

Exploring teachers' perspectives on student and teacher-related challenges and solutions in inclusive senior high school English learning in Yogyakarta: A case study

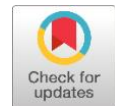
Rovi Kholifah^{a,1}, Bambang Widi Pratolo^{a,2*}, Dat Bao^{b,3}

^a Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Jl. Pramuka No.42, Pandeyan, Kec. Umbulharjo, Kota Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55161, Yogyakarta

^b Monash University, Wellington Rd, Clayton VIC 3800, Australia

¹ 2407042002@webmail.uad.ac.id, ² bambang.pratolo@pbi.uad.ac.id*, ³ dat.bao@monash.edu.au

*Corresponding author



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ABSTRACT

This study explores teachers' perspectives on both student and teacher related challenges, as well as the solutions employed in English language instruction within inclusive senior high schools in Yogyakarta. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through interviews with three types of participants. English teachers, a teacher assistant and school principals, complemented by approximately five hours of classroom observations. The data were analyzed thematically through initial coding, categorization, and triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings reveal five major themes, including challenges in addressing diverse learner abilities, particularly between students with special educational needs (SEN) and their peers, as well as constraints related to resources, time management, and instructional strategies. Teachers addressed these challenges through institutional support, comprehensive and adaptive assessment practices, and the development of engaging and differentiated learning activities. This study extends existing research on inclusive education by specifically examining EFL instruction in Indonesian inclusive senior high schools from teachers' perspectives. The study highlights future prospects including enhanced teacher training, the development of innovative media, and collaboration with international institutions. These insights contribute to strengthening inclusive English education practices in Indonesia.



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1. Introduction

Indonesia has formally adopted inclusive education policies to ensure equitable access to education for all learners, including students with special educational needs (SEN). These policies emphasize the integration of students with diverse abilities into regular schools rather than segregated settings (UNESCO, 2020). In recent years, inclusive education has increasingly been implemented at the secondary school level, including senior high schools, which presents new pedagogical challenges for subject teachers (Ainscow, 2020). In the context English as a Foreign Language (EFL), instruction in inclusive senior high schools involves complex teaching demands, as teachers are required to address varying linguistic abilities, learning needs, and cognitive profiles within the same classroom. Language learning relies heavily on communication, interaction, and ongoing assessment, which can be challenging when students demonstrate diverse levels of engagement, task completion, and language proficiency (Tomlinson, 2019; Fahmi, et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Consequently, EFL teachers in inclusive senior

high schools are required to adapt instructional strategies, learning materials, and assessment practices to meet the needs of all learners.

Inclusive education is not a new concept in Indonesian higher education. Indeed, on November 30, 2016, the Indonesian government passed Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Regulation. Other government regulations include Law No. 70 of 2009 decreed by the Minister of National Education, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), the Disability Act No. 8 of 2016, and Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. Therefore, government regulations are on track to keep inclusive education alive in the Indonesian educational sector. What remains is to assess the extent to which these government policies and regulations are implemented and their positive or negative consequences at all levels, particularly in higher education (Rofiah et al., 2023). For a number of reasons, such as low expectations, unfavorable attitudes, teacher preparation, physical constraints, resource availability, transitional planning, and inefficient support services, inclusive education in universities is still typically insufficient (Arnaiz Sánchez et al., 2019).

The gap between inclusive education policies and the real inclusion of students with disabilities is a common topic of inclusive education (IE) research (Bulk & Nimmon, 2023). The contextual and culturally enforced difficulties that many university contexts encounter serve as the foundation for the problem's complexity (Maeda et al., 2021). When discussing the main challenges that students face in educational institutions, academics typically bring out the stigma associated with disabilities that endures across many institutions and societal levels (Eccles et al., 2018). The majority of research aim to fill the gaps in terms of accessibility, resources, and curricular changes because the topic of inclusive education is still important for both policy and practice. In addition to managing disability services (Cifuentes-Faura & Faura-Martínez, 2022). According to the results of a few earlier studies and the official guidelines issued by the Indonesian government, known as the Guidelines on Providing Services for Students with Disability, four themes must be included when talking about exceptional inclusive education. These themes include curriculum, management and regulation, support systems, and teamwork (Muskhanova et al., 2020).

