Teacher Perspectives on Students with Special Educational Needs Enrolled in Secondary-Level World Language Classes in the State of Utah

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Teacher Perspectives on Students with Special Educational Needs Enrolled in Secondary-Level

World Language Classes in the State of Utah

María Fernanda Zamora Sánchez

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Perspectives on Students with Special Educational Needs Enrolled in Secondary-Level World Language Classes in the State of Utah

María Fernanda Zamora Sánchez
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Master of Arts

Research was conducted on students with special educational needs (SEN) taking world language (WL) classes at the secondary level in the state of Utah. Ninety-two WL teachers shared their outlooks and experiences on working with this population of students. Data analyses show that there is not a significant increase in the number of students with SEN enrolled in WL classes. Analyses suggest that WL teachers have an average of two students with SEN per class, learning disability being the most common SEN identified. This study also shares teachers' successful and challenging experiences, finding that time and individual attention are examples of critical aspects for students' success. Additionally, the research shows that not all teachers have the professional or academic support to assist their SEN students. This research contributes valuable information for future studies in this field, such as the study of English Language Learners (ELL) categorized as students with learning disabilities because while their lack of English proficiency flags them as needing help, this need does not necessarily equate to a learning disability.

Keywords: special educational needs, special needs, disabilities, world languages, special education.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Historically, professionals in the field of world language (WL) teaching have been conducting research on how to improve and find the appropriate method to implement in language instruction (Hadley, 1993). A variety of methods and approaches have been proposed throughout the years, for instance, the Grammar-Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Total Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching, etc. (Bateman & Lago, 2010). For years, they have been focused on effective ways of approaching language instruction, as well as effective ways of assessing students’ performance in WL classes. Additionally, more than thirty years ago, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), in collaboration with other testing agencies, launched the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, which have helped to measure students’ abilities in their target language (Liskin-Gasparro, 2003).

Although the main topics of WL instruction have actively focused on the implementation of approaches and ways of assessment, there are other, equally important issues that the field has overlooked, such as students with disabilities attending WL classes and their performance. In addition, more research needs to be done on teachers’ experiences when working with these students.

While there are teachers who acknowledge their students’ backgrounds and their experience in language ability, others may not be completely aware of the extent of the diversity that exists in their classrooms (Carlsen, 2011). Knowing and learning about students’ backgrounds is crucial for teachers to help all students, including those students with SEN. Being aware of this population of students, teachers may approach their teaching by implementing strategies and a way of assessment that cannot only benefit regular students, but students with
SEN as well (Tolbert, 2017). Additionally, teachers need to know, however, that not all their students with SEN need special assistance or require that teachers modify the curriculum for them to be included (Knoblauch & Sorenson, 1998).

Before teachers put into practice certain methods, it is important for them to know about the diversity that exists in their classrooms, which includes identifying at-risk students and those students with special educational needs (SEN). Many of these students can be successful in WL classes, but they may need specific kinds of supports to do so.

Many of the students with SEN are supported by institutions and special education (SPED) personnel, and others receive support under some acts such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Even though students with SEN receive support from different institutions, this does not mean that teachers can avoid working with these students or will not be involved in their learning process. Thus, WL teachers need to understand their students’ SEN to better assist them and help them succeed in their classes.

Although teachers may study certain topics related to disabilities or SEN during their undergraduate and graduate studies, working in a school and taking responsibility for a class may be very different from gaining academic knowledge about certain topics. For instance, one can learn about multi-sensory methods and that they benefit students with specific learning disabilities to learn a foreign language (Tolbert, 2017). However, teachers also need to consider other elements when trying to put this knowledge into practice with their own students, such as the type of SEN their students have, accommodations and/or modifications requested or suggested by the SPED school department, and their class sizes.

Research conducted in WL instruction should not be limited to the scope of measuring students’ proficiency in the target language, but should provide WL teachers with the knowledge
and expertise they need to face the diversity in their classrooms and how to respond to some challenges, specifically, how to include and work with students with SEN. In 2012, ACTFL proposed the Research Priorities Initiative, which focused on conducting research in five main areas involving Equity and Access in Language Learning, including diversity in the classroom, which can include providing opportunities to students with SEN to learn a WL. According to Hlas and Crane (2019), there are some problems in WL instruction that need to be solved, including the inclusion of students with disabilities in language classes. However, this still represents a challenge to many as there is little research in this area, including current teaching practices or how prepared teachers feel to face a classroom where SEN are present (Maciver et al., 2018).

To contribute to this field, one of the purposes of this study is to share data that can be used as a starting point regarding how teachers have been working with these students, the support they receive from their educational institutions as well as other stakeholders, and how prepared they feel to work and help students with SEN. It is important to note that this study does not seek to judge teachers’ performance in any way, but to provide meaningful information on their experiences in working with students with SEN.

In order to increase our understanding of teachers’ experiences in working with SEN students, this study undertook to examine their challenges and successes. Some analyses were performed with the purpose of identifying relationships between how prepared teachers are and whether they are more prone to identify students with SEN in their classes. In addition, the relationship between teachers’ preparation and the strategies they use to meaningfully integrate these students was also analyzed. This information was collected through a survey, which also
included questions regarding teachers’ educational background and the demographics of their classes, focusing on students with SEN.
Defining Special Educational Needs

Throughout the years various terms have been used when referring to people with disabilities. Over time, growing awareness of students’ needs has caused a shift in the terms used to identify these students. Understanding the terms that are currently in use can help to clarify practitioners’ and researchers’ goals. For example, the word disability refers to “a decrement in the ability to perform some action, engage in some activity, or participate in some real-life situation or setting” (Batshaw, et al., 2013).

According to Public Law 108-446, 108th Congress (2004), there are several categories of disabilities, such as “autism, deaf-blindness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment” (Shrum & Glisan, 2016, p. 332). While some students have been diagnosed with one or more of these disabilities, there are others who have been attending school without knowing they need special assistance or support. According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.), it is estimated that about 10 percent of Americans under the age of 18 have a learning disability. Because some students may have a type of learning disability that has not been diagnosed yet, they may face particular barriers and difficulties to their education.

Besides the term disability, there are other terms used to refer to students who need special assistance in a classroom setting. For instance, special educational needs (SEN) is another term used in the field by researchers and people who work with people with disabilities. This term “refers to children with learning problems or disabilities that make it harder for them
to learn than most children of the same age” (Nidirect Government Services (UK), 2018). It also refers to “those with learning problems in one or more areas of sensory, physical, cognitive, or other areas of functioning” (Al-Shammari & Hornby, 2020).

Even though there are different terms to refer to people with a disability, the term of “students with SEN” will be used most often throughout this thesis. “Students with disabilities,” “students with special needs,” or similar may be used occasionally to avoid repetition.

**A Brief History of Special Education**

Although most authors agree that SPED started at the beginning of the 19th century, there are others who disagree. According to Ferrelli (2010), SPED was formally accepted during the 18th century, when people with disabilities, called “exceptional individuals” at that time, started to be taken into greater account in society. This new interest in helping people with disabilities was one of the outcomes that the so-called Enlightenment movement brought with it (Ferrone, 2015). Throughout that century, there were important contributions made mainly by Europeans considered pioneers in the special educational field. For instance, Denis Diderot conducted and published studies on blind and deaf people; and Valentin Haüy and Abbé Roche Ambroise Cucurron Sicard founded schools for blind and deaf children respectively (Winzer, 1993).

At the end of that century, some professionals decided to try a different approach related to medical treatments for people with disabilities. To illustrate this, Philippe Pinel was a psychiatrist who rejected the idea that people with mental illness had received that condition because of the devil or natural factors (Winzer, 1993). Pinel wanted these individuals to be treated with more respect, thus he promoted the *Traitement Moral* (Davidson et al., 2010).

Another important contribution to the field of special education was the study conducted by Jean Marc Gaspard Itard in southern France. This study involved a twelve-year-old feral boy
better known as Victor, The Wild Boy of Aveyron, who was brought to Itard’s house after being seen running naked. Itard focused his attention on observing the boy and trying to put into practice his method of sensory training; however, he did not succeed (Ferrelli, 2010; Winzer, 1993). The final report ended up stating that Victor was an “incurable idiot” since he could not hold a conversation with anyone and lacked social and behavioral skills (Feinstein, 2010; Shattuck, 1976). The concept of “idiot” was proposed by the French psychiatrist Jean-Etienne Dominique Esquirol, who was Pinel’s student. Esquirol justified this concept saying that “incapable of attention, idiots cannot control their senses. They hear, but do not understand; they see but do not regard. Having no ideas, and thinking not, they have nothing to desire; therefore, have no need for signs, nor of speech” (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2019). Later, it was found that Victor presented autistic behavior, which is another condition that affects the social skills of a person (Feinstein, 2010).

Edouard Seguin was another remarkable psychiatrist and surgeon devoted to SPED, specifically to the treatment of mental retardation. He improved the method of sensory training by Itard and trusted in the physiological method as a possible cure for mental deficiency (The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2019). He believed that humans’ senses, muscles, and nerves had to be educated in order to function efficiently (Holman, 1914).

The 19th century brought more improvements in SPED, as more institutions were established and welcomed students with disabilities. Moreover, there were debates that addressed topics such as training, early admission, and intervention, among others, which are still discussed today (Ferrelli, 2010; Winzer, 1993).

Despite these improvements and important contributions to the special educational field, in the United States, parents of children with disabilities started to form groups to fight for their
children’s rights to receive public education. At that time, about 1960, disabled children had to receive classes at home, or they had to pay in order to attend a private school. These advocacy groups were able to address this issue with teachers and politicians. As a result, a few years later, former president Lyndon B. Johnson signed laws that expanded public education to include people with disabilities in regular schools (Arkansas State University, 2016).

A few years later, the United Nations declared that 1970 would be the year of International Education. This gave the world the opportunity to address the rights that people with disabilities, especially children and young people, should be able to have (United Nations Official Document, 1967). Then, in 1973 a U.S. law, Rehabilitation Act was signed, which shared the purpose of not discriminating against people with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act has become well-known in the SPED or the educational field in general. It covers and protects students with disabilities who attend schools supported by federal financial aid (Protecting Students with Disabilities, 2020). Moreover, qualified students with disabilities can be granted a plan where the school will be committed to support them so that these students can have equal access to instruction.

Moreover, in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was approved, which years later was named Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law promoted and protected children with disabilities, as they were able to receive the same rights that non-disabled children had (Smith, 2015). This law, which is still in effect, sought to make “available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In addition to the creation of these civil rights acts, there were other initiatives that have sought to include people with disabilities and give them the same rights that non-
disabled people have. One of those initiatives is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), created in 1990. This act “guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications.” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2001). This law has been amended with the objective of including more social and educational opportunities for people with disabilities.

Clearly, the creation and approval of the IDEA, ADA, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act were crucial for the inclusion and support of people with disabilities. One of the most important benefits they can enjoy stemming from these laws is to be included in education and attend regular schools. The IDEA has been updated to incorporate and integrate students with disabilities into new classes, including WL classes, which now must be accessible for all students without discrimination (Shrum & Glisan, 2016).

**Special Education and World Language Instruction**

This section will discuss what is currently known about students with SEN in WL classes, data about the enrollment of this population of students, experiences teachers have had, resources or plans that students can receive to be integrated in regular classes, as well as some areas where more research needs to be done.

