



Foreign Language Teaching within Inclusive Education: Innovations and Prospects



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Abstract

Currently, Russian professors were facing crucial demands because of a new, urgent condition to pursue their work. Until recently, these professors were used to working within familiar surroundings and sharing knowledge with students of traditional classes, but now, they are expected to move beyond that and function on a different level, which demands special skills and methods of working in an inclusive class. The purpose of this article was to throw light on the various aspects of inclusion that was supposed to be essential for the further development of inclusive education in Russia. The scientific issues in this field get more and more support and interest in almost all countries around the world. The research presented some theoretical and practical workouts of Russian professors within inclusive classes. The data were collected, analyzed, and overflowed into conclusions that highlight the idea of possible and fruitful coeducation of students with disabilities in a typical education process. However, as the survey showed, it is not an easy task, and the variety of issues should be taken into consideration.

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Contents

Abstract	85
1 Introduction	86
2 Materials and Methods	87
3 Results and Discussions	89
4 Conclusion	89
Acknowledgments	89
References	90
Biography of Authors	90

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1 Introduction

Inclusive education of children with disabilities in the framework of general educational institutions is one of the urgent problems of the modern education system and poses a difficult task for all professors to ensure the development of the adequate conditions for the genuine and full inclusion and participation of these children in the educational process. The implementation of the concept of inclusive education for children with disabilities requires the search for the most efficient learning strategies as a process aimed at developing the personal potential of each child according to his/her abilities and needs.

It is evident that the embodiment of the idea of inclusive education imposes a great responsibility on all participants of the educational process and, first and foremost, on the professor. The analysis in Russian educational institutions showed that the attitude of professors, in general, towards inclusive education is negative, since many are not ready to work with children with disabilities, and do not know how to do it. For example, a group of professors from the State University of Moscow conducted the questionnaire of 226 professors who do not have working classes with children with special learning abilities and, they consider this practice not useful because students with disabilities should be taught with the use of unique methods and devices, respectively, the achievement of educational goals is impossible with coeducation.

Moreover, as international practice shows, inclusive education is useful not only for students with disabilities and their peers but also for professors, as well. This idea can be confirmed by the words of Sue Stubbs in the book "Inclusive Education with Limited Resources" "sometimes people begin to see the decisive role of inclusion, and it helps them to understand their hidden beliefs and values, as well as determine the ideas that they would like to defend" ([Stubbs, 2008](#)).

The problem of inclusive education of children with disabilities is especially relevant for professors of foreign languages. Foreign countries have accumulated productive and successful experience in inclusive education of children. However, an analysis of international research literature showed that the issue of choosing a practical methodology for teaching a foreign language to children with special health abilities in conditions of inclusive education is still debatable. On the one hand, this problem is due to the traditionally established view in the educational system that the study of a foreign language is a complex process, and especially for children with psychophysical impairments. To reduce the educational load on children with disabilities, until recently, it was considered inappropriate to teach a foreign language to them because, in most cases, this subject is not vital for their everyday activity. In this regard, the issue of the interest of children with disabilities is essential. According to foreign researchers, these children are interested in learning a foreign language no less than their healthy peers: they have a hasty career, the prospect of studying in various international educational programs, the opportunity to communicate with foreign friends, and knowledge of foreign language culture.

On the other hand, often the attention of professors is focused on diagnosing a psychophysical disorder in the mental development of the child, which, of course, is essential, especially at the early stage of education. However, if diagnostics acts as an end in itself and does not form the basis for developing an individual educational trajectory of a student following the nature of his abilities, then, in this case, learning a foreign language, as well as other general subjects, is impossible. According to R. Schwartz, early diagnosis should not be considered as establishing the fact of the impossibility to learn but as teaching children with disabilities in a group of students learning a foreign language ([Schwarz, 1997](#)). Perhaps in this situation is a paradox in the teaching of children with disabilities that means involving the activation and participation of all students using variant methods of training.

