



From Margins to Mainstream: Investigating Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies to Enhance English Language Mastery in Senior Secondary Education

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Abstract:

This study analyses how inclusive pedagogic strategies help bridge learning gaps between mainstream and marginalised learners in senior secondary school English language education. Today, with increasing diversity in classrooms, teachers are faced with challenges in providing equal learning opportunities to students coming from socioeconomically deprived or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilised to explore better teaching strategies, such as customised teaching methods, guided learning support, and a culturally inclusive teaching approach, to improve English language skills. Data were collected from senior secondary teachers and students situated within diverse institutional contexts using standardised questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Results indicated that students who reported using inclusive teaching strategies showed improvements in linguistic proficiency, self-efficacy, and engagement. This study also brings forth the role of collaborative learning environments and continuous teacher professional growth in promoting inclusivity. Suggestions on reforming curriculum, designing teacher training modules, and policy initiatives with a focus on inclusivity in senior secondary school English language pedagogies are given at the end of this paper.

Keywords: Inclusive education, English language mastery, pedagogical strategies, marginalised learners, senior secondary education.

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Introduction

The English language plays a vital role worldwide, especially in academic achievement, social mobility, and career opportunities in the modern era. In senior secondary education, English proficiency is essential, as students move into higher education, where they meet students from different backgrounds. Some students prefer to choose a job to cover their financial requirements. In that place, English serves as the central pillar for communication. Mastery of English not only shows up as a subject, but also gives students the confidence to represent themselves well.

Moreover, English is not limited to a particular level; it matters in all aspects, including for students from rural areas, who have limited language exposure and fewer opportunities than urban students. Language also promotes equity so everyone can learn and grow together. But in marginalised areas, students cannot learn the language due to factors like low awareness, limited resources, and a lack of confidence in learning a second language. These challenges stem from traditional pedagogical practices. This fails to meet students' learning needs; consequently, many students remain on the margins and cannot fulfil their aspirations because they do not learn English as required.

In response, the concept of education for all has emerged as a transformative approach. Inclusive pedagogy emphasises better learning for all through participatory, experiential, and flexible teaching strategies that address varied linguistic, cognitive, and social backgrounds. In India, the NEP 2020 strongly emphasises inclusive learner-centred educational practices and highlights the importance of equal learning that bridges gaps and supports better outcomes and student success. The NEP 2020 policy underscores the importance of innovative pedagogy and multilingualism in improving useful learning experiences.

In the discourse on inclusive English language teaching, the research helps bridge the gap between classroom practice and the goals set out in NEP 2020. It does so by providing empirical evidence on how to accommodate learner diversity while developing English language competency. The results can help guide the design of training programs and pedagogy for English language teachers, teacher trainers, educational institutions, and policymakers. This will help ensure that education is high-quality and inclusive for all learners.

This study is grounded in the premise that equitable teaching approaches may play an essential role in moving students from the margin to the mainstream in English language education by examining learner-centred pedagogy in senior secondary classrooms. The research also seeks to investigate the impact of targeted instructional interventions that can enhance English language mastery for students in rural areas. This study aims to promote language learning and attitude across the nation so that, through better pedagogical systems, students can show their potential and achieve engagement and academic success. As an essential part of our lives, communication plays a vital role in all aspects. Through personal narratives, they not only stand up for themselves but also help build their nation as a whole. Developing the skills and competencies required for 21st-century English is essential. English language instruction not only supports learning and development but also helps learners participate effectively in their studies, careers, and other social environments. Moreover, learner-centred, context-specific teaching approaches lead to higher educational success.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine the difficulties underprivileged students, encounter when trying to grasp the English language.
- To find out how well inclusive teaching methods work in senior secondary classes.
- To make suggestions for enhancing inclusive instruction.

Literature Review

Inclusive pedagogy has emerged as an internationally recognised educational approach to address learner diversity and promote equal learning outcomes. (Florian and Black-Hawkins 821) contend that inclusive education is not constrained to catering for students with special educational needs but constitutes a strategic restructuring of teaching practices with guaranteed full participation and attainment of all learners. This view shifts the focus from deficit models to proactive pedagogical designs that anticipate learner variability within mainstream classrooms. From the perspective of inclusive pedagogy within English language education, accessibility, engagement, and meaningful participation are foregrounded, especially for learners from minoritised linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory underpins inclusive language pedagogy, emphasising the role of social interaction, scaffolding, and guided learning in cognitive and language development (Vygotsky 90). The framework, therefore, postulates that learners achieve language more effectively through collaborative activities and teacher-mediated support within their Zone of Proximal Development. This approach is highly relevant at the senior secondary level, as mastering English requires higher-level competencies such as critical reading, academic writing, and communicative competence.

