Article

Coping with Challenges in Teaching Foreign Languages to Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities: Stakeholders' Perspectives

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Abstract: In this qualitative study, we aim to gain insight into the stakeholders' perspectives around the inclusion of a mild intellectual disability (MID) student of perinatal origin in the foreign language (FL) classroom, and their perspectives on the student's working conditions, and the support needed to effectively develop this student's basic FL skills. The research hypothesis holds that the stakeholders face numerous technical, contextual, and formative challenges which hinder the MID student's learning conditions in the FL classroom. The study was carried out in a state secondary school of the metropolitan area of Granada (Spain). Different stakeholders participated in this study. As an instrument of research, we designed an in-depth interview with open questions. The data were perused, sifted, and interpreted by means of a content analysis methodology. The main results confirm the research hypothesis since stakeholders' perspectives are positive towards the theoretical bases of inclusive education. Conversely, we observe that these perspectives are negative when it comes to the real and effective practice of inclusive education in the FL classroom, which would allow them to tailor their teaching methodology to the real needs of the MID student and the rest of students with special educational needs (SEN).

Keywords: foreign language learning; mild intellectual disability; basic language skills; special education; inclusive education; special educational needs

1. Introduction

The challenges of teaching foreign languages (henceforward FLs) to students with mild intellectual disability (MID from now onwards) still go mostly unnoticed in the educational system. The paucity of studies tackling this issue is glaring but if we focus exclusively on those related to the perspectives of teaching professionals, the number is still in the single digits. Thus, we believe that the stakeholders' (i.e., specialist teachers and headship of the school) viewpoints are of paramount importance, since these might influence both the academic performance and the life and development of these children [1,2]. This research intends to have a wider reach, attempting to identify the challenges they are to face and enumerate the instruments they need to overcome. Moreover, there is a growing body of literature concerned with the role of the teacher as the key agent in the inclusive school [3–5]. Some of these publications [6,7] emphasize how inclusive education training is the key to success in the teachers' subsequent career, to boot.

Several studies have documented the complexities experienced by students with linguistic and cognitive needs in acquiring a foreign language (FL) [8–10]. A significant and recurrent obstacle that stands in the way is the diversity of learning profiles inherent among these students [11]. Nevertheless, the numerous benefits in the linguistic domain [12–17]; cognitive and metacognitive domains [18–21]; sociocultural domain [22–24]; and socioemotional dimension [25–27] have been reported in the literature. Furthermore, as stated in the Salamanca Agreement [28], the European Commission [29] and by other

researchers [19,23,30], any student has the right to receive a good quality education and equal educational opportunities from an ethical and legal point of view. Therefore, limiting linguistic learning to just one language in a growing, globalized and diverse society may be counterproductive for the personal and social development of students with intellectual disabilities [31]. Thus, this research thoroughly delves into stakeholders' perspectives in order to unveil the ways they can contribute to develop basic FL skills in students with MID in secondary education.

To frame the discussion, we must refer to the prevalence rate of people with intellectual disabilities and their presence in mainstream schooling. According to the estimates of the World Report on Disability [32], this rate stands for 1–2% of the total world population. By the same token, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-V) [33] concludes that the subtype with the highest incidence is MID, which accounts for about 85%. In Spain, based on the data provided by the Observatory on Disability and the Labor Market (ODISMET) [34], there were 193,500 people with intellectual disabilities (aged 16–64). It also pinpoints that in the Spanish educational system, 219,720 out of a total of 8,182,396 students present special educational needs (henceforth SEN) (2.7% of the total) and that 62,400 are diagnosed with intellectual disabilities. In the same way, the report displays a strong trend that has been observed since 2010 with regard to the enrolment of these students in mainstream educational institutions. Consequently, 83.4% of students with SEN are enrolled in ordinary schools, that is, 8 out of 10, compared to 2 out of 10 who are registered in specific special education schools. It is therefore relatively uncontroversial to say that the presence of students with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools means that the Spanish educational system creates and guarantees a solid support system available for all students. The omission would cloud the reality of many children. Thus, throughout our study we intend to scrutinize the stakeholders' perspectives in order to determine the obstacles they encounter in the creation and implementation of this support system.

In view of the constellation of evidence [29,35–38], the discussion aims to unravel pathways to remedy some of the existing inequalities. Thus, catering to students with intellectual disabilities requires improvements in the initial and ongoing training of the teaching staff; hiring teachers; acquiring more resources; improving stakeholders' coordination and communication, and collaboration with the students' families; and adapting the curriculum to students' needs.

Alternatively, we cannot ignore the data related to human rights and disabilities [39]. Spain is one of the few European countries in which a human rights plan for students with SEN has not yet been drafted. The oblivion of these rights has a negative impact on various areas of their lives, including inclusion, well-being, political rights, universal accessibility, social protection, personal autonomy, and education. In addition, it is worth mentioning that public policies neither prioritize these students' needs nor show commitment for a truly transformative curriculum. In this sense, and regarding educational legislation, Medina García [40] identifies two barriers that make it difficult to implement an inclusive education. On the one hand, this author [40] alludes to the lack of coordination between the measures of attention to diversity and the right to inclusive education through the (dis) use of action policies and positive discrimination. This sidesteps a framework of preventive and systemic policies geared towards the entire school community and aimed at avoiding situations which are likely to generate exclusion. On the other hand, it describes the insufficiencies in the design, development and implementation of the curriculum. It is notable that excessive standardization displaces the focus from the process of learning to measurable results. At the same time, according to this author [40], assuming that the textbook is the epitome of the curriculum has far-reaching consequences for both the teachers' autonomy and students' involvement in the teaching–learning processes.

1.1. State of the Art

In general terms, the number of studies related to the teaching of an FL in the field of inclusive/special education is lower compared to the papers devoted to the teaching of an

FL in mainstream education [41]. Furthermore, within the category of students with SEN, pieces of research scrutinizing those with MID are very limited (at least in the Spanish context). However, we have identified two research streams. One peruses the ability of students with intellectual disabilities to learn an FL in immersion contexts benefitting from intervention programs in compulsory educational stages. The second examines teaching practices of MID students when learning English as an FL. The main results of these stances are summarized synthetically throughout this section.

Notwithstanding this, several authors claim that more research should be conducted in order to reflect the wide range of idiosyncrasies among MID students [5,15,32,34].

In the same way, we have observed that there is a gap of information regarding the perspectives of the FL stakeholders who specifically serve these students. We therefore consider that a deep understanding of these perspectives can contribute to the creation of initial and permanent training programs with the aim of offering adequate training to teachers working hand-in-hand with MID students.

In order to facilitate comprehension of the data from the literature review, this section tackles the main features of MID, stakeholders' perspectives and the approaches, methods, techniques, strategies, and materials used to include students with MID in the FL classroom.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-V) [33], intellectual disability is defined as "a disorder with onset during the developmental period that includes both intellectual and adaptive functioning deficits in conceptual, social, and practical domains" (p. 33). It is subdivided into mild, moderate, severe and profound.

Narrowing the focus on MID, we can observe the following characteristics in relation to the basic linguistic skills involved in learning an FL:

- Linguistic and communicative development: There are delays in the acquisition of productive skills (oral and written expression) and receptive skills (oral and written comprehension). In general, their language is more restricted and immature [42]. In the linguistic area, these students present difficulties related to sound articulation, especially with the most complex phonemes, and with auditory discrimination that is sometimes slow and immature [12].
- Semantics: Reduced lexicon and lexical scaffolding [12].
- Morphosyntax: Reduced length and less complexity in forms and expressions, problems with morphosyntactic inflections, and problems with understanding and producing subordinate sentences [12].
- Pragmatic skills: Students show slowness in the development of advanced skills. For instance, difficulties in interacting, such as contributing to a conversation, making a request, etc.
- Discourse organization: These students lack proficiency of the macrostructures of discourse. At the same time, various studies maintain that the difficulties they present in learning their L1 are frequently iterated in their L2 [10,12]. In this sense, the research carried out by Kay-Raining Bird [19] and Genesee, Paradis and Crago [43] show that people with intellectual disabilities can become bilingual without impairing their mother tongue learning. Notwithstanding this fact, they warn that the exposure to the L1 and L2 is decisive in terms of the strengths and weaknesses that they present in both. These authors [19,43] underscore the sociocultural context and the characteristics of each individual as the essential bases on which the different support measures adopted should be based.

