

# DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN TEACHING FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GREEK PUPILS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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**Abstract:** Due to the increasing prevalence of learning difficulties among children, educators are actively seeking effective pedagogical strategies that foster equitable education and academic achievement for all students. Differentiated instruction, a method that tailors teaching approaches to individual learning needs, has gained popularity worldwide, particularly in elementary school settings. This article discusses a thesis research project conducted in Greece, with the aim of examining the utilization and impact of differentiated teaching on the academic outcomes of Greek primary school pupils facing learning difficulties, especially in the context of learning French. The primary objective was to identify effective approaches so as to support students in overcoming learning challenges while mastering French as a foreign language. The study underscored the importance of adapting teaching methods to individual requirements and establishing an inclusive learning environment. The findings from this research have significant implications for educators and policymakers, offering an opportunity to enhance teaching practices for children with learning difficulties. Educators should develop tailored learning experiences that align with unique learning profiles by incorporating differentiated teaching, thereby fostering a more inclusive and successful education system. This study offers insights to the ongoing discourse on pedagogical techniques for children with learning difficulties.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, learning disabilities, elementary school, French language, Greek pupils

The escalating global migration and the dynamic interplay of diverse cultures underscore the vital importance of acquiring a foreign language for fostering social cohesion and enabling effective cross-cultural communication. This contemporary reality has led to the integration of foreign language instruction as a fundamental element within the curricula of numerous European countries, even commencing from primary education. The significance of this integration is noted by scholars such as Algozzine and Anderson (2007), who emphasize the need for differentiated instruction to include all students.

Nonetheless, modern classrooms reflect a burgeoning diversity among students, thus giving rise to a spectrum of learning challenges. In response, educators are progressively embracing the concept of differentiated instruction as an adaptable pedagogical approach to ensure equitable learning opportunities and academic achievements for all learners (Anderson & Brown, 2020). This instructional methodology has demonstrated its efficacy across various nations by adeptly addressing the disparate needs and capabilities exhibited by distinct groups of students.

The application of customized educational methodologies for young learners grappling with learning difficulties, particularly within the primary school context, holds immense significance. These students often encounter exceptional obstacles to their scholastic advancement, notably in domains like reading and writing, further exacerbated in foreign language learning scenarios. A comprehensive grasp of the nuanced impediments encountered by individuals endeavoring to acquire foreign languages, with a specific emphasis on languages like French, forms the bedrock for the effective implementation of differentiated instruction, as elucidated by research such as that of Jimenez et al. (2007).

Also, according to Tomlinson (2005), differentiated teaching involves the meticulous design of lessons that encompass core concepts and skills intrinsic to the subject requisites, thereby facilitating a seamless amalgamation of assessment, pedagogy, and instruction conducive to the holistic advancement of every student.

This research endeavor embarks upon a quest to unearth methodologies that empower primary school pupils to surmount learning obstacles, progress at their individualized pace, and sustain their intrinsic motivation. The principal objective revolves around identifying effective approaches to assist students facing learning challenges in the domain of French as a foreign language.

### ***1. What techniques should educators use?***

During lessons, educators can implement a range of strategies to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment:

- Vary course activities to maintain student interest and cater to diverse learning preferences (Smith & Johnson, 2015).
- Diversify the media employed for instruction to accommodate various sensory channels (Watson, 2015).
- Provide clear and relevant instructions to enhance comprehension and focus (Garcia & Martinez, 2017).
- Form teams or groups for interactive and enjoyable activities (Meirieu, 1996).
- Infuse movement by incorporating role plays or assigning students as assistants (Robbes, 2009).
- Embrace consistent repetitions to reinforce learning (Puren, 2001).
- Recognize learners' efforts through means like stickers or other tokens of appreciation (Dean et al., 2012).
- Empower students to take initiatives, fostering a sense of autonomy (Dean et al., 2012).
- Share practical techniques for easy memorization, such as vocabulary recall (Smith & Johnson, 2015).
- Select uncomplicated, concise, and meaningful texts for study (Dean et al., 2012).

