm-hmm, yeah, fantastic. OK so I'm... 168. P5: But then, he's got his, sorry. So he's got his fine. I mean, he's good at physical education, so he's got his fine 169.motor skills. So models. And he, yeah, he's modelling so he can. And maybe that is the attention because he can, he 170. can structure it within his modelling. Modelling isn't easy for young children. So I would say, yeah, maybe there 171.needs to be a bit of a, some adjustments made within literacy.	important to start for his behaviour which may be a front. Speaking to LSA – other subjects. *Linking understanding of Tom to specific student in participant's class.* Trying multiple things, seeing what works – what type of a learner From experience with other pupils (adhd) – Linking understanding of Tom with student with ADHD. Unspoken assumption that Tom has ADHD? Teacher reluctant to label without more evidence? Negativity / raised tone / 'sort yourself out' *(blame? Student's responsibility?)* doesn't work Positive reinforcement, bringing them closer *(proximity? But also relationships?)* = settling, feel they have your attention Evaluating strategies – fidget toys not working. Trying strategies while waiting for diagnosis – *but what happens after? The diagnosis changes things? Moving from Tom to student in her experiences with ADHD – P5 making links between Tom's needs and ADHD? Or similar presentation?* Hypothesising about Tom – *picking out important information and asking rhetorical questions* – looking at strengths/skills	*Valuing the individual by noticing positives and building a relationship is important p7.* *Student support involves a degree of trying things out to see if they help p.7*

Appendix 19: Examples of Searching for Connections Across Experiential Statements

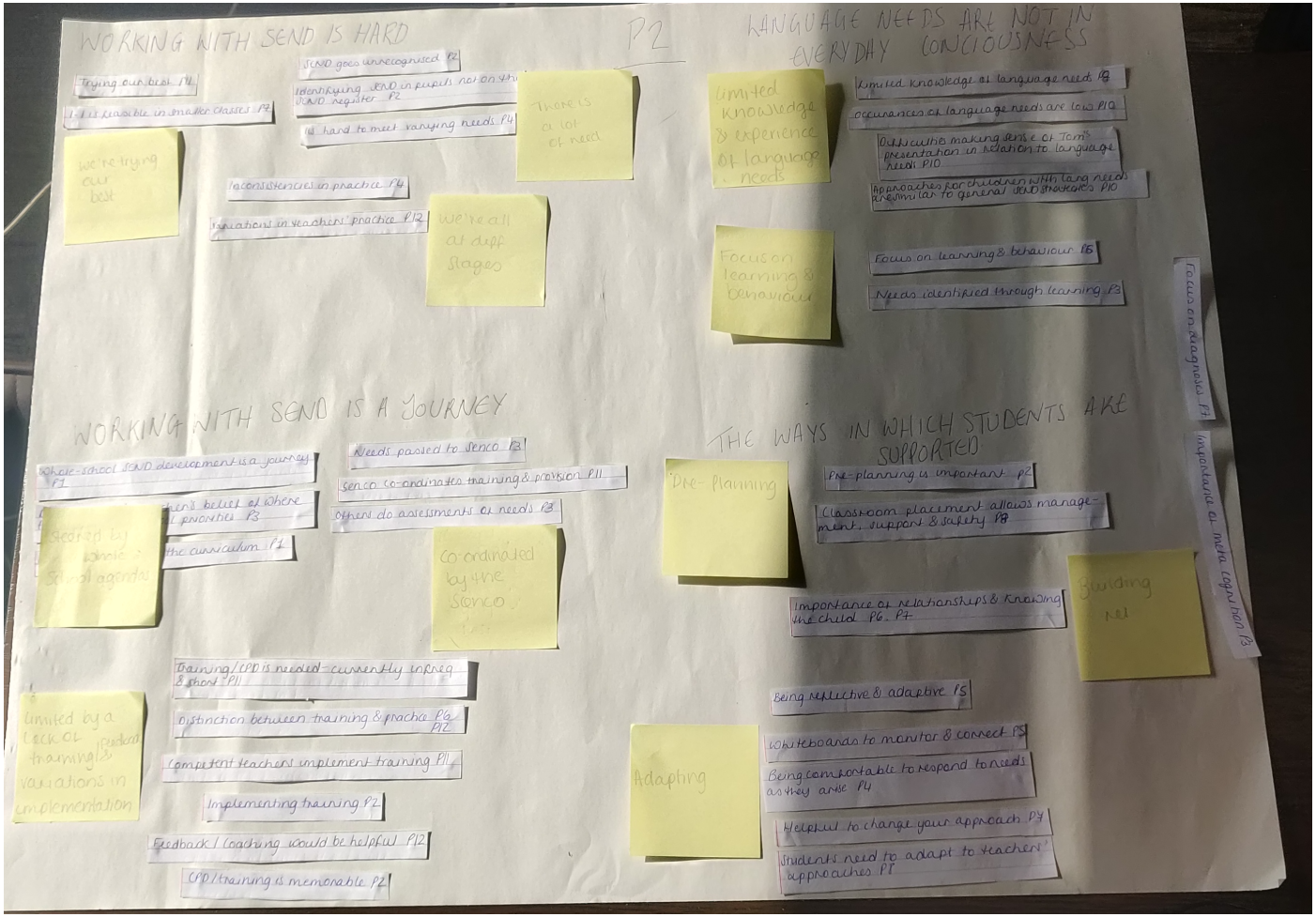
Alex

Image for illustrative purposes – Please see Appendix 20 for tabulated data.



