



Research Article

All we can do is trial and error: English language teachers' inclusive practice experiences

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Meeting the basic education needs of students with special needs, which are the legal rights of students with special needs, requires the implementation of successful inclusion practices within an effective education process. In the process of successful inclusion practices for students with special educational needs, academic and non-academic skills can be taught. Foreign language is also included in the teaching of academic skills. While it is possible to realize effective English language teaching for students with special needs with the necessary arrangements, problems are experienced due to various reasons. Hence, in the process of successful inclusion practices, students with special needs either cannot learn a foreign language at all or have limited foreign language knowledge. The aim of the study is to determine the adaptations made by teachers in effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs in order to ensure successful inclusion practices, the problems they encounter in this process and their solution suggestions. The study is a qualitative study, employing a narrative approach as the research design. The data is collected via narrative interviews with eight teachers of English. The thematic analysis of the findings is presented four main categories: insufficient theoretical knowledge about inclusive practices; problems encountered in the classroom; instructional adaptations, and suggestions from the practitioners. The findings illustrate that the participants received either no or little training on special education and inclusion at undergraduate level or as a professional development opportunity. Moreover, the training they received was only at the theoretical level and partially or completely forgotten due to the fact that it could not be transferred to the application level. Moreover, participants underline that they face problems regarding the diagnosis of students with special needs, as well as their needs to have cooperation between experts, teachers, families and students. Yet, participant teachers found novel ways to overcome their problems and have a more successful inclusive practice for students with special needs. Their offers of solutions to these problems are listed at the end of the study.

Keywords: Students with special educational needs, successful inclusion practices, foreign language teaching, instructional adaptations, effective teaching

1. Introduction

According to international and national laws, regulations and strategic plans, it is an indispensable right for students with special needs to benefit from the same educational opportunities as their peers within the scope of equality of opportunity in education, in general education classes, in accordance with the principle of least restrictive environment, by providing support services to the teacher (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994). At this point, the principle of "least restrictive environment" requires the least separation of students with special needs from their environment and the provision of the most effective educational opportunities (Carson, 2015). A special need is a complication in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty that an individual encounters while performing a task or action; and a participation limitation is a problem that an individual experiences while participating in life situations. Therefore, the student with special needs is a complex phenomenon and reflects the interaction between the characteristics of the person's body and the characteristics of the society in which they live (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). Meeting the basic education needs of students with special needs, which are the legal rights of students with special needs, in general,

education classes is possible through the implementation of successful inclusion practices within an effective education process (Hunt et al., 2002; Montes et al., 2016). Through successful inclusion practices, students with special needs will gain the independent living skills they need and integrate with society and achieve a happy life without limitations (Booth et al., 2003; WHO, 2023). The components of successful inclusion practices consist of many elements such as teachers, students with special needs, peers, families, administrators, experts, non-governmental organisations and policy makers (Hardy & Woodcock, 2014). Students with special needs show different learning characteristics among themselves due to their special needs types. While some of them can be taught academic skills (such as Turkish, mathematics, and foreign language), others can only be taught non-academic skills (such as self-care skills and nutrition) (Batu & Kircaali-İftar, 2010). Teachers have an important role among these elements (Srivastava et al., 2015). Successful inclusion practices are closely related to minimizing all barriers to learning and participation, no matter who experiences them and where they are located within the cultures, policies, and practices of a school (Antoniou et al., 2009; Booth et al., 2003). In order to achieve successful inclusion practices for students with special needs, it is very important for teachers to include the necessary adaptations based on individualized education programmes [IEP] in teaching academic and non-academic skills (Broderick et al., 2005; Forlin, 2010; Gaitas, & Alves Martins, 2017).

Teaching foreign languages to students with special needs requires a social or interactive perspective that values the diversity that students with special needs bring to the classroom, giving everyone equal opportunity to learn and develop (Moreno & Rodríguez, 2012). Despite numerous documents addressing the need to improve public policies related to diversity, educational inclusion and real equality in society (Rapti et al., 2023), students with special needs are often exempted from language education (Blázquez Arribas et al., 2020). For this reason, effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs cannot be realized for various reasons, so students with special needs either do not learn a foreign language at all or have limited foreign language knowledge and skills (Montes et al., 2016). For this reason, it is essential to provide a language teaching process in which students with special needs are approached in a fair manner, adaptations are implemented according to individual learning speed, opportunities are specially created for them to participate in course activities, and a positive classroom environment is cultivated (Chen, 2022; Miller, 2016; Rapti et al., 2023). At this point, it becomes even more important for foreign language teachers to include the necessary adaptations to ensure effective teaching for students with special needs in the process of successful inclusion practices (Barros et al., 2021; Frumos, 2020; Handle, 2010; Rezabala et al., 2020). Otherwise, inclusion practices in language teaching to students with special needs will not be achieved, but rather, this might, most likely, lead to un/intentional segregation practices.

Studies indicate that teachers who have received English language teaching education and are currently employed do not have adequate preparation for effective English language teaching for students with special needs, feel inadequate, and lack confidence (Ataç & Taşçı, 2020; Moreno, & Rodríguez, 2012; Shalbayeva et al, 2021; Sowell, & Sugisaki, 2020; Yastıbaş, 2021).

