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# INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING



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# THE OUP ELT EXPERT PANEL

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- Policymakers
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- School owners
- Directors of Studies
- Head teachers
- Teachers

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(IN COLLABORATION WITH RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT ERICKSON)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

English has become a global lingua franca and is widely perceived as a prerequisite for success in many areas of life. However, language learners with special educational needs may find that they are disadvantaged by the way their learning environment interacts with their individual differences. Such language learners include both 'neurodiverse' learners (those with specific learning difficulties) and those who experience social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). An attainment gap can develop between these learners and their peers which only increases during the school years. Bridging this attainment gap is at the core of the inclusion agenda developed by international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD to promote the implementation of inclusive educational systems in which all learners are actively engaged in learning and can reach their potential.

Learning an additional language can present significant challenges to learners with special educational needs. Consequently, the English language teacher may even be the first to notice indicators of neurodiversity or SEBD. At the same time, the English language classroom can provide the ideal environment for addressing these challenges. Through its long association with learner-centred communicative methodologies, the English language classroom offers many opportunities to implement inclusive practices which allow all learners to

participate fully and achieve success. This unique combination of challenges and opportunities compels the English language teaching community to lead in developing and implementing inclusive practices.

The implementation of inclusive practices requires support and leadership at an institutional level. All school staff need support for the collaboration and cooperation involved in developing an inclusive learning environment. School management also has a vital role to play in providing continuous professional development for teachers in inclusive practices. Equipped to establish an inclusive ethos in their classes, teachers can make small adjustments to classroom practice and learning materials which meet the needs of all their learners.

This paper outlines the development of approaches to inclusive education and discusses the characteristics of some types of neurodiversity and SEBD and their impact on language learning. It suggests aspects of continuous professional development that would benefit English language teachers, and provides guidelines for inclusive practices in the use of learning materials. It also explores accessibility with regard to assessment and testing. Finally, it advocates collaboration between stakeholders in the development of inclusive education, from those in the classroom to those involved in educational policymaking.





# 01



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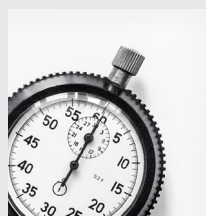
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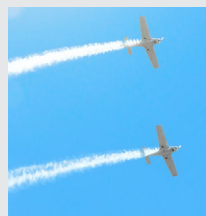
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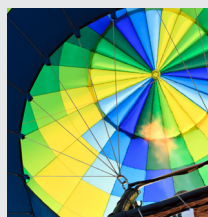
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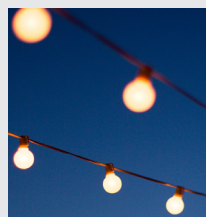
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# INTRODUCTION



The English language has become a global lingua franca in our 21st-century world.<sup>1</sup> It is used across vast domains of activity: from education, business, and international politics, to travel, tourism, and many daily interactions. As a result, English is widely perceived as a prerequisite for success in many areas of life. At the same time, the learning of English can present significant challenges to many learners: there are an estimated 800 million children worldwide whose cognitive development and educational attainment are affected by a range of conditions stemming from biological, environmental, and psychosocial causes.<sup>2</sup> These learners can be at a disadvantage pedagogically, and at risk of experiencing an ever-increasing attainment gap between themselves and their peers. International organizations such as the European Commission and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognize the importance of closing this attainment gap,<sup>3</sup> and many countries are working to achieve this by adopting inclusive approaches in their education systems.

## ESTABLISHING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE EDUCATION

In this paper, Oxford University Press ELT seeks to make a contribution to the development and implementation of inclusive language education systems. With this paper, we aim to provide support and recommendations for English language teachers, teacher trainers, materials developers, and other language professionals who are interested in creating an inclusive learning environment. We also provide information on the opportunities and challenges inherent to the language learning classroom for **neurodiverse** language learners (namely, those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and those with **social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)**, which may be a consequence of neurodiversity or of environmental factors alone.

Two main considerations compel the English language teaching (ELT) community to lead in this endeavour: firstly, the opportunities afforded by the communicative methodologies used in ELT; secondly, the challenges that

language learning presents, the English language in particular.

The communicative methodologies and materials commonly used in English language classrooms promote a largely learner-centred and interactive learning environment, in contrast to the more traditional teacher-led methods often used in other subjects. Communicative ELT activities can sometimes highlight communication or social interaction difficulties. At the same time, the English language classroom is an environment which is particularly suitable for inclusive practices because of the opportunities it provides for promoting cooperation between learners.

With regards to the challenges of language learning, neurodiverse learners may experience several difficulties if they have reduced phonological awareness (the awareness of the sound structure of words) and working memory (the type of short-term memory needed for processing and combining information). Difficulties in these areas affect word-decoding and the comprehension and production of written and spoken language.<sup>4</sup> The English language is particularly challenging in this regard, as



# The communicative and collaborative approaches in language teaching offer valuable opportunities for inclusive learning.

JUDIT KORMOS

the written language only partly reflects pronunciation and there is often no one-to-one correspondence between sounds and letters.

These two aspects of ELT mean that neurodiverse learners and those with SEBD often find that their existing learning strategies are not adequate to cope with the extra challenges of learning English as a second or foreign language, and specific learning difficulties can become apparent in a way that was not detected when learners were learning their own or other languages with more regular writing systems. For this reason, English language teachers are sometimes the first to identify underlying neurodiversity and SEBD in their learners, and may need to take a lead in raising the awareness of other members of staff in the school or college. As English language teachers are often specialized in communicative methodologies, they have experience in facilitating supportive collaboration between learners. This can put English language teachers in a strong starting position to implement inclusive practices.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THIS PAPER

This paper explores aspects of inclusive practice in six sections.

The first section traces the development of approaches to inclusive education, as part of a worldwide move towards a more inclusive society, as outlined in the 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement and subsequently developed by the European Union and global agencies.<sup>5</sup> It includes a brief discussion of the terminology used in the field and gives a definition of an ethos of inclusion, based on a principle of equity, followed by an overview of the benefits that inclusive education can bring.

The second section discusses the characteristics of some of the most commonly encountered types of neurodiversity and SEBD, and how they impact on language learning. It is important to emphasize that assigning a diagnostic label to a student with difficulties is the job of a qualified assessor rather than a teacher. However, teachers can benefit from knowing about some of the characteristics of neurodiversity and SEBD, as heightened awareness can lead to recognition of the need to provide support and to ask for a referral to a qualified assessor if necessary.

The third section focuses on the importance of support and continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers to develop their existing skills and knowledge base. It sets out the main areas of inclusive practice that need to be explored, and emphasizes the fact that teachers will need the collaboration and cooperation of their colleagues—particularly their managers—and of learners' parents (and other caregivers) where appropriate. Teachers seeking to make their practice more inclusive will be embarking on a journey of exploration. During this journey, many different strategies and interventions may need to be implemented, monitored, reflected upon, and revised, until the best approach is found for each individual learner.

Section 4 outlines a set of guidelines for the inclusive use of learning

materials in the classroom, covering differentiation, classroom management, multisensory and multimodal learning, and learning strategies.

Assessment is an integral part of any learning process, and so Section 5 explores inclusive practice within the assessment of progress (assessment *for* learning) and the assessment of proficiency (assessment *of* learning). Providers of national and international assessments have a role to play here in offering students opportunities to demonstrate their true level of understanding and language proficiency, without being unfairly penalized for weaknesses in specific aspects of their performance that mean they cannot access the test questions and/or material.

The final section of the paper advocates the need for openness and collaboration between all the stakeholders, from those working in the classroom or training teachers, to educational management, local and national policymakers, publishers, and examining bodies. All these stakeholders need to work together with the learners and their families to ensure that the learners' voices are heard and their needs are met. This will require a commitment of time, resources, and energy from all involved.

We conclude by summarizing the key messages of the paper.



# 01

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

This section outlines approaches to inclusive education that have evolved over time, and associated terminology. It then describes an ethos of inclusion and sets out the potential benefits of an inclusive education system for all involved. Finally, it introduces the idea of implementing inclusive practices on two levels: at a general level, providing an accessible learning environment; and at an individual level, recognizing and embracing the individual differences that occur in any group.

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Inclusive practices acknowledge that everyone has different strengths and diversity is celebrated.

MARIE DELANEY

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROACHES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education was first put on the map in 1994 by the UNESCO Salamanca Statement.<sup>6</sup> This statement, a document informed by governments and international organizations worldwide, introduced a rights-based perspective to the discussion of inclusive education, putting inclusion on the agenda for educational reform.

Today, attitudes towards learner differences vary from country to country and also on an individual basis, depending on personal experience, world view, and many other factors. Traditional framing of learner differences uses the term 'disability'. While in some contexts this term has fallen out of use, its usage persists in many others; for example, in policy documents of EU agencies and the UN. It is also used in legislation. Although many neurodiverse learners with an identified specific learning difficulty would not think of themselves as having a 'disability', in many countries it is in this term that their right to an education is protected by law.

In the discussion of difference and disability, three models of understanding have evolved over time which have had a significant impact on educational

policy and practice: the medical model, the social model, and the interactional model.<sup>7</sup>

### Medical Model

The Medical Model takes a 'deficit approach' to difference and disability, seeing the problem as being within the learner only, rather than recognizing any barriers to learning within the learning environment. This model prioritizes the diagnosis of the disability or disorder, and the individual receives treatment which aims to enable them to function like most other students. Separate schooling in 'special schools', set up to cater for particular groups of learners with differences or disabilities, are a product of the medical model, and are based on a policy of segregation rather than inclusion.

### Social Model

After the Medical Model came the Social Model, which reframed disability in terms of social and environmental barriers. In the Social Model, difficulties are attributed not to the individual learner but to a mismatch between their way of working, the physical environment, the design of the curriculum and materials, and most importantly, the attitudes of the educational community. The goal here is to direct every effort towards altering

the learning environment and adapting teaching to suit the learners, rather than expecting individuals to fit into their environment.

### Interactional Model

There is a growing awareness of the importance of recognizing and understanding the individual differences of learners, and not ascribing their difficulties only to external factors. The Interactional Model, as it is called, considers the interplay between multiple factors affecting the behaviours and needs of an individual. These factors include a learner's cognitive processing capacity, individual abilities, and their personal and wider contextual circumstances. The Interactional Model recognizes that difficulties in learning are the result of an interaction between individual and environmental factors. As no two learners respond to the environment in the same way, the range of barriers they experience will be unique to them. It is the Interactional Model that informs the approach of this paper.

## TERMINOLOGY USED TO TALK ABOUT DIFFERENCE

Just as there are different models of difference and disability reflecting a range of attitudes, there are also competing discourses—ways of talking about difference and disability—that reinforce or challenge the dominant models. The use of language is fluid and it is not always possible to advise which terms will be acceptable and appropriate in any given situation. Indeed, educational professionals need to develop a wide repertoire so that they can choose which terminology to use in different contexts, with different people.

### Special educational needs and neurodiversity

The term 'special educational needs' (SEN), first used by H. M. Warnock in her influential 1978 report,<sup>8</sup> is the term that is commonly used in educational policy and institutions. Definitions of SEN vary a great deal from country to country, and even from region to region within



countries, and so this term needs to be used with an awareness that it means different things to different people.

As with all technical terms, educational professionals should consider carefully what the impact of their language choice might be, bearing in mind that the expression ‘special educational needs’ may seem negative to some people, setting these learners apart from their peers.

The term ‘neurodiversity’ is increasingly used in reference to learners with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, autism spectrum condition, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Neurodiversity embraces the idea that all human brains function differently, and some much more so than others. In the educational sphere, thinking in terms of neurodiversity recognizes that specific learning difficulties are part of human variation and need to be catered for. It shifts the emphasis from the ‘problems’ of the learner to barriers in the learning environment and the interaction between the two.<sup>9</sup>

### Terminology used in this paper

In 2007, the OECD classified different types of special educational needs into three categories.<sup>10</sup> These are:

- A.** disabilities: sensory, physical, and intellectual impairments
- B.** learning difficulties: specific learning differences such as dyslexia, and other ‘invisible’ cognitive differences which are not directly linked to socio-economic or linguistic causes, such as ADHD
- C.** disadvantages: difficulties that arise from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors.