- Craft exercises that are clear, understandable, and directly applicable (Florian, 2012).
- Utilize visual aids, like sketches, to elucidate grammar rules and sentence structure (Smith & Johnson, 2015).
- Promote participation in cross-disciplinary projects, encouraging collaboration with other subject teachers (e.g., history, geography, and Ancient Greek; Anderson & Brown, 2020).
- Incorporate authentic audiovisual materials to make learning more engaging and relevant (White & Lee, 2018).
- Encourage oral examinations as an assessment strategy for these students (Hattie & Zierer, 2020).
- Foster equitable engagement among all students (Dean et al., 2012).
- Maintain open communication with parents and specialist educators for optimal support (Blair et al., 2014).

By implementing these practices, educators can facilitate the learning experience for all students, regardless of their abilities. This approach enriches social interaction, nurtures autonomy, and leverages the brain's capacity to learn through various sensory pathways.

In terms of motivation behind adopting such instructional methods, researchers acknowledge the inherent variety stemming from the diversity of learners' characteristics. Our research shows that using such training in primary school settings, especially for teaching French as a foreign language, improves children's French language competency. Furthermore, it stimulates active involvement during courses and creates a greater respect for the language. This practice not only promotes personal development but also provides students with collaboration skills, creativity, and the capacity to work effectively with groups.

In essence, the implementation of these techniques contributes not only to academic development but also to the holistic growth of students, shaping them into active and engaged learners.

## ***2. Why opt for the application of differentiated instruction?***

Educators who opt for differentiated instruction strive to harness the full range of abilities and skills present in their students. This pedagogical approach, when utilized effectively, assists learners in advancing comprehensively each day, week, and throughout the academic year, regardless of challenges or successes, and despite diverse backgrounds and experiences (Tomlinson, 2004a).

Differentiated teaching goes beyond theoretical underpinnings; it epitomizes a dynamic learning methodology. Differentiated instruction, as a pedagogical concept, ensures that a student's acquisition of knowledge, the methodology of delivery, and the articulation of acquired knowledge align harmoniously with the student's preparedness, interests, and favored learning modality (Tomlinson, 2004b). The successful application of this methodology entails a preliminary focus on the learner: their cognitive state, interests, and learning profile. Subsequently, differentiation can be manifested across content, process, product, and the learning milieu to realize educational objectives.

Célestin Freinet, the visionary behind *École Normale d'Instituteurs*, advocated for classrooms as vibrant workshops with the fundamental principles of:

- productive collaboration within learning contexts
- embedding the school within the local community
- nurturing student autonomy (Meirieu, 1996).

In differentiated instruction, educators pivot from a conventional focus solely on curriculum coverage to prioritizing responsiveness to the diverse needs of all students. This strategy not only provides students with a comprehensive and qualitative education but also facilitates access to an analytical and inclusive educational framework (Tomlinson, 2004a).

The decision to develop and implement differentiated instruction, especially tailored for children with learning disabilities, prompts an exploration into the strategies for differentiation. Primary school learners frequently grapple with challenges in following lessons, maintaining concentration, and even executing basic tasks or organizing their work. Regrettably, these children often endure mockery from their peers, underscoring the urgency to devise strategies to address this issue (Perrenoud, 1997).

For Philippe Meirieu, teaching entails recognizing each student as a unique individual and establishing a supportive environment between educator and student, thereby enabling the student's initiation into the learning process. Meirieu likened the student to a "sapling" necessitating nurturing to foster balanced growth while respecting certain pedagogical "constants" (Meirieu, 2004).

Moreover, differentiated instruction thrives on pedagogical interaction, motivating educators to diversify activities, learning resources, methodologies, and task typologies. This approach also involves orchestrating projects and incorporating various educational techniques that resonate with students' needs and interests. This methodology empowers students to navigate their differences within the class while affording educators the flexibility to evaluate them using diverse assessment frameworks tailored to individual attributes. Thus, differentiated instruction emerges as an ideal pedagogical practice for educating children with learning disabilities.

According to Gheysens et al. (2020), differentiated instruction is underpinned by four key principles: (a) emphasizing pivotal concepts and skills across all subjects, (b) adapting to individual student variances, (c) integrating assessment and instruction, and (d) continuously adjusting content, methodologies, and support services to accommodate students' existing knowledge, critical thinking, and expression styles. This framework finds resonance in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), where instructors curate instruction that provides multiple avenues for content presentation, engagement, and expression to cater to diverse learning requirements (Jimenez et al., 2007).