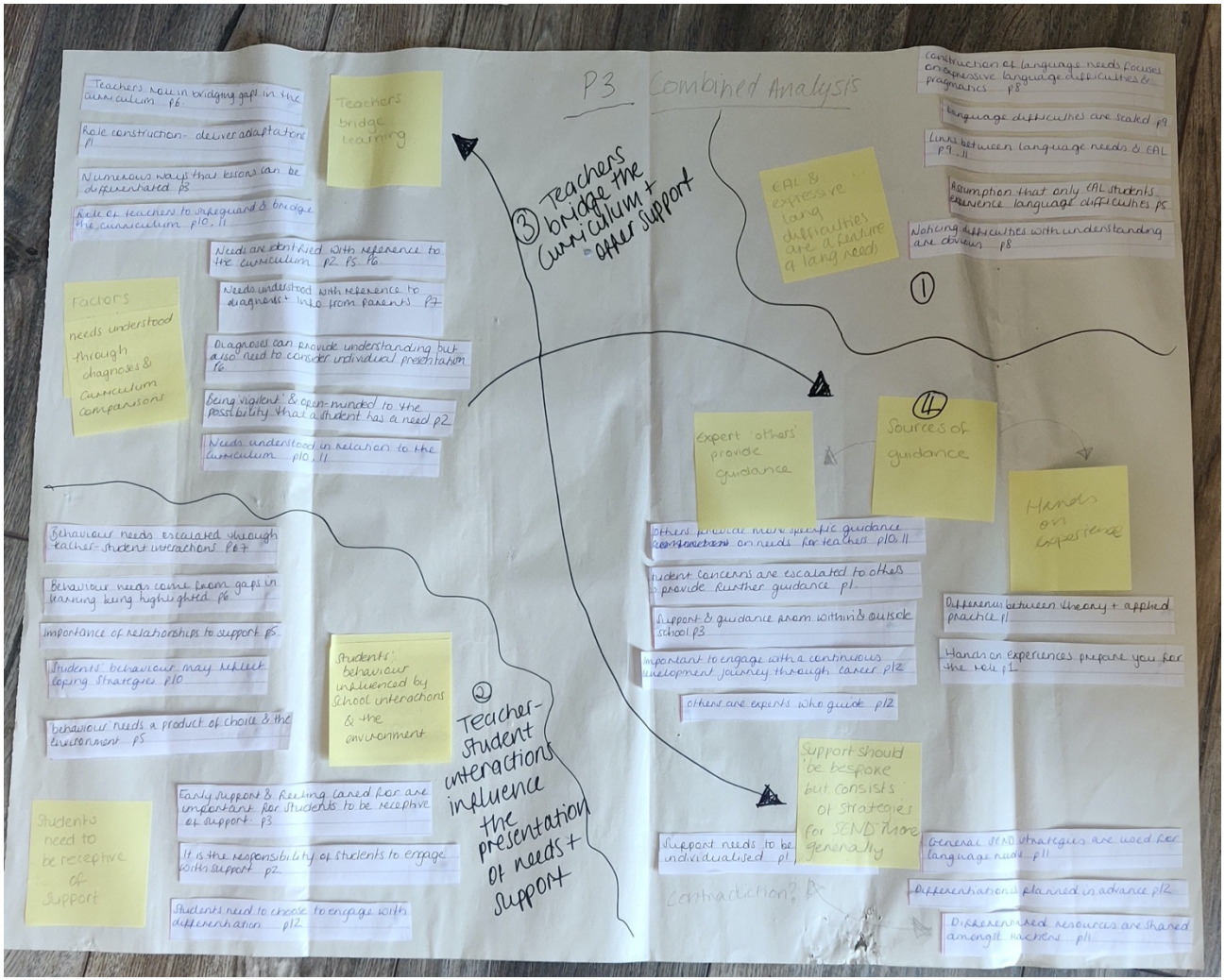
Brenda

Image for illustrative purposes – Please see Appendix 21 for tabulated data.



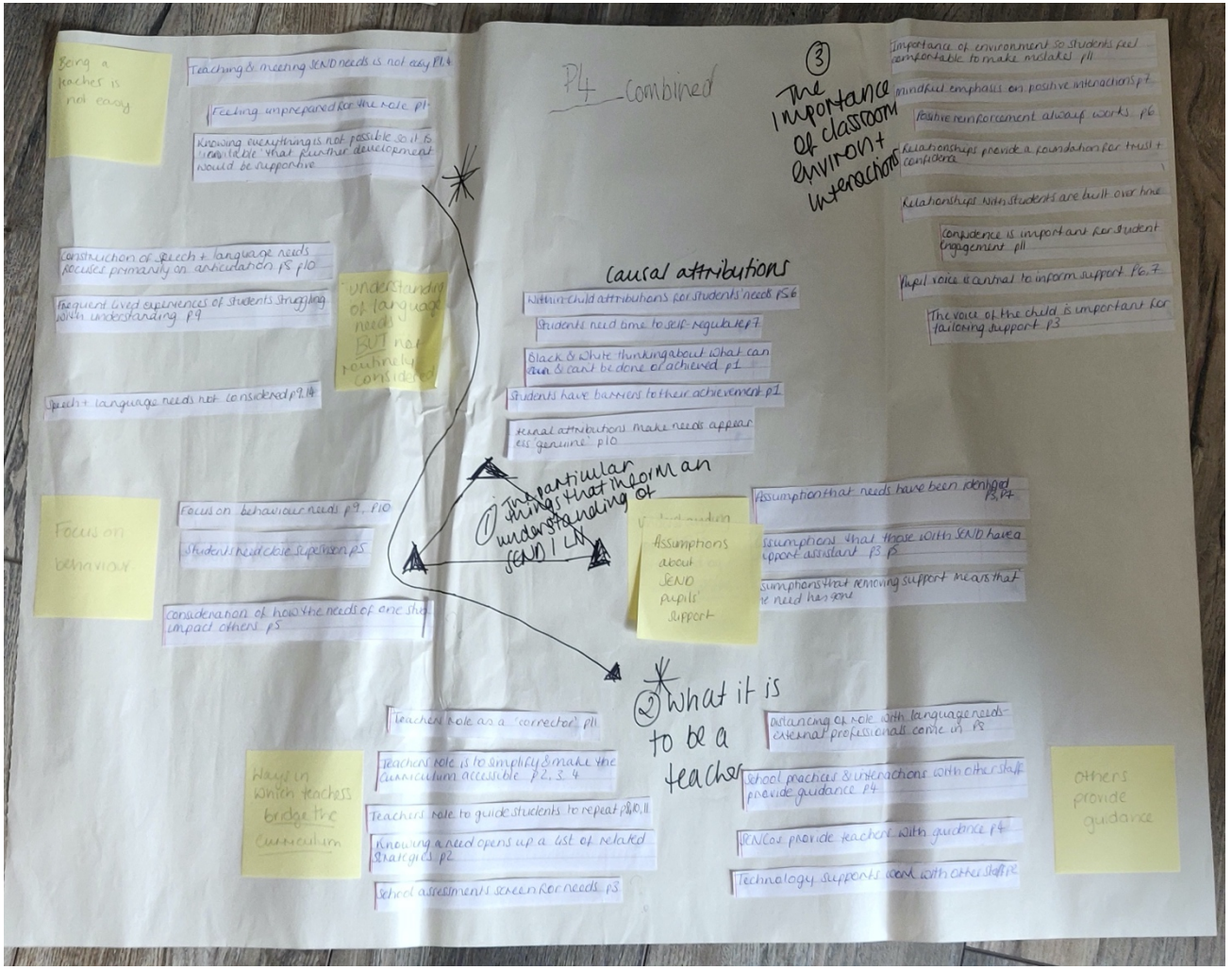
Charlie

Image for illustrative purposes – Please see Appendix 22 for tabulated data.



