

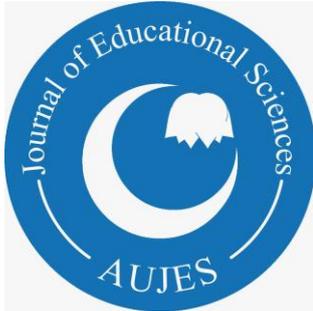
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**A Guideline for the Use of Recent  
Inclusive Practices in EFL Higher  
Education Contexts**

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## A Guideline for the Use of Recent Inclusive Practices in EFL Higher Education Contexts\*

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### Abstract

The pursuit of inclusive education within English as a Foreign Language settings remains pivotal in ensuring equal learning opportunities for students with special needs (SSNs). The present research aims to address this gap by examining recent inclusive practices based on precedents and previous developments. However, the contemporary status of the research makes it necessary to explore historical developments and recent advancements in the field. The results of the comprehensive literature review advocates for inclusive pedagogies that cater the diverse needs of SSNs and suggest the need for educating EFL instructors in effective means to address the needs of SSNs. This paper offers an inclusive-practice-based guideline based on recent inclusive practices. Moreover, it provides potential directions for classroom practice and further research. Through collaboration and openness, the present research contributes to the discussion of ongoing discourse on inclusive education, particularly in the realm of EFL, and promotes the development of inclusive EFL classrooms conducive to the success of all learners.

**Key words:** Inclusive Practices, EFL, Students with Special Needs

### Introduction

In the dynamic realm of education, the pursuit of inclusivity stands out as a crucial priority in extending pedagogical contexts and geographical boundaries. An escalating concern revolves around addressing learning needs of students with special needs (SSNs), to ensure that they have an equitable opportunity to be integrated into mainstream education and be segregated from their peers to the least extent possible (Davis & Braun, 2010). There is a commonly acknowledged consensus that SSNs should possess "the same rights as others in the community to achieve maximum independence as adults and should be educated to the best of their potential towards that end" (Jenkinson, 1993, p. 320). Overall, the effectiveness of educating SSNs alongside their classmates has been empirically validated, fostering positive outcomes in academic, social, and behavioural realms (Carter & Hughes, 2005). For this reason, inclusion has become a focal point in discussions on human rights and education equity, spurring the widespread adoption of inclusive instructional practices globally as shown by several studies (e.g., UNESCO, 2008; European Commission, 2014; Schleicher, 2019; Haug, 2017; Davis & Braun, 2010).

Across the globe, to advance inclusive education practices, substantial strides have recently transpired, leading the inclusive education policy to undergo ongoing revisions to provide more support for a greater number of SSNs (e.g., Florian, 2014; Mitchell, 2005; Nelis & Pedaste, 2020; Pijl et al., 1997; Carter & Hughes, 2005; Odom & Sailor, 2005).

Despite being a prominent concept in educational research (Ainscow, 2020; Haug, 2020, Lesar & Mihelic, 2020) and international policy documents over the past thirty years (UNESCO, 2008; European Commission, 2014; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019; Schleicher, 2019), within contemporary education systems, exertion of inclusive education remains a persistent challenge. Furthermore, a noticeable discrepancy exists between its actual execution and conceptualization of inclusive education (Haug, 2017).

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Moreover, the imperative to establish educational experiences that are accessible and equitable for all learners, irrespective of their diverse identities, abilities, or backgrounds, has prompted an increasing focus on inclusive practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2003; Cummins, 2000; Harmer, 2015; Brantmeier, 2006). The initiative for inclusive practices continues to lag especially, in the EFL classrooms, which are progressively evolving into microcosms of cultural diversity where students from diverse sociocultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds with unique learning experiences and needs converge, notwithstanding advancements in the quality and equity of education. Nevertheless, the significance of inclusive language education in EFL settings has never been more pertinent although English is in significant foreign language status and an obligatory subject in Türkiye. As EFL teaching and learning in Türkiye progresses, numerous research studies are delving into Turkish students' EFL learning from a variety of perspectives, such as EFL learning motivations, learning styles, language policies, etc. (e.g., Özçelik, 2013; Öz, 2011; Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005; Gömleksiz & Şimşek, 2013; Başoğlu, 2016). Most of the previous research, on the other hand, has centered on EFL students and teachers' instructional practices in higher education, predominantly with students not requiring special education needs (SENs). Limited scholarly attention has been devoted to scrutinizing instructional practices implemented in EFL contexts for students with SENs.

