

Inclusive English Class in Higher Education: A Challenge

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Abstrak

Penerapan prinsip-prinsip pendidikan inklusif di perguruan tinggi menghadirkan suatu upaya yang kompleks. Pendidikan inklusif membuka kesempatan kelas konvensional bagi peserta didik dari berbagai latar belakang, memberikan kesempatan kepada siswa berkebutuhan khusus untuk belajar setara dengan teman-temannya. Hal ini juga meluas pada penguasaan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Meski demikian, mengajar di kelas inklusif menimbulkan tantangan besar bagi dosen bahasa Inggris. Banyak kendala yang muncul dalam proses belajar-mengajar, sehingga pendidik harus menyadari dan mengatasi tantangan tersebut, terutama ketika mengajar siswa berkebutuhan khusus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki tantangan yang dihadapi oleh dosen bahasa Inggris, memberikan wawasan mengenai potensi penyelesaiannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan observasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa dosen Bahasa Inggris menghadapi kesulitan dalam mengajar siswa berkebutuhan khusus, menggarisbawahi pentingnya mengidentifikasi dan merancang solusi efektif untuk tantangan ini.

Kata Kunci: *Inklusi, Siswa Penyandang Disabilitas, Pendidikan Tinggi, Tantangan, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris.*

Abstract

The implementation of inclusive education principles in higher education presents a complex endeavor. Inclusive education opens the doors of conventional classrooms to learners from diverse backgrounds, providing students with special needs the opportunity to learn on an equal footing with their peers. This also extends to their acquisition of English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, teaching in an inclusive classroom poses considerable challenges for English lecturers. Numerous hurdles arise during the teaching-learning process, necessitating educators to acknowledge and address these challenges, particularly when instructing students with special needs. This study was aimed to investigate the challenges encountered by English lecturers, offering insights into potential resolutions. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Data were gathered by interview and observation. The findings showed that English lecturers confront difficulties in instructing students with special needs, underscoring the importance of identifying and devising effective solutions for these challenges.

Keyword: *Inclusion, Students With Disabilities, Higher Education, Challenge, Teaching English*

INTRODUCTION

An educational strategy known as inclusive education suggests creating classrooms where all students are welcome to participate and are valued members of the community. It is an educational philosophy and methodology that seeks to enhance each student's learning and engagement within a shared learning environment. According to (Slee & Allan, 2001) and (Florian, 2008), inclusive education is perceived as an ongoing activity and a set of beliefs that challenges any exclusionary circumstances. A fair and equitable society is predicated on inclusive education, which is acknowledged as a fundamental human right (Hocking, 2017), also taken into account is an ethical factor (Ainscow, 2005). The goal of inclusive education is to increase the practices that result in full participation by giving all students access to high-quality educational responses (Moriña, 2017; Opertti et al., 2014). Diversity is understood in the inclusive philosophy to include a wide range of abilities, gender differences, and origins in different social and cultural contexts. These distinctions are viewed as advantages rather than drawbacks. It is believed that every student, without exception, ought to gain from excellent instruction and take advantage of full engagement in the educational process.

Inclusive education was developed and implemented in educational settings prior to higher education. Conversely, inclusive practices and concepts have long influenced university goals, regulations, and instructional strategies. There is still a long way to go and many challenges to be solved before we can

really say that higher education is inclusive. These are the guiding principles of inclusive education that must inform educational activities. Furthermore, it is stipulated that special education caters to students encountering challenges in the learning process due to physical, emotional, mental, and social disorders, as well as those exhibiting special aptitude and talent potential. According to the Directorate of Special School Development in Ilahi (2013), institutions providing special education are mandated to integrate the curriculum, the educational system, and the teaching-learning process in alignment with the unique needs of the students.

Special Needs Education pertains to the education provided for students with disabilities. The objective of this educational approach is to enhance the capabilities, independence, and social participation of students with special needs. Special Needs Education manifests in various formats, encompassing resource rooms, special classes within regular schools (inclusive classes), and specialized institutions known as "Schools for Special Needs Education." Historically, special schools were established independently, categorized by types of disabilities, such as "Schools for the Blind," "Schools for the Deaf," and "Schools for the Intellectually Disabled, the Physically Disabled, and the Health Impaired."