1.1. Literature Review

Previous studies have identified various challenges faced by students in inclusive classrooms, including academic difficulties, limited task completion, and communication barriers. Research in both international and Indonesian contexts indicates that students with special educational needs often experience difficulties in engaging with learning tasks, particularly in language-based subjects such as English, where interaction and sustained participation are required (Tomlinson, 2019; Rofiah et al., 2023). However, existing studies tend to focus on general learning challenges, with limited attention to how student difficulties emerge specifically in inclusive EFL classrooms at the secondary level. Existing literature on inclusive education in Indonesia has largely focused on policy evaluation, higher education contexts, or students' access to academic accommodations (Algolaylat et al., 2023; Bulk & Nimmon, 2023). Studies have highlighted persistent issues such as limited accessibility, inadequate support systems, and insufficient instructional adjustments for learners with disabilities (Cifuentes-Faura & Faura-Martínez, 2022). However, many of these studies concentrate on tertiary education, leaving secondary-level classrooms, particularly inclusive EFL settings, underexplored. Alongside student-related challenges, teachers play a critical role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. International studies report that teachers often face barriers related to insufficient training, limited time for individualized instruction, curriculum inflexibility, and inadequate teaching resources (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020; Ainscow, 2020). In EFL contexts, these challenges are compounded by the need to address diverse linguistic abilities while maintaining curriculum alignment and assessment standards.

Indonesian studies further reveal that many teachers feel underprepared to teach students with SEN due to limited professional development opportunities and unclear instructional guidelines (Ashar et al., 2023; Rofiah et al., 2023). While some teachers demonstrate adaptive practices such as differentiated instruction, modified worksheets, alternative assessment methods, and the use of engaging activities, these adaptations are often implemented individually rather than systematically. Existing research shows inconsistency in how teachers respond to learner diversity, suggesting that teacher adaptations depend heavily on personal experience and available institutional support rather than structured pedagogical frameworks.

Despite acknowledging teacher barriers, previous studies often stop at identifying challenges without examining teachers' agency in adapting instructional strategies within inclusive EFL classrooms. This

highlights a gap in understanding how teachers negotiate instructional demands and learner diversity in real classroom contexts, particularly at the senior high school level.

According to students, issues include unfavorable behavior from instructors, friends, and even personnel in the classroom, poor facilities, trouble taking tests, and instruction that does not meet their needs. From a teacher's point of view, some of the issues include the curriculum's lack of support, the fact that many teachers lack training because they are still inexperienced, and the close interactions with pupils. Data collecting from the students, which can be a little challenging to obtain, is the research's issue constraint. Government policy is another study barrier, and the assistance of the teacher is required to gather this data. Nonetheless, information gathered from educators and other individuals in the school setting will be extremely helpful in defining the focus of this study. Many studies also do not focus on the solutions taken by schools or how schools solve problems that occur in schools. Despite growing research on inclusive education in Indonesia, empirical studies examining English language teaching in inclusive senior high schools remain limited, particularly from teachers' perspectives. The purpose of this study is to examine the difficulties teachers have when learning English and the solution that the teachers take to reduce the problem. Many studies have not explained the solutions that are carried out to overcome problems that occur during learning or outside of teaching.

Unlike previous studies that have primarily documented barriers to inclusive education, this study simultaneously examines student-related challenges, teacher-related challenges, and institutional responses within English language classrooms. By integrating these three perspectives into a single analytical framework, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusive English teaching is enacted in Indonesian senior high schools. This research aims to answer these questions:

1. What student-related challenges do teachers identify in English learning within an inclusive senior high school?
2. What challenges do teachers experience when teaching English in an inclusive senior high school?
3. What strategies and institutional supports are employed to address these challenges?

