

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Understanding student experiences in inclusive
EFL education

Final conference

ERASMUS+ project SuPporting foreign
Language LEarNing for stuDents wIth
Disabilities (SPLENDID)

University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, 13th September 2025



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University of Education Heidelberg, Germany

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education, Slovenia

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

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Editorial

Book of Abstracts was designed upon the final conference of the ERASMUS+ project SuPPorting foreign Language lEarNing for stuDents wlth Disabilities – SPLENDID (Project No.: 2022-1-EL01-KA220-SCH-000089364). The project, conducted from December 2022 to December 2025, aimed to develop research-based methodological and didactic strategies for teaching foreign languages in inclusive settings. Its focus was on approaches that support both typically developing learners and those with diverse learning needs. The overarching goal was to ensure that all students benefit from a high-quality, universally designed language learning experience.

The conference, which was conducted in a hybrid way, took place at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, on 13th of September 2025. The coordinators of the conference and main speakers were members of the project team from the participating institutions: University of Macedonia, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, University of Education Heidelberg, University of Ljubljana, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Platon Schools in Katerini, Schlierbach Primary School in Heidelberg, and Milan Šuštaršič Primary School.

The event brought together experts on language learning in inclusive settings from across Europe and gave a voice to teachers, who presented good practices arising from experiential and task-based learning. One of the main highlights of the conference concerned different ways of implementing *Universal Design for Learning*. This is a flexible pedagogical framework that promotes learner agency through multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression. All students, but particularly students with diverse learning needs, are encouraged to engage and become purposeful, reflective, and strategic learners. Additionally, the role of assistive technology was emphasized, as it enables access, participation, and multimodal learning to students with diverse learning needs. Lastly, the experiences and perceptions of the students with diverse learning needs were presented and taken into serious consideration as important partners in the creation of quality and inclusive educational settings.

Dr Marianna Karatsiori, Dr Melita Lemut Bajec and Dr Mojca Poredoš

Link to the recording of the conference:

<https://youtube.com/live/MDojhKshRkc?feature=share>

Link to the SPLENDID website portal:

<https://splendid.uom.gr/>

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SPLENDID conference agenda

September 13, 2025

Streaming link: <https://youtube.com/live/MDojhKshRkc?feature=share>

9:00 - 09:30 Registration

9:30 - 9:40 Welcome

09:40 - 10:20 Panel discussion: Breaking barriers: Making language learning accessible to all

10:20 - 11.00 Research findings session: Evidence-based insights: Research on supporting students with diverse learning needs in language learning, Dr Mojca Poredoš and Dr Melita Lemut Bajec

11.00-11.20 Beyond barriers: How do students with diverse learning needs experience foreign language learning across Europe; Dr Marianna Karatsiori and Dr Trisevgeni Lontou

11:20 - 11.50 Coffee break

11:50 - 13:00 Teachers' voices session: Classroom perspectives

13:00 - 14:00 Lunch break and networking

14:00 - 14:30 Assistive technology and *Universal Design for Learning* for inclusive language teaching, Dr Karin Vogt

14:30 - 15:00 Developing EFL reading skills: Evidence-based strategies for deaf and hard of hearing students, Dr Ewa Domagała-Zyśk

15:00 - 16:00 Presentation of SPLENDID outputs: Putting SPLENDID into practice; Dr Marianthi Karatsiori, Dr Trisevgeni Lontou, Dr Karin Vogt, and Efthimis Mavrogeorgiadis

16:00 - 16:30 Closing remarks and way forward

Panel discussion: Understanding student experiences in inclusive EFL education

Challenges in foreign language learning for students with visual impairments

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Foreign language competence is a key competence that enables individuals to participate in learning opportunities, develop employability skills, and enjoy diverse experiences. Students with diverse learning needs (DLN) usually find it more challenging to develop this competence because foreign language classes are often not designed to cater to their DLN. The Erasmus+ project SPLENDID aimed to develop new methodological and didactic strategies and interventions for learning and teaching foreign languages in mainstream schools. The goal of SPLENDID was to identify the digitally enhanced and inclusive foreign language teaching practices, examine how certain learning needs intersect with language learning practices, propose ways to overcome barriers in the learning process, and identify the support language teachers need. We also investigated the impact of educational materials and games used within foreign language classes.

