

Perceptions and attitudes of english teachers towards inclusive education

Percepciones y actitudes de los profesores de inglés hacia la educación inclusiva

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding inclusive education across different educational levels and institutional contexts in Ecuador. Adopting a qualitative, descriptive interpretative research design, data were collected through a focus group involving ten EFL teachers and an online survey administered to a broader group of English teachers from public, private, and higher education institutions. The study aimed to examine teachers' conceptual understanding of inclusive education, their self-efficacy in adapting instruction, perceived challenges, institutional support, and the role of technology in inclusive English teaching. The findings indicate that participants generally hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education and demonstrate a solid theoretical understanding of its principles, aligned with national and international policy frameworks. However, results reveal a persistent gap between conceptual knowledge and the systematic implementation of inclusive practices in EFL classrooms. Teachers reported moderate confidence in adapting instruction, frequently relying on informal and reactive strategies rather than structured inclusive pedagogical planning. Major barriers identified include time constraints, large class sizes, limited access to resources, insufficient specialized support, and unequal access to technology. While technology was perceived as a valuable facilitator of inclusion, the digital divide remains a significant obstacle. The study concludes that strengthening inclusive EFL education in Ecuador requires sustained professional development, collaboration with specialists, stronger institutional support, and equitable access to technological and pedagogical resources. These measures are essential to bridge the gap between inclusive educational ideals and classroom realities across educational levels.

Keywords: inclusive education, EFL teachers, teacher attitudes, inclusive pedagogy, Ecuador.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza las percepciones, actitudes y experiencias de docentes de inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) frente a la educación inclusiva en distintos niveles educativos y contextos institucionales en Ecuador. Se adoptó un enfoque cualitativo de tipo descriptivo interpretativo, utilizando un grupo focal conformado por diez docentes de inglés y una encuesta en línea aplicada a un grupo más amplio de profesores pertenecientes a instituciones públicas, privadas y de educación superior. El estudio examinó la comprensión conceptual de la educación inclusiva, la autoeficacia docente para adaptar la enseñanza, los desafíos percibidos, el apoyo institucional y el papel de la tecnología en la enseñanza inclusiva del inglés. Los resultados evidencian que los docentes mantienen actitudes mayormente positivas hacia la educación inclusiva y poseen un adecuado conocimiento teórico de sus principios, en concordancia con los marcos normativos nacionales e internacionales. No obstante, se identifica una brecha persistente entre dicho conocimiento conceptual y la implementación sistemática de prácticas inclusivas en el aula de inglés. Los docentes reportaron niveles moderados de confianza para adaptar su enseñanza, recurriendo con frecuencia a ajustes informales y reactivos más que a una planificación pedagógica inclusiva estructurada. Entre los principales obstáculos se destacan la falta de tiempo, el tamaño de los grupos, la escasez de recursos, la limitada disponibilidad de apoyo especializado y las desigualdades en el acceso a la tecnología. Si bien la tecnología es percibida como un facilitador clave de la inclusión, la brecha digital continúa siendo una barrera significativa. Se concluye que el fortalecimiento de la educación inclusiva en EFL en Ecuador requiere procesos de formación docente continua, trabajo colaborativo con especialistas, mayor respaldo institucional y un acceso equitativo a recursos tecnológicos y pedagógicos, con el fin de reducir la distancia entre los principios de la inclusión y su aplicación en la práctica educativa.

Palabras clave: educación inclusiva, docentes de inglés, actitudes docentes, pedagogía inclusiva, Ecuador.

Introduction

Inclusive education has become a central component of contemporary educational policy and pedagogical practice, particularly in contexts striving to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students. From a humanistic and rights-based perspective, inclusion promotes full participation regardless of students' abilities, disabilities, or linguistic and cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020). In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), inclusion requires educators not only to acknowledge learner diversity but also to design instruction that supports varied needs through flexible and accessible teaching methodologies. Understanding these principles is essential, as they directly influence classroom practices and language learning outcomes.

Inclusive Education and Its Implications for EFL Teaching

The implementation of inclusive education in EFL classrooms involves more than placing students in the same learning environment. It requires the development of instructional strategies that allow all learners to engage with the language meaningfully. Scholars highlight the importance of differentiated instruction, technology-assisted learning, and formative assessment as essential components of inclusive EFL pedagogy (Bell & Baecher, 2020; Florian & Spratt, 2013). Differentiation, for example, enables teachers to adapt tasks, materials, and expectations based on students' individual profiles. This may include modifying reading texts, offering multisensory input, or providing scaffolded activities for learners who require additional support (Tomlinson, 2017).