In addition, the practical execution of inclusive education requires EFL instructors to possess qualities such as creativity, openness to learning from students, adaptability, and ability to initiate active learning, etc. (e.g., Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Slee, 2011; Sharma & Sokal, 2015; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Loreman et al., 2010; Ainscow, 2016). To ensure the optimal support to accommodate the diverse learning needs of SSNs, EFL instructors should utilize effective pedagogical approaches and techniques, choose pertinent instructional materials, tasks, and practices, and exhibit proficient classroom management skills (Farrel, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017; Garinger, 2009; Cumming & Driscoll, 1995; Harmer, 2012). Furthermore, EFL instructors of SSNs should comprehensively comprehend the causes, nature, interventions, and assessments of SSNs (Hallahan et al., 2005). Besides, the prospects for success in notable milestones and in attaining greater achievements in EFL learning are elevated when they are immersed in supportive educational environments and collaborate with EFL instructors who acknowledge their potential contributions (Hewett et al., 2018; Reed, 2013). Thus, it is recognized that it is necessary to support EFL instructors in equipping them with effective inclusive practices and strategies to enhance the success of SSNs in EFL classroom contexts. Achieving these objectives hinges upon thoroughly comprehending the inclusive practices executed in inclusive EFL educational settings. Additionally, EFL instructors' thorough comprehension of effective practices and methodologies can promote the learning process and modify their lessons accordingly tailored to their students' unique needs, and thus help them genuinely integrate them into regular classes (Beech, 2000; Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Reed, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2005). While there has been considerable scholarly investigation into teacher variables in various EFL contexts (Green & Stormont, 2018), previous research has failed to adequately discuss the inclusive practices of teachers within an EFL context, thus warranting comprehensive examination and avenues for future research. Therefore, the present paper was prompted by the imperative to provide a guideline for EFL instructors based on the inclusive practices implemented in EFL classes over the past five years. The overarching aim was to enhance the development of EFL-inclusive environments for SSNs and make suggestions for the use and design of inclusive practices.

### **The Structure of this Paper**

This paper delves into various facets of inclusive practices within the context of EFL settings, organized into six sections. Following a concise exploration of the terminology utilized in the field and furnishing a definition of an ethos of inclusion grounded in the principle of equity, the first section traces the historical development of inclusive education (IE) approaches and presents an overview of the potential benefits of IE. The significance of teachers' practices and the implementation of IE in EFL classrooms are addressed in the second section, which also discusses a concise literature review of EFL teaching practices in IE contexts up until the last five years. EFL-inclusive practices employed over the past five years are provided in the third section. Section 4 concentrates on the implications and potential avenues for future research for cultivating an inclusive EFL setting. Section 5 delineates a set of guidelines for the use of IE practices in classroom settings. The last section concludes by summarizing the key arguments derived from the exploration, emphasizing the need for openness and collaboration among all stakeholders.

### **A Brief History of Inclusive Education**

The widespread recognition of inclusive education has been significant; however, attaining a consensus-based definition of the concept accepted by all has proven challenging due to the diverse interpretations across various contexts (Mittler & Daunt, 1995, p.13).

The multifaceted interpretations of the concept of "inclusion" have been underscored by Pijl, Mijer, and Hegarty (1997), particularly in the American context, where it encompasses accessibility and active participation in the overall general education instructional program and the physical integration into a regular class and school (p. 106-107). They define it as:

... "place", a classroom in a regular school building, and a seat in an age –appropriate general education classroom. It also means access to, and participation in, the general education instructional programme, either full-time or part-time. And it means bringing special education teachers or special education paraprofessionals into general education schools and classrooms to help make inclusion work. Beyond this broad conceptualization, however, inclusion can mean very different things in different schools and among different professionals.

For example, a discernible trend is observed in Spain and the UK in favour of adopting the term "children with special education needs" rather than "children with disabilities" or "handicaps" (Mittler & Daunt, p. 13). However, the international consensus concentrating on equal educational rights for individuals with various special education needs was represented by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994).

IE is often the subject of discussions revolving around the distinctions between narrow (primarily focusing on children with special needs, striving for their full integration into regular classes or schools) and broad (encompassing all marginalized groups, guaranteeing the inclusion of children susceptible to exclusion for a variety of reasons) definitions (Ainscow, 2020; Haug, 2017; UNESCO, 1994).

In its exhaustive definition, inclusion is characterized as a process prioritizing all learners' participation and diverse needs while exclusion within and from the realm of education is mitigated (UNESCO, 2005, p.13). Inclusion is defined in the "Guidelines for Inclusion" as a process including various elements encapsulating its essence, as can be seen clearly in the subsequent description:

Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that the regular system's responsibility is to educate all children.

From an education standpoint, inclusion is delineated as the delivery of appropriate superior-quality instruction for SSNs within regular schools, with a particular focus on teachers' readiness and capacity to fulfill this responsibility (Pijl, Meiger, & Heagarty, 1997, p. 150-151). Walker and Covington (1998) endorse IE, arguing in favour of IE employing the optimal support services, supplementary aids, and pedagogical approaches to ensure the success of the learning process despite the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of IE.

Achieving a single universally accepted definition of IE, despite the existence of a formal normative consensus, proves to be challenging (Haug, 2017). However, the establishment of a universally recognized definition has been considered necessary by Florian (2014) to actively aid the advancement of inclusive practices.

Considering the intricacy of the schools and the multitude of values underlying the Notion, Mitchell (2005) views inclusion to be a multifaceted concept characterized by various underlying values and processes. An all-encompassing definition has been put forward by Nelis and Pedaste (2020) who state in their systematic review:

An educational approach that takes into account human rights and provides all children with access to high-quality education in a learning environment where children feel social integration and belongingness in their wider social network despite their diversity; it is achieved by meaningful participation of all children and personalized support in the development of each child's full potential" (Nelis & Pedaste, 2020, p. 162).

