TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT EFFECTIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN A GREEK EFL CONTEXT

Danai Rapti[1i],
Mina Koukou[2],
Spyridon-Georgios Soulis[3]
[1]PhD Candidate,
University of Ioannina,
Department of Primary Education,
Greece
[2]PhD Candidate,
University of Ioannina,
Department of Early Childhood Education,
Greece
[3]Professor,
University of Ioannina,
Department of Primary Education,
Greece

Abstract:
Teachers' beliefs are a central construct in education as they influence their teaching attitude, methods and practices, thus, their exploration becomes particularly important. The aim of the present study is to examine teachers' beliefs regarding foreign language teaching of students with intellectual disability. The sample consisted of ten English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who teach at Greek special/vocational schools in secondary education. Semi-structured interviews were used as a tool for data collection. The research findings suggest a lack of training of EFL teachers regarding specialized foreign language teaching methods for students with intellectual disability. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of training in using digital technology. As a result, further training of EFL teachers in teaching methods and use of digital technology is deemed necessary.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, intellectual disability, teachers' beliefs, EFL teaching methodology, digital technology

[i] Correspondence: email danairapti@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that the English language has become more prominent in the present time and its status as a global language has been firmly established. Thus, the learning of the English language has become essential for all people, including people with disability. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning helps people with disability achieve social integration, employability (Arribas et al., 2020) and increases their chances of academic success (O'Brien, 2017; Wight, 2015). In this context, a pivotal issue that is worth examining is the beliefs of EFL special education teachers regarding teaching students with intellectual disability (ID).

Pajares (1992, p. 309) highlighted the difficulty in defining the term 'beliefs' as they are a "*messy construct*" and they "*travel in disguise and often under alias-attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertories of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature*". Richardson (1996, p. 103) defines beliefs as "*psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true*", while Borg (2001, p. 186) further stresses the subjective element and defines them as "*a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further it serves as a guide to thought and behavior*".

Williams and Burden (1997) stressed the importance of studying teachers' beliefs as they have a great impact on the choice of activities that will be used in the classroom. Furthermore, they affect the teachers' instructional strategies and supplemental techniques, they define the kind of interaction they have with their students (Erkmen, 2012) and they influence the students' beliefs and attitudes towards language learning (Cephe & Yalcin, 2015).

2. Literature Review

Many researchers have studied the general education teachers' beliefs regarding EFL teaching in typically developing students (Borg, 2015; Busch, 2010; Horwitz, 1988; Inozu, 2011; Wesely, 2012; Young, 2014; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Their aim was to explore the characteristics of the teachers' beliefs and the kind of impact that they may have. The conclusion that they reached was that teachers' beliefs have a great effect on the learning outcome.

Similarly, in the field of special education, several studies have been carried out which examine teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching of learners with disability. Zhang (2019) focuses on teachers' beliefs regarding the behavior, needed support and academic performance of students with disabilities during foreign language learning. Blume et al. (2019) and Padurean (2014) explore teachers' beliefs regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the EFL classroom. Haggag and Bakr (2020) study the teachers' beliefs

regarding the difficulties that students with language learning disabilities face as well as effective intervention and evaluation techniques. Kormos and Nijakowska (2017), Lioliou (2019) and Nijakowska et al. (2018) focus on dyslexia and study teachers' beliefs regarding their training, the problems they face and the inclusion of students with dyslexia in the EFL classroom. Finally, de Valenzuela et al. (2016) explore teachers' beliefs about bilingualism in students with developmental disabilities.

Regarding intellectual disability, the majority of researches that have been carried out focus on the exploration of appropriate teaching interventions and their effectiveness (Avianita et al., 2018; Carreon & Salazar, 2017; Gallego, 2015; Kinjo et al. 2016; Koerth, 2016; Malaniiuk, 2019; Mohammadian & Dolatabadi, 2016; Moustafa & Ghani, 2017; Polo, 2017; Salehi & Hallaji, 2015; Sembiring & Rosana, 2019; Williamson, 2017) as well as on technologies and how they could be incorporated in the EFL classroom in a special education context (Alemi & Bahramipour, 2019; Coşkun, 2013; Gilberte-Mally, 2019; Noori & Farvardin, 2016; Riveraetal, 2016; Turnbull, 2017). Meanwhile, Nagmeh-Abbaspour and Sabokrouh, (2020) and Ramezani et al. (2018) have carried out meta-researches which explore the prevalent EFL teaching methodologies for students with ID and conclude that the most effective ones are the communicative approach, the lexical approach and total physical response.

There is limited research, however, regarding teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching of students with ID. For instance, Bawa and Osei (2018) have carried out a qualitative research examining teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching of students with ID where teachers discuss their teaching experiences and the methods that they use. Similarly, Knight et al. (2019) explores teachers' beliefs about their training and the methods and techniques they use while teaching students with various disabilities, among which intellectual disability. Recently, Arribas et al. (2020) studied EFL teachers' beliefs about their teaching experiences with students with disabilities, including students with ID.

According to the aforementioned, there is a research gap in the field of special education, which the present study aims to fill by focusing on the exploration of EFL special education teachers' beliefs about teaching students with ID. The purpose of the study is to shed light on the methods and techniques that teachers use and on the way, they incorporate technology in the EFL classroom.

2.1 Research Questions
In order to address the issue, the following research questions were posed:
1. What are the EFL special education teachers' beliefs regarding the ability of students with ID to learn a foreign language as well as the usefulness of learning a foreign language?
2. What are the EFL special education teachers' beliefs regarding effective teaching methods and techniques for students with ID?
3. What are the EFL special education teachers' beliefs regarding the role of digital technology in teaching students with ID?

