POSTGRADUATE STUDIES – SECOND CYCLE

The use of technology and other special methodologies for teaching English as a foreign/second language to students with learning disabilities

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I have the deepest gratitude for my family who has supported me at every step during this journey of knowledge, change and growth. I would like to dedicate this paper to them especially, as a token of my love and appreciation. I would also like to thank my students who motivate me every day, who bring out the best in me, and in return help me inspire them to leave their mark in the world. Teaching is a great joy and even greater responsibility, and it is the cornerstone of my motivation to write this thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to define the role of technology, and the type of technology that can be used when applying special teaching methods when teaching English to students with special learning needs. Furthermore, this thesis serves as a mean to better understand various teaching methodologies used to teach students with disabilities in their journey towards learning English. In other words, through practical examples as well as class observations, we have better understood what type of teaching methodologies appear to be successful in teaching English to students with disabilities, and where does the use of technology fit in this aspect.

The thesis also attempts to define what techniques suit best different groups of students, depending on their learning or other disability. This has been done by attempting to understand best teaching practices, as well as the benefits of including technology when teaching English to this group of students. The thesis has been conducted in two primary schools, one in the Municipality of Prizren and the other in the Municipality of Mitrovica. Furthermore, additional observations on the application of teaching methodologies and the use of technology to increase the learning experience have been conducted with the students I currently teach that are affected by hearing disabilities.

More often than not, teaching practices in Kosovo are not especially tailored to fulfil the learning needs of students with disabilities. Thesis curriculums especially should be designed to be better suited to the learning needs of this target of students. Every child should be provided with the same learning opportunities.

The duration of the research part of the thesis has taken seven weeks and the sessions have been conducted three days a week. The thesis comprises mainly of observations of English language lessons taught to students with disabilities. Additionally, a survey with the teachers teaching those groups of students has been conducted, in order to better understand their challenges when teaching classes of students with disabilities, and how they overcome these teaching challenges to improve the English language learning experience. The number of students participating in the research consists of a

sample group of twenty-three students, whereas the number of teachers participating in the research was five.

Keywords: learning disorder, students with disabilities, technology, motivation, methodology, assistive technology.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Every child is entitled to receiving an education. According to Rhonda, Morin, Tracey, Parker, & Zhong (2015) teaching programs should focus on empowering students, to aid and instruct them in their journey of becoming contributing members to their society. Programs should optimize all students' potential, by using modern techniques, and replicating innovative strategies. Rhonda, Morin, Tracey, Parker, & Zhong (2015) also state that the number of students diagnosed with learning disabilities is increasing worldwide. Therefore, it is imperative to provide learning opportunities for these students.

When referring to students with disabilities in this thesis, in the same notion will be included both learning disabilities, and physical impediments or disabilities. According to Mental Health Foundation, n.d. a learning disability refers to problems that include learning new things, communication, reading, writing etc. Furthermore, the Department of Health, 2001 defines learning disabilities as the diminished capability to understand and process new and complex informarion, or learn new skills. They also state that usually this type of imediments start before adulthood. On the other hand, phycisal disabilities according to Educational Psychology, 2019, are described as as a physical condition that impacts one or more major life activities. For the purpose of this thesis we will refer only to certain physical disabilities that have a direct effect in the learning process, such as sight and hearning impediments.

When learning a foreign language, there are four important aspects that need to be emphasized and that complement each other when learning the new language. Those aspects are: reading, writing, listening and speaking a language. Being able to master each of these aspects, one is able to master a language. Many teachers use different approaches to teaching these four aspects of a language, some emphasizing one aspect over the other, but with the main goal of making the students skilled and proficient in that particular language. Using modern and creative techniques is essential for language learning, especially when it comes to students with disabilities.

Roger & George, (2008) define learning disabilities, as particular kinds of learning issues that affect various skills such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math. They also state that there is no "cure" for learning disabilities; yet students can grow to accomplish great things, by finding ways to get around their learning disabilities. In order to get around their learning disabilities, they require the right help. The teachers are one of those sources that could provide this help for students with learning disabilities to find a way around their disability.

Tanguay, (2002) suggests that technology tools allow students with disabilities to compensate for the areas where they lack, while simultaneously leads to significant improvement in the learning process. Incorporating technology in the learning process can therefore increase the chances of an improved learning experience for students with disabilities, which would enable them to benefit more from the lessons.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2006) in studies regarding students with disabilities in Eastern Europe countries, including Kosovo and Macedonia, states that there are issues regarding the education provided for children with special needs, within the framework of ongoing education reform. In the book it is also stated that outdated learning methodologies and inadequate education for the teachers are just one of the issues that preoccupy the teaching of students with disabilities.

While the incorporation of technology as a tool to improve the learning process can be considered in all educational aspects, when discussion it the thesis will focus mainly in the aspect of language acquisition, in particular learning of English.

In another publication by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2011) entitled Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Tertiary Education, and Employment, it is stated that technology aids are one of the components included in order to help students with learning disabilities. So, while the students with disabilities can grow to become high achievers, they require the aid of well-prepared teachers who use modern methodologies, in order to be successful.

Furthermore, the incorporation of technology in the learning process is also a great aid in providing a better and more successful learning experience. As Stone-MacDonald, (2014) suggests, students with learning disabilities learn best through seeing and doing. Therefore, with instructions from teachers, and the necessary tools, such as technology in the classroom, the students can experience a better learning process by applying the knowledge and doing things on their own.

1.1. Background of the thesis

Every child deserves to benefit as much as possible from the educational system. The same is true when it comes to students with disabilities, and their learning of English language as one of the main elective courses. However, it is not always the case that students belonging to this group benefit as much as possible from learning experiences. It is imperative to figure out the best approaches for teaching these students, especially nowadays that the rise of technology can improve the teaching and learning process.

As teachers have the main role in teaching, it is imperative to know whether the methodologies they use create the best learning opportunities. It is also very important to highlight the effect that implementing the use of technology in such learning methodologies can have to the learning process.

Additionally, it is also imperative to know that educational institutions are equipping teachers with the necessary tools to teach students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, it is simultaneously important to know whether students with learning disabilities are treated with the same regard as the rest of the students (if not with additional attention), when creating curriculums.

The greatest influencers, that influenced me to decide on this particular topic, were the students that I currently teach who are affected by hearing disabilities. That is why, considering the possibilities that not all students with disabilities may be offered

the same opportunities to maximize their learning, it seemed imperative to be able to define at least some aspects and ways in which English language teaching can be improved, when dealing with these groups of students.

Commonly in Kosovo, there seem to be very scarce specific improvements when it comes to the teaching of students with disabilities in general, not only in regards to English Language, while it also seems that education institutions are not dealing particularly with this number of students, mainly due to its scarcity in numbers. Therefore, it seems important to show the need for dealing more with this spectrum of students, and offering a fresh perspective on improving the teaching process, especially with the use of technology.

1.2. Significance and purpose of the thesis

As stated above, this thesis's main aim is to create an awareness of the benefits of technology use to teach English, in particular to students with disabilities. Additionally, it aims to understand and highlight the best teaching practices and teaching methodologies used in teaching students with disabilities. Moreover, it also aims to understand the extent to which educational institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, have planned the learning process and curriculum for students with disabilities, and whether there have been planned actual steps to overcome such difficulties. Put differently, this thesis will make an effort to understand what is being done and what can be done in order to improve the learning experience, especially that of English language, for students with disabilities.

This thesis aims to create an awareness of the benefits of technology use to teach English to students with disabilities in particular; while also highlighting the best teaching practices and teaching methodologies used to teaching students with disabilities. Furthermore, it aims to raise the awareness of educational institutions in regard to students with disabilities.

1.3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This thesis examines the effectiveness of teaching English as a second language to learners with disabilities, and the use of technology in the classroom and its effectiveness in improving English teaching and learning, by means of the following research questions:

- Does the use of technology affect the learning process of students with learning disabilities?
- Do the curriculums include relevant approaches to teaching content regarding students with disabilities?
- In what manner do teachers approach the teaching process of students with disabilities, and do they encompass the use of technology to improve the learning process?

According to these research questions, here are the following hypotheses of this thesis:

H1: The use of technology in the classroom can facilitate learning English with students who have learning disabilities.

H2: The use of technology provides students with disabilities with a fruitful and pleasant learning experience.

H3: Curricula are oriented towards the learning process of students in general, paying less attention to teaching methodologies and materials that can be used in teaching students with disabilities.

1.4. The structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapter one provides a general introduction and generally deals with the background of the thesis, significance and purpose of the thesis and structure of the thesis.

Chapter two contains the review of the relevant literature and studies conducted in

the field of second language vocabulary learning and teaching. The first section reviews the literature related to teaching methods, and how technology can be incorporated within those teaching methods to make them more effective.

Chapter three includes a more detailed review of learning disabilities in particular, and how they affect students. In this chapter is also included a more general comparison between the students with learning disabilities and students with other disabilities when it comes to curriculum design, lesson planning, or English language teaching in the classroom.

Chapter four discusses the methodology and thesis procedures. It introduces the research design, participants of the thesis, instruments and data analysis. Most importantly, it deals with the experimental use of different types of technologies that the participants in the thesis use, and their effectiveness in English language teaching.

Chapter five presents and discusses all quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews and compares them with reference to the research questions and hypotheses.

Chapter six deals with the overall conclusions of the thesis, its limitations and also includes recommendations for future research studies. The relevant references and resources used in this thesis are presented at the bibliography section and appendixes are structured by the end of the thesis.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction of literature review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature and studies conducted in the field of English as a second language learning and teaching. The theoretical framework of the first section reviews the literature related to the importance of English learning and teaching, the role of technology in English learning, English teaching strategies, learning disabilities, and the incorporation of technology in various English teaching methods to ease the learning process for students with disabilities.

There are many researches, and other materials written on English language teaching methods. The list of English teaching methods is especially voluminous as it is one of the most influential languages and as such the demand to learn it is increasing. However, in order to combine English teaching methods, and the use of technology in the classroom, extensive research was conducted. As a foundation for this thesis the sources have been gathered through studying various books and papers related to learning disabilities, the use of technology for language learning, and the teaching and learning of English language in general; this thesis is also a paper encompassed from the data gathered from the vast number of already existing sources.

A portion of materials were available for the contemporary English teaching methods especially because of the impact of technology. However, it was more challenging to find sources related to teaching methods used in the previous decades, which deal with English teaching methodologies that were used in the classroom.

The sources referred to in this paper have been properly included and listed in the bibliography section in the last section of the thesis. Among the materials consulted, Boumova, (2008) and Tamura, (2006) were rather valuable as they form the basis for fundamental information regarding teaching methods in teaching English language. These sources represent a comparison of the traditional and modern teaching methodologies, their advantages and disadvantages.

Furthermore, Kasumi, (2016) had a significant importance in understanding the principles upon which the Educational institutions of Kosovo function. He states that the classrooms are mainly teacher focused and usually the teacher does not have an adequate relationship with his/her students. The lack of variety in the classroom is also affected by the lack of technology in the classroom that could aid with audio-visual exercises. He explains that in Kosovo's classrooms students cannot develop skills such as listening and speaking, but only reading and writing, because of the exercises and assignments, which are centred mainly on these two aspects of the language.

2.2. The methods of teaching English language utilized during the previous decades

In order to teach English more proficiently, particularly to students with learning disabilities teachers ought to use various means and methods in the classroom. Nowadays foreign or second languages are taught at almost every educational institution. Apart from mandatory education (primary schools) there are also a number of language schools that are specialized in teaching a certain language in a short period of time, stating that the students will learn at a certain level of proficiency in a language.

These educational institutions, be they primary schools or any other school of languages, have one main aim: they aspire to help their pupils to acquire the language fast and in an effortless manner. Therefore, the English teaching methods are chosen carefully and used with precision. In order to have an effective teaching process, the teachers have the possibility to use various means in achieving language proficiency for students. For instance, with useful and attractive games numerous classroom activities are supported by the use of technology as part of the teaching methods.

Kasumi, (2016) suggests that English teachers in particular are the essential reacting agent that through their language teaching methods they affect all of the language skills. The teachers are responsible for carefully choosing the appropriate teaching method. Based on the teacher's ability to choose or develop the teaching method,

that will suit the student or students, it will be determined whether or not the learning will be effective for all the language skills in the same manner, such as listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Henceforth, this section discusses the English language teaching methods used by the English teachers involved in our case study; by focusing on the teaching methods used by the teachers of English nowadays it will be possible to get a glimpse of the effectiveness of teaching without the possibility of incorporating technology during the lessons. Therefore, the language teaching methods are presented and discussed in detail, including the advantages and disadvantages of certain teaching methods. By listing and discussing the five of the most relevant teaching methods, that relate directly to language teaching, particularly foreign languages, we will gain a better understanding of the importance of these English teaching methods, and how when applied with the use of technology they will benefit all English language students, especially those students with special needs. Since teachers have the main role in teaching, it is imperative to know whether the methodologies utilized by them create the best learning opportunities.

Below are represented the most common teaching methodologies utilized by the teachers in primary schools of Kosovo, particularly the schools of Mitrovica and Prizren. By explaining these teaching methods below, it is aimed to understand the way English teachers in primary schools conduct English lessons. Furthermore, with each of the teaching methods represented below there are more information as to the types of assistive technology could be used to make the teaching method better suited to students with learning disabilities. In addition, by highlighting the best teaching practices and teaching methodologies it helps understand which of the teaching methodologies currently in use benefit students with disabilities and learning disabilities, in particular. Through this analysis of the teaching methods and the use of technology, it is easier to understand whether the inclusion of technology can facilitate English teaching and learning, and whether in doing so students with learning disabilities in particular can have a more fruitful and pleasant learning experience. For the purpose of this thesis, a sample of twenty-three students with

disabilities has been selected. The types of disabilities in our sample include a mix of learning, intellectual and physical disabilities. While the majority of the students partaking in the research are affected by Down Syndrome, and physical impairments (visual and hearing impairments), only a minority of participants struggle with learning disorders, particularly Dyslexia.

The teaching methods presented below, are teaching methods used in language learning in general. However, since these methods have been frequently employed by the teachers partaking in the research part of this thesis, it seemed relevant to include and expand more on these types of teaching methods. Furthermore, besides expanding on the types of the teaching methods, it was expanded a step further by matching teaching methods currently in use by the teachers, with potential assistive technologies. In doing so, it was attempted to show how current English teaching methods can be improved upon, and make them more effective with students with disabilities (including both learning and physical disabilities).

2.2.1. Grammar Translation Method

Patel & Jain, (2008) define this method as a method that focuses on teaching the grammar of a specific language, in our case the English language. This method is used by the teachers in primary schools in Kosovo, and it mainly represents a teaching technique focused on translating from the target language and vice versa. This method focuses only on two of the language skills: reading and writing. This method is noted and is defined as one of the highly effective teaching methods due to the fact that the pupils' native language still remains the base for the process of learning. The drawback of this method is that by employing it, the learners remain passive during the process of teaching and learning.