Reflecting a comprehensive understanding of inclusion, encompassing both practical implementations and philosophical principles, this definition highlights IE as an approach seeking to enable each child to actualize their full potential through active engagement and tailored support within a learning setting that cultivates belongingness and social integration. Considering all these varying definitions, it is realized that no single definition is agreed upon by all and encompassing every perspective. So, it would be possible to conceptualize it from multiple angles, the prominence of which is the subject matter it tackles and applies. The present study is grounded in adherence to this definition.

## The Importance of Teacher Practices

Given its dynamic nature, a predetermined formula for ensuring the success of inclusive education is not readily available. For this reason, an essential prerequisite for its effectiveness is to procure "a good knowledge and understanding of the key the background to the development of inclusive education, its origins and influences international human rights and development instruments and documents, and the concepts, models, approaches and what makes inclusive education different from apparently similar paradigms" (Stubbs, 2008, p.52). In scholarly literature, several factors have been discussed to affect the outcome of inclusion implementation. So, sharing experiences and support for teachers would help them to obtain ideas from their colleagues' practices that they may utilize to accommodate their instructional needs in their inclusion contexts. This could be shown in the form of instructional and environmental changes. These changes in educational contexts are called adaptations and support all students with equal access to success, affordances, and results (Wright, 2003). Along with accommodations that entail assessment-related and instructional decisions targeted towards tailoring students' needs, maximizing the benefits of the curriculum, and ensuring the SSNs' participation in regular classes (Green & Stormont, 2018) and modifications that contain changes to the expectations, learning materials content, and their assessment criteria to meet performance standards and changed curriculum goals (Elliot & McKeivitt, 2000), these adaptations are integral requirements of achieving a fruitful inclusive education framework. Since inclusion is not a painless process, helping English teachers learn approaches and mechanisms that they can apply to their inclusive classroom contexts based on shared ideas from their colleagues' practices is crucial. This is of high importance in English-inclusive classes as prior studies have identified that SSNs may encounter a myriad of academic challenges, including study skills, math computation, feelings of helplessness and frustration, challenges in memory organization and prioritization, struggles in spelling, writing, and reading comprehension, nervousness, and anxiety (L'ecuyer, 2014; May & Stone, 2010). They have additionally issued information related to receptive and expressive oral language, following directions, meeting deadlines, and language proficiency. They also reported that problems are also identified in interpersonal relationships leading to a tendency to undervalue their achievements. In addition, issues encountered in foreign languages, humanities, and social sciences are among the documented problems.

For Hornby (2014), teachers' recognition of such challenges would be insufficient to successfully implement inclusion, and they must also be knowledgeable about diverse teaching practices that are appropriate to the different types of special needs. Previous studies have shown that teachers of inclusive classes utilize diverse teaching styles and differentiate their inclusive practices (e.g., Hodge et al., 2014). Thus, to enhance these practices, comprehensive teaching guidelines become imperative as the success of any inclusive education policy is highly contingent upon the issues addressed related to the improvement in learning contexts and provides for increased learning opportunities through various resources like instructional materials, alternative curriculums, specialized teaching practices, and equipment, or collaboration with other parties (Orelus & Hills, 2010).

## Inclusive practices in EFL settings

In educational settings all over the world, over decades of research, the positive effects of inclusive education have been proven and thus IE has gained increasing recognition and importance (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2005). Within the EFL context, the importance of the implementation of inclusive practices has been highlighted by Russak (2016), who states that according to policy documents, the needs and/or rights of SSNs who are required to learn English will not be neglected. Implementing IE practices in EFL classrooms holds particular significance as SSNs might have more difficulty learning languages than others drawing upon scholarly research (e.g., Androu et al., 2019; Ho & Fong, 2005; Marashi & Dolatdoost, 2016). Specifically, it was found that academic problems such as oral/written speech comprehension and phonological awareness would be encountered more likely in students with learning difficulties (Androu et al., 2019), corroborated by the findings of Ho and Fong (2005) who found that ss with dyslexia achieved worse results than others in nearly all English tests. In Marashi and Dolatdoost's study (2016) a significant negative correlation was found between ADHD and speaking complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). Thus, as SSNs undoubtedly experience more difficulties in EFL learning, it is of high importance to pay more attention to them to ensure that they can fully participate and benefit from language learning experiences.