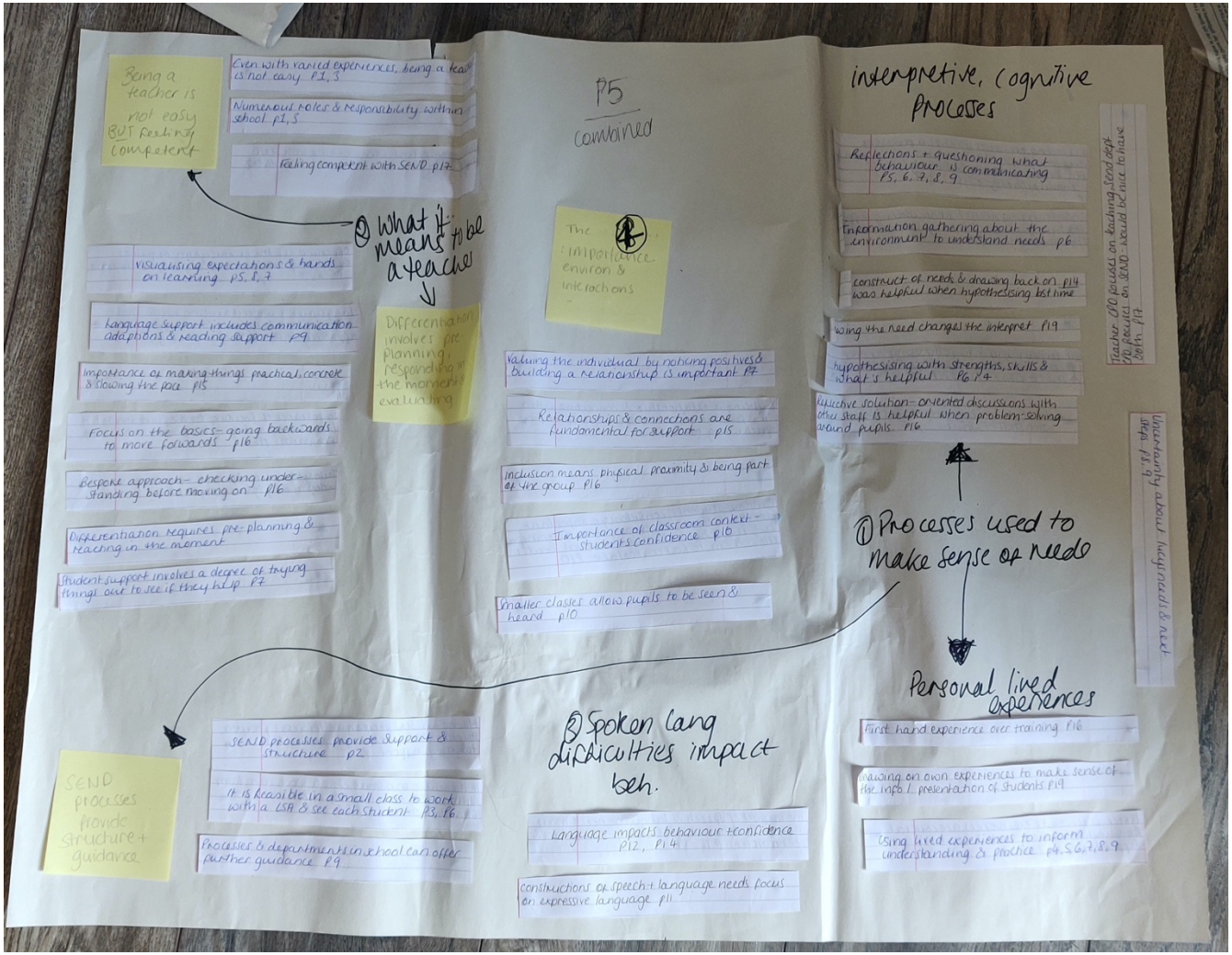
Dana

Image for illustrative purposes – Please see Appendix 23 for tabulated data.



Ellen

Image for illustrative purposes – Please see Appendix 24 for tabulated data.



Appendix 20: Personal Experiential Themes For Alex

The tables below detail the personal Experiental themes for each participant. The analytical process can be followed using the following key:

BOLD UPPER CASE reflect the Personal Experiential Theme (PETs)
bold lower reflect sub-themes
classic font reflect experiential statements
italics provide an example quote(s)

Table of Personal Experiential Themes for Alex	
PETs:	**Sub-themes, Experiential statements and quotes:**
1. THE PARTICULAR THINGS ONE GETS FROM EFFECTIVE SEND PROCESSES	**Structure** SEND processes provide structure p16. *The programme so it works on three levels* SEND process are an investment p16., p.19. *These sort of investments; we're hedging our bets* Highly efficient schools are organised and offer varied training p.1. *Highly efficient, very organised* **Confidence** Feeling the processes are manageable p.5. *It's not onerous* Confidence around SEND processes p1., p.15. *It's been fantastic; highly efficient, very organised* **Information about students** Information is needed to make judgements about needs p.12., p.15. *The vagueness in there is a frustrating thing; they'll never be a a case where I've got a question about a learner* SEND processes provide information about students p.15. *That generates a reading age* School-led SEND processes support pupil awareness, which may not happen otherwise p.3. *everybody's well aware…if you say to teachers go away and look, yeah, that might not always happen; we would be aware of that*

