



# An Investigation of the Views of Foreign Language Teachers with Inclusion Students in Classrooms on Teaching Methods and Techniques They Use in Their Teaching Processes: A Qualitative Approach

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## Abstract

Based on the fact that students have different abilities and needs, inclusive practice aims to include individuals with special needs in general education environments provided that support special education services are provided. In these classes, students with special needs are not educated in a separate educational environment, but in general classes with other students. In Turkey, inclusive education was legalised with the Law No. 2916 on Children in Need of Special Education, which entered into force in 1983. When the literature is examined, it is seen that the studies on teaching methods and techniques used in foreign language teaching processes to students with special needs are quite limited. The aim of this study is to examine the opinions of foreign language teachers who have inclusive students in their classrooms about the teaching methods and techniques they use in teaching processes. The method of this research is semi-structured interview method. The participant group of the study consisted of 10 teachers working in Konya Meram Nuri Pakdil Anatolian High School and Mehmet Karacıganlar Mevlana Imam Hatip Secondary School who had inclusive students in their classes. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. The analysis of the data was analysed by descriptive analysis method. According to the results of the study, teachers use technology, physical and sensory activities when teaching a foreign language to integrated students and achieve positive results; however, students have difficulty in following instructions and understanding what they read. In addition, due to crowded classes and lack of sufficient information, programs cannot be implemented effectively, students have difficulty participating in class activities, assessment tools need to be revised, and families should give more importance to language education.

**Keywords:** Qualitative Research, Teacher Education, Individuals with Special Needs, Inclusion Practice.

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## 1. Introduction

Ensuring equal opportunities in education and maximizing the potential of every individual are among the fundamental goals of modern education. In this context, inclusion practices emerge as a significant pedagogical approach that aims to support both the academic and social development of individuals with special needs by integrating them into general education settings. Inclusive education is defined as the education provided for individuals with special needs in full-time general education classes or part-time special education classes, with the support of supplementary educational services to ensure their interaction with other students and achievement of educational goals in all areas and levels of education (Special Education Services Regulation [SESR], 2018, Article 4).

Based on the premise that students possess diverse abilities and needs, inclusion practices aim to integrate individuals with special needs into general education settings, provided that supportive special education services are available. In these classrooms, students with special needs receive their education alongside other students in general education settings rather than in separate environments. In Turkey, inclusion practices were legalized with the enactment of Law No. 2916 on Children in Need of Special Education in 1983. These regulations have encouraged individuals to receive education alongside their peers and have highlighted an educational approach based on individual differences (Batu & Kırcaali-İftar, 2007). However, challenges and shortcomings in implementation have complicated the effective structuring of teaching processes. Factors such as teachers' lack of knowledge about inclusion practices, difficulties in classroom management, and insufficient support services are among the primary elements negatively affecting inclusive education (Zeybek, 2015).

When viewed from the perspective of foreign language teaching, language education in inclusive classrooms holds particular importance. The limited number of studies on how the methods and techniques used in foreign language teaching processes can be adapted for individuals with special needs highlights the need for further research in this area (Salend, 2008). In this context, it is emphasized that more focus should be placed on studies regarding strategies developed by English teachers, pedagogical approaches, and individualized education plans (IEPs) for inclusive students (Zeybek, 2015).

Foreign language learning is an important process in terms of cognitive, social, and emotional development, and the challenges encountered in this process can negatively affect not only students' language skills but also their overall academic achievement. However, research in this field is quite limited, and there has been no in-depth examination in the existing literature regarding the specific

challenges faced by students with special needs in foreign language learning and the instructional strategies implemented to overcome these difficulties.