First, it is important to remember that the SPED field and WL instruction may have a different history, but both have gone through several changes and advances. The former has gone from the segregation of people with disabilities to the inclusion of students with SEN in public schools or regular education. The latter has put into practice different pedagogical techniques throughout the years. Currently, students with disabilities are seen in public schools, but the following question arises, have they been seen attending WL classes?
ACTFL shares on its official website that “no individual should experience marginalization of their contributions or talents because of their unique attributes” (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2019). Its website also gives examples of those unique attributes, and it mentions the disability status of students, suggesting that students with SEN should not be excluded from but integrated into WL instruction.

After reading several documents from the U.S. Department of Education and on the IDEA websites, and other sources, it was difficult to find specific information that shows percentages of students with SEN currently enrolled in WL classes. For example, the American Councils for International Education (2017), includes a report for 2014-2015 per state of the number of students enrolled in WL classes. In the state of Utah, there were 622,449 students from K-12 grades, in which 131,118 (21.06%) were enrolled in WL classes. Nonetheless, this report does not specify the how many of these students had a disability.

In 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics identified 700,900 students with disabilities enrolled in English Language Learner (ELL) classes; this number represents 14.2% of the total ELL population enrolled in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools. (McFarland et al., 2019). These numbers increased in 2017, when about 718,400 ELL students with disabilities were reported. This represents 14.3% (0.1% more) of the total of students enrolled in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools (Hussar, 2020).

In terms of enrollment, there were 6.8 million (13.4%) students with SEN enrolled in public schools between 2016-2017. This number increased in the school year 2017-2018, where 7.0 million (13.7%) of the students received special education services under IDEA. Among students receiving special education services, 34% had been diagnosed with specific learning disabilities (McFarland et al., 2019). In addition, the most current report indicates that these
numbers have increased again. During the school year of 2018-2019, 7.1 million (14.1%) students with SEN benefited from special education services (Hussar, 2020).

Another area that increased in the realm of special needs was the graduation rate; for instance, in the state of Utah alone, the graduation rate of students with disabilities increased 0.9% from 2018 to 2019, 72.4% and 73.3% respectively (Utah State Board of Education, 2020). These numbers suggest that students with SEN have had the opportunity to be more involved in education and to conclude their studies despite their physical, mental, and emotional limitations. However, it is important to note that based on the report from the Utah State Board of Education, students who graduate may receive an alternate type of diploma depending on their disability (e.g., those who suffer from a cognitive disability).

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education’s website shares information, graphics, and statistics by state about people with disabilities divided by their race, educational environments (home, regular schools, private institutions, etc.), disabilities, and ages. To illustrate this, as of 2019, there were 76,769 people with disabilities ages 6-21 in the state of Utah alone. Of these people with disabilities, more than 35,000 between those ages had a specific learning disability, about 16,400 had speech or language impairment, and about 8,500 had other health impairments (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). This document shares the exact numbers of people with other disabilities, but these three are mentioned as an example.

Despite the increasing number of students with SEN in public schools, data have not been found specifically on the average number of students with SEN attending or having been enrolled in WL classes. Additionally, regardless of the increasing graduation rate and assistance provided by IDEA and other institutions to schools and individuals, it is not completely known how teachers are coping with helping students with SEN succeed in their WL classes. Therefore,
the current study will try to contribute to this realm by sharing teachers’ perspectives on this topic.

**Qualitative Studies on Teachers’ Experiences Working with SEN Students**

It is important to share some qualitative studies that have addressed teachers’ experiences on helping and including their students with SEN in their WL teaching. For instance, Oda (2010) conducted a case study in the United States about an autistic girl named Karen and her tutor who obtained meaningful insights about autism by learning more about her student and her condition. The tutor researched as much as she could to better understand how to behave with her student. She also read about the history of autism and had communication with Karen’s parents. After researching, reaching out to her students’ parents, interviewing them, and observing the very first day they met, this tutor had more empathy and planned the activities she would use while tutoring. The teacher and her student successfully fulfilled the assignments and created a good learning environment, which contributed to Karen’s progress in the target language.

Another example about teachers’ experiences involves the story of four teachers who worked with visual and hearing-impaired students (Reese, 2006). These teachers implemented different methods and relied on devices to help students with these disabilities to learn a new language. These teaching tools included magnifiers, tele microscopes, and color-coded systems. As a remarkable example, Ann Eddie, one of these four teachers, was a blind language instructor who successfully guided and taught visually impaired students. These experiences are another example that teachers can help their students with SEN succeed when they understand their students’ difficulties and try to teach the way their students learn (Ferri & Ashby, 2017; Leons, et al., 2009; McColl, 2005). In this case, these teachers tried to find alternative resources to help their students learn in a more effective way.
Despite these and other successful experiences that WL teachers have had with their students with SEN, there are also challenges that they have faced. However, not only teachers are prone to have these difficulties, but students with SEN can also experience their own challenges. It is important to remember that students with SEN put extra work in learning their first language. For example, students with learning disabilities face, or have faced, certain “difficulties in learning the spoken and/or written code of their native language” (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004, p. 391). As a result, it can take a significant effort for them to learn the spoken and written code of the target language. To illustrate this, students who struggle with dyslexia encounter this problem in learning to read. These students learn how to read in their first language by decoding and associating written and oral vocabulary; but this process is quite different in foreign language learning since their linguistic foundation is essential to learn and improve in their reading skills (Łodej, 2016; DiFino & Lombardino, 2004). Because languages have their own phonological system and some of them have their own unique alphabet, students with dyslexia may struggle when trying to read or perform the other skills.

In general, having a learning disability causes a lot of stress and pressure on students; they may feel lost and that they are not able to achieve the class objectives (Stein, 1987). These challenges may be compounded among students with SEN in language classes, where they sometimes are expected to perform at the same level as their classmates. Having the same expectations for all the students and not knowing what certain learning disabilities involve can also be a challenge for teachers. This challenge may increase for teachers who lack experience working with special needs students.

Because teachers may need support as they try to accommodate their students’ needs, another interesting area to research is the availability of resources and personnel in schools.
Although some schools have enough SPED personnel or other professionals to assist students with SEN, there is a large number of schools that are not prepared to offer the services these students and teachers need (Vaughn et al., 2015). Because of this, the work that teachers do inside the classroom may seem very demanding as they have to assist and teach all of their students regardless of their condition.

Having students with SEN in a WL class can be challenging for teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders involved. However, as time passes, more resources and support have been offered to ease teachers’ responsibility and give students a good experience in class. For instance, *accommodations* and *modifications* are resources that may ease teachers’ burden and support students with SEN so they can succeed in these courses as the non-disabled students do. Currently, many schools across different levels offer accommodations, or special assistance, to their students.

However, it is important to differentiate between the meaning of the words *accommodation* and *modification*. According to the University of Washington (2019), when a student with SEN is granted an accommodation, teachers can teach what they have planned, and grade this student using the same scale as used for the rest of the students. On the other hand, modifications demand changes in the curriculum, which affect the way instructors teach their lessons. An example of a modification is to reduce and modify the number of assignments students with SEN will do, whereas an accommodation will provide some equipment to students with SEN to accomplish their tasks, such as large-print books, interpreters, worksheets, among other. It seems that for those students who have a more severe disability or condition that precludes them from learning, modifications need to be done to integrate students in their class. In contrast, those students who can understand what is being taught only need some
accommodations so they can finish their assignments. To summarize, accommodations can be a good option; however, if the goal is to truly include students with SEN in the class, teachers need to make some modifications or alterations to the curriculum and the way they teach (Wight, 2015). Granting accommodations and modifications to students with SEN can represent a challenge for some teachers. Therefore, this study will attempt to gather information on accommodations and/or modifications and whether teachers have the resources to grant them.

Summary

This chapter attempted to give a historical background on special needs, how these started to be taken into greater account in other countries, and how some issues regarding SPED or people with disabilities were addressed in the United States. Additionally, several specific terms were discussed on how students who suffer from a disability should be addressed. There are a few different ways to address students with disabilities, but this will depend on location, meaning that terminology may vary from country to country (Lecerf, 2017; Ferguson 2008). In the context of this thesis, and as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the term that will be used mostly is “students with special educational needs” (students with SEN). However, other terms, such as “students with disabilities” and “students with special needs,” will be included to avoid repetition.

In addition, I have attempted to provide current data and other updated information. These include enrollment and graduation rates of students with SEN, as well as teachers’ perspectives on helping and including students with SEN in their classes. Nonetheless, as previously stated, it was difficult to find this information, especially the average number of students with SEN enrolled in WL classes. Although several articles address what some teachers
have done to help their special needs students, there are not as many studies that specifically address the current situation of WL teachers working with SEN students.

Based on what has been explored so far, some gaps in the research have been identified: 1) The average number of students with SEN enrolled in WL classes, which can help to find whether there is a disproportionate number enrolled or not enrolled. 2) How WL teachers find their teaching experience being successful or challenging. 3) Students with SEN being given the opportunity to access WL instruction while WL teachers implement strategies to help them succeed. Although there are some qualitative data that have been shared in this chapter, especially for the last two areas, this study includes statistical analyses as well. The current study seeks to contribute with more information that may be valuable for future research.
Chapter 3. Methodology

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of WL teaching for SEN in the state of Utah specifically. It seeks to gather information regarding such aspects of this phenomena such as the average number of students with SEN enrolled in WL classes, the support that teachers receive, their challenges, and their successful experiences in working with students with SEN. In order to provide these data, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the demographics of special education students enrolled in secondary-level world language classes?
- In what ways are teachers challenged or in what ways do they succeed when working with students with special educational needs?
- How could foreign language instruction be improved for students with special needs, in terms of access and learning?

Source of Information

The data for this study were obtained by a survey administered through Qualtrics. The survey was completely anonymous as teachers were not asked for personal information nor the school they worked for. This survey consisted of a variety of multiple-choice, checkboxes, and open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). It included questions that asked for participants’ educational background, their experience in the field of SPED and WL, the strategies they usually implement in class to assist students with SEN, their positive experiences and challenges, as well as the impact that working with students with SEN has had on their teaching practice. In addition, it contained questions regarding instructors being notified of having students with SEN.
disabilities in their classes, and the type of accommodations they have had to make to include students with SEN in their WL classes.

**Process**

After receiving the notification from the institutional review board (IRB) approving this study, I collected the participants’ emails through their school webpages on the Utah State Board of Education website. I compiled these emails in an Excel document and divided them by district and school. In addition, there were a few charter schools that included WL classes whose teachers were also contacted. Their emails were found on their schools’ webpages on the Utah State Board of Education website under Charter Schools. It is important to mention that schools specifically for students with SEN were not included in this study.

Before sending out the survey to all the participants, I conducted a pilot survey to receive feedback from some WL instructors. About 10 responses were collected and besides a few grammar mistakes, there were no corrections to be made in the questions. Then, I proceeded to send the survey to all the participants via email. They were given one month to complete the survey. During this month, I sent two reminders so I could obtain more responses and those in process could be finished.

After the 30-day period, the survey was closed, and participants’ responses were collected and downloaded in a PDF and Excel spreadsheet. To perform adequate data analysis, a few responses were deleted because some teachers did not finish the survey.

**Participants**

About 600 secondary-level WL teachers from the 41 school districts in the state of Utah were invited to participate in this study. Ultimately, the total of responses collected was 106, but
the data analyses focus on 92 responses because 14 participants did not complete the entire survey, and other participants only answered a few questions.

