

## Foreign Language and Special Education

*Sandra Brunner Evarrs*

*Steven E. Knotek*

Special education is an outcome of a century-old legal and reform movement that came to fruition in public schools with the passage by Congress in 1975 of the Education of All Handicapped Act, PL 94-142. Special education is, simply put, focused education that arose out of a legal directive for schools and teachers to instructionally meet the educational requirements of students within ten core categories of special needs. This array of special needs is expansive, ranging from narrowly defined learning issues to visual sensory impairment to cognitive delays.

When the average person thinks of attributes that define a special education student, what terms come to mind? For many people a range of terms describing various deficits will surface, including, perhaps, *impaired*, *slow*, *dependent*, and *behavior problem*—but certainly not the word *capable*. People often see students with special needs through a black-and-white lens: either they are special education and limited, or they are regular education and competent. The reality of the situation is of course far more complex; all students have strengths and all students have areas that may benefit from improvement.

Almost all teachers make modifications to some extent so that their instruction will better fit individual students' educational needs. Teachers are often comfortable with some degree of difference among their students and make adjustments accordingly. For example, a first-grade teacher may target reading instruction so that some students receive more instruction in acquiring reading fluency, while other students receive more instruction in comprehension strategies. Likewise, students who receive special education services are not an undifferentiated amalgam of humanity. Rather, they are individual children whose unique attributes have been mandated to be taken into account when instruction is being planned. All of our students should be so lucky.

Foreign language teachers should keep the following points in mind about teaching students who receive special education services: (a) Special education is a broad legal mandate designed to impact the delivery of education to a wide variety of students, and (b) the vast majority of students receiving special education services have their core language skills intact. This chapter will review specifics of special education legal concerns, describe some of the general learning issues associated with some prominent special education categories, and offer suggestions for possible accommodations to support students' acquisition of foreign language.

## Special Education and Legal Requirements

The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) is federally funded to assist schools to guarantee and ensure that all students with special learning requirements have access to fair and appropriate education programs. IDEA has categorized thirteen different disabilities that qualify for special education services. Despite these children's deficits they are all capable of learning and have many abilities. Students who fall under the IDEA disability spectrum comprise approximately 12% of the general school population. Of the students identified with a disability, approximately 50% of them have a learning disability (Jones, Apling, Mangan, & Smole, 2004). Key elements of IDEA are Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

### Free and Appropriate Public Education

Under the IDEA all children who receive special education services are entitled to an appropriate education at no cost as directed by their individualized education program. Under the laws and court decisions, FAPE requires that an *educational benefit* be conferred upon the child. Educational benefit should be measured through both academic and social progress.

### Individualized Education Program

A critically important feature of the law governing special education specifies that regular teachers, a designation which can include foreign language teachers, will be part of the team that develops each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is especially important since the law removes barriers to placing disabled children in regular classroom settings and ties the education of children with disabilities more closely to the regular education curriculum. The current educational policy of inclusion which has been adopted in the general curriculum includes areas such as math, language arts, and science and should also include foreign language instruction.

An Individualized Education Program is a plan developed for each child receiving special education services. An IEP must include an evaluation of the child's academic performance and learning characteristics, social and emotional performance, health and physical development, annual goals, short-term objectives to meet those goals, school environment and service recommendations, a detailing of the extent to which the student will participate in other school activities, any related service recommendations, and a detailing of the extent to which the student will participate in state and citywide assessments, either with or without modifications. IEPs can be reviewed at any time upon request from any of the interested parties, and by law these must be reviewed at least once a year.

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against students with physical and mental disabilities who attend public school (Smith, 1998). This section protects students whose physical or mental impairments substantially limit one or more *major life activities*, for example, caring for themselves, seeing, breathing, walking, and learning. This statute protects both children with physical and mental disabilities who are not and should not be receiving special education services and children receiving special education services. Section 504 requires school districts to develop and implement standards and procedures for identifying, assessing, and assuring appropriate placement of eligible students; ensure the provision of necessary individualized services and support; and train teachers and support staff to perform services or make accommodations in the classrooms. Section 504 can require administration of medication, monitoring students' physical well-being, provision of accessible facilities, use of equipment like tape recorders and calculators, counseling, and test modifications or accommodations. Both Section 504 and IDEA are available to assist students with learning problems.

