

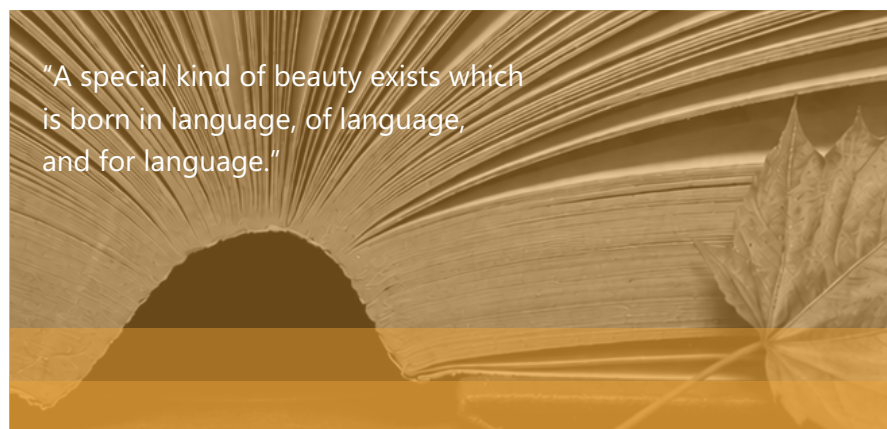


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"A special kind of beauty exists which
is born in language, of language,
and for language."



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Inclusive Strategies for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Students with Diverse Learning Needs in Higher Education

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Annotation

Higher-education English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms now include students whose learning profiles vary across dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum conditions, sensory and mobility disabilities, and differences in prior schooling. Uniform lecture-plus-exam designs still dominate many university language programs and systematically convert learner variability into underachievement. This article synthesizes recent research on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, multisensory and multimodal pedagogy, and accessible assessment in tertiary EFL. It argues that inclusion is not a set of after-the-fact accommodations but a design stance: instructors provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression before barriers appear. Drawing on international studies and practice briefs, the paper maps strategy clusters onto common learner profiles and discusses institutional conditions that make those strategies durable – faculty development, accessible digital platforms, and assessment policies that separate language knowledge from print or speed constraints. An analytical table condenses expected benefits, risks, and classroom implications. The discussion highlights tensions between communicative language teaching and the need for predictability, between academic integrity and legitimate assistive technology, and between massification of higher education and individualized support. The article concludes that inclusive EFL in universities is feasible when curriculum, materials, and evaluation are redesigned together rather than patched for individual cases.

Keywords

Inclusive EFL, higher education, Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, neurodiversity, dyslexia; ADHD, accessible assessment

Oliy ta'limda turli o'quv ehtiyojlariga ega talabalarga ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitishning inklyuziv strategiyalari

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Annotatsiya

Oliy ta'limdagi ingliz tili (EFL) auditoriyalarida disleksiya va boshqa o'qish qiyinchiliklari, diqqat tanqisligi va giperaktivlik buzilishi, autizm spektri, sezgi va harakat imkoniyati cheklanganligi hamda turli maktab tayyorgarligiga ega talabalar tobora ko'p. Ko'p tillar dasturlarida hali ham yagona "ma'ruza plus imtihon" modeli ustun bo'lib, o'quvchilar farqini tizimli past natijaga aylantiradi. Maqola Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differensiyalangan ta'lim, multisensor

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va multimodal pedagogika hamda oliy ta'lim EFL da ochiq baholash bo'yicha so'nggi tadqiqotlarni umumlashtiradi. Inklyuziya kechikkan moslashtirishlar to'plami emas, balki loyihalash yondashuvi: o'qituvchi to'siq paydo bo'lishidan oldin taqdim etish, jalb qilish va ifodalashning bir nechta yo'lini beradi. Xalqaro tadqiqotlar asosida strategiyalar odatiy o'quvchi profillariga solishtiriladi; ularni barqaror qiladigan shartlar – o'qituvchi malakasini oshirish, ochiq raqamli platformalar va til bilimini chop etish yoki tezlik cheklovidan ajratadigan baholash siyosati – muhokama qilinadi. Tahliliy jadval kutilgan foyda, xavf va dars oqibatlarini qisqartiradi. Muhokamada kommunikativ yondashuv bilan oldindan aytib bo'ladigan tartib ehtiyoji, akademik halollik bilan yordamchi texnologiyalar, oliy ta'lim ommalashuvi bilan individual yordam o'rtasidagi ziddiyatlar ko'rsatiladi. Xulosa: universitetda inklyuziv EFL o'quv dasturi, materiallar va baholash birgalikda qayta loyihalanganda amalga oshadi.