Moreover, the use of technological tools has proven beneficial in creating personalized learning pathways and fostering autonomy. These innovations allow students to practice the language at their own pace and receive immediate feedback, an aspect particularly valuable for learners with specific educational needs.

Teacher Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Teacher attitudes are widely recognized as a determining factor in the successful implementation of inclusive practices. Borg (2003) argues that teachers' beliefs strongly influence how they interpret and enact pedagogical approaches in their classrooms. When teachers possess positive perceptions of inclusion, they are more willing to differentiate instruction, collaborate with specialists, and engage in reflective practice. In contrast, negative attitudes or misconceptions about students' capabilities can undermine inclusion, even in settings with strong policy directives (Bell & Baecher, 2020).

In the Ecuadorian context, this issue becomes even more evident. Studies indicate that English teachers often demonstrate adequate linguistic competence but report limited training in inclusive pedagogy, which affects their confidence and self-efficacy (INEVAL, 2019). Research by Escarbajal et al. (2024) and Romero Jácome et al. (2024) reveals that teachers frequently face attitudinal barriers shaped by challenges such as insufficient resources, large class sizes, and limited institutional support. These factors contribute to reluctance or uncertainty when addressing diverse learners in EFL classrooms.

Ecuador has made notable progress in establishing legal and curricular frameworks that promote inclusive education. The Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI) and the Ministry of Education's guidelines emphasize the importance of creating accessible learning environments, reducing barriers, and adapting instruction to diverse student needs (Ecuador Ministry of Education, 2021). Despite these advancements, implementation in EFL settings continues to be problematic.

Public schools, particularly at the secondary level, often struggle with conditions that hinder effective English instruction: limited hours of instruction, a grammar-centered teaching approach, scarce technological resources, and low student motivation (Astudillo & Zavala, 2021; Orosz et al., 2023). These challenges disproportionately

impact students with special educational needs (SEN), who may require adapted materials, alternative forms of assessment, or assistive technologies elements that are not consistently available in the Ecuadorian public system.

Additionally, many teachers report relying on teacher-centered methodologies due to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient training opportunities. These systemic issues restrict the implementation of inclusive strategies and contribute to persistent gaps in students' English proficiency, making the national B1 requirement difficult to achieve in many institutions.

Pedagogical Strategies for Promoting Inclusion in EFL Classrooms

To address these inequities, researchers recommend incorporating a set of strategies aligned with inclusive pedagogy:

- Differentiated Instruction: Adapting content, processes, and products based on learners' needs (Tomlinson, 2017).
- Collaborative Learning: Fostering cooperative activities that enhance communicative competence.
- Technology Integration: Using digital tools to support personalized practice and ongoing feedback (Bell & Baecher, 2020).
- Formative Assessment: Evaluating students through flexible and diverse forms of evidence (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

Understanding and applying these strategies is essential not only for promoting equitable participation but also for addressing national concerns regarding overall low English proficiency in public schools.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

A recurrent theme in the literature is the crucial role of teacher preparation in the development of inclusive EFL practices. Effective professional development should integrate:

- solid knowledge of English and EFL pedagogy,
- training in inclusive methodologies and differentiated teaching,
- the development of positive attitudes toward diversity, and
- skills in digital tool integration (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Bell & Baecher, 2020).

Latin American research further confirms that teacher attitudes are closely tied to their sense of self-efficacy. Educators who receive consistent training and institutional support feel more competent and willing to implement inclusion, whereas those lacking preparation experience anxiety and uncertainty (Sahli Lozano et al., 2024).

The literature indicates that the effectiveness of inclusion in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is influenced by multiple interrelated factors, including teachers' attitudes, pedagogical practices, institutional contexts, and the policies and regulations that govern educational settings. Ecuador has made significant progress in establishing legal and curricular frameworks that promote inclusive education. However, empirical research consistently highlights a persistent gap between policy intentions and classroom-level implementation. This discrepancy cannot be attributed solely to limitations in resources or pedagogical practices; rather, it reflects deeper structural inequalities that shape educational systems in Ecuador and other Latin American contexts. Large class sizes limited instructional time, and a predominant focus on grammar-based instruction illustrate broader challenges related to equity and access that extend beyond individual teacher practices.

What teachers think and feel depends on their jobs and the culture around them. The research makes us realize that not enough training in how to teach inclusively, along with poor support from schools, can make teachers think negatively about students with special needs or different languages. So, whether teachers believe they can successfully include all students and whether they're ready to try inclusive methods is not only about them, but also about the support they get.

