

## INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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**Annotation.** *This article explores the theoretical foundations of inclusive education and provides a scientific analysis of the concept of special educational needs. It examines the psychological, cognitive, and communicative characteristics of learners with special educational needs, identifying their specific requirements in the educational process. The study also investigates effective inclusive language teaching strategies for such learners, including differentiated instruction, individualized learning pathways, and the use of adapted teaching materials. Furthermore, the article highlights the importance of collaborative learning in developing students' language skills within an inclusive educational environment and justifies its effectiveness with practical examples. The findings of the study contribute to improving inclusive education practices and enhancing the effective engagement of learners with special educational needs in language learning.*

**Key words.** *inclusive education, special educational needs, language teaching, differentiated instruction, individualized learning, collaborative learning, communicative skills.*

**Аннотация.** *В данной статье подробно рассматриваются теоретические основы инклюзивного образования и проводится научный анализ понятия особых образовательных потребностей. Исследуются психологические, когнитивные и коммуникативные особенности обучающихся с особыми образовательными потребностями, а также уточняются их образовательные нужды. В статье анализируются эффективные стратегии инклюзивного обучения иностранному языку, включая дифференцированный подход, индивидуальные образовательные траектории и использование адаптированных учебных материалов. Кроме того, обосновывается важность совместного обучения в развитии языковых навыков учащихся в условиях инклюзивной образовательной среды, а также приводятся практические примеры его эффективности. Результаты исследования способствуют совершенствованию практики инклюзивного образования и повышению эффективности вовлечения обучающихся с особыми образовательными потребностями в процесс изучения языка.*

**Ключевые слова.** *инклюзивное образование, особые образовательные потребности, обучение языку, дифференцированный подход, индивидуальное обучение, совместное обучение, коммуникативные навыки.*

**Annotatsiya.** *Mazkur maqolada inklyuziv ta'limning nazariy asoslari batafsil yoritilib, maxsus ta'lim ehtiyojlari tushunchasining mazmun-mohiyati ilmiy jihatdan tahlil etilgan. Shuningdek, maxsus ta'lim ehtiyojlariga ega bo'lgan o'quvchilarning psixologik, kognitiv va kommunikativ xususiyatlari ko'rib chiqilib, ularning ta'lim jarayonidagi ehtiyojlari aniqlashtirilgan. Maqolada bunday o'quvchilar uchun samarali inklyuziv til o'qitish strategiyalari, jumladan differensial yondashuv, individual ta'lim yo'nalishlari va moslashtirilgan o'quv materiallaridan foydalanish masalalari tadqiq etilgan. Bundan tashqari, inklyuziv ta'lim muhitida o'quvchilarning til ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda hamkorlikda*

*o'qitish (collaborative learning) metodining ahamiyati ilmiy asosda yoritilib, uning amaliy samaradorligi misollar orqali asoslab berilgan. Maqola natijalari inklyuziv ta'lim jarayonini takomillashtirish hamda maxsus ehtiyojli o'quvchilarni til o'rganishga samarali jalb etishda muhim ahamiyat kasb etadi.*

*Kalit so'zlar. inklyuziv ta'lim, maxsus ta'lim ehtiyojlari, til o'qitish, differensial yondashuv, individual ta'lim, hamkorlikda o'qitish, kommunikativ ko'nikmalar.*

**Introduction.** In recent years, inclusive education has become one of the key priorities of modern educational systems around the world. The growing recognition of diversity among learners and the need to provide equal educational opportunities for all students have led to significant changes in teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and assessment practices. In this context, foreign language teaching also requires new approaches that consider the individual needs, abilities, and learning styles of students, especially those with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Learners with special educational needs often face various barriers in traditional classroom environments, including communication difficulties, cognitive and learning challenges, behavioural and emotional needs, as well as sensory or physical impairments. These factors may influence their participation, motivation, and success in language learning. Therefore, the development and implementation of inclusive language teaching strategies is essential to ensure that all learners can actively engage in the educational process and achieve meaningful learning outcomes.

This article is devoted to the study of inclusive language teaching strategies for learners with special educational needs. The relevance of the research lies in the increasing demand for effective pedagogical practices that support diversity and promote equal access to quality language education. The work aims to explore theoretical foundations of inclusive education, analyze pedagogical principles and approaches in inclusive language teaching, and identify effective instructional strategies, assessment methods, and the role of the teacher in creating a supportive and accessible learning environment.

**Diversity, special educational needs and inclusive education.** Diversity refers to “people’s differences which may relate to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7). Children with diverse backgrounds are ones “who usually fall outside of (are excluded from) the mainstream educational system due to gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, cultural, religious, or other characteristics (Harris et al., 2004, p. 10).