Teachers' experiences regarding the problems they encountered in this process, the solutions they found to these problems, and the support they received / did not receive during the process constitute the focus of the study. By determining these experiences, it will be possible to ensure effectiveness in teaching foreign language to students with special needs and to minimise the problems that are likely to be encountered in the current and future process. Some studies in the literature indicate that teachers are ready to integrate students with special needs into their classrooms when given the necessary support (Antoniou et al., 2009; Barros et al., 2021; Hoadjli, & Latrache, 2020). In this context, the research aims to identify the problems experienced in the field and the roots of these problems based on the views of the participants.

In this vein, the aim of the research is to determine the problems faced by teachers in the process of effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs, the instructional adaptations made by teachers and their solution suggestions in order to ensure successful inclusion practices. Research questions of the study can be listed as follows:

RQ 1) What are the problems encountered by foreign language teachers in the process of effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs in order to ensure successful inclusion practices?

RQ 2) What are the instructional adaptations (objectives, presentation, evaluation) that foreign language teachers make in the process of effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs in order to ensure successful inclusion practices?

RQ 3) What are the solutions for the problems encountered by foreign language teachers in the process of effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs in order to ensure successful inclusion practices?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The study employs a narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquiry documents the experiences and perspectives of a small group of people on a certain topic, mainly through interviews that are then arranged chronologically. Unlike positivist paradigms, narrative inquiry does not look after the 'truth', a narrative inquirer is not interested in whether the narrators utter is true or fiction. Rather, narrative inquirer is after the experiences of people, after their stories (Bruner, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) underline, "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives". The terms 'narrative' and 'story' can be used interchangeably. People's narratives are indeed stories based on their experiences but in this approach, a narrative is used 'to refer specifically to texts that are thematically organized by plots' (Polkinghorne, 1995). As Hinchman and Hinchman (1997, p. xvi) outline, narratives are "discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it". In education, narrative inquiry is a valuable research method and particularly useful "to understand teachers as knowers: knowers of themselves, of their situations, of children, of subject matter, of teaching, of learning" (Clandinin, 2015). In this particular study, narrative inquiry is employed to explore the experiences of teachers of English in Türkiye, regarding their successful inclusive practices while teaching English to students with special needs. The data is collected via narrative interviews (Polkinghorne, 1995) and analysed with a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is explained in more details in the following section.

2.2. Participants

The study group of the research consisted of eight teachers of English from Türkiye, teaching at the primary and middle school levels, determined by criterion sampling method. The criteria for forming a study group can be listed as having at least one student with special needs in the classroom in the 2022-2023 academic year or before, being a teacher of English, having completed their teaching practice and voluntarily participating in the study. Participants who met these criteria were reached with the permission of the ethics committee. Participants were informed about the research process and signed a consent form. The demographic characteristics of the English teachers interviewed in the study are given in Table 1.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Personal information form

A personal information form was prepared by the researchers to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study. The form included questions about the participant's age, gender, education level, inclusion practice experience, undergraduate inclusion education, and professional development inclusion education.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of participants

Pseudo names of the participants	Age	Gender	Level of education	Inclusive practice experience (Year)	RTI	RPD
Ayşe	32	Female	Undergraduate	8	Yes	No
Canan	35	Female	Undergraduate	7	Yes	No
Fatma	27	Female	Undergraduate	4	Yes	No
Emel	35	Female	Undergraduate	10	No	No
Fahriye	45	Female	Undergraduate	16	No	No
Ahmet	33	Male	Undergraduate	9	Yes	No
Zeynep	37	Female	Undergraduate	14	No	No
Ali	31	Male	Undergraduate	5	Yes	No

Note. RTI: Did the participant receive training on inclusion during the Undergrad?; RPD: Did the participant receive training on inclusion for professional development?

2.3.2. Semi-structured interview questions

A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. The semi-structured interview form was prepared by the researchers, which were then sent to colleagues who were the field experts for member checking. While preparing the form, in line with the narrative interviewing approach, the questions focused on the experiences of the participants, and participants were expected to discuss their experiences in length. Some of the interview questions finalized after the related corrections are as follows:

- 1) Can you tell us about your experiences in teaching foreign language skills to students with special needs for successful inclusion practices?
- 2) In which aspect do you have the most difficulties in teaching foreign language skills to students with special needs for successful inclusion practices?
- 3) Which physical and instructional adaptations do you use to ensure effective teaching in teaching foreign language skills to students with special needs for successful inclusion practices?
- 4) What do you think should be done to ensure effective teaching of foreign language skills to students with special needs for successful inclusion practices?
- 5) Do you have any memorable experiences with your students with special needs?

2.4. Data Analysis

The answers given by the participants to the interview questions were analysed and evaluated within the framework of the themes and codes created by the researchers. Thematic analysis was utilized with the aim of bringing together similar data within a framework of certain concepts and themes and interpreting them by organizing them in a way that the reader can understand (Creswell, 2013). As a result of the analysis based on the data obtained from the research, four main themes were identified: i) Insufficient past learning about inclusion practices, ii) Problems encountered, iii) Successful inclusion practice adaptations, iv) Suggestions for solutions from practitioners.