As stated in the introduction, the communicative methodologies used in ELT and the nature of language learning (particularly of the English language) mean that the English language classroom may be the environment in which signs of OECD Categories B and C (learning difficulties and disadvantages) are first noticed: neurodiverse learners with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia may find that their existing language learning strategies are not

sufficient when learning English; and learners with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)—whether a consequence of a specific learning difficulty or of environmental factors such as loss, trauma, or neglect—may find the social interaction involved in communicative language teaching more challenging than other learners. This paper therefore focuses on learners in these two categories. Learners in Category A are likely to have had their needs identified and address, though of course the recommendations made in this paper can also benefit these learners.

For the purposes of this paper, learners who fall into Category B—with specific learning difficulties—are referred to as neurodiverse learners. We include in Category B learners with ‘high-functioning’ autism (also known as Asperger’s Syndrome), which is an autism spectrum condition in which there is no intellectual impairment. We use the term special educational needs (SEN) when referring to OECD Categories B and C.

## AN ETHOS OF INCLUSION

An ethos of inclusion is one in which all students are valued. Inclusion respects the fact that people are different, that each individual experiences learning in their own way, and that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses.

Underpinning inclusion is the principle of equity, which in education means ensuring that each learner is provided with what they need; in other words, every learner gets the accommodation or differentiation they need in order to succeed. This is distinct from equality, which is a ‘one size fits all’ approach where everybody gets the same treatment or resources. Equity is key to inclusive practice, as it guarantees that each learner is viewed and valued as an individual within the larger group.

### Inclusion versus integration

The term inclusion is used in several ways. Some people use it in a narrow way, to describe physical access to a school for all; for example, the presence of students

with disabilities in mainstream schools. Other people conceive of the term in a broader sense, to describe the process of developing strategies that meet everybody’s needs and support quality learning and participation for all. Inclusion in this broader sense can only start from an engagement of the school community in supporting learning processes for all. Achieving full inclusion is a significant challenge for educational managers, but is perhaps best conceived of as a process which schools and colleges go through, constantly evaluating and refining their systems and outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

We use the term integration to refer to students’ physical access to school and recognize that it is a necessary but insufficient step in developing inclusion. Indeed, the integration of a group of students without a change in the school ethos and practices might lead to a form of exclusion within a common setting.

In situations where students are integrated rather than fully included, teachers can become exhausted and frustrated by trying to fulfil their responsibilities within an inadequate framework. Despite this, schools and colleges in many countries remain committed to developing their inclusive provision, and teachers all around the world are seeking more information and professional development opportunities, in order to develop practical skills to build on their inclusive ethos. Inclusive teaching is founded on core values, such as those set out by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education in 2012:<sup>12</sup>

- valuing learner diversity
- supporting all learners
- working with others
- continuing personal professional development.



**Very often I found that the problem was not with the other students in the class, but with the teachers believing that they had to treat all the children the same, when, in fact, a lot of the children realized that my son needed to be treated differently from them, and they didn't think it was unfair.**

David, parent of a child with autism spectrum condition





I had quite a few positive comments from parents of children in his school, who felt that it had been good for the children to meet and understand people with different conditions, and it also means that he is a better accepted member of our local community.

MELANIE, PARENT OF A CHILD WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION, DYSLEXIA, AND DYSPRAXIA  
MARIE DELANEY

## THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSION

There are many arguments for the development of a more inclusive education system, including:

- the moral justness of offering parity of opportunity to all learners to fulfil their potential
- the advantages to society of building cohesive communities (increasing the sense of well-being that stems from living in a supportive community)
- the pedagogical benefits for all learners.

The pedagogical benefits of inclusive education have been explored by several researchers in education. Research by the European Commission shows that for children who are deemed to have 'additional support' needs (SEN), there are some advantages to being educated in a mainstream school, in terms of how well they do in formal exams and in integrating socially. It is also worth noting that children who are not considered to have additional support needs benefit from being taught alongside children with SEN in two main ways:<sup>13</sup>

- they are exposed to and become more appreciative of diversity in general, and thus develop better social interaction skills and empathy
- they benefit from their teachers' efforts to provide an inclusive environment, which makes the curriculum more accessible for all learners.

## A TWO-LEVEL APPROACH TO INCLUSION

As stated by UNESCO, 'Inclusion is a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners'.<sup>14</sup> This paper advocates a two-level approach to inclusion: the general level and the individual level.

### General level

At the general level, teachers need an understanding of the most common kinds of difficulties that learners with SEN often experience in the classroom. Teachers can then work towards developing a classroom culture and

environment that will make the learning experience more accessible. This in turn will engender a feeling of belonging to a learning community, in which individual differences are seen 'not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for democratizing and enriching learning'.<sup>15</sup>

### Individual level

At the individual level, teachers work with each learner to identify any barriers that they are experiencing as a result of the interplay between environmental factors and the learner's neurodiversity. Once these are identified, teachers can put specific interventions in place and differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of the individuals they are working with. In Appendix 1, there are suggestions for interventions, or practical responses, to various indications that students may be experiencing barriers to learning. This will enable all learners to study independently and develop their own strategies, which can also be transferred beyond education to other areas of their lives.

## SUMMARY

This section has offered an overview of some of the different perspectives on barriers to learning and the terminology used to discuss these, and considered the benefits of inclusive practices at both a general and an individual level. The next section provides an overview of the most commonly identified causes of difficulties in language learning.

# 02

## COMMONLY IDENTIFIED CAUSES OF DIFFICULTIES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

To help teachers recognize barriers to learning, this section presents key characteristics of some of the most commonly identified indications of neurodiversity and social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It is meant to empower teachers by raising awareness of possible underlying issues that may be hindering language learning. This awareness can help teachers develop ideas on how to address their learners' difficulties, and know when a referral to an assessor may be appropriate. It is not meant to encourage diagnosis by teachers who are not specifically qualified to do so.

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Inclusive practices aim to remove barriers so all students have equal chances to learn successfully.

JUDIT KORMOS

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In the introduction, it was suggested that language teachers are in a unique position when it comes to identifying some **cognitive differences**, because neurodiverse learners may experience more significant challenges than their peers when learning a new language. In the case of English, the irregular writing system presents particular challenges which may bring to light unusual processing patterns. In addition, students with communication difficulties can find interactive methodologies challenging and can be unsure of how to regulate their behaviour.

Students who are facing additional challenges because of the nature of the subject matter or the interaction required of them are likely to experience low self-esteem. They might withdraw from the class emotionally and psychologically, appearing aloof or disengaged. Teachers may observe them behaving in a range of ways:

- daydreaming or wasting time
- disrupting the class routine (thus drawing attention away from their poor academic performance)
- over-compensating (working extremely hard to try to complete the tasks, and working through breaks and/or into the night to try to keep up; as this is not sustainable, it can result in 'burn out', with these students showing a lack of energy and motivation, even falling ill).

It is important that teachers can get to know their learners, to be alert to changes in behaviour from lesson to lesson as well as over the course of a term. If teachers do become concerned about a student, they should not

immediately assign a diagnostic label, but rather monitor the situation and if necessary refer to a qualified assessor. In the meantime, they can start to develop and adapt activities and materials to work around the difficulties.

As noted in Section 1, this paper focuses on the individual differences in **cognitive function** which fall into OECD Categories B and C: specifically, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, high-functioning autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and SEBD. It is impossible to state with any certainty how many people experience difficulties due to cognitive differences; many people are never formally identified, and the identification criteria vary from country to country.<sup>16</sup> For the occurrence of dyslexia, the International Dyslexia Association, the European Dyslexia Association, and the British Dyslexia Association all estimate the figure to be somewhere between 10–15% of the population of their respective areas, with around 4–5% experiencing quite severe difficulties.

There is also a high degree of overlap between the characteristics of certain learning difficulties, suggesting that co-occurrence is the norm rather than the exception;<sup>17</sup> people identified as having dyslexia will often also show some indications of dyspraxia, for example, or of ADHD.

Appendix 1 provides a list of common behaviours that might be connected with the situations described in this section, along with some suggestions for their accommodation in the language classroom.

## DYSLEXIA

This is a cognitive developmental difference which is lifelong in its effects. Because it affects **working memory**, **phonological awareness**, and **speed of processing**, dyslexia can have a particularly noticeable effect on the development of literacy practices, and in some countries it is defined in this way. For example, in the USA it is sometimes referred to as a 'reading disability' or a 'specific learning disorder'.<sup>18</sup> However, difficulties with reading, spelling, and writing are only the most easily visible features of the underlying differences in cognitive function, which produce obvious discrepancies between oral and written proficiency. People with dyslexia usually also experience difficulties in following instructions, organizing their ideas, and maintaining coherence in both spoken and written texts, and their abilities in these areas often do not match up to their other skills and talents.

In terms of learning a foreign language in a formal setting, the difficulties experienced by students who are identified as having dyslexia are likely to include:

- a discrepancy between oral and written work
- being unable to recognize and discriminate between sounds
- struggling to memorize and apply grammatical structures in context, even with practice
- needing a lot of practice to securely learn new vocabulary
- finding it hard to develop good literacy skills (e.g. accurate spelling, coherent writing, smooth line-tracking, fluent decoding, and good comprehension, including remembering what has been read)
- slower-than-typical processing of oral input and the formulation of responses
- needing to overlearn through the use of personalized strategies, accommodations, and structured practice to achieve automaticity in language use.

## DYSPRAXIA

10–15%

estimation of the population with dyslexia

4–5%

estimation of the population with dyslexia experiencing quite severe difficulties

Sometimes referred to as a 'developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD)',<sup>19</sup> dyspraxia makes it difficult for people to plan and sequence everyday movements. It can affect gross motor skills (for example, when running or dancing) and/or fine motor skills (for example, when using a pencil or playing a musical instrument). There might also be an impact on the articulation of speech, as the small precise movements of the lips, tongue, and jaw may not be sufficiently well co-ordinated. In common with dyslexia, there may be issues around speed of processing, working memory, and organization, as well as sequencing. Some people with dyspraxia experience heightened (or reduced) sensitivity to the environment (temperature, noise, light, textures, etc.), also characteristic of autistic spectrum condition. Balance and spatial awareness are often affected, making a person appear physically clumsy or awkward, as well as temporal awareness (the ability to perceive how much time has gone by, or to estimate how long a task might take). In the language classroom, the main areas of challenge are likely to be:

- speech and language difficulties
- developing legible handwriting (relative to age peers), particularly if the target language uses a script that is not yet familiar
- pronouncing sounds correctly and in the correct order
- organizing the work space (having text books, notebooks, dictionary, stationery, etc. to hand and within a confined area)
- working quickly enough to complete tasks on time
- navigating the built environment (e.g. finding the way to a different location).

## DYSGRAPHIA

Although closely related to dyslexia and dyspraxia, this is a term that is usually applied when there is a specific difficulty in producing legible and coherent written text but other language skills are not affected. Its prevalence varies from country to country depending on assessment norms; for example, in the UK it is almost never identified, as assessors would normally attribute the difficulties to either dyslexia or dyspraxia, or a combination of the two. However, some people who have no identifiable difficulties in the areas of speed of processing, working memory, or phonological awareness, or in fine motor control or spatial awareness generally, still experience significant barriers when they come to write a text. In the context of learning a new language, we might see the following difficulties:

- illegible handwriting (relative to age and first-language peers)
- inability to maintain lines or margins (even when writing on lined paper, in some cases)
- inaccurate spelling or grammar
- incoherent structure of the text (i.e. ideas are presented in a way that appears illogical, or without seeming to connect).

## AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION

Autism spectrum condition is a wide-ranging term, spanning from severe to mild. Mild autism is also known as high-functioning autism. As awareness and understanding of autism improves, more people are being identified as having some degree of high-functioning autism which causes difficulties in learning, and in activities of daily living. The key elements that indicate any autistic profile are:<sup>20</sup>

- difficulties in social interaction and social communication: for example, in maintaining appropriate eye contact, proximity, and physical contact; in turn-taking, making appropriate contributions to conversations, and understanding the underlying meaning of other people's contributions
- limited or repetitive patterns of behaviour or interests: for example, difficulties in thinking flexibly, or coping with change; an interest in one topic bordering on obsession.

In common with dyspraxia, autism can also be characterized by increased sensitivity to the environment. Learners with high-functioning autism might have difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships, as they might answer questions factually but abruptly, with little mitigation of unpleasant or unwelcome information, or display a very literal understanding of what is said (that is, taking words in their most basic or usual sense with no understanding of the speaker's intention in context).