For students with visual impairments, it is important to recognize that they miss out on incidental learning, face barriers to visual vocabulary, and require explicit, step-by-step instruction and additional resources, which are not always available. Teachers often lack confidence in supporting these learners because they have not received adequate training. Good practices for teachers include multisensory presentation of vocabulary and grammar (e.g., linking vocabulary or grammar to movement through kinesthetic tasks), using real objects instead of pictures, providing tactile versions of visuals (e.g., raised line drawings, textured maps), adding auditory elements (e.g., verbal explanations, recordings, descriptive language), and contextualizing materials with real-life sensory examples. Educators should also make use of assistive technologies, such as screen readers, Braille displays, OCR software, electronic magnifiers, voice recognition software, and tactile graphics software. It is important to ensure the classroom is adequately prepared, including optimal lighting, minimal glare, proximity, desk markers, a consistent layout, a clutter-free working space, and clear pathways. Finally, social inclusion should be considered, for example, through explicitly designed group work.

Keywords: foreign language competence; students with diverse learning needs; students with visual impairments

Challenges in foreign language learning for students with dyslexia

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Dyslexia is a lifelong neurobiologically based learning disorder that primarily affects reading, spelling, and writing abilities. It is characterized by impairments in specific cognitive processes, including phonological awareness, working memory, processing speed, metacognition, organizational skills, and difficulties in the automatization of the decoding process. People with dyslexia face various difficulties, which exist on a continuum and can be experienced to various degrees. Dyslexia is likely to co-occur with one or more other developmental difficulties. Although it impacts language literacy across all languages, the degree of difficulty varies depending on the orthographic transparency of the language. It is also worthwhile to remember that there are also positives to thinking differently. Namely, many people with dyslexia show strengths in areas such as reasoning and in visual and creative fields.

When learning foreign languages, learners with dyslexia often require additional support in the form of explicit and structured instructional approaches, which should incorporate multiple means of engagement, representation, and action or expression. Furthermore, dyslexic learners especially benefit from multisensory methods, emphasis on oral communication, regular formative assessment, and interactive, collaborative learning environments. Additionally, when selecting or preparing written materials, attention should be given to typography, contrast, layout, clarity, and visual support. Students' success can further be enhanced through the use of assistive digital tools, such as speech-to-text and text-to-speech converters, spell checkers, smart pens, mind mapping tools, scanning devices, tablets, and interactive learning apps. These practices significantly enhance the accessibility of the learning process, motivation, and engagement of students.

Keywords: dyslexia; cognitive processes; orthographic language transparency; inclusive learning environments; scaffolding strategies; assistive technology

Challenges in foreign language learning for deaf and hard-of-hearing students

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Creating inclusive learning environments for deaf and hard-of-hearing students requires a thoughtful blend of suitable communication strategies, reasonable accommodations, and personalized teaching approaches. The ultimate goal is to provide an integral education that addresses cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Effective strategies are well structured and address learners' emotional needs, sustaining their engagement and motivation. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students must be supported with sufficient and adequate visualization techniques. The SPLENDID project has paid particular attention to providing teachers with materials that are accessible through the use of visual elements, such as subtitles, photos, pictures, and animations. Further, in foreign language classes, it is important to proceed systematically, from simple to complex elements and structures, while being aware of students' different needs and individual learning styles. Additionally, it is important for teachers to adopt accessible communication styles; they need to speak clearly, maintain eye contact, minimize movement, and support lipreading and speech reading, while also using written communication when needed. These strategies and thus prepared materials collectively foster engagement, motivation, and accessibility, and provide meaningful learning experiences for all students.

Keywords: deaf and hard-of-hearing students; personalized teaching approaches; integral education; visualization techniques; accessible communication styles

Challenges in foreign language learning for students with physical disabilities

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Physical and motor development can be influenced by a wide spectrum of conditions, including cerebral movement disorders, epilepsy, chronic and progressive diseases, spina bifida, and complex developmental or perceptual disabilities. These conditions can significantly impact language learning through attention and executive function challenges, communication barriers, memory and concentration difficulties, and frequent absences leading to knowledge gaps. Psychological effects such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and reduced participation further complicate the learning process. Given the diversity of needs and comorbidities, a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate.