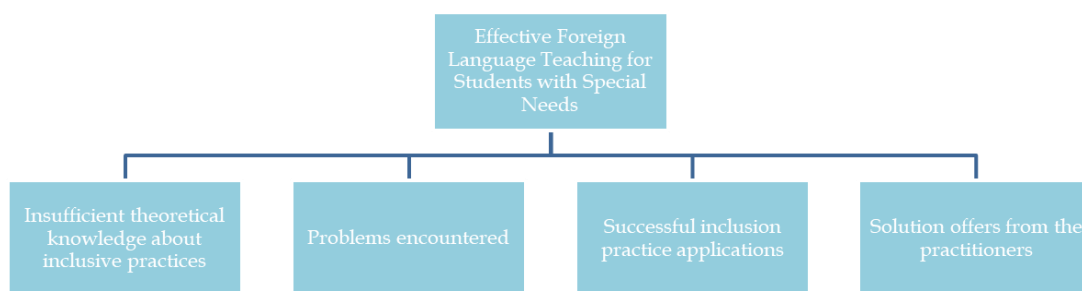
2.5. Ethical Procedure

Ethical principles and rules were followed in the planning, data collection, data analysis and data reporting stages of the research process. The research was ethically approved by the decision numbered 2023/300 taken at the meeting of Düzce University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 19.10.2023 and numbered 9 (Document Date and Number: 24.10.2023-354870). All the names in the study are pseudonyms, not real names of the participants.

3. Findings

Figure 1 illustrates the main themes based on the thematic analysis of the data. The sub-themes related to these themes are given in detail in the following sections.

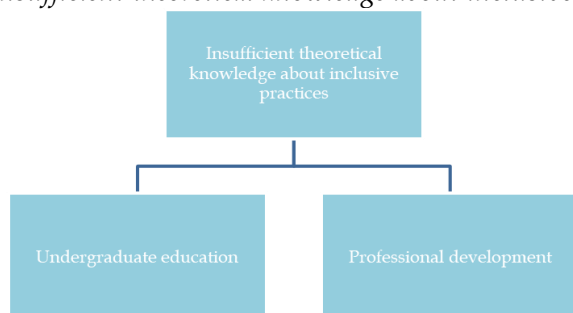
Figure 1
Effective Foreign Language Teaching for Students with Special Needs



3.1. Insufficient Theoretical Knowledge about Inclusive Practices

Figure 2 demonstrates main sub-themes of this category, within the light of participants' remarks.

Figure 2
Insufficient theoretical knowledge about inclusive practices



3.1.1. Undergraduate education

Some of the participants stated that they received undergraduate level education on special education and inclusion practices, while others stated that they did not receive any undergraduate level education on the subject. In addition, some of the participants who received undergraduate level education on special education and inclusion practices stated that this education process was only at the theoretical level, could not be put into practice and therefore they felt inadequate.

Some participants, like Ahmet and Fahriye, who graduated from one of the finest universities in the country underlined that they did not receive any specific education on children with special needs or inclusive education in general. Even though several participants had courses such as 'special education and inclusion' at the undergraduate level, they point out that it was not adequate enough, mostly lacking the practical elements. In this excerpt, Emel discusses her university course on the topic and its effects on her teaching now:

I can say that I took a special education course in the first semester in the last year of university. Apart from that, I did not receive any training on these students or how to teach them. In this special education course I took, I have knowledge about students with special needs in general terms, but not in a very detailed and comprehensive way. I don't know how useful I can be for these special students. I try to help them as much as I can from the internet or from the individualised education plans we prepare at the beginning of the term, but frankly, I don't think it is enough (Emel).

3.1.2. Professional development

The majority of the participants in the research process stated that they did not receive any professional development on effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs, and some participants stated that they participated in some informative seminars and activities in general, but not directly on foreign language teaching. Among the participants, only Ayşe was lucky enough to get a chance for a special training on the matter:

I remember in the past, when the seminars were face to face, our guidance counsellors used to give us short trainings on inclusion, because not only English teachers, but also classroom teachers have problems in this regard, during the seminar period. But that was not directly related to my field. It was more about how to approach the child. That is in-service training. Apart from that, we went to Italy with a project on this subject. Italy is a country that has gone a long way in this regard, we have seen it in practice. But it was not very applicable in our country in terms of applicability. For example, I work in a primary school. When we visited a primary school in Italy, when there is a student in need of special education in the classroom, there is one more teacher besides the class teacher. The class teacher continues to teach the lesson. In other words, there is an audience of 30 people, there are students. But when the other student falls behind, the teacher who is there to take care of him/her individually is with him/her immediately (Ayşe).