Culturally responsive teaching further strengthens the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogy in English language classrooms. According to Cummins 45), language learning is closely related to learners' identity and cultural experience. Recognising and valuing students' linguistic backgrounds increases their engagement and reduces barriers to language acquisition. Similarly, Gay 25) states that culturally responsive strategies empower students by incorporating their life experiences into classroom discourse, improving comprehension and building confidence in using English.

In English language education, a comprehensive understanding of various teaching methods is essential, including knowledge of linguistic backgrounds, learners' language experiences, and their actual needs for language learning. According to Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, inclusive education involves removing barriers to learning and providing equal opportunity for all participants (Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson 62). In multilingual settings, translanguaging has proven to be one of the most successful approaches because it allows learners to use their entire linguistic repertoire for meaning-making and academic development (García and Wei 15). According to Blackledge and Creese, multilingual teaching approaches help learners to form their identities and participate actively in different educational settings (Blackledge and Creese 10). Multilingual education research has also highlighted the positive influence of culturally and linguistically responsive methods on increased engagement and improved learning among learners from diverse backgrounds (Brevik, Menken, and Solheim 72).

Current studies also stress the significance of scaffolding, collaborative learning and inclusion-based instruction in English language classrooms. According to Gibbons, these instructional techniques help English learners develop academic language skills (Gibbons 45). Echevarria, Short, and Powers show that sheltered instruction effectively develops language while students access subject matter (Echevarria, Short, and Powers 347). Similarly, Kumaravadivelu supports language-teaching practices based on learners' contextual needs (Kumaravadivelu 24). These viewpoints highlight the need for an effective pedagogy of English language teaching to incorporate inclusive, learner-centred, and contextualised practices.

Differentiated instruction has also emerged as an important inclusive approach to help meet a range of learner needs. (Tomlinson 65) emphasises that when content is differentiated by learners' readiness, interest, and learning profile, similarly differentiated processes and assessments lead to high academic performance. But despite a developing body of research internationally on both inclusive and differentiated pedagogies, there is limited empirical

research reported on the systematic use of either within the context of senior secondary English language teaching, and especially within the Indian education system. This gap creates a clear need for focused research on inclusive pedagogical strategies that promote English mastery and bring peripheral learners into the mainstream.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method research design to gather comprehensive insights.

Participants: Purposive sampling selected 80-100 students and 10 English teachers from senior secondary schools.

Data Collection:

- Pre- and post-language assessment scores.
- Survey with teachers and students.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The analysis shows a significant improvement in students' academic performance in English language skills after using inclusive pedagogical approaches. A comparison of pre-test and post-test results shows a significant increase in students' academic performance, with the average mark rising from 52.4% to 68.9%. Therefore, inclusive and learner-centred approaches positively affect students' acquisition of language skills and overall performance. In addition, qualitative data from participants showed that they felt more supported, motivated, and confident because of personalised learning, differentiation, collaboration, and formative assessments. Constant teacher feedback helped learners identify their strengths and weaknesses and become more engaged, participatory, and confident in English.

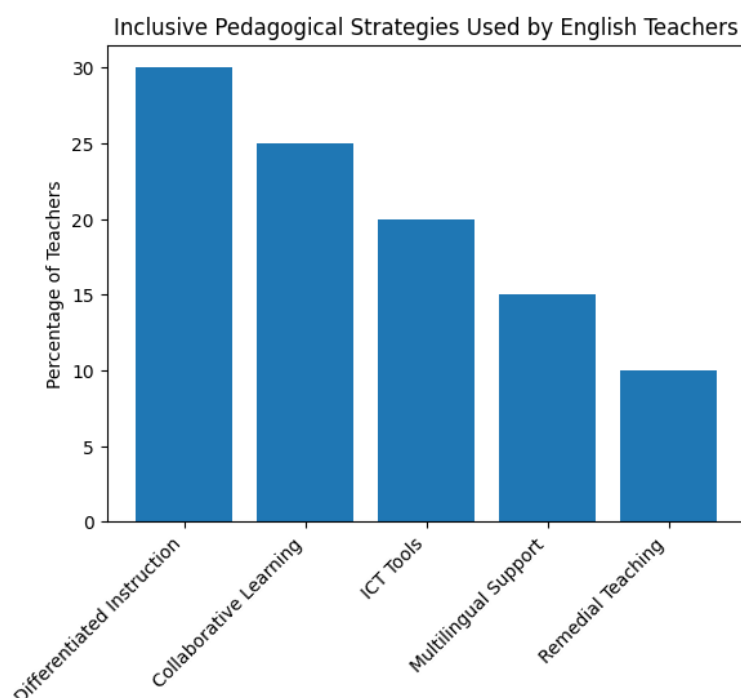
Language Assessment (Pre-test and Post-test)

Students were administered a standardised English language assessment before and after implementing inclusive pedagogical strategies.

