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STRATEGIES OF INCLUSIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A PERSPECTIVE FROM PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Inclusive education has become a central tenet in modern pedagogy, emphasising the need for teaching strategies that accommodate the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN). Our study investigated the strategies proposed in the research on inclusive foreign language teaching and their effectiveness as perceived by future foreign language teachers. The study aims to identify and substantiate the most effective strategies in inclusive foreign language classrooms by focusing on pre-service foreign language teachers' training and professional development.

The literature on inclusive education highlights the importance of adapting teaching methods to meet the needs of all students, particularly those with SEN. Studies by L. Florian and K. Black-Hawkins, L.A. Fortepiani and S.A. Marsh emphasise the role of inclusive pedagogy in fostering an environment where all students can succeed [2; 3].

In the context of foreign language teaching, C. Blume, B. Gerlach, B. Roters, T. Schmidt have explored the attitudes and beliefs of pre-service foreign language teachers [1], A. Harris Jones researched challenges and teaching strategies specific to the field of language learning, including differentiation, scaffolding, and the use of multimodal resources [4]. However, despite the existing body of literature, there remains a gap in research explicitly addressing the effectiveness of these strategies as perceived by future educators.

Inclusive foreign language teaching is an approach to language instruction that seeks to include all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, by employing various teaching methods and strategies. The term “special educational needs” refers to students with learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most students of the same age.

Explicit teaching of strategies in the context of this study was defined as the deliberate instruction of specific inclusive strategies to pre-service foreign language teachers to help them teach more effectively in diverse settings. We agree with Ye. Kharkovskyy who emphasised the importance of professional development as ongoing training and education for teachers to improve their teaching skills and knowledge, particularly in inclusive settings [5, p. 78].

The study was conducted with 90 pre-service foreign language teachers: 56 fourth-year bachelor students who completed the “Catering for SEN Learners” module in the course “Methods of Foreign Language Teaching” and 34 master students enrolled in the elective course “Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages to Learners with Special Educational Needs”. These students were surveyed to evaluate their

perception of the effectiveness of various inclusive teaching strategies before and after related training. The surveys included a ranking system where students rated strategies based on their perceived effectiveness in inclusive classrooms.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from open-ended responses in focus groups. The survey instruments were developed based on existing literature and included items related to commonly used inclusive teaching strategies. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify the most highly rated strategies. Qualitative responses were coded and analysed to provide context and a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings.

The study results indicate that future foreign language teachers consider specific strategies particularly effective in inclusive settings. Among these, differentiation, which involves tailoring instruction to meet students' needs, was ranked the highest. Scaffolding, where support is gradually removed as students gain independence, was also identified as an effective strategy. Additionally, using multimodal resources, catering to different learning styles and abilities, was perceived as crucial for inclusive foreign language teaching.

The study concluded that training pre-service foreign language teachers in applying inclusive teaching strategies is vital for effectively organising foreign language teaching in diverse classrooms. The need for continuous professional development is also emphasised, ensuring educators can adapt to the evolving demands of inclusive education. Equipping teachers with robust strategies can significantly enhance the quality of foreign language education in inclusive settings.

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