It can safely be argued that Ayşe is an exception. In Türkiye, professional development opportunities for teachers were often found to be not helpful, rather dull and delivered with old-fashioned methods (Atay, 2008; Uztosun, 2018). Canan summarises what the majority of teachers go through in the country:

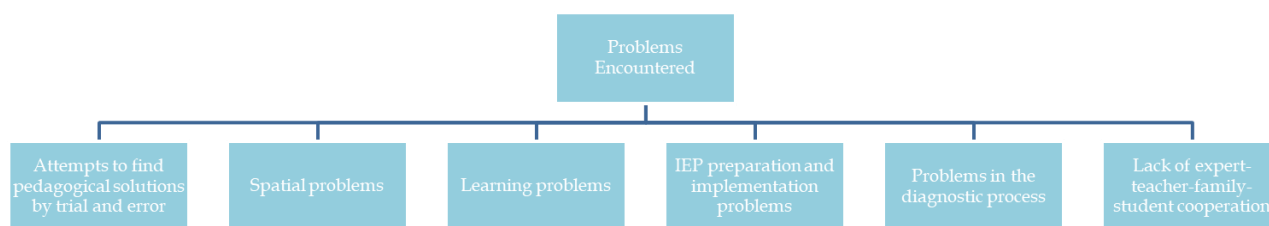
Actually, I can say that I am insufficient in that regard. For example, our current topic is foreign language teaching by learning special needs. In other words, I did not receive any in-service training for the inclusion of students with special needs, I did not see any seminars for this. I do not have a certificate or anything like that. So I had no training experience in this subject. For this, let me put it this way, I tried to put into practice what I saw in my undergraduate education (Canan).

3.2. Problems Encountered

Figure 3 demonstrates the various problems the participants encounter, which are mostly structural at the macro and the meso levels, regarding teaching students with special needs.

Figure 3

Problems encountered



3.2.1. Attempts to find pedagogical solutions by trial and error

As the participant teachers lack theoretical knowledge and professional support, they found novel ways to tackle their problems. In this narrative, Ahmet had to wait patiently to find a solution to his problem with one of the students:

I had a student in the first grade. The child never spoke to me from September to April. He spoke very little even to his class teacher. He only spoke to his parents. He didn't talk to any of his friends either, he was like that. He would come to me when he wanted something, he would only move his lips. I would ask him if he wanted to drink water, for example, and he would start crying. If you ask a question and expect an answer, he cries. Now he cried and cried and cried. I realised it wasn't going to work. He was asking something, moving his lips, I'd say okay. Then I'd watch to see what he was going to do, and I'd see that he'd gone to the bathroom. Then he came back and moved her lips again. I would say okay, and he would go and sharpen his pencil. The only thing we can do about inclusion at the moment is trial and error. We have no other method as teachers (Ahmet).

3.2.2. Spatial problems

In terms of effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs, some participants stated that they had some problems arising from the physical conditions of the institution, this situation distracted students with special needs and triggered behavioural problems. In this quote, Ahmet highlights a significant problem many teachers probably face in their classrooms:

Apart from these, our only big problem is the lack of suitable classrooms for the child. If you are in a small school, if there is one branch or two branches for each grade, you cannot organise an inclusive class. As I said, when the child is sent to the level class, both the younger students in that class disturb this student and this student disturbs the younger students. They feel awkward, or sometimes there may be mockery (Ali).

3.2.3. *Learning problems*

In this category, main issues raised by the participants can be categorised as: late learning, non-permanent learning, difficulty in learning in one or more of the areas of reading, writing, speaking and/or listening. In this quote, Zeynep touches upon some crucial points about the difficulties the students have in the foreign language classes as well as other lessons:

Writing is already a big problem, especially for individuals with special needs. We can never do it anyway. Since there is a problem of reading and writing words in Turkish, children first receive inclusive Turkish education from our teachers. For example, there are such students who are currently in inclusive groups. They need to learn Turkish first. Therefore, writing in a foreign language becomes a big problem. There is a problem when writing, usually when speaking, so they cannot read. You know, reading is also generally a problem. It depends on individual difficulties, for example, some of our students cannot speak. Some of our students cannot hear. You know, it depends entirely on their own problems. For example, listening. Our hearing-impaired student understands what she reads very well. But let's say we have a student with a physical disability. So she doesn't understand anything. Neither reading nor writing. For example, there are no words, so you can never memorize them. You know, there is also a word-learning problem. He cannot focus on the process in any way. Especially from the moment I enter the lesson. The student starts to deal with something else because the student cannot understand the lesson. He says he has to go to the toilet and leave the classroom. And so on, you know, he asks for permission. I mean in that way. For example, the child is disconnected from the very beginning, like I can't do this. You know, the child can neither participate in the lesson nor write in any way. Unfortunately, vocabulary teaching is also a problem at this point (Zeynep).

3.2.4. *IEP Preparation and implementation problems*

All of the participants stated that they had problems in both IEP preparation and implementation, that they tried to find their own solutions, that they had to use ready-made plans, and that for this reason, students with special needs had learning problems or could not learn at all.

I don't think the Ministry cares much about this issue. They seem to care on paperwork. They just tell us to do it, do it. But how should we do it? It is a very complicated issue. We need to make a different application for each student. I talked to a friend of mine in another city the other day. He said that there are 36 students with IEPs, I need to prepare a separate IEP for each of these students. The problem is also experienced there. You cannot prepare a plan for this child without knowing him/her. You take ready-made plans. The ready-made plan does not fit. As a teacher, you have to observe the child in the lesson and proceed according to the situation (Ali).

3.2.5. *Problems in the diagnostic process*

In the process of effective foreign language teaching for students with special needs, the participants stated that the diagnostic processes were either not carried out at all or were carried out incorrectly, so that students with special needs, who were already victimized for various reasons, were victimised for the second time in most cases. Diagnosis of students with special needs is sometimes found to be problematic in the country, with the lack of enough experts at the centers and family attitudes toward their children getting diagnosed as some of the main issues (Kılıç & Aslan, 2022; Kot et al., 2018). In this part, Ahmet narrates a significant problem that he often encounters:

The school I teach this year is the perfect school for you, let me put it that way. Almost half of them have IEPs. There is a problem there. I mean, I don't know what they give the IEP according to, I don't know what they don't give it according to. On paper, everyone has an IEP. For different purposes. Students who should have IEPs are also walking around without IEPs. There is also that.

