INCLUSIVE TEACHING METHODS

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Identifying students with special educational needs (SEN) in the classroom and including them in the assessment process is a highly difficult process. Two major aspects are distinguished in the assessment of students with SEN. Not included in our expertise as teachers is the ability to diagnose special needs and assign labels to learners. It is our duty to know them and pay attention to the factors that support or hinder their learning. As a teacher, we can be the first to notice if a student is struggling to learn in a group setting.

A common definition of a case of SEN is that the student experiences learning difficulties that are significantly greater than most children of the same age or that prevent them from using general educational facilities.

The easiest way is to pay attention to the student and his learning. In particular, we need to look beyond any inappropriate behavior to recognize potential signs of learning difficulties. The signs that may suggest that a student may have learning difficulties are varied. The child does not follow or understand instructions even if others know what to do, finds it difficult to concentrate on their work for long periods of time, finds it difficult to stand and wait their turn, a discrepancy occurs between the student's verbal and written skills, the student finds it difficult to start tasks or never seems to finish, avoids doing the task, often through inappropriate behaviors such as arguing with the teacher, or does not speak in groups. Typically, the student appears to be absent-minded or dreamy, showing problems socializing with peers. It is natural for all students to exhibit such behaviors at times, so it is important to note any patterns of recurrence in children of the same age and then do some further investigation.

When sufficient information has been collected, it is useful to refer to a school psychologist for further support and assessment. It is important that this is done in partnership with the parent or carer. Discussing this sensitive issue with the parent or caregiver can create an adversarial relationship between the family and the school, but using descriptive rather than judgmental language can ease parental anxiety and emphasize the child's positive qualities.

Another challenge for teachers is assessing and evaluating the progress of students with SEN, who may find normal testing methods difficult and demotivating. They may have trouble writing their answers in the required time while sitting for a long time in an exam, and some may not be able to understand the test requirements. They are also likely to lose confidence if they continue to underperform others in simulations and assessments. Different legislation allows extra help for students with SEN in official exams, such as getting more time or allowing another person to write for the student, it may be possible to do the exam on a laptop or in a smaller room. Even though testing at the end of the year is difficult, it is possible to work with the student throughout the year based on the assessment of their own progress. Assessment for learning is an approach that involves students in their own assessments and allows them to set their own goals. It can be very helpful for students with SEN to measure their progress against their own goals rather than against others. Above all, the aim is to build children's confidence outside of the exam itself.

Some strategies to build student confidence can be applied in the classroom, providing opportunities to develop empathy and understanding in different ways. For example, students can make a role play, a podcast, a poster, a presentation or a 3D model. They can use small whiteboards to show their answers rather than producing them verbally. Students can work in groups on projects where they have different roles. They must be encouraged to appreciate what they know now, compared to what they knew earlier in the year, by continually working with the student, acknowledging their feelings and difficulties, but also their strengths. Other skills can be praised and rewarded, for example, the most useful student, the student who is the most responsible, the most creative, constantly reminding them that we only evaluate a certain type of work, not the whole person.

It is often believed that language learning for a child with special educational needs may waste valuable time that could be more profitably used in teaching "more relevant" skills and that they may be confused with children who already have problems in and master the mother tongue. However, it is vital that we provide every opportunity to broaden and enhance the range of learning experiences available to these children by engaging them in a wide range of lifelong activities, one of which is language learning.

Children with special educational needs may have physical and conceptual difficulties, mild and moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and emotional and behavioral difficulties and will usually require some form of additional support to address these, such as a period short attention span and a lack of concentration, memory problems, both short-term and long-term, poor generalization skills, auditory discrimination problems, visual discrimination problems, imaginative thinking and diminished hand-eye coordination. Their needs are diverse, and when deciding what to teach and how to teach, language programs should aim to start with the needs of each individual child in order to capitalize on their strengths. In order to respond as effectively as possible to the different learning needs of these students, a school should dedicate its management plan to them and apply it as a team, including making decisions about methodological approaches, assessment procedures, ways to support the student and the optimal ways to organize courses according to the context in which we work. Some of the special requirements described are not so different from those of our ordinary pupils and many of the familiar principles underlying good educational practice as used by language teachers of primary pupils are appropriate. These include effective teaching strategies and techniques, material selection, task design including differentiation and classroom management skills.