Many have advocated for more inclusivity in higher education, contending that it is the duty of the institution to meet the requirements of each and every student (Astin & Astin, 2013; Meixner et al., 2010; Sturm, 2007). In fact, (Safa et al., 2015) come to the conclusion that a top-notch institution must be inclusive. However, implementing inclusive education's guiding principles in higher education presents difficulties. A mere ten years of historical reflection is all it takes to confirm that the modern higher education classroom differs greatly from that of the past. While the differences between today's students and their predecessors cannot fully account for this, one feature that unites modern universities is the growing diversity of the students they accept. (Syed, 2010) posited that increased involvement in universities can be attributed to the gradual integration of groups that were previously excluded from higher education, such as students from diverse nations, age groups, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds, or ability levels. More studies are looking into how higher education is adapting to this new reality as a result of the expanding diversity that is changing classrooms and gaining scientific attention. Numerous studies concentrate on non-traditional populations, such as students who require extra help; these students may be students with disabilities, members of underrepresented cultural groups, or students from low-income backgrounds, depending on the country (Cotton et al., 2017). An increasing amount of research centers on examining the university experiences of disabled students (Findley et al., 2016; Koca-Atabey, 2017; O'Shea & Kaplan, 2018; Shepler & Woosley, 2012).

In relation to this group, the number of disabled students enrolled in postsecondary education is rising annually (Cahalan, Margaret; Perna, 2015; Theodoridis & Kraemer, n.d.). This rise of students could have been affected by the adoption of policies and declarations meant to encourage inclusivity. Many nations have started taking steps to improve accessibility for those with disabilities at universities, showing a growing commitment to inclusive practices (Dalton et al., 2019; Moríña, 2017). Many colleges have created offices to address the academic needs of students with disabilities in response to these laws and policies, and they have also adopted inclusive teaching approaches, integrated the use of new technology, and/or built offices. Nevertheless, the mere fact that these measures exist does not guarantee students' rights to a high-quality education that is inclusive, devoid of discrimination, and founded in inclusive education. Numerous studies conducted recently (Cerna et al., 2021; Cui, 2016; Uchem & Ngwa, 2014) have come to the conclusion that ensuring diverse students' access to school is not enough; additional support is required to ensure their inclusion. Students with disabilities are more likely than students without impairments to leave college early, according to reports (Schuck et al., 2019; Wagner et al., 2005). Therefore, it's essential to create guidelines and plans of action that motivate students to stick with their studies and earn their degrees.

University policies and practices based on the social model of disability must combine the concepts of inclusive education and universal design for learning to ensure equitable opportunities and support the inclusion of students with disabilities. All university students have the right to full participation and high-quality education, according to the tenets of inclusive education. In inclusive educational environments, diversity is valued. This means that accessible educational initiatives are designed with consideration for the various learning styles and requirements that may emerge.

The social model suggests that the practices, attitudes, and policies of the social context create the barriers and/or supports that influence access and participation. In this case, the university is the source of the barriers that prevent university students with disabilities from being included in society (Moríña, 2017). The social model holds that there is no need to treat the "disease" because disability is neither a personal tragedy nor an aberration. According to (Shogren et al., 2015), institutions should refrain from using medical labels to identify students with impairments and instead work to develop inclusive teaching practices that will promote students' achievement. According to the social model, higher education needs to reorganize the curriculum to allow for the participation of all students.

Most of studies revolve around the students themselves. Three primary areas have been examined: the barriers and aids identified by students with disabilities; the transitions from educational stages prior to higher education towards this formative stage; and students' concern about whether or not disclose their disability if it is 'invisible'. Many of these studies were qualitative that sought to hear amplify student voices.

Students with disabilities

The largest group of research studies examined the voice of the students as they identify both the barriers and the supports in their university experiences ((Farwick) Kwenani & Yu, 2018; Spassiani, 2013). In this summary, we have chosen to look at the experiences of students with disabilities as a whole, rather than examining individual disability areas. Regarding the barriers, the most important obstacle identified was the negative attitudes displayed by faculty members. In many cases, the students stated that the professor doubted they had a disability, did not adapt the teaching projects and questioned their capacity to study in the university. Additional challenges reported by students with disabilities included: architectural barriers; inaccessible information and technology; rules and policies that are not actually enforced (e.g. the exam schedules and formats were not adapted, class attendance was not facilitated for students with difficulties derived from their disability); or methodologies that do not favour inclusion (Tâm et al., 2016).

These students' paths are frequently very difficult, somewhat like an obstacle course and students even define themselves as survivors and long-distance runners (Foubert & Perry, 2007). Their eventual performance is similar to that of the rest of the students, but in all cases, they reported that this implies a greater investment of effort and time (Ackerman, 2014). Students with disabilities commonly report that they feel they have to work harder than other students because they have to manage both their disability and their studies (Goode, 2007).