People with physical disabilities have the right to participate in English-speaking discourse. Therefore, when planning language lessons, teachers should pay attention to various socio-emotional and physical factors affecting their students' progress, such as emotional stress, hospital stays, parental overprotection, limited energy, lack of motivation and independence, possible behavior issues, and limited emotional life-worlds. Teachers must provide emotional support, allow frequent breaks, and consider the pros and cons of buddy systems. Classroom and organizational adaptations include interdisciplinary staff cooperation, barrier-free and stimulus-regulated spaces, and accessible materials and technologies. Success is further boosted through small classes, flexible teaching, individual differentiation, and materials that ensure accessibility through adapted worksheets, font size, color coding, etc. Language teaching should prioritize participation over performance, embrace error tolerance, and use engaging methods like play, storytelling, and songs. Assistive technologies and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, such as PECS and VOCAs, support diverse learners. To ensure inclusive and effective language education for students with physical and motor challenges, it is also beneficial to employ the *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)* principles, which are based on multisensory input, varied expression formats, and peer feedback. Lastly, it is also crucial to provide emotional support and supervision to the educators in order to prevent them from burning out.

Keywords: students with physical disabilities; assistive technologies; flexible teaching; *Universal Design for Learning*; inclusive language education

Research findings session

Addressing specific learning difficulties in foreign language classes in Slovenia: Students' insights

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Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), including dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, are marked by significant and persistent challenges in acquiring academic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics. These difficulties do not stem from intellectual disabilities, sensory impairments, or environmental and social factors. Instead, they are associated with neurophysiological causes and deficiencies in relevant cognitive abilities, including attention, memory, coordination, communication, and a reduced ability to automate new knowledge. The prevalence of SpLD in the overall population is estimated to range from 5% to 15%, affecting various areas of learning. Understanding the origins of SpLD is crucial for developing effective interventions and support strategies for affected individuals. Students with SpLD and other related issues can be effectively supported through *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL), a framework that promotes inclusive teaching and learning, grounded in scientific insights into human learning processes. A study was conducted as part of the SPLENDID project to explore how the needs of pupils with SpLD are addressed in foreign language classes in Slovenia. Nine primary school pupils, aged between 9 and 15 years, were interviewed about their experiences with English lessons. Our focus was on three key areas: (i) students' perceptions of good teaching practices, (ii) the challenges they encounter while learning English in a classroom setting, and (iii) their suggestions for potential classroom interventions to facilitate their English language acquisition. The findings highlight that students with SpLD value teaching practices that incorporate authentic, meaningful, playful, and creative activities, allowing for full engagement, such as drawing, dancing, and singing. Furthermore, these students express a preference for free speech opportunities that enable them to articulate their opinions without being confined to rigid, pre-prepared patterns and structures. The challenges they encounter pertain to writing, spelling, and pronunciation, especially with longer and more complex words. An extensive vocabulary that lacks connection to tangible situations significantly hinders their progress due to difficulties with memory and concentration. Students identified difficulties with specific tasks, such as distinguishing verb tenses and completing gap-fill exercises. They further reported that large class sizes hinder the quiet environment required for learners with SpLD to concentrate. When invited to propose improvements, students were initially hesitant and required considerable

prompting, ultimately offering broad suggestions including scaffolding techniques, mnemonics, visual materials, playful activities, subtitled multimodal resources, a supportive classroom climate, and reduced class sizes. Integrating such feedback into pedagogical practice is essential, as it aligns with the principles of UDL, which emphasise multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression.

Keywords: Specific Learning Difficulties; *Universal Design for Learning*; primary school pupils; good teaching practices; scaffolding strategies

Addressing special educational needs in foreign language classes in Slovenia: Teachers' insights

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The increasing prevalence of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in educational settings necessitates educators who are informed and equipped to implement inclusive pedagogical strategies. This requires constant in-service training for teachers to stay up-to-date. Two such contemporary teaching approaches, whose potential is not yet adequately recognized in Slovenia, are experiential learning and *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL). A study was conducted as part of the SPLENDID project to investigate the in-situ situation and to empower the teachers with the two approaches. Six primary school teachers participated in a structured training program that consisted of a preparatory phase (including a questionnaire and an interactive training session), an implementation phase (during which 15 classroom activities were conducted), and an evaluation phase (involving a follow-up questionnaire and a focus group interview for self-reflection). The objectives included gathering insights into (i) teachers' experiences with SEN pupils, (ii) their readiness to modify instructional materials and resources, and (iii) their familiarity with experiential learning and UDL. Findings indicated that teachers possessed varied experiences working with pupils with SEN (i). Consequently, they demonstrated a willingness to adapt and modify materials tailored to individual student requirements (ii). Most educators reported either partial or full adjustments in their teaching strategies, instructional materials, assessment tools, and classroom layouts to better accommodate their students' needs and preferred learning modalities. Specifically, they often reduced the volume and complexity of materials while ensuring that students met essential learning standards. They employed diverse representational means to enhance topic accessibility, regularly assessed comprehension, and offered individualized support as necessary. Additionally, group work and collaborative peer