Kalit so'zlar Inklyuziv EFL, oliy ta'lim, o'qitishning universal dizayni, differensiyalangan ta'lim, neyroxilma-xillik, disleksiya, DEHB, ochiq baholash

Инклюзивные стратегии преподавания английского языка как иностранного студентам с разнообразными образовательными потребностями в высшей школе

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Аннотация Аудитории английского языка как иностранного (EFL) в вузах все чаще включают студентов с различными профилями обучения: дислексией и другими специфическими трудностями, СДВГ, расстройствами аутистического спектра, сенсорными и двигательными ограничениями, а также разным школьным опытом. Единообразные модели «лекция плюс экзамен» по-прежнему распространены и превращают вариативность обучающихся в систематическое отставание. Статья обобщает исследования универсального дизайна обучения (UDL), дифференцированного обучения, мультисенсорной педагогики и доступного оценивания в вузовском EFL. Инклюзия трактуется не как набор запоздалых приспособлений, а как принцип проектирования: преподаватель заранее предлагает множественные способы представления, вовлечения и выражения. На основе международных работ стратегии соотносятся с типичными профилями обучающихся; обсуждаются условия устойчивости практик — повышение квалификации преподавателей, доступные цифровые платформы и политики оценивания, отделяющие знание языка от ограничений печати или скорости. Аналитическая таблица суммирует эффекты, риски и следствия для аудитории. В дискуссии рассматриваются напряжение между коммуникативным подходом и потребностью в предсказуемости, между академической честностью и легитимными вспомогательными

технологиями, между массовизацией высшего образования и индивидуальной поддержкой. Вывод: инклюзивный вузовский EFL возможен, если программа, материалы и оценивание перестраиваются совместно, а не «латаются» под отдельные случаи.

Ключевые слова *Инклюзивный EFL, высшее образование, универсальный дизайн обучения, дифференцированное обучение, нейроразнообразие, дислексия, СДВГ, доступное оценивание*

Introduction

University EFL courses are no longer populated only by students who learned to read fluently in a transparent orthography, sat still through long lectures, and demonstrated knowledge in timed handwritten examinations. Contemporary higher-education cohorts include learners with diagnosed and undiagnosed specific learning difficulties, attention and executive-function differences, autism spectrum conditions, hearing or vision loss, chronic health constraints, and highly uneven prior exposure to English. International surveys of school and university populations show that these profiles are not rare exceptions; they are a structural feature of mass higher education (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2019). When language programs treat variability as a private problem to be managed by disability offices after enrollment, many students encounter the first barrier in the syllabus itself: dense uncaptioned lectures, single-mode textbooks, oral presentations without rehearsal options, and high-stakes tests that confound decoding speed with linguistic competence.

Inclusive pedagogy responds to this reality by shifting the unit of analysis from the “deficient student” to the designed environment. Universal Design for Learning, originally articulated for broader curriculum design, specifies three levers: multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement, and multiple means of action and expression (CAST, 2018; Evmenova et al., 2024).

In EFL these levers have concrete linguistic consequences. Representation concerns how input is packaged – print, audio, visual annotation, translated glosses, or signed support. Engagement concerns why students persist through the high cognitive load of a foreign language – choice, relevance, predictable routines, and manageable risk. Action and expression concern how proficiency is shown – speech, writing, multimodal products, extended time, or assistive technology. Differentiated instruction complements UDL by adjusting task complexity and support within a shared communicative goal (Tomlinson, 2017; Rafi & Pourdana, 2023).

The stakes are academic and ethical. English is frequently a gatekeeper for graduation, mobility, and employment. Students who could acquire the language under accessible conditions are instead filtered out by format. Research on dyslexia in additional-language learning shows that phonological and orthographic difficulties intensify in opaque writing systems such as English; without multimodal scaffolding, reading tasks measure disability rather than interlanguage (Kormos, 2017; Shaywitz, 2020). Studies of ADHD and autism in language classrooms document that attention, sensory load, and social unpredictability – not lack of motivation – often explain disengagement (Barkley, 2015; Shomurodova, 2025). At the same time, poorly planned “inclusion” can become tokenistic: a student is

physically present while the method remains unchanged.