As previously mentioned, they were contacted via email and their participation was voluntary; they did not receive any type of compensation for the completion of the survey. It is important to mention that several WL teachers work in more than one school, therefore, it is very likely that they received the survey link twice, but they probably responded only once. This is because in one of the survey questions they could select the district or districts where they teach, and some participants selected more than one district. Additionally, there were several teachers’ emails that were not correctly listed on their school websites; therefore, those instructors did not receive the email with the invitation to complete the survey.

Moreover, a few school webpages did not specifically state what classes teachers were assigned to teach, which made it difficult to collect the appropriate emails for those instructors that teach language classes. Thus, these schools or participants were not included in the study.

Data Analysis

The collected answers were analyzed statistically and qualitatively. For the statistical analyses, Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were completed for each of the dependent variables, which are number of students with SEN, teachers’ successful experiences, and number of techniques. The explanatory variables that were tested were education, relevant coursework, and training. The ANOVA was followed by doing pairwise tests for each of the explanatory variables. All tests were performed in SAS, version 9.4. Simpler analyses were done through Excel to calculate the mean and the mode for demographics of teachers and students.

The qualitative analyses were performed using coding, which involves labeling or tagging the qualitative data (e.g., comments) into categories or recurring themes so the
information can be presented in a more organized way (Fraenkel et al., 2012). To illustrate this, in the following section there are some tables that contain the frequency with which teachers mentioned specific techniques they use in class, what classes they would suggest for undergraduate or graduate studies, and the frequency with which they mentioned certain difficulties and successes they have experienced in their teaching practice. In order to present this information, I read all the participants’ comments and started grouping their comments into recurring themes or categories in an Excel spreadsheet. There were several responses that fit into more than one category or group; therefore, the total of responses exceeded the total number of the participants. I read each participant’s comments twice and this helped me to reflect on their insights and to make sure I grouped every comment correctly, this process also led me to, partially or fully, quote the most relevant and striking comments as examples of what was being discussed.
Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter addresses the most important findings related to the three research questions that guided this study.

Research Question 1. What Are the Demographics of Special Education Students Enrolled in Secondary-Level World Language Classes?

Demographics of Students with SEN

This research question aims to provide information regarding the number of students with SEN that WL instructors in Utah have in their classes, as well as the type of SEN these students present. First, the participants were asked the average of the number of students they had regardless of their condition. Because this was a multiple-choice question, participants were to choose one of the options given, to which between 25-30 students was the option mentioned most frequently by participants. See Figure 1 for a visualization of the number of students WL teachers have per class.

![Figure 1. Number of Students Enrolled in World Language Classes.](image-url)
To focus more on the target demographic, which is students with SEN, participants were also asked to choose an approximate number of students with SEN they had in their classes. After collecting their responses, the mode indicates that teachers have two students with SEN per class, as shown in Figure 2, where 35% of the respondents selected this number. However, it is important to mention that 9% of the participants indicated that they had about five students with SEN in their classes where the population is from 30 up to 40 students. Additionally, 3% expressed that they do not have any students with SEN, and 2% did not know whether they have students with disabilities. This information is visualized in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Approximate Number of Students with SEN Per World Language Class.

In addition, teachers were asked if they felt they had more students with SEN now compared to the past. Although 37 participants (40.2%), mentioned that they do not have more students with SEN, almost the same number of participants, 34 (36.9%), mentioned that they feel they have more students with special needs. It is important to note that for this question participants had the option to make additional comments without specifically responding yes or
no. Consequently, three participants shared that the number of students with SEN enrolled in their classes depends on the school year. Additionally, three participants shared that they could not make a comparison because they have taught WL for only one or two years. Lastly, the rest of the participants, except for one who did not provide an answer, referred to other points to justify why they could not choose between an absolute yes or no about having an increasing number of students with SEN attending their WL classes.

Participants’ responses include the difficulty of the WL class they teach, meaning that the number of students with SEN in their class would vary if they were counted at the beginning or middle of the semester. This means that it is often the case that as a course progresses, so does its difficulty level, and that as the difficulty level of a course increases, some teachers report that their SEN students drop the course. To illustrate this, a Japanese teacher expressed how some students transfer because of the requirement to learn a new writing system, but others stay because of their interest in Japanese culture:

Yes, I'm seeing more in my classes, but by the first semester, half of special needs kids transfer out. Japanese imposes a unique burden due to the requirement to learn a new writing system. The special needs students who have a strong interest in the culture typically persevere and are able to succeed, as opposed to the ones who simply thought the class might be interesting. When I indicated that I average 2 special needs students per class, that is the average who stick around.

In addition, there were a few participants among those who did not provide a specific answer, who highlighted the support they receive from SPED personnel at their school. However, others mentioned that they lack SPED assistance for students enrolled in WL classes. The following comment illustrates this:
Special Ed does not service any students in world language classes in my school. Most SPED students do not take the class [WL class]. If they take it, they typically wait until they are at high school.

Among the additional comments received for this question, there is one more topic that might be interesting to point out. There were some responses that categorized students with SEN into two groups: one group for those with an IEP (Individualized Education Program), and the other for those students with a 504 plan. The former is a document that contains everything that a student with SEN requires, such as goals, accommodations, and curricular modifications, in order to be included and be able to participate in classes in a regular school. This form is preceded by a meeting where parents are also involved, and their approval is critical (Siegel, 2020, p. 46). The latter refers to a plan, a document, that includes all the accommodations and modifications that have to be made for students with SEN in regular schools (Wilmshurst & Brue, 2010, p. 247).

Regarding the additional data about students’ demographics, participants were also asked for the type of SEN they were most used to working with. Almost half of the participants (47.8%), mentioned learning disabilities as one of the most common SEN their students have, followed by 44.5% that mentioned autism, and 39.1% who mentioned emotional disturbance, which involves depression, anxiety, symptoms of fear, schizophrenia, among others. See Figure 3 for a graphic representation of the total of the responses.
Figure 3. Common Special Educational Needs Teachers Are Used to Work with.

It is important to note that several participants selected “Other,” but as shown in Figure 3, only one response was considered. This is because in many of the specifications, participants included some SEN that were part of the group of learning disabilities and/or emotional disturbance, such as, anxiety, reading comprehension problems, dyslexia, among others. Therefore, for data analyses purposes, these answers were counted in their respective groups. As far as the only response considered in “Other,” it was not clear enough to categorize it in any group of disabilities as it referred to a student who needs more time to process information.

The participants who selected “Learning disability” were also asked to specify the type of learning disability their students usually have. The results are shown in Figure 4.
A few participants mentioned that they were unsure about their answers being part of the group of learning disability. However, for data analysis purposes, those responses were organized in their respective categories. For instance, there was a participant who mentioned anxiety as a type of learning disability; but as explained in the following paragraph, anxiety is considered to be an emotional disturbance, therefore, it was counted among the group of emotional disturbance.

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act, Sec. 300.8 (c) (4) (2017), there are several characteristics that should be considered in order to determine if a child has an emotional disturbance. For instance, children who exhibit this condition may react differently or inappropriately in regular circumstances. Additionally, their mood tends to show unhappiness and they are unable to establish good relationships with their classmates or instructors. Yet, this definition does not specifically state that children who suffer from anxiety are in this category; there are authors who include anxiety because the characteristics suggested by IDEA fit in its definition. To illustrate this, Hollo et al. (2019) mention anxiety as one of the symptoms that children with emotional disturbance may exhibit. On the other hand, Tibbetts (2014) argues that
the definition of emotional disturbance suggested by IDEA seems to be very broad and its interpretation may be varied. He also claims that having temporary changes of humor or a mix of emotions when facing specific situations does not mean that a child is emotionally disturbed. However, Tibbetts highlights the importance of observing the period of time when children present or experience those characteristics suggested by IDEA. This is because longer periods of time could tell if a person experiencing this mix of emotions is emotionally disturbed. In short, it is important to note whether a student presents one or more of the characteristics mentioned by IDEA and also note that these behaviors are observed over a long period of time in order to determine if that student has an emotional disturbance.

The reason some people might want to categorize anxiety as a learning disability is perhaps because some students who present a learning disability may experience anxiety. According to Nelson and Harwood (2010), there is a relationship between learning disabilities and anxiety as there have been several theories trying to explain this relationship. One of them is called secondary reaction theory, which deals with the anticipated fear of academic failure from students who struggle with reading, writing, and mathematics (Zinkus, 1979, as cited in Nelson & Harwood, 2010, p. 3). Another reason some WL instructors might want to include anxiety in the group of learning disabilities is because students in WL classes sometimes experience a specific condition called foreign language anxiety. This term involves fear of being evaluated negatively by others, including classmates or WL teachers. It also deals with thoughts of apprehension as some students are simply scared of having a conversation with others and not being able to understand (Cakici, 2016).
Finally, there were a few responses that mentioned that IEPs, 504 plans, and English fell in the category of learning disabilities. However, because these are not part of the group of learning disabilities or other type of SEN, these responses were not counted in any category.

After analyzing the results of the question that asked teachers to identify the type of learning disability, it seemed that the term “learning disability” itself was unclear or ambiguous. Because of this, it was important to consider what IDEA states regarding this term. It says that “specific learning disabilities means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia” (Individuals with Disabilities Act, Sec. 300.8 (c) (10) (i), 2018). Later in that section, it clarifies that learning difficulties associated with hearing, visual, cultural, emotional disturbance, among others, are not considered learning disabilities. Additionally, IDEA addresses the topic of students whose English is not their first language. It declares that English language proficiency should not be the only source to determine whether a student has a disability (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Therefore, any responses involving any of these non-learning disabilities were not included in the data analysis.

Demographics of World Language Teachers

In this section I have attempted to provide data that answer the first research question of this study, which involves demographics about students with SEN enrolled in WL classes. These data include statistical analyses that provide means and modes along with some explanations based on participants’ responses.
Even though this section specifically asks for demographics about students with SEN attending WL classes, data on teachers were also collected. They were asked about being WL certified teachers, the total of years they have been teaching WL classes, as well as their educational background. There were other types of questions related to their training, experiences and coursework that will be discussed in the following sections.

First, teachers were asked about the year when they started teaching. The answers range from 1976 to 2020. Because this question did not specifically ask for the year when teachers started teaching language classes, they were also asked for the total of years being teaching WL classes either continuously or non-continuously. Figure 5 displays the data collected for this question, showing that most participants have been teaching between 10 to 19 years. However, almost the same number of teachers mentioned that they have been teaching between 5 to 9 years, and from 1 to 4 years. Moreover, it is important to point out that almost 20% of the respondents have more than 20 years of experience, while almost 10% mentioned that they have barely started teaching WL classes.

**Figure 5.** Total Years Teaching World Languages (to 2020).
Additionally, participants were asked whether they were certified to teach WL classes. The results show that only eight participants (8.6%) mentioned that they do not hold a WL certification, compared to the rest of the participants who are certified WL instructors.

Furthermore, participants were asked about their education. According to the total of the responses, 36 participants (39.1%) responded that hold a bachelor’s degree or less, while 51 participants (55.4%) completed a graduate program. The rest of the participants did not specify their educational background.