The family does not accept or does not care. For example, in the 8th grade, I have a student with IEP who cannot read and write. He should have an IEP, but he is not diagnosed. We tried, the family doesn't speak Turkish either, they only speak Arabic. We can't communicate either. We couldn't do anything, even though we have been trying for a year. As I said, we have some problems at school. We have unofficial IEPs, and IEPs who are actually normal. I think there are some people who show their children with IEPs in order to get benefits. There seems to be different things, illegal things. And, there is another problem. The official IEP reports may not be of such high quality. The officer says there is nothing; he says the student will take care of this and that. We see that the child cannot. The official report says the child doesn't understand this, and we look and see that the child understands. One of our children was told that he had a learning difficulty, but he turned out to be gifted. Again, giftedness is also special, but they said that the child was not gifted, the child did not understand and gave such a report. It turns out that the child understands very well, but we don't understand the child (Ahmet).

3.2.6. Lack of expert-teacher-family-student cooperation

The participants stated that they sometimes had problems with the "expert-teacher-family-student cooperation" they needed to ensure successful inclusion practices, that the degree of these cooperation problems could vary according to the situation, and that they could have productive educational experiences for both them and students with special needs to the extent that they could establish cooperation. Canan underscores the importance of cooperation, especially with the current adversities they have to endure every day:

Class hours in primary schools are insufficient in this regard. Unless the family provides support, there is difficulty in forgetting. For example, I have to assign homework for the information I have given. It is true that I have problems with these issues. I mean, if we had more time, I don't know, family support is very important in this regard. I think we can progress much more (Canan).

Right on the matter, Ayşe exemplifies fruitful cooperation between parties, which was particularly helpful:

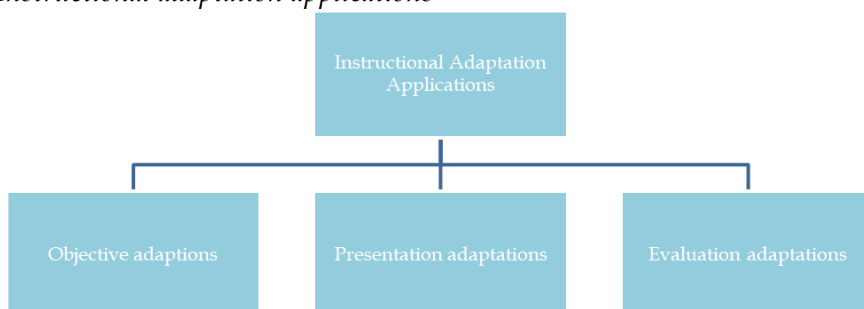
Some families can indicate this in advance, which I think is a good thing. When I just started teaching the twos, we had just met, and when there was no information from the counselor, the mother of one of my students with speech and language disorder stated it at the very beginning. When she said, "Teacher, this is the situation of my child, if you just give him time, he will express himself," I started with a positive attitude and I progressed in that way. Always giving him time. Normally, I could have done this, but I could have realized it late, I could have realized it a few weeks later in the classroom. We progressed faster when his mother warned me directly. Also, some parents are really interested. We can make progress with their interest. I have another parent in the same way, the student has a mild intellectual disability. But with his mother's efforts, we make better progress with him regularly, when he does not understand his homework, with her questions about how we can progress (Ayşe).

3.3. Successful Inclusion Practice Applications

Figure 4 portrays the main sub-themes based on the codes regarding successful applications by the participants when it comes to inclusive education. They can be argued to be remarkable, given the inadequate learning of the participants and lack of support they need.

Figure 4

Instructional adaptation applications



3.3.1. Objective adaptations

In the context of effective teaching for students with special needs in the process of successful inclusion practices, some participants stated that they included adaptations in the curriculum objectives, while some participants stated the opposite. In this first quote, Emel exemplifies her adaptation practices:

As an English teacher, in general, I motivate myself to increase their efforts and facilitate their understanding according to the students as much as possible. I try to make the lesson as easy as possible for the students. In other words, although almost all of them are not applied one-to-one, I try to adapt different applications according to the level of the students in the class and try to give the gains I need to give. In the process of gaining 4 skills in this work, I took care to explain again when there were parts that were not understood. I make an effort to answer students' questions and give them positive or negative feedback (Emel).

Although Emel underlines her tailor-made adaptations for her students with special needs, Fatma states that she does not employ these adaptations, mostly because of spatial problems she encounters:

We prepare separate lesson plans for these students. Anyway, we generally work with students with learning difficulties, not gifted students. We work with a maximum of 2 students in each class. Yes, they have annual plans, but when you look at it, I do not teach according to those annual plans, I teach according to whatever the eighth grade's own objectives are. Since it is not possible for me to teach these students separately, especially in crowded classes, whatever I teach, whatever the eighth-grade curriculum is, they learn it with the other students (Fatma).