activities were integrated into their practice. Nonetheless, teachers acknowledged gaps in their knowledge, particularly regarding strategies for engaging pupils with SEN. They expressed concerns about time constraints and perceived some of their current strategies as less effective. Regarding the two approaches, before the intervention, two teachers reported knowing and utilizing experiential learning, while three teachers were familiar with UDL but did not implement it. Following the intervention, all teachers recognized the efficacy of experiential learning, citing its ability to foster enduring knowledge and heightened engagement. Regarding UDL, four teachers were introduced to its principles during the intervention, with three recognising its value and subsequently incorporating it into their classroom practice. When asked about the importance of such training initiatives, all participants affirmed their relevance, emphasising their role in equipping educators with practical, evidence-based strategies. Moreover, these professional development opportunities serve as a crucial bridge between academic research and its application in real-world teaching contexts.

Keywords: special educational needs; experiential learning; *Universal Design for Learning*; primary school pupils; teachers

Beyond barriers: Understanding engagement gaps in foreign language learning for students with diverse needs; Findings from the SPLENDID cross-national study

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This presentation reports findings from a cross-national mixed-methods study examining the foreign language learning experiences of 95 students (aged 6–18 years and older) with diverse learning needs across Greece, Germany, Slovenia, and Poland. The SPLENDID project addresses a critical gap in inclusive education research by centering the voices of students with visual impairment (n=16), hearing impairment (n=14), physical/mobility difficulties (n=32), and specific learning difficulties (n=33). Using the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and semi-structured interviews, we measured two key dimensions: Learning Attitudes (LA) and Personal Engagement (PE). The central finding reveals a significant discrepancy: students demonstrated high motivation and positive attitudes toward language learning, yet reported substantially lower levels of active classroom engagement. This "willingness-participation gap" varied across disability types, with physical/mobility groups showing the strongest LA-PE correlation, visual impairment students facing access barriers despite high motivation, and specific learning difficulties students requiring additional scaffolding. The study identifies specific challenges for each group and documents what students themselves report as enjoyable and effective. These findings have direct implications for teacher training, curriculum adaptation, and the design of inclusive digital learning tools. The research demonstrates that motivation is not the barrier; access and engagement strategies are.

Keywords: inclusive education; foreign language learning; students with disabilities;

Reference:

Karatsiori, M., Lιontou, T., Vogt, K., Košak Babuder, M., Poredoš, M., & Domagała-Zyśk, E. (2025). Beyond barriers: Exploring foreign language learning experiences of students with diverse learning needs in four European countries. *Frontiers in Education*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1520944>

Teachers' voices session: Classroom perspectives

Implementing an approach to inclusive English language learning

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This presentation reports on the classroom implementation of SPLENDID language learning scenarios across a range of CEFR levels (A2 to C1) and diverse learner profiles, including students with Dyslexia, ADHD, sensory impairments, and other special educational needs. The scenarios, centered on environmental themes such as recycling and climate change, were delivered in primary and junior high school classrooms with varied cognitive and language proficiency levels. Teachers adapted materials extensively, employing multisensory approaches—combining video, audio, tactile props, and digital tools—to increase accessibility and engagement. Peer support emerged as a key facilitator of inclusion, with neurotypical students actively assisting those with learning difficulties, fostering collaboration and empathy. However, teachers highlighted persistent material constraints, including limited access to functional adaptive technologies such as Braille printers, which hindered the full participation of some learners. Moreover, scenarios at higher CEFR levels demanded significant scaffolding to balance linguistic complexity with cognitive load, especially for younger students. Sustaining attention during longer lessons and managing dual sensory impairments presented additional challenges. Despite these obstacles, the scenarios successfully promoted active learning through games, teamwork, and multi-modal input/output strategies. The findings underscore the critical role of flexible, differentiated teaching methods, robust peer support, and sufficient material resources in achieving equitable language learning outcomes for diverse student populations.