### Foreign Language Learning Difficulties

Many students, identified for special education services or not, have some difficulty acquiring a foreign language. Numerous theories provide possible explanations for students' learning issues; these explanations run the gamut from auditory ability, anxiety, memory, subaverage reading ability, inability to maintain focus, and difficulties with the student's first language.

#### Auditory Ability

In the 1960s Paul Pimsleur, a foreign language researcher, and his colleagues found that students who experienced difficulty in foreign languages often would have deficits in *auditory ability*. This auditory ability refers to the skills in learning sound/symbol correspondences and sounds that are required to succeed in acquiring a foreign language (Pimsleur, 1968; Pimsleur, Sundland, & McIntyre, 1964). These skills are required when repeating sounds and phrases and when encoding from auditory stimulus. Difficulty with auditory rehearsal may also interfere with foreign language development. If a student is unable to distinguish phonemes, foreign language acquisition may be compromised and accuracy will be weakly developed.

#### Language Skills

Another theory addressing the question of why students experience foreign language learning difficulties is that the basic language skills are below grade level. Drinklage (1971) studied cases at Harvard University and hypothesized that



students exhibiting differences in the foreign language requirement demonstrated a similar learning profile as individuals with dyslexia. These learning struggles included problems with discrimination of sounds and syllables, verbal memory, reading, and spelling. Symptomatology of dyslexia can cause severe learning problems in the student's first language and, in turn, will negatively affect a student's acquisition of a second.

### **Other Possible Causes for Foreign Language Learning Difficulties**

Some of the learning deficits that may negatively impact foreign language learning are memory difficulties, high anxiety, distractibility, poor reading skills, and inability to mimic (Arries, 1999). Although an anxious student may have the abilities to acquire a foreign language successfully, the anxiety symptoms negatively impact the student's learning.

### **IDEA Disabilities and Foreign Language Expectations**

It has been established that not all students learn foreign languages with the same ease or to the same degree of success as their peers. Differentiation of students' foreign language abilities can be further described within the range of categorical definitions found within IDEA.

These federal definitions guide how states define who is eligible for a free appropriate public education under IDEA. The definitions of disability terms and guidelines for foreign language production expectations are as follows:

#### **Autism**

Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age of three, which adversely affects educational performance. Characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to changes in daily routines or the environment, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. Because of autism's negative impact on verbal and nonverbal communication, acquisition of foreign language will most likely be compromised. Some children with autism may exhibit signs of echolalia which is a repetition of sound, words, or phrases in a perseverative manner. Teachers should use caution when interpreting echolalia, as there is often a lack of purposeful meaning associated with this autistic characteristic.

**Deaf-Blindness**

Deaf-Blindness is concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that these cannot be accommodated in special education programs designed solely for children with deafness or children with blindness. These students diagnosed with Deaf-Blindness will have compromised ability to fully learn a foreign language. These students will more likely have their program concentrated on general communication and adaptive abilities.

**Deafness**

Deafness is a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects educational performance. The inability of these students to hear will significantly impact their foreign language acquisition. In most cases these students and their families choose to focus their educational programming within the general education curriculum.

**Emotional Disturbance**

An Emotional Disturbance is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- a. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- b. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- d. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Students diagnosed with an Emotional Disturbance will most often be able to learn a foreign language with appropriate accommodations, modifications, and support. These students will often have behavior intervention plans and reinforcement programs which require utilization in every school environment, including the foreign language class.

### **Hearing Impairment**

A Hearing Impairment is an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of *deafness*. Students with hearing impairments can often still be included in the general foreign language courses. These students may require FM devices or monitoring of hearing assistive devices. The production of proper sound formation in foreign languages may be difficult as a result of the weakened ability to hear and mimic sounds and enunciations.

### **Mental Retardation**

Mental Retardation is a significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Mental retardation will negatively impact the student's ability to fully fulfill the typical requirements of a foreign language program. General language development is usually significantly delayed in these students. These students should not automatically be excluded from the foreign language curriculum simply due to their limited intellectual capacity. Often students can learn basic vocabulary and concepts with repetition and review. Teachers can choose to teach the most important words and concepts in lieu of the entire curriculum which general education students would complete.

### **Multiple Disabilities**

Multiple Disabilities is concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, and similar co-occurring impairments), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that these cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. Students with Multiple Impairments will most likely experience tremendous difficulty, and often teachers and parents choose to focus the student's education on more basic skills rather than have the student attempt a foreign language.