Regardless of the fact that the Grammar Translation Method is an old-fashioned language teaching method it is still widely used, even in teaching students with disabilities. What could make this method more effective however, is employing the

aid of assistive technology in the classroom. The type of assistive technology that could be used to accompany the Grammar Translation Method can be the text-to-speech (TTS) software. Alvernia University, (2019) states that this software is designed to help students who have difficulties reading standard (typed) text, which includes students suffering from disabilities such as dyslexia, blindeness, visual impairment etc. This type of assistive technology helps students who have a difficulty to read and therefore understand the text prior to translation, and also helps students develop the English language listening skill.

2.2.2. The Direct Method

The Direct Method uses the English language as a form of teaching and communication in the language classroom. It represents a shift from literary language into the language that is spoken every day, as this is one of the fastest ways in improving a foreign language. Patel & Jain, (2008) suggest that this method focuses more on the target language – and the process of learning this language only without the usage of the native language. It is more concerned with the development of skills such as speaking and listening, as these two are constantly in function while using this method. Teachers of English at the schools of Mitrovica and Prizren for this method use various techniques of language, for example demonstrations of pictures and objects, spoken narratives, dictation and role play.

Besides the TTS Software that can also be used in combination with the Direct Method as well, other types of assistive technology include: Electronic Worksheets and Phonetic Spelling Software and Videotaped Skills. As explained in the webpage Masters in Special Education, (2015), Electronic Worksheets help students to line up words, and even synthesize speech; other assistive technology such as Videotaped Skills help with solving linguisic problems, and phonetic spelling software is useful especially with dictations, following along with texts or even overcoming reading difficulties. These types of assistive technologies can help with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and dyspraghia, as well as students who are autistic.

2.2.3. Audio Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method is categorized as a method by Richards & Rodgers, (2001) who define this method as one of the first that changed its role and usage from linguistics and psychology. This method makes used of dialogues as one of the main means of learning the English language, this is aimed to be done in specific by using various drills or mime games to name a few.

The Audio-Lingual Method is utilized in our case study primary schools, in the form of dialogs, or incorporated with activities and games such as mime and other game like elements that make the lesson enjoyable to the students, by focusing on elevating the skills of listening and speaking. Alvernia University, (2019) mentions Sound Filed Systems as Assistive Listening Systems, that help students who are deaf, have difficulty hearign or have other auditory and learning problems such as: language delays, central auditory processing disorder, articulation disorders. This system is particularly helpful for students who are learning English as a second language.

2.3. Modern English Teaching Methods

Every aspect of our life is affected by technology which also plays a huge role in the development of the society in general. It is easy to see that the use of technology in the classroom improves the learning experience. That is indeed the use of Assistive Technology specially to improve the quality and learning experience of students. Pierangelo & Giuliani, (2008) refer to Assistive Technology as the technology used in the learning process. Assistive Technology according to Pierangelo & Giuliani, (2008) has become a highly relevant tool used by teachers to enhance the quality of the learning process.

Modern technology in particular possesses an important function and plays a significant role in education. Students in general who aim to learn English language benefit from the use of technology in learning faster and more proficiently. The same is true for students with special needs or disabilities.

Technology can be very beneficial when practicing various aspects of the language such as listening, reading, speaking and writing. Computers, radios, internet or projector can only be some of the tools used in order to learn the language more effectively. Nevertheless, the teachers are still a valuable part of this process since they are the ones that have a say in the in the combination of the language teaching methods with the modern tools of technology, to provide a more effective learning environment.

Nowadays, English language and Technology are related to each other as technology is part of each of the language lessons. In addition, a number of modern English language teaching methods are based on the usage of technology. These methods are used more often by the teachers as they have proven to be more effective. This section will discuss the English language teaching methods influenced by technology such as Communication Language Teaching, The Task Based Method, and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. The methods mentioned below represent methods currently in use by the teachers of primary schools of Mitrovica and Prizren, when teaching students with disabilities.

It is worth noting that there is significant lack of technological equipment as well as assistive technology software that the teachers can utilize. While many of the teachers are provided with elementary or basic equipment to conduct a lesson, more often than not, they are only devices and not the necessary assistive technology software.

The following teaching methods have also been observed during the class observations.

2.3.1. Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching method gives more attention on the proficiency of communication rather than focusing on the structure of the language. As explained by Richards & Rodgers, (2001) this method aims to make the

communicative skill the main motivation of the language teaching. Therefore, it develops procedures for teaching the four skills (listening, writing, speaking and reading) that distinguish the interdependence of the language and communication. Furthermore, this method encourages those kinds of activities that involve real communication and as such also carry out meaningful tasks.

By the implementation of this method it is engraved within the learners the idea that the language that they are learning is very useful and meaningful and consequently it also supports the process of learning. In this method both teacher and learners are active and participants of the learning and teaching process. The learners are expected to negotiate and think critically, while the teachers on the other hand are responsible for organizing, guiding, analysing, consulting and managing the lesson.

When utilizing the Communicative Language Teaching with their students, the teachers used a variety of materials. Among the predominant tools used were books and technological equipment such as radio, computer and projector. However, it was evident that the teachers were not familiar with any type of assistive technology such as TTS Software, Electronic Worksheets, or any other assistive technology software. Mainly they focused on planning lesson CD-s or preparing PowerPoint presentations of the lesson. While this use of technology is better than no use of technology in the classroom, it still lacks the benefits of the use of technology in combination with assistive technology.

2.3.2. Task-Based Method

The Task-Based English language teaching method centres on the usage of the real language just as well as giving the learners meaningful and useful tasks in the target language – English language, according to Richards & Rodgers, (2001). It is stated that this method insists that the learners get involved in various tasks such as visits to various places, doing interviews or even have contacts with various people from diverse fields of life. This method is relevant because, it is among the teaching methods included in the Kosovo's curriculum.

"Studying the curriculum of Kosovo, we noticed that it puts emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) and (Task - Based Learning).

-Kasumi, (2016), pg. 216

With the implementation of this method, prominently the focus is bestowed upon the task and the learners' ability to act independently and take responsible. Henceforth the evaluation is done based on the success of the task rather than written tests. This reason is among the many that makes this English language teaching method among one of the most popular as it helps learners develop their English skills by speaking and interacting in various tasks. This language teaching method is very similar to the previous one as both focus on communication, however the Task-Based English language teaching method uses primarily tasks to achieve its aim.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), (2011) suggests that in a situation that involves foreign language learning, the learning process ought to have a communicative function, which is performed by one of the generative capabilities, or through the skill of speaking or writing.

As observed in the classrooms, in the first phase the teacher introduces the learner to the task and gives clear instructions; in the second part the learners perform or complete the task given while the teacher only plays the role of the observer. Finally, the pupils review the outcomes from the tasks while the teachers may have the chance to evaluate the learners.

This English language teaching method uses tasks as main means of teaching and learning. Upon the observation of English lessons taught to the students of the primary school of Mitrovica, it was evident that the tasks assigned to the students more often than did not include the utilization of technological aid.

2.3.3. Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling

The Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling English language teaching method uses a mixture of reading and storytelling in order to help the learners acquire the language faster. As Patel & Jain, (2008) suggest, this method works in a routine of three steps:

- Firstly, the teacher uses various gestures, forms of translation or even question in order to teach the new vocabulary structures.
- Secondly, the learners make use of the previously learnt things by verbally engaging in the storytelling process.
- Thirdly, the teachers and learners combine all the new information gathered and read the story out.

During activities related to reading and storytelling, the teachers had the opportunity to use various modern technological means such as the radio, computer or projector so the students could actually listen to the story being told before moving to the second or third step, as mentioned above.

The teachers used various techniques as well while teaching with the *Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling* method; they constantly asked questions about the meaning of the text or often do short comprehensive tests to make sure that all the pupils have understood the text. Through the various tasks and activities that the teachers prepare for their pupils, the learners are able to learn something new by listening and practice the language by speaking.

While the various tools used by the teachers range from old to modern as this method is mastering every day; in this aspect the teachers use means such as the print out papers or read the story themselves to the more advanced means which include the tools from the latest technology such as smart boards or projector despite the fact that not every school can afford them. In addition, there are books of recommended lesson plans, manuals explaining the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and

Storytelling English language teaching methodology, different listening material, alternate DVDs, and many other sources.

2.4. The Different English Teaching Methods used in the Schools of Kosovo

Besides the teaching methodologies stated above, and gathered via the teachers included in our case study of the research part of the thesis, there is little information on the different teaching methods implemented by teachers in schools of Kosovo in general. While a number of studies and books on the English teaching method can be found online, they belong to the category of English language in general, mainly in western countries where data is more ample. Teaching English in primary schools as a foreign language is not a novelty, as it has been part of Kosovo's educational system for quite some time.

The data on the different teaching methods used by the English teachers in Kosovo is merely limited to the data gathered through questionnaires and interviews as part of this research. Since the questions included in the questionnaire and interviews aim to obtain a suggestion of the teaching methods used in the classroom, through the information gathered it will also be presented a general perspective regarding the technological teaching means used during lessons.

For the students that have a slower pace of learning, and require a great deal of repetition to learn a new concept, the computer can be a very patient source of learning, enabling a student to repeat lessons as many times as necessary. The computer networks provide ample opportunities to work with language learning exercises, thus making the learning process more interesting and accessible.

However as noted above, it is highly evident that only computers are not sufficient as a technology, if they are not accompanied by proper learning software. Using technology most certainly can help with the aspects of learning a language, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. The advantages of using technology in English language teaching and learning are ample, and the technology should be part of every

educational state structure, especially nowadays that the technology has become an essential part of daily life. There are many benefits to using technology for the purpose of English learning in the classroom, including but not limited to: aiding students with spellchecks, and ability to visualize the way a language is written. The ais of technology also increases the feelings of pride, and pleasure during the learning process, and hence helps develop students and encourage them throughout the learning process.

Regardless of the fact that some of the schools are equipped with computers, and some of them are not, teachers should be trained in the field of technology use, particularly assistive technology, and it's use in the classroom.

To summarize, all the teaching techniques used by the English teachers can benefit from the use of technology in general, and assistive technology in particular. The use of technology in combination with the teaching methods can facilitate the work that the teachers do, and more importantly can improve the quality of the learning experience. To better understand the teaching methods, and the use of assistive technology with learning disabilities, in the following chapter is included a more detailed representation of those disabilities. Thus, making it easier to understand the connection between the learning disabilities, teaching methodologies and the use of technology and assistive technology with said students.

Chapter III- Defining and Categorizing Learning Disabilities

3.1. What some of the most influential learning disabilities that affect modern students?

The topic of learning and other disabilities has been studied continually; therefore, a lot of materials were available online. This paper includes an individual thesis as well, on the topic therefore the main source for the paper is the thesis itself, more specifically the data collected and analysed through class observations, surveys with students. The topic can be perceived as a rather sensitive one, especially for the parents of the included pupils; therefore, the pupils' names are not presented, while the teachers will be introduced with their initials as necessary.

Among the sources used that we can refer to are Federer, (1985) who talks about resources and teaching approaches in educating handicapped students. Whereas Fidler & Nadel, (2007) focus on the education of children with Down Syndrome in particular. Among the most common intellectual (hence learning affective) disorder is Down Syndrome. Most influential learning disabilities however included in order of importance are: Dyslexia, ADHD, Non-verbal Processing Disorders and Visual Processing Disorders. These types of learning disabilities are presented below, along with other types of learning disabilities that can affect learners.

3.2. Types of learning disabilities

Initially a distinction should be made between physical disabilities such as issues pertaining to hearing, seeing or other physical disabilities, and learning disabilities that are inner-directed. It is also worth stating that a learning disability is not an intellectual disability. Taylor & Sternberg, (1992) mention that a learning disability is a disability that affects a person's ability to process information and that people with learning disabilities possess an average to above-average IQ.

Turkington, Joseph R. Harris, & Bookworks, (2006) list and explain many of learning disabilities. A list of those learning disabilities and a short description is presented

below. As a source of reference for the learning disabilities presented below mainly the book The Encyclopedia of Learning Disabilities, Second Edition by Turkington, Joseph R. Harris, & Bookworks, 2006 has been used. Besides the book, many of the learning disabilities also have specific websites dedicated to their explanation.

3.2.1. Dyslexia

According to Turkington, Joseph R. Harris, & Bookworks, (2006) Dyslexia is one of the most common forms of all learning disabilities. As explained by Davis, (1992) this type of learning disability can be defined as a language-based disability in which a person has difficulties comprehending words, sentences, or paragraphs. People with dyslexia frequently have problems with processing or understanding what they read or hear. However, numerous dyslexic people are markedly talented in arts and music; 3-D visual perception; athletic and mechanical ability.

3.2.2. Dyscalculia

According to Wilson, (n.d.) dyscalculia is a life-long learning disability that affects the ability to grip and solve math concepts. There are many different types of math disability, which can affect individuals differently and at different stages of a person's life. The individuals that have dyscalculia frequently struggle with manipulating numbers in their head and remembering steps in formulas and equations. Just like dyslexia, people with dyscalculia can be taught to achieve success.

3.2.3. Dysgraphia

As stated by Turkington, Joseph R. Harris, & Bookworks, (2006) Dysgraphia is a writing disability where people have difficulties to form letters and write within a defined space. A large number of individuals with dysgraphia have a handwriting that is inconsistent and uneven. The individuals that are able to write legible texts often write very slowly or in very small letters. It is common for people with dysgraphia to be unable to visualize letters and not have the ability to remember the motor patterns of letters and writing requires a large amount of energy and time.

3.2.4. Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is another disorder that affects the development of motor skills. People with this type of learning disability have difficulties planning and executing fine motor tasks, which can range from waving goodbye to getting dressed. According to Turkington, Joseph R. Harris, & Bookworks, (2006) Dyspraxia is a life-long disorder with no cure, but options are available for helping to improve a person's ability to function and be independent. While dyspraxia is not a learning disability, it commonly coexists with other learning disabilities that can affect learning ability.

3.2.5. ADHD

Baum, (2004) mentions ADHD, a disorder that causes people to lose focus on tasks very easily. There are two main types of ADHD: *Hyperactive-Impulsive ADHD* is well-known by the person's excessive amount of activity. This may include constant fidgeting, non-stop talking, problems with doing quiet activities, trouble controlling their temper, and more.

Inattentive ADHD causes people to not put the needed attention into a required task. People with inattentive ADHD may struggle with paying attention to instruction, daydream a lot, process information slowly, become bored easily, and be very poorly organized. ADHD is not a learning disability but can cause people to struggle with learning and is commonly linked to other learning disabilities.