It is interesting to note that many of the barriers identified by students with disabilities are also shared by other students (Garrison-Wade, 2012). Nevertheless, for people with disabilities, these issues may be even more complex and may need additional support to solve. Although less present in the literature, there are also studies describing a series of facilitators to support students with disabilities within the university. Among the supportive factors are: family support to study in the university, friendships and peer support networks, counting on close people who encourage them and assist them in their studies (Kleinert et al., 2012; Moriña, 2017) help from certain faculty and staff who believe in them, facilitating the necessary adjustments, technologies that facilitate learning, such as the use of digital blackboards, adapted software, disability support offices, or personal support, referring to the students' own personal strategies implemented to deal with their difficulties (Moriña, 2017).

Other studies have focused on exploring the transition processes from secondary education to the university (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Waters et al., 2012). These works have described both the difficulties encountered with and ideas for improvement of the transition of students with disabilities. These studies concluded that, for people with disabilities, the transition processes to the university are fragile and can easily be compromised. The transition to post-secondary education is a period when more vulnerabilities are revealed, which can lead to students dropping out of the university. This stage is a difficult one for many students, but it may be especially challenging for those with disabilities because of academic and social adjustment issues (Sumi et al., 1999). The transition process influences the beginning of the students' experience within higher education and sets a tone for involvement which often continues until graduation. The main source of difficulty in the transition lies in the fact that the student must often adapt to new organisational, educational and social contexts. When they arrive at the university, the needs of students with disabilities are similar to those they had in high school, except now they have to be more self-directed in managing their own lives (Hong et al., 2011). In addition, many students do not know which support services are available or what legal rights they have.

Studies show that many universities have begun to implement some form of intervention to increase retention during the first year of university. There also seem to be some key factors that help in the transition processes, including self-awareness, self-determination and support, self-management, adequate preparation for university and assistance technology (Garrison-Wade, 2012). Also, networking and relationships with their fellow students and mentoring by students of the last courses or by faculty members were critical for achieving experiences of success in the university (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). (Black et al., 2015) stated that students with disabilities benefit from faculty that have increased awareness and knowledge of the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities, and from faculty that insert concepts of universal design into their instruction. Communication with tutors and other staff members is also a key issue for a successful transition process. Other aspects such as peer support, academic support and academic accommodations are also considered as protective factors (Wiener, 2004).

A third theme analysed in other investigations refers to hidden disabilities. In these studies, 'invisible' disabilities refer to disabilities that have no physical manifestation and cannot be readily identified by

others. According to (Goodwin, 2020), people with invisible disabilities think that having this type of disability has affected them negatively in their university studies. In this study, the university students felt that the academic staff and the other students questioned the validity of their disabilities because they were not visible. In many cases, they even had to present additional documents to demonstrate their disability. This was emotionally very difficult for them and made them feel less legitimate. Many university students indicated that they preferred not to disclose their disability and did so only in their closest relationships or when it was necessary, for example, when they needed some kind of adaptation or, as (Moriña, 2017) states, to obtain economic support, as in the case of free college tuition.

Students' perceptions about hidden disabilities are closely related to the concept of 'normality' and they may choose non-disclosure if they desire to be considered and treated with 'normality'. They may also choose not to share their disability if they feel that disclosure would place them at a disadvantage or they the fear being stigmatised or labelled (Eccles et al., 2018; Grimes et al., 2020); or simply because they think they have no special needs or disability. In general, these students, with either a visible or an invisible disability, may not want to be identified with a disability. As some studies explain, requesting some type of aid does not imply that they do not want to be treated like any other peer (Moriña, 2017).

Physical activities prove beneficial for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), given their propensity to struggle with sustained focus or extended periods of sitting. The learning environment should be conducive, steering clear of undue pressure, stressful circumstances, or monotonous activities that might discomfort students. Abstract concepts, rigid rules, and grammatical structures should be minimized to prevent the introduction of tension. Overcorrection of mistakes should be avoided as it may demotivate students. Given that a foreign language is acquired through direct exposure, students with SEN benefit from familiarization with English through listening and reading activities. Recognizing that students exhibit diverse learning styles, including those with SEN, lecturers should be attuned to the specific learning preferences of each student. Kinesthetic learners favor movement-oriented learning, visual learners lean towards reading and visual aids, interpersonal learners thrive in group work and discussions, while intrapersonal learners excel in independent work. Consequently, it is crucial for lecturers to tailor their instructional approaches to accommodate these diverse learning styles.