In 2010, the British council provided guidelines for inclusion and diversity based the Inclusion and Diversity in Education (INDIE) project between eleven countries across Western Europe. The project was created to develop best practices and shared guidelines for policymakers and head teachers on building and developing culturally inclusive schools. Based on the research evidence from different countries, the participants of the

projects finally draw on a model of the culturally inclusive school.

**Literature review.** The edge in the box represents the context of the school, involving the legal, policy, and funding environment and community support. Each circle represents an aspect of best practices in a culturally inclusive school. There are nine aspects of best practice. Rashid & Tikly (2010) gave some examples to illustrate each aspect of the model. Specifically, the government should support schools to create an enabling environment with a suitable legal framework, policy, and financial environment. All learners are ensured to have access to schools and benefit from inclusion and diversity in the curriculum by effective inspection systems. Teacher training in inclusion and diversity has become a key priority in developing a culturally inclusive school. Learner voice should be heard to address the issues of inclusion and diversity. Local government is pivotal in supporting schools to become more inclusive and diverse. It is critical for parental and community engagement and support to develop an inclusive school. At the school level, leadership, high expectations, and achievement for all, responding positively to diversity are crucial factors in promoting inclusion and diversity.

In 2021, the British council (Douglas, 2021) claimed that “equality, diversity, and inclusion” are fundamental values for creating respectful and safe environments. They focus on six areas of diversity: age, disability, ethnicity or race, gender, religion or belief, and sexual identity. They explain that “diversity is concerned with creating an environment supported by practices which benefit the organization and all those who work in and with it” (British council, 2022, p. 3-4). Understanding and valuing diversity leads to “greater participation with benefits at an individual, team, organization and wider societal level” (British council, 2022, p. 4). That is, valuing diversity supports inclusion.

In China, the 1995 Education Law, as amended in 2021, claims that “all citizens enjoy equal opportunities for education in accordance with the law, regardless of their nationality, race, sex, occupation, property status or religious beliefs” (NPC, 2021, Art.9) and reaffirms that “the State supports and develops the education of persons with disabilities” (NPC, 2021, Art.10). Inclusive education in China, mainly refers to the education of children with disabilities, gender, ethnic and linguistic groups, living in rural or remote areas, poverty and migrants (UNESCO, 2021). However, this study focused on inclusive education in relation to students with special educational needs.

**Special educational needs or disabilities.** There are many definitions of “special education needs” and “disabilities”. Students with “special educational needs” are “children who require greater attention to help them with their learning” (Harris et al., p. 12). The attention can be given in either special or regular schools or classrooms. “Special educational needs” is “a term used in some countries to refer to children with impairments that are seen as requiring additional support” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7). These definitions revealed that students with special education needs needed more support for learning and

participation. The 1994 Salamanca Statement defined “special educational needs”. Children with special educational needs are: “All those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties (UNESCO,1994, p. 6)”.

“Children with disabilities” includes “those children with physical, sensory, emotional, or intellectual disabilities and who are oftentimes excluded from learning in schools” (Harris et al., 2004, p. 11). Harris et al. (2004) also indicated that disabilities might be born or acquired because of illness, accidents, or other causes. Not all children with disabilities may be children with special educational needs.

Douglas (2021) defined special education needs and disability together. Special educational needs and disability refers to “pupils who have identified needs concerned with, for example, communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health or sensory and/or physical needs” (Douglas, 2021, p. 10).

She thought that children with special education needs or disabilities needed more support in learning according to their characteristics.

According to the Law on Compulsory Education of the People’s Republic of China in 1986, the state offers education to the blind, deaf, mute, and other “handicapped citizens” (NPC, 1986, Art. 9). In 1990, the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities (PPD) as revised in 2018, gave a definition of disabilities. “The term ‘a person with disabilities’ refers to one with visual, or hearing, or speech, or physical, or intellectual, or psychiatric disability, multiple disabilities and/or other disabilities” (State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 1990, Art. 2). The scope of disabilities is broadened into seven types. Furthermore, the right of persons with disabilities to education was guaranteed by the State (ibid, Art.21). Currently, the broader definition is imperative due to more students’ access to regular schools under the comprehensive implementation of inclusive education. The 2021 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Promotion Action Plan on Special Education pointed out that “special education is an important component of education, mainly for children and adolescents with visual, or hearing, or speech, or physical, or intellectual, or psychiatric disability, multiple disabilities and/or other special educational needs” (MOE, 2021, p. 1).

**Discussion and Results.** According to the new definition, the researcher used the term “special educational needs” or “children with special educational needs” or “students with special educational needs” in this thesis to respond how teachers use inclusive teaching strategies to support student learning accompanying students with new and more types of disabilities receiving education in regular schools. Children with “special educational needs” are ones “who exhibit difficulty in learning, who excel at learning, who have atypical behaviours or who deviate from the established norms of the education system” (Hunt, 2020, p. 8). It is worth noting that the researcher focused on children with special educational needs.