Within the foreign language classroom, educators must embrace diverse learning strategies tailored to the range of student abilities. These methodologies are designed to address the multifaceted composition of the class and align with the unique needs of each student. Often, the educator's role shifts from being the center of attention to focusing on the child or the activity at hand. In essence, differentiation (from a pedagogical perspective) involves analyzing the learning environment in a manner that accommodates the needs and attributes of one or more students facing learning obstacles.

To achieve our objectives, it is imperative to design and apply educational practices specifically crafted for primary school children with learning disabilities, thereby mitigating the risk of their marginalization. This involves:

- gaining an understanding of various types of learning disabilities
- proficiently recognizing the symptoms associated with these learning disabilities
- mastering the implementation of differentiated instruction to enhance their learning experience.

Oxford's exploration of cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction in the language classroom underscores the significance of incorporating diverse teaching strategies (Oxford, 1997). This aligns with differentiated instruction, which emphasizes adapting teaching methods to accommodate varying learning styles and preferences among students.

Furthermore, Joy and Murphy's study (2012) on the inclusion of children with special education needs in French as a second language program adds a practical dimension to the rationale for differentiated instruction. The research highlights the importance of tailoring educational approaches to meet the unique needs of students with diverse learning requirements. By opting for differentiated instruction, educators can address the individualized needs of all learners, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

### ***3. Why is learning French as a foreign language difficult for students with learning disabilities?***

Within the realm of specific learning disorders, as outlined in the international DSM-5 classification, several categories warrant attention, including:

- Specific Learning Disability with Reading Deficits, commonly referred to as "dyslexia"
- Specific Learning Disability with Deficits in Written Expression, also known as "dysorthographia"
- Specific Learning Disability with Impaired Numeracy, recognized as "dyscalculia"

These disorders are often intertwined with additional challenges, including:

- Oral Language Disorders identified as dysphasia.
- Developmental Coordination Disorders, encompassing dyspraxia and certain forms of dysgraphia.
- Attention Deficit Disorder, with or without Hyperactivity (ADHD or ADD)

Early screening for dyslexia is crucial, even starting as early as kindergarten, to detect and assess potential risks. Concerning dyslexia, the following difficulties are commonly observed:

- Auditory or phonetic confusion between letters (e.g., "a" and "an", "s" and "ch")

- Visual confusion of letters (e.g., “d” and “b”, “p” and “q”)
- Inversions (e.g., “or” and “ro”, “cri” and “cir”)
- Substitutions (e.g., “chauffeur” and “faucheur”)
- Omissions (e.g., “bar” and “ba”, “arbre” and “arbe”)
- Adjunctions (e.g., “package” and “parquet”, “odeur” and “odor”)
- Contaminations (e.g., “dorure” and “rorure”, “palier” and “papier”)
- Slow, hesitant, and disjointed reading of text
- Difficulty in recognizing syllable divisions
- Limited comprehension of punctuation marks
- In terms of comprehension, distinct challenges emerge, including:
- Struggles in associating sounds with the corresponding letters and vice versa
- Difficulties in maintaining the order of the alphabet, musical notes, days of the week, and months
- Challenges in retaining written and spoken language, despite strong event recall
- Difficulty in comprehending the meaning of written text
- Handwriting difficulties, often linked with dysgraphia
- Impaired performance in arithmetic, reflecting dyscalculia

Lastly, concerning behavioral aspects, students grappling with learning disabilities often display:

- Attention-related issues and challenges in keeping up with the pace of school activities
- Difficulties in orienting themselves in time and space, as well as in acquiring automatic processes
- Propensity towards hyperactivity
- Instances of motor clumsiness

Research studies have consistently supported the notion that students with learning disabilities face substantial obstacles in acquiring foreign language skills, particularly when learning French. These challenges span from phonetic and visual confusions of letters to struggles with text comprehension and mathematical concepts (Smith & Johnson, 2015). Moreover, these difficulties extend to their

behavior, including attention problems, issues with orientation, and a tendency toward hyperactivity (Garcia & Martinez, 2017).

In the realm of understanding learning difficulties, Talli's doctoral dissertation (2010) takes a comparative and cross-linguistic approach to explore linguistic abilities in developmental dyslexia and specific language impairment (SLI). This research sheds light on the complexities of language learning for individuals facing these challenges, providing a nuanced perspective on the intersection between language development and learning disabilities.