When learning a language, the greatest difficulties are likely to be noticed around:

- understanding other people's communicative intentions (e.g. irony, metaphor, humour)
- understanding the cues for taking turns
- using idiomatic language appropriate to the audience



- tolerating inconsistencies in the language (e.g. exceptions to grammatical rules, or words that have more than one meaning)
- role-playing situations from an unfamiliar perspective (e.g. '...but I'm not a shop-keeper!')

## ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

The key characteristics of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) include difficulties in focusing and maintaining attention, controlling impulses, and harnessing excessive energy for productive activities.

There are said to be three different ways in which these characteristics can present themselves: predominantly inattentive presentation (less excessive energy), predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation (more attentional control), and combined presentation (roughly equal degrees of difficulty with controlling attention and harnessing excessive energy).<sup>21</sup> People with ADHD may also experience difficulty with regulating their emotions, swinging from elation to fury or despair in a matter of minutes. As they mature and learn to regulate their behaviour better, some of these characteristics tend to become less noticeable; but like the other cognitive differences described above, ADHD does not ever fully disappear. Many young people are prescribed medication to reduce the effects of ADHD, and while some find this helpful, others prefer to explore behavioural interventions as well or instead.

Teachers are likely to notice the following difficulties in the classroom:

- loss of concentration when reading/ listening for extended periods, especially if there are no visual cues or practical input
- difficulty or uncertainty in social interactions, especially taking turns in conversations or games
- difficulties in following instructions and classroom conventions (e.g. putting up a hand and waiting to be called on to answer a question)
- working too quickly to maintain accuracy
- excessive energy manifesting as fidgeting, restlessness, or moving around the room.



## SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)

All of the above learning difficulties may result at some stage in students with specific learning difficulties experiencing social isolation and negative emotional issues, due to the challenges that they are facing. The combination of the environmental stresses and the students' own reactions to their difficulties may result in low self-esteem, which could manifest as behaviours that are disruptive to others and/or self-harmful. This might well have a negative effect on their relationships with their peers, and make them vulnerable to bullying.<sup>22</sup>

There are also some students who experience SEBD without a learning difficulty being the cause, sometimes as a result of loss, neglect, or trauma. An uncertain, inconsistent, or even dangerous home environment could lead to increased stress levels, anxiety, and impulsivity, as well as limiting the development of empathy and logical reasoning. This might result in behaviours characterized by mood swings, aggression, a lot of noise or movement, and inappropriate reactions, such as trying to exert power over their classmates, or being unwilling to wait their turn in class. Similar to other learning difficulties, especially ADHD, SEBD is likely to present additional challenges to language learning, including:

- not being able to manage emotions around learning (e.g. frustration at not knowing something)
- increased general anxiety or feelings of vulnerability, which mean that the learner may not be able to concentrate on the work
- avoidance of failure (e.g. reluctance to use new language or try new activities)
- difficulties in listening to and following instructions
- uncertainty around organizational and problem-solving tasks
- difficulties in social interaction, especially in terms of taking turns, trusting, and collaborating with work partners
- difficulties with completing work on time, and/or accurately.

## MIGRANT AND REFUGEE STUDENTS

One group of learners who merit a specific mention here are recently arrived learners whose language background is different from the majority in the classroom—particularly migrant and refugee students. Their initial barriers to learning may be largely linguistic, cultural, or emotional. Linguistic barriers may arise if a recently arrived learner has nobody in the class who shares their first language, and little or no proficiency in the language of the classroom or the target language, leaving them feeling isolated and confused. Clearly, this is not the same as having a cognitive difference like the ones described above, but some of the effects and consequences may be similar, at least temporarily.

In addition to these linguistic challenges, the impact on learning of relocation and the possible emotional trauma that a refugee or migrant learner is experiencing cannot be overstated.<sup>23</sup> In many cases, families will have been separated, leaving the learner wondering about the well-being of close relatives. Then there is the additional challenge of

adjusting to a new physical environment, as well as a new educational culture with some differing expectations, and there may well be uncertainty about how long they will be staying before being resettled elsewhere. Teachers should therefore not be surprised to see these students experiencing any (or several) of the difficulties listed above, and should respond accordingly. Whether or not newly arrived learners have cognitive differences in addition to facing the challenges of relocation, the barriers to learning they experience must be addressed.

The strategies listed in Appendix 1 would also be appropriate for migrant and refugee learners as well as learners with SEN.

## POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES

Recognizing the specific educational needs of learners need not be only in terms of the difficulties experienced. On the contrary, it is important to look for each student's strengths and to find out about their interests, and to draw on them in the language learning process. The variety of individual differences

About 13–14% of the school population nationwide has a handicapping condition that qualifies them for special education. Current studies indicate that one half of all the students who qualify for special education are classified as having a learning disability (LD) (6–7%). About 85% of those students have a primary learning disability in reading and language processing.



is enormous, and identifying learners' strengths and finding out about their interests is a key part of getting to know them well, letting them know they are valued, and ensuring that their individual characteristics do not get reduced to a diagnostic label.

Without wishing to generalize, there are some common strengths that teachers could observe in students with SEN. For example, learners with autism spectrum condition sometimes have excellent memories for facts and rules, making them confident in the grammatical aspects of the language. They may have a deep interest in (and knowledge of) a particular topic, which can be directed towards learning vocabulary and project work. Students with ADHD often have a lot of energy which, if channelled into learning using engaging and varied tasks, can help them to keep working for longer. In practical activities, such as drama or art projects, their enthusiasm and energy

can have a very motivating effect on their peers, too.

All learners benefit from a structured and well-organized learning environment, but those who are experiencing barriers to learning will appreciate it all the more. Students with SEBD in particular might respond well to openness and support from their teachers, with whom they can then develop a relationship of trust and respect.<sup>24</sup> Migrant and refugee learners may find that, given a safe and predictable environment, they can contribute their experiences to the classroom, helping their peers to understand and value the differences—and common ground—found between languages and cultures.

Many neurodiverse learners may have innate strengths in visual and/or spatial reasoning and therefore find visually organized activities engaging and accessible. Some may be especially good at perceiving and remembering abstract relationships represented

through the use of colour or diagrams. Others may find they are skilled in holistic thinking (for example, being able to hold an overall view of how something works), enabling them to solve problems in creative ways.

Finally, learners who have worked hard to learn often develop deep reserves of determination and can show great perseverance in their learning.<sup>25</sup> By noticing and praising learners' strengths, and taking an interest in the things that interest them, teachers reinforce the message that everybody is valued for their individual achievements, individual differences, and positive qualities.

## SUMMARY

This section has offered an overview of the main challenges that some of the most commonly identified barriers to learning can bring. The intention is to help teachers understand what the diagnostic labels might mean in the classroom, if any of their learners have been formally assessed, and to appreciate the possible causes of the difficulties they are having. Migrant and refugee learners are mentioned, not because being new in a country is associated with a specific learning difficulty, but because the impact of relocation can cause social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, particularly in the early stages of settling in. Understanding the possible underlying causes of students' difficulties gives teachers a direction to follow in equipping themselves to support their learners. The next section outlines other aspects of inclusive education that are useful for teachers to know about as part of their continuous professional development.



# 03 SUPPORT AND CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

In the introduction it was established that inclusive practice needs to be planned on two levels simultaneously: the development of a generally inclusive environment with a culture of mutual respect and support, alongside work on an individual level. This section sets out some ways in which teachers could enhance their existing expertise and develop their practice on both levels, in line with the European Agency's core value of continuing personal professional development (see page 5).<sup>26</sup> It suggests some topics for exploration, as well as the modes of accessing professional development opportunities.

## DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

There is a long tradition in English language education of using student-centred methodologies, such as communicative language teaching (CLT) or a task-based approach. These methodologies, which rely on student-to-student communication, foster collaboration and cooperation between learners. When it comes to developing inclusive practices, English language teachers often have experience and knowledge to draw on, and they can build upon the CLT training already received and the teaching skills they have already developed in the classroom. There is a wide range of

topics that teachers could usefully explore in their CPD, which would lead to the development of a more inclusive ethos in the classroom. These include the topics outlined below.

### Understanding the principles underpinning inclusive education

- the aims and ethos of inclusive education
- the benefits to all learners of being in an inclusive learning environment
- the difference between inclusion and integration (i.e. engagement versus access)
- teaching and learning methods that value learners' diversity.

### Making inclusive choices

There are decisions to be made at the stages of planning the course, planning each lesson, and delivering the lesson in the classroom. Reflection on the results of these choices should then inform future choices. These are choices regarding:

- the methodology (e.g. interactive and participatory approaches)
- the range of teaching techniques (the activities that the students will engage with)
- the range of materials (especially multisensory activities and multimodal resources that reflect and celebrate the diversity within the group)
- the classroom environment (ensuring that the lighting, temperature, and

noise levels are comfortable for everyone, as far as possible)

- classroom management (making sure all instructions are clear and explicit, and establishing a shared and democratic system of rules)
- the assessment of progress (allowing students to demonstrate their learning in different formats; giving explicit and constructive feedback, focusing on one or two areas for development).

### Raising awareness regarding issues of diversity and inclusion

#### With students

- initiating self-exploratory discussions in the classroom; for example, creating a values-led class contract with each class, and encouraging students to compare their responses to different tasks or challenges.

#### With colleagues

- sharing experiences in the staff room; for example, informal conversations to compare ideas about how to respond to the barriers to learning encountered by some learners
- organizing formal CPD events in the school; for example, inviting a speaker in to offer input on a particular aspect of inclusive practice
- providing a forum for parents to meet and share experiences; for example, setting up a private area on the school website for online discussions

## DIFFERENTIATING TEACHING FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

Differentiation is the practical response to individual differences in the way students learn. Even in an environment where many barriers have been minimized, students will still need to work at their own pace, and in their own ways. Differentiated teaching involves developing a general understanding of neurodiversity and finding out as much as possible about how each individual in the group learns so that learners can be provided with options which allow them to develop greater autonomy.

### Understanding neurodiversity

In order to understand an individual learner, teachers need to be able to do the following:

- recognize the non-typical behaviours and learning patterns that may indicate the presence of neurodiversity
- understand the common features of different types of barriers to learning
- know when to refer to an appropriate professional for a full evaluation (in order to apply for additional resources or exam access arrangements).

### Developing learner autonomy through differentiation

Ideally, differentiated teaching provides students with options that they could choose from—with guidance, if necessary—so that they also develop autonomy and engage critically with their learning. To help their learners develop autonomy, teachers need to consider what they could offer in terms of materials, tasks, expectations, support, and classroom organization:

- **materials:** different texts and/or different text types; having different formats available
- **tasks:** allowing students to choose which items to tackle (or to tackle first); allocating different roles in group work
- **expectations:** recognizing that not everybody will produce the same amount of work in class; accepting that often the learning process is more important than the finished product
- **support:** allowing students to use technology or reference materials

### CLASS CONTRACT

## IN THIS CLASS, WE:

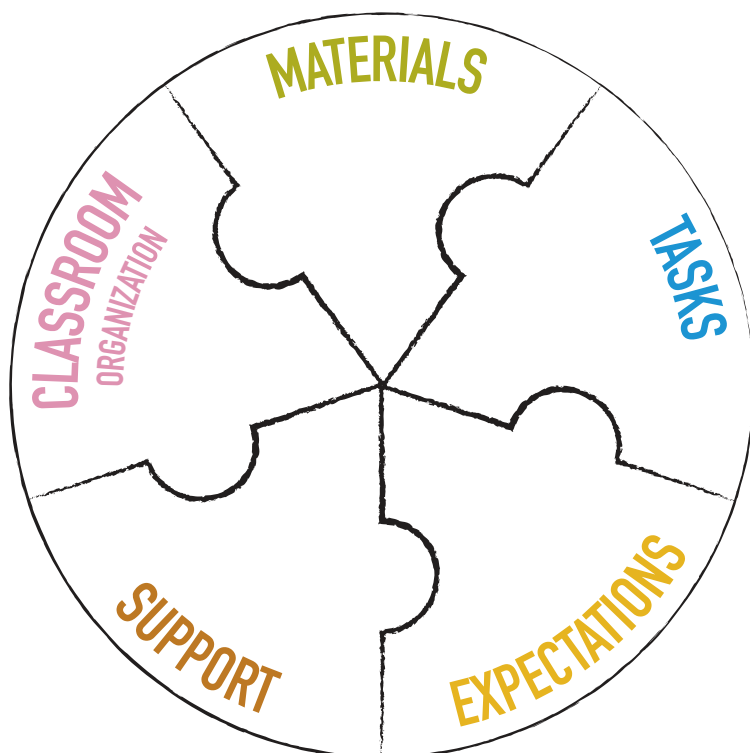
✓ LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

✓ WORK TOGETHER

✓ SHOW RESPECT

✓ WAIT FOR OUR TURN





to varying degrees; setting up groupwork so that there is a balance of abilities and skills; spending more time with students who need more encouragement, or clarification, at particular points in the lesson

- **classroom organization:** creating a learning environment in which students can be doing different tasks within a shared space

For more information on these points, see Section 4.