3.2.6. Auditory Processing Disorders

Auditory processing disorders are disorders that may cause a person to have difficulties with distinguishing similar sounds, as well as other difficulties.

3.2.7. Visual Processing Disorders

Visual processing disorders are disorders that cause people to have a hard time with seeing the differences between similar letters, numbers, objects, colours, shapes and patterns which can be an issue when it comes to learning.

3.2.8. Non-verbal Learning Disorders

These types of disorders are best explained by Davis & Broitman, (2011) refer to non-verbal learning disabilities (NLD), or non-verbal learning disorders, are neurological syndromes that develop in the right side of the brain.

While individuals with NLD have a very strong verbal ability, remarkable memory and spelling skills, and strong auditory retention; they possess poor social skills and have difficulty understanding facial expression and body language. Many do not react well to change, and some possess poor social judgement. Some people with NLD have poor co-ordination, balance problems and difficulty with fine motor skills.

3.3. Most effective Teaching Techniques used with students with disabilities

Different teaching techniques vary in effectiveness and should be adapted for specific needs for special education individuals. Depending on whether a teacher is working with short attention spans, or any other learning disability, then the techniques should be matched accordingly. Reid & Lienemann, (2006) suggest that in many cases teachers get attached to certain teaching methods, even if they do not prove to be as effective. Therefore these wedded ineffective approaches are used continually irrespective of whether or not they are successful. They continue by stating that the development of a strategy instruction could help with new approaches, but they require a degree of systematic professional development in strategy instruction approaches.

3.4. The use of technology in the classroom with students with learning disabilities

Assistive technology is any device, or equipment or system that helps work around or compensate for an individual's specific learning deficits. As Dikusar, (2018) suggests with the implementation of in special education it is more possible to ameliorate the academic skills of students with disabilities.

While the use of assistive technology doesn't cure or eliminate learning difficulties, it

can aid learners reach their potential because it allows them to benefit from the strengths and avoid the areas of difficulty. Assistive technology addresses different types of learning problems such as those related to: listening, writing, reading, memory etc.
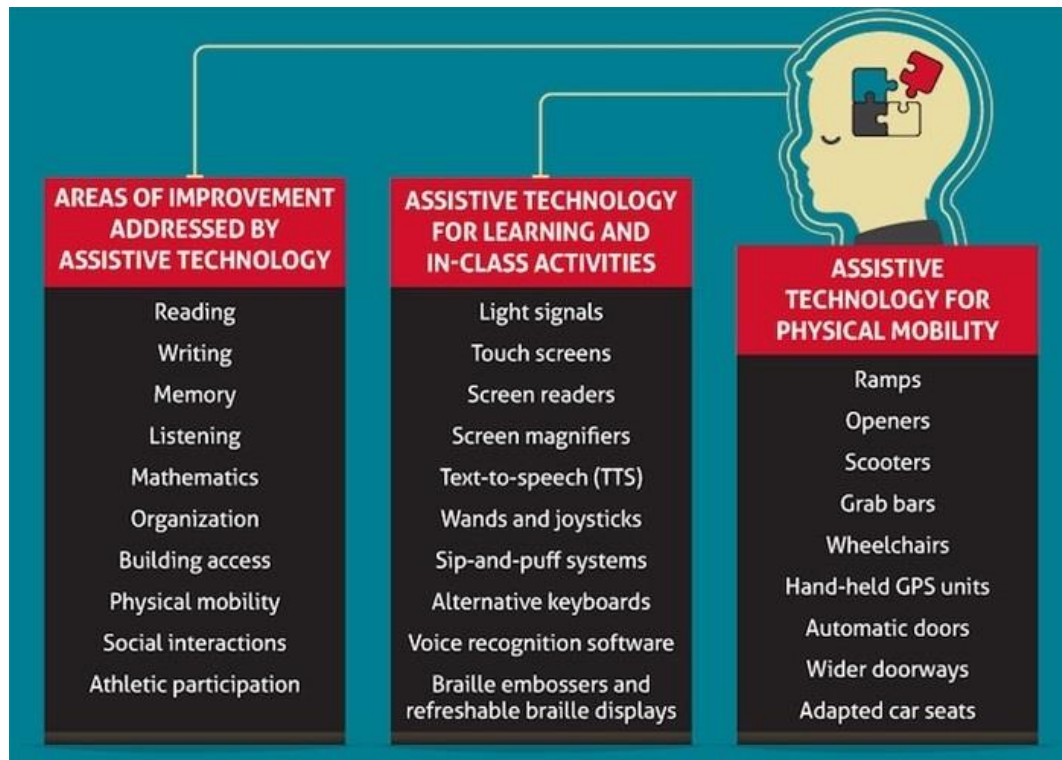
Figure 1: The types of assistive technology (Source: University of Cincinnati)

Based on the existing research it has been evident that in the schools where the research was conducted there is no clear distinction between the use of technology in the classroom and the use of assistive technology in the classroom. More often than not the earlier is presumed to be the latter. The technology used in the classrooms encompasses a number of technological devices such as: projector, computer, laptop, tablet, TV, radio and potentially smart boards.

Assistive technology on the other hand includes these types of devices and much more. As Young & MacCormack, n.d. state, even though the phrase assistive technology may make us think of computers and computerized devices, assistive technology can encompass everything from technology devices to low-tech ones. The

type of Assistive technology that helps students with learning disabilities can include even computer programs and tablet applications that provide text-to-speech, speech-to-text, word prediction capabilities, and even graphic organizers.

Among the assistive technology resources for students with disabilities Smith & McCulloch, (n.d.) name resources such as:

- **Reading tools** like text to speech, softwaare that converts text files to audio, talking books etc.
- **Writing tools** such as organizational software, onscreen word banks, word prediction, portable word processors etc.

Other assistive technologies according to Neese, (n.d.) can also be: Low-Tech Handouts, such as simple paper handouts ; Assistive Listening systems; FM Systems Sound Field Systems Proofreading Software, Math Tools and Simulations etc.

So assistive technology helps with different aspects of students' learning experience, and it expands beyong the technological devices that are currently being used by teachers. Unfortunately technology and assistivve technology is still seen as a nice-to-have equipment but as Sullivan, (2019) puts it, for students with disabilities it is crucial to their learning and success in school.

There are also several misconceptions regarding assistive technology, such as it is expensive, it means additional work for the teacher, it can only be used in the classroom or that is primarily for students with severe disabilities. But as Adebisi, Liman, & Longpoe, (2015) state assistive technology enhances basic skills, and should be used as part of the educational process. Assistive technology is more than an educational tool.

Using assistive technology in the classroom could aid the learning process and facilitate the teacher's work. Also using assistive technology in the classroom could ensure that the students suffering from learning or other disabilities can benefit more

from the lessons. While assistive technology could be beneficial, this paper was focused to determine via interviews with teachers and surveys with students, as to their benefit and/or access is such technologies during their lessons. If so, do they indeed benefit by the use of assistive technology.

To summarize, there are many types of learning and other disabilities that might affect learners, and there is also a number of assistive technology types that can aid with specific disabilities. What is worth noting is that a clear distinction is often not made between technology in general, and assistive technology in particular. Therefore, while curriculums can include the use of technology in the classroom, there is no indicator that assistive technology is included. In the following chapters below, it is more evident that based on manner in which the research part of the thesis was conducted, and the food for thought gathered via the interviews with teachers, very little thought goes into the involvement of students with learning disabilities in the general education curriculums designed, let alone assistive technology. In most cases the teachers are the ones that despite the lack of inclusiveness in the curriculums designed by governmental educational institutions, they attempt to adapt the curriculums in order to fulfil the needs of the learners.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction of the research design and methodology

This chapter describes the experimental design of the thesis. In this chapter are included the research procedures, research population and descriptions of the different parts of the research process.

4.2. Design of the thesis

Teaching English to students with learning disabilities, or other physical disabilities that pertain to the sense of hearing and sight is a challenge both for teachers and pupils. For the research part of this diploma paper, the research was conducted with primary school pupils of "Nëna Terezë" in Mitrovica and Special School "Lef Nosi" Prizren. The pupils and the teachers have been contacted either personally at the school or indirectly through other teacher-colleagues. Taking into account that this is an academic paper the names of the pupils as well as teachers will be kept confidential, statistics only are included in this paper, since they suffice for the purpose of the thesis.

As mentioned above, schools from two different cities have been chosen for this thesis. However, the data is collected and studied as one total group, as this survey focuses on the process of teaching English to pupils with learning disabilities or students with disabilities in general, not the comparison of two or more cities.

4.3. Population and sample

To better understand the effect that technology has in improving the learning process of students with disabilities, as well as the best teaching practices, a quantitative research has been conducted. In this thesis five teachers of students with disabilities have participated, as well as a number of twenty-three selected participants that serve as the representative sample of students with disabilities.

The thesis has been conducted in two primary schools, one of which is located in the

municipality of Prizren and the other in the municipality of Mitrovica. Furthermore, it was also aimed to document various teaching methodologies, and also see the role of technology in teaching the group of students with hearing disabilities that are currently taught by the thesis author. The English learners part of the research belong to the age groups of 9-13 years old, whereas they are further classified into categories depending on their disabilities, in order to be able to learn which teaching methodologies, and what kind of technologies show a rate of success depending on the disability type.

The students have been observed during lessons, while in collaboration with the teachers, various methodologies or teaching approaches have been applied and their effectiveness has been studied. The thesis has tried to classify, depending on the type of disability, the best teaching practices as well as the type of technology or technological equipment that have improved the learning experience.

After the application of various methodologies students have partaken in individual interviews, so that their level of satisfaction with the methodologies applied could be determined, and to see the type of technology that they considered interesting or effective during the learning process. After conducting the interviews, the information from the class observations was gathered, and the surveys with the professors were conducted, the results are presented through graphs and charts.

The information gathered was analysed, in order to be able to present the successful teaching methodologies with students with learning disabilities, depending on their disability. In addition, the teachers' point of view has also been presented through analysing the survey part of the research. This thesis was conducted during the timespan of seven weeks and the sessions have been conducted three days a week.

4.4. Data collection procedure and instruments

As the very first step, ethical permission from the schools' principals was obtained for the allowance of the thesis. Personal data were assured that will remain confidential

since the participants' names would not be needed. For the purpose of this thesis the following instruments were used: the questionnaire for students comprising of 10 multiple choice questions, class observation, interviews with the teachers (the interviews comprised of open-ended questions), and also conversations with students.

For the research part conducted with students a questionnaire of ten questions was compiled. The questionnaire focuses on ten main questions. The questionnaires were distributed to the students in the beginning of the class, and collected at the end, ensuring that they have sufficient time to answer. In cases when students were unable to fill in the questionnaire, the answers were obtained by conversing with the particular student.

The teachers also played a very important part in this research. The teachers/professors were interviewed with questions that mainly focused towards their difficulties in teaching children with disabilities; they were asked about their teaching strategies, recommendations, and questions of this nature.

4.5. Instrumentation

The first instrument used was the questionnaire with students, combined with the conversations with students unable to fill in the questionnaire. The second instrument used was the classroom/lesson observation. And the third instrument used, in the research is the process of interviews with professors/teachers.

An instrument used were also the sources that have been utilized in this paper. The lists of the sources utilized for this paper are presented in the alphabetical order in the Bibliography section in the end of this diploma paper. Ranging from the variety of the second-hand materials, to influential books by renowned authors, the materials used can be divided in two separate categories that combine to form the singularity of this paper. On the one hand we have the sources who deal with English language learning and methods, and on the other hand we have the materials that define the students, and the types of disabilities that have been documented, that affect the learning

process, in particular that of new languages.

Other resources used, such as articles, focus on other points such as the role of the teachers in teaching these pupils, or the school facilities; yet there is no article which includes both topics in one. Therefore, a great deal of research needed to be done and a vast number of materials have been analysed and combined in order to present a new take on these issues and to represent the possibility of new ideas.

CHAPTER V: THESIS RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Introduction of thesis results and discussions

This chapter presents and discusses the main results of the post-tests and data analysis of questionnaires from the quantitative perspective. As the data analysis relates to the research questions and hypotheses, this thesis further deals with demographic data such as students' gender, age and English proficiency.

The other section of the chapter deals with the overall findings of this thesis and is focused on summarizing them in a proper general perspective. The analysis of the total thesis findings is related to the research questions that served as a guide for this research.

5.2. The descriptive analysis of demographic characteristics of variables and subjects

The students participating in the research belonged mainly to the male gender. While a minority of five respondents were girls.

Gender of the student participants

- Male
- Female
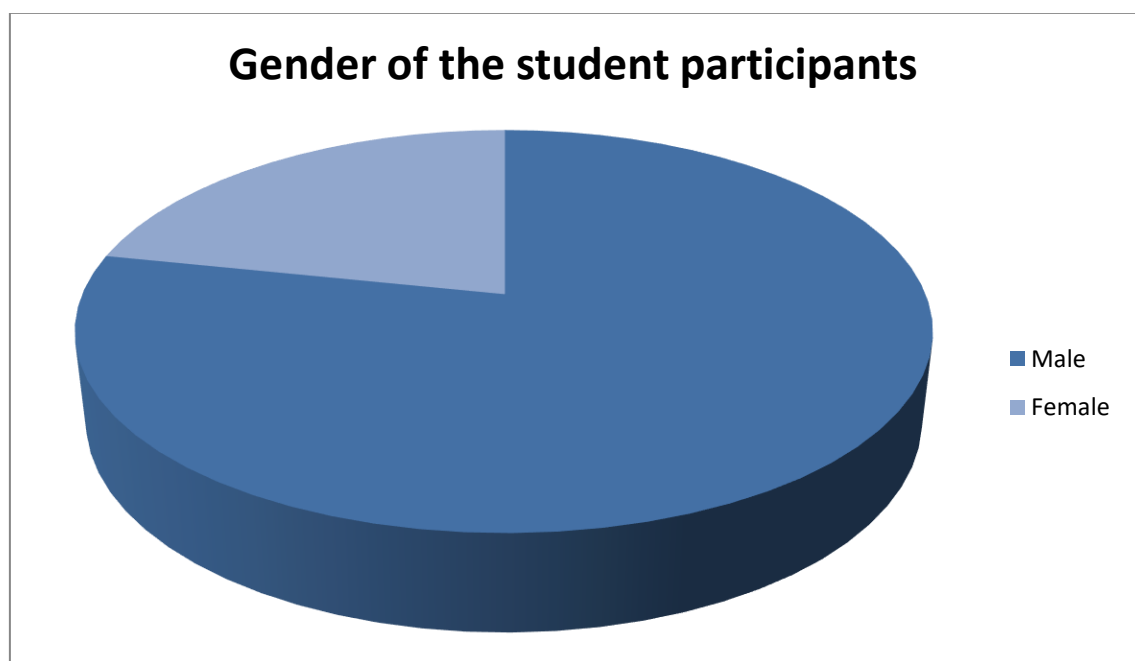
Figure 2: Students participating in the research, denoted using gender