By revealing the perspectives of teachers at the senior high school level, it can be an evaluation for teachers and other schools to prepare schools with inclusive programs better and be more prepared for possible problems that will be faced. Disclosure of solutions taken from schools with problems encountered. This can help teachers or other schools to reflect on the learning system in schools or the education system in Indonesia.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore teachers' perspectives on challenges and solutions in inclusive English language instruction. The behaviors and experiences of people dealing with students who have additional support needs and disabilities were thoroughly described using a case study methodology (Maciver et al., 2018). In order to "investigate contemporary phenomena within its real-life context," Yin claims that case studies are employed (Lu et al., 2022). This research was conducted in an inclusive high school in Yogyakarta, which was purposively selected due to its formal implementation of inclusive education policies and the presence of students with special educational needs in regular English classrooms. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were directly involved in inclusive English instruction and institutional decision-making. The participants consisted of three key informants, including an English teacher, a classroom teacher assistant, and the school principal, who acts as the policy maker at the school level. Data collection was carried out by contacting the school through the school number listed on the website. Then, a research permit letter and an ethics letter were sent. After going through the permit process, the researcher visited the school to conduct interviews with teachers and the principal and also conducted observations in the classroom to find out the conditions in the classroom. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, and the observations lasted from the beginning to the end of the lesson. Data collection was carried out by transcribing the recordings of the interviews verbatim. A thematic content analysis employing a coding system was part of the data analysis procedure (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To determine the first coding, the transcripts were first carefully examined, word by word. This required carefully reading the scripts. To find words or paragraphs that captured the participants' ideas, behaviors, strategies, thoughts, and actions, an open coding process was employed (Creswell & Poth, 2024). At this point, we were able to identify a number of codes that were related to the participants' methods and techniques. After merging

codes that contained similar information, irrelevant or duplicate codes were pruned, and a preliminary theme identification was carried out. Two meta-themes and sub-themes represented the ultimate level of abstraction when themes were further developed and interrogated. At every stage, it was made sure that the concepts were saturated. The entire sample was used for data analysis, not only certain schools or response groups (Maciver et al., 2018). For data collecting, we employed methodological triangulation (observation and interviews) to boost the study's legitimacy. Data collection and analysis took place at the same time (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To ensure analytic rigor, consensus validation was employed by discussing preliminary codes and themes with a peer researcher until agreement was reached. Data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently. Data saturation was considered to have been reached when subsequent interviews and classroom observations yielded no substantively new codes or conceptual insights and existing themes adequately captured participants' experiences. Analyst triangulation and coding enhanced the analysis's credibility by enabling interobserver reliability assessments of the coding. All coding procedures were conducted manually, enabling close engagement with the data throughout the analysis process. Creating a scheme of participant descriptions of what they thought and confirmed to be beneficial practices was our overarching strategy.

Although the study involved only three participants from a single inclusive senior high school, the intention was not to achieve statistical representativeness but to generate an in-depth understanding of a bounded educational case. Consistent with qualitative case study methodology, the value of the study lies in the richness of participants' experiences rather than the size of the sample. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the context of this particular school and may not be directly generalisable to other educational settings.

Table 1. Illustrative Coding Framework

Initial Codes	Subthemes	Final Themes
Different academic levels among students	Academic ability gap	Student challenges
Students require repeated explanation	Comprehension difficulties	Student challenges
Teachers modify learning materials	Material adaptation	Teacher challenges
Worksheets adapted for SEN students	Differentiated worksheets	Teacher challenges
Flexible assessment aligned with students' needs	Adaptive assessment practices	School-level solutions

Table 1 presents illustrative examples rather than the complete coding framework. The final themes emerged through repeated comparison across interview transcripts and classroom observations until conceptual agreement was achieved among the researchers.

3. Findings

1.1. Students' Challenges from Teachers' Perspective

Students at inclusive schools confront a number of difficulties when learning English. The viewpoint of educators who describe some of these challenges forms the basis of this study. These challenges are primarily related to academic abilities gap, comprehension difficulties, task completion challenges, low learning motivation and focus, diversity and diverse learner needs among students.

a) Academic ability gap

A major challenge identified by teachers is the significant academic ability gap between students with special educational needs (SEN) and their peers in inclusive English classrooms. The participating English teacher reported that students demonstrated varying levels of language proficiency and cognitive readiness, which often requires differentiated instructional approaches. In some cases, students without special needs are able to engage in more complex grammatical tasks, while students with SEN are still developing basic language structures. As a result, teachers must carefully adjust learning activities to ensure that all students can participate meaningfully in the same lesson.