This means ongoing, helpful training that fits their situation, plus real improvements to school buildings and supplies. Some experts believe that inclusive education in EFL also needs to look at power issues in language teaching. For example, standard language rules can be seen as more important than other languages, which can make speakers of those other languages feel left out. This aspect has received limited attention in existing research; however, it is essential for achieving meaningful transformation toward inclusive education. Recognizing linguistic and cultural diversity as assets rather than deficits is fundamental to fostering genuinely inclusive educational practices. Lastly, using tech seems like a good way to make learning fit each student and support inclusion. However, it is essential to critically examine disparities in access to and effective use of technology, as the digital divide has the potential to further marginalize students who are already at a disadvantage. Unequal access to technological resources and digital literacy may result in the disproportionate benefit of educational technologies for students from more privileged backgrounds, thereby exacerbating existing educational inequalities if these gaps are not adequately addressed.

Methods and Materials

Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research design, aimed at exploring English teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding inclusive practices in English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) education. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' beliefs, attitudes, and interpretations within their specific educational and sociocultural contexts.

Participants

The participants were English teachers working in diverse educational institutions, including public and private schools as well as higher education institutions. They taught at different educational levels, such as early childhood education, basic education, secondary education, and tertiary education. The participants were drawn from different provinces of Ecuador, specifically Guayas and Azuay, which allowed for the inclusion of varied regional and institutional perspectives. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants with relevant experience in teaching English in inclusive or diverse classrooms, based on the following criteria:

- Currently teaching English at any educational level,
- Experience working with students with diverse learning needs, including students with special educational needs (SEN),
- Willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

The focus group consisted of ten EFL teachers, representing a range of institutional types and teaching levels. In addition, an online survey was distributed to a broader group of English teachers from various institutions and regions, with approximately 15 participants responding. In total, the study involved 25 participants, which allowed for the inclusion of a wider range of perspectives on inclusive education.

Data Collection Instruments

To obtain rich and comprehensive data, multiple instruments were used:

Focus Group Discussion

A semi-structured focus group was conducted to encourage collective reflection and dialogue among participants. The guiding questions explored teachers' understanding of inclusive education, confidence in adapting instruction, perceived challenges, institutional support, professional development, collaboration with families, and the role of technology in inclusive English teaching. The focus group format enabled interaction among teachers from different educational levels, fostering the exchange of diverse experiences and viewpoints.

Online Survey (Google Forms)

A structured online survey was administered using Google Forms and distributed to English teachers across various educational institutions. The survey included Likert-scale and open-ended questions addressing teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, perceived challenges, access to resources, and institutional support for inclusive education. This instrument allowed for the collection of complementary data and supported the identification of broader trends beyond the focus group participants.

Field Notes

Field notes were taken during the focus group session to record contextual information, interaction dynamics, and non-verbal cues. These notes contributed to a deeper interpretation of the qualitative data and supported the triangulation process.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted during the months of November and December 2025, following a structured and systematic process to ensure methodological coherence and reliability. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the

objectives, scope, and voluntary nature of the study. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants before their involvement.

The data collection process was implemented in two stages. First, an online survey was distributed to English teachers from various institutions and regions. The survey remained open for a designated period to allow participants sufficient time to respond voluntarily. This stage aimed to gather a broad range of perspectives related to inclusive education in EFL contexts.

In the second stage, a focus group discussion was organized and facilitated by the researcher. The focus group provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, allowing for interaction and collective reflection among participants. All data were collected and managed in an organized manner to maintain consistency and ensure the integrity of the research process.

The focus group session was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Survey responses, particularly open-ended items, were reviewed and integrated into the qualitative analysis to complement the focus group findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic content analysis approach. Focus group transcripts, open-ended survey responses, and field notes were analyzed through a systematic process that included:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading.
 2. Initial coding of meaningful statements related to teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education.
 3. Grouping codes into thematic categories aligned with the research objectives.
-

4. Identification of patterns, similarities, and divergences across educational levels and institutional contexts.
5. Triangulation of data sources to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings.

This process allowed for the identification of shared themes as well as context-specific variations in teachers' experiences with inclusive education.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the rigor of the study, methodological triangulation was employed by integrating data from the focus group, online survey, and field notes. Transparency in data collection and analysis procedures contributed to the credibility and dependability of the findings. The inclusion of teachers from different educational levels and institutional contexts enhanced the transferability of the results.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations guided all stages of the research. Participation was voluntary, and participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through the use of codes. Teachers were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. All data were used exclusively for academic purposes, following ethical standards for educational research

Analysis of results

Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Responses

The focus group data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following a process of familiarization, initial coding, categorization, and theme interpretation. Recurring patterns in teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding inclusive education were identified and grouped into analytical categories.