4. What are the EFL special education teachers' beliefs regarding the problems that they face while teaching students with ID?

3. Method

3.1 Sample – Procedure

The sample of the research consists of ten EFL special education teachers who teach students with intellectual disability at special/vocational schools in secondary education in the prefectures of Attica and Ioannina, Greece. In the Greek education system, students with ID aged between six and twelve, who attend special education primary schools, are given the opportunity to learn English but it is not a mandatory subject. For students aged between 13 and 18, who attend special/vocational schools in secondary education, English is a mandatory subject. The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Men	2	20%
Women	8	80%
Age		
31 – 40	5	50%
41 – 50	5	50%
Specialization in Special Education		
Postgraduate Degree	5	50%
Seminar	5	50%
Specialization in teaching EFL in a Special Education setting		
Postgraduate Degree	2	20%
Seminar	1	10%
No specialization	7	70%
Teaching experience with students with ID		
4 – 6 years	5	50%
10 – 12 years	5	50%
ICT skills		
Excellent	8	80%
Very Good	2	20%

The data collection procedure was based on the grounded *theory* - a qualitative research methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) which aims at constructing theory grounded in data. According to grounded theory, the constant comparative method is used to analyze the data, break them down into smaller parts, compare them to find similarities and differences and classify them into thematic categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.7).

The research took place in the prefectures of Attica and Ioannina during the academic year 2019-2020. At first, the teachers were informed about the aim of the

research and if they agreed to participate, a time was set to carry out the interview at their school. With those participants with whom a face-to-face interview was not feasible, the selected method was the Skype interview (Bryman, 2016). The length of the interviews varied between 40 and 50 minutes and the anonymity of the participants' data was ensured by the researcher.

3.2. The research tool

For the data collection, the tool of the semi-structured interview was used. During the interview the researcher followed a set of questions which she rephrased and enriched depending on the course of the conversation. In other words, she had a list of questions as an interview guide, but she could deviate from it giving, thus, to the interviewee a greater freedom in answering (Bryman, 2016). The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. In order to analyze the data, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used. More specifically, the selected software was Nvivo 12, which is widely used in education research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). After being transcribed, the interviews were inserted in 'nodes', in order to organize, classify and analyze the data in thematic categories (Bryman, 2016).

4. Results

Four major themes emerged from the data analysis: EFL teachers' beliefs about whether students with ID are able to/should learn a foreign language, EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching methods and techniques for students with ID, EFL teachers' beliefs about the role of digital technology for students with ID, EFL teachers' beliefs about the problems and obstacles they face during teaching students with ID.

4.1. Are students with ID able to learn a foreign language/should they learn a foreign language?

One of the main points during the semi-structured interviews was the question of whether students with ID have the ability to learn a foreign language, such as English, and whether they should learn it, in other words, whether there is a point in learning English and if they will find it useful in their everyday life. One teacher noted:

> *"Of course, they can learn a foreign language successfully. Students with ID can acquire new vocabulary and simple grammar structures with appropriate training. I think they should learn English because it is very useful as it helps them surf the internet and fit into society better."*

Another teacher made the following comment:

> *"They are able to learn English to a certain extent and they should learn it because, in this way, they take advantage of the benefits of bilingualism on a cognitive and practical level."*

The results demonstrated that all the teachers of the sample (n=10) held a firm belief that students with ID possess the ability to learn a foreign language even under certain conditions and limitations. All of them also concluded that knowing a foreign language would definitely be a useful skill in the everyday life of students with ID. Two important parameters that they mentioned about the usefulness of English were that it contributes to the social integration of students and that it provides them with the benefits of bilingualism.

4.2. Teaching methods and techniques

All of the teachers referred to the importance of choosing the appropriate methods and techniques for effective foreign language learning. As regards to what methods and techniques the participants find effective, the following subcategories emerged:

4.2.1. Traditional teaching

The vast majority of the sample (n=9) rejected the traditional way of foreign language teaching as they considered it highly ineffective for students with ID. A teacher's comment that summarizes the sentiment of all the participants is the following:

"I believe that the traditional way of teaching doesn't work in a classroom with students with ID. If I directly teach them the grammar and vocabulary in a teacher-centered way they won't be able to understand nor retain the knowledge. Besides, they will lose interest right away."

Only one teacher (n=1) was a proponent of the traditional way of teaching:

"I am not making any special accommodations while teaching students with ID. I just teach them at a much slower pace and explain the same thing over and over again. I teach grammar and vocabulary explicitly by writing the grammar rules and the unknown words on the board and then ask my students to practice and produce their own structures. There is a lot of error correction in class."

4.2.2. Communicative approach

The majority of the sample (n=7) had positive beliefs about the communicative approach. One teacher stated the following:

"I rely upon the principles of the communicative approach to design a lesson. I place great emphasis on students' interaction and my goal is to enable students to communicate in English. Emphasis is placed on fluency, not accuracy and direct grammar instruction is not a priority in my class."

