

Include not exclude: Inclusion in EFL classes

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Abstract

There has been an increasing focus in policy and practice on adopting inclusive pedagogy as a way of reconceptualizing how schools work with children with special educational needs (SEN). The paper considers the split between knowledge and pedagogy inherent in some dominant strains of inclusive pedagogy. More specifically the objective is to consider inclusive education in relation to children with disabilities in EFL classrooms. Responding to what is typically a poorly conceptualized and defined area of educational research and practice, this paper attempts to chart the relationship between regular and special education as a means for analysing the attenuation of inclusive education through its appropriation and application by special education. Drawing on the 'knowledge turn' in inclusive education studies, we argue that although an analytical distinction between knowledge and pedagogy may be useful, too strong a delineation between the two fails to best serve the needs of children with special needs. Studies have established that differentiation of English teaching strategies and learning processes are effective inclusive teaching approaches (Miller, 2015; Tugba & Izci, 2018; EADSNE, 2012), and that is the main idea of inclusive education and inclusive practice.

Keywords: inclusion; special educational needs; inclusive pedagogy

الدمج دون الفصول: الدمج في فصول تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية"

المستخلص:

لقد تزايد الإهتمام في مجال التعليم (سواء جانب التخطيط أو التطبيق) بتبني رؤية تربوية قائمة علي الدمج، لتكون السبيل في تطوير تعامل المدارس مع الطلاب ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة. وتتناول هذه الدراسة الأيدلوجية التي قامت عليها فكرة الدمج في مختلف الدراسات الدولية والمحلية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة بشكل خاص إلي البحث في عملية تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية داخل فصول الدمج وذلك بتوضيح عديد الإستراتيجيات الحديثة التي اتفقت عليها العديد من الدراسات التربوية لتحقيق نجاح الدمج. وخلصت الدراسة إلي أهمية اعتماد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية علي فكرة التنوع والدمج بين طرق التدريس المختلفة. وبشكل خاص الطرق المعتمدة علي التكنولوجيا والتي تعتبر ركيزة أساسية للتدريس داخل فصول الدمج.

Introduction

With a heightened awareness and increased need for students with disabilities to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers, there has been a progressive movement towards inclusive education. Inclusive education suggests that all students in a school, regardless of their ability or disability, become a part of the school community. The principles of inclusive education were made prominent as part of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). More recently, the United Nations General Comment No. 4 stressed the importance of the legally binding nature of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the call for quality inclusive education. Foreman (2017, P. 16) stated that "inclusive education is based on the principle that schools provide for the needs of all the children in the community, whatever their background, their ability or their disability".

Generally, inclusion has meant different things to different people, and the way inclusion is conceptualized and practiced has differed in different national educational contexts because of local social, cultural, and historical differences. Other difficulties involving the conceptualization of inclusion have arisen from semantic, ideological and political discourses (Florian, 2017). Parnell (2018) has established that the concept of inclusion is constructed from four separate discourses, namely, the rights and ethics, efficacy, political, and pragmatic discourses.

A recent critical analysis of studies on inclusive education by Goddard and Evans (2018) found four different ways in which inclusion is understood: a) placement definitions that describe inclusion as the placement of pupils with

disabilities or pupils in need of special support in regular classrooms; b) specified individualized definitions that explain inclusion as meeting the social and academic needs of pupils with disabilities or those of pupils in need of special support; c) general individualized definitions that view inclusion as meeting the academic and social needs of all pupils; and d) community-based definitions that describe inclusion as the creation of communities with specific characteristics.

Some of these definitions of inclusive education have been described as narrow (in reference to promoting the inclusion of specific groups of students in regular education) and broad (when inclusion does not focus on specific groups of students but rather on how schools should respond to the diversity of all students). However, both narrow and broad definitions of inclusive education can be fragmented (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016). Furthermore, the focus of inclusion has now gone beyond the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education to a broader focus on access, quality, equity, social justice, democratic values, participation, achievement, balance between community, and diversity. Inclusion is about inclusive society; it is about collective belonging and equality in a civilized society (Sciemer, 2017).