Various aspects involving the role of teacher attitudes, beliefs, the use of technology, teacher training, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches have been explored in recent research on inclusive practices in EFL settings (e.g., Benson & Chik, 2017; Arar, 2019; Bosman & De Boer, 2020; Ferguson, 2018; Richards & Farrell, 2021; García-Sánchez & Díaz-Pérez, 2019; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2020). Moreover, research has explored the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in enhancing inclusion in EFL classrooms (e.g., Holliday, 2020). Additionally, previous research has indicated the inadequacy and/or insufficiency of initial teacher training are among the primary causes of teachers' limited knowledge about successful intervention programs

and inclusive practices (e.g., Joshi et al., 2009; Goldfus, 2012). In the same vein, effective intervention programs and inclusive practices are found not only necessary to implement effective instruction to SSNs but also have been determined to serve as a crucial foundation for teachers' self-confidence in inclusive settings, thus leading to striving for better inclusive practices (e.g., Goldfus, 2012; Moats, 1994; Washburn et al., 2011; McCutchen et al., 2002; McCutchen et al., 2002; McCutchen et al., 2009; Podhajski et al., 2009). On the other side, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs may decrease due to the unavailability of teacher training or professional development, thus lack of background knowledge along with the increasing social and educational pressures regarding the execution of inclusive practices, possibly leading to negative attitudes toward inclusion. Contact and previous success in teaching students with SEN (teacher-related variables), the supply of teaching resources, and cooperation with other teachers, school administrators, and parents of the students have shown a direct impact on the teachers' perceptions (Sharma & Deppeler, 2012). Thus, based on the recognition of the positive effects of recent research, there is a need to explore instructional inclusive practices to improve the outcomes for learners.

The literature underscores the significance of encouraging inclusive education in EFL settings to improve L2 learning outcomes and ensure equitable access. Inclusion in EFL settings will be effective "if teachers are able to respond to a wider range of needs and this could be achieved through greater differentiation of tasks and materials" (Davies, 2004). Teachers have a central role to play in the execution of inclusive practices and their development. However, they cannot accomplish or maintain positive change without support from the wider educational community. Beyond schools, assessment providers, educational publishers, policymakers, and other stakeholders all are required to improve an inclusive educational system.

### **EFL Inclusive Practices Utilized in the Last 5 Years**

The global educational landscape has witnessed a significant transformation in recent years, with a surge in the number of English language learners who embark on their linguistic journey in diverse EFL classrooms. These learners come equipped with many linguistic, cultural, and cognitive attributes, presenting challenges and opportunities for educators. To address this diversity and promote equitable learning experiences, educators have turned to inclusive language education, a framework that seeks to accommodate every learner's unique needs and backgrounds.

Although several studies recognize the importance of inclusive EFL practices, previous studies have failed to address EFL instructors' inclusive practices. Within the context of Türkiye, teaching processes involved in inclusive EFL settings have not been dealt with in depth. EFL instructors are not empowered to provide effective inclusion due to the lack of necessary teacher training. Therefore, this gap opens a rich space for further research. In this section, we aim to provide the inclusive practices employed by EFL teachers in the last 5 years by summarizing them before suggesting a guideline for EFL teachers.

Inclusive education in EFL settings encompasses a range of strategies, from context-specific approaches tailored to the nuances of each learning environment to the integration of technology and the promotion of multicultural awareness (Altaher, 2020; Galante et al., 2019; Kahanurak et al., 2022; Sancyzk, 2021). For instance, in Altaher (2020) multicultural videos were used in an English-level course to support learning. The study showed a positive relationship between multicultural videos and their dependent variables, reflecting on the ways in which the use of those videos enabled the teacher to enhance inclusive teaching in a tertiary classroom and could assist students of various backgrounds in participating and engaging fruitfully. In another higher education context, Galante et al. (2019) implemented plurilingual tasks and offered a collaborative framework consisting of four elements: administrative support, teachers' interest in using languages other than English in class, weekly collaboration, and learner-centred tasks. The authors claimed that students could benefit from this movement, from an English-only policy to a plurilingual approach and collaboration, and this shift could only be possible by leading EFL teachers and program directors and encouraging language teachers and program directors to change in this direction.

In a similar vein, Sancyzk (2021) explored how adult ESL teachers build up culturally responsive pedagogy. The author suggested that the teachers used various culturally responsive practices ranging from learning about students and accepting their languages to empathizing with them creating learning opportunities through diverse curricula as well as constructing meaningful relationships and bridging communities. The author concluded by suggesting more empirical data is needed on adult ESL teachers' culturally sensitive implementations because most of the research on this topic focuses on K-12 settings. As can be induced from these studies, more empirical research should be carried out in tertiary contexts in terms of inclusive foreign language practices.

Apart from multicultural issues, inclusive foreign language practices extend to considerations of gender-fair language policies (Lohe, 2022; Tarrayo, 2023). In her study, Lohe (2022) discussed the importance

of EFL classrooms for dealing with gender and sexuality topics. Adopting a quantitative approach and collecting data through a student questionnaire in a tertiary context, she asserted that most of the students came across gender as a topic at universities, yet still, there is a need to develop gender awareness in many students as they have traditional notions of gender or are not interested in the topic. To promote gender awareness for adult students, the author proposed critical incidents to foster gender awareness and stimulate reflection processes, as well as display alternative performative options that somehow deal with gender topics. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by Tarrayo (2023) focusing on the experiences of English language teachers in applying gender-fair language to their teaching practices. Findings showed that using gender-fair language ensured inclusivity, promoted gender perceptions, and challenged inherent norms of gender inequality. Teachers used gender-related instructional materials to promote class interactions and involved tasks focusing on gender-fair language and gender inclusivity. All in all, the author claimed that transforming classroom language into a gender-fair language in ELT supports students' development socially and creates an inclusive language learning environment.