Figure 3: A visual representation of the age of the research participants

The students participating in the research ranged between the ages of nine to thirteen. While the majority of the respondents belonged 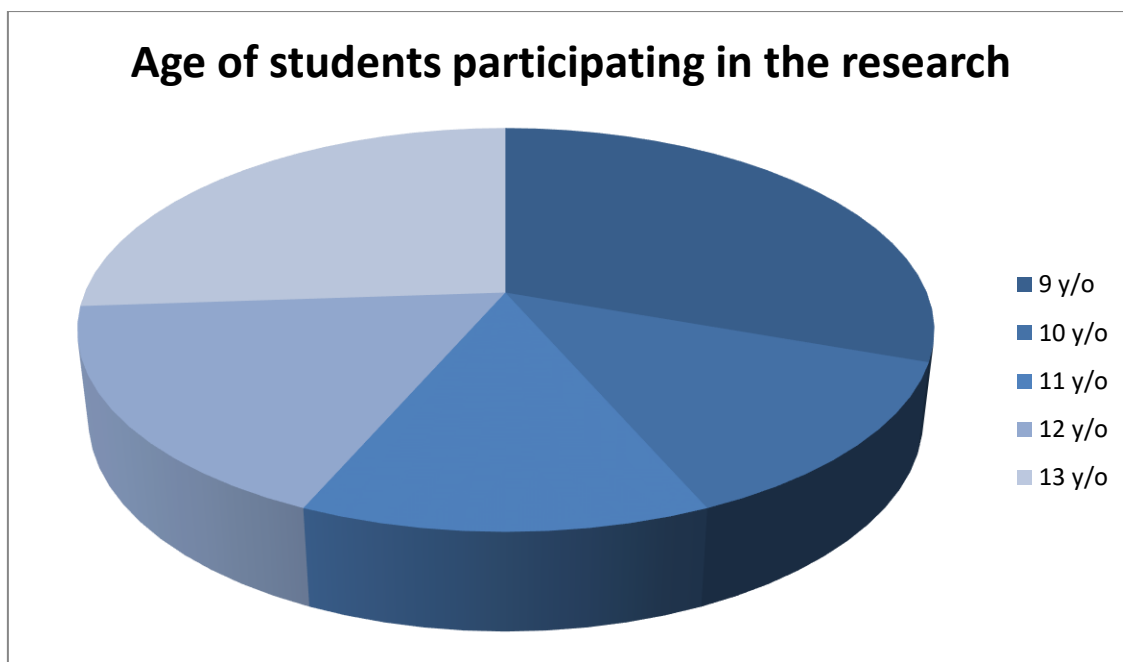to these two age groups, the samples for other age groups were also sufficient to create a sample of all these age groups.
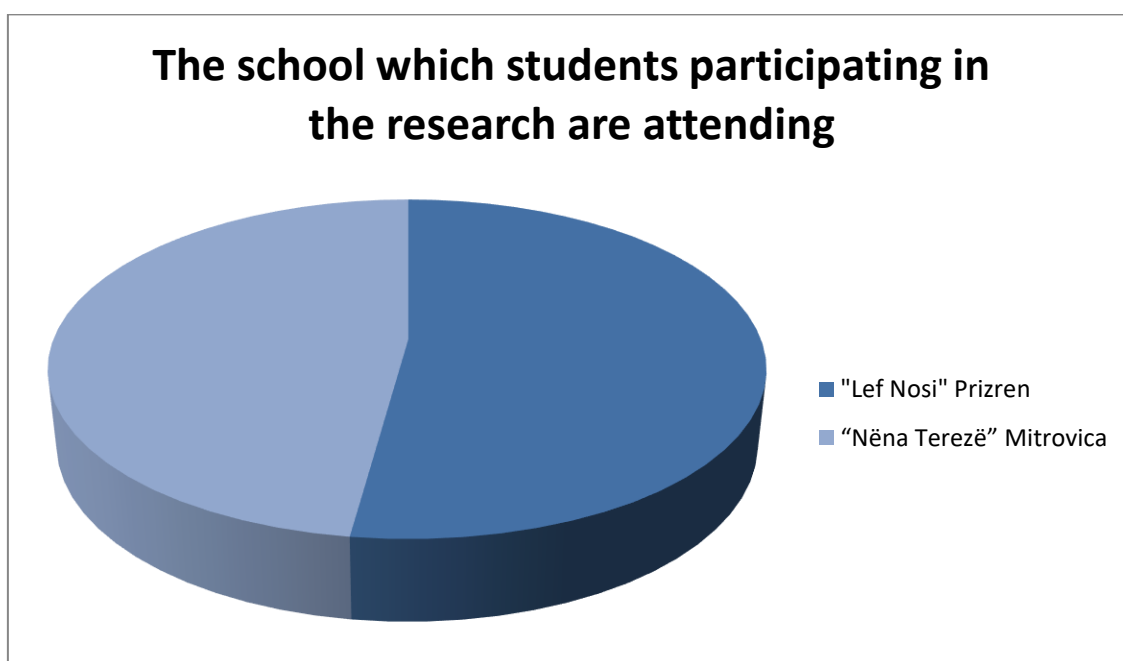

Figure 4: Participats in the research from Mitrovica and Prizren

The respondents participating in the research were selected in almost equal numbers. From the school in Prizren there were 12 participants, and 11 belonged to the school in Mitrovica.

The types of disabilities of the students partaking in this research

- Down Syndome
- Dyslexia
- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
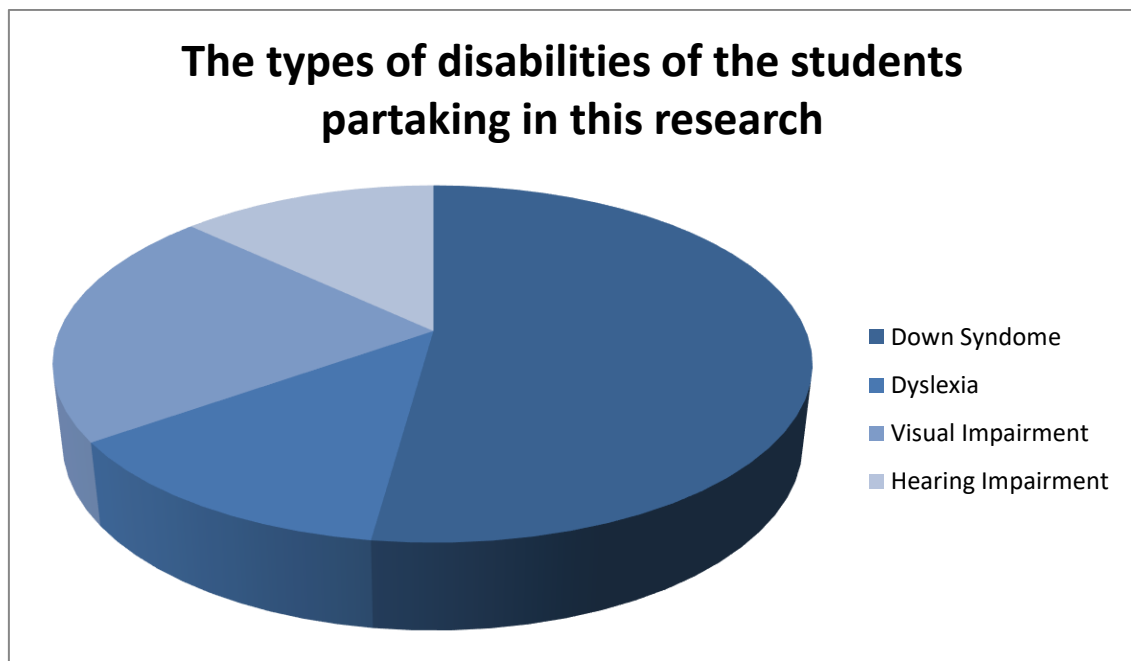
Figure 5: The types of disabilities of the students partaking in this research

The majority of the students with disabilities partaking in the research were affected by the Down syndrome. In addition, only 3 participants (13%) were affected by a learning disability, dyslexia. This however leads to the question of whether or not the students affected by learning disabilities are identified as such and is there any means through which teachers or educational institutions use to identify and reach out to these students. The students partaking in this research, their inability to learn was also accompanied by issues such as mood, anxiety and depressive disorders, reading comprehension difficulties, difficulty following directions, listening and concentrating, Forgetfulness, hyperactivity, intellectual impairments and speech impairments.

Visible disabilities are easy to identify, but most of the learning disabilities are not evident at first sight. It is important to address this issue and discuss whether or not there exists a system in place that addresses the issue of learning disability.

5.3. The analysis of students' survey

As mentioned previously the pupils participating in this survey were from two

different primary schools. Ranging on their level of English and also their age it was deemed necessary to help them out as sometimes they were asked or interviewed about the question and then the answer was written down on the questionnaires. The section below presents the data collected with charts; however among the questions and answers included below, are only the ones that were more relevant and related to the topic.

How motivating are the English classroom lessons at your school?

- Not at all motivating
- Slightly motivating
- Somewhat motivating
- Quite motivating
- Extremely motivating
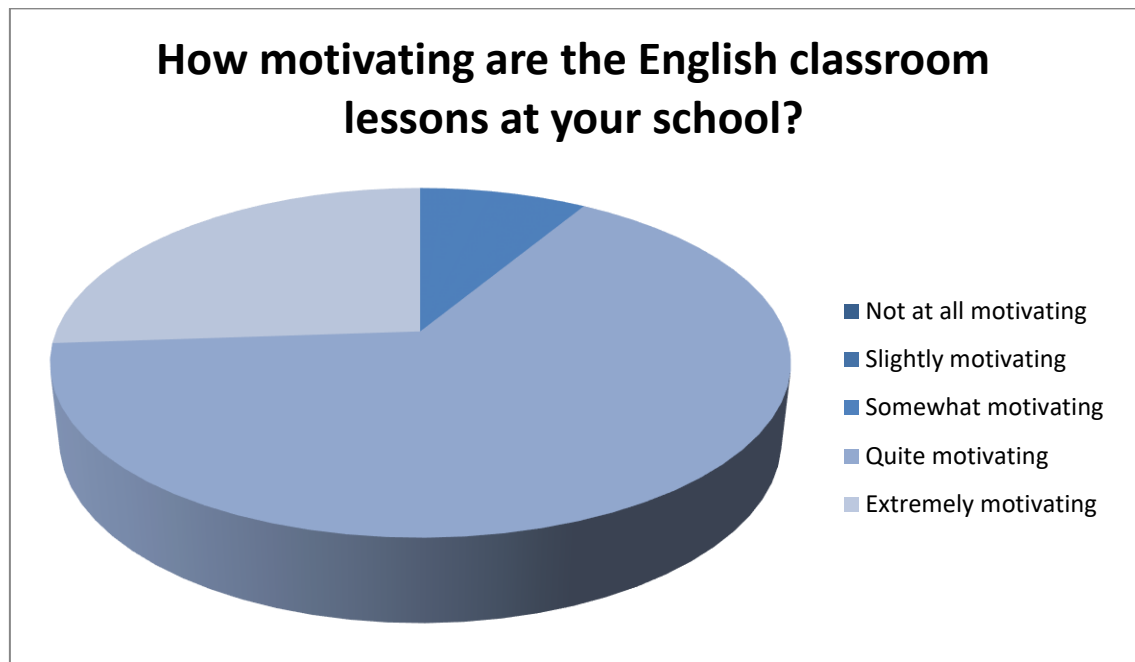
Figure 6: Students' view on lessons

The students suggest that in general English language lessons are quite motivating. This indicates that the effort of the teachers to make lessons interesting for the students and create a pleasant learning experience is dominant.

How well does the school environment fulfill your learning needs?

- Not well at all
- Mildly well
- Fairly well
- Quite well
- Extremely well
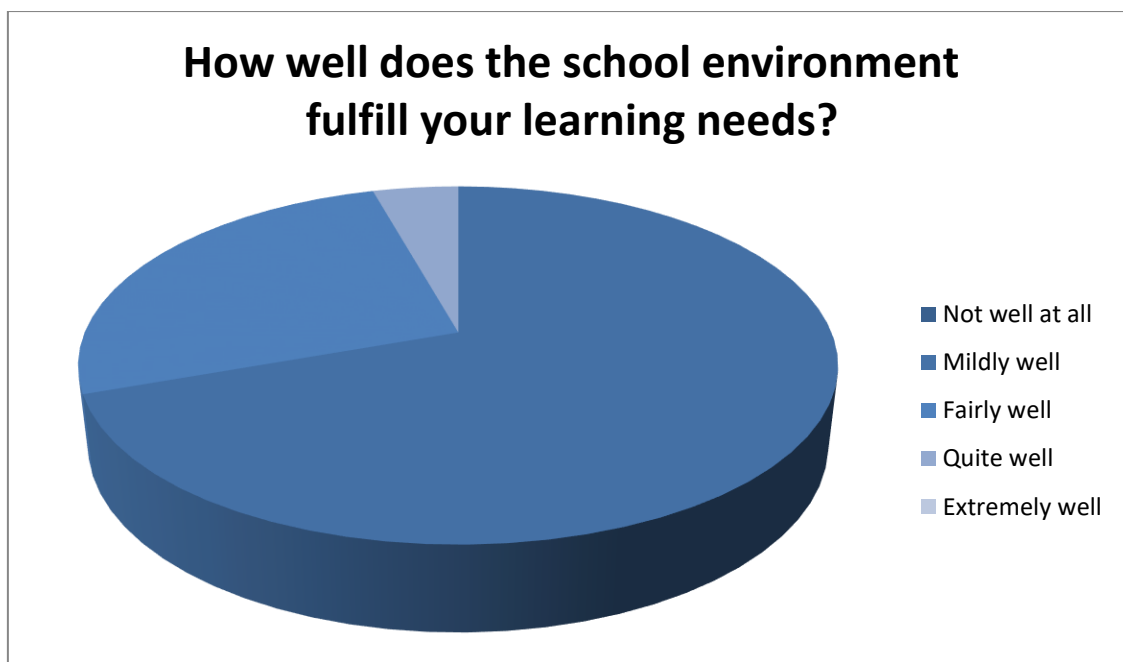
Figure 7: Students' view on the fulfilment of their learning needs

When asked whether the schools offer the optimal learning conditions, students indicated that the school environments do not necessarily fulfil their learning needs. This indicates that even though the teachers may attempt to make English lessons fun and interesting, they do not always have the most optimal conditions to make the best out of lessons.

On average, how much time do you spend on homework for this class each night?