Categories and Codes

Category 1: Conceptual Understanding of Inclusive Education

Codes:

- Inclusion as equal educational opportunity
- Inclusion beyond physical integration
- Recognition of learner diversity
- Inclusion as a policy versus classroom practice

Interpretation:

Teachers demonstrated a general understanding of inclusive education aligned with national and international frameworks; however, inclusion was often conceptualized at a theoretical level rather than as a fully operational classroom practice.

Category 2: Teacher Self-Efficacy in Inclusive Practices

Codes:

- Moderate confidence in lesson adaptation
-

- Trial-and-error approach
- Need for methodological guidance
- Insecurity in addressing complex needs

Interpretation:

Participants expressed willingness to adapt teaching strategies but reported limited confidence, especially when addressing students with specific learning disabilities or behavioral challenges.

Category 3: Institutional and Structural Challenges

Codes:

- Large class sizes
- Time constraints
- Lack of adapted materials
- Insufficient specialized support

Interpretation:

Structural conditions within schools emerged as significant barriers to inclusive practice, limiting teachers' ability to provide individualized support.

Category 4: Administrative Support and Educational Policy

Codes:

- Policy-level support
 - Limited practical implementation
-

- Lack of follow-up
- Scarce professional guidance

Interpretation:

Teachers perceived a gap between inclusive education policies and their effective implementation at the school level.

Category 5: Professional Development and Resource Needs

Codes:

- Need for practical training
- Inclusive methodologies
- Access to specialists
- Technological and didactic resources

Interpretation:

Participants emphasized that continuous, practice-oriented professional development is essential to strengthen inclusive English teaching.

Category 6: Instructional Adaptation Practices

Codes:

- Frequent informal adaptations
 - Reactive rather than planned inclusion
 - Limited differentiated assessment
-

Interpretation:

Lesson adaptations were commonly implemented but often informally and without systematic planning, reflecting gaps in training and time availability.

Category 7: Family Involvement in Inclusive Education

Codes:

- Parental collaboration as essential
- Communication challenges
- Limited parental availability

Interpretation:

Teachers recognized family involvement as critical, although contextual factors often hinder consistent collaboration.

Category 8: Challenges Across Language Skills

Codes:

- Speaking and listening as adaptable skills
- Reading and writing as major challenges
- Literacy-related difficulties

Interpretation:

Inclusive practices were perceived as more feasible in oral skills, while literacy-based skills required specialized strategies.

Category 9: Technology and Educational Inequality

Codes:

- Limited access to home technology
- Digital divide
- Technology as an inclusive facilitator

Interpretation:

Access to technology significantly influenced teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices, highlighting inequities among students.

Category 10: Attitudes Toward Inclusive Schooling

Codes:

- Strong belief in inclusive education
- Conditional support
- Need for adequate resources

Interpretation:

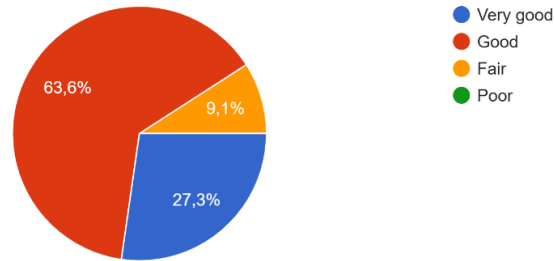
While most teachers supported inclusive education philosophically, they emphasized that successful implementation depends on systemic support.

Data analysis of survey responses

This section reports the results of the survey conducted with English teachers to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding inclusive education. The findings are presented descriptively using percentages and figures and are organized according to the main themes of the questionnaire.

Figure 1. *Participants self-reported understanding of educational inclusion.*

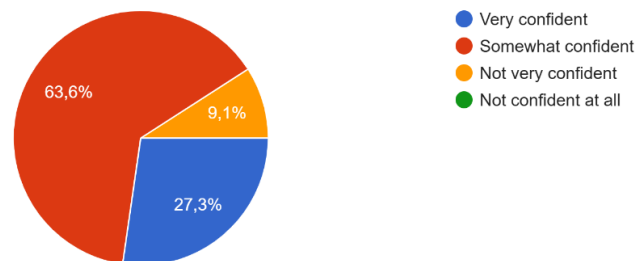
1. How would you describe your understanding of educational inclusion?
11 respuestas



Regarding participants' understanding of educational inclusion, the majority reported a positive level of comprehension. Specifically, 63.6% of respondents rated their understanding as good, while 27.3% described it as very good. A smaller proportion (9.1%) indicated a fair level of understanding, and no participants reported a poor understanding of educational inclusion.