Effective teaching strategies and techniques include planning and establishing well-balanced and varied learning sequences with clear objectives so that children know what is expected of them. These will also include the use of the mother tongue, as appropriate, to contextualize and support learning so that children can relate something new to something familiar and thus develop a sense of security; providing concrete, clear and meaningful contexts in which to present language, providing a multitude of repetitions, fixations and recapitulations, using a range of mimes, signs, gestures, expressions to convey and support meaning; involving active children in the learning process as much as possible by using rhyming actions and songs, stories, colouring, making things, dancing, drawing, total physical response activities and games; stimulating children's senses as much as possible through multi-sensory aids.

Children must clearly perceive the learning objectives, which must respect the main objectives classified in the Council of Europe statements, such as understanding and using common expressions. Accompanied by systematic post-activity debriefing, children will be able to perceive their progress, in many cases this being small, to be determined by the school and teaching team as part of general policy. Materials should be

varied, accessible and clear and provide plenty of stimuli and visual support in the form of pictures, objects, puppets, realia, stories, videos, ICT, etc. Tasks should provide a reasonable degree of effort or challenge within each child's language and cognitive abilities and have short-term goals and clearly defined steps leading to successful completion, as well as objective outcomes that allow for immediate feedback and a positive fixation.

In order to create their tasks, teachers must be able to assess whether each child's level of demand is appropriate and identify the types of demands. These relate to concepts and notions of language such as shape, size, colour, location, cause and effect and linguistic functions such as describing, classifying, sequencing, anticipating, etc. Teachers also need to be aware of the types of concepts their students may be dealing with at certain stages of their development. In addition, each student has their own learning style and intelligences, and some tasks may only be suitable for specific learning styles or intelligences, and will present difficulties to students who do not possess or have low levels of specific types of intelligence. Differentiation of tasks is also central to a successful methodology and should be done so that the areas of experience, for example a topic or theme, are the same for each child, but the depth in which it will be covered will be different.

A well-managed classroom will be one where routines are established, the teacher is firm but fair and establishes a safe learning environment, explaining methodological approaches to avoid a mismatch of expectations and establishing clear ways of working that will praise the whole effort, no matter how small. Classroom dynamics will be analyzed and seating plans will be implemented accordingly. Teachers' language will be analyzed with the aim of keeping instructions and demonstrations clear and simple, being sensitive to the level of challenge of different questions and being appropriately addressed to children individually and to avoid excessive talking by teachers, which it can be confusing. Students' attention will be focused on completing tasks, and teachers will be aware of the behavioral effect of activities that will be adequately monitored.

The school may decide that the help of a support teacher or teaching assistant is needed, who may be required full-time, part-time or seasonally, who may work with several students or with a whole class or just a group. In any situation where a support teacher can function, he or she can help the student learn by having a clearly defined role within the classroom, allowing time to share lesson planning and assessment with appropriate resources. Furthermore, the importance of their role in the teaching staff team must be recognised.

From Vygotsky's point of view, a child with special needs who is integrated into a regular classroom could, through cooperation and interaction with classmates, develop his knowledge, language and thinking. In primary EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes, the emphasis is on oral communication, especially in the initial stages. Thus, one of the main deficiencies of the child with additional needs is avoided, i.e. writing. This can be beneficial in that they start on an even footing with their counterparts in terms of schooling. Many of the required responses are from the whole class, so a child is rarely singled out and can learn to communicate in a foreign language without fear of failure. Integration may require the presence of a support teacher to deal with unpredictable behavior that could disrupt classmates, generating general unpleasant behavior; to explain to classmates the particular requirements of a child so that they can understand and respect these differences and the extra effort such a child may have in learning, to prevent any potential for ridicule from the group, to explain the teacher's methodology and to reinforce the class's code of conduct and liaise with parents if necessary.

Teaching languages to children with special educational needs is complex and each school needs to decide on a policy that suits them best. The principles of inclusion ethically reaffirm the right of children with special educational needs, like other children, to experience and enjoy language learning and the belief that they have the potential to benefit and progress linguistically, psychologically, cognitively, social and cultural. They will know what works. It needs to be like a collaborative learning journey, rather than one of fear. And a final thought... Let's remember that a student is much more than their school results. A six-year-old boy was sent home from school with a note saying, "This boy is too stupid to learn." That boy was Thomas Edison!

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