Students with disabilities require the introduction of specially designed approaches to their learning. The leading goal of a foreign language professor who teaches in an inclusive class is to create an educational environment in which the entire learning process will ensure success in achieving the necessary educational results for all students in the class, which in turn involves the use of practical educational strategies aimed at prediction and removal of possible difficulties in learning a foreign language, which every student of a class faces within a class ([Ortiz, 1997](#)). Creating a "barrier-free" educational environment at learning a foreign language for children with disabilities in terms of inclusive class begins with the creation of a favorable psychological climate, the achievement of all students of class academic results, and their empowerment ([Cummins, 1989](#)). The fundamental basis for designing a successful and productive educational environment should be the provision that all children can study, and each professor should

take responsibility for organizing adequate support in learning. Different research models are presented in foreign research literature. Given the specificity of the subject "Foreign Language," G. Gardner believes that foreign language should be implemented within the framework of "social and pedagogical" models that promote the active participation of children with disabilities in socio-cultural communication together with the developmental features of their cognitive and emotional spheres ([Gardner, 1985](#)). This model should be considered as a system-structural concept, the necessary components of which are the following: socio-cultural environment, previous factors, individual differences in the learning process, learning a foreign language in varied contexts, acquiring language skills in different contexts, learning results. It should be emphasized that the backbone of this model is an education in a sociocultural context that helps students develop linguistic and non-linguistic skills ([Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993](#)). Teaching a foreign language in a sociocultural context involves the maximum concentration of the professor on the individual differences of students, which can conditionally be divided into two groups: cognitive and emotional.

The components of the cognitive group are the features of intellectual activity, the level of language proficiency, and language learning strategies. However, the emotional sphere is related to language, motivation, and language barriers. All the components should be considered in their interdependence. So, for example, the attitude towards one's language and the language of other people has a strong influence on motivation, and a high level of motivation, in turn, helps reduce emotional anxiety in the success of learning a foreign language or, conversely, a high level of anxiety causes a significant decrease in motivation. Besides, the level of emotional anxiety and motivation can strongly influence learning strategies ([Gardner, & MacIntyre, 1993](#); [MacIntyre et al., 1997](#); [Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999](#)). According to foreign scholars, the process of teaching a foreign language in a sociocultural context should be aimed at the formation and development of linguistic and non-linguistic abilities and skills of students. The realization of this goal involves modeling situations of real communication, during which the communicative needs for using a foreign language are essential for building further prospects for study ([Krashen, 1982](#)). The correct organization of students' communicative activity in an inclusive class agrees to increase the level of cooperation between several students in the class without exception and to increase the level of students' self-confidence. Using a communicative approach to teaching children with disabilities ensures the formation and development of the main kinds of speech and mental student activities. One of the priorities of the professor, in this case, is to assist the child in achieving success in learning. Accordingly, the success of training in many respects directly depends on the comprehensive and systematic implementation of various educational tools in the educational process that ensures the updating of all sensory organs, as, for example, with the use of a multisensory approach ([Tlustořová, 2006](#)).

2 Materials and Methods

All people need the support and friendship of their peers. At present, the question remains: "Why is it important for students with special educational needs to study foreign languages?" Most of these students suffer from low self-esteem, which leads to disruptive behavior, but professors utilizing particular kinds of strategies can manage it. Such tactics include adopting a multisensory approach, involving kinesthetic as well as visual and auditory learning styles. Structured and explicit manner of the lessons provides learning by slow steps. There is a deployment of a memory strategy. It accepts to refresh the vocabulary and learn grammar, praise students to support motivation and self-esteem, and also promotes the development of soft skills.

While practicing vocabulary or grammar material on a particular topic, children can do applications, significant work in groups (whether wall newspapers, clusters), as well as origami, collect 3-D electronic puzzles. Games, other entertaining exercises and techniques should also be present in the classroom. The so-called game tasks help children relax, and each such task can have a clear goal. When using educational games, various speech skills are trained: phonetic, lexical, grammar, which is of great practical importance.

In this case, it is better to create clusters on specific topics instead of dictionaries. It is not just an item of vocabulary with translation and transcription, but systematization, classification of lexical units, in which the primary thought processes, such as analysis and synthesis, are involved. In this case, working with children

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becomes more interesting, for example, as a form of control, instead of a vocabulary dictation, children can be given a gapped text sentence with a task to add the missing words.

In the learning process, the applicability of knowledge is also necessary, and in teaching a language, it is communication. It is important to remember that communication can be in a written form, as well. Besides, the way out can be found in music: when children do individual tasks, it is appropriate to play calm music, which will allow children to restore their balance and tune in to work. If the class size allows, a professor can give children headsets. Moreover, using the music of popular musical groups and musicians of the countries of the language being studied, one can thereby develop and expand the educational horizons of children.