Figure 2. *Participants self-reported confidence in adapting teaching methods to include students with diverse learning needs.*

2. How confident do you feel in adapting your teaching methods to include students with diverse learning needs?
11 respuestas

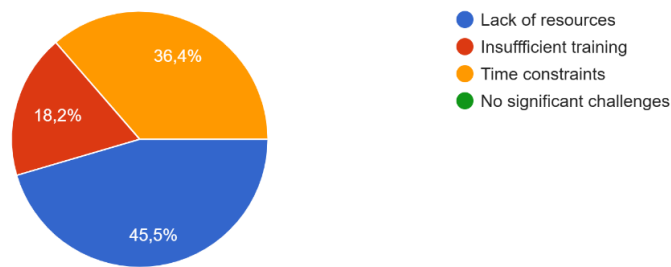


With regard to confidence in adapting teaching methods to include students with diverse learning needs, most participants reported moderate to high levels of confidence. Specifically, 63.6% of respondents indicated feeling somewhat confident, while 27.3%

reported being very confident. A smaller proportion (9.1%) expressed being not very confident, and no participants reported feeling not confident at all.

Figura 3. *Participants self-reported insufficient training when implementing inclusive practices in their English classroom*

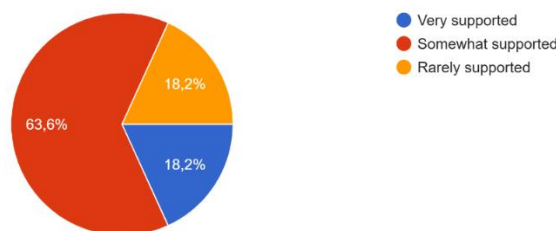
3. What challenges do you face when implementing inclusive practices in your English classroom?
11 respuestas



The main challenge reported by teachers is Lack of resources accounting for 45.5% of the responses, which shows that almost half feel that missing materials, support, or adaptations limit the implementation of inclusive practices. The second most frequent challenge is “Time constraints” with 36.4%, indicating that over a third experience workload and time pressure as a barrier to planning and applying inclusive strategies consistently. Finally, 18.2% chose “Insufficient training,” suggesting that a smaller but still relevant group of teachers feel they need more specific professional development to effectively implement inclusion in the English classroom.

Figure 4. *Perceived level of administrative support by their school administration in promoting education inclusion*

4. How supported do you feel by your school administration in promoting education inclusion?
11 respuestas

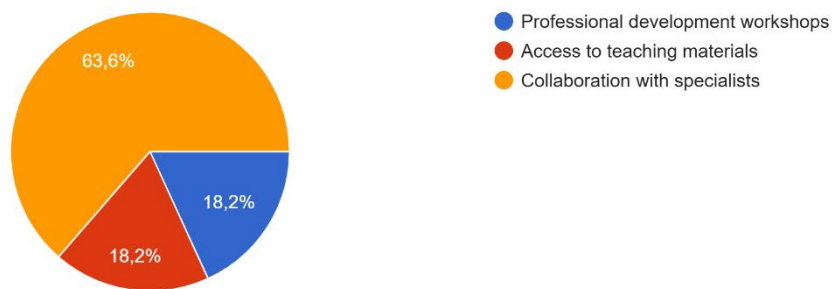


The majority of respondents (63.6%) report feeling “Somewhat supported”, suggesting that school leadership offers some initiatives or resources for inclusion but that support is perceived as incomplete or inconsistent. Meanwhile, only 18.2% feel “Very supported”, indicating that a limited group experiences strong, proactive backing from the administration in inclusive education. Another 18.2% feel “Rarely supported”, which reveals that nearly one in five teachers perceives minimal institutional support, potentially limiting their ability to sustain inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Figure 5. *Participants self-reported collaboration with specialists as training to improve their ability to teach inclusively*