It is important to note that there is no single strategy or intervention that will work for every learner. The complex interactions between the individuals' cognitive profiles, their personal circumstances, and the learning environment mean that teachers and other professionals working with learners with special educational needs (SEN) need to take each situation on a case-by-case basis and not assume that something that has worked before will work in every case. With experience, though, teachers can often find a useful starting point from which to experiment with, reflect on, and refine their techniques.

## MODES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Formal CPD

Teachers are busy people, and gaining access to high-quality continuous professional development (CPD) depends on balancing many different responsibilities. In recognition of this, providers of CPD are beginning to offer a range of options that teachers can choose from, to find a pathway that suits them. This could mean teachers attending a face-to-face course at a local college in the evenings, or accessing a course from an institution in another town via the internet. There are several organizations offering online courses on topics related to inclusive practices, and some are free to access. Some starting points are provided in the *Further reading and resources* section at the end of this paper.

### Informal CPD

More informally, CPD can involve joining a local teachers' organization and meeting once a month to discuss issues around inclusion, or simply setting aside a lunchtime each week to share experiences and ideas with colleagues,

whether face-to-face, via video conferencing, or in an online chat room.

### Action research

Very powerful personal and professional development can be accomplished through an individual action research project, with or without external resources of input.<sup>27</sup> In these kinds of projects, a teacher would identify an aspect of practice that she or he was interested in improving—for example, supporting a student to develop greater attentional control. After thinking through the possible reasons for that issue arising, an intervention would be devised—for example, encouraging the learner to maintain concentration on a task for one minute in the first instance, using a sand timer as a visual prompt, and building up the time gradually. After a short period of employing this strategy, the teacher would evaluate how well it has been working, reflect on what the factors were that determined its effectiveness or otherwise (for example, time of day, the manner in which it was introduced, the position of the sand timer, etc.), and why those choices were made. Some modifications to the technique might be required before continuing with the intervention, and this cycle would continue until the strategy was successful for that learner.


## SUPPORT FROM THE PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

There is a lot that individual teachers can do independently to develop their own practice in respect of the aspects of pedagogy listed in this section. However, in order to access and make the most of CPD opportunities that arise, teachers need support from and collaboration with those they work with most closely. These include institutions, colleagues, and professional bodies.

### Institutions

Usually managers will need to agree to teachers changing schedules or taking time out to attend training, and also to provide funding where possible to cover costs (in some cases, this might include

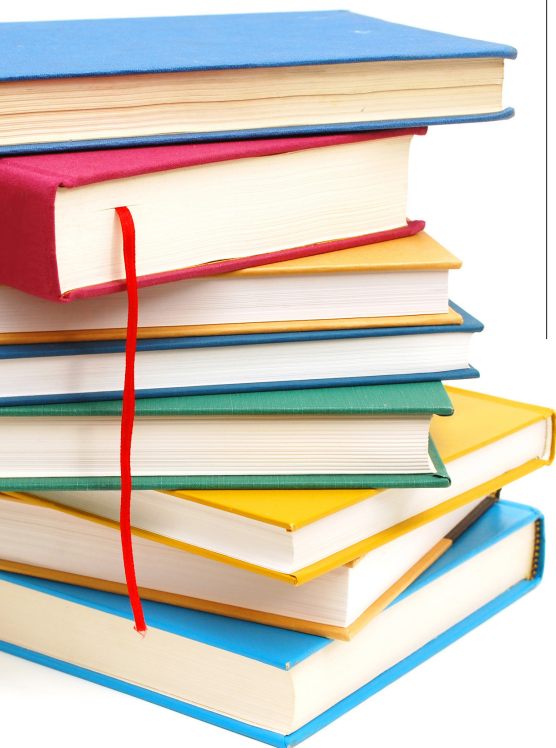




One of my Year 3 learners was a pleasant boy who, when the topic caught his imagination, would have great ideas and contribute in class discussions. But he seemed to lose all concentration when it came to following instructions for follow-up activities, which I thought was him switching off. Now that I know he is dyslexic, and have learned a bit about dyslexia, I understand that he simply couldn't retain the information—it wasn't that he couldn't be bothered. Now I take care to break up my instructions into one thing at a time, so that he—and all my other learners—can carry out the instructions step by step. It was a simple thing to put into practice, and I've seen a marked improvement in his engagement with activities since I started this.

Penny, Primary EFL teacher, Spain





travel expenses and materials as well as course fees). In return, managers may want to see evidence of improvements in student attainment or retention, which teachers would need to gather and present.

### Colleagues

Sometimes it might be necessary to ask colleagues to provide cover while another teacher is on a training course. In return for this kind of support, many teachers share the information they have gained with their team. Colleagues might also be asked to act as collaborators, participants, or informants in small-scale research projects, or simply to act as sounding boards for ideas about implementing new strategies.

### Professional bodies

In most countries there are local and national organizations which exist to support teachers. They might be asked to provide a forum for teachers interested in certain topics to meet up, or to organize talks on a specific issue. There are also international organizations which can put teachers in touch with colleagues in other countries who are working on similar issues. For example, IATEFL now has a special interest group called *Inclusive Practices and SEN*, which provides support and advice to teachers working with learners who have additional needs. Many professional bodies produce a newsletter or journal for their members, and might well have an interest in featuring a report of a research project, or a reflective piece based on a teacher's experiences.

Specific training for teachers is necessary, and more effective alongside hands-on experience.

MICHELE DALOISO

## SUMMARY

In this section some suggestions were made as to how teachers might make the most of any opportunities available for developing their own inclusive practices. Progression towards an inclusive education system will take time, resources, leadership from management and local authorities, and commitment from teachers and students. In order to be sustainable, it requires both bottom-up and top-down change: ideas and engagement within the classroom coupled with managerial leadership and support.



# 04

## GUIDELINES FOR THE INCLUSIVE USE OF LEARNING MATERIALS



In this section we offer a set of guidelines to help teachers make informed decisions when using ELT materials for an inclusive classroom. ELT courses come with an array of print and digital components that aim to enrich the teaching and learning experience, offering flexibility to students, who can access content in alternative modes. Guided by a principle of equity, teachers can make the most of the materials available to offer an inclusive learning experience to their learners by following guidelines on differentiation, classroom management, multisensory and multimodal learning, and learning strategies.

### APPLY DIFFERENTIATION PRINCIPLES TO LEARNING MATERIALS AND TASKS

At the heart of successful differentiation is teachers knowing their learners well; that is, understanding their potential and the challenges they face. Differentiation is a skill that teachers exercise every time they teach a group of learners that they know: whenever they choose a learner to answer a question, or put learners in groups or pairs, they are making decisions based on what they already know about their learners and what will help them complete a task successfully.

With regard to ELT materials, there is a lot that teachers can do to make the most of what is available to them and their learners, differentiating their teaching in the ways they use the materials and manage the classroom. In many cases, small changes in the way coursebook activities are set up can make a big difference to neurodiverse learners.



Language teachers can provide accessible inputs for everyone, differentiating tasks and materials so that every learner can be involved.

MICHELE DALOISO

### Differentiating the format of materials

For most learners, coursebooks are visually appealing and interesting, with the illustrations, colour, and layout providing a stimulating basis for a lesson. For a minority of learners who find visual processing difficult, such as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who do not always know what to pay attention to, learners with dyslexia, and those with high-functioning autism, who can become overwhelmed, this same material can in fact be visually overburdening. The teacher can differentiate by introducing some modifications to help their students. A simple low-tech solution such as offering 'text windows' (two L-shaped pieces of card), can help learners to focus on one part of the page at a time. A frequently used intervention for some learners with dyslexia is the use of coloured paper for printing out handouts. Alternatively, there may be digital solutions using online resources, such as specially formatted versions of reading exercises, or audio files of reading texts that can be slowed down.

If these resources can be shared with the whole class, teachers can accomplish differentiation whilst encouraging

students to exercise some degree of autonomy in class and at home. Since there is no single solution that works for all learners, the teacher should try out different solutions, inviting feedback from the learners. This will nurture an environment of trust and openness, allowing suitable solutions to be identified for each learner.

### Making activities inclusive

In order to ensure that ELT activities are inclusive, teachers can work on various technical skills and strategic skills with their learners, which work on bottom-up and top-down processes needed for success in tasks focused on the reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar (see Appendix 2). More information can be found in *Supporting Learners with Dyslexia in the ELT Classroom*.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, there are ways that teachers can maximize the accessibility of coursebook activities for their learners. Some activities place a high burden on working memory, which can be particularly problematic for neurodiverse learners. For example, a 'listen and do' activity with a linguistic output that involves summarizing, paraphrasing, or translating, or a listening and reading activity, which requires learners to process great deal at once linguistically, making it inaccessible for those who experience difficulties with working memory and phonological awareness. The activity can be made more accessible if the 'do' part requires learners to demonstrate their understanding by means of a *non-linguistic* output, such as colouring in, completing a map, or choosing a picture.

### Adapted materials

Sometimes learners will benefit from using adapted materials in which the content has been simplified and/or reorganized, with less information on the page. It is important that any adapted materials used are based as far as possible on the original and allow for integrated use. The materials need to be used flexibly and inclusively: if treated as an extra classroom resource available to all learners, they are materials like

any other and all learners may choose to use them at times. This avoids the creation of a subgroup of students with SEN working alone on different materials and the damage to social cohesion that this could entail. An inclusive way of working with adapted materials is to involve learners in creating them; for example, engaging students in creating a do-it-yourself grammar revision sheet or glossary.

### Collaborative adaptation of materials

Learners can be invited to work in groups to prepare resources for use in class, such as simplified summaries, visual mappings of grammar content, and illustrated sheets about the content they have covered. This both consolidates knowledge for learners who have already learned a topic from the coursebook and introduces it to those who are not yet familiar with it.

## MANAGE THE CLASSROOM INCLUSIVELY

### Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning opportunities, through pairwork and groupwork, help to create an inclusive ethos. The range of collaborative tasks extends from short activities such as transactional dialogues, to more substantial tasks such as project work, presenting learners with a variety of opportunities to sustain this inclusive ethos.

The teacher can adapt task procedures in the learning materials to create collaborative pairwork or groupwork opportunities, for example using a Think–Pair–Share format.<sup>29</sup> This will be especially beneficial for students who need more time to process a response.

Students who find social interaction difficult can be encouraged to work with one or two other people initially, in relatively short activities that they will find comfortable. They may also benefit from some quiet time to work alone, and somewhere to go to do this.

Peer tutoring is a collaborative learning activity which involves reciprocal teaching between learners. It

## THINK-PAIR-SHARE

The class are given two minutes to think, and one minute to discuss in pairs.\*

Then the pairs are asked to share their ideas with the class.

\* timing depends on the type and difficulty of the task

has positive effects both on the student who plays the role of tutor, and on the student who is being taught. It can also produce significant progress with regard to interpersonal relationships, and to the motivation and self-esteem of the students. The role of tutor needs to be rotated amongst the class members, giving every student the opportunity to play the role.

### Managing the environment

It is useful for collaborative learning if the teacher can organize the layout of the classroom effectively to facilitate interaction opportunities; for example, putting chairs into pairs, or laying out the tables and chairs for small groupwork or individual quiet working time.

Once they know their learners, the teacher can also find ways to minimize distraction; for example, seating learners away from the window if they are likely to get overstimulated. They might take the same approach to sensitivities regarding the type of lighting and the temperature in the room, to ensure that every student feels comfortable in the physical environment.

### Facilitating communication

It is easy for some learners to 'get lost' during activities, but there are straightforward strategies for keeping the class together. These may be strategies around working memory; for example, staging instructions or breaking down rubrics in coursebooks so that learners do them together, one step at a time. Other strategies may help with establishing classroom routines,

## CLAP-BACK TECHNIQUE

The teachers clap a short rhythm to the class, who respond by clapping back the same rhythm. The teacher then claps another rhythm for the class to copy, and so on until the class is once again ready to listen.

where the use of non-verbal cues and signals can be effective in keeping noise and associated stress to a minimum. For example, teachers can establish a 'clap-back' routine which they can use to manage pairwork and groupwork activities, as it signals to the class that it is time to listen to the teacher.