Assessment Stage	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pre-Test	52.4	8.6
Post-Test	68.9	7.9

Table 1. (Pre- and Post-Language Assessment Scores of Students)

Table 1 compares students' English language performance before and after the application of inclusive pedagogy. The pre-test results indicate poor performance in the subject matter, with a mean score of 52.4 and an SD of 8.6, showing moderate variance in students' performance. In contrast to the pre-test results, the post-test shows improved student performance after applying innovative learner-centred pedagogy through differentiated instruction, scaffolded



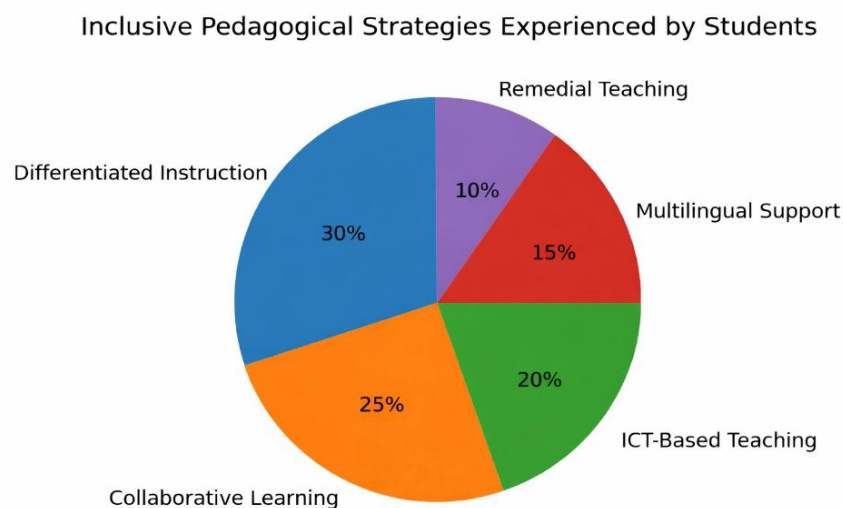
learning, collaboration, and continuous formative assessments. The mean score increased to

68.9 (SD = 7.9), showing better and more consistent results. The results show that inclusion has improved students' academic performance, as they performed better on the post-test.

The figure demonstrates the percentage of various inclusive strategies used by English teachers.

The differentiated instruction strategy is the most common, used by 30% of English teachers.

This indicates intensive use of different instructional strategies, classroom practices, and materials to meet students' diverse learning needs. The second most common strategy is collaborative learning, used by 25% of teachers. It involves active cooperation among students through interaction, collaboration, and group work. ICT strategies are used by 20% of English teachers; it is another type of strategy used in classroom practice. Multilingual strategies are



used by 15% of teachers. They imply that the teachers take students' linguistic abilities into account during the teaching process to promote comprehension and participation in the classroom environment. The last one is remedial teaching; only 10% of teachers use it. This means instructional support for students experiencing learning difficulties is limited.

- Differentiated Instruction - 30%
- Collaborative Learning - 25%

- ICT-based Teaching Strategies - 20%
- Multilingual Support - 15%
- Remedial teaching – 10%

As shown in the pie chart and bar graph, the results indicate that various pedagogical strategies significantly impact senior secondary school students' learning of English. The test shows pre- and post-test language proficiency. The strategies include differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, ICT-based teaching, multilingual support, and remedial instruction for learning good manners. These show students' confidence in the language; teachers also observe reduced learning gaps. Overall, the findings confirm that inclusive pedagogy plays a significant role in bringing learners from the margins to the mainstream.