One teacher explained the differences observed during classroom instruction:

"Students with Down syndrome are still writing sentences in English, while other students are already working on grammar." (P1)

This finding reflects the principles of differentiated instruction, which emphasize the need to adapt learning tasks based on students' readiness levels and abilities (Tomlinson, 2014). Within inclusive pedagogy, such differentiation allows teachers to maintain shared classroom participation while supporting diverse learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

b) Comprehension difficulties

Another challenge observed in inclusive English classrooms is students' difficulty in understanding instructional explanations. Teachers reported that although the same material is presented to the whole class, students with special educational needs often require repeated explanations or simplified instructions. In these situations, teaching assistants play an important role in supporting students' comprehension and engagement during learning activities.

This finding highlights the importance of scaffolding and guided instruction in inclusive classrooms. From a socio-constructivist perspective, learning occurs through interaction and support provided by more knowledgeable individuals, including teachers and peers (Vygotskian learning theory). Such support helps students gradually develop their understanding and confidence in language learning.

c) Task completion challenges

Students have their own difficulties in learning. Each meeting must have learning outcomes. This is seen from their understanding of the material that has been delivered and then completing assignments as a measure of students' understanding of the material provided. There are obstacles experienced by students, including a lack of understanding for students with Down syndrome. Students with cerebral palsy (CP) find it difficult to write because they tire easily when doing so continuously. These obstacles sometimes require a considerable amount of time. Although the assignments given are different, they must still be completed based on the lessons that have just been taught. The delivery of material and completion of assignments must be in accordance with the time allotted. The completion of worksheets by students must be in accordance with the time taken so that it does not exceed the teacher's teaching hours and student activities can be more focused.

Other researchers have also stated the same thing about this finding by Beta et al. (2025), stating that teachers sometimes attribute students' incapacity to finish class work on cognitive deficits including short attention spans and trouble processing information. This finding aligns with previous studies on inclusive EFL classrooms, Students' chances of finishing projects completely are decreased by big class sizes, a lack of learning aides, and limited tailored materials (Puspitasari et al., 2019). In inclusive classrooms, teachers must therefore balance curriculum demands with the need to provide adequate support for diverse learners.

d) Low learning motivation and focus

The participating teacher also identified that students may lack interest for studying due to physical, mental, and scholastic difficulties. Since they might not be motivated or focused on the lessons they will learn, they require emotional support for their actions. This will make learning less efficient, perhaps impact their peers, and not conducive. English teachers will talk with their other educators on what to do when students' enthusiasm to learn fluctuates in unanticipated ways. Learning can be made more favorable by talking with fellow educators who have dealt with pupils who have unique needs (Völlinger & Supanc, 2020). Students with special needs need emotional support at all times, yet occasionally their moods are different and beyond of our control.

The classroom assistant teacher expressed the same opinion regarding this finding, namely that it relates to the motivation needed by students in the learning process. Therefore, one of the tasks of the classroom assistant teacher is to motivate students to remain enthusiastic about learning. From an inclusive education perspective, emotional support and positive classroom environments are essential for fostering participation among students with diverse learning needs. Supportive interactions between teachers and students help create a safe learning environment that encourages active participation.

e) Diversity of learner needs

Every student has different needs because of the variations in his/her conditions. These variations significantly affect the surroundings, classroom ambiance, and learning. This diversity is crucial because inclusive schools are those where kids with and without special needs attend classes together. Students at the school have autism, dyslexia, CP (cerebral palsy), Down syndrome, ADD (attention deficit disorder), and slow learners. From the following explanation, it is clear that the diversity of students in each class has an impact on the facilities and creativity of teachers in making classes more enjoyable so that they are not monotonous.