Keywords: classroom implementation; diverse learning needs; language learning scenarios; accessibility; peer support; multisensory teaching

Animals in danger: Meaningful language learning through task-based and inclusive practices in primary education

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Task-based learning (TBL) provides a framework for effectively engaging young learners in English language education by emphasizing meaningful, goal-oriented tasks that promote communication and learner autonomy. Grounded in inclusive practice and digital integration (e.g., iPads, Smart TV), this framework highlights a dynamic and interactive approach to language teaching and learning. To ensure that all learners can fully participate and benefit from these tasks, principles of inclusive and flexible design, such as *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL), can be applied, providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, as well as including learners with developmental language needs (DLN). The project *Animals in danger*, implemented at Schlierbach Primary School in Heidelberg, Germany, involved 25 Year 4 students (ages 9–10) at a mostly pre-A1 language level, including several multilingual learners, learners with ADHD, dyslexia, and autism. Using backward planning and a task-based sequence, students progressed from sorting animal pictures and selecting a focus animal to developing vocabulary through word banks on task cards and digital platforms such as Padlet. They practiced listening, reading comprehension, and writing skills, gradually progressing toward independently producing an animal report. Adapted materials and scaffolded tasks supported learners with DLN, focusing on key vocabulary, visual cues, and reduced writing demands. Collaboration and peer support were central throughout, encouraging interdependence and fostering motivation. Reflections on student outcomes, classroom observations, and broader implications highlight how real-world themes, structured planning, and digital tools can transform early foreign language teaching. By combining creativity, inclusive pedagogy, and task-based methodology, the project *Animals in danger* demonstrates how language learning can be meaningful, collaborative, and empowering for primary school learners.

Keywords: task-based learning; *Universal Design for Learning*; primary school learners; digital integration; collaboration; foreign language teaching

Addressing specific learning difficulties in foreign language classes in Slovenia: Students' insights

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There is a noticeable increase in the number of pupils experiencing a range of learning difficulties, from children with autism, ADHD, emotional and behavioral disorders, to attention and concentration-related challenges. Such learners often require tailored approaches and differentiated teaching strategies. Activities that involve movement, collaboration, games, songs, as well as various visual and auditory aids are especially beneficial for SEN students. Such activities not only motivate pupils but also foster critical thinking and collaboration. As part of the Splendid project, we tested several activities, two of which we found particularly useful. The first was a rainbow shortcut. This activity is designed especially for practicing sentence building. Pupils are given a picture with various objects and a set of color-coded word slips. First, the teacher creates a model sentence using slips of different colors to show the correct word order. Then the pupils use the colors as clues to arrange their own slips into meaningful sentences that describe the picture. The color coding is key, as it helps learners see the logical sequence of words and understand sentence structure visually. After a few guided examples, they are able to work independently in pairs. Even pupils who normally find sentence building difficult were engaged and successful. The activity gave them confidence, supported spelling and vocabulary revision. The second activity was the learning machine, which helps pupils gradually master new vocabulary. We need a box with five sections and a set of picture cards. At the outset, all cards are placed in the first section. Each day, pupils pronounce the words aloud. If a word is named correctly, its card is moved to the next section; if not, it remains in place. Cards in the first section are practiced daily, those in the second every other day, in the third once a week, and in the fourth once a month. Once a card reaches the fifth section, the word is considered mastered. This structured and systematic routine promotes consistent revision while allowing learners to observe their own progress. The physical movement of the cards adds a playful and motivating element, enabling each child to advance at an individual pace. Both activities proved highly effective for learners with special needs, as they combine structure, repetition, and enjoyment—key principles of inclusive language teaching.