	Support Support network in school p15. *That's probably the person that gives us the most support… that's internally I think the sort of structures we have* Feedback from a mentor is helpful p.2. *What was more useful was having a good mentor* Training can be burdensome – feeling grateful for the flexibility p.2. *Training was quite heavy…I don't think our school has really pushed that and I think staff quite grateful* Varied training from specialists p.2. *They will recruit someone that has got high profile* Uncertain if monitoring students help but costs for teachers are low p4. *Whether it would actually help…it's not sort of burdening the teachers*
2. TEACHERS ARE EXPERTS IN THE CURRICULUM, NOT LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	**Confidence in the curriculum** Confidence in the curriculum offer p16. *We've got a solid curriculum offer* SEND intervention compliments rather than replaces the curriculum offer p16. *Part of our curriculum, yes…but not done within the curriculum time* **Teachers are responsible for the curriculum, not language development** Uncertainty about the presentation of language needs p11. *I'm not entirely sure; I don't think I'd be able to give you an answer* Expertise in the curriculum, not language development p17., p18. *Knowing what a curriculum expectation is for a learner; we stopped looking at language development* Distinction that SEND requires the SENCo and learning support requires the English department p10. *Distinguishing between the English department itself support…or does it really require the SENCo*

	Distancing the teacher role in language development p17., p18. *It's no longer a real issue; It's not something we look at* **Language development is not a concern for secondary teachers** A small percentage of students have language difficulties p17. *Threes a small percentage* Language development is a concern for primary schools p18. *Once the child becomes a teenager, it's no longer a real issue* **The curriculum supports language development** The curriculum supports language development p17. *We take it for granted…they will just develop* Curriculum opportunities to develop speaking and listening p12., p13., p14. *the opportunity to speak and to listen and to share and teamwork; the literacy curriculum is primarily to do with vocabulary; students are able to read, write, speak, listen better*
3. **THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE IDENTIFIED**	**Intuition** Intuitive nature of identifying needs p7., p8. *It's just innate teacher radar; that raises alarm bells* **Focus on learning/behaviour** Focus on learning/behaviour p8., p9., p19. *Manage this as a case of behaviour; it's really difficult sometimes knowing whether it's a language issue or a behaviour issue* **The curriculum, but not conclusively** The curriculum identifies needs p7., p9. *There's no logical pattern for the spelling to be wrong… handwriting that is illegible; progress or results* Slow progress through the curriculum does not mean need p9., p12., p15. *Slow attainment does not equal a complex need; if there's already an attainment gap, you can't put a kid on to a SEND register*

	Getting a second opinion Getting a second opinion from managers – SEND p7., p9. *I will usually raise that with my direct line manager; that would probably go through to the SENCo* Feeling certain before escalating concerns p7., p8. *If my line manager agrees; checked with someone that's not me and my teaching style* **Balancing disadvantage and discrimination** Balancing awareness of disadvantage without discrimination p13., p15. *There's always a danger that we take somebody's disadvantage and translate that into this child needing more support etcetera for special educational needs* Balancing support and singling out p6. *The balance between not singling out the student yet singling her out so that she gets the support*
4. MULTIPLE ROLES IN SEND	**Student – motivation and confidence** Students often do not want to engage p10. *The standard does not want to engage sort of issue* Without support assistants, students need to indicate that they need support p6. *You just put your hand up…or turn your rag card to red…and I'll come visit you* Confidence and pre-warning influences verbal responses to questions p11. *That's not really a need, that's just the kid is not confident* **Others provide guidance** 'others' provide SEND guidance p3., p5. *Those have been explained to use; I've been asked to do* Teachers action guidance and problem-solve next steps p4. *Is it working? And if it's not, what else do you want to do instead* Teachers provide evidence to SENCos for review p4. *Adds to the review…that signed off by the SENCo* Escalating concerns passes the 'problem' to others p7., p13 *They do their diagnostics; it's out of my hands I've done as much as I can*

	Teacher awareness and accountability Seating plans provide conscious accountability p3. *You're aware, obviously, that these learners are in your class… ready to be able to evidence and explain* Need to be more thorough with SEND pupils p6. *Check her stuff a little bit more thoroughly* Training focuses on students rather than needs p4. *It's more about do you know who's in your class* Teachers are responsible for recognising needs p6. *Nobody else really does pick that up* Role construction – curriculum developments and conscious awareness of SEND p12. P14. *Not treat SEND as we don't treat SEND as a last option; is the curriculum not strong enough that we've not been able to prepare this learner adequately* **Support assistants bridge the curriculum** Support assistants bridge the curriculum and lesson content p5. *Making sure my communication with the support teacher is fantastic* Support provided to pupils with an EHCP through support teachers p5. *This learner will have an SSA a support teacher with her*

Appendix 21: Personal Experiential Themes For Brenda

The tables below detail the personal Experiental themes for each participant. The analytical process can be followed using the following key:

BOLD UPPER CASE reflect the Personal Experiential Theme (PETs)
bold lower reflect sub-themes
classic font reflect experiential statements
italics provide an example quote(s)

Table of Personal Experiential Themes for Brenda	
PETs:	**Sub-themes, Experiential statements and quotes:**
1. WORKING WITH SEND IS HARD	**We're trying out best** We're trying out best *we're doing all we can, but I'm sure there is more that we could be doing* It is only feasible in smaller classes *there's only nine children in this class. So I have the ability to to work one to one* **There is a lot of need** It's hard to meet varying needs *We know it's hard because of all of the different needs within the classroom* SEND goes unrecognised *sometimes these are going unnoticed* Identifying SEND in pupils not on the SEND register *That [training received] was kind of pivotal really in me being able to identify pupils that might not be on the SEN register, but as showing traits* **We're all at different stages** Variations in teachers' practice *we're all at different levels* Inconsistencies in practice *there's some inconsistencies in what good modelling looks like*
2. WORKING WITH SEND IS A JOURNEY	**Steered by whole-school agendas** Whole-school SEND development is a journey *we're not where we want to be with it, but we're definitely, you know, a massive improvement since we started that journey*

	Discrepancy in teachers' beliefs of where the focus on SEND should be and school priorities *I feel as a school we've kind of forgotten about metacognition for a while"* Weaving oracy into the curriculum *we've really tried to have a few different strategies that are woven into all lessons* **Co-ordinated by the SENCo** Needs passed to the SENCo *it's just about recognizing it, emailing the SEND coordinator so that you can, you know see whether a referral can happen* SENCo coordinates training and provision *the SEND coordinator that any kind of concerns would go to and all the training comes through her* Others do assessments of needs *Not for me. Not that I've ever been shown* **Limited by a lack of training, feedback and variations in implementation** Training/CPD is needed – currently it's infrequent and short *I mean we, we've had one session on how to support pupils with SEND and it was only an hour long but it was so useful…we could do with having more tools, more CPD* Distinction between training and practice *you can be given the tools, but if you're not implementing them properly, the kind of pointless knowing them* *We've had the training on it. We've just not started to implement that yet* Competent teachers implement training *for a competent and confident teacher it can go into practice straight away* Implementing training *we've really taken on board the strategies that we've got from that most recent CPD* Feedback/coaching would be helpful *maybe people could be coached around SEND strategies that they we're doing it right* CPD/training is memorable *I remember the first year here, we had some CPD on how to recognize signs of dyslexia, which was really interesting*

