EXAMINING THE NATURE OF DISABILITIES AND MEETING THE VARIED NEEDS OF LEARNERS

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Guiding Questions

- What barriers exist for students with disabilities attempting to acquire a foreign language?
- How do we better meet the needs of students with disabilities in the foreign language classroom?
  - What are the potential impacts of different disabilities on Foreign Language Learning?
  - What are five recommendations for developing an Inclusive Foreign Language Learning Environment?
- Self-Assessment, Resources & Case Study Example
WHAT BARRIERS EXIST FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ATTEMPTING TO ACQUIRE A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?
Barriers outside the Foreign Language Classroom

- The Foreign Language Exemption
  - Exclusive Practice
    - Against Inclusive Beliefs
      - Rejecting a subset of the population
    - Against ACTFL’s mission
    - Against Inclusive Legislation
  - Perpetuates Myths about Foreign Language Learning
## Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas of Need</th>
<th>IEP Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Organized; Speaking Activities</td>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td>Learning Disabled - Memory Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan</td>
<td>Cultural Activities; Love of Spanish</td>
<td>Organization; Work Completion</td>
<td>Other Health Impairment - ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricky</td>
<td>Organized; Cultural Activities</td>
<td>Listening; Speaking; Participation</td>
<td>Other Health Impairment - Auditory Processing Disorder - ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>Participation; Love of Spanish</td>
<td>Work completion; Attention</td>
<td>Other Health Impairment - ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Vocabulary Retention</td>
<td>Partner work; Quality of Work Completion</td>
<td>Other Health Impairment- ADHD Autism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Barriers observed within the Foreign Language Classroom

◦ Exclusive Pedagogical and Content Practices
  ◦ High reliance on vocabulary retention
  ◦ High reliance on decontextualized grammar focus
  ◦ Focus on work completion over communicative and cultural competences
HOW DO WE BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM?
## Potential Impact of Different Disabilities on Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEA (2004) Category</th>
<th>Potential Areas of Need in FL Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>Impact on verbal communication and social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafness and/or Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>Impact on listening, pronunciation, and speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf-Blindness</td>
<td>Concurrent hearing and visual needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>(Minimal Impact on Foreign Language Learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disabilities</td>
<td>General language abilities are often impacted, causing need in FL study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td>Varies based on individual need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Potential Impact of Different Disabilities on Language Learning

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<th>IDEA (2004) Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orthopedic Impairment</td>
<td>(Minimal Impact on Foreign Language Learning)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Other Health Impairment                      | Varies based on individual need  
|                                              | • Students with ADHD have demonstrated success in FL learning (Sparks, Ganschow, & Patton, 2008)       |
| Specific Learning Disability                 | Varies based on individual need                                                                          |
| Speech or Language Impairment                | Impact on speaking and pronunciation.  
<p>|                                              | • Seek support from Speech Language Therapist                                                          |
| Traumatic Brain Injury                       | Varies based on individual need, but often impacts memory                                               |
| Visual Impairment including Blindness        | Impact on reading and writing                                                                           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Disorders</th>
<th>Impact on Learner</th>
<th>Potential Areas of Need in FL Learning</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Auditory Processing Disorder</td>
<td>Affects how <strong>sound</strong> is processed or interpreted by the brain</td>
<td>Difficulty recognizing differences in sounds (Phonetics &amp; morphology)</td>
<td>• Demonstrate &amp; model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty blocking out competing noises</td>
<td>• Allow extended think time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Language Processing Disorder (Type of APD) | Affects how **language** is processed or interpreted by the brain:  
  • expressive language (What is said)  
  • receptive language (what is understood) | Difficulty recognizing differences in sounds (Phonetics & morphology)                                   | • Speak slowly in direction of learner                                   |
|                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                                        | • Provide oral and visual supports                                       |
|                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                                        | • Use graphic organizers                                                 |
|                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                                        | • Use manipulatives and visual cues                                      |
| Dyslexia                           | Reading & Writing processing skills                                               | Fluency, decoding, comprehension, writing, spelling                                                    | • Quiet areas                                                            |
|                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                                        | • Copies of notes                                                       |
|                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                                        | • Don’t count spelling                                                   |
|                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                                        | • Differentiate with listening & speaking                                |
Moving away from “Foreign Language Learning Disability”

◦ “Some students are capable and some students are not” rather than a discussion of “some teaching practices and learning environments are effective and some are not”

◦ Sparks (2006, 2009)- There is no unique FLLD
  ◦ Students classified under this term do not exhibit cognitive or academic achievement differences when compared to low achieving students who were not identified as having a learning disability
  ◦ No reliable or valid measure to classify as FLLD
    ◦ IQ, MLAT, and grades are not reliable or valid for this purpose
  ◦ “In my view, the focus of native and foreign language educators and researchers should be on developing effective methods for teaching FLs to low-achieving students.” (Sparks, 2006, p. 553)
What are five recommendations for developing an Inclusive Foreign Language Learning Environment?

1. Take up an Inclusive Educational Stance
2. Focus on Developing Communicative and Cultural Competences
3. Follow best practices for Vocabulary and Grammar
4. Follow best practices for Classroom Procedures
5. Differing Assessments
1. Take up an Inclusive Educational Stance

◦ To do:
  ◦ Find out how your students learn best and be willing to change based on their needs.
  ◦ Take an inclusive self-assessment
2. Focus on Developing Communicative and Cultural Competences

◦ To do:
  ◦ Recognize equal importance of all standards
  ◦ Focus on communication over hypercorrectness.
3. Follow best practices for Vocabulary and Grammar

◦ To do:
  ◦ Vocabulary:
    ◦ 5-9 lexical items for communication (Khoii & Sharififar, 2013)
  ◦ Grammar:
    ◦ Focus on contextualization in communicative purpose
4. Follow best practices for Classroom Procedures

To do:
  • Directions:
    o Provide visually and orally
  • Explicitly teach learning strategies:
    o How to organize and use their resources
    o How to study
  • Participation:
    o Clearly provide expectations
    o Increase wait time
    o Use method to ensure all students are participating
  • Grouping:
    o Group heterogeneously
5. Differing Assessments

◦ To do:
  ◦ Make sure assessments are opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning
  ◦ Use meaningful, alternative assessments, such as portfolios or projects
Resources

◦ Websites
  ◦ Transforming Education Through Universal Design for Learning
    ◦ http://www.cast.org/
  ◦ Ñandutí- Foreign Language Learning and Special Needs Children
    ◦ http://www.cal.org/earlylang/benefits/special_needs.html
  ◦ Languages without Limits
    ◦ http://www.languageswithoutlimits.co.uk/
  ◦ Types of Learning Disabilities, including language-based disabilities
    ◦ http://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/
  ◦ Special Education Needs
    ◦ http://www.specialeducationalneeds.com/home/languages
Resources

◦ Articles
Self-Assessment on Inclusion

◦ This quiz will be helpful in understanding multitudes of different ways to meet learners’ needs.

◦ Directions:
  ◦ In response to the statements in column two, mark whether currently this is true or false for your classroom. If false, not all students are being included. Write notes as to how you could change this for the future.
Thoughts on the Self-Assessment...
Case Study

◦ For this case study, you will work with your group members to discuss the students enrolled in your fictitious language classroom, which has amazingly only 10 students.

◦ You will brainstorm different methods of instruction and assessment to meet the targeted standards and unit objectives.
Case Studies- Whole Group Discussion

- Each group give 1-2 ideas they had
Questions, comments…
References

References