Literature review

Scholarship on inclusive foreign-language education has moved from specialized “SEN methods” toward design frameworks that benefit the whole class. Early applications of universal instructional design to world languages already argued that communicative classrooms could be made more accessible without lowering linguistic aims (Van Handle, 2004). Subsequent work in postsecondary disability studies showed that adjunct-heavy language departments often lack sustained training, which Project LINC and similar faculty-development models tried to remedy through year-long workshops on barriers and redesign (Scott et al., related practice; see also later UDL briefs). CAST’s UDL guidelines remain the most cited architecture. Evmenova et al. (2024) translate the three principles into college-course tactics: choice of topic and format, authentic assignments, options for recruiting interest, and explicit attention to learner variability that includes strengths, multilingual backgrounds, and support needs – not only diagnoses (Rao, 2019).

Empirical and practice-oriented studies in EFL and ESL specify what those principles look like in language work. Lintang Sari and Emaliana (2020) and Husin et al. (2022) report UDL-aligned tertiary English courses in which multimodal materials and flexible demonstration of learning reduced exclusion of students with disabilities. Barros del Río and colleagues, in the EN-Abilities project, combined UDL with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to build an online English environment for adults with special educational needs, arguing that accessibility and motivation must be designed together (Barros del Río, 2021). EDULEARN and related conference work has proposed frameworks that map UDL questions onto visual impairment, deafness, learning differences, and ADHD across CEFR levels, noting that

barriers change as proficiency rises (EDULEARN, 2025).

Differentiated instruction (DI) is the second major strand. Tomlinson’s (2017) model of adjusting content, process, and product according to readiness, interest, and learning profile has been applied to EFL oral tasks. Rafi and Pourdana (2023) combined diagnostic assessment with tiered collaborative speaking tasks in an online classroom and found that differentiation could coexist with interaction. Reviews of inclusive EFL pedagogies for students with special needs similarly conclude that instructors need both principled frameworks and concrete choices of materials, tasks, and classroom management (Farrell, 2015; Harmer, 2012; recent syntheses in Adiyaman University Journal of Educational Sciences, 2024).

Neurodiversity research adds profile-sensitive detail. Dyslexia-focused work emphasizes reducing unnecessary decoding load: sans-serif fonts, spacing, audio support, color-coded morphology, and assessments that do not equate spelling with language knowledge (British Dyslexia Association, 2023; Kormos, 2017). ADHD-related studies highlight short interactive segments, role play, movement, and immediate feedback rather than long monologic input (Barkley, 2015; Mohebbi, 2023). Autism-informed pedagogy stresses predictable routines, visual agendas, explicit social language, and caution with idiomatic or rapidly shifting pair work (Shomurodova, 2025). A Bangkok bilingual-classroom case found differentiated benefits of the same toolkit: role play and digital tools supported ADHD learners; visual scaffolding raised dyslexic learners’ task accuracy; structured group routines aided autistic learners (2025 case synthesis). These findings caution against a single “inclusive activity” and support a menu aligned with UDL.

Technology is repeatedly identified as both enabler and new barrier. Text-to-speech, captions, speech-to-text, and accessible digital libraries expand access when platforms

meet WCAG standards; uncaptioned video and inaccessible learning-management systems reproduce exclusion at scale (CAST, 2018; Bookshare-type services for postsecondary readers). Project-based and task-based learning can showcase strengths of neurodivergent students if goals, timelines, and roles are transparent (Yphantides, 2021). Finally, legal and policy literature reminds universities that reasonable accommodation is a right, yet rights-based compliance alone does not produce good pedagogy. The literature therefore converges on a design-first stance: anticipate variability, offer multimodal

routes through the same language outcomes, train instructors continuously, and evaluate whether assessments measure English rather than print speed, social fluency, or stamina.

Analytical table and Discussion

Mapping strategies to learner profiles

Table 1 synthesizes the literature into strategy clusters rather than isolated tricks. Columns are illustrative profiles, not sealed categories; many students combine features or have no formal diagnosis. Rows follow UDL plus assessment, because evaluation is where exclusion is often finalized.