3. **LANGUAGE NEEDS ARE NOT IN EVERYDAY CONSCIOUSNESS**	**Limited knowledge and understanding of language needs** Limited knowledge of language needs *I don't know much about what that is* Occurrences of language needs are low *I haven't had, like, too much experience working with pupils with a variety of pupil with those needs. I'll be honest, maybe just a handful over the past seven years* Difficulties making sense of Tom's presentation in relation to language needs *I'm struggling with Tom* Approaches for children with language needs are similar to general SEND strategies *Explicit teaching is important, especially like explicit teaching of vocabulary, modelling for them. Scaffolding as well, because they often struggle how to get ideas and write. And just making sure that you're checking in on them"* **Focus on learning and behaviour** Focus on learning and behaviour *a mild learning disability to me, but a lot of it seems to stem around SEMH* needs identified through learning *it could be something to do with handwriting… they're not getting them down on paper. These are all, you know, signs that the child might have an additional need*
4. **THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE SUPPORTED**	**Pre-planning** Pre-planning is important *ensuring that you've planned the questions that you're going to ask and where abouts in the lesson children are going to have that opportunity for exploratory talk* Classroom placement allows management, support and safety *I'd make sure these sat next to someone positive… and feel safe* **Adapting** Being reflective and adaptive *responding to those needs there and then. but I would say yeah, just being reflective within the lesson and been able to adapt* Whiteboards to monitor and correct *we had a model on the white Board picked that apart and so that they have that to refer to you next time*

	Being comfortable to respond to needs as they arise *this might just come from being comfortable with it, but. Just responding to the needs within the lesson* Helpful to change your approach *change your tactics so to speak with the child and you realise that maybe praise is gonna work* Students need to adapt to teachers' approaches *I do like cold calling and my lesson, so maybe to get him used to that, I would kind of give him a yes or no answer rather than opting out or guessing so that it can least participate in that way* **Building relationships** Importance of relationships and knowing the child *I don't think you can necessarily help anyone if you don't show them that care …if you don't have that you know mutual respect for each other, I think. And I think that's really important* *then that's the kind of recipe for failure really. Unless you've got positive relationships and the right strategies to help you*

Appendix 22: Personal Experiential Themes For Charlie

The tables below detail the personal Experiental themes for each participant. The analytical process can be followed using the following key:

BOLD UPPER CASE reflect the Personal Experiential Theme (PETs)
bold lower reflect sub-themes
classic font reflect experiential statements
italics provide an example quote(s)

Table of Personal Experiential Themes for Charlie	
PETs:	**Sub-themes, Experiential statements and quotes:**
1. EAL AND EXPRESSIVE LANGAUGE DIFFICULTIES ARE FEATURES OF LANGUAGE NEEDS	Constructions of speech and language needs focuses primarily on articulation and pragmatics, p8 *It would maybe be driven by this pupil's ability to to communicate themselves, whether they can express, sort of, themselves in terms of ideas…. their ability to be able to talk and communicate and be able to sort of adjust for differing audiences* language difficulties are scaled, p9. *There's a whole scale, isn't there* Links between language needs and EAL, p9., p11. *I have some year 10s in my that have just moved from abroad and they don't 209. understand much English* *I've I've got quite a few sorts of English as additional language pupils, I've also got a couple of pupils who have language specific sort of requirements* Assumptions that only EAL students experience language difficulties, p5. *if English is first language and then then that would have eliminated sort of any communication* Noticing difficulties with understanding are obvious p8. *it's very obvious when you've got somebody in front of you who doesn't understand*
2.TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS INFLUENCE THE PRESENTATION OF NEEDS AND SUPPORT	**Student behaviour is influenced by the school interactions and environment** Behaviour needs are a product of choice and the environment, p5. *I certainly wouldn't have him sat at the back. That seems to be a license potentially for him to sort of misbehave* *certainly deal with any bad behaviour as a as a choice and consequence sort of setup*

	Behaviour needs escalate through teacher-student interactions, p7. *I think how you then respond to that as a teacher will have a lot to do with it.* Behaviour needs come from gaps in learning being highlighted,p6. *indicative of her sort of feeling as though she's been challenged and cornered and highlighting those gaps. And it sort of escalates* Importance of relationships to support, p5. *I'd certainly look to build a relationship with him* Students' behaviour may reflect coping strategies, p10. *he's developed coping strategies to sort of avoid sort of addressing it or avoid it being picked up on.* **Students need to be receptive of support** Early support and feeling cared for are important for students to be receptive of support, p3. *the younger the pupil and the earlier you pick it up and start supporting, the more open they are to accepting that…feel like they're being cared for* It is the responsibility of students to engage with support, p2. *they're refuse to engage in the processes that they need to support themselves* Students need to choose to engage with differentiation, p12. *sometimes they want it, sometimes they don't.*
3. TEACHERS BRIDGE THE CURRICULUM AND OFFER SUPPORT	**Teachers bridge the curriculum** Teachers role in bridging gaps in the curriculum, p6. *establishing what those gaps are and looking to support them* Role construction – delivering adaptations, p1. *the teachers expectations with regards to pupils that require the additional support within the classroom and sort of adaptions* Numerous ways lessons can be differentiated, p3. *So there's lots of ways that you adapt lesson content* Role of teachers to safeguard and bridge the curriculum, p10., p11. *I'm hopefully here to teach them…so long as all the safeguarding requirements* *adapting the lesson content that sort of helps them…So just breaking things down*