### **Orthopedic Impairment**

An Orthopedic Impairment is a severe impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly impairments, by disease, and by other factors. Most often an Orthopedic Impairment does not affect a student's intellectual and academic performance within a classroom with the exception of confounding secondary disabilities such as a Mental Impairment. These students can enroll in foreign language with very few curriculum accommodations, but they may require support in order to access appropriate



equipment such as chairs, desks, keyboards, slant boards, and the like. Each student with an orthopedic impairment requires unique accommodations directly related to the specific needs.

### **Other Health Impairment**

Other Health Impairment (OHI) is having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that causes limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, resulting from chronic or acute health problems (for example, a heart condition, asthma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, epilepsy, hemophilia, leukemia, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and diabetes) and adversely affecting a child's educational performance. Due to the extreme variability of skills and deficits of these students, a general expectation regarding their foreign language production cannot be made. Most often students with OHI simply require environmental and/or medical accommodations. Each student's needs are different, and the IEP should reflect these distinctive needs.

### **Specific Learning Disability**

A Specific Learning Disability is 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 an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. It is important to remember that students diagnosed with learning disabilities must have at minimum an average intellectual capacity. As a group, students with diagnosed learning disabilities vary greatly in their expected foreign language production. For example, a student with a learning disability in the area of math computation may not exhibit any signs of foreign language learning difficulties; however, a student diagnosed with a reading decoding learning disability may experience tremendous difficulty in learning a foreign language. When teaching a student diagnosed with a learning disability, it is imperative that teachers learn about the student's specific learning needs, processing deficits, and strengths.

### **Speech or Language Impairment**

A Speech or Language Impairment is a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Students with this disability will probably require some consultation between the foreign language teacher and the speech

language therapist. Techniques and strategies used in speech language sessions can often be transferred to foreign language instruction. The speech language therapist can also assist the foreign language teacher in the understanding of the student's processing deficits and the overall effect of these on language production.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury**

Traumatic Brain Injury is an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open-or closed-head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities, cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, nor does it include brain injuries induced by birth trauma. Often these students will exhibit an uneven language development trajectory, which may create struggles in learning a foreign language. Students who fall in this disability category can vary greatly in their intellectual abilities and academic performance; therefore students must be addressed according to their own specific abilities and deficits. Memory is often weak in these students, a weakness which in turn will impair both long-term and short-term memory retention. Accommodations and modifications applied in the general education classroom should be implemented within the foreign language environment; however, these may require some reconfiguring as a consequence of the novelty and lack of background knowledge of the specific foreign language.

### **Visual Impairment Including Blindness**

A Visual Impairment Including Blindness is an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. These students have their hearing intact and therefore will be able to fully learn a foreign language with a few exceptions. Reading a foreign language will obviously be very difficult for these students. The foreign language curriculum will need to be modified in order to meet these students at their instructional level. It is most likely that students with a visual impairment will learn a foreign language through a more auditory mode of instruction.

### **Individualized Education Plans and Disabilities**

Students can qualify for special education services under a variety of categories. When teaching a foreign language to a student who receives special education services, the teacher may find it useful to consider how aspects of the student's categorical definition



can inform foreign language instruction. In fact, instructional issues related to a student's disability can be addressed within his or her IEP.

Students diagnosed with one or more of the thirteen disabilities as defined by IDEA must have an Individualized Education Plan which delineates the annual goals, accommodations, and modifications. This IEP must be reviewed at a minimum of once a year in order to update the learning goals, teaching strategies, and other elements included there. Foreign language teachers can be included as part of these annual meetings in order to provide feedback as it relates to foreign language study.

Although students may have a disability diagnosis, this identification does not define and outline their educational program. The individual's learning characteristics should guide the learning program, accommodations, and modifications. The following will review the accommodations and modifications which may be used for each developmental level. It is important to note that there are numerous students without a defined disability who would also greatly benefit from these accommodations and modifications. Delivering an academic program to a room full of unique students is a challenge. Implementing some of the listed strategies will provide a comfortable learning place for all students regardless of their academic and intellectual abilities.

### **Accommodations and Modifications at the Elementary/Middle School Level**

Students enrolled in a second language at the elementary and middle school levels can benefit greatly from accommodations and modifications. For elementary and middle school students, these may include assessments in a distraction-free environment, provision of verbal and visual cues for vocabulary, extended wait time, opportunity for extra rehearsal of verbal responses, and allowances for poor spelling.