5. What training or resources would improve your ability to teach inclusively?

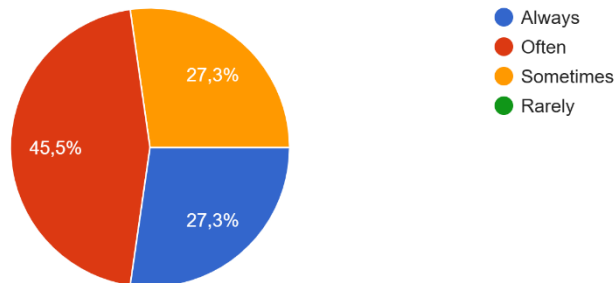
11 respuestas



Most teachers (63.6%) identified collaboration with specialists as the most important resource for improving their ability to teach inclusively. This option reflects a perceived need for regular support from professionals such as psychologists, special educators, or inclusion coordinators. Additionally, 18.2% of respondents selected professional development workshops, and an equal proportion (18.2%) indicated the need for greater access to teaching materials

Figure 6. *Frequency of lesson adaptation for students with special needs.*

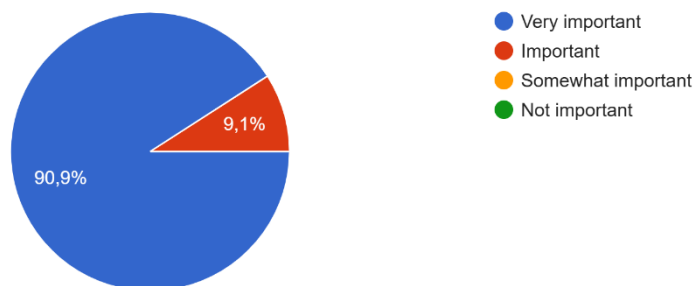
6. How often do you adapt your lessons for students with special needs?
11 respuestas



Regarding the frequency with which participants adapt their lessons for students with special needs, nearly half of the respondents (45.5%) reported doing so often. Additionally, 27.3% indicated that they always adapt their lessons, while an equal proportion (27.3%) reported doing so sometimes. No participants selected lower-frequency options.

Figure 7. *Perceived importance of collaboration with parents in inclusive education*

7. How important do you think collaboration with parents is to support inclusive education?
11 respuestas

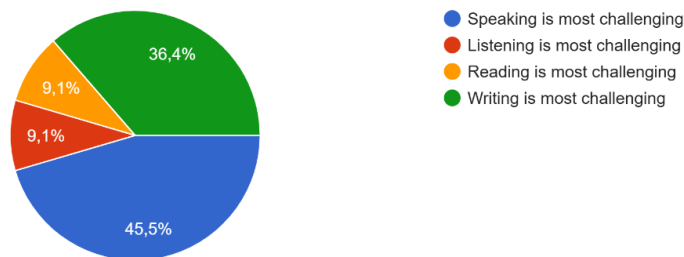


The vast majority of participants perceived collaboration with parents as essential for supporting inclusive education. Specifically, 90.9% of respondents rated it as very

important, while 9.1% considered it important. No participants selected the options somewhat important or not important.

Figure 8. *Perceived challenges in adapting inclusive practices across language skills.*

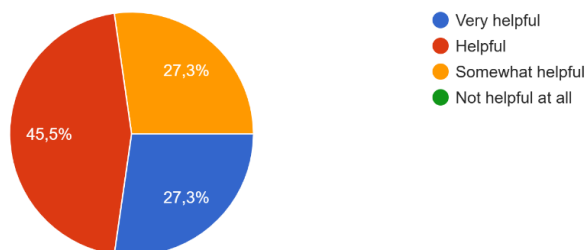
8. How challenging do you find adapting inclusive practices for different language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing)?
11 respuestas



Participants reported varying levels of challenge when adapting inclusive practices across different language skills. Writing was identified as the most challenging skill by 45.5% of respondents, followed by speaking (36.4%). In contrast, fewer participants reported listening (9.1%) and reading (9.1%) as the most challenging areas.

Figure 9. *Perceived usefulness of institutional training for inclusive teaching practices.*

9. How helpful have courses or training provided by your educational institution been in helping you adapt to inclusive teaching practice?
11 respuestas

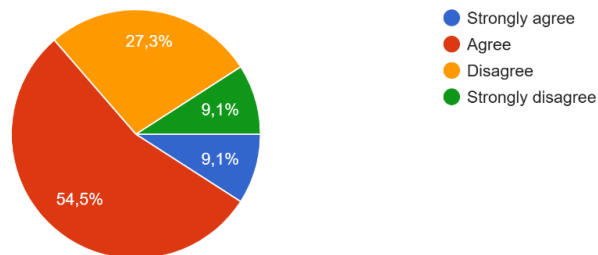


Regarding institutional support, nearly half of the participants (45.5%) reported that training courses were helpful, while 27.3% indicated they were very helpful. An additional 27.3% perceived the training as somewhat helpful. No respondents reported that the courses were not helpful at all.

