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Textbook in Inclusive Education: The Suitability of the Textbooks for Learning German as a Foreign Language for Students with Dyslexia²

Extended summary

This paper examines the suitability of the textbooks for learning German as a foreign language for students with dyslexia within the framework of inclusive education. Inclusive teaching is grounded in the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which emphasize the need to modify educational materials to meet different needs of all learners. Given that in formal education textbooks remain the primary teaching resources, their design, structure, and accessibility play a crucial role in supporting or hindering inclusive classroom practices. However, despite the growing emphasis on inclusion, the question of textbook adaptation for learners with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia has not been researched.

The aim of this study is to analyze the structural characteristics of the selected textbooks for learning German in order to determine whether and to what extent they support inclusive teaching and learning for students with dyslexia. The theoretical framework of the study integrates research in inclusive education, dyslexia and foreign language learning, as well as studies on textbook design and accessibility. Previous research highlights that dyslexic learners benefit from clearly structured texts, appropriate typography, functional visual elements, reduced visual stress, and the availability of alternative learning formats such as audio and digital resources.

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In terms of methodology, the study applies a qualitative content analysis of pedagogical documents, followed by a qualitative-interpretative approach. The analytical apparatus comprises four categories derived from prior research and pedagogical recommendations: (1) formatting (font size, font type, and line spacing), (2) design (contrast and the function of illustrations), (3) accessibility of content (linguistic clarity, highlighting of key elements, and the use of italics), and (4) the existence of alternative formats (audio materials and digital versions). The corpus consists of four textbooks used in Serbian primary education: Prima Plus A1.1, Prima Plus A1.2, Prima Plus A2.1, and Prima Plus A2.2.

The results indicate that the analyzed corpus partially follows the principles of inclusive education. Font size and line spacing generally comply with pedagogical recommendations, which helps with readability. However, the choice of typography does not fully meet the needs of students with dyslexia. Instead of dyslexia-friendly alternatives, standard fonts are used. The visual design of the textbooks is mostly functional: more than 70% of the illustrations serve a cognitive purpose by supporting comprehension, memory or conceptualization, while purely decorative images are less frequent. Linguistic accessibility is supported through appropriate syntax and vocabulary, as well as consistent highlighting of key grammatical and lexical elements. Nevertheless, the frequent use of italics represents a significant difficulty, as it can hinder reading fluency for dyslexic learners. Importantly, the availability of digital and audio versions of the textbooks substantially improves their accessibility.

In conclusion, the study indicates that the analyzed corpus possesses considerable potential for use in inclusive classrooms, but also reveals parts that require systematic improvement. Pedagogical implications include the need for a greater alignment with UDL principles in textbook design, particularly in typography and visual presentation, as well as the continued development of alternative formats. The findings underline the importance of designing foreign language teaching materials that support equal learning opportunities and enable students with dyslexia to participate fully and effectively in the educational process.

Keywords: primary education, inclusive education, German as a foreign language, textbook, dyslexia

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