Researchers have also investigated topics such as the inclusion of students with physical and learning disabilities (Attachoo & Sitthitikul, 2021; Csizer & Kontra, 2020; Seiradakis, 2022; SowEFL & Sugisaki, 2020; Yuliyani et al., 2022), the use of universal design for learning (UDL) (Altaher, 2020; Husin et al., 2022; Lintang Sari & Emaliana, 2020) and differentiated instruction (DI) (Çelik, 2017; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023). Attachoo and Sitthitikul (2021) investigated the lived experiences of visually impaired EFL students in Thailand. The study pointed out a discrepancy between the policies and actual practices. However, it also demonstrated the positive perceptions of EFL students for the inclusive classroom concept as well as factors motivating their EFL success and language learning strategies. Another study, which examined the conditions for blind students from the EFL teachers' perspectives, demonstrated that teachers are faced with a range of problems from inadequate teaching resources to lack of university policies. The findings of the study highlight that equipping teachers with disability-oriented training programs and supporting them with quality educational materials and evaluation tools adopting UDL and DI perspectives toward EFL teaching are prerequisites (Lintang Sari & Emaliana, 2020; Arslan, 2023).

To shed more light on the peculiarities of deaf and severely hard-of-hearing students, Csizer and Kontra (2020) explored the challenges and drawbacks of foreign language learning. Their study demonstrated that those students' foreign language learning experiences are replete with challenges in contrast to their dedication and willingness to learn. Based on their findings, the authors recommended that practitioners create learning environments in which they can use national sign language to contribute to the efficiency of teaching. In addition, they urged the teachers to employ effective learning strategies and support the learners with autonomous learning.

Moreover, Yulian et al. (2022) investigated how EFL slow learners discern the integration of inclusive technology with authentic multimedia-assisted language learning. Findings revealed that students found authentic multimedia-assisted language learning advantageous concerning its practicality and efficiency for speaking skills. Investigating learning disabilities from the EFL teachers' perspectives, Sowell and Sugisaki (2020) found that the participating EFL teachers were found to have no training for learning disabilities. Also, they did not believe that they could help students with learning disabilities. Therefore, they recommended that accommodating learning disabilities in EFL contexts includes the support of administrative staff. Most importantly, EFL teachers should also acquaint themselves with these obstacles through professional development.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that inclusive practices in English language teaching are effective at helping students with learning difficulties improve themselves in various skills like writing (Jozwick & Cuenca-Carlino, 2020) and understanding academic material and vocabulary in English (O'Connor et al., 2019). These studies integrally pointed out EFL teachers have a pivotal role in carrying out inclusive practices and the success is firmly contingent on the teachers' attitude and training in inclusive language education (Aksu-Ataç & Taşçı, 2020; Yastıbaş, 2021). Lack of training on inclusive L2 education might cause EFL teachers to feel inadequate (Rezai et al., 2018) as they need to possess pedagogical skills (Heijnen Maathuis, 2019) to assist students with learning English difficulties regardless of their positive attitudes toward inclusive education in English language teaching (Arribas et al., 2020).

In addition to addressing foreign language learning disabilities in different contexts, the literature points out various instructional solutions to these problems. As such, differentiated instruction (DI) is offered as a viable solution to inclusive L2 education (Çelik, 2017; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023). For example, Çelik (2017) suggested that teachers could create an inclusive context by employing various instructional methods for different learners. By conducting action research in a primary school, the author displayed a good example of empirical research. Rafi and Pourdana (2023) integrated diagnostic assessment and collaborative language learning in a differentiated (tiered) oral tasks intervention and applied them in a Google Meet cyber classroom.

Their study demonstrated that DI practices that accommodate diagnostic assessment and collaboration are closely related to inclusive L2 education. This study also demonstrated that DI is an under-documented inclusive practice in EFL teaching.

As the recent literature shows, translanguaging, World Englishes (WE), English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) are other aspects to consider in inclusive L2 education. For instance, Meletiadiou (2022) investigated learning strategies such as peer-assisted learning/mentoring and translanguaging as inclusive learning strategies to help students' shift into higher education and promote their well-being in the post-COVID. The author found that using these strategies showed significant performance development in the students' academic achievement and fostered a "psychologically safe space" with their peers. In the Turkish context, Solmaz (2020) examined the awareness and perceptions of pre-service English language teachers for WE instruction and whether they would implement WE-inclusive practices in their future classes. Results demonstrated an increased awareness of WE instruction in pre-service teachers' WE-inclusive practices. Their positive attitude towards the WE practices was also reported.

CLIL is another methodology that caters to the diverse learning needs of all learners. Hu (2021) examined the impact of CLIL in an online English teaching program as an inclusive practice with a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach. The study demonstrated that CLIL is a tailor-made inclusive methodology to help learners of different academic abilities; participating students attained remarkable achievements both in language and content learning in an online CLIL context.