Keywords: SPLENDID Erasmus+ project; differentiated teaching strategies; a rainbow shortcut; the learning machine

Assistive technology and *Universal Design for Learning* for inclusive language teaching

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The intersection of *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) and assistive technology (AT) provides a foundation for inclusive language teaching. UDL offers a flexible pedagogical framework that aims to minimize barriers and maximize learning opportunities for all students by promoting learner agency through multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. Thus, it enables purposeful, reflective, strategic, and authentic engagement with learning goals (CAST, 2024). Its application is demonstrated through a task-based language teaching (TBLT) example. The role of assistive technology is examined across a continuum from low-tech tools to AI-supported solutions, highlighting how AT can enhance access, participation, and multimodal learning (Schulz et al., 2025). Examples include accessible everyday technologies like text-to-speech, speech recognition, and automatic subtitling, which support learners with diverse learning needs (DLN), such as dyslexia, hearing impairments, or temporary barriers. Ethical considerations, infrastructure challenges, and the need for teacher training in the effective use of critical AT also need to be addressed. A practical classroom example—the “Me-book” project based on Lepelt and Vogt (2025)—illustrates how low-tech and digital tools can be used to foster learner identity, autonomy, and differentiated expression. The analysis underscores the importance of knowing learners’ preferences, conditions, and prior knowledge to effectively integrate UDL and AT in foreign language education.

Keywords: *Universal Design for Learning*; assistive technology; inclusive language teaching; task-based language teaching; learner agency

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Developing EFL reading skills: Evidence-based strategies for deaf and hard-of-hearing learners

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This presentation focuses on evidence-based approaches to developing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading skills among deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) learners, drawing on over 200 research publications and practical interventions developed since 1999 onwards. It addresses a critical gap in language education by recognizing the unique linguistic and pedagogical needs of DHH students, who face distinct challenges in acquiring foreign language literacy skills. The research highlights comprehensive strategies, emphasizing suitable communication methods, reasonable accommodations, visualization techniques, and teaching approaches centered on personalization, structuralization, and emotionalization. The overarching goal is to promote integral education that addresses both linguistic competence and holistic student development. Research findings from 2016 studies reveal specific reading difficulties among DHH EFL learners, including limited vocabulary repertoires, challenges with specialized terminology and grammar words, difficulties understanding informal speech-based texts, low digital literacy skills for navigating hypertext, and reduced motivation for reading activities. Despite these barriers, learners demonstrate good abilities in reading simple, short, concrete sentences, suggesting that targeted interventions can be built upon their existing strengths. The proposed pedagogical approach emphasizes multifaceted learning strategies, including learning by doing, traveling, problem-solving, communicating, building relationships, tutoring, and mentoring. These methods prioritize integral development over traditional teaching models. Contemporary reading instruction, therefore, focuses on expanding vocabulary while utilizing all communication modalities—oral, sign, and written—with particular emphasis on translanguaging approaches that leverage learners' full linguistic repertoires. Inclusive strategies include warm-up activities to evoke interest, explicit key vocabulary instruction, and the use of age-appropriate texts aligned with language proficiency levels. Additional approaches involve diverse reading comprehension exercises incorporating writing, drawing, movement, and ICT tools, as well as creative personalized activities that connect learners' individual interests and experiences. Further, a pilot study conducted in July 2024 in Sienna (Domagała-Zyśk, 2024) examined learning enjoyment among 14 DHH participants from Poland, Romania, Italy, and Czechia attending a summer EFL school. The diverse communication profiles of

participants included eight individuals who used both sign language and speech, four who communicated exclusively through sign language, and two who relied solely on speech. Using the Foreign Language Learning Enjoyment Scale by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), the study revealed remarkably high satisfaction levels across multiple dimensions, with scores ranging from 4.36 to 4.5 on a 0-5 scale. Participants reported that learning English was a pleasure (4.5), felt strong group cohesion (4.5), experienced teacher support (4.5), and maintained high levels of engagement through laughter and positive interaction (4.43). The presentation further highlights a fundamental challenge identified by R.O. Cornett (Cornet & Daisey, 2001), creator of Cued Speech: DHH learners have limited access to spontaneous language experiences, and the common assumption that reading can replace listening proves inadequate. This insight frames the core problem as "not voice but words," emphasizing that the challenge lies not in auditory processing but in comprehensive language access and development. The work embodies the disability rights principle "Nothing about us without us," emphasizing the importance of DHH learners' agency in their educational processes.

Keywords: deaf and hard of hearing; EFL; reading strategies; cued speech; learning strategies

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Presentation of SPLENDID outputs

Putting SPLENDID into practice: The online game

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As part of the SPLENDID project, a free online educational game was developed to support language learning through engaging storytelling and environmental themes. The game centers around two main characters and explores ecological issues across four distinct environments. Each narrative segment, presented before gameplay, introduces vocabulary ranging from A1 to B2 levels of the CEFR scale. A key focus during development was ensuring accessibility for students with special educational needs. To this end, the game incorporates a variety of customizable features, including adjustable voice settings, font styles, content density, and input delay options, allowing users to take breaks and engage at their own pace. Players can also personalize their character, modify game difficulty, and receive immediate feedback and rewards after each session—elements designed to enhance motivation and support language acquisition. Preliminary testing with students with special educational needs revealed challenges related to sentence complexity and vocabulary. In response, ongoing revisions aim to simplify language structures and reduce sentence length to improve accessibility and comprehension.