Justification of Inclusive Education

It is well-established that inclusive education has been advocated on two strong foundations: the rights of children to be included in regular education and the precept that inclusive education is more effective than special education. However, the ethical, right, and philosophical commitment to the inclusive education movement has been firm and has dominated other discourses more than the empirical foundation (UNSECO, 2017). The convention stated that

countries must recognize the right to education of persons with disabilities and implement an inclusive education system at all levels, along with lifelong learning to promote full human potential, a sense of dignity, and a sense of self-worth. Right-based education is not only academically effective but it is also inclusive, healthy, protective of all children, gender-responsive, and encourages full participation of learners, families, and their communities (Lundqvist & Bodin, 2018).

Over the last two decades, Egypt has shown significant interest in and support for inclusive education, as evidenced by policy efforts, political discourse, and partial inclusion initiatives for students with mild disabilities. Following Egypt's endorsement of the CRPD (2007), the Egyptian Ministry of Education (MOE) issued a Ministerial Decree in 2008, updated in 2015, mandating the admission of students with mild disabilities in public and private schools that are configured and prepared to receive those students (Parnell,2018). Mild disabilities include vision and hearing disabilities, mild to moderate physical and mobility disabilities, and mild intellectual disabilities. Moreover, most recent National Strategic Plans for Pre-University Education in Egypt contain detailed targets, activities, and indicators for advancing inclusive education (MOE, 2008, 2015).

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education(2012) has identified seven different strategies which could be used to create awareness about inclusive education. These strategies were:

- Strategy 1 - Create appropriate legislative frameworks, and set out**

ambitious national plans for inclusion.

- **Strategy 2 - Provide the capacity, resources and leadership to implement ambitious national plans on inclusion.**
- **Strategy 3 - Improve data on disability and education, and build accountability for action.**
- **Strategy 4 - Make schools and classrooms accessible and relevant for all.**
- **Strategy 5 - Ensure there are enough appropriately trained teachers for all.**
- **Strategy 6 - Challenge attitudes which reinforce and sustain discrimination; and Strategy 7- Create an enabling environment to support inclusive education, including thorough cross-sectoral policies and strategies that reduce exclusion.**

Inclusive Pedagogical Approaches

Sharma and Jacobs (2016) established that pedagogical approaches adopting multilevel teaching, multiple intelligences and learning styles, and effective scaffolding can create classes that engage every student regardless of their ability levels and needs. They identified these as concepts, practical strategies, and building blocks that provide a foundation for inclusive pedagogical practices. They are the basis for best pedagogical approaches in diverse classrooms that engage academic, social-emotional, and sensory-physical components of student learning.

Approach (1)- Adopt Best Instructional Practices

Meeting the needs of all students in a classroom includes modifying the curricular content, engaging in assessments of student progress at least three times per year, and modifying the classroom instruction to allow for targeted small-group interventions as needed. As with other strategies introduced in this study, implementing the best practices detailed below will ensure that all children have the best opportunities to learn. (Schwab, 2018):

- **Systematic instruction is an approach that builds on students' prior knowledge and presents new information in a methodical way. Systematic instruction must be guided by the curriculum, and uses strategies such as direct instruction, explicit teaching, and precision teaching approaches.**
- **Explicit instruction is an effective teaching approach that draws a student's attention to the skill, activity, or concept to be mastered. This is especially helpful for students who struggle to learn new content.**
- **Use of manipulatives. Using manipulatives is an example of Universal Design principles that benefits all students. Teachers should use tactile objects that students can manipulate, not just pen and paper. Manipulatives can be as simple and readily available as rocks or sticks, or they can be constructed. Common manipulatives include counting objects such as beads, letter and word cards, letter cubes, and pocket charts. Engaging students in finding or creating these manipulatives can also be a useful way to teach the concept (Aldabas, 2019).**
- **Activity-based learning. Many students have a difficult time learning**

when their only exposure to learning is listening to a teacher talk. Learning is not just about listening, but also about doing. The active part of learning, which involves students' applying what they recently learned in a variety of contexts, should be activity based. When completed in an inclusive classroom, activities should be done in heterogeneous groups—that is, the group should be composed of members with varied learning challenges.