Similarly, another observable trend, which is EMI, has emerged as a popular strand for inclusive language learning practices research (De Costa et al., 2021; Han & Dong, 2023; Tai, 2022). De Costa et al. (2021) argued that inclusion, equity, and access should be on the centre of EMI and transnational higher education because these aspects are conducive to creating an inclusive foreign language learning environment that fosters intercultural competence and tolerance, supports diverse learning profiles, and prepares students for global citizenship. For example, studying the EMI learning experiences of international students at a university in China, Han and Dong (2023) found out that overseas students faced exclusion and inequality regardless of diversity promotion of the institutions. The authors argued that universities reproduce social stratification inequalities among international students via "explicit and implicit institutional practices" and called for a more "inclusive pedagogical approach" to preclude international students from being excluded and welcome those from disparate backgrounds for global citizenship. Lastly, Tai (2022) examined how EMI teachers utilized various resources to ensure that all students had access to discipline-specific knowledge. As per the findings of this study, inclusive practices were in line with the translanguaging process, which requires EMI teachers to make multilingual and semiotic resources available, as well as base their instruction on what students already know.

Having set the scene for inclusive language teaching across the globe, we would like to state that though inclusion has gained momentum among scholars and governmental bodies in recent years, studies are limited in Türkiye in foreign language education. In an attempt to investigate whether the new-service English Language Teacher Education Program (ELTEP) offers effective training on inclusive education, Yastıbaş (2021) identified the following terms in the curriculum of teacher training: special education and inclusion, education of hospitalized students, learning difficulty, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, inclusive education, and individualization and adaptation of teaching. However, the author also pointed out the question of whether when these teachers start teaching, they could find these courses helpful for their EFL teaching practices or not in their contexts remains unanswered.

Thus far, this section has attempted to summarize the recent literature on inclusive EFL practices in contexts from K-12 to higher education across the globe. The following section moves on to consider implications and future research areas for developing an inclusive EFL environment.

## **Developing an Inclusive EFL Environment: Implications and Future Research Directions**

In this section, we aimed to expand pedagogical implications by drawing upon existing findings on inclusive language education for EFL teachers. We have also offered a diverse range of potential trajectories for future research directions.

First, incorporating inclusive practices into English language teacher education is a promising area to focus on for future studies. While previous studies have underscored the importance of empowering pre-service and in-service teachers to implement inclusion, the number of these studies is limited (Ali, 2018; Blume, 2019; Chan & Lo, 2016). Collectively, these studies point out that EFL teachers should be granted autonomy to help their students in need; a collaborative milieu is needed because the fact that EFL teachers could share their experiences with their colleagues amplifies the impact of their inclusive practices on society. In addition, EFL

teachers should be introduced to up-to-date inclusive methodology and curriculum and benefit from in-service training opportunities to support their students with disabilities and special needs. Thus, studies building on these practices are needed in inclusive EFL contexts.

Second, having analysed the recent literature on inclusive EFL practices, it is noted that the predominant methodology of these studies is either observational, in which data collection tools mostly are questionnaires, or qualitative, in which interviews are used to collect data (See Altaher, 2020; Attachoo & Sithitikul; 2020; Rasmitadila et al, 2020; Sanczyk, 2021) Besides, the studies did not adopt a control group or use objective measures to explore the extent of the actual improvement in language learning and achievement, making it difficult to observe the development effects. Given this, considerably more studies with more quantitative and mixed-method designs (See Alobaydi et al.,2021; Csizer & Kontra, 2020; Hu, 2021) will need to be done to explore the extent of the actual improvement in language learning and achievement, which makes it difficult to observe the development effects of inclusive EFL practices. These studies could be carried out comparatively and longitudinally to reach more systematic and empirical data.

Third, another promising avenue for exploring inclusive EFL practices is results concerning the positive effects of using technology and multimedia to enhance student motivation. Limited studies (Alcantud-Diaz & Soler Pardo, 2022; Yulian et al.,2022) have shown that assisted technology with multimedia elements for language learning could be helpful for learners to develop basic oral language skills such as speaking, fluency, structure, and vocabulary of EFL slow learners or instrumental in teaching learn to learn. Building on this, more empirical studies should focus on utilizing digital technologies including Generative Artificial Intelligence tools to assist EFL learners with disabilities or enhance their motivation.

The fourth area of further research could be examining how EFL learners with disabilities and from different cultural backgrounds will benefit from culturally linguistically responsive pedagogy in their learning experiences. Further experimental research needs to be carried out both to promote inclusive practices and assess their impact on student learning. Recent studies have supported the idea that (Altaher, 2020; Galante et al., 2019; Meletiadou, 2022; Kahanurak et al. 2023) more systematic and empirical research should be carried out from K-12 to higher education institutions involving both EFL teachers and learners. Accordingly, instructional strategies and policies that support multicultural and multilingual inclusive practices must be implemented and for these policies to be put into practice, more empirical evidence is needed across different contexts.