## CREATE MULTISENSORY AND MULTIMODAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

**Multisensory activities** involve the use of more than one of the senses—most commonly in the ELT classroom: sight, hearing, and touch. Using a variety of senses simultaneously whilst focused on the same information has two advantages: the activation of different senses increases the number of routes to memory, and the use of different senses increases its potential for learner engagement. Both of these aid learning.<sup>30</sup> Successful multisensory activities do not ask the learner to perform different tasks simultaneously, as this would place extra demands on working memory. For example, a listening activity requiring simultaneous reading of another text in order to complete the task is not an example of a multisensory activity, whereas providing the audio version of a reading text is, and can help the learner decode the text.

**Multimodal resources** refer to different types of resources, typically exploiting the wide range of media that

Second language classrooms should be interactive and encourage students to get to know each other and work together.

MARIE DELANEY

is available, including digital materials such as integrated video, interactive whiteboard materials, and apps that help with vocabulary learning (for example, Quizlet) and organization of learning (for example, online diaries). Audio versions of texts allow students to listen as they read a text and thereby develop a sense of the rhythm and intonation of the language. 'Low-tech' resources such as paper-based materials and real-life objects are also valuable, as their tactile qualities help to bring the relevance of the 'real world' into the classroom.<sup>31</sup>

### Visual organizers

Language teaching is often based largely on the use of written text, but accessibility can be increased if information is presented in visual ways. Mind maps, flow charts, diagrams, and timelines are all clear and simple visual techniques which can be used to show relationships between ideas, or to summarize concepts and facts. These 'visual organizers' can support and enrich the learning experience for neurodiverse learners. For example, the traditional, verbal presentation of grammar points in tables and boxes is suited to analytical minds, but some learners may benefit more from the



use of mind maps or flow charts, which would offer a more visual and holistic representation of the same concepts. Mind maps can also be useful for identifying links between items in a vocabulary set which are otherwise presented separately. Teachers can guide learners by demonstrating how to create these visual organizers, and encouraging them to experiment and see what works best for them.

### Physical interaction with learning resources

Physical interaction with language learning resources should be encouraged as much as possible, to engage learners' visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic channels. Communicative ELT methodologies are rich in activities involving physical interaction, such as acting out a dialogue, or indicating understanding by holding up cards or responses on personal whiteboards. In addition, teachers can help learners to grasp abstract concepts involved in language learning by providing opportunities for physical interaction with resources. For example, learners can use coloured tokens or counters to discuss and map out word order. The act of physically building new sentences, and talking through those sentences as they are being built, can help learners understand the concepts being explored.<sup>32</sup>

### Songs and chants

Singing songs and chants are multisensory activities that can provide a valuable change of pace and focus. Younger learners enjoy learning through songs, and chants, which often include the use of visual aids and actions. Once the learners are familiar with them, songs and chants can be lifted out of their original context and used as part of classroom routines; for example, singing 'the rainbow song' to review colours at the start of the lesson, or using the last five minutes of the lesson before lunch to do a food chant with actions.

Multisensory activities and multimodal resources can add variety to the process of recapping and recycling language points that teachers provide as part of the language programme, and

can include learners who struggle to consolidate their learning with writing activities.

## HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP LEARNING STRATEGIES

One of the most profound positive impacts a teacher can have on learners with SEN is to help them understand themselves better, and to find their most effective ways of learning and managing their behaviour. As students explore different ways of learning, they will become more aware of what works best for them, both in class and in independent study.

### Thinking about thinking

Metacognitive (or 'thinking about thinking') activities are a type of reflective activity which enables learners to make their own thought processes explicit and gain an appreciation of the most appropriate strategies for them to use in different situations. Such self-reflection may be challenging for learners at first, but the rewards for persevering can be immense: equipped with an understanding of how to make their own learning more effective and efficient, the learner will be able to work more confidently and achieve their personal goals.

These activities could take the form of individual questionnaires (using appropriately graded language), pairwork interviews, or small group discussions around the topic of how students approach different aspects of learning. Games also offer opportunities to understand and reflect on the need for rules, listening, turn-taking, and working together—skills which some learners find difficult. Card-matching activities or even a board game format could be developed to provide a tactile element and visual focus to support the auditory content of the activity.

### Strategies for tackling new challenges

An important aspect of metacognitive development work is providing learners with strategies for tackling new challenges, based on their previous

experiences, and using their individual strengths and talents. Sometimes students will feel unable to start a task, or to complete one aspect of it, because of barriers to learning such as not being able to remember grammar rules or vocabulary, or not having enough time to do everything that needs to be done. By identifying what the barrier is, students have the key to access solutions for overcoming it. For example, some neurodiverse students can be overwhelmed by the amount of text involved in reading comprehension activities, and will need explicit guidance in how to approach these tasks. ELT coursebooks often provide guidance on reading comprehension strategies that teachers can encourage learners to use, such as previewing a text, predicting content from the title and images, and noticing how it is structured.

Developing self-awareness is important for everyone, but learners who experience greater challenges in their daily lives benefit particularly from this. Often, self-awareness leads to higher self-esteem, as learners realize they have particular strengths and talents that they can draw on. The teacher also has an important role to play in the development of self-esteem, as their praise and positive evaluation of learners' work will be of great significance to the learners. If learners believe that they can achieve success, and are encouraged to see their own strengths and the progress they are making, they will be more motivated to put in the required effort and to persist when faced with a challenge.



With dyslexia, English is especially hard because it's not pronounced the way you write it. When I was 13, my dad and I went to England for a summer course. He loves English and wanted us to learn it together. Throughout school he would read my graded readers out loud in the evening, and I would do the exercises after each chapter. My English teacher in school was the best: She let me take photos of the whiteboard so I could focus on the class without taking notes. When I finished school I went back to England on my own. By then I could make friends with people from all over the world in English, and I'm still friends with them today.

Oleg, English language student with dyslexia

## SUMMARY

Selecting the best options from the vast array of materials available can require some thought, especially for teachers seeking to accommodate a diverse group of students. This section has offered a set of guidelines to inform planning and working in an inclusive classroom. Following these guidelines should help to ensure that all materials, whether used as published or slightly adapted, can be used inclusively, without the need for extensive rewriting and modification, elaborate technical solutions, or a lot of preparation time. Finally, all learners will benefit from opportunities to explore different ways of learning, allowing for the development of greater self-awareness and learner autonomy.



# 05

## ASSESSMENT AND TESTING

In this section we discuss the different purposes for assessment and outline ways of maximizing accessibility for learners in both formal and informal assessment situations. Assessment plays a crucial role in teaching and learning, and it is important to remember that any barriers that students encounter in learning may well be magnified in an assessment situation.

### THE PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

Students' proficiency levels are often measured through **summative assessment**, also known as **assessment of learning**. This type of assessment is usually carried out by national or international testing organizations or exam boards, using formal methods, and is considered 'high-stakes' since important outcomes, such as school-leaving qualifications, university entrance, and employment or training opportunities may depend on the results. Such high-stakes exams can be extremely daunting for neurodiverse learners and those with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), but it is possible to accommodate their needs, as we describe in this section.

It is just as important to assess learners' progress throughout the learning journey, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, and using the information to adjust teaching and learning strategies. This kind of assessment, which feeds back into the teaching and learning programme, is sometimes referred to as **formative assessment** or **assessment for learning**<sup>33</sup> and can be done using formal or informal methods. Examples of this kind of assessment are provided in this section.

## SETTING TARGETS

Learners with SEN benefit from manageable targets being set, particularly if they are not attaining the targets expected for their age and level. Students can be involved in setting their own targets and measuring their progress. It can be helpful to think of targets that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed. Some learners may also need goals which help them to measure their social, emotional, and behavioural progress as well as their learning progress. Teachers can use various means to help students record their progress. For example:

- **visual progress charts:** these allow students to record the completion of a task or stage in a project
- **jigsaws:** as the students complete each stage of their work, the teacher gives them a piece of the jigsaw, and explains exactly what they have to do to collect the next piece
- **class pictures:** for example, using a picture of a tree with lots of leaves, the students colour in the leaves and write their names on them as they achieve a target
- **checklists:** students track their own progress in, for example, group participation and communication skills against a checklist of targets.

## INFORMAL ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Carefully planned assessment of students' performance in specific classroom tasks induces lower levels of anxiety than formal testing,<sup>34</sup> and not only yields information about language proficiency but also about the students' effort and persistence. In this section we consider some ways of going about this kind of informal assessment.

### Multisensory assessment

Just as learners with SEN benefit from multisensory learning opportunities, they will also benefit from a multisensory approach to classroom-based assessment. For example, to assess

understanding of a reading text or grammar point, teachers could ask students to show their understanding by producing pictures, symbols, diagrams, or mind maps; or they could ask students to demonstrate what they know by making an audio or video recording. These outputs, instead of traditional text-based ones, would then be used as the basis for assessment.

### Self-assessment

Self-assessment is another useful tool which can be used for informal classroom-based assessment. Assessing their own work gives learners the opportunity to raise their awareness of the areas of language proficiency they need to develop, as well as other skills, such as organization and time management. It also encourages learner autonomy and boosts self-esteem, as students feel empowered to take control of their own learning.<sup>35</sup> Another important benefit is that students compare their work with their own previous performance rather than with the work of other students, so they are able to focus on their own progress over time.

### Peer assessment

Peer assessment is another type of informal assessment that can be used with an inclusive ethos. Learners may need some explicit guidance in how to make the most of this activity, and how to offer their ideas constructively and supportively. They may, for example, be set a task in which they have to find two things they like in their peer's work, and identify (and explain) one aspect for further attention. In peer assessment activities, students who may be encountering difficulties have peers who can act as role models to support their learning. Students can find out what their peers do in various learning situations, and this allows them to consciously reflect on their own learning strategies and become more self-aware. All learners can benefit from this aspect of peer assessment.

### Format of progress tests

Progress tests provided in coursebook packages can help teachers monitor

students' progress. However, they may need to be adapted to make them more suitable for learners with SEN. The tests first need to be evaluated, taking into account, for example, the type of task, length of texts, font size, page layout, and the clarity of instructions, and then adaptations made, where necessary, to meet the specific needs of students.

### Assistive technology

Classroom technology can help learners with SEN with assessment *for learning*. These tools can help to reduce barriers to learning, enabling students to use alternative ways of showing their understanding and demonstrate more easily what they know. For example, text-to-speech technology can make it easier for students with reading difficulties to complete reading comprehension tasks. Making a personal reflective video blog (or 'vlog') can help students reflect on what they have learned and how they learned it, and teachers can record targeted feedback for them. A wide range of tools exists and more are being developed all the time, so it is worth checking what is available and evaluating its suitability for individual students.

### Using formal tests in a formative way

Many assessment *of learning* tasks can be adapted and used for assessment *for learning* purposes. For example, instead of giving a weekly, summative test with grades, teachers can set a test without a grade and give feedback in the form of comments instead. This allows students to focus on what they have done well and what they can do to improve without comparing their work with that of their peers.

### Introducing new approaches gradually

It is worth pointing out that introducing a new approach to classroom-based assessment may take time. Students might not immediately respond well to a new approach, particularly if they have no previous experience of it or are used to a focus on grades. It is important, therefore, to introduce new approaches gradually, explaining them clearly and providing support and encouragement. Over time, students will understand the



value of new approaches and learn to become more independent learners.

## FORMAL ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

When planning more formal assessments, whether assessment *for* learning or assessment *of* learning, three important questions need to be asked:

1. Are the assessment methods and tasks accessible to all students?
2. Can all aspects of proficiency be assessed?
3. Can neurodiverse students in the class meet the standards set for the general population?

If in answering these questions there are doubts, ways in which the assessment can be changed need to be considered. For example, language learners who experience issues around rapid auditory processing (perhaps as part of a dyslexic profile) may be disadvantaged by listening comprehension tasks, especially if they are time-restricted. They may therefore be given additional time to listen to the texts, and if that is not sufficient, they could be excused from that part of the assessment. Similarly, learners who experience difficulties with spelling accurately might be exempted from the evaluation of their spelling skills or be allowed to use a spellchecker.