### **Accommodations and Modifications at the High School Level**

Accommodations and modifications for high school students may include allowances for poor spelling, advance notice for lengthy reading assignments, extra time for reading tests, allowance of extra time for written responses, access to teacher or student lecture notes, and testing in a distraction-free environment. Transition plans from high school to college are necessary in order to continue accommodations and modifications at the college level for students with a diagnosed learning disability.

### **Accommodations and Modifications at the Post-Secondary Level**

Students of public schools, colleges, and universities are often obligated to demonstrate a foreign language competency before they confer a degree. This institutional requisite can be very difficult and frustrating for many students demonstrating a

foreign language learning deficit (Freed, 1987). These students include those with cognitive ability in the average to above average range who do not exhibit weaknesses in their other courses such as math, science, and so forth.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects students from discrimination in admission to college activities and programs. Colleges and universities have varied greatly in their implementation of accommodations governed by the Section 504 Act. Reportedly, college faculty noted that students with difficulties in foreign language experienced most of their problems with taking notes, completing written assignments during class, and presenting and interpreting ideas orally in class (Ganschow, Philips, & Schnieder, 2001).

There is a broad continuum of supportive services given to college students. Programs and services may include diagnostic learning assessments, advocacy, trained tutors, study skills courses, counseling, and course advising with a special services coordinator. Accommodation letters for professors are often created by the university after it has reviewed testing findings and past IEPs or 504 Plans. Additional accommodations and modifications at the college level may include picture cues, labels, modified worksheets and learning materials, allowances for mechanical errors in written work produced in class, the option to tape record lectures, the use of computer for essay tests, and testing in a separate area with minimal auditory and visual distractions.

## **Accommodations and Student Needs**

The following accommodations and modifications can also be adapted to most developmental, grade, and intellectual levels. The foreign language teacher should choose the supportive services which would best meet the student's needs.

### **Classroom Environment**

Classroom environment accommodations and modifications can be implemented for students demonstrating distractibility, impulsiveness, organization, and inattention. Teachers may select from the following accommodations and modifications: seat student in an area free from distractions, eliminate all unnecessary materials from student desk to reduce distractions, allow the student frequent breaks, reduce visual distractions, keep a supply of extra pencils, books, and paper in the classroom, create a checklist to help student organization, provide a study carrel or designated area when necessary, and develop an agreed upon cue for the student to leave the classroom.

### **Time Management and Transitions**

Time management and transitions can be integrated into a student's foreign language learning program when the deficits exhibited include extended wait time, slow processing abilities, and weaknesses in listening comprehension. To address

transition and time management concerns, the teacher can allow extra time for homework completion, reduce the amount of work from assignments, provide additional time to complete assignments, space short work periods with breaks, inform the student with several reminders several minutes apart before changing from one activity to the next, and provide a specific place for turning in assignments.

### **Presentation of Materials**

A variety of presentation styles will assist students with foreign language learning difficulties who may become easily overwhelmed or distracted by large amounts of information or material. Teachers can choose from the following modifications and accommodations: provide a model of end product; number and sequence steps in a task; break long assignments into small sequential steps, monitoring each step; break assignments into segments of shorter tasks; provide written and verbal direction with visuals; check that all homework assignments are written correctly in some kind of an agenda/homework book; give alternative assignments in lieu of long written assignments; and alert student attention to key points within the written directions of the assignment through highlighting. Additionally, teachers can provide outlines, study guides, and copies of overhead notes; limit the number of concepts presented at one time; provide incentives for beginning and completing material; allow oral administration of tests; check for the student's attentiveness before beginning a lesson; explain learning expectations to the student before beginning a lesson; and allow the student to use tape recorders, computers, calculators, and dictation to obtain and retain assignment success.

### **Assessment, Grading, and Testing**

Many students without a diagnosed disability will benefit from various modes of testing, grading, and assessment. It is important to assess what the students have learned overall and not how well they have mastered their test-taking skills. The following are suggestions for assessment grading and testing: permit retaking the test, divide the test into small sections, allow as much time as needed for completion, provide monitored breaks from the test, grade spelling separately from content, avoid timed tests, change percentage of work required for passing grade, provide a quiet setting for test taking, allow tests to be scribed if necessary, and allow oral responses. When foreign language teachers report the grade of students who have had modifications or accommodations, it is important that they clearly define the circumstances under which the student received his final grade.