As for the (meta) cognitive development, difficulties related to abstract thinking, executive function (planning, definition of strategies, establishment of priorities, and cognitive flexibility), and short-term memory have been identified [33]. These difficulties negatively affect attention span; the production of one's own learning strategies; self-regulation processes; and metacognitive processes and procedures. All of them are essential for learning a language.

In the socio-emotional development, linguistic and communicative hurdles hinder the expression of feelings, increasing the social origin gap for students. In addition, the more

aware they are of their disability, the more complexes they have affecting their self-concept and self-esteem. This, in turn, might cause anxiety when expressing themselves. A long-standing debate in the literature juxtaposes students' denial of their own disability and caregivers' denial of their offspring's disability. This significantly hampers the diagnosis and quick and effective access to the support and assistance they need [35].

As far as academic development is concerned, these students present learning difficulties and low academic performance. Their progress depends largely on the socio-educational school and family support [42].

1.2. Stakeholders' Perspectives on Students with SEN

Next, we address stakeholders' main perspectives on students with intellectual disabilities in the FL classroom. In order to compensate the dearth of specific studies on MID, we closely inspected those offered by other stakeholders who educate students with similar linguistic and cognitive difficulties. To do this, we focused on two categories: teacher training, and support and working conditions.

1.2.1. Teacher Training

Most of the studies reviewed indicate that in-service FL teachers do not feel sufficiently trained to cater to students with special needs [20,30,44–47]. Furthermore, with regard to the type of training, language teachers frequently state that the received training is essentially theoretical, therefore lacking practical content [15,16,48]. In this sense, the study conducted by Zhang [49] provides data on the perceptions of 12 FL primary teachers in language immersion programs. The main pitfall they envisaged is the lack of further training in learning appropriate practical strategies to manage the behaviors of the target students. They also bring to the fore the necessity of becoming more knowledgeable on the difficulties and (dis) abilities of their students; greater cooperation and collaboration between different education professionals; and better access to teaching materials and resources to work with these students. Likewise, they highlighted the advantage of co-sharing teaching experiences.

1.2.2. Support and Working Conditions

With regard to support and working conditions, several studies show that language teachers cannot satisfactorily meet the demands of students with SEN because of their slower learning pace. This is worsened by increasing curricular constraints and pressures [16,20,48]. Bearing in mind the latter, teachers frequently fight for greater legislative flexibility to tailor curricular adaptations, no matter whether the student has been diagnosed or not [36].

Similarly, language teachers affirm that they require the following:

- More availability of ready-to-use adapted materials, as well as guides and practical information for the selection and adaptation of content [45,47];
- More availability of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to individualize teaching [11];
- Lower ratio of students [36];
- Greater number of hours to warrant ongoing coordination between the different education stakeholders, including pedagogy and speech therapists [36,45].

1.3. Students with MID in the FL Classroom

As we have seen, the perspectives of language teachers are often not positive [15,20,29,30,44,47]. Most of the studies reviewed disclose that teachers and families believe that learning an L2 hinders the learning of the L1. The pervasive idea is that learning an L2 should only be recommended for students who have good academic performance and success [15,30]. Besides, FL teachers do not feel the need to use inclusive teaching methods [50]. Nonetheless, there are studies claiming that a change in the training of pre-service teachers has positive effects in terms of mooting the idea of problematizing

the importance of inclusive approaches to linguistic education [51–53]. However, although there is a crystal-clear correlation between pre-service teachers' attitudes and linguistic development, there are numerous authors who argue that this positiveness is diluted in practice [52,54–56]. According to González-Gil et al. [5], the main issues that prevent the implementation of inclusive practices are: "difficulties of an organizational and pedagogical nature such as the scarcity of resources and time, the scarce support of the educational administration and families, or the lack of specific training." (p. 19, own translation).

Inclusive Teaching Methods, Strategies, Techniques and Materials Used to Develop Basic Skills in MID Students

Despite the relative paucity of studies related to this topic, great strides have been given in demonstrating that there are adequate teaching methods suitable for these students [15]. First of all, it is important to highlight the research carried out by Sit [57] which provides a theoretical and practical framework in order to introduce and justify methodological innovations in English language education by evaluating a wide range of theoretical frameworks and teaching practices. Although this is not addressed specifically to the teaching of FLs to MID students in secondary education, this study offers theoretical and practical insights regarding effective teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learners. The focus lies on instructional, inspirational, and interactional components. It is our belief that this study [57] may contribute positively to the design and implementation of inclusive general practices in the FL classroom as it embraces students' sociocultural backgrounds.

Concurrently, we examine specific research that sheds light on methodological adaptations and may have a positive impact on the development of language skills, as well as on the cognitive and social skills of students with MID.

To illustrate the approaches and methods, we adhere to the tenets of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It is extensively agreed that this approach proposes the creation of spaces in which both people with disabilities and those without disabilities benefit from each other [15]. It represents a way to conceive and/or reconfigure learning objectives, materials and strategies utilized to meet students' needs in a way that maximizes and, therefore, ensures students' access to various learning experiences. This approach is based on socio-constructivism, which postulates that meaningful learning should be achieved through scaffolding; multiple ways to receive and produce content; and active and holistic learning focused on both the student and the learning itself. This patchwork system compounds the fundamental guidelines of an inclusive education approach, since it shifts from a segregation model that revolves around diverse learning capacities toward one of inclusion.

Two further approaches are communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language learning (TBLL) [16,58,59]. Both promote the development of communicative competence and highlight the relevant role that pragmatic competence plays in the linguistic, social and cultural development of these students [17]. They similarly contribute to the development of language skills in a contextualized way, making use of an action-based pedagogy and offering a wide variety of real and meaningful communicative situations and exchanges. Seemingly, the wide range of tasks with a marked social accent facilitates the adaptation to the plurality of interests, abilities and learning styles.

Another method worth referring to is the Total Physical Response (TPR) [27,60]. This can be especially helpful to students as it optimizes the processing and storage of information by establishing links between kinesics and memory. Consequently, it constitutes a channel that encourages the use of techniques based on affectivity.

Multisensory teaching is another well-known approach [11,61]. This consists of the combination of visual, auditory and kinesthetic channels to promote language learning. If the input information is carefully selected and supported through various channels, the output will be of higher quality. Oftentimes, this type of teaching benefits the attention, memory and motivation of students with intellectual disabilities, as well as the creation of a more positive and relaxed classroom atmosphere.

When zeroing in on subtheme teaching strategies and techniques, the existing literature highlights the importance of making learning strategies explicit, since it is the development of the students' talents that is at stake [60,62]. This helps these students gradually acquire some autonomy in their learning process. Among these strategies, the aforementioned authors [60,62], indicate frequent revision and repetition; choral repetition; the utilization of color patterns to learn linguistic aspects; and the use of guides and/or organizers. At the same time, we cannot underestimate the importance of the affective aspects and the classroom atmosphere. Thus, as Mohammadian [27] and Piazzoli and Kubiak [63] defend, the development and understanding of affective aspects linked to emotions and feelings may stimulate the creation of a positive learning atmosphere for all students, who often face problems of anxiety, self-esteem, personality, inhibition and motivation. At the same time, cooperative learning [29,59] favors the inclusion and motivation of students with intellectual disabilities, thanks to the interactions and feedback among peers, as well as the reinforcement of social dimensions, such as the development of self-concept and self-esteem. Similarly, the strategic use of ICTs represents, on the one hand, new channels of interaction, improvements in monitoring and feedback and, on the other hand, facilitates the adaptation and customization of the teaching material according to levels of difficulty. Ergo, the use of ICTs for the teaching of FLs has a positive impact on the students' motivation [64–68]. Specifically, we must highlight the study by Alemi and Bahramipour [67] who created a humanoid robot for teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities in adulthood. It reported positive results not only with regard to the acquisition and retention of vocabulary, but in relation to motivation, memory and affectivity. Finally, we must prioritize frequent evaluation and explore different types of (self) evaluation. According to Difino and Lombardino [62], the various kinds of evaluation show the flexibility and diversity of tools available around the assessment of different capacities and learning paces. Conversely, self-evaluation is essential for students with intellectual disabilities, who tend to have difficulties in terms of autonomy and self-determination. When this is applied correctly to objectives, sequencing and contents, the impact is highly beneficial for their second language learning.