Such tools contribute to the achievement of the following results:

- 1) Improve the vocabulary;
- 2) Expand communication with each other;
- 3) Make better educational activity, which is the key to a positive attitude towards learning;
- 4) Develop a positive attitude towards the product of their work;
- 5) Creative work and visual material contribute to the development of brain functions, mental activity, and short-term memory.

Learning a foreign language even at the elementary level helps these children socialize, become more self-reliant, and avoid problems in communicating with peers. Thus, the main task of inclusive education is realized - the socialization of children with learning disabilities. A variety of exercises and games helps the child more easily and quickly remember the material studied, and this leads to an expansion of the linguistic horizons, which helps master elementary linguistic representations, accessible and vital for mastering oral and written speech in English (4:20).

Of course, learning English by ear is a rather tricky task, but mastering a foreign language increases the educational opportunities of such people, allowing them to become a part of the global educational environment and feel socially adopted in society. Nevertheless, specialists with visual impairments who speak a foreign language are few in Russia, and the problem of learning to listen in such circumstances is hugely relevant. Today information technologies assist in teaching. Thanks to information technology, the variety of sources are open, which are associated with the exceptional achievements of modern computers and telecommunications.

Information technology provides:

- 1) Work with specialized computer programs for persons with learning disabilities;
- 2) The general knowledge of computer games and programs;
- 3) The use of the text editor as a means of developing individual written text;
- 4) The employment of multimedia presentations in training.

Multimedia presentations are an efficient and fruitful method of providing information with the assistance of computer programs. It combines dynamics, sound, and image, that is, the reasons why children keep their attention for as long as possible. Having examined some examples of teaching foreign languages to students with special educational needs at universities, it should be noted that in our country, the work on organizing inclusive education is only just beginning. This teaching model is seen as the primary tool that contributes to the optimization of the direction (correction and development) in working with students with special needs at foreign language lessons.

The main emphasis is on the work of children in groups. It, in turn, for some individuals, is a barrier and does not adequately reveal their abilities and show all their skills. In this regard, it is necessary to supplement the teaching model by introducing individual lessons with students who feel unprepared for working in a team with their peers. A specific technique should be developed for every student, which will allow us to find an approach and reveal their abilities. For example, children with hearing impairment will learn using modern technologies: a speech synthesizer, *google gesture*. Children with visual impairments will also be trained using unique methods and devices. For a blind person, it is enough to have a regular PC with Internet access to perform the tasks, and it requires only to install two programs on it: *screen reader*; speech synthesizer.

3 Results and Discussions

Many professors, even those who have vast experience in school, who first encountered the problem of teaching children with special educational needs, are embarrassed, do not know how to help these children join the team and become full participants in the educational process. Having an individual in the class is perplexing for some, while on the contrary, it inspires others to search for new ideas. We want to show several techniques for working with children with special needs in an English lesson.

Perhaps one of the most common misconceptions among subject professors is that only specialists - psychologists, speech therapists, dermatologists, and the like, should and can work with children with learning disabilities. Of course, the help of all these specialists is invaluable, but the most important thing that a particular child needs is to see that his/her professor does not neglect him, that a professor understands him and takes for what he is, that he is just like the other guys involved in the learning process.

Many subject professors are frightened by the fact that they will have to spend even more time preparing for lessons, studying specialized literature, and thinking over some other ways of involving special children in actual work. Planning a lesson always takes a lot of professor's time and effort, but as a result, you and the children you work with will also benefit. The search for new techniques and methods will make lessons more comprehensible, and most importantly - truly exciting and informative.

Therefore, I would like to highlight several common vital points that a professor working in an inclusive class should remember:

- 1) Do not label children; try to see the personality.
- 2) Try to organize the lesson so that the children can better know and understand each other.
Find someone fond of skiing.
Find someone who has a pet.
Find someone who likes the same food as you.
Find someone who prefers the same cartoons as you and so on.
- 3) Create a positive atmosphere at the lesson.
I am thrilled to see all of you today
- 4) It is recommended to vary the forms of work at the lesson.
- 5) The use of musical gymnastics helps create a positive atmosphere at the lesson.
Try to use as many perception channels as possible.

4 Conclusion

Foreign language teaching is always a relevant and very urgent problem in the practice of inclusive education. According to multiple studies and observations, we found out that communication has a beneficial effect on education in general and the acquisition of international culture in particular. It creates the basis for mastering personality. The stage of university education is considered necessary for the formation of vital intellectual qualities. It can be assumed that the study of foreign languages will favorably affect the development and formation of a person with disabilities.

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