4.2.3. Multisensory teaching

Half of the teachers (n=5) had positive beliefs about multisensory teaching. They declared that they predominantly use audiovisual stimuli and rarely kinaesthetic ones. One teacher mentioned:

> *"I mostly use pictures and audio clips due to convenience and ease of access. I would like to use a greater variety of materials, but they are not made available by the school and I cannot bear the cost myself."*

One teacher used a wider variety of materials:

> *"I bring various materials in class. For example, magnetic letters, play dough, even a small sand pit and sand so that students can trace letters."*

4.2.4. Total physical response (TPR)

The vast majority of the sample (n=9) had negative beliefs about TPR. One teacher made the following comment:

> *"I am not sure it would work in practice, I doubt it. I don't know how to properly draw a lesson plan based on this method. Once that I tried it there was chaos in the classroom as the students were not in their seats, but they were moving around the class. Also, there are many limitations as I think one can mostly teach verbs."*

Only one teacher held a positive view of the method:

> *"I am in favor of this method as it brings about positive results. I have used it to teach imperative and because there is movement involved the students have a stronger motive, they learn the target structures easier and retain them in their memory longer."*

4.2.5. Task-based learning (TBL)

According to the results, this method is not very popular among the teachers of the sample as nine out of ten have negative beliefs about it. One teacher stated:

> *"I have a positive view of TBL but for typically developing students. I tried to implement it in a special education setting and it didn't yield the expected results. This method entails pair work and I find it very frustrating to get students with ID to work collaboratively. I had to intervene all the time."*

Only one teacher had positive beliefs about TBL and confessed that she uses it regularly with great success.

"I think it works fine with students with ID. Once, for instance, I created a task where one student was working at the train station and the other one was a traveler. There was an 'information gap' and the students had to act out a dialogue and ask each other questions in order to find out when the train left and from which platform. The students were motivated to use the language as the task was realistic, interesting and it made sense to them."

4.3. Computer assisted language learning (CALL)

One of the most important issues that came up during the interviews was the use of technology in class. The participants were divided over the issue. One participant mentioned the following:

"I think using technology has great benefits, but I am not sure how to take full advantage of it. I mostly let them watch a video related to the vocabulary category we are focusing on, either in the beginning of the lesson in order to get their attention, or at the end of the lesson as a reward."

Another participant stated the following:

"I design exercises on the computer, for example digital flashcards and I let students do some extra practice on their own. In this way, they do not experience performance stress. Moreover, we use tablets and mobile phones in class. I have downloaded an augmented reality application, Aurasma, with which children scan objects and a video pops up explaining the meaning of the object."

Another participant mentions that she integrates technology into her teaching in many ways:

"I use technology a lot. More specifically, I have been using 'Voki' a digital tool which allows students to create their own Avatar. We use the Avatars to perform dialogues and practice vocabulary and grammar use. Also, I have used a robot in class, Beebot, in order to teach children how to ask and follow directions in English."

Finally, one participant seemed more reluctant towards the use of technology:

"I don't know how to integrate technology in my teaching, and I find it very time consuming to produce digital material myself."

As a conclusion, it could be said that the vast majority of the participants had positive beliefs about the use of technology. They do, however, stress the limited training and the difficulty in finding and producing their own material especially adapted to suit the needs of learners with ID.

4.4. Teachers' problems/obstacles

All of the participants referred to the unsuitability of the EFL school textbook and to the lack of digital material, adapted specifically for EFL learners with ID, provided by the Ministry of education, as central problems in the education process.

One teacher mentioned the following:

"The Ministry of Education provides us with the general education EFL school textbooks and we are called to adapt it for students with ID. There is no digital material provided."

Furthermore, another problem which emerged was the lack of training. The majority of the teachers (n=9) held the belief that their training regarding effective teaching methodologies and use of technology was inadequate. One teacher responded as follows:

"I don't feel adequately prepared to effectively address the needs of students with ID in the EFL classroom. I would like to receive additional training in evidence-based practices and learn how to take full advantage of digital technologies. I feel like there are a lot of technology tools available that I simply do not know how to use."

5. Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the teachers' beliefs regarding effective EFL teaching to students with ID. The findings of this study are in line with and in contrast to the findings of other researches as shown in the discussion that follows.

5.1. Are students with ID able to learn a foreign language/should they learn a foreign language?

Regarding teachers' beliefs about whether students with ID are able to learn a foreign language, all the participants had positive beliefs. This finding is in line with Ware et al. (2015) and Sembiring and Rosana (2019) who found that students with ID have the ability to learn a foreign language as well as with Burgoyneetal (2016) and Feltmate and Bird (2008) who studied the ability of students with Down Syndrome to learn a foreign language and reached similar conclusions.

However, this finding comes in contrast with de Valenzuela et al. (2016, p. 38) who reported that teachers of students with developmental disabilities hold negative beliefs about foreign language learning and used phrases like "the added pressure of learning another language" or "extra load".

Regarding whether students should learn a foreign language or not, all of the participants had positive beliefs. This finding comes in sharp contrast to the findings of Arribas et al. (2020, p. 87) who found that while teachers had positive beliefs about foreign language learning by students with other disabilities, for instance physical disability, when they were asked specifically about intellectual disability, they did not

have the same positive beliefs. In the case of mild intellectual disability, the percentage, who answered positively to the question of whether students with ID should learn English, was extremely small and in the cases of moderate and severe intellectual disability the percentage was even smaller. Similarly, Knight et al. (2019) found that the majority of teachers held the belief that it is not necessary for students with ID to learn a foreign language.

5.2. Teaching methods and techniques
All the participants stressed the importance of choosing an appropriate methodology and specialized techniques for teaching EFL to students with ID. This finding is in agreement with Malaniiuk (2019) who highlights the importance of teachers' preparedness and flexibility regarding the methodology and techniques they use in order to cater for the needs of students with ID while teaching EFL. Similarly, Abdallah (2015) highlights the importance of language teachers implementing innovative methods to address the needs of students with disability.