Different concepts of inclusive education. Education is a fundamental human right (UN, 1948). Inclusive education is seen as central to human rights (Winter & O' Raw, 2010). Inclusive education has become a key topic in educational research since the Salamanca Statement. "Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions" (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). They called upon all the countries to implement inclusive education for every child and provide an appropriate education for them. After that, a movement for inclusive education was launched towards the world. Furthermore, concepts of inclusive education have affected the education systems of other countries.

The principle of an inclusive education system full of tolerance, diversity, and equity may be uncontested; however, how to achieve this is much more challenging (Winter & O' Raw, 2010). One of the reasons is that inclusion is an elusive concept (Ainscow, 1999; Winter & O' Raw, 2010). There is no single definition that has been universally accepted (Florian, 1998; Forlin et al., 2013; Amor et al., 2018). The definitions vary according to the researchers' research objectives and focus. Furthermore, there is a conceptual shift of inclusive education, focusing on the student with special needs to children with all kinds of physical, cognitive, and social backgrounds (Amor et al., 2018). The researcher listed the researchers' different definitions of inclusive education.

Ainscow et al. (2006) defined inclusive education in six main categories from theoretical aspects. Messiou (2017) thought that these categories summarized and reflected the main positions of inclusive education. Amor et al. (2018) adopted a socio-ecological approach to address all students' needs through the transformation of educational systems. This definition by Deng (2016) highlighted the importance of collaboration and partnership between teachers and parents, communities, school staff and leaders, professionals, and governments. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) expressed that inclusive education also referred to provide quality education for all.

Kurth & Gross (2014) indicated that implementing inclusive education is not only about the students' access but also about student participation and achievement. Maclean (2017) considered that inclusive education was controversial to bring many challenges to implement it in reality.

Moreover, some organizations gave definitions of inclusive education to encourage more countries and schools to advocate and implement it. The researcher also made a summary of organizations' definitions of inclusive education.

CSIE (2002) pointed out that the implementation of inclusive education can enable schools to meet all students' needs in regular classrooms. UN (2016) required to eliminate the barriers in the culture, policy, and practice of regular schools to include all students in the schools and society based on human rights. The definitions of UNESCO (2005, 2009, 2017, 2019) are different, but the nature of these definitions is familiar: educate all

students in the regular system by enabling schools and transforming education systems. The definition of UNICEF also highlights the Education for All and supports students to learn by ensuring “teaching and the curriculum, school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport, and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels” (UNICEF, 2017, p.1).

Forlin (2013) summarized the definitions of inclusive education into two groups: “a) those who detail features of inclusion, and b) those who identify and describe barriers to inclusion that must be removed” (p. 7).

Ainscow (2006), who described the categories of inclusive educational environments, is in the second category. Loreman (2009) stipulates the features of an inclusive school for all children.

Furthermore, it is important to communicate regularly with parents about the progress of their children. So, parents can “know what their child has learned well and what the child still needs to learn” (ibid, p. 14). Teachers should explain “inclusive learning-friendly environment” to parents. It means that everyone, including parents, and community members, supports student learning, and every child benefits from inclusive education.

Parents and communities can offer practical support to promote inclusive education in schools. “Community organizations, parent-teacher associations, and school management committees often get involved in helping to improve school facilities” (ibid, p. 22), such as community members helping build ramps where the schools have many steps. Parents can be involved in the classroom to contribute to the development of inclusive education in the schools. For example, parents can act as volunteers to assist teachers with classroom activities. Or parents may be invited to classroom guest speakers to share information and knowledge about their careers and work.

**Conclusion.** In order to provide school and classroom modifications, implementing inclusive practices involve cooperation and interaction of principals and teachers (Kuyini & Desai, 2008). The school head makes decisions and adjustments for inclusion at the school level. Teachers are trained to use inclusive teaching strategies to cater for all students’ needs. Parents and students have important contributions to implementing inclusion (Lindsay, 2007). Hence, parents and students should be involved in the inclusive process. The environment encompasses the physical environment and psycho-social environment (Harris et al., 2004). For example, the physical environment includes accessible school buildings and classrooms, learning resources, etc. The psycho-social environment includes respecting and valuing students’ differences and embracing the diversity of students and emphasizing belonging and self-esteem, etc. Due to the challenge of students with diverse needs and abilities in the Asia-Pacific region and inequality in education in all countries, UNESCO Bangkok issued a toolkit: *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments*, to address diversity and

build more inclusive and learning-friendly environment in schools (Harris et al., 2004). “Learning Environment” refers to “any formal or non- formal setting where children gain knowledge and the skills to use that knowledge in their daily lives” (Harris et al., 2004, p.10).

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