Implications and Recommendations for Inclusive English Language Teaching

Based on the research results, it is imperative to improve inclusive teaching methods that include all learners in the class. Schools should provide teachers with professional development courses on differentiated instruction, multilingual teaching, inclusive assessment, ICT, and artificial intelligence tools. Teachers must create different lesson plans based on the learners' learning levels, pace, interests, and experiences. More emphasis can be placed on collaborative learning through discussion, peer learning, role-playing, and project work to increase participation and confidence. Multilingual materials can help learners understand and connect previous language learning to English learning. ICT and artificial intelligence tools will provide personalisation, interactivity, and assessment of learners' progress. Identifying learners who struggle with reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar is an important step for schools. Formative assessment gives the teacher a chance to monitor learners' progress and adjust teaching methods based on learners' needs. Finally, learners with difficulties should

receive remediation support through special intervention sessions in smaller groups or individually.

Contribution of the Study

The present study contributes to the broader aims of inclusive and equitable education, sustainable development, and nation-building by showing that inclusive pedagogical approaches can improve English language proficiency among senior secondary students. By taking into account learners varied linguistic backgrounds, capabilities, and access to learning resources, the study will contribute to SDG 4, Quality Education, especially by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Increased English proficiency may also improve learners' communication abilities, confidence, employability, enrolment in higher education institutions, and participation in the knowledge economy; hence, it indirectly contributes to SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities. In the Indian context, the present study aligns with the concept of Viksit Bharat@2047, as it focuses on equitable access to quality education, human capital development, digital inclusion, and empowerment of young learners. By promoting inclusive, technology-enabled, and learner-centred English education, the present study will help develop a generation that is competent and able to participate in India's social and economic development.

However, it is also contributing with some aims of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by offering ways to teach English at the senior secondary stage in an inclusive, equitable, and learner-centred way. The research fulfils some aims of NEP 2020, including multilingualism, foundational and language competencies, competency-based learning, differentiated learning, technology-enabled education, and equitable education for learners from different socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds. By analysing inclusive pedagogy methods such as

collaborative learning, differentiated learning, multilingual approaches, ICT-based learning, and remedial learning, this research offers valuable recommendations for making the English language classroom more accessible and effective.

Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting its findings. First, the study is limited to selected senior secondary educational institutions; therefore, the results may not be fully generalizable to all schools/regions. Secondly, the number of respondents and geographical spread might limit the broad applicability of the findings. Third, some data came from teachers' and students' self-reports, which may influence their perceptions. The application of inclusive pedagogy strategies may differ from one teacher to another based on their experience, class size, access to educational materials, internet connectivity, etc. Moreover, this study considers English language education alone and does not examine the effectiveness of inclusive strategies in other disciplines. Lastly, the study presents findings from a specific research environment at a particular point in time; therefore, long-term research using larger and more varied samples is suggested to understand the impact of inclusive pedagogy on English proficiency.

Conclusion

Current research shows that pedagogical approaches play an important role in improving English language proficiency in senior secondary school students. The findings show that the nature of classroom instruction strongly affects students' language proficiency, self-confidence, involvement, and learning success. Effective pedagogical techniques create a positive learning environment that helps students master language skills more effectively and stay actively involved in the learning process.

Differentiated instruction, scaffolded teaching, collaborative learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy have proven to be the most effective tools for mastering English. Differentiated instruction meets students' individual needs by adjusting teaching methods and learning activities to each student's characteristics. Scaffolded teaching helps students build independence and confidence in using the language. Collaborative learning encourages students to communicate, collaborate, and interact with peers, giving them opportunities to practice English language skills. Culturally responsive teaching enriches the learning process by connecting classroom instruction to students' culture and personal experiences. The research findings also highlight the need for continuous professional development among teachers. It is important to conduct continuous teacher training programs, workshops, and capacity-building activities so teachers are equipped with new and innovative teaching methods, including digital methodologies and techniques.

Another finding from the study highlights the need for placing more emphasis on practical activities in language classes. Instead of relying solely on conventional lecture-based methods, language laboratories, group discussions, project work, role plays, debates, storytelling, and digital teaching methodologies can help develop students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The English language curriculum must be flexible and relevant.

Moreover, schools need to design appropriate policies that encourage language practice through innovative pedagogical techniques and continuous student evaluation. Schools must provide adequate learning resources and digital tools for effective English language teaching. In summary, there is a need to reinforce teaching methods through learner-centred approaches, professional development for teachers, practical learning, curriculum improvements, and favourable institutional policies in order to enhance mastery of the English language by students in senior secondary schools. These measures will ensure learners have equal access to

learning opportunities, address learning gaps, and transition from marginalisation to mainstream success in today's globalised era.

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