3.3.2. Presentation adaptations

All of the participants stated that they included some presentation (content) adaptations to different degrees for effective teaching for students with special needs. These adaptations can be listed as: word prediction activities, dramas, games using web 2.0 tools through smart board etc. devices, teaching activities with songs, group work, story-based teaching activities, teaching with videos, pronunciation activities, additional time in activities.

It can be argued that presentation adaptations are the most commonly adapted ones by the participants for the students with special needs. In this first quote, Ahmet narrates that word games are particularly helpful:

We usually do something through applications. My student this year found about word games. There are English-Turkish ones with two options. A word comes out, there are two options, he tries to guess which one it is. As he guesses, it stays in his mind. I also helped him like listening to foreign music. He likes listening to foreign music. I ask him if he can memorise it, he says he can. He tries, he says, I have memorised this much. He learns some of it as much as he can. For example, in the head-shoulders-knees and toes song, which teaches body parts, I first made him memorise the song, then I slowed down the song and asked him what head was in Turkish if he touched his head when I said head. I mean, we could do those things, but since our current friend has a physical disability, we don't have much choice. He looks at English word games on his mobile phone. He listens to foreign music. And such little things. He learnt numbers, colours and a few animal names (Ahmet).

Similar to Ahmet, Fatma discusses the instructional games as well as using pair work and group work activities to include the students more:

I try to use educational games in the lessons because we have inclusion students in almost every class. Since I use educational games for these students, they can keep the words in their minds a little more. Not for a very long time, though. I have to make them repeat them constantly. Again, they are a little better in vocabulary, but whether it is grammar, speaking and listening, these students are at a slightly lower level. It also depends on the level of the student. Also, we do pair work and group work activities. I distribute good students so that there is one in each group. I include these students in these groups because they are more motivated when they are involved in groups (Fatma).

At the primary school level, teaching a foreign language is mainly conducted via fun activities, such as songs and games (Nunan, 2016). Ayşe exemplifies the techniques she applies to students:

Since the age group is small, we are already learning with songs, rhymes and educational games. They also enjoy the process most of the time. If the student is not closed to communication, they also enjoy it, they are involved, learning becomes easier. But I give them extra time, that is definitely there. Especially my students with speech and language disorders need time to pronounce and express themselves, I give them that time. Apart from that, peer teaching can also be in question. Because our class hours are insufficient, there are acquisitions that I need to catch up with. I try to help as much as I can. When I sit next to her and do a writing activity or an activity from a book, I need to show my student with visual impairment at least what to write as much as possible. Because she cannot see close up. I help in that way, but it is mostly peer teaching. When I have a student who finishes faster, I ask him/her to help his/her friend (Ayşe).

In the last quote for this part, Canan explains her adaptations more extensively, particularly highlighting games and drama exercises:

Unfortunately, it is very, very much below the class level. In cases of both special learning difficulties and mild intellectual disabilities, I try to get down to the level of those students more. For example, I present visuals on the smart board or make them hear the word with songs. When necessary, I take them to the board and make them do role model and drama activities in the classroom. I even slow it down, for example, I try to listen to it that way. I reduce the speed. On the contrary, in the IEP plan, we have gifted students in our class who take the BİLSEM exams. I give them more extra work; they do more homework if necessary. Of course, they stay above the class level. So in both cases, I can say that we apply three different techniques in the classroom. We try to progress in different ways (Canan).

As can be seen from these narrations, there are various adaptations that the participants employ in their teaching. Mainly, these adaptations can be argued to be similar to the techniques the participants utilise to all of their students, with nuances for their students with special needs.

3.3.3. Evaluation adaptations

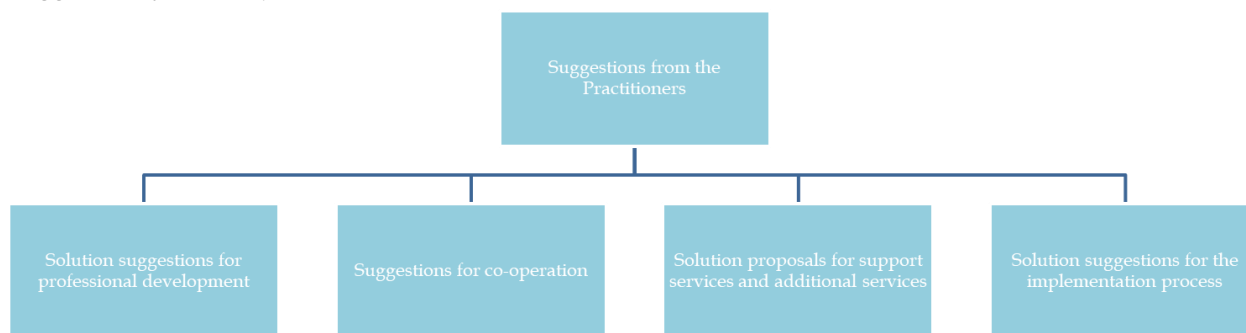
Some participants stated that they included evaluation adaptations to evaluate the effective teaching process for students with special needs. These assessment adaptations can be listed as giving additional time, changing the exam style (oral instead of written, multiple choice instead of classical, etc.), adapting the exam documents (such as enlarging the font size), and using web tools. In this excerpt, Ali narrates various issues around the evaluation of students with special needs:

A meeting is held at the beginning of the term about the writings. It is said that there is a student with IEP in the school. The situation of the student with IEP is discussed. You know, whether there is a problem for him/her to understand the lesson, how much trouble he/she has. Some of them have physical problems. They are also in the IEP category. At the meeting at the beginning of the term, it is decided at the meeting that if a student with IEP has only a physical disability, if there is no mental problem, the exam should be the same. These students already get higher grades than most students. In severe cases, we prepare a special exam for the child. Even if it exceeds the extra time we give, we ignore it. The child has unlimited authority in that regard. We can wait at that moment. Exam rules such as not going to the lavatory during the exam do not apply to them. In general, the child has unlimited freedom. The teacher already knows the child. The teacher prepares an exam from the questions he/she thinks he/she can do. Depending on the disability, if the child has a visual impairment, the font size is enlarged. The questions are written bigger. If the child has serious distraction, an exam paper with pictures and colour printouts is prepared. Because the student can comprehend the black and white visuals differently. I also know that I make special colour photocopies directly for the student. Questions are prepared with special visuals (Ali).

3.4. Solution Offers from the Practitioners

Figure 5 lists the offers the participants came up with to their problems.

Figure 5
Suggestions from the practitioners



3.4.1. Solution suggestions for professional development

It would not be wrong to argue that providing them professional development opportunities for teaching foreign languages to students with special needs is a common expectation of the participants from the Ministry of National Education. Here, Fatma briefly summarises her expectations and why they need these opportunities:

I have never received in-service training on this subject. I don't think teachers have much knowledge on this subject. I have colleagues who have difficulties in approaching these students. We have difficulties. Some of them (students) may show behavioural problems. Not in terms of lessons, but there are students who have problems with their friends, students who are a little more quarrelsome, students who do not get along well with other people. Therefore, we may also have problems in approaching them. We need to improve ourselves in these aspects (Fatma).

3.4.2. Suggestions for co-operation

In the process of realizing the effective teaching process for students with special needs, the participants suggested that meetings should be held with the student's class teacher, family, school administration, and other experts at the beginning of the term, and cooperation should be made in necessary educational activities throughout the term, especially for IEP. Ahmet, here, complains about the workload before underlining the importance of primary school teachers' reports to get to know the students better and more reliably:

We seem to do a lot of work on paper. Yet, when we get to the heart of the matter, we have huge problems. If possible, the primary school teacher should prepare a good file with the counselor for the student. Secondary school teachers should be told that it is compulsory to read this file. Alternatively, this file should be read at the IEP meeting at the beginning of the term and it would be very good if we have a full command of the situation. This seems like the best thing we can do. There is an official website, you write down the child's characteristics and it gives you a plan accordingly. That doesn't coincide either. We need to make a decision by observing the child in class and analyzing him/her for a long time. Since the primary school teacher observes the child for 4 years, I think what this teacher writes is very important. For example, one of our teachers wrote a detailed report about what kind of personality the child has, what problems he/she has, what he/she likes, dislikes, etc. I think her report is higher than all reports. Because she looked after the child for four years. He wrote everything in detail. Some people leave without caring at all. We need this kind of things. That way we can get in a little faster. Otherwise we have to find it by trial and error. (Ahmet).

3.4.3. Solution proposals for support services and additional services

Participants suggested providing support services such as in-class help, resource room, and counselling services in the process of realising effective teaching process for students with special needs. Here, Ayşe underlines the importance of an additional teacher within the classroom:

On my own behalf, I think that the reason why I do not make extra effort for students with special needs is also due to the small number of class hours. 2 hours is a small amount of time. English class hours can be increased. Apart from that, I wish we had another teacher for students with special

needs in addition to the teacher in the classroom. Because, yes, inclusion is a very good practice, and we see the benefits of it in schools. Socially and academically, the child progresses and makes progress with inclusion, it is a good practice. But apart from that, they may also need individual education. Maybe individual training with that extra teacher or individual training that we can implement can be increased (Ayşe).

3.4.4. *Solution suggestions for the implementation process*

In order to realise the effective teaching process for students with special needs, the participants suggested that the mother tongue should be taught well, the needs in terms of accessibility should be determined and necessary support should be provided, necessary and sufficient technological device support should be provided to meet the educational needs, necessary and sufficient technological infrastructure services should be provided, technological training materials such as web tools and interactive books should be prepared for instructional adaptations for students with special needs, and class sizes should be arranged in an appropriate number. Emel discusses highly significant issues on the matter:

I think interactive books can be written for students with special needs. In other words, I think there should be books that will enable the students to be active in the lesson, that will attract their attention, and that will include activities that will increase their desire to learn English. Also, for example, I am looking for a plan on the internet, but there are plans from 2010. I think they need to be updated in line with the needs of these students. I don't think too much attention is paid to this issue in the plans, so these plans can be updated in line with the needs of the students. I don't think too much attention is paid to this issue in the plans, so these plans can be updated in line with the needs of the students. I can say that interactive books can be written for our children. And there is also this, this makes me very sad, I mean, I am not talking about inclusive students in English, I am talking in general, I realise that the necessary care is never shown. Children who are constantly ignored by their teachers and friends in the same way. In other words, firstly, children should learn Turkish, their mother tongue properly, express themselves, understand what they read, and then we should move on to teaching English. You know, I see myself and my other friends as deficient in this regard. I think a solution should be found for this as a continuation. (Emel).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the aim is to determine the adaptations that English language teachers made in foreign language teaching for students with special needs for successful inclusion practices, the problems they encountered in this process and their suggestions for solutions.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the participants either did not receive any training on special education and inclusion at undergraduate and in-service level, or the training they received was only at the theoretical level and partially or completely forgotten due to the fact that it could not be transferred to the application level. As a result of this situation, it is noteworthy that there is a lack of knowledge about the diagnostic process, types of special needs, IEP preparation and implementation in successful inclusion practices. Similar to this result, Shalbayeva et al. (2021) revealed a series of material, technical, pedagogical and specific issues that teachers face in the context of inclusive education. These problems stem from the unique and distinctive features of English language teaching in inclusive education contexts, as well as the lack of courses on English language teaching methods in inclusive education in the programs of higher education institutions. Similarly, Ataç and Taşçı (2020) found that most of the language teacher candidates do not have sufficient expertise and skills to teach students with learning difficulties. García, and Ortiz (2006) concluded that one of the most important problems in meeting the needs of students with special needs is the lack of specially trained teachers with dual expertise in English language teaching.

The participants have various difficulties in the teaching process for students with special needs. Yet they are in an effort to find unique solutions to the problems they encountered. In addition, the participants have some problems arising from the physical conditions of the institutions and this situation triggered behavioural problems by distracting the attention of

students with special needs. Moreover, students with special needs have foreign language learning problems such as late learning, non-permanent learning, difficulty in learning in one or more of the reading-writing-speaking-listening areas. All of the participants have problems in the preparation and implementation of IEPs and they try to find their own solutions to these problems. Mostly, they have to use ready-made IEPs, which are not tailor-made for these students. In addition to this, the diagnostic processes are either not operated at all or operated incorrectly for students with special needs. Hence, students with special needs, who are already victimised for various reasons, are doubly victimised. Expert-teacher-family-student cooperation is not always coordinated in dealing with these problems. The number of students in the class, time spent on assessment, gender, number of teaching hours and location of the school, looking for ways to make the work more interesting, class time, type of school and prioritisation of position are shown among the problems encountered and suggestions for dealing with these problems are proposed. The research conducted by Moreno and Rodríguez (2012) revealed that in the process of teaching foreign languages to students with special needs, teachers lack strategies to include each student in the activities. The reasons for this were teachers' not knowing how to deal with learning problems, the large number of students, lack of materials, lack of innovative ideas, and teachers' lack of interest in promoting a fun learning process.

In order to minimise the problems encountered by foreign language teachers in the research process, it can be concluded that some participants make adaptations in curriculum objectives, presentation and evaluation, while some participants partially include them. The participants include "simplification of objectives" adaptation among the adaptations of objectives, "word prediction activities, dramas, games and songs using web 2.0 tools, group work, story-based teaching activities, teaching with videos, pronunciation activities, allowing additional time in activities" as adaptations and "allowing additional time, changing the exam style (such as oral instead of written, multiple-choice assessment instead of classical), adapting exam documents (such as enlarging the font size), assessment using web tools" as assessment adaptations. Similar to these results, Rapti et al. (2023) taught English vocabulary to three students with intellectual disabilities with an "Augmented Reality" intervention and achieved effective and permanent learning at the end of the process. Similarly, the research results of Rezabala et al. (2020) show how videos attract and maintain the attention of students with special needs for longer periods of time, and how self-recording supports listening and speaking practice. This situation offers many possibilities for renewing existing adaptations and modifications to improve the teaching and learning process of students with special needs in the context of effective teaching. In addition, Barros et al. (2021) reported in their study that effective learning takes place after practical examples and practical application of some activities in the process of teaching foreign languages to students with special needs.

5. Educational Implications

The solution suggestions of the participants for the effective foreign language teaching process of students with special needs in successful inclusion practices can be stated as follows:

- Solution suggestions for in-service training: Providing in-service training specific to teaching foreign languages to students with special needs in the trainings organized by the Ministry of National Education for teachers.
- Suggestions for cooperation: Organising meetings at the beginning of the term with the class teacher, family, school administration and other specialists of the student with special needs and cooperating in necessary educational activities, especially IEP.
- Suggestions for support services and additional services: Providing support services such as resource room, in-class help and counselling services for students with special needs to realize an effective teaching process.
- Solution Suggestions for the Implementation Process: First of all, teaching the mother tongue well, determining what the needs are in terms of accessibility and providing the necessary support, providing the necessary and sufficient technological device support to meet the

educational needs, providing the necessary and sufficient technological infrastructure services, preparing technological training materials such as web tools, interactive books on instructional adaptations for students with special needs, and organizing the class sizes in an appropriate number.

6. Limitations

Limitations of the research and suggestions for further research can be listed as follows:

- The research was conducted at the primary school level. Further research can be conducted at other levels as well.
- Further research can be conducted separately for different types of special needs, such as giftedness.
- Within the scope of the research, the current situation and needs regarding foreign language teaching for students with special needs were revealed. In this context, researches covering the intervention process on the subject can be carried out.

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