- **Formative assessment (progress monitoring and mastery monitoring).** Continuously evaluating student learning is the most immediate and effective way to know whether students have understood the content to which they have been exposed and whether the instruction is effective. Such evaluation can be simple and informal, such as asking students mastery questions during and immediately following a lesson to determine comprehension, or it can involve the use of more standardized, structured assessment tools and methods, such as curriculum-based measurement probes of oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and application skills (Schiemer, 2017).

Approach (2): Apply Strategies for Adopting Response to Intervention

Students with moderate to severe disabilities will need support from a special education teacher or a teacher 's assistant trained to work with such students. A teacher 's assistant can be a preservice teacher, parent, or community member who has received training to assist students with disabilities. It is important to use the following basic strategies and principles of this intervention (Sharma&Jacobs, 2016).

a-Collaborative learning

pedagogical approaches for which students work in heterogeneous learning teams to assist one another in learning academic material have been described as a key principle for building an inclusive community of learners in schools and classrooms. Co-operative learning strategies work better to improve students' performances in teaching and learning of communication, grammar, and mechanics (spelling and punctuation) than individualized strategies. Such collaborative learning strategies have been found to promote participation and enjoyment among students. Pairing students with higher and lower abilities to work on tasks allows students with lower abilities to gain assistance and the more able students to strengthen their skills (Lundqvist, 2016).

b-Peer-assisted learning strategies

Similar to this collaborative learning strategy are peer-assisted learning strategies, such as peer tutoring, mentorship, peer-assisted learning, cross-age tutoring, and peer helpers, for which students team up together or are put in pairs to engage in learning activities, and support each other for a common purpose. They have been identified by several extensive reviews as effective inclusive practices for all pupils (Nilsen, 2018).

c- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Typically, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has also been identified as a key element that promotes inclusive practices. UDL originated from the concept of universal design within the field of architecture. The idea was about designing public structures in ways that were accessible to all from the beginning. Adopted

in education, UDL aims to reform educational curricula, goals, pedagogical approaches, educational environment, materials, and assessment in ways that will create a greater and more inclusive learning environment and access to the curriculum for all students (Hartmann, 2015).

d-Co-teaching

Moreover, co-teaching approaches have emerged as one of the exemplary models of effective inclusive practices. Extensive reviews have found these approaches as effective in developing inclusive classroom arrangements by assisting teachers to serve all students fairly and equitably in regular education classrooms. Therefore, several researchers have recommended that the key elements of successful co-planning and co-teaching techniques should be incorporated and emphasized in all initial teacher education programs to equip student teachers with co-teaching skills (Goldan & Schwab, 2018).

e- Involvement of parents and families

Moreover, the effective involvement of parents and families in collaborative partnership has been found as an effective teaching strategy and approach in the education of children with SEN in inclusive settings. Studies have found parent and family involvement to be an effective approach for pupils with speech, language, communication, and interaction needs and that it also promotes children's academic achievement and reduced maladaptive internalizing and externalizing behaviors in both the short and long term. Parents can serve as resources to the school to ensure the inclusion of their children with SEN (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016; Schwab, 2018).

f- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Moreover, the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other individualized learning programs have been identified as an effective inclusive teaching approach (EADSNE, 2012). The meaning and the description of IEPs and their focus and use vary over time and across different contexts. It is a primary mechanism used to individualize services for SEN students receiving special education services in either general education or special education settings. Several literatures have established that an IEP is not just about producing a piece of paper: it is both the process and the blueprint for the services to be developed, implemented, and reviewed based on the individual assessment of the student with SEN or disabilities (Parnell, 2018).