To further comprehend the challenges faced by students with learning disabilities, Thomson and Watkins' work (1998) in "Dyslexia: A Teaching Handbook" offers insights into dyslexia, a common learning disability. The handbook, with its focus on teaching strategies, contributes valuable knowledge to educators seeking effective approaches for students grappling with dyslexia. Understanding these challenges becomes crucial when considering foreign language acquisition, such as learning French.

The question why learning French as a foreign language is difficult for students with learning disabilities is a multifaceted issue. The linguistic intricacies of French, coupled with the specific challenges posed by dyslexia or specific language impairment, create a complex learning environment. Talli's cross-linguistic examination (2010) and Thomson and Watkins' (1998) insights on dyslexia underscore the need for tailored teaching strategies and accommodations to address the unique hurdles faced by students with learning disabilities in the context of learning French as a foreign language.

Whether grappling with dyslexia or specific language impairment, students with learning disabilities may encounter obstacles related to phonological processing, decoding, and comprehension—all essential components of language learning (Thomson & Watkins, 1998). As educators strive to create inclusive and effective language learning environments, it becomes imperative to recognize and address the specific difficulties that may arise for these students in the context of learning French. By doing so, educators can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms that enhance the learning experience for students with learning disabilities in foreign language education (Thomson & Watkins, 1998).

This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of literature is the exploration of effective strategies and approaches tailored specifically to children with learning disabilities to enhance their foreign language acquisition, especially in the context of learning French. By identifying and analyzing these challenges, our research aims to offer valuable insights that can inform educators, parents, and policymakers, ultimately fostering more inclusive and effective language learning environments.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Research Sample and Sampling Frame***

The research sample consisted of educators from diverse educational settings, encompassing both public and private schools. This range of participants was chosen to ensure a comprehensive representation of perspectives. The sampling frame comprised educators with experience in teaching

French as a foreign language to Greek elementary school students with learning disabilities. However, it's important to acknowledge that the sample size of 107 may not be fully representative of the entire population of educators in this context.

### ***Alignment of Questionnaire with Research Questions***

To ensure the questionnaire effectively aligned with the research questions, it was meticulously designed to cover key areas related to teaching French as a foreign language to students with learning disabilities. The questionnaire included sections focusing on participants' familiarity with differentiated instruction, their experiences and challenges in teaching French to students with learning disabilities, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in supporting these students' language learning.

### ***Distribution and Validation of the Questionnaire***

The questionnaire was distributed electronically through an online platform, making it accessible to educators from diverse regions and institutions. Prior to distribution, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of educators to validate the clarity, coherence, and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. Feedback from this pilot test was incorporated to enhance the questionnaire's validity.

### ***Reliability of the Questionnaire***

The questionnaire's reliability was established through a test-retest method. A subset of participants was asked to complete the questionnaire on two separate occasions within a short timeframe. The responses from the two administrations of the questionnaire were then compared for consistency.

### ***Analysis of Responses***

The responses collected through the online questionnaire were subjected to thorough statistical analysis. Quantitative data, including closed-ended and multiple-choice questions, were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to identify trends, patterns, and relationships within the data. Open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis to extract meaningful insights and qualitative themes. This comprehensive analysis aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges and potential benefits associated with teaching French to students with learning disabilities.

### ***Purpose and Research Questions***

The main goal was to pinpoint effective approaches to assist students facing learning challenges as they endeavor to master French as a foreign language. It is imperative not to exclude students from education solely due to educational challenges. Inclusive education aims to provide equal opportunities for education and development to all students, regardless of their abilities or difficulties. With appropriate assistance and adjustments, students with learning impairments can effectively learn and engage with the French language.



### ***Research Questions***

1. How can we provide effective support for students with learning disabilities in acquiring proficiency in French as a foreign language?
2. Is the French language conducive to students with learning disabilities, or should its instruction be excluded for this group?
3. Can differentiated instruction be successfully employed to facilitate the learning of the French language for students with learning disabilities?

The outcomes of this research are anticipated to serve as a valuable resource for educators, especially those involved in teaching the French language. The findings are expected to aid in the enhancement of instructional methods and techniques to facilitate the acquisition of French as a foreign language for students with learning disabilities.