Teachers and test designers might also set different learning targets for some students in second language reading and writing, and put the emphasis on attaining proficiency in speaking and listening. For learners with high-functioning autism, the assessment of interaction skills could be particularly demanding and it might be necessary to structure very simple interactions in a pair or a small group. In some cases it may be appropriate to exclude some tasks from the test, although any such decision needs careful consideration. Some learners might be assessed on vocabulary and grammar knowledge and all the skills of speaking, writing, listening, and reading, but the expected level of attainment might be lower for them in

comparison with their peers. Teachers should be aware of national assessment regulations, which in some countries provide specific instructions about what is or is not to be tested depending on the type of difficulties being experienced.

For students who routinely experience difficulties in learning, there are some important factors to consider; for example, students should be told in advance about tests, and helped to prepare for them, to avoid unnecessary anxiety. Some of the following aspects of assessment may be possible to modify, especially in assessments *for* learning. In formal assessments *of* learning, it may be necessary to apply for exam access arrangements, as discussed below.

### Timing and length

In real life, most second language interactions are not carried out under time constraints; however, tests are usually timed, creating an additional challenge for students who process information more slowly than is typical, as well as increasing their anxiety. To give these learners a fair chance of demonstrating their language abilities alongside other students in the testing group, it may well be necessary to allow them extra time to complete the tasks. The precise amount of extra time required (usually 25–50%) will vary according to:

- the severity of their difficulties
- whether they need short breaks during the test (to compensate for concentration difficulties and fatigue)
- whether they use a scribe to write on their behalf
- whether they use an electronic device rather than writing by hand.

It is also important to keep in mind that:

- students' levels of tiredness and alertness vary across the daily school routine, so it may be better to take a test in the morning rather than late in the afternoon
- some neurodiverse students will have a shorter attention span, so the number of questions or items in each task could be reduced, the input could be shortened, or reading and listening texts could be broken up into shorter sections to accommodate this.

### Environment

Many neurodiverse learners who experience attentional control issues find that noise and other activity during tests distract them. Some learners might be particularly sensitive to the type of lighting and the temperature in the room. Therefore, if possible, the option to take the test separately in a quiet room may be offered, where the physical environment can be adjusted to suit the learner.

### Format

Clear and logical visual organization assists all learners, and this is particularly helpful for students for whom sequencing and tracking are challenging. These learners might otherwise find it difficult to navigate through the tasks, or leave out tasks accidentally. Some learners experience visual stress or scotopic sensitivity (visual distortions experienced when people look at text, usually in black type on white paper, and the text appears to swirl, blur, or disappear, making reading impossible). For these learners, the following adjustments to format should be considered:

- printing the test on coloured paper or encouraging the use of coloured overlays
- using a large font size and a sans serif font
- allowing more generous spacing.

It is important that the instructions and guidance given to learners is clear and easily accessible. Short, simple instructions presented in clear stages, perhaps with examples of completed items, benefit all test takers, not just neurodiverse learners. Instructions might need to be read out to students with visual processing issues, or written down for those with auditory processing issues.

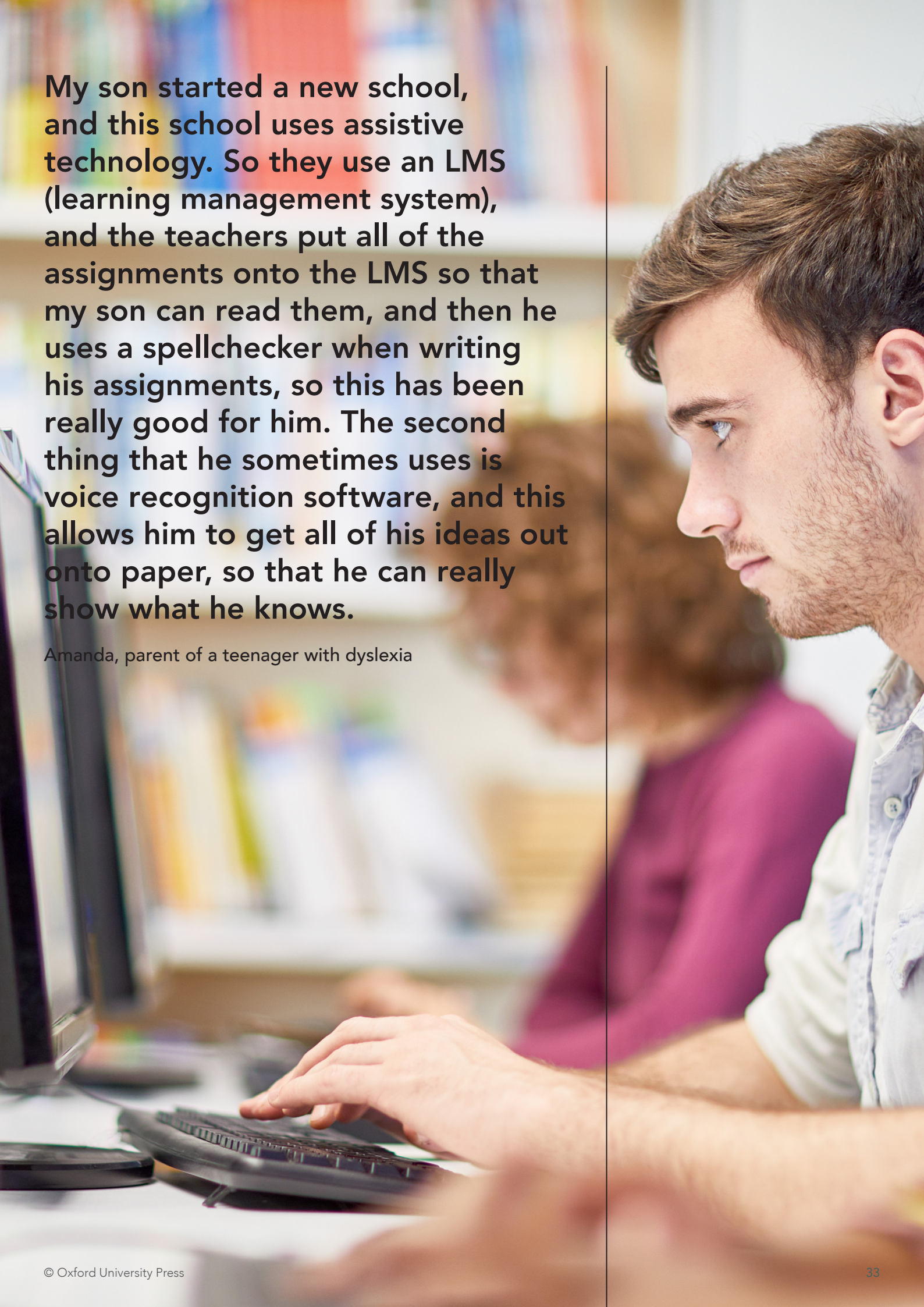
In terms of responding to the questions, neurodiverse students may benefit from:

- responding to questions orally, or using speech-to-text software or a scribe to record their answers
- shorter responses instead of longer answers, or even alternative responses (e.g. matching or underlining; producing visual organizers or mind



**My son started a new school, and this school uses assistive technology. So they use an LMS (learning management system), and the teachers put all of the assignments onto the LMS so that my son can read them, and then he uses a spellchecker when writing his assignments, so this has been really good for him. The second thing that he sometimes uses is voice recognition software, and this allows him to get all of his ideas out onto paper, so that he can really show what he knows.**

Amanda, parent of a teenager with dyslexia





maps) instead of gap-fill or short-answer tasks

- not having to listen and read, or listen and write, at the same time (instead, it may be fairer to allow students to have additional time to preview the questions, read the test items, and listen to the text more than once)
- some support from the teacher, such as verbal encouragement and positive reinforcement, and prompting to move on to the next question.

### Content

Generally, for a language assessment to be valid, it is essential that more than one task and more than one type of task is used for evaluating students' attainment.<sup>36</sup> Ideally, tasks should be designed in such a way that they give students a feeling of success and attainment and minimize chances of failure. Whenever possible, assessment tasks should be interesting, motivating, authentic, and relevant for the students' language use context outside the classroom.<sup>37</sup> For students who find change and new situations stressful, it is helpful if the tasks within the test are similar to the type of task they have encountered within their language lessons; the most appropriate tasks are those that are part of the general repertoire of tasks used in the classroom, and are therefore familiar and do not produce high levels of stress and anxiety. These aspects of test design may be implemented by teachers setting internal assessments, but they are the responsibility of exam boards in external assessments. However, teachers have an important role to play in giving feedback to the exam boards, to help them develop more accessible and inclusive assessments.

## MARKING AND FEEDBACK

Teachers need to decide whether they will use the same criteria for evaluating the work of neurodiverse learners as for their peers. In many countries, neurodiverse learners are given individualized/personalized learning plans, which are used to inform the evaluation criteria. If the assessment is for internal use (for example, a class progress check to inform the teacher which language points have been securely learned and which require more work), then modifications in scoring can be put in place. These should take into account the students' individual strengths and weaknesses and the nature of the difficulties that a student is experiencing. Some students might be exempted from the evaluation of certain aspects of their performance, or their work might be evaluated using different criteria.

Language concerns communication, so the teacher should include communicative aspects in their evaluation criteria. For example, an oral presentation could be evaluated on the basis of communicative strategies, not just grammar and vocabulary. There might be some cases where non-verbal aspects could be used as criteria for evaluation; for example, the use of body language (in a culturally appropriate way) during role-plays. Amendments to criteria should be recorded and reported with the scores or results to students, parents or educational authorities who make use of the data.<sup>38</sup>

All students—but particularly those who experience difficulties in learning—need to be rewarded for their achievement when it shows effort and progress, even if it might fall short of the required standards. Feedback should:

- be positive and encouraging
- emphasize what they can do *now* rather than what they cannot do yet
- present gaps in learners' knowledge as areas for further development.

Learners with attentional and emotional difficulties need immediate feedback if it is to seem relevant and be useful. Students who are experiencing difficulties in learning often have lower self-esteem than their peers, and it can

be very discouraging for them to see a piece of work returned full of highlighted or corrected errors. Excessive error-correction is demotivating and might not even be effective for improving learners' accuracy in the short term.<sup>39</sup> Instead, it is helpful to praise successful uses of newly learned language, to boost the self-esteem of these students.

## PREPARING FOR FORMAL EXTERNAL EXAMS

When preparing neurodiverse learners and those with SEBD for external exams (which are usually assessments of learning), the accommodations raised above may be harder for a classroom teacher to implement but still need to be kept in mind. If exam access arrangements are required, whether accommodations or modifications to the paper, then a formal application will need to be made to the exam board well in advance of the exam, supported by evidence of the difficulties the student experiences.<sup>40</sup> Teachers themselves can do a lot to support neurodiverse learners by:

- making sure the demands of the exam are clear, and encouraging them to prepare systematically (e.g. setting up a revision timetable, recapping on the main topics or language points that need to be secure)
- suggesting relaxation techniques that students can use before and during an exam (regular breathing, mindfulness, etc.)
- ensuring that the students are familiar with the location of the exam, the route to the venue, and the procedures on the day (e.g. what to bring and what to leave at home, where to sign in, and how long they will be there).

Most external exams are marked by the exam board that provided the paper, and any accommodations or modifications need to be recorded and reported when the scripts are submitted. In some cases, modifications to the format or the marking of the paper appear on the certificate, and it may be perceived that the students' scores have a different meaning from the scores of other learners. To reduce the number

of modifications that need to be made, providers of formal assessments need to work towards producing more inclusive and accessible assessments. Making use of technology to provide online papers that can easily be modified is one way that this could be accomplished. This will require some investment in the professional development of item writers and designers so that they understand the challenges facing neurodiverse students. This is a longer-term project, but one which teachers and educational managers could contribute to by making their assessment providers aware of the issues raised here.

## PREPARING FOR FORMAL EXTERNAL EXAMS

### **SYSTEMATIC PREPARATION**

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### **RELAXATION TECHNIQUES**

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### **PRACTICAL DETAILS**

## SUMMARY

This section has shown that assessment serves multiple purposes, not just measuring what students know or have learned, but also informing teachers' decision-making on what areas of language need more teaching or revision. Assessment should be planned alongside the teaching of a course, and carried out in as inclusive a manner as possible. When taking formal exams, whether internal or externally set, neurodiverse learners and those with SEBD may need exam access arrangements in place to enable them to demonstrate their true level of knowledge and skills. Teachers may, to some degree, be able to influence exam boards in their design of assessments by raising their awareness of the issues faced by learners. It is important to ensure that all language learners experience feelings of success as a result of testing, so that they do not lose their motivation, and their self-esteem and self-worth does not decrease.

In the next section, the focus is extended to include policymaking and pastoral care, and the interaction between the many stakeholders in an education system will be discussed.