In this context, the aim of this study is to examine the perspectives of foreign language teachers who have inclusion students in their classrooms regarding the methods and techniques they use in their teaching processes. The study seeks to understand the instructional strategies applied by teachers for students with special needs, the effectiveness of these strategies, and the challenges they encounter. Additionally, by exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the foreign language learning processes of these students, the research aims to contribute to the development of more inclusive and effective teaching methods. Ultimately, this study intends to serve as a valuable resource for understanding the difficulties faced by students with special needs in foreign language learning and highlighting the role of teachers in this process.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Study Group*

The participants of this study consisted of 10 teachers working at Meram Nuri Pakdil Anatolian High School and Mehmet Karacıganlar Mevlana Imam Hatip Middle School in Konya, all of whom have inclusive students in their classrooms. A typical case sampling model, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to select the teachers consulted in this study. This model was preferred as it provides significant data for examining teachers' opinions on raising the academic success of students with special needs in inclusive education and often generates generalizable data (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

### *2.2. Research Instruments*

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. In this study, semi-structured interviews were preferred because they provide a certain level of standardization and flexibility, overcoming the limitations of surveys or tests (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

In this study, various measures were taken to ensure that the data collection process was valid and reliable. This process was structured by evaluating it in terms of internal and external validity.

#### *Internal Validity*

To ensure internal validity, the following steps were taken:

1. *Participant voluntarism:* Participation in the interviews was entirely based on voluntarism. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without providing any justification.
2. *Minimizing the risk of bias:* Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, and all questions were read in the same tone of voice to minimize any guiding effects.
3. *Anonymity:* Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential, ensuring that the interviews were conducted in a more comfortable environment.
4. *Data recording:* Interviews with six teachers were recorded, while detailed notes were taken during the interviews with four teachers who did not consent to audio recording.
5. *Interview duration:* The interviews continued for three weeks, and each teacher participated in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.

### *External Validity*

To ensure external validity and enhance the transferability of the research findings to similar contexts, the following methods were applied:

1. *Transferability:* The rich description method was used to increase the applicability of the research findings to different contexts (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2017). Direct quotes from the interviews and detailed interview notes were presented.
2. *Diverse sampling:* Interviews were conducted with 10 teachers from two different schools in Konya.
3. *Audit process:* The data collection process was explained in detail and transparently, and cross-checking with different sources was conducted to ensure the validity of the methods used (Houser, 2015, cited in Arastaman et al., 2018).
4. *Support from the literature:* The findings were internally consistent and supported by relevant literature.

### 2.3. *Research design*

The methodology of this study employs a semi-structured interview method, a qualitative research approach, to explore the opinions of foreign language teachers regarding the teaching methods and techniques they use with inclusive students in their classrooms. The semi-structured interview method is frequently preferred by researchers as it provides participants with the opportunity for self-expression, offers in-depth information when needed, and eliminates the rigidity of surveys (Büyüköztürk et al., 2024; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

## 3. Results

In the study, the findings were obtained based on the following subtopics within the framework of the question: "As a foreign language teacher with an inclusive student in your classroom, what effective methods do you use, and what are your opinions on this topic?"

1. What is your perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of each method you use?
2. From your perspective, which of these methods becomes more effective when combined with another method?
3. How do you perceive the compatibility of these methods with technology and instructional materials?
4. What is your perspective on students' ability to follow instructions, comprehend reading, and understand listening tasks?
5. How do you view the implementation of the curriculum content?
6. What is your perspective on students' participation in classroom activities?
7. How do you perceive assessment and evaluation?
8. What are your thoughts on the role of families in supporting foreign language learning from your perspective?

The findings obtained from this study are presented in detail below in accordance with the above-mentioned themes.

### 3.1. *Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. This approach involves classifying, describing, and interpreting data based on predefined themes and presenting them to the reader according to the dimensions of the interview questions as mentioned in Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008).

### 3.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Methods Used for Inclusive Students

The majority of the interviewed teachers (6:%60) stated that digital platforms provide great convenience when teaching foreign languages to inclusive students, particularly in maintaining their attention. However, these platforms were seen as disadvantageous for assignments due to insufficient content tailored to special needs and a lack of necessary equipment among students.

*“Digital content is advantageous for us. The disadvantage is that we can’t use digital platforms for assignments because most of my students don’t have computers.” (T3)*

*“Applications I display on the smartboard greatly help inclusive students focus. However, these applications need more content tailored for special needs students.” (T7)*

### 3.3. Methods Enhancing Effectiveness of Teaching Techniques

The findings show that half of the teachers (5:%50) use various strategies to increase the effectiveness of foreign language education for inclusive students, while at the same time facing significant challenges. Half of the teachers emphasize the role of physical activities and games in enhancing learning, suggesting that interactive methods contribute to retention and participation. However, a small number of teachers (2:%20) highlight a critical problem: the lack of sufficient knowledge and training on inclusive education. Despite having taken a single course on the subject during their university education, teachers do not feel prepared to meet the needs of inclusive students, especially in large classes where individual attention is limited. This highlights the need for professional development programs, as suggested by some teachers, to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively support inclusive students.