5.2.1. Traditional teaching
The majority of participants (n=9) reported that they consider the traditional method of teaching to be ineffective - a finding that is opposed to the research of Hilalliyati (2017) where traditional teaching techniques like copying vocabulary from the board and repetition drills were found to be effective in teaching EFL to students with ID. Similar results were reported in the research of Bawa and Osei (2018) where it was noted that the traditional method was mostly used and that no significant educational adjustments were made while teaching EFL to students with ID.

5.2.2. Communicative approach
The communicative approach dominates the field of foreign language learning in general education in the last decades with the majority of EFL teachers rejecting traditional practices and moving away from a focus on grammar accuracy (Bell, 2005). The same tendency is noted in the teachers of the sample as the majority of them adopt principles based on the communicative approach. The efficacy of the communicative approach for teaching EFL to students with ID is strongly supported by a plethora of researches (Kalgotra & Warwal, 2019; Naghmeh-Abbaspour & Sabokrouh, 2020; Polo, 2017; Ramezani et al., 2018).

Contrary to traditional reaching, the communicative approach places an emphasis on fluency rather than on accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), however, when the participants were asked to describe the communicative-based activities that they use in class, a discrepancy between theory and practice was discovered. Namely, the teachers thought that they were applying the principles of the communicative approach whereas their activities actually favored accuracy and were based on traditional methodologies like the grammar-translation method. This discrepancy highlights an important issue as it means that the teachers hold wrong beliefs and have misunderstood the

communicative approach. This finding is in line with the researches of Karavas-Doukas (1996), Rollman (1994), Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) and Thompson (1996) who also noticed a wrong implementation of the communicative approach which was due to wrong teachers beliefs.

5.2.3. Multisensory teaching

Half of the sample (n=5) held positive beliefs about multisensory teaching and consider it a very effective methodology. This finding is consistent with Moustafa and Ghani (2017) in the case of students with ID and Chui (2018) and Lajoie (2020) in the case of students with learning difficulties. The teachers of the sample mostly used visual and auditory stimuli, excluding tactile, kinaesthetic stimuli and elements for gestation and olfaction (Myréen, 2015) because, as they mentioned, there was a lack of school resources. Consequently, it can be inferred that the participants attribute the limited implementation of the multisensory method, targeting only two senses, not to an unwillingness or lack of training on their part but to a lack of funding and school resources.

5.2.4. Total physical response

A finding that was surprising was that only one participant stated that she uses TPR, a methodology which is very effective for teaching EFL to students with ID (Avianita et al., 2018; Kinjo et al., 2016; Mohammadian & Dolatabadi, 2016; Polaka, 2019) and students with learning difficulties (Dalessandro, 2016; Roszak, 2009; Skinner & Smith, 2011). One teacher criticized the method because there was 'chaos' in the classroom. The movement around the class that TPR entails, as students are supposed to act out certain instructions (Larsen-Freeman, 2002) is not easily manageable, especially by untrained teachers, as the present study suggests.

5.2.5. Task-based learning (TBL)

The findings also revealed that the participants do not hold positive beliefs about task-based learning. Similarly, to TPR, TBL is a method which has been widely used in EFL teaching interventions to students with ID (Yousefzadeh, 2016) and to students with ADHD (Turketi, 2010) with positive results. TBL is a foreign language learning method which is based on the students completing meaningful tasks while working in pairs and doing role play (Willis, 1996). Organizing the students into pair work posed a difficulty for the participants of the present study and, thus, was a deterring factor for the implementation of the method. Yet, according to Desmiyanti et al. (2020), pair work is not regarded an obstacle and TBL is successfully used in EFL teaching to students with ID. The participants' difficulty to organize students with ID to work in pairs possibly highlights the existence of teacher-centered beliefs and approaches to learning which are still prevalent in the EFL classroom.

5.3. Computer assisted language learning (CALL)

The majority of the sample (n=9) held positive beliefs about technology, stressing its usefulness in the foreign language teaching of students with ID. This finding comes in contrast with Lioliou (2019) where a very small percentage of the participants, approximately a 20%, declared that they use technology for teaching EFL to students with learning difficulties.

More specifically, by examining the way teachers use digital technology we notice that the majority of the sample (n=9) considers computers especially effective for producing and presenting audiovisual material. This finding is consistent with Rezabala and Holguin (2020), Mize et al. (2018), Noori and Farvardin (2016) who conclude that using computers to produce and present audiovisual material in indeed an effective method for teaching EFL to students to ID, especially for vocabulary teaching. Similarly, Munir et al. (2018) noted that the use of audiovisual material improved the reading ability and memorization skills of students with ID.

Digital flashcards also proved to be a popular educational tool since four participants stated that they use them regularly. Simple flashcards have proven to be a very effective technique as Barwasser et al. (2020) has suggested in an intervention he carried out about teaching EFL to students with learning difficulties. Comparing simple flashcards to digital ones, the latter seem to be even more effective as Turnbull (2017) has concluded while studying their use for EFL teaching to students with intellectual disability.

A large percentage of the sample (7 out of 10) stated that they prefer touch screen technologies. More specifically, they noticed particularly positive results when using tablets and mobile phones. This finding is in agreement with Coşkun (2013) who concluded that the use of tactile T3 technology, through a tablet, yielded positive results in the EFL teaching of students with ID.