# 06

## COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

The establishment of an inclusive culture in the language classroom is only one component in the development of a truly inclusive education system. Keeping in mind that ‘working with others’ is one of the core values of inclusive practice identified by the European Agency (see page 5),<sup>41</sup> this section examines the roles that all the stakeholders in an education system play in developing equitable and transparent procedures and providing accessible education for all.

Apart from the teachers and the students, there are many other parties involved. Parents need to be sure that their children and young people will be supported and enabled to develop their talents. Head teachers and directors of schools have a responsibility to ensure that national and local regulations are adhered to, regarding academic standards, health and safety, and pastoral care. Policymakers at regional or national level must be sure that their vision for education meets the long-term needs of their communities with respect to the knowledge, skills, and qualities that are likely to be required. Providers of formal assessments and published materials also have a role to play in ensuring that the materials they produce are as accessible as possible. Tensions may sometimes arise between these parties when their aims or priorities are perceived to be contradictory, but more

can be achieved by all stakeholders working together, as this section proposes.

### THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Teachers may well find themselves in the position of being responsible for mediating communication between the different parties involved in the development of an inclusive institution. Ultimately, they may also liaise with other parties in the wider education system, as they will have contact in different ways with everyone involved. They will need to make choices about the appropriate language to use when talking with different people, in order to communicate clearly while maintaining their professional authority and encouraging inclusive attitudes in others. For example, it may be appropriate when

talking to other education professionals to use diagnostic terms such as ‘dyslexia’ or ‘social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties’ (SEBD). On the other hand, it may be clearer and more acceptable to the students and their families to use more functional descriptions of what has been observed or identified (such as ‘Learner X seems to forget things quite quickly’ or ‘Learner Y, you often seem to be feeling quite angry or upset when you come to class’).

In order for an inclusive approach to education to be sustainable in the longer term, teachers will need the active support of the management team in their institution as well as the involvement of the students themselves and, where appropriate, their families.

### SCHOOL–HOME LINKS

Cooperation between school/college and home allows for the sharing of detailed information about students’ needs and their existing learning and coping strategies. There are a number of ways in which this can be initiated and maintained, and they work particularly well if each student has a designated contact member of staff. This could be a class tutor or head of year, or in some cases there is a member of staff who is responsible for overseeing the



interventions for students who require additional support. Other members of staff should channel enquiries through this person, to avoid the confusion of parents receiving several messages from different people at different times.<sup>42</sup>

In some schools, a home visit by the named member of staff is arranged when a new student enrolls, particularly if the student may have additional needs, or is arriving midway through the term. It is quite common for schools to organize 'parents' evenings', where teachers can have face-to-face meetings with the parents. In some countries, the students also attend and take part in the discussions. In the case of adult learners, a termly (or more frequent) tutorial fulfils this function.

However it is organized, keeping these two-way communication channels open is an important way of demonstrating to students that their teachers are not judging them negatively but working with them to support their learning and include them in the class. It is also an efficient method for sharing knowledge of the issues and challenges being faced by the learners. Teachers may have theoretical knowledge about potential areas of difficulty, but parents and the students themselves will be able to add to this knowledge base by offering concrete observations of situations that present challenges. They may also be able to provide some background information and family history which might help to explain some of the behaviours seen in the classroom. Working with the student and parents in this way requires a shift in perspective from 'teacher as the expert' to 'teacher as a partner'.

Teachers might also be able to suggest local support groups for the parents of students to contact, as they too may be experiencing some frustration, anxiety, or uncertainty about how best to support their child or young person. Here, they can find out about strategies that other learners with the same difficulties use, or equipment and technology that would make their lives easier. Equally, parents themselves may be able to suggest people from these support groups who can talk to staff at the school.

When seeking the support of parents, teachers need to consider the best course of action. In the case of learners who have reached the legal age of adulthood, local data protection laws are likely to prevent the sharing of information with parents. Some adolescent learners may be reluctant for their parents to find out about their difficulties, perhaps through fear that this knowledge might not result in support. Teachers should approach this sensitively with the learner in question and respect their wishes.

## RAISING AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Teachers can also contribute enormously to an inclusive environment by raising awareness of neurodiversity and SEBD among their colleagues and students, both through formal in-house CPD events and informal interactions in the course of the working week. When students understand the barriers to learning that their classmates are facing, they are much better equipped (and usually more inclined) to work with them supportively. Teachers can match up students with contrasting skills so they can see how the other works and explore different study strategies. In this way, everyone can feel that their contributions are valued and appreciate the diversity in their groups.

Formal CPD sessions might include running experiential activities with groups of colleagues<sup>43</sup> or discussing local case studies. Less formally, teachers could initiate conversations in the staff room about differentiation and the use of multisensory activities, even sharing some ideas for making the classroom more inclusive.

Language teachers already have a range of interpersonal skills and classroom management techniques at their disposal, which they can build on to accommodate the needs of all learners. These could usefully be shared with colleagues who want to develop their own inclusive practices. For example, it is common practice in many ELT classrooms to plan activities with





Institutions support inclusion through inclusive policies, through their organization and curricular choices, and through valuing and training teachers.

DARIO IANES

different interaction patterns throughout a lesson (for example, individual work, pairwork, small groups, teams, whole-class discussions). These changes in class dynamics can be utilized to make the lesson more accessible for students who have shorter attention spans, or who find it challenging to work with large groups of people. Once teachers have tried out a technique that is new to them, they should be encouraged to reflect on its effectiveness, and possibly revise or adapt it to suit the needs of their class.

## THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

It takes time and commitment to develop an inclusive classroom culture and for this to filter into the culture of the wider institution. Teachers need to give feedback to their managers about the positive effects of inclusive practices that they have implemented. The management team will need to work together, acknowledging teachers' innovations and, where appropriate, ensuring that these innovations become

part of the usual way of working in that institution. The implementation of any new procedure should be monitored to determine its impact on both staff and students. A process of reflection and review should lead to any necessary modifications being made, so that it meets the needs of the organization and enhances its overall inclusiveness. The potential benefits of inclusive practice are significant to the institution, as they include increased attainment levels, higher retention rates, and the resulting enhancement of the institution's reputation.

## POLICYMAKERS

Once local managers are engaged in the process of developing more inclusive classroom practices and organizational systems, they may also be persuaded to lend official support to teachers who want to influence policymakers by passing on their suggestions and ideas through official channels. They might also support teachers and students who lobby policymakers through petitions and campaigns to bring about changes that would benefit all learners. Grassroots activity may be the catalyst for improving opportunities for neurodiverse learners, but it is likely to remain localized and temporary unless there is leadership and support from higher levels of management and government.

## PROVIDERS OF ASSESSMENTS AND TEACHING MATERIALS

Exam boards—especially those who provide internationally recognized qualifications—and educational publishers have an enormous impact on the way that subjects are taught, as discussed in Sections 4 and 5. As awareness of inclusive teaching practice grows globally, exam boards and publishers may find that it makes good commercial sense to offer more accessible materials and exams, so as to position themselves as inclusive providers. It is in everybody's

interests to ensure that learners are enabled to access the curriculum and to demonstrate their true level of proficiency when assessed, so that the results can be trusted by all the parties identified in this section. Teachers, managers, and policymakers all have an important role to play in encouraging exam boards and publishers to enhance the inclusivity of their products, by being discerning consumers who give their custom to more inclusive companies, wherever possible.

## SUMMARY

This section has set out the role that all the stakeholders in an education system must play if inclusive practice is to become the norm. It does not only depend on students requesting accommodations in the classroom and in examinations, or on individual teachers acting as advocates for their learners. Nor can it be imposed from above, if the systems do not support practitioners in adopting new practices. Change must be supported from the top down, as well as demanded from the bottom up; this is essential for the sustainability of an inclusive education system.

# CONCLUSIONS



Approaches to inclusive education have been evolving over the past three decades and many countries are already working towards adopting inclusive approaches in their education systems, with the support of international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD which have long promoted inclusive education. The English language teaching community has much to contribute to this positive shift, and is compelled to do so for two key reasons. On the one hand, it is recognized that language learning poses particular challenges for learners with special educational needs (both 'neurodiverse' learners and those with social, emotional, or behavioural difficulties). On the other hand, the interactive methodologies associated with the English language classroom can provide an ideal environment in which to address these challenges.

Inclusive education means embracing the inherent diversity of any group of learners, understanding and valuing the contribution made by each one, and working towards making the curriculum accessible to all. It is based on a principle of equity, in which each learner is provided with what they need in order to achieve success. Importantly, research demonstrates that inclusive practices have benefits for all learners. These include social benefits, as learners' appreciation of diversity is raised and their empathy for others is deepened, as well as pedagogical benefits, resulting from teachers' work on enhancing the accessibility of their lessons.

Teachers have a central role to play in the development and implementation of inclusive practices, but they cannot achieve or sustain positive change without support from the wider educational community. School management needs to provide teachers with ongoing support through the provision of continuous professional development. Schools also need to facilitate collaboration between all those involved in the students' education and well-being, including school staff, the students' families, and the students themselves. Beyond the school, policymakers, educational publishers, assessment providers, and other stakeholders all need to commit to a shared vision of an inclusive educational system in which diversity is celebrated and all learners have equal chances to learn successfully.

We encourage all those involved in English language education to use the guidance in this paper in considering their own particular contexts. Developing inclusive practices results in educational systems where all learners have the opportunity to realize their full potential.



# APPENDIX 1:

## FREQUENT INDICATIONS OF SEN

## AND SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS

The table below is intended to provide some support for teachers who notice indications of neurodiversity or social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in their students. It is not a diagnostic tool, and nor is it an exhaustive list of all possible actions or strategies. The interventions provide a starting point that can be helpful in finding the best way forward with each individual learner. They are for trying out, discussing with the learner, and reviewing and modifying to suit the situation and the learner.

	Indications noticed in class	Suggested interventions
<b>PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS - LISTENING AND SPEAKING</b>	The student has difficulty discriminating between and producing sounds (even when other students from the same language background have no problem with them).	Spend some time doing focused practice on the sounds, starting with recognition in isolation, recognition in context, and then giving explicit instruction in how to produce the sounds in isolation and in context. Offer frequent positive feedback.
<b>WORKING MEMORY</b>	The student finds it hard to remember grammar rules; or if they seem to be learned, they are not applied in context	Use multimodal approaches, such as singing an example sentence containing the target structure, to increase automaticity, or creating a mind-map that is easy to refer back to.
	Learning vocabulary takes a long time.	Help students to develop their own memorization techniques, using pictures, rhymes, or games.
<b>READING</b>	Reading is often inaccurate or comprehension is not complete.	Encourage discussion of the topic before reading; help students to make use of all the contextual information available. Highlight cultural elements of the text to make them clear for all.
	Reading a text takes longer than for their peers.	Encourage the use of holistic reading techniques. Try a coloured background or overlay. Explore the use of technology, e.g. a screen reader to support reading of long passages. It may be helpful to focus on reading comprehension strategies. Try splitting the text into smaller parts and engaging students in comprehension tasks right after they have read each part.

	Indications noticed in class	Suggested interventions
<b>WRITING</b>	Spelling is often erratic and inconsistent.	Teach common spelling patterns; draw attention to other patterns of morphology and syntax; use mnemonics to remember the difficult parts of irregular words.
	Writing is slow.	Help students to develop planning strategies to capture their ideas first, and then write/type them up later. This may be due to dyspraxia or dysgraphia, in which case providing students with additional support, e.g. in the form of technology, may help.
	Writing is hard to read and/or the text layout is untidy.	Experiment with different writing implements to see what works best. Encourage the use of paper with guidelines and draw attention to elements such as margins, spacing, etc. Explore the use of technology, e.g. word-processing instead of handwriting, or even speech-to-text software.
<b>SPEAKING</b>	The student takes longer than his/her peers to process oral input and formulate responses.	Allow additional time for students to answer questions. Repeat the same question again, more slowly. Reformulate the question using simpler language and reinforcing the idea with visuals/gestures/mimes. Let each student know which questions they will be asked to answer in advance and allow time for preparation. Teach the linguistic (and paralinguistic) strategies needed to explain ideas even if the vocabulary is not known.
	Ideas in speech and writing appear disorganized.	Suggest different methods of planning, such as using post-it notes to capture ideas, or mind-mapping to generate and then organize ideas before writing. Recap and reformulate the student's response, praising the content and modelling a different way of organizing the ideas.
<b>LISTENING</b>	The student is not able to follow instructions easily.	This may be due to working memory issues, in which case it may help to provide students with multimodal instructions (e.g. oral and written) and activities which have been divided into small steps. Provide instructions in a visual format, for example in bullet points or as a sequence of pictures showing the actions required. Ask learners to underline the key words of the rubrics and then tell the teacher what they have to do, so as to get immediate feedback on their comprehension.
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	There are books and papers all over the student's workplace, but he/she can't find anything.	Encourage a tidy desk policy in the class; help the student to develop better storage systems for papers and stationery; introduce boxes or drawers with clear labels.
	The student is often late for class.	Initiate a class discussion about the best route to take, and how long it takes to get to different parts of the building. Set up a class survey of what people do in the morning and how long it takes them to get ready to leave the house. Encourage students to develop their own reminders, for example on their phones or using a coloured timeline.