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to less than 60 minutes
- 60 minutes to less than 90 minutes
- 90 minutes or more
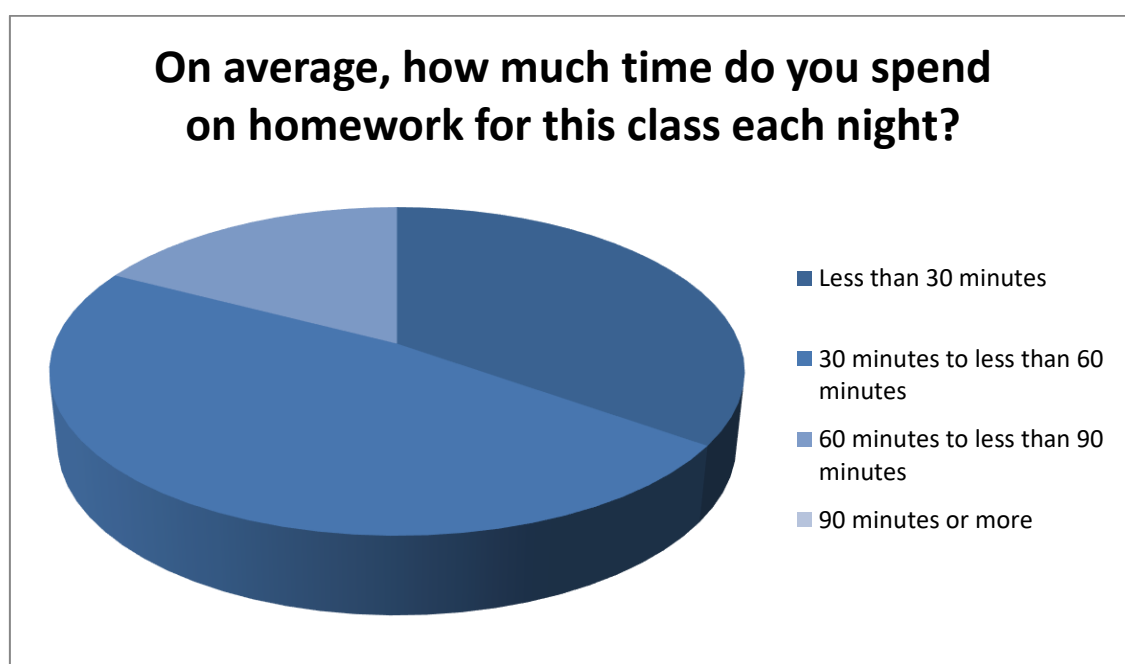
Figure 8: A view of the time spent doing homework, according to students

When asked about the time spent on homework most of the students said that they spend less than 60 minutes in doing homework. This could be because most of the course work is done in class, or maybe they do not have sufficient aid at home to spend more time doing homework.
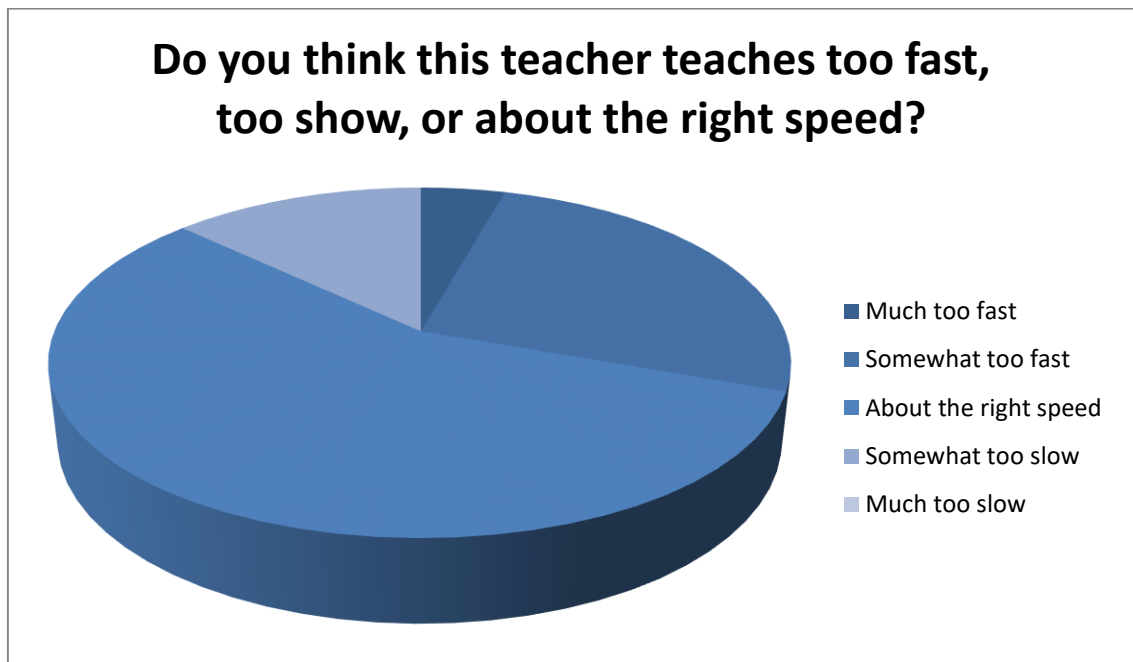
Figure 9: The students' perception about the teachers and teaching process

Regarding the teachers' work with the students, students claimed that generally the teachers have a lesson pace that enables them to keep up with the lessons. While some students on the other hand complained that sometimes the lessons are a bit too fast or a bit too slow. This can be due to the fact that the groups of students participating in the lessons are very diverse, and this can be a challenge to overcome for the teachers, especially when they work with more than one student with disabilities.
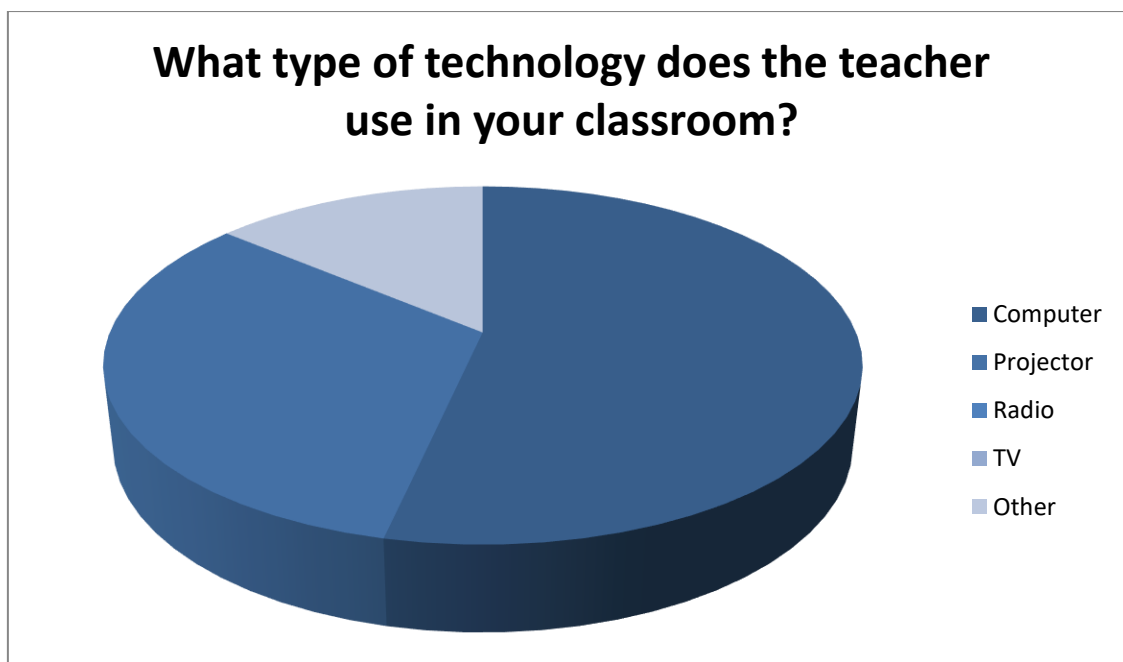
What type of technology does the teacher use in your classroom?

Computer
Projector
Radio
TV
Other

As confirmed by the students, the main types of technology used in the classroom are computers and projectors. This indicates that there are no types of other technologies used in the classroom, such as visual and hearing aids, or special colour coded keyboards that help students with learning or other disabilities to facilitate their learning.

Does the use of technology help you learn English?

Yes
No
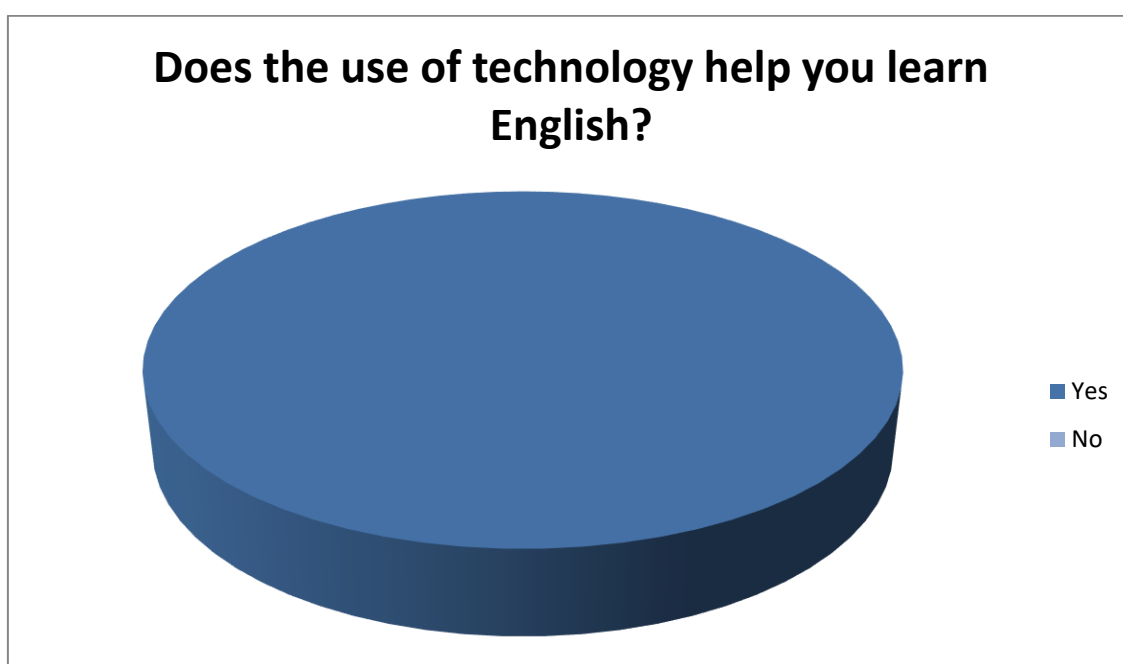
On the other hand, even though scarce, the technology used in the classroom seems to be beneficial for students, since all of them have claimed that the use of technology in the classroom helps them learn English. The pupils were also very open with their replies when asked about the teaching methods used by their English teachers, although they were not able to name the method they described the method. According to them the majority said that their English teachers used mostly the Grammar-Translation language teaching method, followed by the Audio-Lingual, the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling, and various other techniques such as using illustrations to make the lessons more understandable, or participating in discussions and conversations.
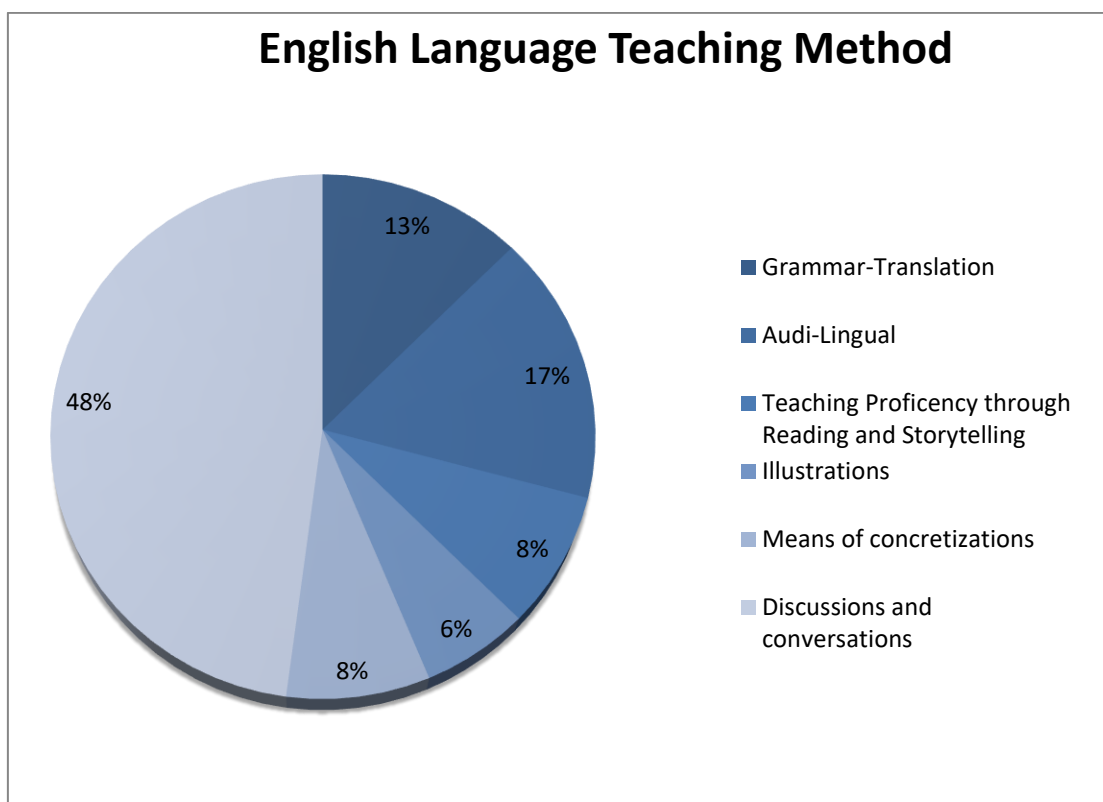
Figure 12: The English language teaching method used according to students.

The students also claimed that their teacher as well combine the teaching methods for instance in one lesson they use two or three methods. This seems to motive the pupils a lot because they prefer this combination of teaching methods. As according to the majority of the learners 67% their teachers use also means of technology in the class, such as projectors or computer, which makes learning more attractive.

Teachers might have as well influenced their pupils as their preferences regarding the English language teaching methods as the majority prefer the exact methods that their teachers use, in specific the Audio-Visual and the Task-Based method. Moreover, the teachers might use various methods when teaching English however regarding the evaluating techniques they seem to be the same and in fact traditional, as according to the pupils all of their teachers use the traditional forms of 'oral' and 'written' examination as referred by Rexhaj, (2013). Nonetheless, the other teachers seem to follow the same pattern as their English language colleagues as it was concluded by the answers on the question about the teaching methods used by the other teachers. Although, the English teachers seem be more creative as they boost their teaching methods with technology or print outs as the pupils pointed out.