One participant mentioned that she has used the robot Beebot in the classroom and that it had a very positive impact on the learning outcome. This finding is consistent with Alemi and Bahramipour (2019) who have studied the use of robotics during vocabulary instruction of Iranian students with Down Syndrome in an EFL context and they noted that it had a very positive impact. However, the vast majority of the participants (nine out of ten) did not have positive beliefs about robotics, a finding which comes in contrast with Battista et al. (2020) who found that teachers had positive beliefs about the use of robotics in teaching students with ID.

One participant stated that she has used augmented reality technology (AR). According to literature, AR has a positive impact on teaching students with ID (Baragash et al., 2020; Gomez-Puerta et al., 2019). The efficiency of AR for teaching a foreign language is the fact that the learner's active participation is promoted and the target material is presented in a multimodal way (Barreira et al., 2012; Dalim et al., 2020; Fan & Antle, 2020; Jamrus & Razali, 2019; Redondo et al., 2020; Safar et al., 2017; Scrivner et al., 2016; Solak & Cakir, 2016; Zainnuddin et al., 2019).

Another interesting finding is that the vast majority of the participants (n=9) believe that the use of technology has a very positive effect on students' motivation. This is supported by the research of Bahari (2019) who carried out a meta-research of 158 articles from 2010 to 2018. He observed that teachers use various motivational techniques in a traditional foreign language classroom, whereas they do not in a CALL context. This, he argues, is due to the fact that teachers consider technology itself to be a motivating factor as it provides personalized learning adapted to the educational profile of each student based on their interests.

To sum up, it could be inferred that the participants use technology mostly for the production and presentation of audiovisual material and only one participant uses technology in a more elaborate and advanced way by employing AR and robotics. Furthermore, the majority of the participants (n=7) employ technology so that students can further practice on vocabulary and grammar. Taking into account the division of CALL into three phases (Warschauer, 1996, 2004) it could be argued that the participants used technology mostly as it was used in the first phase – the behavioristic phase, when learners used technology to practice at their own pace, without having the anxiety of failure and receiving immediate feedback. On the contrary, the majority of the sample did not follow the evolution of CALL and did not use the technology as it was used in the next two phases, namely, the communicative phase where it is used a tool to enhance the students' communicative skills and the integrative phase where it is used a source of language information.

5.4. Teachers' problems and obstacles

All of the participants stated that the EFL school textbook is not suitable for students with ID and it does not cater for their needs, a finding which is in line with Lioliou (2019) who found that the majority of the participants did not find the EFL school textbook suitable for students with learning difficulties.

Another problem that the participants faced was their insufficient training regarding the use of effective teaching methodologies and techniques, a finding which is in agreement with many researches (Haggag & Bakr, 2020; Knight et al., 2019; Lioliou, 2019, Pimentel, 2018; Zhang, 2019) where the majority of the participants felt methodologically inadequate to cater for the educational needs of children with disability in the EFL classroom. This finding can be interpreted if we take into account that only a small percentage (20%) of the participants has further training in teaching EFL to students with disability. Thus, it is imperative to organize seminars and further training programs for teachers regarding specialized methodologies and techniques. Furthermore, the participants believed that they lack training regarding digital technology, a finding which is in line with Toledo and Llorente (2016) and Arribas et al. (2020).

Another interesting finding is that technology is used to a great extent as a form of reward or as a motivational factor so that the class can then "move on the actual lesson" as one teacher pointed out. This finding is worth considering because it highlights, on the one hand, the participants' willingness to incorporate technology in their teaching and,

on the other hand, their inability to use it strictly for educational purposes due to their lack of training. Using technology to motivate learners (Bahari, 2019) or as a way to reward them (Constantin et al., 2017) is a well-established practice and has many positive learning outcomes yet, in this way, the advances of technology are not fully taken advantage of.

Summing up, the participants stated that they encounter major problems in the educational process and that they are not content with their students' level of foreign language learning. In other words, they acknowledge that the students with ID do not perform as well as expected in the EFL classroom. They attribute the limited success of their teaching not to an inability of the students with ID to learn a foreign language but to their lack of training and to extraneous factors like the unsuitability of the school textbook and the lack of digital materials provided by the Ministry of Education.

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the participants show a clear tendency to reject the traditional way of teaching while their difficulty to apply specialized techniques is also evident. The majority tends to adopt multisensory teaching and the communicative approach, however, with several misinterpretations and false implementations. It could be argued that there is a pressing need for further teacher training focusing on effective teaching methodologies as well as improving their digital technology skills. What is more, the issue of the unsuitability of the school textbook is highlighted, as the teachers are obliged to produce their own material in the present setting. The limitations of the research are the small sample size and the fact that the sample only comes from two geographical regions. A suggestion for further research would be to combine the semi-structured interviews with in-class observation so that a discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices could be further explored.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

About the Authors
Danai Rapti is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Primary Education in the University of Ioannina. She has studied in Greece and in the UK and she teaches EFL in special education primary schools. Her research interests focus on teaching methodology and the use of technology to assist students with intellectual disability to learn English as a foreign language.
Mina Koukou is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Early Childhood Education in the University of Ioannina. She is currently working in special education schools. Her research interests include special and intercultural education with an emphasis on the educational needs of refugee students with disabilities.

Spyridon-Georgios Soulis has studied in Greece and in Germany. At present, he is a Professor of Special Education at the Department of Primary Education and Director of the Laboratory of Special Education in the University of Ioannina. His published work focuses on i) the pedagogy and the teaching of people with disability, ii) educational inclusion, iii) the training of parents of children with disability.