Keywords: online educational game; ecological issues; students with special educational needs; customizable features

Deliverable D2.3 Collection of Best Practices

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Abstract

This collection of best practices emerges from the SPLENDID project (Supporting Foreign Language Learning for Students with Diverse Needs), an Erasmus+ initiative coordinated by the University of Macedonia (UoM) that aims to transform foreign language education for students with diverse learning needs (DLN) in mainstream European classrooms. Rooted in the project's comprehensive research cycle—including literature review (T2.1) and needs analysis (T2.2)—this collection (T2.3) bridges theoretical research and classroom realities, responding to the growing demand for harmonized, practical guidance for inclusive language teaching across Europe.

Developed collaboratively by partner institutions, the collection reflects the joint efforts of Dr Marianna Karatsiori (University of Macedonia, Greece), Dr Trisevgeni Liotou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece), Dr. Ewa Domagała-Zyś (Catholic University of Lublin, Poland), Dr Milena Košak Babuder, Dr Mojca Poredoš, Dr Karmen Javornik, and Dr Karmen Pižorn (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia), and Dr. Karin Vogt (University of Education Heidelberg, Germany). International contributors Dr Lucia Pintado Gutiérrez (Dublin City University, Ireland) and Dr Marina Sergeevna Khakhalina, Dr Anna Borisovna Bagramova, and Dr Oxana Nikolaevna Pavlova (Herzen University, St Petersburg, Russia) enriched the collection with additional global perspectives. Local Greek educators Anna Zourna (MA, Aristotle junior high school in Thessaloniki), Maria Bazopoulou (MA, Hellenic Open University), Charikleia Panagiotaki (MA, Hellenic Open University), and Efthymios Mavrogeorgiadis (MA, Experimental School of the University of Macedonia) provided classroom-tested insights and contributed original practices.

The primary objective of this work is to equip language teachers with research-informed, adaptable strategies that promote equitable access to foreign language learning. The practices are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, ensuring both academic rigor and accessibility.

Organized by learning support focus, CEFR level, and language skill, the collection includes 23 good practices and covers a wide range of interventions—from sensory and tactile approaches for visually impaired learners to communication strategies for deaf and hard-of-hearing students and attention-support techniques for learners with ADHD. Ultimately, this collection contributes to transforming mainstream classrooms into inclusive learning communities where all students—regardless of ability—can thrive linguistically, cognitively, and socially.

Read my lips

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Read My Lips is a four-hour classroom project for secondary school students aged 12 to 15, including those with hearing impairments, integrated into regular education. It is a best practice which is presented in the deliverable 2.3 Collection of Best Practices. The practice raises awareness of the challenges faced by people with auditory impairments while providing valuable opportunities for language learning at the A2 to B2 CEFR level. The lesson sequence includes reading comprehension, multimodal text analysis, experiential learning, and gamification to help students explore communication challenges and build empathy. Students work with real materials, such as excerpts from *Seeing at the Speed of Sound*, that help them identify lip-reading difficulties. They participate in interactive tasks that simulate hearing impairments, compare communication methods, and reflect on their own challenges when learning a foreign language. A “lip-reading challenge” highlights the limits of visual speech perception and encourages students to create their own challenges and compete with their classmates. Language goals include vocabulary growth, improvement of reading and listening skills, and an introduction to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Through inquiry-based learning, students examine phonemes and their visual similarities, helping them understand why lip-reading can be unreliable. Working in groups encourages students to develop strategies for clearer communication and apply these in creative storytelling tasks. The project follows *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) principles by providing various ways to engage, represent, and express ideas. It promotes inclusive practices, the use of helpful tools, and reflection on real-world applications. By the end of the project, students improve their English language skills while developing empathy, supportive attitudes, and practical strategies to help peers with hearing impairments.

Keywords: lip-reading; hearing impairments; inclusive education; empathy development



Project SPLENDID team members at the conference venue
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