As for teaching materials, the vast majority of authors [69,70] agree on the lack of resources. Similarly, textbook-bound teaching ought to be avoided as much as possible since it encourages a sedentary lifestyle and generates stress and failure in these students [63]. Following this line, research has revealed the inadequacy of some English coursebooks designed exclusively for these students [69,70]. Despite the extant literature on this topic, this parochial attitude is still engendered in the educational system.

2. Methodology

2.1. Focus of the Work, Research Questions and Hypothesis

The objectives of this research were (a) to be cognizant of the stakeholders' perspectives around the inclusion process of a student with MID in an FL classroom; and (b) to acknowledge the stakeholders' perspectives on students' working conditions and the required support to develop, satisfactorily, the FL skills of the target student.

Consequently, the research questions that anchor this study were the following:

RQ1: What are the stakeholders' perspectives around the teaching of an FL to a student with MID?

RQ2: What are the main problems and challenges faced by the stakeholders when teaching the FL to a MID student?

RQ3: In what ways do the stakeholders consider that the teaching of an FL to the MID student could be improved?

The hypothesis holds that the stakeholders face numerous technical, contextual, and formative challenges which hinder the MID student's learning conditions in the FL classroom.

2.2. Context

The research was carried out in a state secondary school located in a 20,000 inhabitants city of the metropolitan area of Granada (Spain). The school was founded in the academic year 2003–2004, with the objective of being a pioneering, inclusive educational institution. Since the very beginning, innovative teaching projects were implemented to satisfy the needs of Down syndrome students.

To the best of our knowledge, any other mainstream secondary school from Granada's province has reported the same level of commitment regarding inclusive education practices. Our target school has witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of students with SEN since its foundation. Thus, 44 out of 550 students (8%) have SEN. Notwithstanding that, the headmaster affirmed that this figure could be larger since a great number of students are not formally diagnosed but they clearly reveal learning difficulties. The specific condition of this school has awakened stakeholders' interest concerning the teaching of FLs to MID students.

2.3. Informants

In order to attain the objectives, we selected the informants following a judgmental or purposive sampling [71]. These informants are directly connected to the teaching and learning process of the student with MID of perinatal origin who studies in the aforementioned school. She was 17 at the time of the study and was in 4th ESO (it stands for Spanish Secondary Education). She had previously repeated 1st ESO.

The main sociodemographic data of the informants are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Informants.

Teacher	Teaching Experience	Academic Training	Training in Inclusiveness	Others
English teacher in 3rd and 4th of ESO (EFL-T1)	35 years In this school since 2003	MA in English Studies	Self-trained through specialized readings Training courses from Regional Teacher Training Center	Deputy Head of the school (currently)
English teacher in 3rd and 4th of ESO (EFL-T2)	25 years In this school since 2017	MA in English Studies	No training related to inclusive education	Tutor-in chief of the class
Spanish teacher in 3rd and 4th of ESO (L1-T)	19 years In this school since 2003	MA in Spanish Studies MA in Teaching Spanish as an FL	Participation in a teaching project to cope with Down syndrome students	
Specialist teacher in Therapeutic Pedagogy of the school (TP-T)	10 years In this school since 2019	BA in Primary Education (specialized in Therapeutic Pedagogy) MA in Secondary Teacher Training (specialized in Educational Guidance)	Initial and continuous training in inclusive education both from college and from the Regional Teacher Training Center	
Student's Private Speech Therapist (SP-T)	8 years	BA in Speech Therapy MA in Early Care Course on Sign Language	Continuous training on Myofunctional Therapy, dyslexia and dysgraphia	
School's Headmaster and physical education teacher in 1st and 2nd of ESO (HEAD-T)	37 years In this school since 2003	BA in Primary Education (specialized in Physical Education) MA in Secondary Teacher Training MA in Law	No specific training in inclusive education	

(Own elaboration).

2.4. Instruments

In order to collect the data in the utmost comprehensive manner, we designed open interviews. We considered that the interview was the instrument which would better adapt to the profound qualitative information we needed to obtain from the stakeholders.

The interviews were designed following Gardner and MacIntyre's [72] sociocultural model, adapted by Viskari [73] (pp. 12–46). It contemplates all the factors related to the process of learning an FL by SEN students. They are in-depth interviews with closed and open questions. The literature review guided this process to set questions and variables of common use in this field of knowledge.

All the interviews, except the one conducted with the headmaster as he is not an FL specialist, covered the thematic areas summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Thematic areas.

1.　Aspects related to their teaching experience, training, inclusive education training, identity, and teacher wellbeing.
2.　Aspects related to the current state of inclusive education in the target secondary school: approach towards inclusive education in the school, implementation procedures, support and resources, strengths and weaknesses to implement it.
3.　Aspects related to the teaching of FLs to students with MID and acquisition of FL skills by the MID student.
4.　Topics related to the socio-educational and socio-affective education of the MID student.

(Own elaboration).

Once the interviews were designed, they were validated by three experts in educational qualitative research. In this process of external evaluation, the experts suggested thematic changes, improvements in the writing of the questions and better adjustment to the research questions and the objectives of the study. Changes were discussed thoroughly with the external evaluators before coming up with the final validated instrument.

2.5. Practical Implications, Research Ethics

With the aim of protecting the informants to the maximum, we followed the accepted procedure for ethics and good practices in research. The Ethics Committee of the University of Granada (Spain) gave way to the research plan, interviews included. The informants received a written letter explaining the objectives of the research and the detailed description of the whole process of investigation. Additionally, every person was informed orally of this protocol; it was made explicit that their participation was voluntary and that their privacy would be totally preserved. In the same way, the informants had the liberty of abandoning the research process at any time together with the data provided until that moment. This would not cause an erosion in the relation with the researchers.

2.6. Process

The informants were contacted in October 2018 and later interviewed during November–December 2018 and April–May 2019.

The interviews were made in the very same school enclosure, as it was considered the best context in which to conduct the them. This way, the informants would feel more comfortable in their professional natural context and, thus, the information would be more fluid to attain greater veracity.

The interviews were taped using a portable recorder and every interview lasted between 30 and 90 min. Later, they were transcribed to paper to process the data in a faster way. In the resulting text, the data were effectively marked with signs to discriminate discourse features of rhythm, tone, emphasis, pausing and time. Interviews were carried out in Spanish and later translated into English.

2.7. Method for the Analysis of Data

This is a qualitative study through which we pursue a deep understanding of how the integration in the FL classroom of a student with MID is perceived in a school context. Krippendorff [74] defines content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." (p. 18). This definition is qualified by the overarching idea of rigor, examination and verification of contents posed by Cohen et al. [75] (p. 475). In general terms, it is a multitiered process consisting of the codification, categorization, comparison and establishment of conclusions from the data of oral or written texts. This allows to synthesize great amounts of raw information with the aim of creating meaning which is trustworthy and rigorous [75,76].

Since we had a limited and easily manageable number of interviews, we decided to conduct a manually analytical process, and no use of specific research software was made. We followed a qualitative content analysis method [77] (p. 246) which allowed us to delve into a level of latent and interpretive analysis of the deep and underlying meaning of the data.