This finding aligns with inclusive education literature, which views learner diversity as an inherent characteristic of inclusive classrooms rather than an exception. In EFL contexts, such diversity often complicates instructional planning, as teachers must simultaneously address varied linguistic and learning

needs. This finding reflects the fundamental principle of inclusive education, which recognizes learner diversity as a natural condition in classrooms, encompassing differences in ability, learning pace, and educational needs (Florian & Black-Hawkins).

1.2. Teachers' Challenges

In English language learning in inclusive schools, students have many different needs. This results in differences in the teaching methods used by English teachers compared to those used in regular schools. These differences in methods pose challenges for teachers in teaching English in inclusive high schools. These challenges will be explained in several points.

a) *Adapting materials*

English teachers act as facilitators in teaching English as a second language to students. There are quite complex differences in inclusive classes because each class has students with special needs. These students must be given special treatment in learning. Differences in student abilities also become a measure for teachers in creating the material to be delivered. Therefore, teachers must adapt the material to be delivered, not only focusing on learning outcomes or the abilities that students must have, but also focusing more on the needs of each student. In the interview process, P1 stated that the main challenge in teaching English in inclusive classes is preparing materials for normal students and students with special needs. This is in line with the findings of research conducted by Muksalmina, et al. (2024), which adopted lesson customization by altering the procedures, materials, and final outputs according to the interests and skills of the pupils.

b) *Differentiation of worksheet*

Due to variations in learning comprehension skills, which serve as the foundation for distinct learning objectives and outcomes for every English learning session, students' worksheets also vary. Because special needs children struggle to understand the lessons, teachers must design many worksheets for them based on their skills and the learning objectives they need to meet. Similar findings have been made by other researchers, specifically that for each session, the teacher creates worksheets that are easy exercises with fewer questions and simpler texts/paragraphs, and of course, they are also tailored to the ability of SEN children. The instructor must provide various worksheets and materials for the students with special needs (Islami et al., 2025).

Teachers may develop three worksheets for kids with special needs and one for students without special needs, according to this statement. Since each worksheet is made for a single English session, the quantity of worksheets produced in a week can be multiplied by the number of hours spent teaching English. Only pupils in the tenth grade are included in this computation. While previous studies have advocated differentiated instruction as a principle of inclusive education, the present study illustrates how differentiation is enacted in everyday English classrooms under practical constraints of limited time, resources, and diverse learner needs (Tomlinson, 2014). The findings therefore extend existing literature by demonstrating that differentiation functions not merely as a pedagogical strategy but also as a continuous process of teacher decision-making and adaptation.

This indicates that written tasks in inclusive classrooms cannot be assumed to be universally accessible. Instead, worksheets become tools for negotiating participation. Through differentiated worksheets, teachers attempt to preserve classroom inclusion by allowing students to engage with the same lesson through different forms of task demand. This finding strongly supports differentiated instruction theory, especially the principle that fairness in learning is achieved by adjusting task complexity and format. Analytically, it also shows that teachers are doing substantial invisible pedagogical labor to make inclusion workable. The challenge is therefore not only designing worksheets, but also sustaining this practice consistently across lessons.

c) *Time management*

When it comes to learning, time management is also crucial to take into account in connection with the activities that will be conducted in the classroom. When all learning activities can be completed in the right order, teaching time is used effectively (Haufiku et al., 2022). Time is a deciding factor in how activities will be carried out in the classroom because of the significant disparities in student demands, which makes organizing learning in inclusive schools difficult for teachers. Managing time to interact with students prior to instruction, making sure the content is effectively communicated, and making learning fun entails more than merely observing or waiting for them to finish worksheets or write.

This means that teachers must constantly make pedagogical trade-offs: whether to extend support for students who need more help, move forward with the lesson for the rest of the class, or maintain an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. In this context, time management reflects the structural difficulty of delivering inclusive EFL instruction within conventional school schedules.

Analytically, this finding suggests that inclusive pedagogy is constrained not only by teacher skill but also by institutional time structures. It also indicates that successful inclusion requires flexible pacing, which may be difficult to achieve when lesson time is fixed. Compared with wider international research, this challenge is widely reported, but in the Indonesian context it becomes especially significant when teachers must manage diversity with limited support and strong curriculum expectations.