According to the results of the data collected from the questionnaires with the pupils of Mitrovica their teachers give their best in teaching effectively the English language. The results of their hard work can be as well noticed as the pupils were very happy with their improvement in English. This was also evident when small taking while the pupils while distributing the questionnaires and answering their questions on their curiosity of the purpose of this thesis.

5.4. The results from the survey with the teachers

The teachers participating in the research worked in two schools, one in Mitrovica and the other in Prizren. While the survey included twenty-three pupils from the same schools, the number of the teachers partaking in the interviews is smaller compared to that of the pupils. This is due to the fact that the schools chosen for this survey are small schools with a small number of teacher-staff as well as pupils.

Therefore, five teachers from the two schools have participated in this research. The teachers were interviewed individually, and their answers to the specific questions were recorded in writing. Among the questions the teachers were asked about their teaching methods and the use of technology in their classes.

The cities where the teachers participated in the research work at

■ Mitrovica
■ Prizren
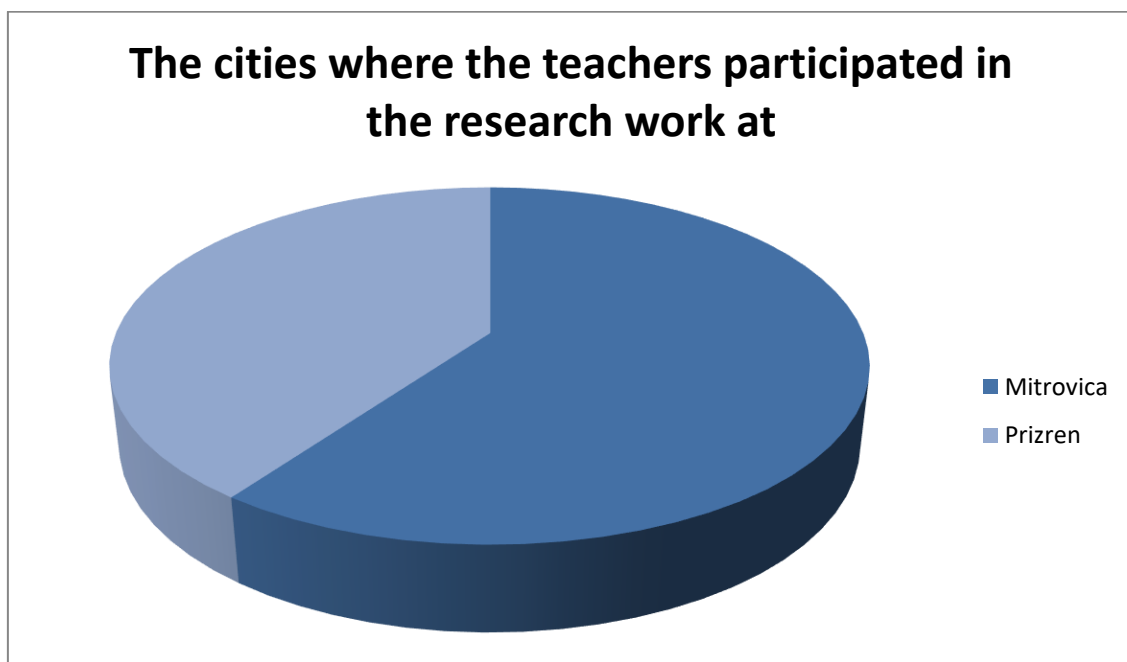
Figure 13: Demographic data of the teachers

The teachers were also asked about the teaching methods that they use and according to their answers they use a mixture of traditional and teaching methods as most of the teachers claimed that they use methods such the grammar-translation teaching method, the audio lingual or the task-based teaching method.

On another question the teachers were asked the question of which English teaching methods are more effective, the majority of the teachers were convinced that a perfect lesson can be delivered if they combine these two, a mixture of tradition and teaching methods. One of the teachers claimed that the type of methodology used depends on the class and the number of pupils. For example one method can be used with the fourth graders, and an entirely different method can be used with the ninth graders.

In addition, a teacher said the pupils are not the same and neither are the teaching methods, what might work out for one pupil might not be preferable and useful for the other-therefore choosing the right English teaching method is just as important as teaching in first place.

Although we live in the era of technology not very classroom is equipped with the latest technology, the majority of the teachers claimed that they use technology to deliver their lessons, yet they use simple means such as a radio, or personal Laptop while only one the teachers claimed that she had a projector that she had bought with her own money so that her lessons would be more attractive for her pupils. In a private conversation, the same teacher confessed that although it was a personal investment, her projector is used by the other teachers as well as the school in special occasions without any compensation.

The means of technology used by the teachers

Other 11%
Computer 28%
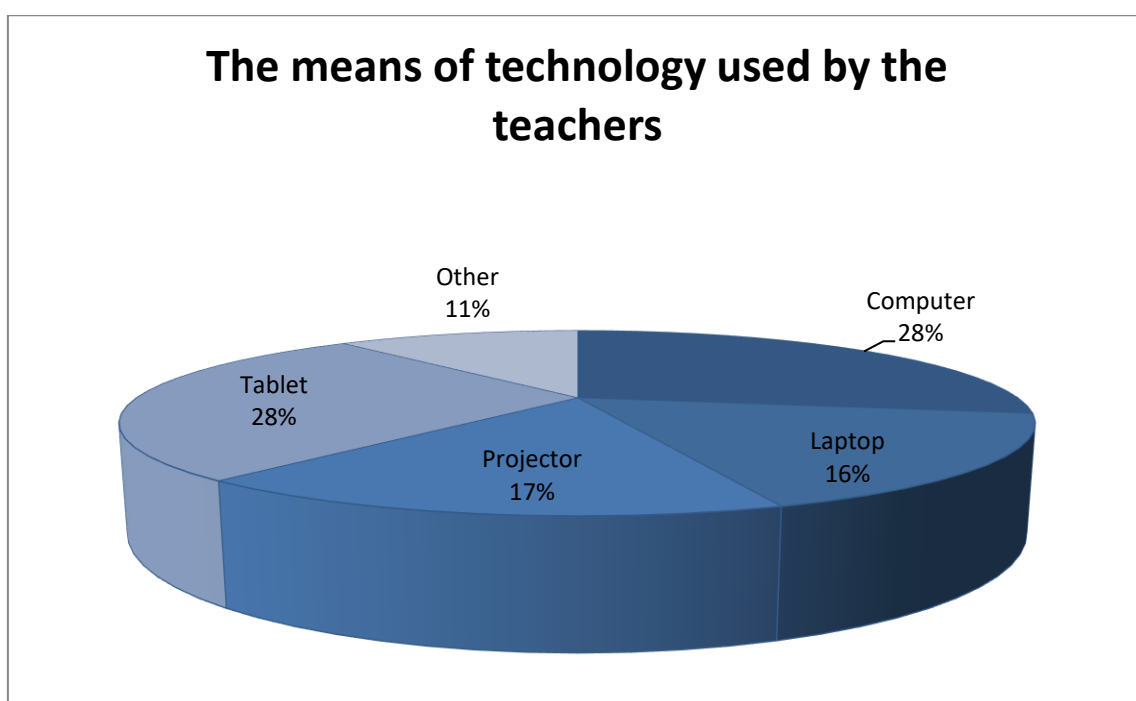Tablet 28%
Laptop 16%
Projector 17%

Figure 14: The technology used by the teachers.

The teachers confirmed the pupils' claims that the English teaching methods are different from the teaching methods used by the other teachers. The English teachers listed the various reasons why they believe that their teaching methods are different.

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Reasons why the English teaching methods are different.

Legend:
- Variety of teaching methods
- Use various means of technology
- Merge the traditional and modern teaching methods
- Interesting and attractive lessons in two languages
- More possibilities for games, activities and tasks
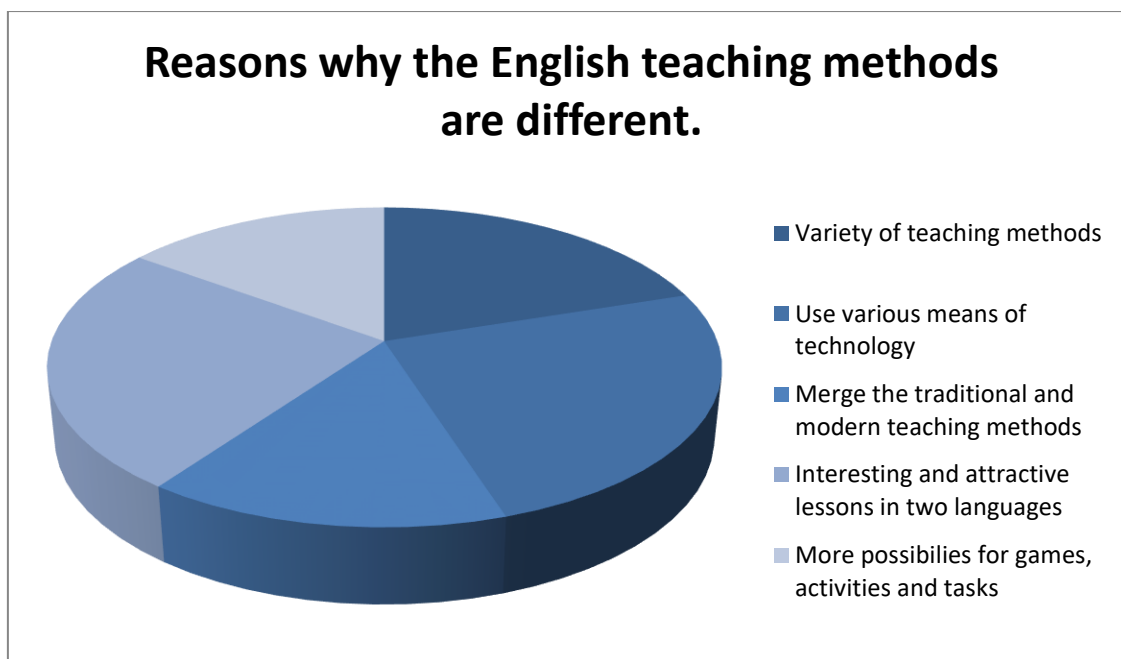
Figure 15: Reasons why the English teaching methods are different.

The teachers and the pupils' preferences differ when choosing the teaching method, while the pupils prefer more entertaining methods the teachers on the other hand have the responsibilities to be wise choices in teaching in a more efficient manner.

The pupils claimed that the Grammar-Translation teaching method was their less favorite method; however, it was this exact method that according to the teachers is the most difficult to apply. This is partly because of the pupils who seem to lose interest very quickly when the teachers use this method. This method consists of various fix roles and a classroom which is teacher-centered therefore the pupils are more passive and in cases also bored.

In one of the questions the teachers were asked to evaluate which English teaching methods are more efficient the traditional one or those up to the eighties or the modern ones-more precisely the ones used after the eighties influences by technology. The teachers were divided into two groups regarding to this question, yet a small percentage influenced the final results as will be presented in the chart below.
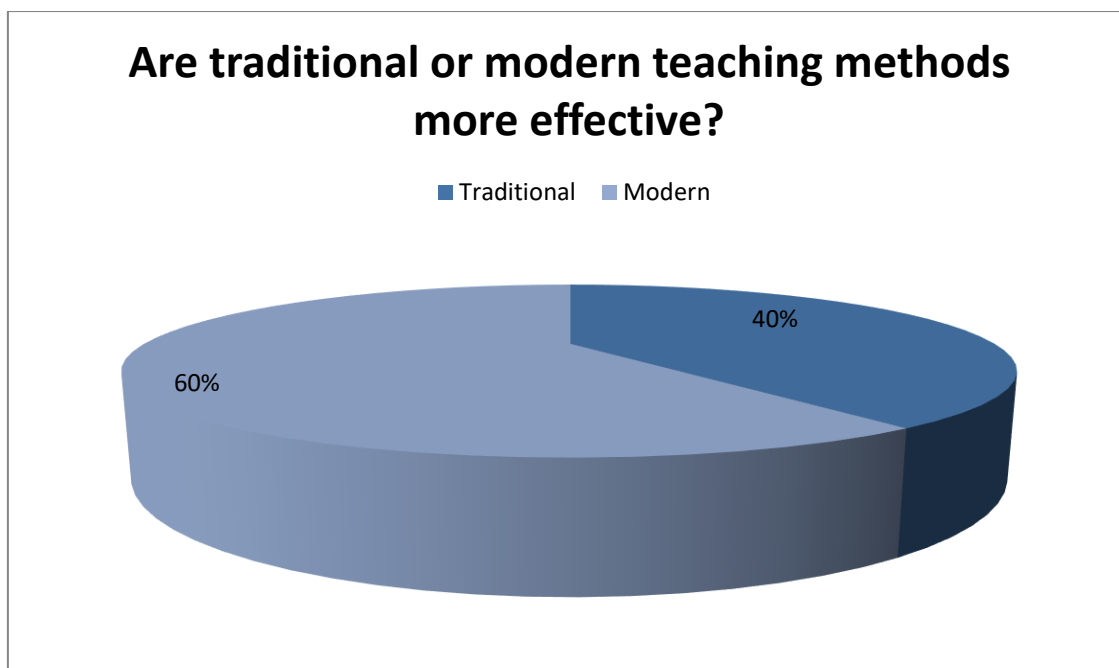
Figure 16: Teachers' response on the most effective teaching methods.

As presented the majority of a percentage of 60% said that modern methods prove to be more effective and useful in the English language teaching process. In a classroom in which the pupils are the center of development and the teachers make use of technological means as well as different activities seem to be more efficient for the pupils in acquiring the English language faster. While the rest, 40%, claimed that they still prefer traditional teaching.

5.5. In depth analysis of teachers' interviews pertaining to English lessons

In order to find out more regarding the teaching practices, the work with students with disabilities, and the learning process concerning those students, the interviews with teachers were conducted. Below is presented a more in-depth representation and analysis of their answers.

The range of the number of students with disabilities varied from four students to up to 12 students per class. This number is not the same for every teacher, depending on their size of the class, and also the number of other students that they teach.

However, it is safe to say that the number of students with learning and other

disabilities attending a class can affect the learning process, and limit the time and attention that the teacher can give to each student.

Furthermore, when asked about the types of disabilities that the students they teach have, the answers also indicated that the teachers are expected to manage a classroom with a very diverse group of students who do not suffer from the same type of disability. The students they teach are affected by learning disabilities, sight impairment, psychological disabilities (such as mood, anxiety and depressive disorders), reading comprehension difficulties, difficulty following directions, listening and concentrating, Forgetfulness, hyperactivity, intellectual impairments hearing impairments and speech impairments.

So based on the answers obtained, it is evident that the groups of students are not only very diverse, but this also presents a difficulty for the teacher who has to devise strategies, lesson plans and employ different methods, in order to achieve a successful learning experience for the students.