We want to make explicit that the whole process of data analysis in qualitative research is long, complex and, sometimes, frustrating. As such, the analysis was transversal to the process from the very beginning to the end when listening to the recorded interviews, transcribing them, summarizing the content to establish matrixes, coding information, translating data from Spanish into English, synthetizing categories according to the research questions, finding connecting or divergent topics, selecting quotations, or writing the final report to explain the meaning in a coherent manner.

Once the textual corpus of study was defined after the transcription of the recorded oral interviews, we proceeded to the analysis of the data based on the classical phases of content analysis [71,75,78].

1. Decontextualization: In this tier, the research team familiarized themselves with the transcribed data from the oral interviews with the aim of getting the general sense of the material before breaking it into smaller units of meaning. Units of meaning, we understand to mean the sentences or paragraphs containing information which may help to answer the research questions and objectives of the study. In this sense, following Miles, Huberman and Saldaña [78], the four researchers made deep readings of the corpus with an interval of ten days, which allowed us to advance toward a highly objective coding process. To begin with, we made use of broad sheets of paper and established single matrixes for each of the six participants. Every matrix contained different squares with the codes of every informant inscribed vertically and the questions of the interview horizontally in a condensed manner. In every corresponding square, we inserted an abbreviated version of the answers of every stakeholder. This scheme of work provided us with an anatomic scaffolding of the data which allowed us to make further comparisons and identify discrepancies between the six interviewees and within themselves as well. Thus, we came up with five matrixes, since two of the stakeholders were united in a single matrix as they both shared the same teaching specialty (namely, English teachers). Then, we followed an inductive coding process where the codes emerged as the research advanced, and more data were available to us. Every one of these minimal units was labeled with a code which had to be understood in relation to the context. We considered both the frequency of the codes and the structure of them [75]. Then, we tried to make sense comparatively of this welter of information and winnowed out the examples to those with an explicit focus on the three research questions devised for this study. This process is known in the scientific literature as an open coding process [79]. These codes facilitated the identification of concepts around which the data can be united. We used a list of codes, including explanations of them, to minimize possible cognitive changes during the analysis process to ensure the reliability of the research. To increase the stability and reliability of the study, we made the coding in a repetitive

way, beginning in different pages of the text every time we faced the task. It should be noted that this was done individually and in parallel by all authors of this paper.

2. Recontextualization: Following Miller and Crabtee [80], after the identification of the minimal units of meaning, we checked that all the aspects of content had been covered in relation to the object of study. With that purpose in mind, we read the whole text together with the list of codes. When researchers are immersed with data, we have the tendency to think they are all important. For that reason, we let a week pass and came back to the text so as to achieve distance with the data. Then, we had to confirm that the information left was not relevant to answer the research questions and objectives.

3. Categorization: In this phase, we identified the content categories. With that purpose in mind, the transcriptions, summaries, and matrixes were deeply studied again, and we came up with new connections between the categories. Here, we made sure that the data were internally homogenous and externally heterogeneous, which implied that every piece of data could not belong to two categories at the same time. To achieve this, we designed a spider diagram to create meaning of the connections between content categories. Then, we came back to the transcriptions and made a new deep reading of them to check their meaning. Initially, there appeared a great number of key themes, but they were collapsed into smaller groups to avoid the atomization of results [81], since many of them were intertwined. In this step, we also identified the so-called illuminative quotations we would later use to exemplify the discussion of results. They were also codified using the categories identified previously. We came up with explicit content areas after considering the different questions used to compile the data [82]. Finally, a number of general categories and sub-categories, and their features were consolidated, as depicted in the tables displayed in the results section.

4. Compilation: Once we had established the categories, we began the analysis and the process of writing from a neutral perspective and applying objectivity to the process. As we have made an analysis which combines manifest and latent meanings, we adhered to what the informants expressed and to the interpretation of the meanings of what they said in the interviews. We worked on this topic gradually through every category identified after the coding, with evidence of the original text [83]. At the same time, as researchers, we got immersed in the global sense of the data so as to be able to identify hidden meanings, which are exemplified in the results with direct quotations from the original corpus. As our content analysis has a marked qualitative character, we have established connections between concepts and categories to substantiate their strength and internal orientation, as well as to identify the key features and the factors or possible research areas. Finally, we considered the extent to which the results correlated with the scientific literature, and we discussed how the results were logic and reasonable [84].

2.8. Validity and Reliability

Following Catanzaro [85], to get a critical view as researchers and as a measure to increase the validity of the data, we asked an independent researcher specialist in qualitative research to read the resulting text and to judge whether it was reasonable or not. His evaluation was positive and the coherence between the matrix corpus and the scientific analysis accomplished was verified.

The fact of interviewing six stakeholders (two English teachers, one Spanish teacher, one specialist teacher in therapeutic pedagogy, the student's private speech therapist, and the school's headmaster) also works for the validity and reliability of the study since they help triangulate the data. Their different perspectives on the teaching of an FL to a MID student offer a well-balanced framework to deeply understand the inner architecture of the challenges of the teaching–learning process.

With the purpose of increasing the validity of the study, the four researchers made a profound data analysis individually. Later, the results were shared and discussed to

reach a consensus about them. Thus, we made sure that they indubitably reflected the phenomenon studied. In the same way, their reliability indicated that we would obtain the same results if the study were to be replicated.

3. Results

In order to make the reading and comprehension process of the results of the study easier, we have organized them according to the research questions mentioned earlier.

3.1. Research Question 1: What Are the Stakeholders' Perspectives around the Teaching of an FL to a Student with MID?

Table 3 summarizes the main results obtained for this research question.

Table 3. Summary of stakeholders' perspectives on the teaching of the FL to the MID student.

Focus	Categories	Features	Sub-Features
FL learning benefits	Affection/cognition	+Self-esteem	-
		+Self-concept	-
		+Autonomy	-
		+Self-determination	-
	Communicative competence	+Phonetics	-
		+Prosody	-
		+FL culture	-
		+L1 awareness	-
	Social	+Socialization	-
MID student's aptitude	Relation L1-FL	The same	-
	Learning rhythm	Slower	-
	Learning methodology	Need for adaptation	-
	Cognition	−Memory (data use and structuration)	-
	Attention	+cognitive complexity = − Attention	-
		+Context distractors = − Attention	-
	Psycho-affective inhibition	+Slower expressive and receptive learning	-
		Linguistic contents	+Phonetics, +Prosody, +Semantics, +Morphosyntax
			−Abstraction
		Language skills	−Oral and written comprehension: large, conceptually complex and unknown lexis.
			−Oral and written production: short sentences, simple vocabulary. Easier to express her emotions and thoughts.
MID student's attitude	Positive	Smiling, polite, motivated to learn	-
	Inhibition, insecurity	−Communicative	-
		−Peer socialization	Teachers' intervention to improve interaction, motivation, participation.
	Absence	Medical or unknown reasons	-

Table 3. *Cont.*

Focus	Categories	Features	Sub-Features
Teaching methodology	Learning approach	Inclusive education	Mix SEN and non-SEN students
			Eclecticism
			Personal growth
	Materials	Coursebook	-
		Adapted dossier	Learner's autonomy
	Groupings	4–5 heterogeneous students	+Cooperative learning
			+Autonomous learning
	Task/activities typology	Explicit and systematic	Grammar, phonetics and semantics
		Integrated with skills	-
		Adaptations	−Difficulty, −contents
			+Visual support, +color patterns
		Language skills	Oral expression: + difficult
			Written expression: guided and adapted to L1
			Oral comprehension: audios + transcription
			Written comprehension: underlining, reading online multilevel audio–visual program, reinforcement tasks
	Error treatment	+Time	-
		Greater use of L1	-
		No over-correction	-
		No differences between SEN and non-SEN students	-
Evaluation	Model	Formative and summative	-
	As system/process	No differences between SEN and non-SEN students	-
	Tests	Adapted to level of difficulty	-
		Written production	-

(Own elaboration).