Strategy cluster	Dyslexia / SLD	ADHD	ASD / high structure needs	Sensory / mobility needs
Multiple means of representation (UDL)	Sans-serif fonts, extra spacing, audio + print, color-coded morphology, reduced decoding load	Short multimodal chunks; captions; graphic organizers that keep the goal visible	Predictable visual agendas; literal explanations of idioms; social scripts for classroom talk	Alt text, transcripts, high-contrast slides, sign-interpreted or captioned input
Multiple means of engagement	Choice of reading format (text-to-speech, Bookshare-type libraries); low-stakes rehearsal	Role play, timed micro-tasks, movement breaks, immediate digital feedback	Stable routines; advance notice of change; interest-based topics; reduced social surprise	Flexible seating and grouping; authentic but physically accessible tasks
Multiple means of action and expression	Oral or multimodal alternatives to long timed writing; spell-check as access, not cheating	Short spoken turns; project options; staggered deadlines with check-ins	Written first, then oral; templates for discussion; option to submit video privately	Speech-to-text, extended time, alternative response modes aligned with WCAG
Assessment redesign	Untimed or extended reading; separate decoding from language knowledge	Frequent formative quizzes; avoid single high-stakes oral exams	Transparent rubrics; practice of the exact exam genre; quiet rooms	Equivalent tasks in accessible formats; no penalty for assistive technology

Reported learning effects (synthesized)	Accuracy gains when visual scaffolding reduces decoding (e.g., task accuracy rising substantially with multimodal support)	Higher on-task behavior with interactive and tech-assisted work; weaker fit with long lectures	Comprehension and reduced anxiety when routines and visuals are consistent	Participation depends on access design more than on language aptitude
Main implementation risk	Treating spelling errors as language failure	Overstimulating group work without structure	Unannounced pair changes and idiomatic banter	Retrofitting after the course is already designed

Table 1. *Inclusive EFL strategy clusters in higher education and their profile-sensitive implications*

Discussion of tensions and institutional conditions

Three tensions recur. First, communicative language teaching values spontaneous interaction, while many neurodivergent and sensory-impaired students need advance organizers, written prompts, and stable grouping. The productive compromise is structured communicativeness: information-gap and task-based work remain, but roles, time boxes, and linguistic models are visible in more than one modality. Second, academic integrity policies sometimes treat spell-checkers, text-to-speech, or extended time as unfair advantage. Construct-irrelevant variance analysis shows the opposite: if the construct is lexical range or pragmatic appropriateness, blocking assistive technology measures disability. Integrity should target plagiarism and unauthorized human substitution, not access tools. Third, massified EFL groups limit one-to-one differentiation. UDL is therefore more scalable than fully individualized plans: a captioned lecture, a choice of product, and a readable handout help many students at once, including those who will never register with a disability office.

Implementation fails most often at the institutional layer. Adjunct instructors receive syllabi late and have little authority over exams. Learning-management systems may not

support alternative formats. Entrance and exit tests remain paper-speed contests. Faculty development that lasts a single workshop cannot change these defaults. Durable practice requires program-level decisions: shared accessible templates, assessment blueprints that list allowed tools, quiet rooms, and collaboration between language departments and disability services before the semester starts. Student voice should inform design; learners can often name barriers more precisely than checklists. Inclusive EFL is thus simultaneously a classroom craft and a governance problem.

Conclusion

Teaching English as a foreign language in higher education can no longer assume a single cognitive, sensory, and educational pathway into the classroom. Diverse learning needs are ordinary. The evidence reviewed here supports a design-first response grounded in Universal Design for Learning, supplemented by differentiated tasks and profile-sensitive multisensory techniques. Multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression make communicative aims reachable without lowering them. Assessment must be rebuilt so that it samples language knowledge rather than decoding speed, social improvisation, or physical endurance. Technology expands access only when platforms themselves are

accessible. Universities that confine inclusion to individual retrofitting will continue to lose capable students at the point of the exam. Programs that redesign materials, interaction,

and evaluation together can treat variability as the starting condition of tertiary EFL rather than as an exception to be managed at the margins.

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