When asked about motivating the students the teachers stated that motivation has an important role in education of the students. They stated that they use different ways to motivate their students such as: selecting interesting topics, discussions, debates, being friendly with them, engaging them on the activities, giving opportunities to answer, always trying to respect their opinions, creating a friendly atmosphere in the class, praising their work, building rapport with pupils (by making them feel loved and taken care of), by preparing engaging lessons, by using technology in the classroom (by making the process of learning fun and pleasurable) and so on.

The teachers stated that they give a great importance on evaluating their students' progress, and that they try to take into account different elements when grading their students. The teachers stated that among the ways they use to grade students are: test performances, reading and translations, during the activities in the class, discussions, debates, oral exams and written exams, dictations and so on. It was also stated that the students are graded based on their records and achievements (their

progress is noted in teachers' diaries, keeping score of the students' results in quizzes, simple tests, portfolio, homework, class participation, effort). This indicated that the teachers try to help their students continually and keep track of their general progress.

Among the teaching methodologies that the teachers said they use were brainstorming and cluster that serve to keep students always in touch with the activities given by the teacher, when students freely give their ideas, opinions by using brainstorming methodology. Other teaching methods used were direct instruction (step-by-step instruction), quality feedback, breaking learning into small steps (e.g. using a specific language), and so on. One of the teachers also mentioned that depending on the type of disability of the students, the method used is adapted. Among the methods used were:

- **Visual**- for students who learn best with pictures and other visual aids,
- **Aural**- for students who learn best by sound and music,
- **Verbal**- for students who learn best word, both in spoken and written,
- **Physical**- for students who learn best with body and touch,
- **Logical**- for students who learn with logic and reasoning.

When asked about the use of the technology in the classroom teachers stated that they do use technology in the classroom. However, they also stated that they do not use technology all the time. The teachers stated that they use projectors when they have presentations, some kind of games, so projectors are very useful while teaching our students; another is mobile phone who is very useful when using games and other activities for learning in the class.

So, among the types of technology in the classroom used by the teachers are projectors, laptops, computers and tablets. According to the teachers the use of the technology in the classroom makes classes more attractive, and students are engaged on the activities given by the teacher, such as presentations, discussions, debates,

communication. That is why according to the teachers, the use of technology in the classroom has an important role.

The teachers also stated that they try to adapt the type of technology used based on the student's disability. However, adapting the type of technology used is not sufficient. The teachers should also select materials that are very attractive to the students, give them enough space in the class in discussions, motivate them, give them extra explanations, be reasonable and friendly with them. The teachers continued by stating that they usually choose the most suitable technology depending on the lesson being taught.

When it comes to effective teaching strategies the teachers indicate that there are many strategies that seem to be effective in teaching students nowadays; teachers should find ways to motivate students, always try to keep them engaged on the activities, to stimulate your students, make it more attractive during the class. Among the effective teaching strategies are included the breaking of learning into small steps and step-by-step (direct) instruction. This teaching strategy seems to be successful strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities.

When it comes to the involvement of parents in the learning process, it turns out that this is not always the case. While some parents are involved in the teaching process not all of them share their interest to do so. This involvement of parents according to the teachers depends on their level of education and how they understand the education in general. The teachers stated that parents should be part taking on the activities of their children but most of the time it does not happen. Some parents are involved in the process whereas some others are not. Not all parents show interest in being involved in the process of their children's learning. Since not all learning occurs only in the classroom, the involvement of parents in the learning process would benefit the students.

When it comes to engaging parents in the process of learning, the teachers say that since parents have an essential role in the process of educations of their children, it is

imperative to cooperate with them during activities, discussions, debates about problems that surround the students. So, the triangle: teacher, student and parent, has an important role in the success of the children. The teachers indicate that they have better results from students when parents are involved.

In order to raise awareness on the importance of their involvement, the teachers state that they talk /converse with parents and let them know about how important the collaboration 'teacher-student-parent' is, and also share advice on how to work properly with the students.

The teachers also state that they conduct frequent classroom exercises. During these exercises they always try to encourage the pupils, try to give them extra explanations on the topics or activities during the class, so that this will have a positive impact on them, and boost their self-confidence during exercises.

The teachers also indicate that while they encourage students to practice and exercise, it is always taken into consideration their abilities; since it would be futile to overload students with information and learning expectations. So, the students are engaged are engaged in the classroom while doing exercises, reading and translations, activities, grammar and literature, so it will help them improve their skills in the class. However, this engagement is usually done in proportion to their abilities and according to their IPE-Individual plan of education.

So, among the main struggles that the teachers have is the diverse range of students, often having to adapt lessons to fulfil the needs of students suffering from deferent disabilities. This can be a challenge in itself, since especially in these cases there is not a one size fits all policy, and also it can be difficult to work with and adapt different methodologies continually, for the diverse groups of students.

Furthermore, while teachers do use technology in the classroom to aid their students in the learning process, it can be noted that the devices in their disposal are few, and limited. Hence, they could perhaps benefit from having access to assistive technology,

such as specific speakers, or different devices tailored to help learning for students.

5.6. Introduction to the hypotheses testing

In order to prove the framework, the initial hypotheses were tested by analysing the interview questions and the surveys and understanding whether the responses prove or disapprove the hypothesis. Through this paper it was also aimed to determine the validity of these hypotheses, by conducting extensive research using various research materials. By obtaining the answers to the research questions, it was also easier to verify or disprove the hypotheses.

Research questions and their answers:

- Does the use of technology affect the learning process of students with learning disabilities?

  The use of technology in the classroom can positively affect the learning process with students with disabilities. This can be done by offering visual and areal aid, and also enhancing the scope of the learning stimuli.

- Do the curriculums include relevant approaches to teaching content regarding students with disabilities?

  The curriculum designed for schools mainly supports the learning process in general, with a lesser focus on students with disabilities, learning disabilities in particular.

- In what manner do teachers approach the teaching process of students with disabilities, and do they encompass the use of technology to improve the learning process?

  The teachers aim to use various tools and materials, including technological devices, in order to help students to benefit as much as possible form the

learning process.

According to these research questions, and the data gathered via the interviews and survey, below are presented the analysis of the hypotheses of this thesis:

5.6.1. The analysis of the hypothesis framework

The analysis of the hypothesis I: The use of technology in the classroom can facilitate learning English with students who have learning disabilities.

This hypothesis is supported by numerous research materials, and scientific researches that testify on the importance of the use of technology in the classroom. This hypothesis is further supported by the answers obtained via the students, who have stated that the use of technology in the classroom has ameliorated their learning experience. In addition, the teachers also stated that the use of technology in the classroom helps their students with and without learning disabilities, to benefit more from the learning taking place in the classroom.

The analysis of the hypothesis II: The use of technology provides students with disabilities with a fruitful and pleasant learning experience.

Through the interviews with the teachers it was determined that the teachers do use various means, including technology in order to provide students with a better learning experience. However, based on their answers, it was evident that they do not possess sufficient technological devices. Their use of technology in the classroom is limited to the use of a computer, occasionally a projector and tablet. The use of technology does indeed provide students with disabilities with a fruitful and pleasant learning experience; however, the teachers are not properly equipped to provide these learning experiences all the time.

The analysis of the hypothesis III: Curricula are oriented towards the learning process of students in general, paying less attention to teaching methodologies and materials

that can be used in teaching students with disabilities.

This hypothesis has also proven to be correct, especially regarding the Kosovar curriculum design in particular. The curriculum design in particular is designed to fulfil the needs of the many, instead of the needs of the few. The teachers also support this, by indicating that they themselves have to focus on adapting the learning materials to students with learning and other disabilities.

5.7. Discussion about the findings of the thesis

Internet offers a variety of materials on this topic; however, the number of articles on the challenges that face students with disabilities, and English teaching for those students in particular (in the schools of Kosovo) was limited.

The data gathered via the interviews and surveys however were sufficient to grasp a better understanding of the challenges that teachers of students with disabilities, and those students face. The first and biggest challenge is that teachers who teach these students have to work with very diverse groups. In most cases there are no separations between students with learning disabilities, and other physical or intellectual disabilities. This shows that there is no clear plan for engaging those students. Another issue is the large number of students per class. For example, in the case where a teacher has to work with twelve students, each having special needs, is difficult to provide the optimal learning conditions for all of them.

Another issue is the lack of a clear plan that would encourage parent involvement in their children education. It is safe to say that not all learning occurs within the classroom. That is why it is imperative for parents as well to be a central part of their children's education, be it by guiding them at home, or even contributing during school.

Yet another issue is the lack of technologies used. Especially nowadays since with the

evolvement of technologies there are many different materials and devices that can be used, with students with learning disabilities, students with Down Syndrome, and students with physical disabilities such as visual and hearing impairment, the teachers are reduced to only using computers and projectors. This equipment, and other innovative devices, which could be supplied by the schools, lack.

The students on the other hand, while they enjoy English lessons in particular, could benefit from improvements in their classroom surroundings. They could also benefit if they worked with groups comprising of students with the same difficulties, because this would enable the teachers to develop more particular lesson plans, and they could benefit more.

Educational institutions, in particular those that are responsible for creating policies and curriculums should develop a new approach regarding the needs of these groups of students. They should also have a clear differentiation between students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome, and physical disabilities such as visual, hearing or other impairment. In creating special curriculums and plans for students based on this distinction, would benefit the students, teachers and even schools who could supply specific technologies for specific groups of students.

So, to recapitulate, the students prefer the use of technology in the classroom, because it enables them to improve the learning process. The teachers also agree that the use of technology in the classroom aids them in their teaching journey. However, it is also clear from the research and discussion part of the thesis, that the teachers do not particularly have a clear idea on the distinction between assistive technology and other types of technology. That is why their use of technology in the classroom is only limited to the use of some of the most common technological devices such as a computer and a projector, without the emphasis of the assistive technology software.

In addition, the teachers in most cases have a limited number of devices that they can use in the classroom, and the use of an individual device for each student is not

possible. What is also worth noting is that governmental educational institutions do not provide these teachers with particular means or curriculums for the students with learning disabilities, and therefore the teachers are only able to tackle the issue of learning and other disabilities only at a shallow level. So while the students do enjoy learning English, and greatly benefit from the teachers' work and dedication, they would benefit more from additional regard by the educational institutions such as MEST, who could not only provide the teachers with more specific curriculums and perhaps even additional trainings, but also could seek out the possibility of inclusion of assistive technology in particular in curriculums, and ensure that the students have access to such technologies in their learning place.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS OF THE THESIS AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the overall conclusions drawn from this thesis. Section 6.2 deals with the general conclusion and summarizes the main thesis findings. Section 6.3 summarizes the limitations of the thesis. Lastly, section 6.4 presents the pedagogical implications of the thesis.

6.2. General Conclusion

Teaching is a great experience as it enables one to meet various pupils and get the chance to know each of them better thus teachers becomes part of their life. However, teaching has its own struggles as well, teachers face difficulties such as overloaded classrooms or no proper teaching equipment to name a few. This diploma paper put the focus in classrooms with combined pupils, classrooms in which pupils with learning disabilities, Down Syndrome or other physical disabilities learn along with the other pupils.

According to the educational system in Kosovo all pupils should learn together and as such teachers are asked to give their best in including all the pupils in the same way in the learning process. In addition, schools are also responsible for creating the proper facilities for these pupils.

As pointed out from the survey as well by the teachers who were as well participants of this survey, teachers need to undergo a lot of changes especially to their lesson plans, so they deliver the classes for all the pupils equally. The pupils were asked about various topics such as their teachers' teaching methods, their love for the English language, their difficulties and in specific their challenges in vocabulary, grammar, writing and speaking. From the results of the survey resulted that the pupils had the least trouble with vocabulary as they enjoy learning new words, while they as well love using the new words learnt. This is the reason why the pupils enjoy speaking

as they listed in speaking in the third place regarding the difficulty level. In addition, for these pupils who struggle with writing the teachers can offer other solutions such as using cards with words, symbols or even pictures. The most difficult part for the pupils is grammar, as all the pupils said that grammar is hard for them to learn and practice the fixed rules.

Teachers use various techniques to engage these pupils in the same manner as all the other pupils in the classroom, they however pay more attention to their needs since they wish for these pupils to feel comfortable and loved. Teachers do a great share of preparations before their classes as in many cases they prepare a special lesson plan for the pupils with special needs, such as the pupils with, learning disabilities, Down Syndrome or students with physical disadvantages. Teachers have as well to be careful in selecting the activities for their lessons, and even when choosing carefully it is a great idea in preparing various activities for one single lesson.

The various language activities such as speaking, writing, vocabulary or grammar should alternate more than other activities; however, teachers should as well be aware of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, the pupils have to feel free to ask for their teachers' or even peers' help, as they both have one main aim to be as much proficient in learning/teaching the English language as possible.

In regard to the hypotheses, which the thesis revolved around, the following can be said:

The analysis of the hypothesis I: The use of technology in the classroom can facilitate learning English with students who have learning disabilities.

This hypothesis is true. This opinion has been supported by various sources throughout the thesis, and also by the information obtained from students and teachers, who have stated that the use of technology in the classroom has ameliorated their learning experience, enabling students to benefit more from the learning taking place in the classroom.

The analysis of the hypothesis II: The use of technology provides students with disabilities with a fruitful and pleasant learning experience.

This hypothesis is true to some extent. While the teachers use different means of technology and teaching methods to make learning a rewarding experience, they lack the incorporation of assistive technology in the classroom, type of technology created especially for students with disabilities. This was evident after the interviews with students and teachers, as well as class observations.

The analysis of the hypothesis III: Curricula are oriented towards the learning process of students in general, paying less attention to teaching methodologies and materials that can be used in teaching students with disabilities.

This hypothesis has also proven to be correct, especially regarding the Kosovar curriculum design specifically. This hypothesis has been proven by the lack of curriculums for students with disabilities available and has been enforced by the teachers who on many occasions have indicated that they themselves have to focus on adapting the learning materials to students with learning and other disabilities.

6.3. Limitations of the thesis

Among the main limitations of the thesis were the lack of different materials regarding the use of technology in the schools of Kosovo, in particular when teaching students with disabilities. Another limitation is the lack of a curriculum designed to fulfil the needs of students with disabilities. The biggest limitation of the thesis however is that in Kosovo there is little importance related to learning disabilities, for example issues surrounding learning disorders such as Dyslexia are almost non-existent. As groups of students with disabilities or in need of special attention are considered: the children with Down syndrome, physical disabilities, and Autism. However, there is no clear policy on learning disabilities and how to deal with them.

6.4. Recommendations for teaching children with disabilities

When it comes to teaching students with disabilities the teachers should bear the following in mind:

The use of assistive technology in the classroom can help in significantly ameliorating the English learning, particularly with children with disabilities. It ought to be pointed out that assistive technology encompasses more than just simply technological devices. Assistive technology can include various software, which can help with learning grammar, listening or even doing different activities in the classroom.