4. Discussion

English teachers came up with the solution by serving as spokespeople in the classroom throughout instruction, keeping an eye on each student's needs, and serving as a liaison between the school and the students. It is crucial to get responses from teachers as school facilitators regarding the following points. Therefore, the principal plays a crucial role in deciding on all matters pertaining to the school as the policy maker. The decisions made by the principal are crucial to the improvement and advancement of the school. In light of this, it is crucial to request information from the principal and the English teacher regarding the efforts made to address a number of issues that arose in the inclusive school's English lessons.

4.1. School Solution

a) *Affective enhancement*

One important implication of this study is the role of affective classroom environments in supporting participation among students with diverse learning needs. Teachers reported that students with special educational needs were more willing to participate in English learning when the classroom atmosphere was emotionally supportive and non-threatening. In inclusive classrooms, language learning often involves anxiety related to making mistakes or speaking in front of peers. Therefore, creating a relaxed environment becomes a key strategy for encouraging students to engage with English tasks. Affective support also helps reduce participation gaps between students with SEN and their peers by fostering a sense of belonging within the classroom community. This finding aligns with the principles of inclusive pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of creating learning environments where all students feel valued and supported (Florian, 2015). In addition, the ability of teachers to maintain such supportive environments reflects aspects of teacher self-efficacy, as teachers who believe in their capability to manage diverse classrooms are more likely to implement inclusive instructional practices effectively.

b) *Informal discourse*

Another important strategy identified in this study is the use of informal interaction to facilitate student engagement in English learning. Teachers frequently began lessons with casual conversations or informal questions about students' daily activities. This strategy helped reduce communication barriers and encouraged students to participate in English discussions without feeling pressured by formal classroom expectations. Informal interaction also allowed teachers to build stronger relationships with students, which is particularly important in inclusive settings where students may require individualized encouragement to participate. From a socio-constructivist perspective, learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative dialogue. Informal discourse therefore functions as a mediating tool that allows students to gradually build confidence in using the target language. This suggests that informal classroom discourse serves not only as an interactional strategy but also as an important mechanism for reducing participation anxiety among students with SEN in EFL classrooms.

c) *Continuous innovation*

The findings also highlight the importance of continuous pedagogical innovation in managing inclusive EFL classrooms. Teachers reported that they regularly experimented with new classroom activities, games, and collaborative strategies to maintain student engagement. Such innovation was necessary because inclusive classrooms contain students with varying learning preferences, cognitive abilities, and motivational levels. Without varied instructional approaches, lessons may become inaccessible or disengaging for certain groups of learners. This finding reflects the broader concept of adaptive teaching, which emphasizes teachers' capacity to modify instruction based on students' evolving needs. It also reinforces research suggesting that innovative teaching practices are essential for sustaining

inclusive learning environments, particularly in language classrooms where active participation plays a central role in learning (Ainscow, 2020; OECD, 2019).

d) Developing engaging content

Another implication concerns the importance of designing engaging learning materials that respond to students' diverse abilities and interests. Teachers emphasized the need to regularly update instructional materials so that lessons remain relevant and motivating for students. In inclusive classrooms, learning materials must not only convey linguistic content but also accommodate differences in learning pace, cognitive processing, and emotional readiness. Therefore, teachers often adjusted activities, tasks, and learning resources to ensure that students could engage with the lesson according to their individual abilities. This finding supports research on student engagement, which suggests that meaningful and relevant learning activities can enhance both emotional and behavioral participation in language classrooms (Fredricks et al., 2019). Within inclusive education, the development of adaptive learning materials also reflects the principle that equitable participation is achieved through flexible instructional design rather than standardized teaching approaches.