Figure 10. *Level of agreement with inclusive classroom learning for all students.*

10. To what extent do you agree with the statement: "All students, regardless of their abilities, should learn together in the same classroom"?

11 respuestas

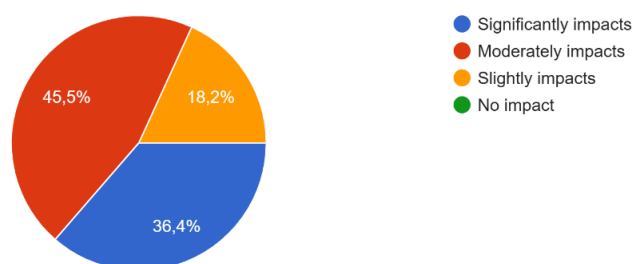


Most participants expressed agreement with the principle of inclusive education. Specifically, 54.5% reported agreeing with the statement, while 9.1% strongly agreed. However, a notable proportion expressed disagreement, with 27.3% reporting disagree and 9.1% strongly disagree.

Figure 11. *Impact of limited home technology access on inclusive English teaching practices.*

To what extent does lack of home technology access impact your ability to implement inclusive English teaching practices (e.g., online assignments, digital tools)?

11 respuestas

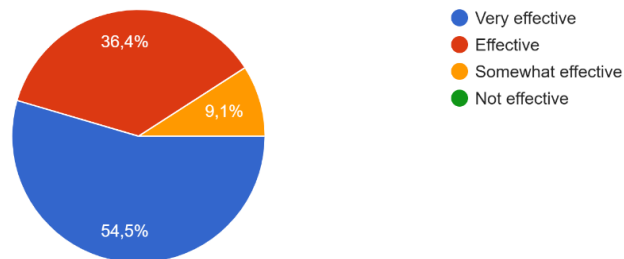


Participants reported that limited access to home technology posed varying degrees of impact on the implementation of inclusive English teaching practices. A majority indicated a moderate impact (45.5%), while 36.4% reported a slight impact. Additionally, 18.2% perceived the impact as significant. No participants reported that lack of technology had no impact.

Figure 12. *Perceived effectiveness of technology tools in supporting inclusive English language teaching*

How effective do you find technology tools (e.g., apps, software, adaptive devices) in supporting inclusive practices for English language learners with diverse needs?

11 respuestas



With regard to the effectiveness of technological tools, most participants reported positive perceptions. 54.5% indicated that such tools were very effective, while 36.4% rated them as effective. A smaller proportion (9.1%) perceived technology as somewhat effective, and no respondents reported it as not effective.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide insight into English teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding inclusive education, drawing on evidence from both the focus group interviews and the survey questionnaire. Overall, the results indicate that teachers hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education, aligning with Ecuadorian educational policies that promote equity and access for all learners. However, despite this favorable disposition, the study reveals a persistent gap between teachers'

conceptual understanding of inclusion and its systematic implementation in classroom practice.

Both data sources show that most teachers reported a high level of awareness and understanding of educational inclusion, describing it as a rights-based approach that seeks to address learner diversity. This shared understanding is a critical foundation for inclusive practice and reflects the influence of national and international policy frameworks. Nevertheless, survey responses and focus group discussions consistently indicated moderate levels of confidence in adapting teaching methods to meet diverse learning needs. This suggests that while teachers are theoretically aligned with inclusive principles, they often feel uncertain about how to translate these principles into effective instructional strategies, particularly in linguistically and cognitively diverse classrooms.

Regarding instructional practices, many teachers reported frequently adapting their lessons for students with special educational needs, a finding that reflects a genuine effort to respond to diversity. However, qualitative evidence from the focus group revealed that these adaptations are often informal, reactive, and based on personal intuition, rather than on systematic planning or differentiated instructional frameworks. This inconsistency supports previous research indicating that limited training in inclusive EFL pedagogy affects teachers' self-efficacy and the sustainability of inclusive practices.

Structural and institutional barriers emerged as central themes across both the focus group and survey data. Teachers consistently identified time constraints, limited resources, and large class sizes as major obstacles to implementing inclusive education effectively. Additionally, participants expressed neutral or ambivalent perceptions of administrative support, noting that institutional efforts often focus on policy compliance rather than on providing practical classroom-level assistance. This finding reinforces existing literature highlighting the critical role of school leadership and institutional commitment in fostering inclusive practices.