References

Abdallah, M. (2015). *TEFL/TESOL for students with special needs: For EFL student teachers*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279854426_TEFLTESOL_for_Students_with_Special_Needs_For_EFL_Student_Teachers

Alemi, M., & Bahramipour, S. (2019). An innovative approach of incorporating a humanoid robot into teaching EFL learners with intellectual disabilities. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 4*(10), 2-22.

Arribas, L. B., Barros del Rio, M. A., Peñalver, E. A., & Sigona, C. M. (2020). Teaching English to adults with disabilities: A digital solution through En-Abilities. *Teaching English with Technology*, *20*(1), 80-103.

Avianita, A. A., & Drajati, N. A. (2018). The strategy in teaching English vocabulary for students with special needs: A narrative inquiry study. *Journal of Education and Human Development, 7*(2), 66-70.

Bahari, A. (2019). Mainstream theoretical trends and future directions of L2 motivation studies in classroom and CALL contexts. *CALL-EJ, 21* (1), 1-28.

Baragash, R. S., Al-Samarraie, H., Alzahrani, A. I., &Alfarraj, O. (2020). Augmented reality in special education: a meta-analysis of single subject design studies. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 35*(3), 382-397, DOI:10.1080/08856257.2019.1703548

Barreira, J., Bessa, M., Pereira, L. C., Adão, T., Peres, E., & Magalhães, L. (2012). MOW: Augmented reality game to learn words in different languages: Case study learning English names of animals in elementary school. *7th Iberian Conference on Information Systems and Technologies (CISTI 2012)*, Madrid, 2012, pp. 1-6.

Barwasser, A., Knaak, T., & Grünke, M. (2020). The effects of a multicomponent storytelling intervention on the vocabulary recognition of struggling English as a foreign language learners with learning disabilities. *Insights into Learning Disabilities, 17*(1), 35-53.

Battista, S. D., Pivetti, M., Moro, M., & Menegatti, E. (2020). Teachers' opinions towards educational robotics for special needs students: An exploratory Italian study. *Robotics, 9*(72), 1-16.

Bawa, A. H., & Osei, M. (2018). English language education and children with intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability, 7*(11), 2704-2715.

Bell, T. R. (2005). Behaviors and attitudes of effective foreign language teachers: Results of a questionnaire study. *Foreign Language Annals, 38*(2), 259-270.

Blume, C., Gerlach, D., Roters, B., & Schmidt, T. (2019). The ABCs of inclusive English teacher education: A quantitative and qualitative study examining the attitudes, beliefs and (reflective) competence of pre-service foreign language teachers. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language, 22*(4), 1-18.

Borg, M. (2001). Key concepts in ELT: Teachers' beliefs. *ELT Journal, 55*(2), 186–188. doi:10.1093/elt/55.2.186

Borg, S. (2015). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Burgoyne, K., Duff, F. J., Nielsen, D., Ulicheva, A., & Snowling, M. J. (2016). Bilingualism and biliteracy in Down Syndrome: Insights from a case study. *Language Learning, 66*(4), 945-971.

Busch, D. (2010). Pre-service teacher beliefs about language learning: The second language acquisition course as an agent for change. *Language Teaching Research, 14*(3), 318-337.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Carreon, Y. S. R., & Salazar, D. I. S. (2017). Teaching students with intellectual disability to use English through pragmatics. *RIE-UANL, 4*(4), 60-79.

Cephe, P. T., & Yalcin, C. G. (2015). Beliefs about foreign language learning: The effects of teacher beliefs on learner beliefs. *Anthropologist, 19*(1), 167-173.

Chui, L. (2018). *The effect of a multisensory approach to Spanish instruction on the foreign language proficiency of students with learning disabilities* [Postgraduate Dissertation, Rowan University].

Constantin, A., Johnson, H., Smith, E., Lengyel, D., & Brosnan, M. (2017). Designing computer-based rewards with and for children with autism spectrum disorder and/or intellectual disability. *Computers in Human Behavior, 75*, 404-414.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of Qualitative Research, Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (4th ed.). Sage Publications Inc.

Coşkun, A. (2013). Teaching English to non-native learners of English with mild cognitive impairment. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods, 3*(4), 8-16.

Dalessandro, J. L. (2016). *Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach to teaching foreign language to students with disabilities*. [Postgraduate Dissertation, Rowan University] https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2324/

Dalim, C. S. C., Sunar, M. S., Dey, A., & Bilinghurst, M. (2020). Using augmented reality with speech input for non-native children's language learning. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 134*, 44-64.

de Valenzuela, J. S., Bird, E. K. R., Parkington, K., Mirenda, P., Cain, K., MacLeod, A. A., & Segers, E. (2016). Access to opportunities for bilingualism for individuals with developmental disabilities: Key informant interviews. *Journal of communication disorders, 63*, 32–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2016.05.005

Desmiyanti, Yuanita, & Anwar, K. (2020). Make a match learning for English conversation skills of students with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Linguistic and English Teaching, 5*(1), 24-31

Erkmen, B. (2012). Ways to uncover teachers' beliefs. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *47*, 141-146.

Fan, M., & Antle, A. N. (2020). An English Language Learning Study with Rural Chinese Children Using an Augmented Reality App. *IDC '20: Proceedings of the Interaction Design and Children Conference*, 385-397.

Feltmate, K., & Bird, E. K. R (2008). Language learning in four bilingual children with Down Syndrome: A detailed analysis of vocabulary and morphosyntax. *Canadian Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, 32*(1), 6-20.