4.2. School Principal

a) Student diversity

Student diversity emerged as a central institutional challenge in implementing inclusive English language learning. From the principal's perspective, diversity is not limited to differences in academic ability but also includes variations in learning pace, cognitive profiles, and socio-emotional development. These differences create uneven participation in classroom activities, where some students are able to engage actively while others require additional guidance and instructional support. As a result, diversity shifts the responsibility of inclusive learning beyond individual teachers and into institutional structures that support differentiated instruction. This highlights the need for continuous teacher development and collaborative planning to ensure that learning materials and activities remain accessible to all learners. This finding reflects the principles of inclusive pedagogy, which emphasize the need to accommodate learner variability while maintaining shared classroom participation (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Rather than treating diversity as a barrier, inclusive pedagogy conceptualizes it as a fundamental characteristic of classrooms that requires adaptive teaching practices.

b) Resource and strategy challenges

Resource and instructional strategy limitations emerge as structural constraints that shape how inclusive EFL practices are enacted in the classroom. The findings indicate that teachers' ability to implement inclusive instruction is not solely dependent on pedagogical knowledge, but is significantly influenced by the availability of appropriate materials, assistive tools, and institutional support systems. In contexts where resources are limited, teachers are required to compensate through personal effort and improvisation, which can lead to inconsistent implementation of inclusive practices. This condition also places additional cognitive and emotional demands on teachers, as they must continuously negotiate between ideal inclusive practices and practical classroom realities. From a teacher self-efficacy perspective, limited resources may weaken teachers' confidence in their ability to effectively support diverse learners (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020). At the same time, inclusive pedagogy suggests that meaningful participation requires not only adaptive teaching strategies but also supportive learning environments and infrastructure (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that inadequate resources and limited instructional support remain major barriers to inclusive education across contexts (Sharma et al., 2019; Cifuentes-Faura & Faura-Martínez, 2022). Similarly, studies in EFL settings highlight that teachers often rely on self-developed materials due to the lack of inclusive-ready resources (Islami et al., 2025).

c) Institutional support

Institutional support serves as a key enabling condition that shapes the sustainability of inclusive EFL practices. The findings indicate that inclusive teaching cannot depend solely on individual teacher effort, but instead requires well-coordinated institutional frameworks, including aligned policies, ongoing professional development, and collaborative support systems. The availability of support teachers, training initiatives, and inclusion-oriented policies helps distribute responsibility across the institution rather than placing it entirely on classroom teachers. As a result, the burden on individual educators is reduced, allowing for more consistent implementation of inclusive practices. This aligns with the principles of inclusive pedagogy, which highlight collective responsibility in responding to learner diversity. It also supports teacher self-efficacy theory, as structured institutional backing can enhance

teachers' confidence and motivation to apply inclusive strategies. Consistent with findings from international research, schools with strong institutional support tend to demonstrate more stable inclusive practices, whereas contexts with limited support often depend on fragmented, teacher-led adaptations.

d) Inclusive education policy

Inclusive education policy provides a foundational framework for equitable learning; however, its effectiveness depends on how it is interpreted and enacted at the classroom level. The findings reveal that although inclusive policies emphasize flexibility in learning outcomes, teachers must actively translate these principles into classroom practices. This process requires pedagogical judgment, as teachers need to adapt curriculum goals, materials, and assessment strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs (Fahmi, et al., 2020). As a result, variations in implementation may occur, depending on teachers' experience, training, and access to support. This indicates that policy alone is insufficient without practical guidance and professional capacity-building. This reflects the principles of inclusive pedagogy, which prioritize responsiveness to learner diversity over standardized instruction (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). From a socio-constructivist perspective, policy implementation also involves collaborative meaning-making among educators within institutional contexts. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the gap between inclusive education policy and classroom practice (Ainscow, 2020; Bulk & Nimmon, 2023). Studies in various contexts have shown that while policies promote equity, teachers often struggle to operationalize them due to limited training and unclear instructional guidelines (Ashar et al., 2023).