To provide more information regarding teachers’ educational background, a deeper statistical analysis was performed to determine if there is a relationship between participants’ educational level and the number of students with SEN they have per class. For this analysis, participants’ responses were categorized into two groups. One group includes those who earned a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent, as well as those who obtained a licensure through a different route. The second group involves teachers who have completed a master’s program or a doctorate degree. See Table 1 for reference.
Table 1: Analyses for Education Level (BA or Less and MA or More). Dependent Variable: Number of Students with Special Educational Needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Mean # of Students with SEN Per Class</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or less</td>
<td>2.4615</td>
<td>0.1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters or more</td>
<td>2.3200</td>
<td>0.1746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences Between Means

| Education Level | Education Level | Difference Between Means | Standard Error | DF | t Value | Pr > |t |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------|----|---------|-------|
| Bachelors or less | Masters or more | 0.1415 | 0.2637 | 87 | 0.54 | 0.5928 |

The first part of the table includes the values for each group, such as the mean number of number of students with SEN that WL teachers have in their classrooms, which is 2.4615 for those who hold “Bachelors or less,” and 2.3200 for those who studied “Masters or more.” These two numbers are subtracted and included in the second part of the table as it contains the differences of the means. The difference of 0.1415 suggests that the number of SEN students assigned per class or the ability of teachers to notice these students in their classes is not related to their educational level. Furthermore, the $p$ value of this analysis ($p = 0.5928$) indicates that it is not statically significant as it did not meet the threshold of .05. Therefore, there is no statistical relationship between these two variables.

**Research Question 2. In What Ways Are World Language Teachers Challenged or in What Ways Do They Succeed When Working with Students with Special Educational Needs?**
There could be different factors that determine how WL teachers are challenged in their teaching practices as they strive to include students with SEN in their classes. Acosta et al. (2016) suggest that a lack of training in working in diverse classrooms represents a significant challenge for teachers in training, specifically for graduate students who sometimes have to balance their teaching practice and learning process. Additionally, as classrooms become more inclusive and diverse, instructors have had to build new relationships with SPED personnel as they have to work together in order to better help students with SEN (Ferguson, 2008). Nonetheless, there are still some schools that do not benefit from the help of a SPED department, which may increase the challenges WL teachers experience. Although WL teachers may experience challenges in working with a diverse class, there are also several ways in which successful experiences have been present in teachers’ practice as they interact with students with or without SEN.

This section attempts to answer the second research question by sharing the ways that WL teachers are challenged and how they succeed as they include students with SEN in their language classes. In order to incorporate relevant data to this section, several survey questions were taken into account. Although most of these questions and their respective answers involve qualitative information, quantitative data analyses are also included.

World Language Teachers’ Training in Working with SEN Students

Training. Being trained or not in working with students with SEN may be related to the ways in which WL teachers are challenged or they succeed. To collect data related to this matter, participants were directly asked if they have received training or not. Data show that only 18 participants (19.6%) said that they have received training in working with students with SEN in WL classes. The rest of the participants (80.5%) said that they have not. Additionally, those
participants who mentioned that they have received training were asked to select the type of training they were referring to; they could select more than one. The results can be found in Figure 6.

Furthermore, these participants were asked to elaborate on their answers by providing some examples. The following comments represent each type of training that participants chose:

Inservice training

*Mostly the logistics of accommodation letters and how to help students receive accommodations and use them. Also, general reminders to be patient, understanding, and kind, and do our best to address their needs. Very minimal training, really.*

University coursework

*My master's degree is in teaching English Language Learners, and there was an entire course on differentiating them from students requiring special education, and responding to the needs of those requiring both.*
For my dyslexic students we have been given information through a variety of programs, namely PCReads, to help support our understanding of what these students need. I've also had some readings through the DLI immersion endorsement that addressed the needs of students with learning disabilities. These were not, however, "official" trainings.

Community course/training

A lot, at the beginning and during every school year.

Federal mandates

Workshop at a professional conference

Discussion of the challenges and examples of solutions, methods

Other

504 and IEP

Participants who received training also shared the frequency with which they have received it. See Figure 7 for a visualization of participants’ responses.

Figure 7. Frequency with Which Training Is Received.
The participants who selected “Other” pointed out inconsistencies in when their training was received. A few mentioned that they received training during their graduate program; others agreed that the SPED department helps them when they need it. Finally, three participants reported that they did not receive any training.

An additional analysis was performed, similar to the quantitative analysis for Table 1, in order to identify any relationships that might exist between those WL teachers who have been trained and the number of students with SEN they have in their classrooms. As seen in Table 2, with the \( p \) value obtained (\( p = 0.1486 \)), one can conclude that there is not a relationship between these two variables since the result is higher than 0.05, which is the \( p \) value desired to find a significance. In other words, whether teachers have received training has no bearing on the number of students with SEN in their WL classes.

Table 2: Analyses for Training. Dependent Variable: Number of Students with SEN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Mean # of Students with SEN</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.2877</td>
<td>0.1423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.7647</td>
<td>0.2948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Training | Training | Difference Between Means | Standard Error | DF | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|----------|----------|--------------------------|----------------|----|---------|------|
| No       | Yes      | -0.4770                  | 0.3273         | 88 | -1.46   | 0.1486 |

Efforts to learn. To learn more about the type of activities teachers do in order to assist their students with SEN in their WL classes, all participants were asked what they do to gain more knowledge and understanding about the special needs their students have regardless of if
they receive training or not. For this question, participants could select all the options that applied. Only one participant did not respond to this question. The results indicate that the majority of the participants prefer to talk to the SPED specialists at their schools to better assist students with SEN in their classes, but it is unclear if all schools provide this service. All the responses are illustrated in Figure 8.

![Figure 8. Teachers' Efforts to Learn More about Their Students' Special Educational Needs.](image)

The participants who selected “Other” shared other ways they have tried to better understand their students’ condition. Three participants mentioned that they speak to the students’ counselors to receive some guidance and help from them. On the contrary, one instructor expressed not receiving enough help from them:

*The counselors are not much help. They just say that the parents wanted them in there [students with SEN in WL classes], and there is nothing they can do about it.*

In addition to reaching out to students’ school counselors, there are other instructors who try to contact students’ tutors or para educators, talk to the members of the administration that
sometimes oversee SPED, and collaborate with their district-wide team in content teams.

Furthermore, one participant expressed the importance of putting into practice strategies that go along with some accommodations required for students with SEN:

*I think effective WL teaching strategies have built into them strategies that follow the IEP accommodations. I receive the accommodation list and for the most part, I use those accommodations for all my students. I did have a blind student once which required me to use special accommodations.*

Lastly, one participant mentioned attending conferences or taking classes over the summer to implement more effective strategies with their students with SEN.

**Relevant coursework.** Responses regarding participants’ university coursework were also analyzed as part of their training. Participants were asked if during their undergraduate or graduate studies they took classes that addressed the topic of special needs students. Data show that 58 participants (63.1%) said that they took classes with relevant coursework during their studies, while 25 participants (27.1%), mentioned that they did not take any classes related to this topic. The rest of the participants, 9.8%, selected “I don’t remember.” See Figure 9 for a graphic visualization of this information.
It is important to note that this question was asked at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix A for reference), and it was not specifically stated that university coursework was considered a way to be given training. Although this issue was not anticipated, it is assumed that several participants did not relate their university studies to having received training. Therefore, the amount of training reported in Figure 6 and 7 is lower than the numbers shown in Figure 8.

Participants who responded to having studied relevant coursework were also asked two subsequent questions. These questions asked them if they had put into practice what they learned and to share an example. Many of the examples given by the respondents included accommodations and modifications as resources to include students with SEN in WL classes. Although some participants simply mentioned these two resources, others elaborated by including the type of accommodations and modifications they make. The following samples were selected to illustrate this:

*Provide students with special needs accommodations & modifications mandated by the government.*
Repetition, preferential seating, modified assignments, oral answers instead of written, written answers instead of oral, use actions to remember vocabulary, individualized instruction, provide hard copy of vocabulary and or notes, use music and rhythm to memorize, read test to student, provide opportunities to practice...

Additionally, a few participants mentioned that they meet the requirements for students who have IEP or 504 plans. Based on the accommodations listed in the plan, teachers make their own changes to their lesson plan or the way they deliver it. Furthermore, one participant mentioned earning a degree in SPED, followed by a masters in Spanish, which was very helpful to use a variety of strategies:

My first degree was in sped. then I completed a masters and my Spanish endorsement. I use a lot of strategies from sped in my language class - check for understanding, tell your partner, speak slowly, repetition, use simple storytelling. Give time for answers, repetition.

There were a few other comments with positive attitudes to inclusion. The following response is an example:

All students are capable of learning and/or acquiring a language. To what extent may vary, but as all of our students communicate in one or more forms of reading, writing, listening and speaking, it is possible for all students to learn and/or acquire a second language. For my students with special needs or special learning needs, I differentiate the curriculum, focusing on their strengths and also helping improve the areas where they might struggle.

Finally, one participant expressed that students with SEN at his school do not have to complete a language requirement; therefore, he does not have a lot of students with SEN:
[...] I also don't get nearly as many SpEd kids as colleagues do because if they have severe learning difficulties, they tend to exempt them from foreign language requirements (and I teach mostly higher levels).

Lastly, I performed a statistical analysis to determine whether there is a relationship between those participants who studied relevant coursework and the number of students with SEN they have in their WL classes. This analysis is also similar to the one performed previously for Tables 1 and 2. See Table 3 for reference followed by an explanation of these results.

Table 3: Analyses for Relevant Coursework. Dependent Variable: Number of Students with SEN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Coursework</th>
<th>Mean # of Students with SEN</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
<td>2.4444</td>
<td>0.3853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.6667</td>
<td>0.2359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.6667</td>
<td>0.1531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Relevant Coursework | Relevant Coursework | Difference Between Means | Standard Error | DF  | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----|---------|------|
| I don’t remember    | No                 | 0.7778                   | 0.4518         | 87  | 1.72    | 0.0887|
| I don’t remember    | Yes                | -0.2222                  | 0.4146         | 87  | -0.54   | 0.5933|
| No                  | Yes                | -1.0000                  | 0.2812         | 87  | -3.56   | 0.0006|

After analyzing the results of the estimates in the differences between means, it can be concluded that those participants who studied topics related to SEN during their undergraduate or graduate studies tend to have, on average, one more student with SEN per class (-1.0000) compared to those who did not study relevant coursework. This could mean that they actually
have more students with SEN or that these teachers are more able to notice students with SEN in their courses. In addition, the $p$ value for that comparison ($p = 0.0006$) indicates that it is statistically significant, confirming the relationship between the two variables.

Additionally, it is important to mention the comparison made between the participants who chose “I don’t remember” and those that selected “No.” As one can see in the table, the $p$ value obtained ($p = 0.0887$) indicates that this result is suggestive but not conclusive, meaning that those respondents who do not remember whether they took relevant coursework may have more students with SEN in their classroom compared to those who did not take classes related to special needs.

**Notification of Students with Disabilities**

Teachers’ success in working with SEN students may also depend on being notified and how they are notified of their students’ disabilities. According to the responses collected, most of the teachers are usually notified that they have students with SEN in their classes, a few of them are notified sometimes, and only one participant does not receive any notification. See these results in Figure 10.
As far as how teachers are notified, the participants were asked to share the ways their schools help them to identify their students with SEN. Although this was an open-ended question, 40 participants said that the IEP is a way schools or SPED personnel help instructors to be aware of the number of students with SEN they have in their classes. In addition, 25 respondents mentioned that 504 plans are also helpful for them to make the appropriate accommodations for their students.