The stakeholders' perspectives on FL teaching were classified into the following categories: benefits of learning an FL, student's aptitude, student's attitude, teaching methodology, and evaluation.

3.1.1. Benefits of Learning an FL

The selected stakeholders agree on the many benefits that learning an FL has for the MID student, especially on her self-esteem, self-image, autonomy, self-determination, phonetics and prosody, socialization, cultural knowledge and awareness of her mother tongue (L1 from now on).

> *She benefits from being out in the world, listening and watching films in English, and although she doesn't understand everything, she does understand certain words. She can listen to English songs and understand them, or even participate in class using some expressions. Maybe she cannot fully follow a conversation or make a presentation, but she does understand and can express certain things [. . .]. Learning a new language opens her mind and helps her learn other things. And nowadays TV, mobiles, social media, magazines and so on, all use English words or expressions. She must think these are all familiar things to her, she may have used them.* [EFL-T2]

3.1.2. MID Student's Aptitude towards Learning an FL

According to the stakeholder's results, the MID student presents the same capabilities when learning an FL that when learning her L1. They are confident that she is capable of learning an FL, but she requires more time than students without SEN and the teaching method has to be adapted to her way of learning as we can see below:

[. . .] She has a good learning competence taking into account her cognitive difficulties which have to be taken seriously as they influence largely on her learning . . . [. . .], learning English should be very motivating when explained the correct way. [SP-T]

[. . .] I am sure she is capable of working and studying hard. The only thing is that she needs six more minutes than the rest [. . .] She could learn the same as others when working very hard [. . .]. If she is given a functional grammatical teaching, she will learn the same way foreigners learn Spanish. [L1-T]

Likewise, the stakeholders agree that the student has a slower learning pace as a consequence of her MID, although she learns faster than Down syndrome students. As maintained by the stakeholders, she presents learning difficulties mostly related to memory aspects, such as the retrieving and organization of data. They also add that her general attention is, in a great way, adequate except for those activities where more complex cognitive use is required or when distracting factors appear in the context.

We must remark that most of the stakeholders have broached a psycho-affective problem in the student (i.e., inhibition) which they say is caused fundamentally as a consequence of her disability, as well as negative experiences within the school context. In this way, they maintain that this problem takes place mainly in situations where she feels insecure, such as when she has to express herself orally or when she thinks she is going to be judged or told off:

[. . .] Due to her shyness . . . she finds it difficult to talk loudly or make herself heard in class [. . .]. I perceive insecurity. [EFL-T1]

[. . .] Fear, yes, and anxiety too. The way she talks so low makes me believe it is a way she thinks she can minimize mistakes. She is afraid of making mistakes [. . .]. I think that during all her life she has been told "no" and "you are doing it wrong." [EFL-T2]

Therefore, as they indicate, the student's level of inhibition represents a psychologic factor which contributes to a slower pace in learning expressive and receptive language. Regarding the latter, the stakeholders offer relevant data referring to her learning linguistic contents and skills.

As for the linguistic contents, her ability with phonetics and prosody stands out, especially when reading aloud in class. Regarding semantics and morphosyntax, they stress her adequate achievement in activities based on moving or copying information. However, they observe difficulties in grammar and vocabulary activities which require a bigger abstraction capability and better data retrieval from the student. In addition, they identify a special difficulty permeating the comprehension of oral and written texts, especially those where the text is long or contains complex concepts and/or less frequent words. Likewise, they highlight the difficulty she finds in those activities where linguistic production is involved, be it oral or written, as her sentences are shorter, and she uses simpler vocabulary. In addition, they state that the student finds it less difficult to express her thoughts in writing, as well as her feelings and emotions, rather than doing it orally. They consider that this may be due to her insecurity and shyness.

3.1.3. MID Student's Attitude towards the FL

The student's attitude in the FL class is perceived as positive by her teachers. She is usually smiling, very polite and willing to learn, but at the same time they stress that her attitude is uncommunicative and passive. The reason for this is attributed to the already mentioned inhibition and insecurity traits. To this they add her shyness when she is asked to socialize with the rest of the class. This attitude increases with her absence, which in

some cases is justified due to medical reasons, and in other cases, is not justified at all. This has a detrimental effect on FL learning:

> *It is only a feeling, but I see she is under stress and anxiety mainly because of her absence . . . I ask myself: "Is it because for her it is a huge effort to deal with a whole class? Is she stressed and she doesn't come to school because she tells her family she doesn't feel well?" [. . .]. I believe she doesn't interact very much with her peers because sometimes she feels uncomfortable, or because she has a mental block due to the difficulty of the activities [. . .]. I think it is all due to her self-awareness of her physical, intellectual and social inferiority complexes. We all have days when we get up thinking "oh no!" and then there are good days, but in general I would say she doesn't feel comfortable.* [EFL-T2]

Concurrently, the stakeholders daresay they must introduce strategies that aim to increase the student's interaction, motivation, sense of security, participation and socialization in the FL classroom. One of the keys is found in improving the relationship she maintains with her peers and, although she does not have any problems with them, she has no one she can rely on as a friend.

3.1.4. Teaching FL Methodology: Educational Approach

According to the stakeholders, the general educational approach they use to deal with teaching an FL is the inclusive method, recognizing the importance in attending to different capabilities and needs. In their own conceit, it is essential to modify the actual teaching methodology in order to embrace a higher number of educational needs. Thus, the pervasive idea floated into a discussion by the informants is the necessity of addressing the ample range of learning profiles. EFL-T1 and EFL-T2 claim that their teaching method is eclectic with the aim in mind of acknowledging individual differences and encompassing multiple learning styles. Despite yearning for a communicative-based model, they are aware of the fact that the students' ratio does not make it possible. They also specify that their objective is not the learning of English as such, but the student's personal growth.

> *[. . .] all classes are different and so they also require different teaching methods . . . and the student's behavior is also different. [. . .] not having a diagnosis does not mean that individual students do not require a different method and approach [. . .]. I consider that I do not have to teach them a great lot of English but what I have to do is work with the students so they can learn in an autonomous and collaborative way.* [EFL-T2]

> *[. . .] What is the aim of Secondary Education? To learn to do things, to think cognitively and learn vocabulary. The need will make them learn, or not, the language because with such big groups another type of communication is difficult.* [EFL-T1]

> *[. . .] The moment you learn to work with children with special needs, whichever they may be [. . .]. You can see in the classroom the different needs there are and you can apply what you have worked with one to the rest because deep down it is basically the same.* [L1-T]

3.1.5. Teaching FL Methodology: Materials

The staple teaching resource is an English textbook published in *Burlington Books* from which the teachers extract and adapt the activities. They end up making an adapted dossier which is given to the students with SEN. This textbook, paraphrasing the informants' words, is the same for all students with SEN regardless of their learning profile. Likewise, the teachers agree that autonomous learning occupies a privileged place in their methodology. This takes place through an individualized working plan of the activities from the textbook they must carry out together within the temporal sequencing. This working plan is handed out to the students at the beginning of each unit except for SEN students. Instead, they are given an adapted version which facilitates understanding.

[The working plan] they cannot follow it because they get upset, they don't understand it, they don't know what to do with it . . . we would have to spend a lot of time explaining when with their adapted units they can follow it easier. [EFL-T2]

3.1.6. Teaching FL Methodology: Groupings

The teachers indicate that they divide the classroom into multilevel groups of 4 or 5 students. In this sense, collaborative learning stands out, although it is later counterbalanced with autonomous learning. Thus, according to the English teachers, collaborative learning favors interaction, peer learning, and classroom management.

