



Creating Inclusive and Accessible World Language Classrooms: Supporting Students with Language-Based Learning Differences

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Abstract

There are increasing numbers of neurodivergent students in international school settings, many of whom present with language-based learning disabilities. In educational systems that do not offer specialized intervention programs, these students are often expected to navigate the same course sequences and academic demands as their neurotypical peers. One area where this challenge frequently emerges is in world language classrooms. While some educational systems provide exemptions from world language study for students with significant language-based learning difficulties, many international schools do not. As a result, world language teachers are tasked with supporting these learners, often with limited training, resources, or guidance. This presentation is designed to equip world language educators with practical knowledge and tools to better support students with language-based learning differences. Participants will develop an understanding of common language-based learning disabilities, including how associated strengths and challenges may manifest in world language learning. Through classroom examples and evidence-informed practices, attendees will learn how to identify potential barriers to learning, implement effective accommodations and instructional strategies, and create more accessible and inclusive language-learning environments. Participants will leave with actionable approaches they can immediately apply in their classrooms to improve engagement, participation, and success for neurodivergent learners. **Scope:** As international schools become increasingly diverse, world language educators are teaching growing numbers of students with neurodevelopmental differences, including language-based learning disabilities such as dyslexia and developmental language disorder. In many international school settings, specialized intervention programs or exemptions from world language study are limited or unavailable, requiring students with language-based learning differences to participate in the same language curriculum as their peers. Consequently, world language teachers are expected to support a wide range of learning needs, yet often receive little formal preparation in special education or in evidence-based instructional practices. This presentation examines the intersection of language acquisition, neurodevelopment, and inclusive instructional design, providing educators with a practical framework for supporting neurodivergent learners in world language classrooms. Participants will review current research on language-based learning disabilities and their impact



on second language acquisition, including the cognitive and linguistic processes that influence learning. The session will explore how these learning differences may present in classroom performance and discuss strategies for distinguishing between language acquisition challenges and underlying learning disabilities. Drawing upon evidence-based educational practices, participants will examine instructional approaches, accommodations, and classroom supports that reduce barriers to learning while maintaining high academic expectations. Practical examples will illustrate how educators can adapt instruction, assessment, and classroom routines to improve accessibility, engagement, and participation for diverse learners. The presentation will also highlight principles of inclusive education that promote equitable access to language learning across international school contexts. Attendees will leave with an evidenced-based understanding of language-based learning disabilities and a toolbox of applicable strategies to create more accessible, inclusive, and supportive world language learning environments.

Objective/Motivation: World language educators are increasingly serving students with language-based learning disabilities in classrooms where specialized intervention services or exemptions from language study are unavailable. Despite this growing need, many teachers receive limited preparation in recognizing language-based learning differences or implementing evidence-based instructional support. This presentation is motivated by the need to bridge research and classroom practice by providing educators with knowledge and strategies to promote equitable access to world language learning for neurodivergent students. The objective of this session is to increase educators' understanding of common language-based learning disabilities and their impact on second language acquisition while equipping participants with evidence-informed instructional practices that support student success. Participants will examine how learning disabilities may influence language learning and explore accommodations, instructional strategies, and classroom supports that reduce barriers without lowering academic expectations. Through authentic classroom examples and practical applications, attendees will be able to identify potential learning challenges, design more accessible instruction, and foster inclusive learning environments that enable all students to meaningfully engage in world language education. By the conclusion of the session, participants will have actionable tools they can immediately implement to improve engagement, participation, and learning outcomes for students with diverse learning profiles.

Keywords: Inclusive Language Classroom