Approach (3)- Use Assistive Technology (AT)

In addition to the above teaching methods to ensure an inclusive learning environment, the use of assistive technologies has also proven to help students with disabilities in the classroom. These devices do not need to be expensive or difficult to obtain. In fact, many of them can be purchased locally or obtained through adapting current learning tools. Both high- and low-tech methods should be considered for classroom instruction whenever feasible and adapted to a student's specific needs. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) defines assistive products and technology as any product, instrument, equipment, or technology adapted or specially designed for improving the functioning of a person with a disability (WHO. ICF Browser (WHO & UNICEF, 2015).

Examples of high-tech assistive technologies according to Schwab (2018) include the following:

- **Braille. A –Braille typewriter** with a key corresponding to each of the six dots of the braille code.
- **Refreshable braille display.** A mechanical device that translates language on a computer screen to a connected braille display.
- **Computer with text-to-voice software.** Allows for information and text provided on a computer to be read aloud by a computerized voice. Several forms of software, at various levels of cost and usability, are available on the market.
- **Hearing aid.** A mechanical device placed in the ear of someone who has low hearing to magnify the sounds around them. It is important to note that the presence of hearing aids does not guarantee comprehension of spoken language. Many organizations are trying to provide low-cost hearing aids, including solar-powered devices, to people in developing countries.
- **Alternative communication device.** A device that typically provides pictures and symbols that the device describes aloud and that a person can touch. It enables individuals with severe speech and communication challenges to interact with others.

Ali (2018) Presented examples of low-tech assistive technologies include the following:

- **Visual aids.** This includes pictures or objects that support learning and allow students to see images and touch objects that go along with learning

instruction; for example, a visual schedule (i.e., contains pictures that represent sequencing of events) can help with transitions and understanding of upcoming activities. These aids can help students who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who have learning disabilities.

- **Magnifying glass.** This simple tool significantly increases the size of text and images, and are useful to people who have low vision to assist with visual learning.
- **Audio books.** Audio books can accompany text to teach students the proper pronunciation of words. Audio books do not have to be purchased. Instead, a teacher can read a book and record it on a tape/ digital recorder (see below).
- **Tape recorder.** Teachers can record directions, stories, lessons, and other materials for students with learning disabilities to provide them with an alternative to reading. Students can then replay the recordings when needed and can use the recorded stories with a corresponding written text to improve their reading skills.
- **Large print.** Use of textbooks and other materials in large print (i.e., font size of 18 point or larger) can enable students with low vision to better read and access materials.
- **Adaptive learning materials.** Typical materials and writing tools can be adapted for students who may have physical disabilities. For example, tape, cloth, or rubber can help students grip materials, if needed, and shorter pencils can be used for better control.

In the same track Greene (2013) investigated whether integrating

Computer Assisted (Language) Learning (CALL) into the curriculum can produce inclusive curricula that cater to the needs of all students (with and without learning difficulties). The research showed that (i) a CALL methodology can be successfully used for a project focused on overcoming first language difficulties, (ii) there is a lack of online curriculum-focused materials which cater to the needs of students with learning difficulties, (iii) CA (L)L materials for diverse students can be successfully integrated into an inclusive classroom, and (iv) teachers can develop their own (CALL) materials successfully.

Approach (4): Modify the Physical Environment

Ensuring an accessible physical environment is vital for students with physical or other motor disabilities. Further, the resources that are available to the student with a disability outside of their classroom, such as access to crutches, a cane, or a wheelchair, should also be made available in the classroom.

Adapted furniture and aids in the classroom

should also be allowed. Manipulating pencils, chalk, and other small items can be difficult for students who have challenges with gross or fine motor skill (Schwab,2018).

Approach (5): Modify Classroom Management Strategies

Modifying classroom management approach and being flexible with students support learning. Implementing the following basic strategies will help to ensure that all children receive the best possible opportunities to learn (Ali, 2018): (a) Consider student fatigue, (b) Encourage note taking, and (c) Use schedule aids.