While IEP and 504 plans seem to be the most common ways instructors are informed about their students with SEN, they are also notified through their school or student management software. For example, two participants mentioned software that focused on saving information only of students with SEN; these are Goalview and Branching Minds. Additionally, there are other online gradebook programs that notify teachers or mark students’ names if they have a SEN. These online programs are PowerSchool, Skyward, and Aspire. According to some participants, these electronic programs sometimes display IEP or 504 plans, which make the information more accessible for them.

Figure 10. Are Teachers Usually Notified of Their Students with SEN?
In addition to schools that use online resources to notify instructors about their students with SEN, there are others that prefer informing their teachers by giving them confidential folders or binders with the information on their students with SEN. As mentioned by several participants, these folders sometimes contain IEP and 504 plans as well as other relevant information regarding their students’ particular situation.

Although participants are informed about their students’ SEN, there are some that still struggle with the accommodations they have to make or the number of students in their classes. According to some participants’ responses, they have a lot of students; therefore, they do not have time to go through all their students’ plans or meet all the accommodations. Furthermore, sometimes the information given does not include the specific disability that a student has, or it states that certain students need modifications, but it does not say the type of modifications they have to do. The following quotes illustrate this:

This was the first year that the head of the SPED department gave me a list of all the students at the beginning of the year. It was helpful to know at the beginning instead of later. In our grading program we use there is a tab that we can click on to see SPED student accommodations and plan. However, as a teacher with many students, I usually don't go out of my way to click on every student's tab. In the student management system [...] there is a button that will appear “504 notes” and “IEP” notes. It doesn't tell me what the learning disability is, just the required modifications.

**Petitions for Accommodations Not Granted**

When teachers have students with SEN, some accommodations are expected to be made. However, the type of accommodations required by the school or the SPED department, and the
time when these are given, may represent a challenge for some WL teachers. In order to collect more data in this regard, participants were asked if they received petitions for accommodations at the beginning of the current school year. It is important to note that the survey used as a source of information for this study was sent in April of 2020. Therefore, the current school year is referring to the beginning of Fall 2019. Based on the results, 69 participants (75%) mentioned receiving petitions for accommodations at the beginning of the current school year (2019-2020), whereas 23 participants (25%) indicated that they did not receive such petitions.

Additionally, teachers were asked about petitions for accommodations that they have not been able to grant, if any. Data show that of the 92 participants, 74 respondents (80.5%), have been able to grant such petitions, while 16 participants (17.4%) expressed the contrary; and two participants (2.1%) did not provide an answer. Furthermore, these 16 participants shared the type of petitions they could not grant to their students with SEN and why they have not been able to do so. Therefore, this information is represented in the following two figures. See results in Figure 11 and 12.

![Figure 11. Petitions for Accommodations That World Language Teachers Have Not Been Able to Grant.](image-url)
Some respondents shared personal experiences about what they have done to accommodate the needs of their students. The following quote is from an instructor who had to buy the equipment they needed in order to accommodate their student:

*The first one to come to mind is that my poor deaf student with a cochlear implant was supposed to have teachers with microphones, and the school did not provide a microphone (not my current school, another school in my district). I ended up buying a tour guide microphone with my own money so I could do something about it.*

Additionally, one participant provided a more detailed answer regarding WL classes being less prioritized by the school and students themselves:

*Having more re-teaching opportunities for my special needs students. Many teachers are constantly working with students in Math, Science, and ELA during I-Time and language teachers are often not given a priority time with students.*

Similarly, another teacher stated that:

Figure 12. Some Reasons Teachers Have Not Been Able to Grant Some Petitions for Accommodations
In order to help students with special needs, I need to work with them individually. Since that is hard to do during a regular class session (I have no aide or student teacher in the classroom) I ask them to come in during lunch or after school. They rarely do. Without spending extra time with them, I can't help them master the material.

Finally, as noted in Figure 11, one participant referred to a religious objection as the reason why they could not grant an accommodation for their student. However, it is important to clarify that as stated by the instructor, this student was not considered to have a disability:

I had a student who did not have special needs but whose parents refused to allow her to use technology based on a religious objection. I use a lot of videos and audio to bring in authentic resources and was not able to give her alternate activities every time.

Among the responses that teachers provided, two participants mentioned specifically that the accommodations they receive for their students are provided to them after the SPED department at their schools has assessed these students. Sometimes the SPED department considers if the students with SEN should wait to be enrolled in a WL class. For instance, a participant mentioned that their SPED program assesses if students struggle with reading and writing skills in their native language. If so, students are encouraged to wait and take a WL class in a future semester. Another participant mentioned that they had a lot of ELL (English language learner) students. However, as previously mentioned, ELL students do not fall into any category of disabilities or SEN. Nonetheless, it is hard to assess ESL (English as a second language) students’ literacy backgrounds because of their experiences and diverse cultures, which may be comparable to the signs that students with learning disabilities present (Case & Taylor, 2005). Therefore, sometimes ESL students have to receive assistance from SPED services even if they do not have a learning disability.
So far, I have attempted to answer the current research question on the ways teachers are challenged or they succeed by considering different components. These include the training that participants have received, notifications of students with SEN, and the ways these are sent to instructors. In addition, I have shared data about the type of accommodations teachers have granted, as well as some petitions for accommodations that have not been granted due to different reasons. However, there are a few more survey questions with relevant data that contribute to this section. These involve the difficulties and successful experiences participants have had during their teaching career, and how their teaching has been affected as they work and include students with SEN in their WL classes.

**How Working with Students with SEN Affects WL Instructors**

To add more qualitative data to the current research question regarding the ways teachers succeed or how they are challenged, participants were asked “How does working with students with special needs affect your teaching positively or negatively?” Most of the participants (40.2%), agreed that teaching SEN students has a positive impact on their teaching. On the other hand, 20.6% have experienced a negative impact on their teaching practice. In addition, 22.8% expressed that it affects them both positively and negatively; and 15.2% expressed that it does not affect them. These results can also be seen in Figure 13.
Figure 13. Perception of World Language Teachers’ Teaching Practice When Working Students with Special Educational Needs.

It is important to note that three participants did not respond to this question; however, the number of responses shown in the figure includes more since a couple of participants mentioned that their teaching is affected negatively when they work with students with severe SEN. However, they also mentioned that their teaching had not been affected when they have worked with students with other type of SEN such as ADD, ADHD, or Asperger\(^1\).

After reading all participants’ responses, I observed that teachers consider several factors when deciding whether they have had positive or negative experiences. For example, those who expressed that their teaching has been affected positively mentioned specific teaching characteristics, such as classroom experiences, teaching strategies that have had positive outcomes, and beginning-level language class. This last point implies that it might seem easy to keep students with SEN in language classes when the target language is new for everyone, or

---

\(^1\) According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Asperger syndrome (AS) is a developmental disorder. It is an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), one of a distinct group of neurological conditions characterized by a greater or lesser degree of impairment in language and communication skills, as well as repetitive or restrictive patterns of thought and behavior.”
students are placed in a beginning-level class. To illustrate this, the following response included the importance of creating a comfortable environment for all the students:

*I've found students with special needs do great and excel in my language classes for a couple of reasons. First, everyone is starting at or near the same level. Each student in the class is new to the language. I think it is empowering for IEP/504 students to see that others have to work to learn something new as much (or sometimes more) than they do.*

[...] 

Additionally, some instructors have had positive classroom experiences as they and the rest of the class integrate students with SEN in their activities. The following comment illustrates this:

*One of my most memorable moments as a teacher came with a special needs student. It was my Spanish 2 class several years ago. The students were assigned to make a skit. 2 students went out of their way to go and include the special needs student and include them in the skit at a level that was challenging, yet, attainable for her. I remember sitting and watching and feeling so proud of those students. It was and is a tender moment for me still.*

On the other hand, the participants whose teaching practice is affected negatively provided examples, such as some experiences related to preparing extra material for their students with SEN, insufficient time to complete the assignments planned for a class period, and the lack of training. The following is an example of a teacher who creates different material:

*It has been hard for both students and me. Because I need to design different materials for them and check to see if they understand the contents while most of the general students already mastered the contents. Special need students feel frustrated when they...*
don't understand and will continually ask the same questions again and again even if I already answered them.

In addition, some participants mentioned how difficult it is to get things done in class or have students with SEN work in groups. The following is an example:

Negatively. In the past couple of years, the counselors have allowed very slow kids into the class that should not be there. The class is hard enough for somebody without special needs. They are thrown into the fire and over half of them drop out at one point anyway. Not too long ago, every student had to get permission from a previous teacher to take the class. It's a difficult high school level class and they throw 7th graders with disabilities in there. It makes it hard to get things done. It's hard to have them work in groups. It's hard without any training for me to know how to handle it any better.

Some participants indicated that the time factor sometimes precludes them from finishing in-class activities. Other aspects referred to class size, the type of SEN their students have, teachers not being notified in advance, lack of support from some parents, as well as lack of training from teachers. On the other hand, some positive experiences result from personal and class experiences instructors have had, which have helped them to improve their teaching techniques and develop more patience. For instance, one participant shared that she has ADHD herself, which helps her to better assist her students with the same learning disability. She also mentioned the effect that having a disability has on students where classes are combined:

It really depends on the special need. [...] The students with ADHD [...] I typically know how to help as I have ADHD myself. They can be a challenge if not channeled properly. In general, I find that students with a learning disability or difficulties concentrating have the hardest time in my French class, [...]. Personally, I think students with developmental
delays and learning disabilities should never be put in the same class as neurotypical students. Not because they can't learn but because they learn differently. [...] My own son has autism, and we lived in the Netherlands for 4.5 years. At first he didn't speak so we ran an in-home therapy program for 3 years to help him speak English. Then when he went to a special needs school he was able to learn Dutch fluently in 4-5 months. It worked, because when you cater to special needs learning style you can build confidence and the skill you are trying to teach. Combining them in the same classroom means they don't really master what they should, and they don't build their confidence either.

Other comments emphasized their students’ positive attitudes and motivation despite the lack of material or their students struggling with the social aspect of learning. This is one example:

*I had a deaf student and a blind student in the same class with no microphone or printer, so I really struggled to be able to accommodate either of them. However, they were both so wonderful, and so patient and unassuming that eventually we figured out ways to be able to make sure they were able to participate. I have had students in wheelchairs that have brought such plucky, positive attitudes that they were such great contributors to our classes. I have had autistic students that really are so motivated to learn! They just get a little overwhelmed by the social aspects of school at times.*

Additionally, several comments included the time required to finish activities or give extra assistance to students with SEN. However, there are some schools that have implemented different programs where instructors can give more support to these students. One teacher stated that:

*I think mostly there is a positive impact in working with kids with special needs. It is an opportunity to diversify my teaching, curriculum and take a close look at what is really*
important for the student to accomplish. The negative impact comes with the lack of time available to work with students who need extra help. We do have a program which address[es] this (iTime). 30 minutes, 3 x week, students can be called to their teachers' classes to have extra support.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, several participants mentioned that their teaching has not been affected either positively or negatively. Although some participants mentioned that it is part of their job, other suggested that learning a WL is already challenging for their students. Therefore, they have to make accommodations for other students too, not only for students with SEN. The following example illustrates this:

It doesn't change it much, teaching a foreign language, you always have kids who pick up things faster and slower, so I am constantly looking for ways to help students catch up, stay caught up or give opportunities to move ahead. Most of the services I provide for special needs students, I tend to do with any students that may struggle, regardless of if they are IEP, 504 or other designation. It does help to remind me, however, to pay closer attention to those particular students' needs.