Indeed, lecturers have encountered challenges throughout the teaching-learning process. Consequently, this study aimed to elucidate the difficulties inherent in instructing English to students with special needs. It scrutinizes the challenges confronted by educators instructing students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and delves into the strategies employed to surmount these challenges.

METHOD RESEARCH

Qualitative research was used in this study, focusing on the instruction of English. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by lecturers in teaching English to students with special education needs (SEN). Recognizing the inherent diversity in individuals' perspectives and perceptions of the world (Cohen, 2017), the study deemed it imperative to elicit varied viewpoints from lecturers regarding the challenges they encountered. Furthermore, the research aimed to elucidate the strategies employed by lecturers to overcome these challenges within the teaching-learning process.

The data obtained from the observation and interviews with the lecturers. One of the drawbacks of observation is that subjects may behave differently when they are aware that they are being watched. As a result, crucial data may be missing because respondents may behave differently when an observer is present (Cohen, 2017). Therefore, information was also acquired through interviews with the lecturers. Data for the interview was gathered from three lecturers teaching at similar level, the first-year students of accounting major in Universitas Pamulang.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Derived from the interview results, lecturers identified various challenges in the context of instructing students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It was underscored that teaching students with SEN necessitates specialized approaches. In response, lecturers expressed consensus regarding their willingness to participate in workshops, seminars, or lectures focused on instructing students with SEN. They articulated a belief in the imperative for someone to guide them in the pedagogical intricacies of teaching English to individuals with special educational needs. Moreover, lecturers advocated for the inclusion of specialized methods and techniques in such workshops to facilitate the application of the most suitable instructional approaches.

Another challenge they encountered was the dearth of instructional resources. The materials from the books on the board were explained by the lecturers. They said it had something to do with the school budget. They were excited to have access to engaging and cutting-edge instructional resources like audio and video. The lecturers proposed that the government provide adequate funding for students with special education needs in order to support the schools.

The lecturers' additional concerns were the classroom and subpar learning conditions. As their friends did, other students had lack of focus. According to (Shiner & Caspi, 2003), a student with a developmental impairment cannot fully develop through higher psychological functions and overall personality unless they are in a truly diverse learning environment. He also suggests that students with special education needs (SEN) should attend the same school/university as their regular peers. He is adamant about developing a learning environment that would give a learner with SEN an alternative method of communication and development.

The instructors contended that it was ineffective to teach English in an inclusive classroom. They believed that the lack of focus displayed by SEN students occasionally had an impact on ordinary students. They found it challenging to comprehend the ideas. Because the instruction had to be repeated multiple times, the curriculum was not fully met. Conversely, some SEN students lacked motivation. Their confidence evaporated. It was as a result of their discrimination. It consequently resulted in loneliness and low self-esteem (Ma'mor et al., 2022). According to (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009), "less favorable perceptions of school, higher levels of school avoidance, and lower levels of school performance" may be caused by these unfavorable interactions. We might conclude that there was a lack of social acceptance for students with special education needs.

Less motivation among some of the lecturers was one of the other issues discovered. Lecturers find themselves inundated when addressing students with special needs within the mainstream student population, as they are compelled to exert additional effort and provide separate explanations for the material concurrently. Lecturers' lack of commitment may be a result of their lack of motivation. However, they became aware of their roles. They must set an example for the students.

There are a few strategies for overcoming the difficulties. The educators concurred that integrating the government and parents into the classroom will help them solve their challenges in addition to their own. In order to ensure that the students were attending class, they made a concerted effort to overcome the obstacles. They created their own media to serve as instructional materials in response to the subpar teaching resources. They were pleased that it added variety to the educational materials despite its extreme limitations. On occasion, though, it failed to inspire students during the teaching and learning process. Students are taught to ask questions by their professors. They are able to collaborate with peers.

The most important thing is to be mindful of and respectful of the questions' timing, location, and style. All people desire to be understood, and communication enables students to look past the stigma associated with a handicap. Along with encouraging involvement and accountability, they also have kids collaborate with one another. Lecturers at our school assign hands-on activities to children who have various needs to accomplish together after matching them process.

For the students, the lecturers serve as role models. Students learn how to interact with, accept, and react to other students from their words and deeds. They must instill in the children a respect for one another and an awareness of the individual qualities in each person. They do not restrict the participation to academic settings. All students are welcome to participate in acting, dancing, and singing performances. Together, they practice and encourage one another.