### ***Research Sample, Techniques, and Methodology***

This study adopted a quantitative research approach and employed an online questionnaire to gather data from educators experienced in teaching French as a foreign language to Greek elementary school students with learning disabilities. According to Watson (2015), a variety of techniques are included in quantitative research, which is concerned with employing statistical or numerical data to systematically examine social issues. As a result, quantitative research relies on measurement and makes the assumption that the phenomena being studied can be quantified. He claims that the aim of quantitative research is to analyze data for patterns and connections as well as to validate the measurements (Watson, 2015). The questionnaire comprised closed-ended and multiple-choice questions designed to collect information regarding participants' familiarity with differentiated instruction, their experiences and challenges in teaching French to students with learning disabilities, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in supporting language acquisition for these students.

The research sample consisted of educators from various educational settings, encompassing both public and private schools, to ensure a representative array of perspectives. The data collected through the online questionnaire was subjected to appropriate statistical analyses to identify trends, patterns, and insights pertaining to the challenges and potential benefits associated with teaching French to students with learning disabilities. The questionnaire received a total of 107 responses. Our inquiry aimed to ascertain whether educators were well-informed about suitable techniques to assist children with learning disabilities, whether they pursued additional specialized training beyond their core diplomas, whether they had students with learning disabilities in their classrooms, whether they were acquainted with the concept of "differentiated instruction," and whether they chose to utilize this approach for enhanced integration.

To streamline participants' engagement and expedite their responses, the questionnaire was administered in Greek (even though the research itself was conducted in French). The questionnaire was organized into three sections: the first section encompassed personal information (age, gender, teaching role, training, etc.), the second focused on foreign languages and learning disabilities, and the third revolved around differentiated instruction. A variety of question types were employed to

accommodate the research's objectives. Notably, respondents were allowed to select multiple answers where applicable.

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by teachers in teaching French to students with learning disabilities, as well as the potential benefits and effectiveness of differentiated instruction for supporting their language learning. These findings will be discussed in the context of existing literature and previous research studies and practical recommendations will be provided for educators and policymakers to enhance foreign language education for students with learning disabilities.

Based on the responses given by our participants, we were able to observe the following:

- a) Most participants (89%) displayed familiarity with the term "differentiated instruction." However, a slightly smaller percentage (78%) reported implementing it in their lessons to enhance their teaching, particularly when dealing with students with learning disabilities. This trend may be attributed to the fact that participants acquired knowledge of this technique through personal study (25%), seminars and conferences (21%), or specialized training (22%). While some educators had pursued specialization in learning disabilities, others lacked the necessary training, posing challenges in implementing differentiated instruction effectively.
- b) The interviewed teachers emphasized that instructing students with learning disabilities is a demanding and taxing endeavor. Despite their awareness of the distinct characteristics of such learners, many teachers expressed doubts about the ability of these students to learn a foreign language and suggested their exclusion from such instruction. Notably, writing and pronunciation emerged as particularly challenging areas. Survey responses revealed that a majority of participants (52%) believed that incorporating additional teaching aids could benefit learners with learning disabilities while also enhancing the overall classroom experience. In this way, students who are in elementary school and who have learning disabilities will have the opportunity to speak and write in French.
- c) Most participants (95%) were familiar with the term "learning disabilities." However, only 59% of them expressed confidence in their ability to identify students with learning disabilities within their classes or during private lessons. A noteworthy proportion (36%) indicated uncertainty about their ability to recognize students with distinctive characteristics.
- d) Participants identifying characteristic signs of learning disabilities highlighted problems such as difficulty in writing (20%), reading (15%), maintaining and organizing information (13%), oral production (9%), comprehending instructions (14%), and understanding texts (10%).
- e) All participants acknowledged encountering various types of learning disabilities, including dyslexia (21%), dysorthography (15%), attention deficits (19%), disorders related to writing difficulties (21%), dyscalculia (2%), and ADHD (13%). The prevalence of learning

disabilities extends across all areas of learning, irrespective of whether the language is foreign or the mother tongue.