	Support should be bespoke but often consists of general SEND strategies General SEND strategies are used for language needs, p11. *I know it sounds like the same brush strokes for the same thing, but often you can find that what might work for somebody with ASD sometimes works with somebody that's that's, you know, EAL* Differentiation is planned in advance, p12. *I prepare my lesson* Differentiated resources are shared amongst teachers, p11. *We'll leave them on the system for other pup-, for other teachers to use* Support needs to be tailored and individualised, p1., p2. *there's no one-size-fits-all. It really depends on the pupil. So it helps you to sort of nuance sort of your approaches as you as you're going through it with the individual pupil*
4. SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR SEND	**Expert 'others'** Others provide more specific guidance on needs for teachers, p10., p11. *the SENCo team to sort of assess him and and sort of move forward* Concerns are escalated to others for further guidance, p1. *highlight it sort of to the relevant people, and then look to for support.* Support and Guidance from within and outside school, p4. *we've got like [SENCo name] and and people like that who sort of coordinate that for us…we can talk amongst ourselves as a department…I'm also a member of various groups outside of school* Important to engage in a continuous development journey through career, p12. *I've still got lots to learn…I hope I'll never be in the position when I say, well, actually, no, I know everything…I think that's the worst thing I could possibly do* Others are experts who guide, p12. *I can take people's opinions and guidance and expertise.* **Hands on experiences** Difference between theory and applied practice, p1. *In theory, things work first time every time, and in practice some reality that isn't the case.*

	Hands on experiences prepare you for the role, p1. *that was predominantly sort of on placement…I'd like to think, I'm quite sort of on point with sort of, the teachers expectations.* **Needs understood through diagnoses and curriculum comparisons** Needs are identified with reference to the curriculum, p2., p5., p6., p10. *we've got quite a lot of strands…establishing what those gaps are* *you wouldn't necessarily say that the language problem is they've got gaps in their knowledge* Needs are understood with reference to diagnoses and information from parents *And certainly speak to her parents …if there is any sort of additional support with regards to a formal diagnosis* Diagnoses can provide understanding but also need to consider individual presentation, p6. *I don't find it helps me to sort of try and diagnose or sort of label them…what is evident…deal with the the what's in front of me in.* Being 'vigilant' and open-minded to the possibility that a student has a need, p2. *you need to be quite vigilant …always be open to the idea that there's… an opportunity where they're going to need additional support*

Appendix 23: Personal Experiential Themes For Dana

The tables below detail the personal Experiential themes for each participant. The analytical process can be followed using the following key:

BOLD UPPER CASE reflect the Personal Experiential Theme (PETs)
bold lower reflect sub-themes
classic font reflect experiential statements
italics provide an example quote(s)

Table of Personal Experiential Themes for Dana	
PETs:	**Sub-themes, Experiential statements and quotes:**
1. THE PARTICULAR THINGS THAT INFORM AN UNDERSTANDING OF SEND/LANGUAGE NEEDS	**Assumptions that SEND pupils have a support assistant** The assumption that those with SEND have a support assistant *each pupil who's got special educational needs has their support teacher* *there's obviously always an LSA.* Assumption that needs have already been identified *we do get information on whether or not their child is special needs* *if she's had anything diagnosed or whether she had like a support teacher in primary school* Assumption that removing support means need has gone *it was withdrawn, so maybe it isn't just the speech thing, it is just the way he is* **Causal attributions** Within-child attributions for students' needs *outbursts of abusive behaviour might be something that's just innate or something that she's learned at home* Students need time to self-regulate *go outside to take a breather for five minutes* Constructions about what can and can't be achieved *if we do every single one, they'll just forget it … Look at the main things, what happens, you know, beginning, middle end, leave it at that* Students have barriers to their achievement *it's really difficult with the barriers that are in place*

	Internal attributions make needs appear less 'genuine' *it's more just him being the way he is. Whereas Lucy, I feel like she she does really struggle* **A focus on behaviour** Focus on behaviour *it was more to do with behaviour* *I'd say it's more just him being the way he is* Students need close supervision *I would constantly be hovering around him* Consideration of how the needs of one student impact others *if we don't address it, then obviously it just has an affect on the rest of the children* **Language needs not routinely considered** Frequent experiences of students struggling with understanding *you do repeat yourself a couple of times* Speech and language needs not considered *it's not something you automatically think of when you think of SEND pupils….You don't think of speech and language as one of the main ones.* Constructions of speech and language needs focuses primarily on articulation *finding it difficult to articulate their speech.* *can't find the right words to be able to answer questions.* *they don't really speak in full sentences*
2. **WHAT IT IS TO BE A TEACHER**	**Being a teacher is not easy** Teaching and meeting SEND needs is not easy. *we try our best* *it was tiring* *very challenging, very difficult* Feeling unprepared for the role *That school is very different to the school I'm at now …which was like a culture shock* Knowing everything is not possible to further development is inevitable *I feel like that's inevitable. There's always something that we can learn*

	Teachers bridge the curriculum Teacher's role is to simplify and make the curriculum accessible *breaking down work* *simplify it so it's easier for them to understand* *diluted to a point where it was really basic* Teacher's role as a 'corrector' *they'll make mistakes…it's fine. We'll get it corrected and we can move on* Teachers role to guide students to repeat *getting them to repeat* *use what I'm saying and start your answer off with that. I always model* Knowing the need opens a list of related strategies *learning about the actual condition that they have…* *learning more about them as people and how their brain works and what we could do.* School assessments screen for needs *we can tell is through reading ages* **Others provide further guidance** Distancing of role with language needs – external professionals come in *they've got a teacher which specifically teaches them how to talk.* SENCos provide teachers with guidance *We have our SEND lead like I said, who essentially tells us if there's any updates on them, if there's any strategies we should be putting into place* School practices and interactions with other staff provide guidance *guidance just comes from like getting CPD from school or asking teachers have already experienced this* Technology supports work with other staff *on teams. We have a channel …we just communicate on there.*

3. IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS	Importance of environment so students feel comfortable to make mistakes *really encouraging them and you know, having a respectful and no laughing tolerance in the classroom.* Mindful emphasis on positive interactions *never raise your voice at them because it does sort of trigger them* *something that works with me is just being really overly nice and kind to them. And they respond better* Positive reinforcement always works *continuing with positive reinforcements, which always works* *I'd just praise him … encouraging him to continue with that positive behaviour* Relationships provide a foundation for trust and confidence *form a better relationship. So I've been trying to do that with some of the SEND pupils… just to build that relationship and to build that trust, to build that confidence* Relationships with students are built over time *I was just starting here so we were just trying to figure each other out how our relationship is going to work. And now that I've taken them…they can trust me* Confidence is important for student engagement *I think you need a really strong foundation, a strong relationship that you can build on which will 100% reflect in the, in the lessons* The voice of the child is important for tailoring support *we speak with the child, we ask them what their barriers are* *without him telling us what he's really feeling, what he's finding difficult, we can't make the appropriate adjustments* *speaking to Lucy, see if there's anything that we can do*