[. . .] Trying to work with students so they can learn in an autonomous and collaborative way [. . .]. When we work with them, we can reinforce the group's work continuously and mark them for the group work [. . .]. They all have to participate because the mark is the same for all the group and if they don't participate their mark will be lower and so they must all work together [. . .]. [EFL-T2]

3.1.7. Teaching Foreign Language Methodology: Type of Activities

Oftentimes, the activities related to learning linguistic contents, such as grammar, phonetics, and semantics, are either tackled in an explicit and systematic way with all the students, or implicitly, if integrated in the learning of linguistic skills. Any adaptation made for the MID student is centered, above all, on the simplification of the difficulty of the activities. This comprises the expungement of contents, a higher visual support and, the use of color patterns to make grammar-based explanations easier. Regarding linguistic skills, EFL-T1 and EFL-T2 focus on oral expression since it is addressed only tangentially, to a large extent, because of the high ratio of students. On top of this, the MID student is very shy and insecure and does not participate actively in class. The transcriptions of the audio are given to her so that she can read them and become familiarized with the text or dialogue ahead of time.

As for the writing skill, she is asked to produce a piece of writing in the FL, bearing in mind her L1 level. She is provided with extra guidelines and instructions to ensure the correct accomplishment of the activity. The comprehensive reading activities are adapted for the MID student spotlighting the main ideas in the text, providing audio–visual aids, or using graded readers. Lastly, reinforcement activities are employed, although informants admit that they do not use self-evaluation activities in class due to lack of time.

We always have the intention to do these activities, but in the end . . . with all the syllabus we have nowadays with the LOMCE, we have little time for this. [EFL-T1]

There is an activity at the end of every unit so the students can think about their learning [. . .]. I think maybe we disregard it and we don't give it the importance it really has because it would help them as revision and reinforcement of what they have learnt. [EFL-T2]

3.1.8. Teaching FL Methodology: Error Treatment

In terms of error treatment, the stakeholders state that generally, they do not make any distinction between students with or without SEN. However, in some occasions, the treatment of errors needs closer attention and, eventually, to make explanations easier and faster, they use their L1 when attending to the MID student and the rest of the SEN students. In the same way, they insist on the fact that they are not in favor of overcorrection, especially with students who have more difficulties so as to not block communication.

Maybe with more care in the way we explain things and justify them [. . .] we cannot interrupt an activity to overcorrect the students. [EFL-T2]

3.1.9. Teaching FL Methodology: Evaluation

The type of evaluation for the MID student, according to the informants, is the same that is utilized for the rest of the class (namely, formative and summative). The only

difference is in the exam. It is divided into common pre-set parts but the difficulty of the activities, as well as the requirements on the written production, is lower for all students with SEN, including the MID student.

> *[. . .] after each unit we present a formal written test, but daily, in class we also have observation sheets. There are certain activities which we use to mark the students because the students work individually and in groups [. . .]. The teacher's book also comes with three tests with different levels of difficulty. We also create our own tests for special needs students with pictures, words or instructions in Spanish. And so, the tests are different and they know it. One student may have a question which counts three points and another may have one which counts for two points.* [EFL-T2]

3.2. Research Question 2: What Are the Main Problems and Challenges Faced by Stakeholders When Teaching the FL to a MID Student?

The problems and challenges identified were dissected into various subthemes, namely the educational administration, stakeholders, students, and families. The main results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of stakeholders' perceived problems/challenges in teaching an FL to a MID student.

Focus	Problem/Challenge	Features	Consequences
Administration	Student homogenization	+SENs students	+Innovation difficulties
		+Workload	-
		+Pull effect	-
	Workforce	−Stable	-
		−SEN trained	-
		−Human resources	-
	Training in Attention to diversity	Lack	-
		Non-compulsory	-
		+Practical	-
		+Expert trainers	-
	Technical resources	Lack	-
	Adapted resources	Lack	-
	Educational Laws	+Changing	−Stability
			+Confusion
			+Workload
			+Bureaucracy
	Language curriculum	Morphosyntax focused	−Communicative approach
		Rigid	−Cooperative learning
		Unrealistic	Reading, writing and lexis difficulties
		Vast	

Table 4. *Cont.*

Focus	Problem/Challenge	Features	Consequences
	Ratio	+High	−Attention to diversity
			−Teaching/learning quality
			−Cooperative learning
			−Teaching orality
			−Classroom discipline
			+Workload
			+Frustration, stress, anxiety
			+Noise
Stakeholders	SEN consciousness	+Workload	-
		+Initial and continuous training	-
		+Emotional education	-
	Lack of SEN training	-	Reluctance to integrate SEN students in ordinary classroom
	Coordination	Reluctance	No cooperative learning
			No project-based learning
Students	Students'-teachers' relations	Poor	-
	Students' devoted time	Scarce	-
	Classroom discipline	Needed	MID student's communicative inhibition
Families	Incomprehension	Need of (in)formation and sensitivity	-
	Responsible of students' absence	-	-

(Own elaboration).

3.2.1. Issues Related to the Educational Administration

One of the first issues to appear repeatedly along the different perspectives of the stakeholders is the growing enrolment of SEN students presenting learning and social difficulties in this school. They fear that SEN students may oust mainstream students as word has been spread that this school is very prestigious and has an excellent attention to diversity plan. Questions about the just distribution of educational and inclusive opportunities might be vexing given the scarcity of resources allocated to education:

> [. . .] *The fact that those who do not wish to study enroll in this school makes the classroom functioning very difficult. It is not the same having a student motivated to study than having a student totally demotivated towards studying.* [HEAD-T]

We do not have any support; we are fed up. This year we have changed the book editorials and so you can imagine. The therapeutic pedagogue is overwhelmed with work and I cannot carry on. I cannot, and we are going to have this problem this year and the next. And every time we change books or the laws change. It is all because there isn't a basic logic approach, because in reality attention to diversity is not wanted. What we really have is our own problems that we have to sort out ourselves. Sometimes families think that we do not pay enough attention to diversity, it is not because we do not want to but mainly because we cannot do so. [L1-T]

Consequently, the teaching staff consider that this fact, apart from increasing their workload, complicates the emergence of innovations in the high school. A stable team of fully qualified teaching staff is critical for the success of inclusive schools.

Evidently, it is of no help not having a stable and broad teaching staff because one part of it is more stable but there is another part which fluctuates constantly and represents 40% of our workforce [. . .]. The teaching staff stability is fundamental to tackle any project. [HEAD-T]

Additionally, the stakeholders complain about the training on attention to diversity of some teachers, stating that all the teachers working in this school should have received prior training on attention to diversity but in reality, this is an exception rather than the rule. They also transmit their discomfort on the fact that training activities organized by the administration are optional. In this way, they claim that this training must be more practical and directed by well-trained and experienced professionals. To add to this training problem, teachers point out the shortage of human resources specialized in students with SEN, taking into account the school's characteristics. Besides, they outline the lack of technical tools, such as ICTs, especially digital tablets, and a need for greater availability of the adapted teaching material, which they believe would favor personalized teaching. All this would help to adapt the teaching materials and improve the student's evaluations as well as reducing the workload.

We would improve reading and oral comprehension if every student had a digital tablet with headphones [. . .]. It would be much better for the organization and planning of the classroom. And more useful because languages must be listened to, spoken and now, with so many platforms you can personalize the type of activities that one or another can do and we would be able to produce a more individualized evaluation.. [L1-T]

Another question zooms in on the educative laws, administration and syllabus. Educational laws, for example, are envisaged as having a negative effect on attention to diversity. Basically, it brings to a standstill the teaching dynamics which have taken years to develop and consolidate, spreading confusion and overloading the teaching staff with additional adaptations and bureaucracy. It is worth mentioning that teachers associate the official syllabus with grammar rather than linguistic skills. The language teachers interviewed consider that following the official syllabus complicates the execution of inclusive teaching methods, such as the communicative approach and collaborative learning, especially in 3rd and 4th ESO where syllabuses are more demanding and have a greater number of contents:

When I am not focused on a syllabus, the truth is the system is more communicative [. . .]. The syllabus is too much and determines our way of working [. . .]. Why does a child in primary education have to know what is a noun? A child in third grade should know many nouns and read lots and write lots and they do not do so [. . .]. They don't know how to write and they have an enormous lack of vocabulary. And they don't know how to read because they haven't read [. . .]. There's is a terrible problem at the base of the educational system [. . .]. When the children know how to write and read and have enough vocabulary . . . then I will teach them what a noun is, morphology and syntax . . . and we will be able to talk about language science. [L1-T]

They also criticize the high student ratio which entails problems to their teaching activities, such as, the obstruction toward an adequate attention to diversity, diminishing at the

same time as the quality of the teaching–learning process; increasing their workload; and frustration, stress and anxiety due to not being able to attend to all students, accordingly, including special needs, decreasing their progress. They find it difficult to start cooperative and collaborative teaching; oral expression teaching; and addressing disciplinary problems.