For the teachers it is imperative to make a distinction between children with learning disabilities, children with physical disabilities and children with intellectual disabilities. These three groups of disabilities affect children and their learning differently and need to be addressed differently. More often than not it is challenging to engage a classroom of students, and this can be even more difficult if the group of students has a diverse type of disability.

Another way to make English lessons more fun is by incorporating the use of Assistive Technology with the current methods used in teaching English. For example, the Grammar Teaching method can be used in combination with text-to-speech software, in order to make it easier for students. More often than not, one type of software such as text-to-speech software helps with learning for more than one type of disability that affects pupils.

In most classrooms, teachers have access to at least one computer or laptop, occasionally even projector, and tablet. These technological devices can be used to download and utilize different assistive technology software. Contrary to belief, there are many sources available for free that teachers can use as resources. This includes different websites and applications such as DuoLingo, or other interactive websites, which can make learning more fun and accessible for the students.

Finally and most importantly, when dealing with children with disabilities, seek the necessary advice from professionals working at your school, or even other educational institutions such as the Ministry of Education, to provide the necessary expertise for determining the type and range of a student's disability, be it intellectual or learning disability. It is imperative to have a clear idea of the type of aid or approach the student needs in order to best fulfil his/her learning needs.

6.5. Recommendation for further research

As pointed out from the survey as well by the teachers who were as well participants of this survey, teachers need to undergo a lot of changes especially to their lesson plans, so they deliver the classes for all the pupils equally. There are also other changes that need to be done, as will be presented below:

Firstly, it should be attempted to develop teaching methodologies, curriculums and lesson plans be appropriate for all the pupils. Secondly it should be attempted by schools in particular, not only teachers, to develop teaching materials that are attractive, appropriate and easy. Thirdly, special attention should be given to develop and implement a scheme of extracurricular activities that promote learning. Forth, it is imperative for changes to be implemented in the curriculums. And finally, it is very important to understand what learning disabilities are and where they fit in the learning disorders spectrum, and also focus on keeping the pace with the latest technologies that help students learn, despite their disability.

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Appendixes
Appendix A- Students' questionnaire

The Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out whether English language teaching is with students with disabilities is improved by the use of technology in the classroom. The time that this questionnaire takes to be answered will be less than 5 minutes. Your answers will be entirely anonymous and will serve only for the purpose of writing a diploma paper. You can answer the questions by ticking or circling one or more than one answer.

1. How motivating are the English classroom lessons at your school?
- o Not at all motivating
- o Slightly motivating
- o Somewhat motivating
- o Quite motivating
- o Extremely motivating

2. On average, how well do you work independently on learning activities at home?
- o Not well at all
- o Mildly well
- o Fairly well
- o Quite well
- o Extremely well

3. How well does the school environment fulfill your learning needs?
- o Not well at all
- o Mildly well
- o Fairly well
- o Quite well
- o Extremely well

4. On average, how much time do you spend on homework for this class each night?
- o Less than 30 minutes
- o 30 minutes to less than 60 minutes
- o 60 minutes to less than 90 minutes
- o 90 minutes or more

5. How much do the homework assignments help you understand the class material?
- o A great deal
- o A lot
- o A moderate amount
- o A little

o None at all

6. Do you think this teacher teaches too fast, too show, or about the right speed?

o Much too fast

o Somewhat too fast

o About the right speed

o Somewhat too

o Much too slow

7. How organized are the facilities at this school?

o Extremely organized

o Very organized

o Somewhat organized

o Not so organized

o Not at all organized

8. Do you participate actively in the English activities by asking questions?

o Yes

o No

o Sometimes

o Other

9. What type of technology does the teacher use in your classroom Computer

o Projector

o Radio

o TV

o Other

10. Does the use of technology help you learn English?

o Yes

o No

Additional interview questions:

1)   Do your teachers motivate you in learning English as a foreign language?

2)   How do your teachers motivate you?

3)   Are your parents involved in the process of learning a new language?

4)   What are some of the teaching methods that your teachers use?

5)   Do you feel free to share your ideas in the classroom?

Appendix B

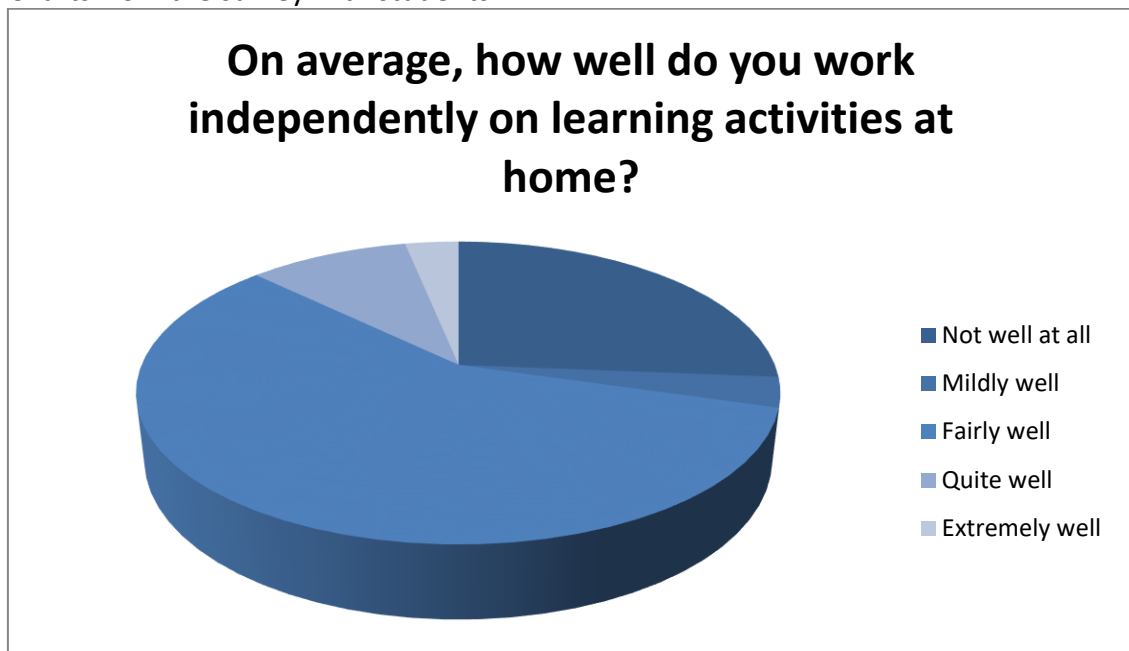Charts from the survey with students:

On average, how well do you work independently on learning activities at home?

Legend:
- Not well at all
- Mildly well
- Fairly well
- Quite well
- Extremely well

Figure 17: Students' answer on doing independent learning activities

How much do the homework assignments help you understand the class material?

Legend:
- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all
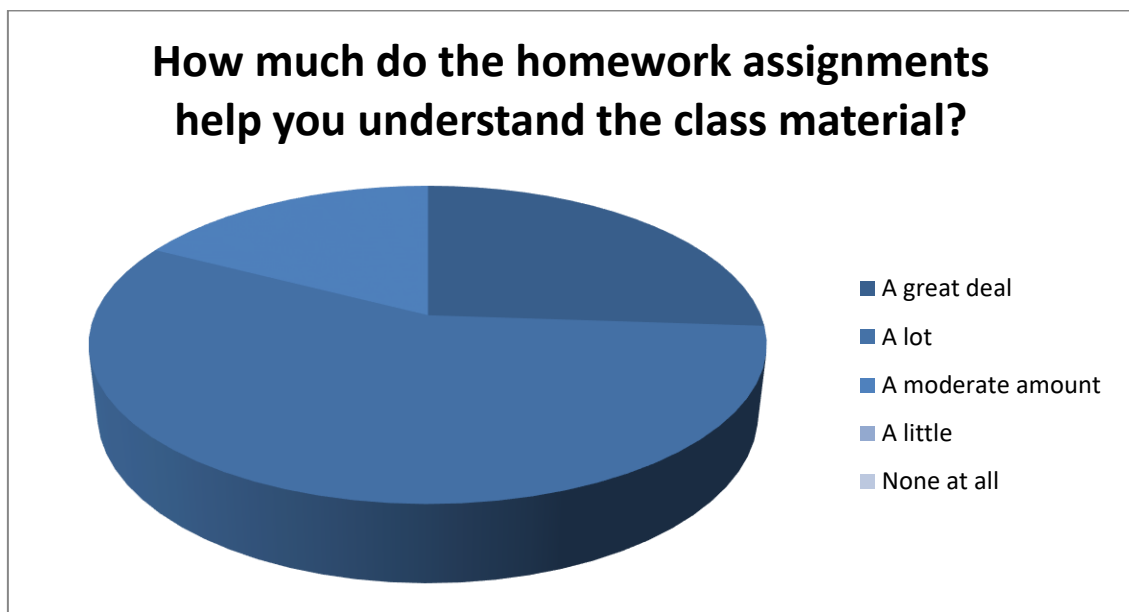
Figure 18: Students' answer regarding homework assignment

How organized are the facilities at this school?

- Extremely organized
- Very organized
- Somewhat organized
- Not so organized
- Not at all organized
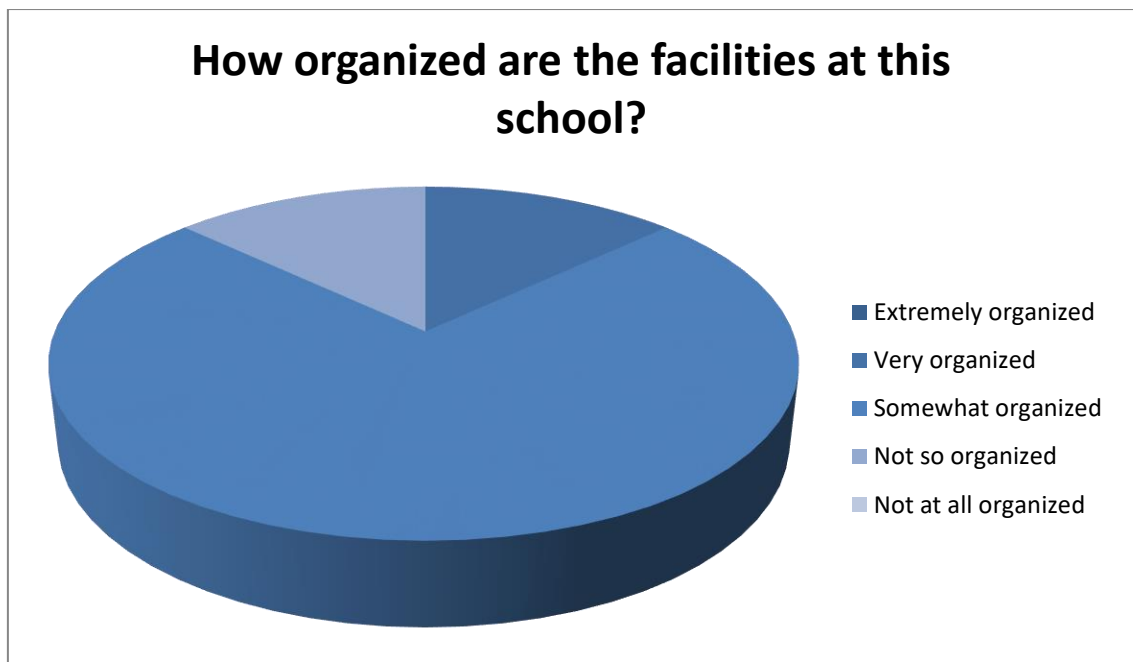
Figure 19: Students' answer regarding the facilities

Do you participate actively in the English activities by asking questions?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
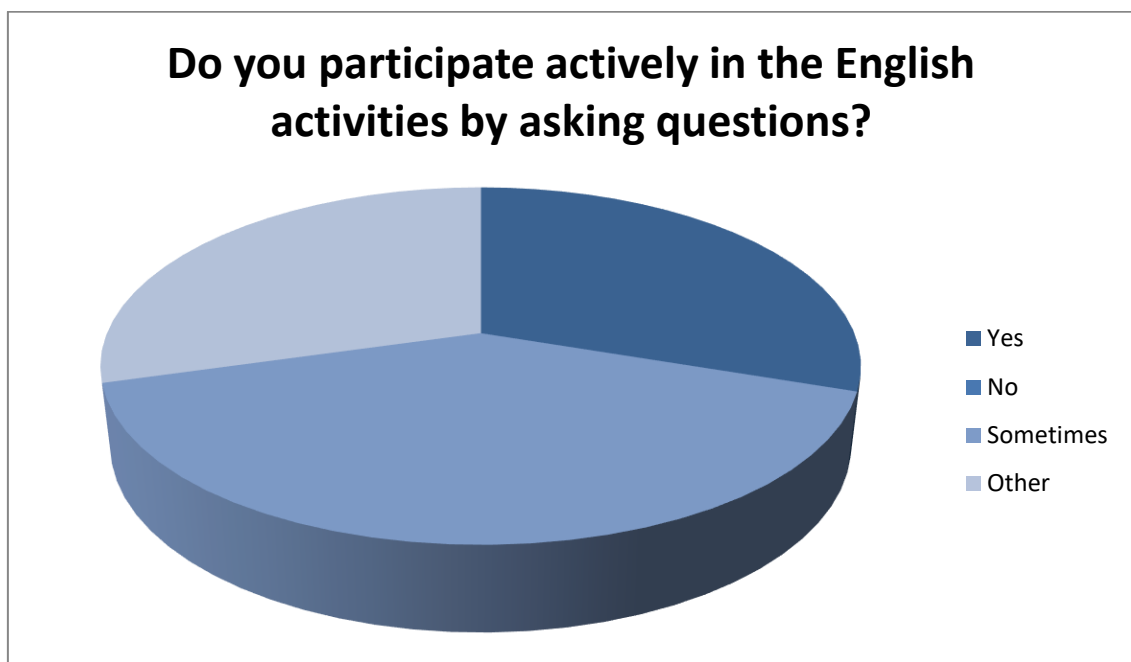- Other

Figure 20: Participation of students in activities

Appendix C
Teachers' interview questions

1. How many students with disabilities do you teach?

2. What are the most common types of learning (and other) disabilities that affect the students you teach?

3. How do you motivate your pupils?

4. How do you grade your pupils?

5. What teaching methodology do you use?

6. Do you use technology in the classroom?

7. What type of technology do you use/ what means of technology do you use in the classroom?

8. Do you adapt the type of technology used based on the student's disability?

9. What teaching strategies seem to be the most effective?

10. Are parents involved in the process of learning?

11. How do you engage parents in the process of learning?

12. Do you encourage your pupils on doing exercises?

13. Do you engage all the pupils in the classroom?