Another difficulty faced by special needs lecturers is the Ministry of Education's curriculum structure. The curriculum, which outlined the activities the school would provide for the students with special needs, was very strict and prevented the students from adjusting to their new surroundings. The results also showed that the curriculum had a top-down structure, which meant that the top decision-makers who created the curriculum gave special needs lecturers instructions on what to teach. Because of this, educators were not obligated to teach the material in the curriculum; instead, they want greater flexibility to allow for the interests of the students. The lecturers came to the conclusion that while they could not completely avoid the difficulties, they could lessen their impact by making sure the students were not negatively impacted.

The findings revealed that special needs education lecturers used various approaches and methods teaching the students depending on the subject. For example, the lecturers used pictures, songs, role play, and team teaching in the classrooms. According to (Shiner & Caspi, 2003), students learn through their interactions with more knowledgeable peers and adults. Even though, during the interviews, many insisted that they were using methods such as team teaching, role play and songs. However, from the study it was observed that many of these methods and approaches were not applied in the class. In other words what was said during the interviews was somehow different from what was observed during the classes.

For students who have special needs in one or more of the following four areas—behavior, emotional and social development, communication and interaction, and sensory and/or physical disability—there are several instructional styles and approaches. Three main theoretical stances are present. These viewpoints are ecological, social constructivist, and behavioral.

The behavioral paradigm of learning comes first. It focuses on observable learning outcomes in various learning environments that are primarily affected by the fundamental ideas of reinforcement

theory. According to this idea, every conduct is learned in accordance with norms that either sustain, modify, or mold it. Cognitive-behavioral methods consider people's ability to comprehend and analyze their own actions. The optimistic, realistic approach, the obvious indicators of success, and the manner that defining explicit objectives helps everyone involved in teaching and learning to comprehend the objectives and expectations for both individuals and groups of students are the main benefits of this model.

Nonetheless, these methods have faced criticism for their excessive concentration on quantifiable learning objectives, given the fact that numerous facets of comprehension and knowledge are not readily apparent and quantifiable in the necessary manner. It is also recognized that there is a risk that students will start to depend too much on external incentives to succeed.

Constructivist learning methods view students as active contributors to their own knowledge acquisition, interpretation of their experiences, and internal fulfillment from problem-solving and learning. Constructivist education is regarded as a transforming experience that creates avenues for additional learning as students develop deeper comprehension and more adaptable methods of expressing their knowledge and processing new information. Sociocultural theory and social constructivism are related to this method. Here, the context of students' active participation in learning is their membership in social groups and communities (like classrooms and schools), which work together to develop knowledge by their participation in worthwhile and purposeful activities.

Diversifying pedagogical methodologies not only serves to benefit students with special needs within the classroom but also enhances the overall academic performance of standard students. Through illustrating the existence of multiple problem-solving approaches or conceptual learning methods, educators equip students with the essential skills for navigating life beyond the educational realm, emphasizing the potential for substantial rewards in cultivating a capacity for unconventional thinking. Various instructional techniques are employed in the facilitation of their education.

Initially, the instructional approach incorporates visual aids to augment comprehension. Furthermore, educators possess the capacity to furnish consistent feedback, thereby fostering heightened motivation among students. Additionally, instructors can actively involve students through the utilization of open-ended inquiries, implementing behavioral models, and employing diverse pedagogical strategies. Through the application of these methodologies coupled with a patient demeanor, lecturers can impart a high-caliber education to each student within their classroom, ensuring that they receive the educational excellence they merit. Such an effective educational strategy serves to equip students for the inevitable transition into a realm beyond the secure confines of the school environment.

CONCLUSION

The investigation addressed ubiquitous challenges encountered in the instruction of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The inquiry discerned teachers specializing in special needs education face formidable obstacles when instructing students with SEN. Notably, the research underscores educators' expressions concerning the imperative to diminish class size, implement contemporary instructional materials, enhance lecturer motivation, and provide supplementary support services from governmental entities. A significant proportion of lecturers tasked with instructing students with SEN reported a lack of formal training in special needs education conferred by the government. They contended that their proficiency is deficient for effectively teaching students with SEN. The research identified suboptimal learning environments within classrooms dedicated to students with SEN, underscoring the inadequacy of inclusive placements alone. Consequently, the study posits that beyond inclusion, it is imperative to ensure that students with SEN receive comprehensive support and requisite services for optimal access to educational facilities. Furthermore, it underscores the necessity for educators to refine their proficiency in imparting English education to students with SEN, emphasizing the exigency of specialized training encompassing both teaching methodologies and materials tailored for special education. Ultimately, the study underscores that the responsibility of instructing students with special needs extends beyond educators to encompass collaborative efforts among lecturers, schools, parents, and governmental entities.

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