By their reckoning, they all agree that coping with attention to diversity fosters frustration due to the lack of support, time and means. Furthermore, it causes stress mainly because of the increasing workload, which comes from the bureaucracy and the adaptation of teaching materials:

> *It is a huge effort, specially it is frustrating not being able to reach every student, not only students with special needs, but all of the students. If I have 30 students, it is more than likely there will be 30 different levels [...]. It stresses me and I feel a lot of anxiety to see they are just sitting there without knowing how to proceed and that I don't have enough time to pay attention to them because with 30 students you can't reach to them all, not in any way.* [EFL-T2]

3.2.2. Issues Related to the Stakeholders

The participants in our study consider that the teaching staff is sensitive, but the majority are not aware of the fact that attention to diversity implies more working hours, educational training, and emotional and permanent training. They also disclose that certain teaching staff are reluctant to include students with SEN in the mainstream class, as they do not feel adequately trained to cater to their needs nor to communicate effectively with their families. In addition, they criticize the unwillingness of a part of the teaching staff to co-work and attend to diversity, using cooperative and collaborative learning. The latter are also reluctant to prioritize project-based learning even if it is mandatory in the innovative plan for attending to diversity in the high school.

> *It is complicated because the academic freedom of the head of department is compromised. However, if this formula is adapted, included in an educational project approved by the school council, this project becomes obligatory to all. Thus, the new teachers must adapt to this educational project. If it is stated that we must work by projects, we must follow it. But evidently this doesn't happen very often.* [L1-T]

3.2.3. Issues Related to the Students

All the stakeholders interviewed consider that they do not have enough time to improve teacher–student or peer–peer relationships. They also hold that they cannot spend as much time as they would like with SEN students, including the MID student, as they usually require more attention. On top of that, EFL-T1, EFL-T2 and L1-T confess that the simple fact of maintaining discipline in the class may convey an unpleasant impression (usually decoded as rigid, severe and inaccessible). This might damage communication and learning, especially with the MID student, as the teachers believe she can get scared and refrain from participating in certain situations.

> *I try not to frighten her because we can't be very sharp with her. If we have 30 students sometimes we have to be a little sharp because we can't spend much time to each student and leave the others waiting and so sometimes we can be sharp with her and this can upset her.* [L1-T]

> *When they get to know me they realize I am not severe or strict. The thing is that first we must promote a certain organization that must be respected.* [EFL-T2]

3.2.4. Issues Related to the Families

The teaching staff feel they are unacknowledged by families in general, no matter whether students have SEN or not. In this sense, they consider that all families must be better informed, made more aware, and trained regarding the inclusive approach. Likewise, they confirm that the absence of students with SEN is very frequent, making their evaluation and learning of an FL much more difficult:

My difficulty with these students is that they miss a lot of lessons and as we all know, learning a language is a continuous process so I am sure they would be able to make better progress if they were more persistent. [EFL-T1]

3.3. Research Question 3: In What Ways Do the Stakeholders Consider That the Teaching of an FL to the MID Student Could Be Improved?

Table 5 encapsulates the most outstanding results of this section.

Table 5. Summary of stakeholders' proposals to improve the teaching of an FL to the MID student.

Focus	Measure	Features	Benefits
Administration	Continuous training in SENs	+Compulsory	-
		+In school enclosure	-
Teachers	Communicative approach to FL	+Increase	-
	Motivation	+Fostering	+Student's self-esteem
	Emotional education	+Fostering	-
	Adapted materials and resources	−Contents +Time +Additional explanations +Simpler vocabulary	Coordinated teachers Project-based learning Cooperative learning
	Groupings	Heterogeneous	-
		Small	-
		+Co-teaching	-
	Planning	+Adequate	-
	Teaching/learning process	+Monitoring	+Participation
			+Socialization
			+Coordination: teachers-families
Students	Peer-learning (SENs + non- SENs)	+Fostering	-
		+Reward	-
Families	Support school–teachers–families	+Fostering	-
	Families' empowerment	+Training with social workers	Avoid SEN students' over-protection

(Own elaboration).

The procedures to improve the teaching of an FL to the MID student are classified according to those offered by the school management, the teaching staff, the students and the families.

3.3.1. According to the School Management

The stakeholders agree on the importance of the permanent training of the FL teaching staff on paying attention to students with SEN. They also believe this training must be compulsory to all teaching staff, especially for those who work with a large number of students with these characteristics. This way, they highlight that the FL teachers should receive this training in their own workplace.

[. . .] Every year, at the beginning of the school year, we usually have some afternoon conferences where the new teaching staff is informed about how we deal with the situation and we also have our adviser and the PT teacher [. . .]. The project is there and we

achieve what we achieve when we get people involved, but yes, we do have an existing philosophy which tries to address diversity. [HEAD-T]

I am learning from my partner EFL-T1 because she has been working the issue of inclusion and attention to diversity for a very long time. [EFL-T2]

3.3.2. According to the Teaching Staff

Informants agree that the teaching of an FL to the MID student improves when the teaching approach emphasizes pragmatic issues communicatively. Additionally, they stress the central role of motivation and the use of praise and positive rewards with the aim to increase the student's self-esteem. Regarding this, they consider the use of more emotional education techniques and strategies as essential.

They also underline the fact of having teaching material already adapted, and the process of analyzing, changing and/or developing their own material. In this sense, they perceive that adapting the syllabus is crucial, and hence the importance of coordinating the teaching staff. This benefits the development of projects adequately, as they will stay true to the guidelines portrayed in the educational project. In other words, they foster project-based learning, with an emphasis on cooperation and collaboration.

[…] Insecurity is one of the important things we must work with her besides the pragmatic area. [SP-T]

If she is presented with grammatical functional learning, she will learn the same way foreigners are taught Spanish. [L1-T]

When you look at her and you tell her "look, you can do it" she is happy. I would say she is quiet and she gets stressed until you generate a little trust in her. [EFL-T1]

The syllabus adaptations are very important because there are students that without them they wouldn't be able to follow the level in class and they would stay stuck. [TP-T]

In addition, they examine the selection of contents for the MID student, her integration in a mainstream class, and their availability in terms of time. They also emphasize that the use of additional, adapted explanations with simpler language and vocabulary is vital for the learning of the FL by the MID student.

Concerning groupings, they consider that arranging heterogenic smaller groups, as well as increasing co-teaching hours, is the key to success.

They additionally express the importance of better and more adequate planning, and better follow-up of the learning processes of the MID student as decisive factors to promote participation and socialization. Regarding the latter, they foreground that the coordination and communication among the teaching staff, as well as with the families, are one of the keys to success.

First, having smaller groups and secondly the co-teaching is really good. Two teachers can reach out to more groups. [EFL-T2]

A method working by groups and having a good follow-up could be very helpful because if a student doesn't feel observed or watched won't do anything in ESO. [EFL-T1]

The students' absence is essential, and this is a role where the families have everything to do for it not to occur and must collaborate with the teachers. [EFL-T2]

3.3.3. According to the Students

The participants in our study consider that it is of paramount importance to encourage and positively compensate the students without SEN to help those with special needs, including the MID student. This is due to the fact that the students with a higher knowledge of the FL are usually less patient when helping those with SEN. They also insist on the scarcity of more guidelines or instructions for the students without SEN on how to offer help to their peers (most of the time, they just give them the answers). It might help in improving their relationships and boosting communication and interaction as well.