	Indications noticed in class	Suggested interventions
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	The student does not complete tasks on time or meet deadlines.	Discuss with the student what the barriers are, and suggest setting pre-deadlines for different stages of the work, or allowing extra time for some tasks. Make use of study-buddies to help with keeping on track for deadlines.
	The student works quickly but not accurately.	Encourage the student to take more time over the work, by suggesting that they count to ten between each question, and that they go through it twice to make sure it is right.
<b>SPACIAL AWARENESS AND PHYSICAL COORDINATION</b>	The student often bumps into things or misjudges distance (e.g. goes to put something on a table but misses).	Keep aisles and floors clear. Encourage slow and careful actions in the classroom through mindfulness activities. Build a culture of helpfulness and consideration through the class contract.
	The student finds it difficult to fasten buttons, tie a tie/bow or shoelaces or put other clothes on properly.	Provide a lot of activities to develop manual dexterity, using blocks, beads, pinboards, etc.
<b>PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT</b>	The student appears to find his/her clothes uncomfortable and tugs at them or refuses to wear some items of clothing.	Check if the temperature is comfortable for everyone; suggest some appropriate modifications to clothing (e.g. removing a tie, wearing a sweatshirt but not a shirt underneath).
	The student appears restless or fidgety; leaves his/her chair frequently or rocks on the chair.	Provide something that the student can play with that is silent, and non-breakable (Blu Tack is good). Find reasons for the student to get up during the lesson (collecting materials, cleaning the board, etc.). Arrange a signal for the student to give you if he/she needs to get up and move around.
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS</b>	Loud noises seem to cause more anxiety than expected.	Monitor the noise levels in the class. Allow the student to wear ear defenders/headphones if necessary. Provide a quiet place for students to go if the noise levels get too high. Arrange a discreet signal that the student can give to let you know that things are getting difficult.
	The student complains about the lighting in the room, or shields his/her eyes from the lights.	Ensure that the lights are not flickering (i.e. that the bulbs are IEEE-compliant) or ask the rest of the class if it is possible to manage just with daylight.
<b>SOCIAL INTERACTION</b>	The student does not make eye contact when talking or listening.	Try to find out what makes the student more anxious and see if it is possible to alleviate that in the classroom. Talk to the student about the role of eye contact in communication, and try to encourage him/her to include it as part of the language they are learning (but without insisting on it).
	The student does not observe usual conventions concerning physical proximity or contact.	Make it clear what the expectations are for your context regarding physical contact and proximity. Try to elicit how it may be different in the student's home context, if applicable. Initiate a class discussion, perhaps leading to poster-making, about what norms the students in your class feel comfortable with. Create stories, scenarios, or role plays to explore the effects of different interaction patterns.

	Indications noticed in class	Suggested interventions
<b>SOCIAL INTERACTION</b>	The student does not wait to take turns in talking or playing games.	Create a list of 'classroom rules' with the class to display on the wall. In a one-to-one conversation with the student, explain why taking turns is appropriate in the classroom. Set this as a personal target for the student and give a lot of praise when you see him/her managing to wait, even for a little while longer than usual.
	Some of the student's contributions appear unconnected to the topic or show that he/she has not understood the intention of the previous speaker.	Collect some examples and have a quiet chat with the student later, asking them to help you see the connections they saw. Point out any linguistic or paralinguistic clues in the prompts that they may have missed. Teach the linguistic (and paralinguistic) strategies needed to ask for clarification.
<b>CHANGE TO ROUTINE</b>	Changes in routine upset the student.	Make it clear ahead of time (if possible) when something will change in the routine; talk to the student about how things will be different and ask him/her to imagine what it might feel like.
	Inconsistencies in the language make the student upset or anxious.	Point out inconsistencies in the language and ask students to think where they might have come from—sometimes knowing the reason behind an anomaly can be helpful. Acknowledge the inconsistency and name the anxiety (e.g. 'This pattern is a bit irregular, which can be annoying/confusing at first.').
<b>SELF-ESTEEM</b>	The student avoids tackling tasks that are likely to be challenging, by leaving the class or disrupting the lesson.	Set some tasks that start with easy successes, to draw the student in. Encourage him/her to stick with it, even when it becomes harder, and give a lot of praise if he/she does.
	The student is withdrawn and unwilling to engage in class.	Provide a quiet corner for students to go to if they are overwhelmed by the environment. If a student spends a lot of time there, talk to him/her about the reasons why and suggest a meeting with a counsellor if necessary. Try to help the student to focus on the task rather than the personal interactions in the class. For multicultural classes, initiate tasks that allow students to share aspects of their home cultures (e.g. producing a recipe book of favourite dishes), valuing the range of diverse experiences in the group.



# APPENDIX 2:

## STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS



Technical skills  
bottom-up processes

- Break the listening task into smaller units
- Pre-teach keywords and expressions
- Avoid 'listen and read' (unnecessary here)



Strategic skills  
top-down processes

- Help students formulate hypotheses about the text
- Move from global to detailed comprehension
- Start with context, then language



- Activate communicative and linguistic resources for speaking
- Move from controlled to free practice



- Enhance pragmatic and interactional skills to help compensate for weaknesses

- Pre-teach keywords
- Present text in both audio and visual format
- Check text layout accessibility
- Introduce accommodations (e.g. silent reading, differentiated texts)



- Use metacognitive perspective in comprehension tasks
- Explicitly teach 'before, while, after' reading comprehension strategies

- Activate linguistic resources (words, expressions) for the writing task
- Move from short to longer texts
- Introduce accommodations (e.g. spellchecker, online dictionary)



- Teach text planning
- Introduce shared/pair writing
- Use strategies for content and language review

### VOCABULARY

#### Presentation

- few target words per lesson
- avoid similar-sounding words
- pronunciation–meaning mapping > introduce other information about target word

#### Practice

- accessible exercises
- memorization strategies



### GRAMMAR

#### Presentation

- notice/analyse structures in context
- multisensory techniques (e.g. colour-coding)

#### Practice

- accessible exercises
- structured practice

# GLOSSARY

## ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

An evaluation of learning which informs the next phase of teaching.

## ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

An evaluation of learning which determines whether targets have been met or standards achieved.

## BARRIER TO LEARNING

Anything that prevents a learner from progressing, whether due to environmental factors, personal attributes, or the interaction between the two.

## CO-OCCURRENCE

The presence of more than one identifiable specific learning difference within an individual's cognitive profile. Dyslexia and dyspraxia often co-occur, for example.

## COGNITIVE FUNCTION DIFFERENCES

Activity in the mind/differences in the way the mind works (e.g. in terms of memory, speed of processing, etc.).

## EQUITY

The provision of resources, support, etc. according to individual need. This is in contrast to equality, where everybody gets the same.

## FORMAL ASSESSMENT

Methods of assessing proficiency levels and progress that typically require candidates to respond individually under timed conditions, without access to other resources.

## INCLUSION

A system of education whereby every learner can access and engage with the curriculum alongside his/her age peers, regardless of ability.

## INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

Methods of assessing proficiency levels and progress that may allow candidates to work with others, use reference materials, and take the time they need to complete tasks.

## INTEGRATION

A system of education whereby all learners are taught in the same physical location (i.e. in the same building, or on the same site), but not all learners have the same opportunities to engage with the curriculum.

## INTERVENTIONS

Strategies, techniques, or equipment, including assistive technology, that make learning more accessible.

## MULTISENSORY ACTIVITIES

Learning activities that simultaneously activate several different senses.

## MULTIMODAL RESOURCES

Resources that include multimodal components (e.g. coursebooks that have videos/CDs/tactile elements integrated into their programmes).

## NEURODIVERSE/NEURODIVERSITY

Used increasingly in reference to learners with specific learning difficulties, neurodiversity embraces the idea that all human brains function differently, and some more so than others.

## PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

The ability to recognize and discriminate between different aspects of phonology (e.g. phonemes, intonation patterns, volume).

## SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)

A term used in educational contexts to describe learners whose social, emotional, or behavioural responses adversely affect their learning.

## SEGREGATION

A system of education whereby some learners are removed from the 'mainstream' environment and taught instead in a 'special' school, usually engaging with a limited curriculum.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

The term commonly used in educational settings to identify a student's needs.

## SPEED OF PROCESSING

How quickly a person can process information that is presented, either visually or orally.

## WORKING MEMORY

The ability to hold some information in mind while adding to it or otherwise manipulating it, before using it to complete a task or action.



# FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Delaney, M. (2016). *Special educational needs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
Additional online resources: [www.oup.com/elt/teacher/itc](http://www.oup.com/elt/teacher/itc)

Daloiso, M. (2017). *Supporting learners with dyslexia in the ELT classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
Additional online resources: [www.oup.com/elt/teacher/supportingdyslexia](http://www.oup.com/elt/teacher/supportingdyslexia)

Kormos, J., & Smith, A. M. (2012). *Teaching languages to students with specific learning differences*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Sánchez-López, C., & Young, T. (2018). *Focus on Special Educational Needs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, A. M. (2017). *Raising awareness of SpLDs*. Morecambe: ELT well.

British Dyslexia Association: [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

Dyspraxia Foundation: <https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>

dysTEFL: [www.dystefl.eu](http://www.dystefl.eu)

European Dyslexia Association: [www.eda-info.eu](http://www.eda-info.eu)

FutureLearn: [www.futurelearn.com/courses/education-for-all](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/education-for-all)

IATEFL Inclusive Practices and Special Educational Needs Special Interest Group: <https://ipsen.iatefl.org>

International Dyslexia Association: <https://dyslexiaida.org>

The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS): [www.addiss.co.uk/allabout.htm](http://www.addiss.co.uk/allabout.htm)

The National Autism Association: <http://nationalautismassociation.org>

The National Autistic Society: [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

# ENDNOTES

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Crystal (2012)
- 2 Carpenter (2005)
- 3 European Commission (2013); UNESCO (2006, 2017)
- 4 Schneider & Crombie (2003); Kormos & Smith (2012), Kormos (2017)
- 5 UNESCO (1994, 2017), OECD (2007); European Commission (2013)

## 01 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- 6 UNESCO (1994)
- 7 Kormos (2017)
- 8 Warnock (1978)
- 9 Daloiso (2017)
- 10 OECD (2007)
- 11 European Commission (2013)
- 12 European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012)
- 13 European Commission (2013)
- 14-15 UNESCO (2017)

## 02 COMMONLY IDENTIFIED CAUSES OF DIFFICULTIES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

- 16 Everatt, Reid, & Elbeheri (2013)
- 17 Reid, Elbeheri, & Everatt (2015)
- 18 American Psychiatric Association (2013)
- 19 Gibbs, Appleton, & Appleton (2007)
- 20-21 American Psychiatric Association (2013)
- 22 European Commission (2013)
- 23 Taylor & Sidhu (2012)
- 24-25 Delaney (2016)

## 03 SUPPORT AND CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

- 26 European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, &
- 27 Somekh (2013)

## 04 GUIDELINES FOR THE INCLUSIVE USE OF LEARNING MATERIALS

- 28 Daloiso (2017)
- 29 Johnson & Johnson (1999)
- 30 Kormos (2017)
- 31 Daloiso (2017)
- 32 Kormos & Smith (2012)

## 05 ASSESSMENT AND TESTING

- 33 Shute & Kim (2014)
- 34 Hashemi (2011)
- 35 Gholami (2016)
- 36 Kormos & Smith (2012)
- 37 Kung, Fitzgerald, & Amendum (2013)
- 38 Kormos & Smith (2012)
- 39 Pawlak (2014)
- 40 Kormos (2017)

## 06 COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

- 41 European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012)
- 42 Delaney (2016)
- 43 Smith (2017)



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