*“I add physical activities and play games to make teaching methods for special needs students more effective. This makes learning more permanent.” (T2)*

*“We lack sufficient knowledge about inclusive students. We only had a course on this in college. Class sizes are large, and we can’t focus on these students. MoNE should provide training to teachers.” (T8)*

### 3.4. Compatibility of Methods with Technology and Materials

The findings show that all teachers (10:%10) use different strategies to support inclusive students in foreign language learning, especially emphasizing technology and material adaptation. All teachers emphasize the dominant use of

technological methods for both mainstream and inclusive students, indicating that digital tools are relied upon to enhance teaching. On the other hand, a small number (2:%20) emphasize the importance of adapting materials to students' specific needs, especially by including visually rich resources for those who benefit from visual learning. These perspectives suggest that while technology serves as a common teaching approach, individualized material selection also plays an important role in addressing diverse learning preferences and improving participation.

*“Almost all the methods I use for both mainstream and inclusive students are technological.” (T5)*

*“I use materials tailored to the needs of my inclusive students. If they are interested in visual content, I use resources rich in visuals.” (T1)*

### *3.5. Students' Comprehension of Instructions, Reading, and Listening*

The majority of teachers' opinion (8:%80) shows that there are different perspectives among teachers regarding inclusive students' comprehension skills in foreign language learning. While the majority of teachers emphasize that students face difficulties in reading and listening comprehension due to a curriculum that prioritizes vocabulary and grammar over these skills, some (2:%20) have the opposite opinion, arguing that the instructions are clear and understandable, and students do not have difficulty understanding them. This difference shows that factors such as individual student needs, teaching strategies and curriculum design can affect students' comprehension skills. The findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach that integrates vocabulary and grammar with advanced reading and listening support to meet diverse learning needs.

*“Even though I haven't worked with severely inclusive students, they still struggle with reading and listening comprehension. This is because the curriculum mainly focuses on vocabulary and grammar, with reading and listening taking a back seat.” (T9)*

*“Instructions are clear and understandable. Therefore, students don't have any issues comprehending them.” (T3)*

### *3.6. Implementation of Curriculum Content*

The majority of teachers' views (6:%60) reveal that there are different perspectives among teachers regarding the challenges and adequacy of educational programs for inclusive students in foreign language classrooms. Some teachers emphasized the challenges posed by large classes, indicating that their

primary focus was on maintaining order rather than effectively implementing the curriculum, while others (2:%20) expressed confidence in the appropriateness of existing programs for inclusive students. This contrast suggests that classroom conditions, such as student-teacher ratios and instructional support, significantly affect teachers' ability to meet the needs of inclusive students. The findings highlight the need for strategies that address classroom management challenges while ensuring meaningful participation and curriculum adaptation for all students.

*“Class sizes are too large, making it impossible to attend to each student individually. For these children, we usually just aim to maintain order, rather than focusing on the curriculum.” (T4)*

*“I think the programs prepared for inclusive students are sufficient and suitable for their levels.” (T6)*

### *3.7. Participation of Students in Classroom Activities*

A majority of the teachers (9:%90) stated that inclusive students participated less in lessons and emphasized the need for efforts to increase their involvement.

*“Inclusive students take time to adapt to the class. I try to include them in activities with some encouragement, but I rarely succeed.” (T3)*

### *3.8. Evaluation and Assessment*

Most teachers (6:%60) argued that inclusive students should not take the same exams as their peers and called for the redesign of evaluation tools for all students.

*“I believe that special needs students should never be assessed using the same criteria as regular students. Positive discrimination should be applied, and evaluation tools should be updated for both groups.” (T5)*

### *3.9. Family Support in Language Learning*

Almost all teachers (9:%90) highlight the challenges of family involvement in foreign language education for inclusive students. T7 notes that many families do not prioritize foreign language learning, often because of more immediate socioeconomic or educational disadvantages that take precedence. This perceived lack of importance results in limited support from parents, which can hinder students' progress and motivation. The teacher acknowledges this reality without blaming families and acknowledges that wider systemic and social issues affect their involvement. These insights suggest that increased awareness and support



mechanisms are needed to emphasize the value of foreign language learning for all students, including students with special needs.