In addition, some comments referred to the type of SEN as an important point to consider when deciding about positive or negative ways their teaching has been affected. These participants limited their responses to say that some disabilities are easier than others.

Greatest Challenges and Successful Experiences

Greatest difficulties WL teachers have experienced. As teachers face difficulties in their teaching practice, it becomes more challenging for them to help students succeed in their classes, specifically students with SEN. According to the participants, these challenges may vary depending on the school and its assistance, the lack of resources, even knowledge to address
difficult situations, among other factors. To gather more information about this issue, teachers were asked about the greatest difficulty they have faced when trying to help students with special needs succeed in learning a WL. Several participants added an example as they were asked to share one. Of the 92 respondents, 83 participants (90.2%) answered this question. Table 4 lists the greatest difficulties mentioned by participants and the frequency with which they were mentioned.

Table 4: Frequency with Which Participants Mentioned their Greatest Difficulties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greatest Challenges</th>
<th>Frequency of Appearance in Participants' Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN in large class sizes</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN lacking motivation / Students giving up</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking time / Not being able to work with students with SEN one-on-one</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to get students with disabilities (e.g., students with autism, speech, and language impairment) to speak or interact with classmates (e.g., interpersonal tasks)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking training / Feeling not qualified to help students with SEN or not knowing what to do for them to accommodate them</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN needing more (processing) time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN struggling with their reading and writing (e.g., dyslexia)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping students with SEN focused</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing different content / Making some accommodations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being equitable with grading / Assessment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students who are not proficient in English</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aide not accompanying students with SEN / Not enough aids</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It depends on students' SEN</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping them succeed / Keeping them motivated</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN not completing their assignments</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students not receiving the professional or medical help they need to cope with their disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping them to follow instructions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping them not to feel frustrated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the information in the table, 41 themes or challenges were identified. As is evident, “Students with SEN in large class sizes” is the greatest challenge teachers experience.

One respondent specifically mentioned having several students with different SEN in a big class, which makes it even more challenging. The following quote illustrates this:

_In one of my classes, I have 45 students. I have one student on the autism spectrum, several with dysgraphia, a couple with ADD, a few who are slow processors, and a handful of others with anxiety that is severe enough that they never feel comfortable talking in front of their peers in the target language. Trying to accommodate all of their_
needs, while also providing quality input to the other kids in the class, can be a challenge.

It is important to note that there may be more challenges teachers have faced, but they shared perhaps the most current or noteworthy for them. In addition, because the question asked them for the greatest difficulty, a few of them only shared one, but the majority included more than one in their responses.

**Successful experiences.** In addition to asking participants about the greatest difficulty they have experienced; they were also asked to share any successful experience they have had teaching students with SEN in their WL classes. Of the 92 survey participants, 58 (63.1%) shared at least one successful experience, and the rest of the respondents (36.9%) indicated not having experienced any. Because this was an open-ended question, responses were quite varied. Some responses include what teachers have done to succeed or what has helped their students with SEN to succeed. In addition, other responses contain specific personal experiences. All comments have been grouped in recurring themes as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Teachers’ Successful Experiences with Working with Students with Special Educational Needs in Their World Language Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Experiences</th>
<th>Frequency with Which Participants Mentioned These Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involving other students to help their classmates with SEN</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers being patient, reassuring, kind, and approachable</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving more time</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending a lot of time working with students with SEN one-on-one before and after school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making students with SEN feel safe and comfortable</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking down the information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher working with student's aide / Working with SPED personnel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students simply doing well</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN participating in communicative activities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing more games in class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN being self-motivated / Wanting to learn the language</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving them hands on tasks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN using the target language at home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading instructions to students with SEN</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving alternative tests</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving family members (e.g., parents)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting everything students with SEN are able to give</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students with SEN to build their self esteem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers creating organizational maps for students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN sitting up front and asking questions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing comprehensible input</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Having students with SEN demonstrate what they know about a subject,</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rather than asking specific questions about things they might not know”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students with SEN to engage more in class and complete more</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students going to colleges and top colleges</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher being partner of a student with SEN in interpersonal activities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN using the target language in class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving assignments at their level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[Having] a little stress release toy with a funny recording that [my</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students with SEN] could come up to my desk and push”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using more visuals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using fun and engaging activities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to students about the assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One student with hearing disability who had a mini-microphone that he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handed me at the beginning of each class”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with SEN reading and writing in the target language</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[H]ave had IEP students who may understand the concept quicker than</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their partner and they have a chance to be the “tutor” for their partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With the quarantine, [a student with autism] has done even better (I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think because the social aspect is gone, so he doesn’t stress at others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;One autistic boy loves it. He may not catch on to everything, but he</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brings a very positive environment to the class&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A boy has some hearing loss and has found meaning in learning about ASL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Deaf culture&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to analyzing participants’ responses qualitatively, there were performed three statistical analyses similar to the ones previously done where the estimate and the \( p \) value of the differences of the means indicate whether a relationship exists among variables. In this case the dependent variable is “Successful experiences,” and it will be determined whether there is a relationship between this dependent variable and participants’ educational background and their training, including the relevant coursework they studied during their undergraduate or graduate studies. It is important to note that the variable of successful experiences was calculated by counting whether participants shared a successful experience, which 58 participants did, as previously mentioned.

Regarding participants’ education, those who completed a master’s degree or more may have more successful experiences compared to those who completed “Bachelors or less.” This is suggested based on the estimate in the differences of the means, where a negative difference between the estimates indicates that the second group, in this case, “Masters or more,” is higher than the first group, “Bachelors or less.” See Table 6 for reference.

Table 6: Analyses for Education. Dependent Variable: Successful Experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analyses for Education and Successful Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences Between Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, because the $p$ value obtained ($p = 0.3557$), is not statically significant, it can be concluded that no relationship exists between the educational level of WL teachers and their successful experiences.

A second analysis was conducted using participants’ relevant coursework as an independent variable. Like the previous results in Table 6, the results shown in Table 7 indicate that although some participants took university classes that addressed topics related to SEN, this does not mean that they will have more successful experiences than those who did not take relevant coursework. As is evident in Table 7, none of the differences among means were statistically significant.

Table 7: Analyses for Relevant Coursework. Dependent Variable: Successful Experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Coursework</th>
<th>Mean Successful Experiences</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
<td>0.5556</td>
<td>0.1631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.6800</td>
<td>0.09788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.6207</td>
<td>0.06426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences Between Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the analysis performed in an attempt to find a relationship between teachers who have been trained and their successful experiences. Even though teachers who have
received some type of training may have more successful experiences based on the estimate in the differences of the means (-0.1647), this does not mean that participants who have received training tend to always have successful experiences, inasmuch as the \( p \) value obtained (0.2082) was not statistically significant.

Table 8: \textit{Analyses for Training. Dependent Variable: Successful Experiences.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analyses for Training and Successful Experiences</th>
<th>Mean Successful Experiences</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.6000</td>
<td>0.05586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.7647</td>
<td>0.1173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Differences Between Means | Training | Training | Difference Between Means | Standard Error | DF | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|----------------|----|---------|------|
| No                         | Yes      | -0.1647  | 0.1299                   | 90             | -1.27 | 0.2082 |

Research Question 3. How Could Foreign Language Instruction Be Improved for Students with Special Needs, in Terms of Access and Learning?

Two survey items addressed this research question. These include the techniques teachers use as a way to improve WL instruction for students with SEN, and the relevant coursework they would like to study if they had the opportunity to attend college again. The responses were collected and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Techniques WL Teachers Commonly Use to Help Their Students with SEN

The purpose of asking teachers about the techniques they use was to find the different ways that work for them as they assist their students with SEN. Additionally, these responses
may be helpful for other teachers who are looking for ways to help their students with disabilities. A variety of responses were collected as many teachers mentioned that those strategies will depend on their students’ disabilities. However, similarities were identified among the responses, and these were grouped and counted in order to know how many times each technique was mentioned by the participants. Table 9 shows the entire list of techniques that participants included in their responses along with the number of times these were mentioned.

Table 9: List of Techniques Used by World Language Teachers to Work with Students with Special Educational Needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Frequency with Which Participants Mentioned These Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended time to turn in assignments and tests / Extended deadlines</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigning a study buddy / Pairing them with sympathetic students / Peer tutor</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing them to turn in work in different formats / Modified assignments</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra tutoring sessions / 1:1 Sessions / Individual conferences</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a variety of teaching tools: PPT, videos, visuals aids, task card activities, use technology for text-speech and speech-text, more pictures, use class microphone, audio support, songs to learn new vocabulary, Quizlet flashcards</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing instructions in different ways: Visual, written, and oral / Give them private instructions after the regular instruction / Simplify or scaffold instructions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing in an alternative location / Quiet setting / Distraction-free environments for testing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement in the classroom (e.g., Sit the student at the front of the class)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual attention / Approach them individually in class</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking content into smaller chunks</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging them to interact with their classmates / Working in groups</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing them written or printed notes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following their accommodations in their IEP or other plans</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling / Give examples</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience and kindness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a variety of activities / Activities that incorporate multiple learning modalities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check ins</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-teaching vocabulary / A lot of vocabulary instruction or practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations in assessment / Assess them in different ways</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting grading scale</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Allow them to participate when they are ready, not when I want them to do it” / &quot;If they wish it, I do not call on them&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class games</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing students to redo assignments and quizzes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on the basic proficiency standard / Different or modified expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving them a job that will allow them to feel successful</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent breaks / Allowing them to take breaks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowing pace / Slowing down</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using laptop instead of handwriting / “Type instead of write”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking them probing questions to check for understanding</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-explaining and re-teaching after assessments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating often with them</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of opportunities to practice / Extra practice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing coursework</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing them a copy of vocabulary lists / Flashcards (Quizlet sets)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of scaffolding</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting longer for them to respond in class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping them figure out their learning style</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a place for them to store their things in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent communication with parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving them positive feedback</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making everything accessible in Canvas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting regular routines for them to follow</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping them build their self-esteem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Placing a little sticky on their table to make them aware that they are disruptive without verbally drawing attention to them”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping them get organized</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing them to do oral presentations after class so they do not feel as intimidated in front of the class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating them</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying tests</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording work in a way that is best for them (audio, computer, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students write for them</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language immersion (85% of the time)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplified language</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading adaptations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I alternate [them] working normally with the rest of the class with activities especially design for [them]”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior interventions</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using TPR (Total physical response)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing them to have an aide write or read for them</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that of the 92 participants, 77 (83.6%) shared the techniques they commonly use in class. Therefore, if the rest of the teachers had answered this question, this list could have more than the 62 techniques already included.

Additionally, to perform a different type of analysis, I counted the number of techniques used per participant. The results are illustrated in Figure 14.

![Figure 14. Number of Techniques Used by World Language Teachers to Help Their Students with Special Educational Needs.](image)

After collecting these results, I proceeded to perform statistical analyses in order to identify any relationships between the number of techniques used by instructors and their educational background and training, as well as the relevant coursework during their college studies.
Based on the results in Table 10, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between participants’ educational level and the number of techniques they commonly use in class, as the $p$ value ($0.3843$) in the differences of the means did not approach statistical significance.