Gallego, A. C. (2015). Teaching English to students with low intellectual capacities through ICTs: Online reinforcement tasks. [Dissertation, Universitat Jaume].

Gilberte-Mally, N. H. (2019). *Individuals with intellectual disabilities and second language acquisition: A framework for approaching inclusive foreign language instruction* [Dissertation, Kansas State University].

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Sociology Press.

Gómez-Puerta, M., Chiner, E., Melero-Pérez, P., & Lledó, G. L. (2019). Research review on augmented reality as an educational resource for people with intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology, 1*(2), 473-486.

Haggag, M. H., & Bakr, E. M-E. (2020). Teachers' perceptions about language learning difficulties in English as a foreign language EFL classes. *European Scientific Journal, 16*(19), 120-142.

Hilalliyati, N., (2017). *Teaching English as A Foreign Language for Students with Intellectual Disabilities*. http://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/36249

Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *Modern Language Journal, 72*(3), 283-294.

Inozu, J. (2011). Beliefs about language learning among students training to teach English as a foreign language. *Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal*, *39*(5): 645-653.

Jamrus, M. H. M., & Razali, A. B. (2019). Augmented reality in teaching and learning English reading: Realities, possibilities, and limitations. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 8*(4), 724–737.

Kalgotra, R., & Warwal, J. W. (2019). Effect of intervention in teaching listening and speaking skills on children with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies, 20*, 21-39.

Karavas-Doukas, E. (1996). Using attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach. *ELT Journal, 50*(3), 187-198.

Kinjo, M., Mori, K., & Tanaka, A. (2016). The performance verification of foreign language activity using TPR for the elementary students with intellectual disabilities. *Asian Journal of Human Services, 10,* 68-82.

Knight, V. F., Huber, H. B., Kuntz, E. M., Carter, E. W., & Juarez, A. P. (2019). Instructional practices, priorities, and preparedness for educating students with autism and

intellectual disability. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, *34*(1), 3-14.

Koerth, M. (2016). *Teaching Special Education in the ES/FL Classroom* [Dissertation, Liberty University].

Kormos, J., & Nijakowska, J. (2017). Inclusive practices in teaching students with dyslexia: Second language teachers' concerns, attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs on a massive open online learning course. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 68*, 30-41.

Lajoie, L. E. (2020). *A Case Study Analysis of Phonological Awareness Strategies Aimed at Helping Students with Learning Disabilities in Foreign Language* [Doctoral Dissertation, Northeastern University Boston]. https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/files/neu:m046pd95b/fulltext.pdf

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2011). Beyond constant comparison qualitative data analysis: Using NVivo. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *26*(1), 70–84.

Lioliou, Z. (2019). *Teaching English as second language to young learners with learning disabilities: Insight into the world of the learning difficulties and a teacher's guide* [Postgraduate Dissertation, Hellenic Open University]. https://apothesis.eap.gr/bitstream/repo/43199/1/115054_LIOLIOU_ZOI.pdf

Malaniiuk, M. (2019). Theoretical Background of Intellectual Disability: Possibilities and Limitations. *Periodyk Naukowy Akademii Polonijnej, 36*(5), 103-110. http://dx.doi.org/10.23856/3612

Mize, M. K., Park, Y., & Moore, T. (2018). Computer-assisted vocabulary instruction for students with disabilities: Evidence from an effect size analysis of single subject experimental design studies. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 34*, 641-651.

Mohammadian, A., & Dolatabadi, S. M. (2016). The effect of affection on English language learning of children with intellectual disability based on Total Physical Response method of language teaching. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies, 5(2)*, 92-103.

Moustafa, A., & Ghani, M. Z. (2017). The effectiveness of a multi sensory approach in improving reading CVC words among mild intellectual disabled students in State of Kuwait. *Journal of Research & Method in Education, 7*(1), 43-49.

Myreen, S. (2015). Foreign language learning in the multisensory space. *Aistien-menetelmälläoivalluksiaoppimiseen ja kohtaamiseen. Laureaammattikorkeakoulu, LaureaJulkaisut (42)*, 29-32. https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/157594/Myreen.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Munir, M., Setiawan, W., Nugroho, E., Kusnendar, J., &Wibawa, A. (2018). The effectiveness of multimedia in education for special education (MESE) to improve reading ability and memorizing for children with intellectual disability. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, *13*(8), 254-263.

Naghmeh-Abbaspour, B., & Sabokrouh, F. (2020). Training and teaching the interaction of meaning in English classes as foreign languages to students with special needs: A review study. *Journal of Critical Reviews, 7*(9), 879-883.

Nijakowska, J., Tsagari, D., & Spanoudis, G. (2018). English as a Foreign Language Teacher Training Needs and Perceived Preparedness to Include Dyslexic Learners: The case of Greece, Cyprus, and Poland. *Dyslexia, 24*, 357–379. https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1598

Noori, Z. S., & Farvardin, M. T. (2016). The effect of using audio-visual aids versus pictures on foreign language vocabulary learning of individuals with mild intellectual disability. *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation, 17*(1-2), 16-35.

O'Brien, M. G. (2017). *Literature review on the impact of second-language learning.* Edmonton, Canada: The Alberta Teachers' Association.

Padurean, A. N. (2014) Teaching English Language to Children with Special Educational Needs. *TEM Journal, (3)*4, 309-314.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research*, *62*(3), 307-332.