Now she is in a group with a student who also has some difficulties and it is he who explains everything to her (the MID student), then there are also two very good students that almost have B2 level who I would love to see helping more, but they have less patience. [EFL-T1]

Indeed, sometimes I tell them "don't give her the answer, we don't want her to copy the answer, tell her how to do it" but of course, they sometimes get desperate because they don't have enough patience or because they want to be in other conversations [. . .]. We should give them some type of instruction on how to do it. [EFL-T2]

3.3.4. According to the Families

The participants in our study bring to light the importance of having greater support from the families in general and especially from the family of the MID student. They believe that the learning of the MID student would improve whenever attendance and follow-ups are more constant, and school support from the part of the family is more regular. For this, they also consider it necessary to work on empowering the families with SEN students, and it would be also of great help to have an external figure, such as a social worker, who could provide support to these families. In this aspect, empowering the families and avoiding overprotective behaviors toward their children are essential.

I miss having social workers who get involved with the families [. . .] to empower the families, because sometimes it is the family itself which has that compassion or pity or think their children with special needs have to make a huge effort and they are not aware that that is an overprotective approach that hinders the development of the student. [EFL-T1]

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The most relevant results in our study have allowed us to achieve the objectives set at the beginning of this paper. These are, on the one hand, to exhaustively examine the stakeholders' perspectives around the inclusion process of a student with a MID in the FL classroom, and on the other hand, to cognize their perspectives around the student's working conditions and the help needed to develop basic FL skills of the MID student effectively. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation of the data confirm the hypothesis from which we started, proving that the stakeholders face numerous technical, contextual, and formative challenges which hinder the MID student's learning conditions in the FL classroom. Seemingly, there is a broad consensus on this [20,29,30,35,36,39,40,44,47,49].

To know and grant significance to the data, we have started assuming that the perspectives of the teaching staff influence SEN students' academic successes as well as their lives, including the MID student [1,2]. Therefore, we can confirm that, according to the data offered by the participants in our study, their perspectives are positive towards the assumption of a philosophical approach based on, theoretically, an inclusive education. However, we observe that these perspectives are essentially negative regarding the implementation of a real and effective inclusive FL education which would allow teachers to adapt their teaching to the MID student and SEN students, in general. These results coincide with those found in other studies [5,7,16,30,44–49]

In this sense, the research conducted by González-Gil et al. [5] places the focus on a number of organizational and teaching difficulties, such as the scarcity of resources and time, the lack of support from the educational administration and families, or the lack of specific training. All of these have also been identified by the stakeholders in our context. Regarding the specific training, the stakeholders consider that this must be compulsory to all the teaching staff, and be centered on the development of practical abilities. It must also be taught by professionals with ample experience and, if possible, this training should be held periodically. In a complementary way, we must emphasize the particular situation of this high school, where 40% of its education force is non-permanent. We must also add that the students are, every day, more homogeneous in the sense that they present mainly cognitive or social learning difficulties. This particular condition in the school could,

according to the stakeholders, be avoided with better support from the administration that, in this case, should have a higher percentage of tenured teachers. They should also limit the freedom of the students at the time of choosing a school, or be more demanding with the rest of the educational institutions in the local area which do not have a well-grounded inclusive approach.

This particular situation in the high school hinders the start-up and consolidation of the innovations included in the educational and innovation projects of the school. According to the stakeholders, the implementation of these projects has gone through ups and downs since the opening of the school in 2003. As a result, we can confirm that the perspectives of the stakeholders interviewed are not totally positive from a practical point of view, and they may act as a deterrent to teaching.

As we have mentioned before, aiming to deepen the discussion of the data regarding the perspectives around the teaching and learning of English by the MID student, we should emphasize, firstly, the positive perspectives received by our informants. These generally correspond to their perceptions and beliefs around the teaching of an FL according to the principles, theoretical tenets, and the objectives of an inclusive education. Similarly, they are related to the student's aptitude toward language learning based on her performance in the classroom. Thus, the linguistic, (meta) cognitive, social, cultural or affective benefits obtained from learning an FL by the MID student are brought to bear on prevailing theories in the field [12–24,31]. Regarding these, we have perceived that the stakeholders have mainly been centered on the (meta) cognitive benefits, such as autonomy and self-determination, as well as the social-affective benefits, namely the self-esteem and self-concept of the MID student. These results are in keeping with previous studies [25–27,63].

As for attitude of the MID student, we can see that the stakeholders report the same difficulties when learning the L1 or the FL [12]. We can highlight the following:

- A slower learning pace of receptive and expressive language;
- Slow development of advanced pragmatic abilities;
- A reduced amount and poor organization of lexicon;
- Problems comprehending and producing subordinate sentences;
- A reduced complexity in form and expressions;
- Discursive organization misunderstandings.

However, contrary to what this author [12] describes, and according to the English teachers, the student does not present difficulties in articulating sounds. The thread running throughout this paper leads us to confirm the great diversity of learning profiles that exist among students with SEN, as Tolbert, Killu and Lazarus [11] defend. Due to this, it is essential to consider the capacities and learning paces of the students with SEN, as well as their diagnoses at the moment of planning and carrying out the corresponding educational actions.

If we focus now on the stakeholders' negative perspectives, these are more related to the implementation of the methodology in their FL lesson rather than their inclusive education approach.

To start, we will explore primarily the stakeholders' perspectives regarding the attitude of the MID student. As we have observed in the data provided by the informants, the student has a positive and polite attitude. However, she is passive and not very communicative. This usually is the result of an acquired psychological factor that the stakeholders have identified as inhibition, and which has been revealed by authors such as Snell and Luckasson [35]. These authors [35] believe that the linguistic and communicative deficits have a negative effect on the socioemotional development of the MID student. This blocks the expression of feelings and increases social difficulties. Therefore, it is crucial to take all of this into account when programming and carrying out the different didactic interventions in order to create welcoming and safe learning and communicative environments. This plays a pivotal role in those contexts where students are aware of their disabilities.

Thus, in their view, large classes impair the abilities of teachers to maintain discipline and enforce the rules. The consequences might be far reaching for the MID student, as her

inhibition increases while her socializing time decreases. These conditions may ultimately affect the teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education.

As we have been able to verify throughout our study, promoting socialization is an indispensable requirement to improve the MID student's motivation and self-esteem in the FL class.

Continuing with the discussion of the stakeholders' negative perspectives, those related to the educational approach become especially relevant as they acquire a clear negative shade in terms of its implementation. Despite the efforts of English teachers to put FL inclusive teaching methodologies (communicative approach, cooperative and collaborative learning, or autonomous learning) into practice, they do not manage to bring it to fruition mainly due to the high student ratio in the class. This carries a negative impact for the learning of the FL by the MID student, especially because her communication, participation, socialization, motivation, and self-esteem are diminished in the class.

We must signal the difficulty pointed out by the English teachers affecting the adequate monitoring of the MID student. The fact that teachers do not have the time needed to individualize their teaching or carry out frequent follow-ups and evaluations of the MID student has a negative consequence toward the content and linguistic skills. To this, we can add the lack of self-evaluation activities which, for the MID student, are very important in terms of autonomy and self-determination. This has been revealed by preceding studies [62].

The findings discussed in this paper provide the following insights for future research. Further studies are required to better understand the learning processes of MID students and identify the particular areas of need or understanding. Subsequent research must address the ways by which we can improve the practical training as well as the working conditions of the teachers in general, and especially of professionals who work in schools where there is a vast number of SEN students. In the same vein, it is essential to promote the coordination and regular meetings of the different stakeholders, emphasizing the hiring of more SEN professionals. It is also particularly relevant to create a space for the communication, coordination and support of the families.

In closing, we must add that, despite the limitations in our study in terms of the size and sample, we consider that the results can contribute to develop a full picture of what is happening in similar educational contexts. With this, we open the way to new theories and contrasting study models which can be useful for evaluating and determining the teaching quality of languages to students with MID, aimed at improving working conditions and teaching practices.

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