Table 10: *Analyses for Education. Dependent Variable: Number of Techniques.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Mean # of Techniques</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or less</td>
<td>3.1538</td>
<td>0.3430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters or more</td>
<td>2.7500</td>
<td>0.3092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences Between Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Difference Between Means</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>Pr &gt;</th>
<th>t</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or less</td>
<td>Masters or more</td>
<td>0.4038</td>
<td>0.4618</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.3843</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar analysis was performed to attempt to find a relationship between the relevant coursework participants enrolled in during their college studies and if this contributed to the use of more techniques in class. However, the results conclude that there is not a relationship between these two variables since the $p$ values ($p = 0.6847; 0.8680; 0.6852$) in the differences of the means are not close to the standard. See Table 11 for reference.
Table 11: Analyses for Relevant Coursework. Dependent Variable: Number of Techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Coursework</th>
<th>Mean # of Techniques</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
<td>2.7778</td>
<td>0.7201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.1200</td>
<td>0.4321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.9074</td>
<td>0.2940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Relevant Coursework | Difference Between Means | Standard Error | DF  | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----|---------|------|
| I don’t remember    | -0.3422                  | 0.8398         | 85  | -0.41   | 0.6847|
| I don’t remember    | -0.1296                  | 0.7778         | 85  | -0.17   | 0.8680|
| No                  | 0.2126                   | 0.5226         | 85  | 0.41    | 0.6852|

In addition, the resulting estimate in the differences of the means (0.2126) indicates that those teachers who did not have relevant coursework are using more techniques in class compared to those that did. Nonetheless, it is important to note that several participants shared only a few techniques they use in class, specifying that they may use other types of techniques depending on their students’ disabilities or the activity they are trying to implement in class. Therefore, these results may have been different if all the participants had shared every technique they have put into practice.

Finally, the same analysis was performed to confirm a relationship between the number of techniques teachers commonly use and the training they have received. Similar to the previous analyses, the results in the differences of the means show that there is no measurable relationship between the two variables. As seen in Table 12, the $p$ value obtained ($p = 0.1727$) is higher than the value expected for it to be considered significant.
Table 12: Analyses for Training. Dependent Variable: Number of Techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis for Training and Number of Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences Between Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

University Classes Including Topics Related to SEN

Another way that may contribute to improve WL instruction for students with SEN is by including topics related to language instruction and students with disabilities in university coursework. As previously discussed, several participants have taken relevant coursework in their university studies. However, other participants mentioned not taking any classes where SEN were addressed.

At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked the question: “If you were to take classes again as an undergraduate or graduate student, what specific topics or teachings regarding special educational needs would you like to be taught?” Of the 92 participants, 72 participants (78.2%) replied to this question. Some participants expressed that they would not change anything or that WL teachers interact with fewer students with SEN, so there is no need to change the curriculum. However, many of the responses collected include different topics that teachers would like to see addressed in college classes. All the responses received can be seen in Table 13.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Topics for University Coursework</th>
<th>Number of Times Teacher Mentioned These Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know / No need to change the curriculum of undergraduate or graduate programs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education in a World Language classroom / Language learning for special education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching strategies / Intervention strategies</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations and modifications</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to help students with SEN</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More about SEN and SPED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to help students who struggle with reading and writing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to teach multiple skill levels</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to parents / How to communicate with them</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to connect/interact with special needs students</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How students with special needs acquire language?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations / &quot;To be able to experience/observe special education in the schools during the student teaching time would have been beneficial&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to motivate them</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to support ELL students in the classroom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to address students' needs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways to check for understanding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best ways to scaffold assignments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment for SEN students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“How important it is during an English time in class to address the topic with the students to put them more at ease”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention disorders in the classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of the needs of the students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management of special education students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with stakeholders</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A mentor-like program during the first few years of teaching that focuses on special ed would be more effective”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about IEP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to make students with SEN participate in partner and group activities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching blind/deaf students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Learn about the different learning disabilities and their signs so I can identify what I am dealing with”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to meet the needs of all students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All or any</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this last section I summarize some of the most relevant findings for each research question. Additionally, implications, limitations to the study, and suggestions for future research will be described.

Research Question 1. What Are the Demographics of Special Education Students Enrolled in Secondary-Level World Language Classes?

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there is an increasing number of students with SEN enrolled in regular classes, whose presence is supported by legislation like IDEA (McFarland et al., 2019; Hussar, 2020). However, the data in this study seem to contradict this as a plurality of participants, (n=37, 40.2%), did not feel that the number of students with SEN in their classes, specifically in WL classes, is increasing. Nonetheless, the number of respondents, (n=34, 36.9%), who mentioned that they are beginning to have more students with SEN in their classes is close to those who stated the opposite. Additionally, a few responses indicated that the number of students with SEN in their classes will depend on the school year. Therefore, despite students with SEN have more access to education, according to the respondents, the number of these students seems to have not increased in WL enrollment.

Additionally, based on the collected data, teachers have an average number of two students with disabilities per class. However, this number may vary depending on the class size, and as previously mentioned, on the SPED department’s policy at each school or district, because they may assess students with SEN before letting them take a WL class. The results of this study also indicate that teachers may have students with a variety of special needs. Based on the data, the most common disability participants encounter is learning disabilities. This is perhaps not surprising given the number of people with learning disabilities in the State of Utah.
alone. As mentioned in chapter two, as of 2019, there were more than 35,000 people of ages 6-21 with specific learning disabilities (IDEA Section 618 Data Products: State Level Data Files, 2019). Among the different types of learning disabilities, this study shows that ADD (Attention deficit disorder) or ADHD (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) are the most common learning disabilities.

Another reason that the average number of students with SEN per class may vary is the population of students for whom English is not their first language. Based on some participants responses, I found that sometimes these students are diagnosed with learning disability even if they do not have any intellectual or behavioral challenges. Nonetheless, there are schools where the SPED department assesses ELL students’ literacy skills before allowing them to study WL courses. As I mentioned in chapter four, they do this evaluation because ELL students come with their own reading and writing skills which are appropriate in their culture, which may be different, in this case, from the U.S. literacy culture (Case & Taylor, 2005.) Hence, they may think that allowing students to study a WL class may represent a difficulty for them as they need to catch up with the rest of their peers whose first language is English. As a result, it is possible that ELL students wait to enroll in a WL class or delay studying their first language. Perhaps this contributes to the lack of interest among immigrant students in speaking or studying their first language as they have been precluded from doing so in previous semesters or even when they first started school in the US.

**Research Question 2. In What Ways Are World Language Teachers Challenged or in What Ways Do They Succeed When Working with Students with Special Educational Needs?**

Based on the data, we can conclude that due to the unique characteristics of each student, it is impossible to prescribe a specific path to success for teachers seeking to help their students
with SEN to flourish. Every teacher has different experiences when working with students with SEN. However, I observed that even though some teachers do not feel qualified to assist students with SEN, they still try a variety of activities in order to include them. Sometimes the result is not what they expected, and it may lead to a frustrating experience. Despite these experiences, most of the participants, as mentioned in the previous chapter, think that their teaching practices have been affected positively by working with students with SEN. Therefore, even though working with students with SEN represents a challenge for many, it can also be a good learning experience that positively impacts their teaching.

Additionally, teachers’ experience varies depending on the severity of the different disabilities their students have. Moreover, having students with the same disability does not mean that they will perform equally. Therefore, teachers’ experiences will differ from each other. During the data analysis of teachers’ successes and difficulties, I noted the successful and challenging experiences that some have and what leads to such experiences. For example, giving students with SEN extra time to complete their assignments or even to finish their tests worked well for some teachers and it has led to future successes in their teaching practice. This seems to confirm Ivančević-Otanjac’s (2016) research on the value of providing extended deadlines. She states that students with learning disabilities need extra time in order to accomplish their tasks in class. Even though she only refers to students with learning disabilities, this may be a strategy to also put into practice with students with other disabilities as well. On the other hand, some teachers mentioned that their lack of time to give students extended deadlines is a challenge they face. It is unknown why this could represent a challenge since none of the respondents explained their comments.
Peer tutoring is another strategy that seemed to help teachers to succeed. This type of tutoring seems to have some benefits as stated by Eaton (2019), who confirms that some positive advantages of peer tutoring include keeping students motivated and helping them to increase their self-concept. While this involves all students regardless of their condition, this can also apply to students with SEN. As reported by one participant, students with SEN are used to receiving guidance and help from their peers. However, they can also be the one in charge of giving the help. The following comment illustrates this; this comment is also found in Table 5 from the previous chapter:

*I just love seeing all students feel empowered because they have learned something new. I also have had IEP students who may understand the concept quicker than their partner and they have a chance to be the 'tutor' for their partner. I love seeing their faces light up and their confidence increase when this happens. It is evident, they are not used to being the one who understands the information and is able to help others.*

Nonetheless, there are cases where this is not possible or may require extra effort for teachers and students. For instance, some regular students do not want to work with their classmates with SEN. Additionally, there are some students with SEN who do not want to participate or talk to their peers, often because of the nature of their disability.

In addition to pairing students with a partner, teachers find student-teacher conferences often lead to success. As noted by Davidson et al. (2021) students’ behavior issues decrease when they interact with their teachers. Additionally, they feel they are being helped when teachers take the time to do one-on-one teaching (Leons et al., 2009). Even so, some teachers do not have enough time to offer these meetings, which may result in a challenge due to their inability to have these meetings to assist their students with SEN.
In addition to these strategies, findings indicate that certain personal attributes can also lead to success in working with students with SEN. Patience may seem difficult to develop while working with students with SEN. However, being patient, kind, reassuring, and approachable, can help teachers have successful experiences. This finding confirms what Steinbrecher et al. (2015) state. They note that being patient is necessary when working with students with SEN, especially those with severe learning difficulties. They also added compassion and empathy as two characteristics teachers and administrators should develop in order to connect with their students.

The number of students per class can affect teachers’ experiences in a positive or negative way. This is because it is important for students with SEN to socialize or be integrated in class activities. Having a large class size can be challenging for teachers as they are required to manage several tasks. As stated by Blatchford and Russell (2020) students with SEN will always be affected by the class size. They can be affected positively by being in a small class since they will receive more assistance. On the contrary, they can be affected negatively by being in a large class, where it will be easier for them to get distracted. What constitutes a small or large class may be different from each teacher’s perspective or experience. According to the data shared in the previous chapter, most of the participants mentioned having between 25-30 students per class, which I consider to be an average class size.

**Research Question 3. How Could Foreign Language Instruction Be Improved for Students with Special Needs, in Terms of Access and Learning?**

In this study I observed that there is more than one task that needs to be accomplished in order to improve WL instruction for students with SEN. For example, the training that teachers need to receive so they can feel more prepared to teach students with SEN should be improved.
Additionally, teachers should be implementing a wider variety of strategies in class to help empower their SEN learners. Thirdly, WL teachers must implement students’ accommodations so these students are given the same opportunity to perform the activities as their classmates even if they may have to use different materials or alternatives to accomplish said tasks.