e) Comprehensive and adaptive assessment

Adaptive assessment practices represent a shift from standardized evaluation toward more inclusive and equitable approaches to measuring student learning. The findings indicate that assessment in inclusive classrooms is designed to accommodate diverse learner abilities by allowing multiple forms of evaluation. This flexibility enables students with special educational needs to demonstrate their understanding through alternative modes such as oral presentations, collaborative tasks, or creative outputs. Consequently, assessment becomes not only a tool for measuring achievement but also a mechanism for promoting participation and reducing exclusion. This aligns with inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes fairness through flexibility rather than uniformity (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2019). It also reflects socio-constructivist principles, where learning is understood as a process that can be expressed through various forms of interaction and meaning-making. This finding supports earlier studies indicating that adaptive assessment enhances engagement and participation in inclusive classrooms (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Fahmi, et al., 2020; Tancredi et al., 2024). Research also shows that flexible assessment practices are essential in addressing the diverse needs of learners in EFL contexts (Hidayah & Morganna, 2019; Fahmi, et al., 2020).

f) Future prospects and development

The sustainability of inclusive EFL practices depends on continuous professional development, innovation, and institutional collaboration. The findings suggest that inclusive education is an evolving process that requires ongoing adaptation to meet diverse learner needs. Teachers must continuously develop their pedagogical skills, particularly in differentiating instruction and managing inclusive classrooms. At the same time, schools need to invest in innovative learning media and establish collaborations with external institutions to enhance teaching quality. Without sustained development, inclusive practices risk becoming inconsistent and dependent on individual teacher initiative. From a teacher self-efficacy perspective, continuous professional development strengthens teachers' confidence and capability in handling diverse classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020). Additionally, socio-constructivist theory emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning communities in developing effective teaching practices. This finding is supported by research highlighting the importance of ongoing teacher training and institutional collaboration in improving inclusive education (OECD, 2020; Cameron et al., 2024). Studies also indicate that access to innovative teaching media significantly enhances student engagement in inclusive EFL settings (OECD, 2019).

Taken together, these findings suggest that successful inclusive English teaching depends upon interactions between learner characteristics, teacher expertise, and institutional support. Rather than operating independently, these factors influence one another continuously. Teachers' instructional decisions are shaped not only by students' learning needs but also by school policies, available resources, collaborative support, and opportunities for professional development. Inclusive English education should therefore be viewed as a systemic rather than purely classroom-based endeavour.

The study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a single inclusive senior high school with a small number of participants, limiting the transferability of the findings. Second, the study relied primarily on teachers', assistants', and principals' perspectives without directly incorporating students' voices. Future research involving multiple schools and a broader range of participants would provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive English learning practices.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that English language learning in inclusive senior high schools in Yogyakarta presents complex challenges for both students and teachers. From the teachers' perspectives, the primary difficulties include managing the wide diversity of students' abilities, addressing the learning needs of students with special educational needs (SEN), and coping with resource limitations and time constraints. At the same time, teachers themselves face the challenge of continuously adapting materials, strategies, and assessments to ensure equitable participation in the classroom. Despite these challenges, several solutions have been identified. Teachers employ adaptive strategies such as differentiated instruction, flexible and comprehensive assessments, and the integration of engaging activities like games and personalized tasks. Institutional support, including collaboration with support teachers and the provision of learning facilities, further strengthens the inclusivity of English instruction. Moreover, aligning learning outcomes with students' potential and fostering innovative teaching practices provide pathways for improvement. The findings suggest that sustainable inclusive education requires not only individual teacher creativity but also systemic support through policy alignment, professional development, and innovative media. Future efforts should focus on enhancing teacher training and fostering collaborations with external and international institutions to ensure that inclusive English education can evolve and meet the diverse needs of learners.

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Declarations

- Author contribution** : Rovi Kholifah was responsible for the initial draft, instrument development, data collection and analysis. Bambang Widi Pratolo was in charge of data analysis, instrument development, initial draft and revision. Dat Bao proofread the manuscript. All authors approved the final manuscript.
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- Conflict of interest** : Both authors declare that they have no competing interests.
- Ethical declaration** : We as authors acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms with the regulations of our university and that we have obtained the permission from the relevant institute when collecting data.
- We support ELTEJ in maintaining high standards of personal conduct, practicing honesty in all our professional practices and endeavors.
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