Pimentel, C. L. (2018). Problems and issues related to teaching Japanese to students with disabilities: Lessons learned. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, *9*(1), 1–6. doi:10.17507/jltr.0901.01

Polaka, A. (2019). The Acquisition of foreign language by students with intellectual disability in an elementary school. *Education Reform: Education Content Research and Implementation Problems, 2*, 125-136. https://doi.org/10.17770/er2019.2.4227

Polo, L. S. (2017). *Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Students with Down Syndrome: A case study* [Postgraduate Dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid].

Ramezani, A., Mihandoust, P., & Mohamadzadeh, S. (2018). Teaching English as a foreign language to students with special needs: A review study. *Journal of Exceptional Children, 18*(1), 119-138.

Redondo, B., Cozar-Gutierrez, R., Gonzalez-Calero, J. A., & Ruiz, R. S. (2020). Integration of augmented reality in the teaching of English as a foreign language in early childhood education. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 48*, 147–155.

Rezabala, M. E. A., & Holguin, J. S. V. (2020). Adaptations for teaching children with special educational need in ESL Context. *International Journal of Social Science Studies, 8*(1), 121-134.

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (pp. 102–119). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rivera, C. J., Jabeen, I., & Mason, L. L. (2016). The effects of a computer-based video intervention to teach literacy skills to a student with a moderate intellectual disability. *Interaction Design and Architecture(s) Journal, 28*, 85-102.

Rollman, M. (1994). The communicative language teaching 'Revolution' tested: A comparison of two classroom attitudes: 1976 and 1993. *Foreign Language Annals* 27(2), 221-233.

Roszak, K. (2009). *Activities for teaching English to children with special needs* [Dissertation, Masaryk University] https://is.muni.cz/th/rh1ur/Magisterska_prace.pdf

Safar, A. H., Al-Jafar, A. A., & Al-Yousefi, Z. H. (2017). The effectiveness of using augmented reality apps in teaching the English alphabet to kindergarten children: A case study in the state of Kuwait. *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics Science and Technology Education, 13*(2), 417-440.

Salehi, M., & Hallaji, Z. (2015). Learning languages and its impact on mentally retarded students' interaction. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1-6.

Sato, K. & Kleinsasser, R. (1999). Communicative language teaching (CLT): Practical understanding. *The Modern Language Journal, 83*(4), 494-517.

Scrivner, O., Madewell, J., Buckley, C., & Perez, N. (2016). *Augmented Reality Digital Technologies (ARDT) for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*. FTC 2016 - Future Technologies Conference 2016, 6-7 December 2016, San Francisco, United States.

Sembiring, S. E. A., & Rosana, Y. (2019). English language acquisition of students with intellectual disabilities at special junior high school in Bengkulu. *Edulitics Journal, 4*(1), 13-20.

Skinner, M. E., & Smith, A. T. (2011). Creating success for students with learning disabilities in postsecondary foreign language courses. *International Journal of Special Education, 26*(2), 42-57.

Solak, E., & Cakir, R. (2015). Exploring the effect of materials designed with augmented reality on language learners' vocabulary learning. *The Journal of Educators Online-JEO*, 13(2), 50-72.

Thompson, G. (1996). Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching. *ELT Journal, 50*(1), 9-15.

Toledo, P., & Llorente, M. C. (2016). Formación inicial del profesorado en el uso de Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC) para la educación del discapacitado. *Digital Education Review, 30*, 123-134.

Turketi, N. (2010). *Teaching English to children with ADHD*. [Postgraduate Dissertation, School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, USA]. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection/483/

Turnbull, S. S. (2017). *Extending research on the comparative efficacy of computer flashcard reading interventions in elementary-school students with intellectual disability*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Tennessee]

Ware, J., Lye, C. B., & Kyffin, F. (2015). Bilingualism and students (learners) with intellectual disability: A review. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 12*(3), 220-231.

Warschauer, M. (1996). Computer assisted language learning: An introduction. In S. Fotos (Ed.), *Multimedia language teaching* (pp. 3-20). Tokyo, Logos International.

Warschauer, M. (2004). Technological change and the future of CALL. In S. Fotos& C. Browne (Eds), New Perspectives *on CALL for Second Language Classrooms* (pp. 15–25). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wesely, M. P. (2012). Learner attitudes, perceptions and beliefs in language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, *45*(1), 98-117.

Wight, M. C. S. (2015). Students with learning disabilities in the foreign language learning environment and the practice of exemption. *Foreign Language Annals, 48*(1). 39-55.

Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williamson, D. M. (2017). *Preview-View-Review: Increasing academic access for students with intellectual disabilities who are English learners.* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nevada, Las Vegas]

Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Longman.

Young, A. S. (2014). Unpacking teachers' language ideologies: Attitudes, beliefs, and practiced language policies in schools in Alsace, France. *Language Awareness, 23*, 157-171.

Yousefzadeh, M. (2016). The effect of task based language teaching on disabled learners' first language written task accuracy, fluency, and complexity. *International Journal of Educational Investigation, 3*(5), 52-60.

Zainuddin, N., Sahrir, M. S., Idrus, R. M., & Jaffar, M. N. (2016). Scaffolding a conceptual support for personalized Arabic vocabulary learning using augmented reality (AR) enhanced flashcards. *Journal of Personalized Learning, 2*(1), 95-103.

Zhang, F., & Liu, Y. (2014). A study of secondary school English teachers' beliefs in the context of curriculum reform in China. *Language Teaching Research, 18*(2), 187-204.

Zhang, C. (2019). *Language immersion teachers' perspectives of foreign language learning for students with disabilities* [Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University].