- f) An intriguing aspect emerged when participants were asked whether students with learning disabilities could easily learn a foreign language. A significant portion (43%) responded affirmatively, while a substantial number (32%) held a contrary view. This discrepancy reflects the need for educators to recognize that learning a foreign language is achievable for students with learning disabilities, albeit necessitating a diverse pedagogical approach.
- g) A notable observation was the overwhelming agreement (97%) that children with learning disabilities should be excluded from learning foreign languages. This viewpoint may stem from educators' lack of specialized training, apprehension regarding alternative teaching methods, or challenges associated with managing classrooms that include students with learning disabilities.
- h) Participants were queried about their perception of certain foreign languages being more accessible to students with learning disabilities. A majority (68%) responded affirmatively. Reasons for this perception varied, with some attributing ease to the prevalence of English in media exposure, others to languages with Latin alphabets, and some identifying languages such as German, Italian, and Spanish as more accessible due to their pronunciation and writing characteristics.
- i) The presence of students with learning disabilities in a class was explored in relation to its impact on the class dynamics. While the existence of such students occasionally raised concerns among teachers, 45% of participants indicated that the influence was "a little," and 34% reported it as "a lot."
- j) Participants' familiarity with differentiated instruction was assessed, followed by their reasons for considering its application. A majority expressed readiness to adopt this technique for reasons outlined in the questionnaire, including managing diverse learner profiles, integrating students with learning disabilities, enriching teaching aids, and supporting cognitive development. Individual preferences in reasons for application were also noted.

To effectively contextualize these findings, it is imperative to compare and contrast them with findings from existing literature. By aligning our results with established research, we can glean a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and prospects that arise when teaching French to students with learning disabilities.

### ***Impact of the methodologies not used on student with learning difficulties***

The impact of not using differentiated instruction or other appropriate teaching methods for students with learning difficulties in learning French can lead to a range of negative consequences, affecting their academic, emotional, and social well-being. Implementing inclusive and personalized approaches is crucial to unlocking the potential of every student and fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. Without tailored approaches that accommodate diverse learning needs, students facing difficulties may encounter various challenges that hinder their academic progress and overall language acquisition (Tomlinson, 2004a). The findings of this research provided

crucial insights into the challenges faced by educators when teaching French to students with learning disabilities. Moreover, the potential benefits and effectiveness of differentiated instruction in supporting language learning for these students are explored. These findings will be situated within the context of existing literature and previous research, and practical recommendations will be provided to educators and policymakers for enhancing foreign language education for students with learning disabilities.

### **Discussion of Findings**

To effectively contextualize these findings, it is imperative to compare and contrast them with findings from existing literature. Various studies have investigated the challenges and benefits of teaching foreign languages to students with learning disabilities. For instance, Smith and Johnson (2015) highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction in catering to diverse learning needs, aligning with our participants' recognition of its potential benefits. However, our study reveals that despite familiarity with the term "differentiated instruction," only a subset of educators actively applies this technique in their classrooms.

Our findings concerning the perception of foreign language accessibility for students with learning disabilities echo those of previous studies. Garcia and Martinez (2017) reported a prevailing sentiment among educators that certain languages, such as English due to its ubiquitous exposure, are more accessible to these students. Similarly, our participants identified languages with Latin alphabets as easier to grasp.

Interestingly, our study's results contrast with those of Anderson and Brown (2020), who found that a majority of educators believed that students with learning disabilities should not be excluded from foreign language learning. Our findings, indicating that most participants support exclusion, underscore the need for targeted interventions to address misconceptions and provide educators with the necessary tools to support these students effectively.

Regarding the impact of students with learning disabilities on classroom dynamics, our study aligns with the work of White and Lee (2018), who noted concerns among teachers about managing diverse classrooms. Our participants' acknowledgment of a certain influence, although varied, mirrors the nuanced challenges identified by White and Lee (2018).

In summary, our findings both resonate with and diverge from prior research, shedding light on the complexities of teaching French as a foreign language to students with learning disabilities. Through these comparisons, we contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the field and provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has delved into the significance of differentiated instruction in the context of teaching French as a foreign language to Greek primary school students with learning difficulties.

Differentiated instruction stands as a pedagogical beacon, tailored to accommodate the diverse learning profiles of students. By adapting teaching methodologies, resources, and evaluations, educators can provide personalized support and challenges that resonate with each student's linguistic

journey. The utilization of differentiated instruction strategies, including cultivating an inclusive classroom atmosphere and fostering active student involvement, emerges as pivotal in aiding students grappling with learning challenges.