Appendix 24: Personal Experiential Themes For Ellen

The tables below detail the personal Experiental themes for each participant. The analytical process can be followed using the following key:

BOLD UPPER CASE reflect the Personal Experiential Theme (PETs)
bold lower reflect sub-themes
classic font reflect experiential statements
italics provide an example quote(s)

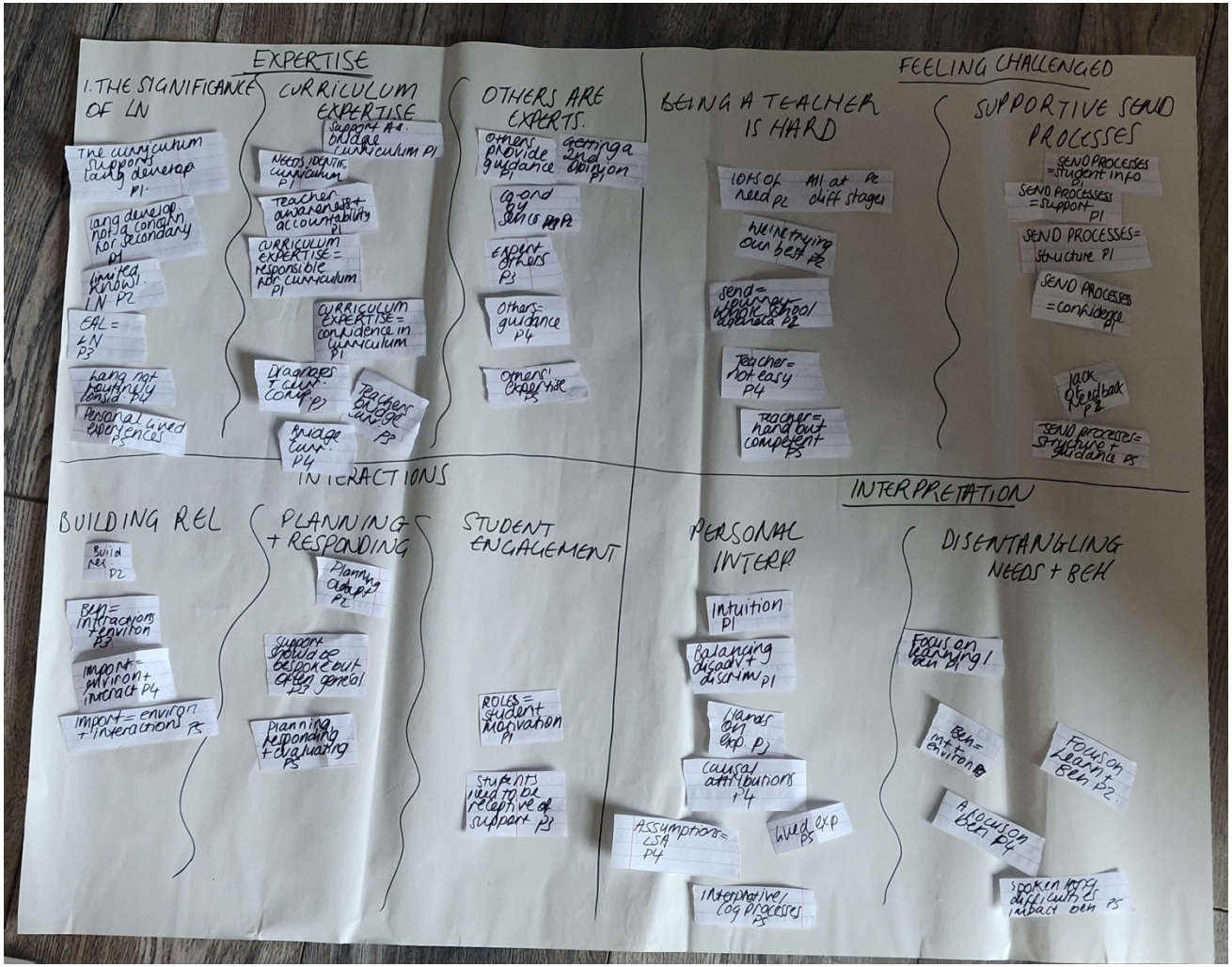
Table of Personal Experiential Themes for Ellen	
PETs:	**Sub-themes, Experiential statements and quotes:**
1. PROCESSES USED TO MAKE SENSE OF NEEDS	**Personal/lived experiences** Using lived experiences to inform understanding and practice *I have to say my … experience …really helped* *I'm looking at that direction cause he usually sits there.* *Lucy reminds me a lot of [person]* First hand experience over training *first-hand experience had to come from the other LSAs.* Drawing on own experiences to make sense of the information/ presentation of students *I think my personal experience…I do kind of remember their need,* *I automatically saw them in, her in Lucy.* **Interpretive/cognitive processes** Hypothesising with strengths and skills and what's helpful *he's got his fine motor skills … he's modelling* *he likes computers…so maybe the visual is helping him* Reflecting and questioning what behaviour is communicating *he's hiding maybe the lack of understanding…shown through his actions.* *I think the the behaviour is … a front* *the violence is obviously due to the lack of understanding* Information gathering about the environment to understand needs *what's going on around other subjects. is it just kind of to English?* Stable construct of needs & drawing on what was helpful hypothesising last time *what I picked up on was* Knowing a need changes the interpretation

	see how you're kind of interpretation changes in terms of when you, when you put a need in there Reflective solution-orientated discussions with other staff is helpful when problem-solving around pupils p16 *we could talk through strategies…So how do you think you've done? What strategies work for you? Maybe I'll, I'll try that* **SEND processes provide structure and guidance** SEND processes provide support and structure *we have three different programs.* *that is a kind of hybrid model* It is feasible in a small class to work with a LSA and see each student *strategically placing them in, where they can be easily accessed within the class* *keep your eye on him. If it's a smaller class* Processes and departments in school can offer further guidance *what happens is … identify, it gives strategies in place… that would be translated through our SEND what the needs would be* **Others expertise** *the LSA who knows the child better then anybody* *the SENCo. That if I needed any other kind of help*
2. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A TEACHER	**Being a teacher is not easy, but feeling competent** being a teacher is not easy *the workload was quite heavy…I needed a little bit of ease* Numerous roles and responsibilities *I took on the [job title] role in school.* Feeling competent with SEND *I'm spotting it and I'm kind of picking it up. It does seem that it's working* **Differentiation involves pre-planning, responding in the moment and evaluating** Visualising expectations and hands-on learning *they've got to have an image* *I think role play works* Language support includes communication adaptations and reading support *repeating yourself … in the most simplified manner* Importance of making things practical, concrete and slowing the pace