As previously discussed, lack of training is a recurring theme in participants’ responses. Most of the WL teachers have not been trained to work with students with SEN, which corroborates previous research on the value of being trained regarding special needs. For example, in a study conducted by Sharma et al. (2008), 603 pre-service teachers from four countries participated in the study. The results show that 10% of the participants mentioned that they received training on students with disabilities, but 90% of the pre-service teachers did not receive any. With so little pre-service training offered, it is vitally important for them to receive training periodically, especially given that they do not always work with the same disabilities or have the same level of experience. Every student, regardless of their SEN, is different and requires unique assistance and/or accommodations.

Following the accommodations included in students’ IEP or 504 plans is important for students’ inclusion in the WL classroom. As noted by Wight (2015), students with special needs can benefit greatly from the accommodations they have been granted. However, these accommodations need to be tailored for each student, meaning that if a student has a learning disability or suffers from an emotional disturbance, a deeper analysis should be done in order to know the best way to assist them. Nonetheless, it seems that frequently, some of the accommodations that teachers are used to making are somewhat generic, such as giving extra time to turn in assignments, assigning a study buddy, or using a variety of teaching materials. Because students with SEN perform at a different level or have their own needs, these
accommodations may not work all the time for everyone. For this reason, receiving training to
learn more about other ways to help students with SEN is vital for future and current teachers.

Another important task for teachers is to learn more about the different techniques they
can try to use to include their students with SEN. In this study, I found some techniques teachers
have used that seem to work well for them. These techniques include giving students with SEN
more time to turn in assignments and being open to modifying assignments. Additionally, this
extra time should not only be for assignments, but also for tests. Moreover, it is important for
students to have conferences with their teachers; these one-on-one meetings may help teachers to
build a closer relationship with their students with SEN, understand their students’ needs, and
find ways to help them succeed in class. Furthermore, sometimes teachers will need to
implement a variety of teaching materials and/or techniques to catch and retain students’
attention. Finally, teachers should expect to deliver instructions more simply and in different
formats to make sure all their students understand and can perform the activity.

Implications

The recurring themes that stand out in this study are teachers’ preparation, the resources
they have access to, and the support system they can be part of.

Teachers’ preparation is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed
because of the consequences associated with being prepared or not. As previously mentioned, it
is important for teachers to be trained, and this training should start during their undergraduate
and graduate studies. Some of the topics teachers would like to be taught are accommodations
and modifications, effective teaching strategies, differentiation, and how to help students with
literacy difficulties, among others. Even though receiving pre-service training that included these
topics would help teachers to be more prepared, it is important for them to continue receiving
training as they will face different experiences during their teaching practice. When teachers start acquiring knowledge starting in their undergraduate and graduate studies, it is more likely for them to identify students with SEN, even when those students do not officially receive SPED assistance. Teachers can also become aware of their ELL students who sometimes are categorized as disabled learners even when they do not suffer from any disability.

As observed in some of the responses, some teachers do not have the resources they need to accommodate their students’ disabilities which results in a challenging situation for both teachers and students. For example, sometimes the school does not have SPED personnel to help teachers and students, or the school does not provide the teaching tools or resources needed. Because of this, sometimes teachers have to buy or get their own material so they can grant students’ accommodations. Additionally, there are some students who bring their own resources in order to be integrated and do the activities their peers do in class.

Another resource that was mentioned in several responses was time. Teachers need more time to plan their lessons to include some activities that allow students with SEN to participate. Additionally, in order to have one-on-one conferences, it is important to consider giving teachers more time. Furthermore, some teachers need to modify the assessment or the curriculum so they can include their students with SEN. Teachers need to invest time as well to incorporate these modifications, which sometimes represent a challenge, especially if instructors have not been trained in this topic, those modifications are not included in students’ IEP, or the school does not provide what those students need.

Preparation, support, and resources can contribute to teachers’ successful experiences. These three elements could be key for WL teachers to have a positive experience and increase their pedagogical skills, too. In this study, several teachers claimed to not have had any
successful experiences, perhaps because of the lack of appropriate resources, including knowledge or training, to work with their students with disabilities.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study, such as collecting participants’ emails. As mentioned previously, the participants’ emails were collected through their school’s websites. However, there were several schools that did not properly list their teachers’ information. For example, a few schools’ websites only provided teachers’ emails and their names but did not specify what subject they teach. Additionally, there were some websites that do not display their teachers’ emails but take you directly to another tab to send them a private message. However, when I tried to include the survey link, some of the private message websites did not allow me to include links in my email.

Because a few questions, mostly open-ended questions, were not marked as required, some participants skipped them. For future studies, teachers will need to respond to all of the questions in order to count them on the study. This change will make the survey more valid. In addition, I noted that some of the participants were not clear on the definition of some terms used in the survey, such as, IEP, learning disabilities, ADD and ADHD, and emotional disturbance, among others. It may have been helpful to add some definitions in the survey for participants to understand what they have been asked.

Furthermore, this study was conducted only in the state of Utah. Therefore, the results may differ from state to state due to their particular demographics. In addition, only secondary-level WL teachers participated in this study, who may have different perspectives from teachers at the elementary and college levels.
Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the variety of disabilities present in the school system, each with their own characteristics, studies focusing on individual disabilities could provide valuable insights. Instead of collecting data from a general point of view, such studies could provide a narrower analysis leading to very clear recommendations for world language teachers working with students with specific disabilities.

Future studies could also be performed on teaching English to ELL students with disabilities. Even though only a few participants thought ELL students should be assisted by SPED personnel, or related ELL to having a learning disability, it was observed that in several questions this topic was mentioned.

Additionally, studies similar to the present one could also be conducted with teachers at the elementary and college levels. The results could then be compared among the different levels (elementary, secondary, and college education) to see if participants face the same experiences or have the same opportunities to be helped by their school or even by their own SEN students. Additionally, surveys should be conducted not only in the state of Utah, but in other places as well. Combining the results of surveys from several states or even a nationwide survey would provide a much broader picture of the situation of teaching world languages to students with SEN.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to illuminate an under researched area of world language instruction. After analyzing the different topics addressed in the survey, it is clear that additional research needs to be performed on teaching world languages to students with SEN. Being a WL instructor can be challenging and having SEN students can make it even harder for some
teachers, especially for those with little experience or training in working with this population. Therefore, topics such as training, impact on teaching practices, demographics, and experiences should be studied further in order to contribute valuable insights that will benefit WL teachers so that all students, with or without SEN, can enjoy the benefits of language learning.
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*Students with Disabilities.* Students at the Center: Deeper Learning Research Series. Jobs for the Future


Appendix A

SURVEY

Students with Special Educational Needs in World Language Classes.
The following survey has the purpose of gathering data about middle school and high school
students with special educational needs studying a foreign language in Utah. In addition, it seeks
to gather information regarding the training that teachers receive, the techniques implemented in
class, their challenges, and their successful experiences in working with this population.
This survey is anonymous and includes multiple-choice questions and some open-ended
questions with the aim of having a more complete view of the different experiences in teaching a
foreign language class and having special needs students. There are 26 questions, and it will take
about 25 minutes to complete this survey.
Even though there are several terms to refer to special needs students, the following survey
mainly uses the term special educational needs to refer to students with a learning disability or a
disability in general.

The following questions are focused on your education background:

1. **In what year did you start teaching?**

2. **How many years have you taught world languages? Either continuously or non-
   continuously:**
   - 20+ years
   - 10+ years
   - 5+ years
   - 1+ year
   - This is my first year

3. **Are you a certified world language teacher?**
   - Yes
   - No

4. **How did you become licensed to teach?**
   - Alternative route to licensure
   - University degree
   - Post-bac
   - Other (please specify):

5. **Did you study and receive a higher degree? If yes, please select your answer(s):**
   - Master’s program
6. In your B.A., Master’s, Ph.D. or other, did you take classes that addressed the topic of special educational needs?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t remember

6a. If yes, have you put into practice what you learned?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Sometimes

6b. Could you give an example of what you learned and put into practice?

7. In what district(s) do you currently teach?
   - Alpine
   - Beaver
   - Box Elder
   - Cache
   - Canyons
   - Carbon
   - Daggett
   - Davis
   - Duchesne
   - Emery
   - Garfield
   - Grand
   - Granite
   - Iron
   - Jordan
   - Juab
   - Kane
   - Logan
   - Millard
   - Morgan
   - Murray
   - Nebo
   - North Sanpete
• North Summit
• Ogden City
• Park City
• Piute
• Provo City
• Rich
• Salt Lake City
• San Juan
• Sevier
• South Sanpete
• South Summit
• Tintic
• Tooele
• Uintah
• Wasatch
• Washington
• Wayne
• Weber
• Other: _____________

8. In which level or type of school do you teach? Select all that apply:
• Middle School
• Junior High
• High School
• Public
• Private
• Charter

9. Select the foreign language(s) that you teach:
• American Sign Language
• Arabic
• French
• German
• Greek
• Italian
• Japanese
• Korean
• Latin
• Mandarin
• Portuguese
• Russian
• Spanish
• Other(s) (please specify): ________________

10. What course level do you teach? Select all that apply:
• Level 1
• Level 2
• Level 3
• Level 4
• Level 5
• AP
• AB
• Language for native/heritage speakers
• Other (please specify): ________________

11. In a typical class how many students do you have?
• More than 40 students
• Between 35 and 40
• Between 30-35
• Between 25-30
• Between 20-25
• Between 15-20
• Between 10-15
• Less than 10
  11b. And in a class of that size how many students with special educational needs do you have?
• 5
• 4
• 3
• 2
• 1
• 0
• I don’t know

12. Do you feel that you are beginning to have more students with special educational needs compared to the past?
• Yes
• No
• Additional comments:
13. What are the most common special educational needs you have worked with?
   • Autism
   • Deaf-blindness
   • Developmental delay
   • Emotional disturbance
   • Hearing impairment
   • Intellectual disability
   • Learning disability (please specify): ________________
   • Multiple disabilities
   • Orthopedic impairment
   • Speech or language impairment
   • Traumatic brain injury
   • Visual impairment
   • Other (please specify): ________________

14. Are you notified in some way that you have students in your classes that have special educational needs?
   • Yes
   • No

15. How does the school help you in identify students with special educational needs?
   Please, explain:

16. How does working with special needs students affect your teaching positively or negatively?
   Please, explain:

17. If you currently have special needs students, did you receive any petitions for accommodations at the beginning of the current school year?
   • Yes
   • No

18. Have you received training on how to assist students with special educational needs in foreign language classes?
   • Yes
   • No

19. What type of training to work with special educational needs have you received?

20. How often do you receive training?
• Every month
• Every school year
• Every two years
• I don’t receive any training.
• Other: ________________

21. Besides receiving training (or not) what do you do to gain more knowledge and understanding about the special needs that your students have? Please select all that apply:
• I read books, articles, or other reliable sources
• I read blogs on the Internet
• I talk to other teachers about their past experiences
• If possible, I talk to the teacher that previously worked with my student(s)
• I talk to my students’ parents
• I talk to the person(s) in charge of students with special educational needs in the school
• Other (please specify): ________________

22. Are there any petitions for accommodation that you have not been able to grant?
• Yes
• No
  24a. Why?

23. What is the greatest difficulty you face when trying to help students with special needs to succeed in learning in a foreign language?

  25a. Could you give us an example?

24. Could you share any particularly successful experiences with teaching special needs students in a world language class?

25. What techniques do you commonly used to help students with special education needs?

26. If you were to take classes again as an undergraduate or graduate student, what specific topics or teaching regarding special educational needs would you like to be taught?

• Thank you for your responses, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact:
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