Proceeding further, as recent studies have indicated, EFL practices can be implemented through certain approaches and methodologies such as CLIL, translanguaging, differentiated instruction, and World Englishes instruction (Han & Dong, 2023; Hu, 2021; Lintangari & Emaliana (2020); Meletiadou, 2022; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023; Solmaz, 2020). These studies have collectively shown that these instructional strategies might be useful to include EFL learners with diverse needs and characteristics; however, as these studies are limited by qualitative findings, future studies could benefit from more empirical studies with larger learner groups in various teaching and learning contexts. Also, some findings present evidence for inclusive practices. To exemplify, in a recent study, Han and Dong (2023) claimed that although EMI has the potential to benefit EFL learners, inclusive practices should be carefully designed so as not to "reproduce inequalities of social stratification of international students through explicit and implicit institutional practices". The authors highlighted that without careful design and implementation, even well-intended applications might lead to the marginalization of international language students of diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Therefore, further research might explore whether this is the case in other international contexts or not.

Moreover, there is still room for investigating inclusive EFL education as a university policy. To our knowledge, there is no study that specifically deals with determining the impact of such policies on educational practices and perceptions of lecturers as well as their challenges in this aspect.

Relevant literature shows that inadequate resources and teacher training addressing inclusion and disabilities are some of the obstacles EFL professionals encounter (Lintangsari & Emaliana, 2020). Owing to this, further work is needed to fully understand the implications in Turkish higher education and K-12 contexts.

Lastly, replication studies should be carried out to grasp the results and recommendations of the studies. As the majority of the recent studies are qualitative, their results cannot be generalized, but by replicating those studies, findings can be verified and consolidated. As McManus (2022) suggested, replication studies are required to establish "the field's evidence base". Therefore, another potential area would be to execute replication studies for inclusive EFL implementations and theories.

The scope of the paper limits suggested recommendations, nonetheless, the implications provided show that there is ample room to extend this line of inquiry, especially longitudinal and empirical studies carried out for EFL learners with physical and learning disabilities. As stated in UNESCO (2009, p. 19), "accessible and

flexible curricula, textbooks and learning materials can serve as the key to creating schools for all. Many curricula expect all pupils to learn the same things, at the same time, and by the same means and methods. But pupils are different and have different abilities and needs." To close the section, we would like to highlight that all EFL learners are unique, and they have different capabilities and needs in their context, it is high time that we as language professionals, do our best to cater to their needs.

### **Breaking Barriers through Suggested Inclusive Practices: A Guideline for the Use of Inclusive Practices in EFL classrooms**

Following the theoretical discussion and suggestions that were presented earlier in this study, we have outlined a guideline for EFL professionals to implement the following strategies in their classrooms. This section has offered some practical suggestions for integrating inclusive practices into EFL classes as a review of the literature suggests a need for higher education to move beyond simply meeting legislative requirements and to support the existence of inclusive practices in inclusive EFL classes (e.g., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Black-Hawkins et al., 2021; Pilner & Johnson, 2004).

#### 1. Multicultural Videos and Inclusive Teaching:

EFL teachers should consider incorporating multicultural videos into their teaching methods to promote inclusive learning. Such videos can help students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds participate and engage more effectively (Altaher, 2020; Galante et al., 2019; Kahanurak et al., 2022; SANCZYK, 2021).

#### 2. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL):

Teachers should recognize the potential benefits of CLIL for all learners. Tailoring CLIL to meet students' diverse needs and learning levels can enhance inclusive L2 education (Hu, 2021; Meletiadiou, 2022)

#### 3. Instructional Strategies for Inclusive Classrooms:

EFL teachers should explore instructional strategies based on the brain's natural learning system. These strategies are well-suited for inclusive classrooms in higher education (Altaher, 2020; Attachoo & Sitthitikul, 2021; Csizer & Kontra, 2020; Çelik, 2017; Husin et al., 2022; Lintang Sari & Emaliana, 2020; Seiradakis, 2022; SowEFL & Sugisaki, 2020; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023; Yuliyani et al., 2022)

#### 4. Gender and Self-Esteem in Inclusive L2 Education:

Teachers should acknowledge that there may be no significant gender-based differences in self-esteem and attitudes toward inclusive L2 education. However, it's essential to be aware of any variations and address them to ensure inclusivity (Lohe, 2022; Tarrayo, 2023).

#### 5. Inclusive L2 Education Policy and Practices:

Teachers should be aware of the role of university policies in promoting inclusive L2 education. Utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) can contribute to successful implementation. Overcoming resource limitations and providing teacher training are crucial for effective inclusive L2 education (Lintangsari & Emaliana, 2020; Arslan, 2023).

#### 6. Challenges Faced by Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students:

Teachers should be sensitive to the challenges that deaf and hard-of-hearing students face. Recognizing these challenges and providing appropriate support can foster inclusivity (Csizer & Kontra, 2020).

#### 7. Essence of Inclusive Language Learning:

Teachers should focus on both the positive and negative aspects of inclusive language learning. The findings can guide teachers, practitioners, and administrators in shaping future practices (Alcantud-Diaz & Soler Pardo, 2022; Yulian et al., 2022).

#### 8. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

EFL teachers should consider incorporating culturally responsive practices into their teaching methods. Learning about students, offering diverse curricula, and building meaningful relationships can facilitate inclusion in diverse classrooms (Altaher, 2020; Galante et al., 2019; Holliday, 2020; Kahanurak et al., 2022; SANCZYK, 2021).