### **Behavior**

Behavior concerns are an area which all teachers, foreign language or otherwise, constantly are required to address in their classrooms. With a few clear and consistently applied interventions in place, a foreign language classroom with behavioral



issues can become a positive and productive learning environment. Behavior concerns can be addressed through the following examples of intervention strategies: develop a behavior intervention plan that is realistic and easily applied, ignore attention-seeking behaviors that are not disruptive to the classroom, provide an appropriate peer role model, develop a code of conduct for the classroom and visually display it in an appropriate place where all students can see it, review the code of conduct frequently, avoid confrontations and power struggles, develop a system or code that will let the student know when behavior is not appropriate, and provide immediate reinforcers and feedback.

## Teaching Approaches and Language Development

Not only can teachers support students by managing the particulars of the classroom environment, they can also adopt pedagogical approaches that allow for targeted instruction. Instructional approaches that may be useful include differentiation, inclusion, direct teaching of language form, attention to a student's learning styles, and consideration of the student's multiple intelligences.

### Differentiating Instruction

Differentiation of instruction identifies each student's learning preferences and the best learning strategies to meet the student's learning needs. An instructional match is met when the curriculum and the mode of instruction are adapted to the learner so that learning can be established. Differentiation is a process that enables teachers to improve student learning by matching students' individual learning characteristics to the curriculum. Differentiation requires teachers to anticipate and acknowledge the differences in each student's readiness, interests, and learning styles. Teachers can then effectively engage students in meaningful and challenging work. Classroom teachers can challenge every student to think, work, and produce at a high level while simultaneously targeting the specific learning needs of all students.

### Inclusion

Inclusion is a term often used to describe a *least restrictive environment* method of educating children who need special programming in a general education classroom in the school they would have attended if not disabled, with age appropriate peers, and with appropriate supports and services. Inclusion has brought about a change in the student composition of general education classrooms. Students with disabilities are now included in the general education classroom with their nondisabled peers as much as possible. This in turn creates a broader spectrum of abilities in a general education classroom.

## **Explicit Instruction and Whole Language**

Overt teaching of language form was until recently considered the primary integral component of foreign language teaching curricula as reported by Stern (1983). This explicit teaching would include instruction in grammatical, sound, and sound-symbol rule systems. Teaching a foreign language through natural communication emphasizes the contextual and meaning aspects of foreign language. Javorsky, Sparks, and Ganschow (1992) disagree with the whole language approach to learning foreign language for students with learning disabilities because it does not incorporate explicit instruction in the syntactic or phonetic codes. Many second language classrooms use a whole language approach in combination with overt attention to language form.

The Orton-Gillingham teaching technique, initially used within the special education population, involves "cracking" of a language code. Students who experience difficulties with phonological and syntactic codes of language may benefit from this instructional approach. The Orton-Gillingham method uses a structured, multi-sensory approach in which the students simultaneously see, hear, and write sounds/symbols and are directly taught rules for grammatical structures (Ganschow, Sparks, & Javorsky, 1998). Foreign language teachers carefully sequence materials, implement controlled pacing, and integrate spelling, reading, and writing as part of the Orton-Gillingham method.

## **Learning styles**

### **Visual Learners**

Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning. Visual learners learn through seeing. These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expressions to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions. They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts, and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes in order to fully absorb the information.

### **Auditory Learners**

Auditory learners learn through listening. They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through, and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed, and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

## Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners

Tactile/kinesthetic learners learn through moving, doing, and touching. Tactile/kinesthetic persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods of time and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

## Multiple Intelligences

Multiple Intelligence was conceived by Howard Gardner (1993). Multiple Intelligences are seven different ways to demonstrate intellectual ability. The seven different types of Multiple Intelligence are Visual/Spatial Intelligence, Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence, Logical/Mathematical Intelligence, Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence, Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence.

*Visual/Spatial Intelligence* is the ability to perceive the visual. These learners tend to think in pictures and need to create vivid mental images to retain information. They enjoy looking at maps, charts, pictures, videos, and movies. Their skills include reading, writing, understanding charts and graphs, creating visual metaphors and analogies, puzzle building, manipulating images, constructing, sketching, having a good sense of direction, and interpreting visual images. Students with Visual/Spatial Intelligence may do very well with reading and writing foreign languages and with understanding visual representations.

*Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence* is the ability to use words and language. These learners have highly developed auditory skills and are generally elegant speakers. They think in words rather than pictures. Their skills include explaining, speaking, writing, listening, storytelling, teaching, using humor, understanding the syntax and meaning of words, and analyzing language usage. These students will most likely do very well when learning a foreign language because of their unique characteristics and skill sets.

*Logical/Mathematical Intelligence* is the ability to use reason, logic, and numbers. These learners think conceptually in logical and numerical patterns, making connections between pieces of information. Their skills include problem solving, working with abstract concepts to figure out the relationship of each to the other, classifying and categorizing information, performing complex mathematical calculations, and working with geometric shapes. Students with Logical/Mathematical Intelligence may experience some difficulty with certain aspects of learning a foreign language. They may benefit from a clearly defined and organized structure of the materials.

*Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence* is the ability to control body movements and handle objects skillfully. These learners express themselves through movement. They have a good sense of balance and eye-hand co-ordination. Through interacting with the space around them, they are able to remember and process information.

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Their skills include the use of body language, physical coordination, sports, hands-on experimentation, miming, and the expression of emotions through the body. These students may benefit from role playing in the foreign language in order to better comprehend concepts and vocabulary.

*Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence* is the ability to produce and appreciate music. These musically inclined learners think in sounds, rhythms, and patterns. Their skills include singing, playing musical instruments, recognizing tonal patterns, remembering melodies, and understanding the structure and rhythm of music. Students with Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence will be able to differentiate and mimic sounds and words, a skill which will greatly benefit their learning of a foreign language. These students will also learn rapidly if foreign language is put to music or rhythmic beats.

*Interpersonal Intelligence* is the ability to relate to and understand others. These learners try to see things from other people's point of view in order to understand how they think and feel. They often have an uncanny ability to sense feelings, intentions, and motivations. Generally they try to maintain peace in group settings and encourage cooperation. They use both verbal and non-verbal language to open communication channels with others. Their skills include listening, seeing things from the perspectives of others, understanding other people's moods and feelings, counseling, cooperating with groups, using empathy, communicating both verbally and nonverbally, and establishing positive relations with other people. These students are an asset to the classroom environment when completing group projects or community learning groups.

*Intrapersonal Intelligence* is the ability to self-reflect and be aware of one's inner state of being. These learners try to understand their inner feelings, dreams, relationships with others, and their own strengths and weaknesses. Their skills include reflecting and analyzing themselves, evaluating their thinking patterns, recognizing strengths and weaknesses, and understanding their role in relationship to others. Students with Intrapersonal Intelligence may be able to better understand when they are experiencing difficulty with learning new concepts and are then able to ask for assistance and support.

### **Case Example of a Foreign Language Program at the Middle School Level**

A suburban school in Chicago begins its foreign language program in the fifth grade. Students and their parents can choose from Latin, German, Spanish, and French. These foreign language courses are taught through the twelfth grade in this school district so that the students can experience eight years of continuity in their foreign language acquisition. All students not diagnosed with a disability must take

a foreign language of their choice as part of their courseload requirement starting in the fifth grade. Students diagnosed with a disability have the option of taking a study hall in lieu of a foreign language. If these students enroll in the study hall in the fifth grade, they will not have the option to enroll in a foreign language until the ninth grade. Typically students diagnosed with a disability will have a trial run in a foreign language in the fifth grade and will often transfer to a study hall by the second semester. Typically, teaching strategies and accommodations that are provided to these students in all other courses are not provided to them in foreign language, and the students are expected to succeed on their own without any assistance. According to the school district, these IEP-mandated accommodations were not required in foreign language at the fifth-grade level because foreign language is not a requirement for grade promotion. If these students were provided with some of the simple accommodations and modifications as defined in their IEP, they probably would be successful in their foreign language acquisition—just as they are in many other subjects. This is an example consistent with what many special education students endure when they attempt the study of a foreign language.

## Conclusion

Today as a nation we are still working to find the pedagogical and instructional means to fully support students who receive special education services. Although we do not have all the instructional answers or, in many cases, even fully understand the basic questions related to learning issues of special education students, we have begun to realize that students with disabilities are not a “them” distinct from an “us.” All students have a range of abilities and needs, and we need to provide a continuum of instructional practices to effectively meet and engage each student at his or her current level. If we truly embrace the notion that all students can learn, we will continue to expect students to succeed when they are presented with targeted instruction that meets them at their instructional level. Language is a unique human endowment, and special education students can benefit from instruction in a foreign language.

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