Collaboration with families was widely recognized as essential for supporting inclusive education. Both qualitative and survey findings emphasized that parental involvement contributes to a better understanding of students' needs and enhances continuity between home and school. However, teachers also acknowledged challenges in maintaining consistent communication with families, suggesting the need for more structured and institutionalized mechanisms for family engagement.

When examining inclusive practices across language skills, teachers perceived writing and speaking as the most challenging areas for inclusion. These skills often require individualized feedback, extended instructional time, and tailored assessment, which intensify existing time and resource limitations. In contrast, listening and reading were considered more adaptable, possibly due to the availability of graded materials, audio resources, and technological supports. This distinction underscores the need for targeted training in inclusive strategies for productive language skills in EFL contexts.

Technology emerged as a generally positive factor in supporting inclusive education. Teachers from both data sources acknowledged that digital tools, when accessible, facilitate differentiation and accessibility for students with diverse needs. However, participants also highlighted that unequal access to technology at home significantly limits the effectiveness of these tools. This digital divide, particularly evident among students from rural or low-income backgrounds, remains a critical barrier and reflects broader social inequalities affecting educational inclusion in Ecuador.

Finally, most teachers agreed with the principle that all students should learn together in the same classroom, regardless of their abilities. However, both the focus group and survey data revealed that this support is often conditional, depending on the availability of resources, training, and institutional support. This ambivalence suggests that while inclusion is widely accepted as an educational ideal, its practical implementation continues to generate concerns among teachers.

In sum, the combined findings from the focus group and survey indicate that English teachers in Ecuador are generally committed to inclusive education and recognize its importance. Nevertheless, persistent challenges related to training, time, resources, institutional support, and technological access limit the full realization of inclusive practices. Addressing these issues through ongoing professional development, collaboration with specialists, stronger administrative support, and equitable access to resources is essential to bridging the gap between inclusive ideals and classroom realities.

Although the sample size was relatively small and the study exploratory in nature, the findings offer a meaningful contribution to understanding how inclusive education is perceived and enacted in EFL contexts. They also provide a basis for future research and policy development aimed at strengthening inclusive practices across educational levels and institutional settings.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore English teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education across educational levels in Ecuador, integrating insights from both focus group discussions and survey data. The findings demonstrate that EFL teachers generally support the principles of inclusive education and recognize it as a fundamental right aligned with national and international educational frameworks. This positive disposition constitutes a crucial foundation for inclusive practice and reflects the growing awareness of diversity and equity within English language teaching.

However, the results also reveal a consistent gap between teachers' theoretical understanding of inclusion and its systematic enactment in classroom practice. While participants reported frequently adapting lessons for students with diverse learning needs, these adaptations were often informal, reactive, and guided by personal experience rather than by structured inclusive pedagogical models. This suggests that

inclusive education in EFL contexts is still largely dependent on individual teacher initiative rather than being embedded in institutional teaching practices.

Structural and institutional challenges significantly constrain the implementation of inclusive education. Time limitations, large class sizes, insufficient teaching materials, limited access to specialists, and uneven administrative support were identified as major barriers. These challenges are not confined to public education but extend across different types of institutions and educational levels, indicating that inclusive education remains a systemic issue rather than an isolated classroom concern.

The study also highlights the critical role of professional development in strengthening inclusive EFL practices. Teachers emphasized the need for continuous, practice-oriented training and regular collaboration with specialists, which they perceived as more effective than isolated workshops. Additionally, family involvement was unanimously recognized as essential for supporting inclusion, although contextual factors often hinder sustained collaboration between schools and families.

Technology emerged as a double-edged factor in inclusive education. While teachers acknowledged its potential to facilitate differentiation and accessibility, unequal access to technology particularly outside the classroom limits its effectiveness and risks reinforcing existing educational inequalities. Addressing the digital divide is therefore essential for ensuring that technology serves as a tool for inclusion rather than exclusion.

In conclusion, this study underscores that achieving inclusive education in EFL classrooms requires more than positive teacher attitudes or policy mandates. It demands coordinated efforts involving sustained teacher training, institutional commitment, collaborative support structures, and equitable access to resources. Although the study is exploratory and based on a relatively small sample, it contributes valuable insights into the realities of inclusive English teaching in Ecuador and offers a foundation for future



research and policy initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between inclusive ideals and educational practice across diverse learning contexts.



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