	concrete resources, be that through images… and really slowing the pace down Focusing on the basics - going backwards to move forwards *don't have to do the whole breadth of the lesson. It's about breaking it down so they understand the core.* *take it back and then build on it.* Differentiation involves pre-planning and responding in the moment *me and the LSA would … go through the week,* *that we would do beforehand* *I could rotate and support those that would need less help* Student support involves trying things to see if they help *we've tried…it's not really helping him* *see what works for him* *Maybe try out multiple things.*
3. SPOKEN LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IMPACT BEHAVIOUR	Language impacts behaviour and confidence *then it's affecting her self-esteem.* *expressed through his behaviours.* Constructions of speech and language focus on expressive language *unable to articulate what you'd like to say.*
4. THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS	Valuing the individual by noticing positives and building a relationship is important *giving him the positives and bringing him closer* *working together with that we can build that relationship* Relationships and connection are fundamental for support *just having that that one to one* *build, first of, first and foremost the relationship.* Inclusion means physical proximity and being part of the group *not being kind of, kind of pushed to the side of the class.* *at the back of the classroom, where they feel like they're out of place* The importance of classroom context – student confidence *even those that … were shy … it's a feeling of …they feel comfortable within a setting… you've got to build from the bottom, bottom up* Smaller classes allow pupils to be seen and heard *know the smaller classes, you know, being able to have a voice would would, helps anybody*

Appendix 25: Example of searching for connections across Personal Experiential Statements

Image for illustrative purposes – Please see Appendix 26 for tabulated data.



Appendix 26: Group Experiential Themes Tabulated Data

This table demonstrates the Personal Experiential Themes which contributed to the development of the Group Experiential Themes.

Group ET	Sub-theme	Example Personal Experiential Themes and Sub-themes
Expertise	The Significance of Language Needs	TEACHERS ARE EXPERTS IN THE CURRICULUM, NOT LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: The curriculum supports language development; language development is not a concern for secondary schools (Alex) LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IS NOT IN EVERDAY CONSCIOUSNESS: Limited knowledge and understanding of language needs (Brenda) EAL AND EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES ARE A FEATURE OF LANGUAGE NEEDS (Charlie) THE PARTICULAR THINGS THAT INFORM AN UNDERSTANDING OF SEND/LANGUAGE NEEDS: language needs not routinely considered (Dana) THE PROCESSES USED TO MAKE SENSE OF NEEDS: personal/lived experiences (Ellen)
	Curriculum Expertise	TEACHERS ARE EXPERTS IN THE CURRICULUM, NOT LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: confidence in the curriculum; teachers are responsible for the curriculum, not language development (Alex) THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE IDENTIFED: The curriculum, but not conclusively (Alex)

		MULTIPLE ROLES IN SEND: teacher awareness and accountability; support assistants bridge the curriculum (Alex) SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR SEND: Needs understood through diagnoses and curriculum comparisons (Charlie) TEACHERS BRIDGE THE CURRICULUM AND OFFER SUPPORT: Teachers bridge the curriculum (Charlie) WHAT IT IS TO BE A TEACHER: teachers bridge the curriculum (Dana)
	Others are Experts	MULTIPLE ROLES IN SEND: others provide guidance (Alex) THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE IDENTIFIED: getting a second opinion (Alex) WORKING WITH SEND IS A JOURNEY: Co-ordinated by the SENCo (Brenda) SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR SEND: Expert others (Charlie) WHAT IT IS TO BE A TEACHER: Others provide further guidance (Dana) PROCESSES USED TO MAKE SENSE OF NEEDS: Other's expertise (Ellen)
Interactions	Building relationships	THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE SUPPORTED: Building relationships (Brenda) TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS INFLUENCE THE PRESENTATION OF NEEDS AND SUPPORT: Students' behaviour is influenced by school environment and interactions (Charlie) THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTIONS (Dana, Ellen)
	Planning and Responding	THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE SUPPORTED: Pre-planning; Adapting (Brenda)

		TEACHERS BRIDGE THE CURRICULUM AND OFFER SUPPORT: Support should be bespoke but often consists of general SEND strategies (Charlie) WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A TEACHER: Differentiation involves planning, responding in the moment and evaluating (Ellen)
	Student engagement	MULTIPLE ROLES IN SEND: Student motivation and confidence (Alex) TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS INFLUENCE THE PRESENTATION OF NEEDS AND SUPPORT: Students need to be receptive of support (Charlie)
Feeling challenged	Being a teacher is hard	WORKING WITH SEND IS HARD: We're all at different stages; We're trying our best; There is a lot of need (Brenda) WORKING WITH SEND IS A JOURNEY: Lack of training, feedback and variations in implementation (Brenda) WHAT IT IS TO BE A TEACHER: Being a teacher is not easy (Dana) WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A TEACHER: Being a teacher is not easy BUT feeling competent (Ellen)
	Supportive SEND processes	THE PARTICULAR THINGS ONE GETS FROM EFFECTIVE SEND PROCESSES: Support; Structure; Information about students (Alex) WORKING WITH SEND IS A JOURNEY: steered by whole school agenda (Brenda) PROCESSES USED TO MAKE SENSE OF NEEDS: SEND processes provide structure and guidance (Ellen)
Interpretation	Personal interpretation	THE WAYS IN WHICH NEEDS ARE IDENTIFIED: Intuition; Balancing disadvantage and discrimination (Alex) SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE: Hands on experiences (Charlie)

		THE PARTICULAR THINGS THAT INFORM AN UNDERSTANDING OF SEND/LANGUAGE NEEDS: Assumptions that SEND pupils have a support assistant; causal attributions (Dana) PROCESSES USED TO MAKE SENSE OF NEEDS: Interpretive/reflective processes; Lived experiences (Ellen)
	Disentangling needs and behaviour	Focus on learning/ behaviour (Alex, Brenda, Charlie, Dana)