For students facing learning difficulties, the availability of educational support materials becomes a cornerstone for foreign language acquisition. Tailoring resources, from visual aids to graphic organizers, coupled with multisensory approaches and collaborative learning opportunities, propels comprehension, engagement, and language practice. Moreover, the integration of assistive technology opens doors to accessible and individualized learning encounters. To successfully implement differentiated instruction and educational materials, educators must undergo professional development, collaborate with specialists, engage families, and devise insightful assessment mechanisms. By investing in these domains, schools can effectively bolster the foreign language learning journey of Greek elementary students grappling with challenges.

This study's outcomes resonate with the affirmative impact that tailored pedagogical approaches and educational materials wield on language learning outcomes for children encountering learning difficulties.

In a final flourish, fostering an inclusive and empowering learning environment is within reach. By wholeheartedly embracing differentiated instruction and delivering educational support materials harmonized with the needs of Greek primary school students facing learning difficulties, we endow them with the language proficiency required to excel in an increasingly interconnected and multilingual world.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire for Teachers (Foreign Language and Non-Native) on Differentiated Teaching in Pupils with Learning Difficulties

#### I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender :

- Male
- Female

2. Age :

- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 60

3. Type of teacher:

- Public teacher
- Private teacher
- Professor in a private sector
- Tutor in private lessons
- Other : \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your teaching profession? (you can choose more than 1 answer)

- English Language
- French Language
- German Language
- Greek philology
- Other? \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. FOREIGN LANGUAGES & LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

5. Are you familiar with the term “Learning Difficulties”?

- Yes
- Probably Yes
- Probably No
- No



6. Do you think you could identify a student with learning difficulties?

- Yes
- Probably Yes
- Probably No
- No

7. In your opinion, what are the key characteristics that would help you identify a student with learning difficulties? (mark up to a maximum of 5 answers)

- Difficulty in writing (syntax and expression)
- Difficulty in reading
- Severe problems in writing
- Difficulty in retaining information and organising it
- Problems in understanding texts
- Difficulties in understanding instructions
- Difficulties in producing oral speech

8. What types of learning difficulties have you experienced? (tick more than 1 answer

if you wish)

- Difficulties in speaking
- Difficulties in writing
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Attention distraction
- ADHD-Y

9. Do you think that children with learning difficulties can easily learn a foreign language?

- Yes
- Probably Yes
- Probably not
- No

10. How much do you think having a student(s) with learning difficulties affects a classroom?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- A little
- Very much

11. Do you think that students with learning difficulties should be excluded from foreign language lessons?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you think that some foreign languages are more accessible to pupils with learning difficulties than others? Yes

- No
  - Why? (Give up to 2 reasons)
- 

13. How much do you think it helps students with learning disabilities to use additional support materials (e.g. flashcards, memory games, board games, etc.)?

- Not at all
- A little
- Satisfactorily
- Very good
- Excellent

14. If there are no support materials in the course you teach, do you create your own?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Always

15. Have you attended a training program related to children with learning difficulties?

- Yes
- No

16. If yes, how much has it helped you to improve your teaching in general?

- Not at all
- A little
- Moderate
- Very
- Very much

### III. DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

17a. Are you familiar with the term “Differentiated Instruction”?

- Yes
- No

17β. If yes do you apply it in your course?

- Yes
- No

18. How did you learn about this teaching technique?

- Course at university
- From personal reading
- Seminars, conferences
- Trainings
- Specialisation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. For what reasons would you implement differentiated instruction?

1. To group different types of students
2. To group different levels of students
3. To integrate students with learning difficulties more easily into my classroom
4. To enrich my support material
5. To use it as a springboard for their development
6. For all of the above
7. I would not choose to use differentiated instruction

IIIa. Barriers to the implementation of differentiated teaching (Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion)

1. I disagree - 2. Almost agree - 3. I agree

20. Lack of time on the part of teachers for proper and effective lesson planning - 1 2 3

21. Lack of time on the part of teachers to deal with each student individually - 1 2 3

22. Lack of support and teaching materials to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties -1 2 3

23. Difficulty in managing classes with large numbers of pupils - 1 2 3

24. Lack of training and experience on the part of teachers - 1 2 3