#### 9. Technology and Motivation:

Teachers should recognize that technology can impact students' motivation in multifaceted ways. This highlights the importance of integrating technology thoughtfully to enhance motivation (Alcantud-Diaz & Soler Pardo, 2022; Yulian et al., 2022).

#### 10. Peer-Assisted Learning and Translanguaging:

Teachers can consider the use of peer-assisted learning (PALM) and translanguaging as inclusive learning strategies. Combining these methods can create a psychologically safe space for learners (Meletiadou, 2022).

#### 11. Establishing Inclusive Policies:

Institutions and teachers should collaborate to identify existing policies or create new ones to support inclusive L2 education. This collaboration should involve resource assessment, barrier removal, leadership roles, and professional development (De Costa et al., 2021; Han & Dong, 2023; Tai, 2022).

#### 12. World Englishes (WE) Instruction:

Teachers should recognize the potential of WE instruction to raise awareness and develop positive attitudes among students. Encouraging WE-oriented practices in future classes can promote inclusivity (Solmaz, 2020).

#### 13. Gender and Sexuality Topics:

Teachers can consider the importance of EFL classrooms in addressing gender and sexuality topics. Recognizing the need for gender awareness and catering to students' interests in these topics is vital for inclusivity (Lohe, 2022; Tarrayo, 2023).

#### 14. Dyslexia-Friendly Language Learning:

Teachers should provide dyslexia-friendly affordances in language courses. Students' perception of course relevance and effectiveness can be enhanced through such accommodations (Seiradakis, 2022).

#### 15. Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning:

EFL teachers should explore multimedia-assisted language learning to improve their English skills. Using project-based instruction and culture-related tasks can evaluate speaking skills effectively (Alcantud-Diaz & Soler Pardo, 2022; Yulian et al., 2022).

#### 16. Teaching Strategies and Student Motivation:

Teachers can focus on teaching strategies that enhance students' perception of teachers' efficiency. Recognizing the connection between motivation and teaching strategies is crucial for inclusive L2 education (Farrel, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017; Garinger, 2009; Cumming & Driscoll, 1995; Harmer, 2012).

#### 17. EFL Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion:

Teachers should be aware that EFL teachers may have varying perceptions of inclusion. Professional development and training can help align perceptions and promote inclusivity (García-Sánchez & Díaz-Pérez, 2019; Sharma & Deppeler, 2012).

#### 18. Differentiated Instruction (DI):

Integrating DI and collaboration in practice are parts and parcels of inclusive L2 education. Thus, collaboration and teamwork are crucial aspects to integrate into L2 teaching (Çelik, 2017; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023).

#### 19. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI):

Teachers should consider the potential implications of EMI for international students. Structural mechanisms and policies should be examined to reduce educational inequalities among international students (De Costa et al., 2021; Han & Dong, 2023; Tai, 2022).

#### 20. Gender and Language Learning:

Teachers should explore ways to integrate gender and sexuality topics into ELT. Utilizing gender-themed instructional materials and fostering inclusive activities can create an inclusive learning environment.

#### 21. Training for Identifying Learning Disabilities:

Teachers should recognize the need for training in identifying and accommodating students with learning disabilities. Such training can help teachers develop competence in assisting these students effectively (Arslan, 2023; Haug, 2017; Jozwik et al., 2020; Lintangari & Emaliana, 2020; O'Connor, 2019; Sowell & Sugisaki, 2020).

## 22. Formative Assessment strategies:

To identify the student's progress, formative strategies could be used to help inform teaching approaches. EFL teachers should benefit from more formative assessment strategies as they are more inclusive and responsive to identifying the EFL learners' target areas to work on (Rafi & Pourdana, 2023).

## Conclusion

The current paper demonstrates that inclusive EFL teaching and learning is a long and arduous process, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution for implementing inclusive teaching effectively. Every context needs its tailor-made resolutions and EFL teaching is no exception for this. Literature concerning inclusive practices has indicated that the pursuit of inclusivity remains a pressing priority in the EFL context. This paper has provided a comprehensive investigation of recent inclusive practices utilized in EFL settings. This paper has also highlighted that teachers 'must be equipped with a thorough understanding of their students' unique needs and diverse skill set to effectively implement inclusive practices. Based on the implications of these studies, a comprehensive guideline comprising 22 pedagogical suggestions for integrating inclusive practices into EFL classrooms emphasizes the significance of the awareness of diverse student identities and needs, technological integration into inclusive EFL classrooms, differentiated instruction and multiculturalism. Moving forward, to foster effective inclusive EFL classrooms, ongoing teacher training or professional development for instructors, collaboration among all stakeholders and more empirical and longitudinal studies into effective inclusive EFL practices are of high importance. In proposing this guideline, we have aimed to provide practical solutions by synthesizing the recent literature on inclusive EFL practices with implications and identifying potential avenues for future research. In doing so, we have aspired to contribute to the ongoing discourse on inclusive EFL practices and their role in shaping the future of language education. By embracing these suggestions and principles, EFL instructors can work towards breaking down barriers and creating truly inclusive instructional practices.

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