*“It is insufficient and not considered essential. Most of my students’ families never see foreign language learning as necessary. I can’t blame them since they have other disadvantages to address before they can focus on language education.”* (T7)

#### **4. Discussion**

This study has revealed several key findings regarding foreign language teaching for inclusive students. Teachers frequently utilize technology in their instructional methods and report positive outcomes. However, there is a need for increased digital content specifically designed for students with special needs. Additionally, physical and sensory activities have been found to contribute positively to students’ learning processes. Despite these strategies, students still struggle with comprehending instructions, and teachers face challenges in implementing inclusive education programs due to large class sizes and limited knowledge. Moreover, inclusive students experience difficulties in participating in classroom activities, assessment tools require modifications, and families do not place sufficient importance on foreign language education.

A review of the literature supports these findings. Yılmaz and Ermiş Yılmaz (2024) conducted a study on English teachers’ perspectives on inclusive education, concluding that teachers use technological tools to support special needs students’ foreign language learning. These results align with the findings of the present study. With rapidly advancing technology, various applications are being developed to assist individuals with special needs, yielding positive outcomes.

The study also emphasizes the role of physical and sensory activities in enhancing learning for students with special needs. This finding is consistent with the observations of Brumen et al. (2014), who highlighted the importance of collaborative methods in supporting students with learning difficulties in foreign language education. According to their research, foreign language teachers and special educators play crucial roles in creating an inclusive learning environment that fosters students’ self-esteem and social participation. Furthermore, this study underscores the significant contribution of physical and sensory activities to the learning process of special needs students. The findings align with Smith et al. (2006), who advocated for the development of student-specific content. Similarly, Zeybek (2015) found that teachers predominantly use visual materials, real objects, books, and worksheets in their teaching. Koçyiğit (2015) also

reported that teachers select instructional materials appropriate for the level of students with special needs.

Additionally, the study found that inclusive students experience difficulties in reading comprehension and understanding instructions. Previous research by Akçamete et al. (2003) and Güzel-Özmen (2001) supports this, indicating that students with special needs struggle particularly with reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in achieving academic success and plays a crucial role in building self-confidence and independence (Sarı, 2014). To support these students, individualized education plans should be designed according to their learning characteristics, and appropriate teaching methods, techniques, and materials should be provided.

Another significant finding is that families of inclusive students do not prioritize foreign language learning, often focusing more on other subjects or daily life skills. A review of the literature shows that Zeybek (2015) emphasized the importance of family involvement in inclusive students' foreign language acquisition. According to the study, maintaining communication with schools, supporting homework at home, and accepting their child's situation can facilitate the learning process.

In conclusion, while technology plays a vital role in supporting foreign language learning for inclusive students, there is a critical need for more specialized digital content and resources. Addressing the challenges faced by teachers and students, as well as encouraging family involvement, is an essential step toward creating a more inclusive and effective educational environment for all learners.

## **5. Conclusion**

The results of this research are presented in detail below.

1. Teachers utilize technology when teaching foreign languages to inclusive students and achieve positive results.
2. Physical and sensory activities in the learning process contribute to students' learning.
3. Inclusive students face challenges in understanding instructions and reading comprehension.
4. Programs designed for inclusive students cannot be effectively implemented due to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient teacher knowledge.

5. Assessment tools need to be revised.
6. Families do not give sufficient importance to foreign language teaching.

## 6. Implications for Practice

The recommendations arising from this research are presented in detail below.

1. Activities and content for students with special needs can be expanded on digital platforms.
2. Individualized education plans should be designed according to students' learning characteristics and needs. Appropriate teaching methods and techniques should be employed, and suitable teaching materials should be provided.
3. Inclusive students can be placed in smaller classrooms with fewer peers.
4. Assessment and evaluation tools can be revised and adapted accordingly.
5. Parents can receive training on the special needs of individuals to foster collaboration with schools.

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