Approach (6): Ensure Social Inclusion

Lozman (2017) stressed in his research the need a number of strategies that can be used to greatly enhance the probability that students with disabilities, as well as all other marginalized students, will be fully accepted in the school community and experience the social and the academic benefits of inclusion. These strategies are: -

- a) Respect for diversity**
- b) Physical access**
- c) Student engagement**
- d) Social reinforcement**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Students with Learning Disabilities

There is no set recipe for teaching English as a foreign language to students with learning disabilities at the intermediate and advanced levels. However, research indicates that these students do well with decoding but have difficulties with language comprehension and production because they lack effective cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Therefore, they more than their peers without learning disabilities are in need of interventions that explicitly teach strategies for language learning and language use in conjunction with language skills (Goddard & Evans, 2018).

In simple words, having a learning disability means that the brain does not

process information normally. This, of course, requires modeling effective cognitive processes through learning strategies instruction to help students with learning disabilities change their ineffective learning processes and employ effective ones in a reflective, purposeful way. In support of this solution, Schierner (2018), stated that students with learning disabilities can learn strategies, which can in turn improve their language skills. To help students with language learning disabilities overcome their own learning difficulties, instruction should take as its aim the improvement of the underlying processes and strategies these students depend upon to learn language skills as these skills are rooted in complex processes. These strategies include:

1. Combining direct instruction with strategy instruction
2. Using learning strategies
3. Employing multi-sensory teaching
4. Teaching in a meta-cognitive way
5. Using communication strategies
6. Task- based learning method
7. Total physical response method
8. The eclectic approach
9. Providing positive Learning Context
10. Reducing Anxiety
11. Increase learners' motivation

12. **Using different Learning Styles**
13. **Promote student responsibility and independence**
14. **Adaptation of teaching to individual differences**
15. **Promoting writing skill**

General education teachers do have concerns about teaching students with learning impairments including lack of training, planning time, and resources, so research is essential to demonstrate how the inclusion model can have a positive impact on academic achievement as well as social interaction among students with disabilities. However, the literature indicates with proper training and resources, inclusion can be a practical and effective learning environment (Schwab, 2018).

The policy of including pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools and classes is now firmly established in many jurisdictions worldwide. However, to make this policy fruitful it largely depends on teachers who are prepared and have the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies. This may create some sort of challenges to both novice and experienced teachers. Notwithstanding the challenges which may face teacher preparation and training, it is important as it provides quality education for all students in inclusive settings. In order to counteract the challenges associated with the implementation of the inclusive education, greater efforts are being made in various countries to train and develop teachers who are to carry out the strenuous task (Hartmann, 2015).

Conclusion

Inclusive education is tailored to give the maximum assistance to special needs children in society so that they become useful to themselves and society. Education was designed for the 'normal' children in mind and as education and knowledge abounds, special schools were created for children with varied forms of disabilities. New development and research proved that inclusive education would be the best as compared to special schools. The Salamanca statement (1994) and the United Nations (1993) standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities were compelling institutions to open their doors for students having special needs to be educated together in the same class with their non-disabled counterparts.

Available literature all pointed to the fact that attitude of society continues to create significant barriers to inclusion. This notwithstanding a lot of education, awareness and research on inclusive education is ongoing to break the barrier of not making inclusive education possible in a short time to come (Forlin, et al, 2011; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016). The clear implication of the inclusive education movement is that mainstream schools seek to restructure so as to provide for an increasing diversity of educational needs and eliminate the problem of students who fail to fulfil their learning potential. Adaptation of the classroom to absorb disabled children calls for a turnaround in assessing the achievement of learners. Alternative assessment attempts to capture the learners' total array of skills and abilities. Through alternative assessment procedures, it is possible to measure language proficiency in the context of specific subject matter (Goddard & Evans, 2018; Florian, 2017).

In making inclusive education thrive, knowledge of teachers, implementation of the curriculum to benefit special needs pupils, implementation of alternative assessment in inclusive education and collaboration of teachers with other professionals to make the best out of inclusive education were the empirical literature that were reviewed.

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