

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS, POLICY
FRAMEWORKS, AND APPLICATIONS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING - A
NARRATIVE REVIEW**

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Annotation: This paper examines the conceptual foundations, international and national (Uzbekistan) policy frameworks, and pedagogical applications of inclusive education, with particular attention to foreign language teaching.

Keywords: inclusive education; Salamanca Statement; special educational needs; Universal Design for Learning; differentiated instruction; Uzbekistan; English as a Foreign Language; teacher preparedness.

Introduction. Ensuring every learner's right to quality education, regardless of physical, sensory, cognitive, linguistic, or social circumstance, has become one of the defining commitments of contemporary education policy. UNESCO reports that despite decades of reform, millions of children and young people worldwide continue to be excluded from education because of gender, language, disability, ethnicity, or economic condition, and that learners with disabilities remain disproportionately affected [1]. This persistent exclusion has driven a conceptual shift, from viewing the education of learners with additional needs as a specialized, separate concern, toward treating inclusion as a property of the whole education system - one that must adapt to the diversity of its learners rather than the reverse.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the development of inclusive education has become an explicit priority of state policy over the past decade, reflected in a sequence of presidential decrees, resolutions, and the 2020 Law "On Education." Yet the extent to which inclusive principles have been translated into everyday classroom practice and, in particular, into foreign language teaching, where learner diversity in sensory, cognitive, and linguistic profiles is especially pronounced - remains comparatively under-examined in the national literature. This review therefore aims to (1) trace the conceptual and historical development of inclusive education, (2) synthesize its internationally recognized principles, (3) map the legal and policy framework governing inclusive education in Uzbekistan, and (4) examine the pedagogical strategies used to implement inclusive principles in English language teaching (ELT).

Materials and Methods. This study takes the form of a narrative literature review rather than a systematic review or empirical field study; accordingly, no primary data (surveys, interviews, or classroom observations) were collected, and no statistics beyond those explicitly attributed to their original source are reported.

Three categories of sources were consulted: (a) international policy and reference documents, primarily from UNESCO, defining and framing inclusive education; (b) the national legal and regulatory framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including the Law "On Education" (2020), presidential decrees, and the corresponding government resolution and national concept on inclusive education; (c) peer-reviewed and practitioner-oriented literature addressing inclusive pedagogy specifically within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching contexts.

Sources were identified through targeted searches using terms such as "inclusive education," "Salamanca Statement," "Universal Design for Learning," and "EFL inclusive classroom." Materials were included if they addressed the definition, principles, policy framework, or classroom-level implementation of inclusive education; general disability-studies literature unrelated to education, and sources unavailable in full text, were excluded. The identified material was organized thematically into four categories, corresponding to the four subsections presented

under Results, and synthesized descriptively rather than through statistical meta-analysis. As a narrative rather than systematic review, this study does not follow a fixed protocol for study selection, and its coverage should be read as illustrative of the main themes in the literature rather than exhaustive.

Results. The term “inclusive education” derives from the French “inclusive” (“including” or “encompassing”). Historically, provision for learners with additional needs passed through two earlier stages before the emergence of inclusion: a “special education” stage, in which such learners were educated separately from mainstream schooling, and an “integration” stage, in which they were placed in mainstream schools but expected to adapt to an otherwise unchanged system [2]. Inclusion reverses this logic: it is the education system, not the learner, that is expected to adapt.

The decisive turning point in the international recognition of this model was the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain, from 7 to 10 June 1994, and attended by representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations. The resulting Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action established, for the first time as an internationally endorsed principle, that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have [3; 4]. Building on this foundation, UNESCO currently defines inclusion in education as the process of identifying and responding to the diversity of all learners' needs by increasing participation in learning, culture, and community, and by reducing exclusion within and from education [5]. This definition deliberately extends beyond disability to encompass exclusion linked to gender, language, ethnicity, migration status, and socio-economic condition.

Across the reviewed literature, four principles recur as defining features of inclusive education:

- Equity of access - every learner's right to quality education is recognized independently of ability or background;
- Diversity as a resource - differences among learners are treated not as deficits to be managed but as a source of enrichment for the learning process [6];
- Systemic rather than piecemeal change - UNESCO emphasizes that inclusion requires transforming curricula, pedagogy, teacher preparation, and assessment systems as a whole, rather than removing barriers one at a time [5];
- Participation and shared responsibility - learners, families, educators, and the wider community are expected to be actively engaged in the educational process.

Uzbekistan's legal architecture for inclusive education has developed cumulatively since 2017. The Presidential Decree “On Measures for the Fundamental Improvement of the System of State Support for Persons with Disabilities” (1 December 2017, PF-5270) and the Presidential Decree approving the Concept for the Development of the Public Education System until 2030 (29 April 2019, PF-5712) established the initial policy commitments in this area [7]. The revised Law “On Education,” in force since 24 September 2020, addresses inclusive education directly in Article 20, which requires equal treatment, free of any form of discrimination, of children with physical, intellectual, sensory, or psychological impairments within the education process [7; 8]. Notably, during the legislative debate preceding adoption, representatives of Uzbekistan's Association of Persons with Disabilities argued that Article 20 should include an explicit definition of inclusive education, a provision the final text did not incorporate [8].

To operationalize the Law, Presidential Resolution PQ-4860 (13 October 2020), “On Measures for Further Improving the System of Education and Upbringing for Children with Special Educational Needs,” together with its annexed “Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education in the Public Education System for 2020–2025,” set out concrete implementation tasks: establishing accessibility requirements for school buildings, supplying specialized methodological literature and

equipment, and training specialist teachers and tutors [9; 10]. The Concept further envisages individualized curricula developed jointly with parents, and the voluntary engagement of advanced pedagogy students as tutors in schools implementing inclusive education [10]. Despite this framework, national researchers report a persistent gap between the regulatory base and classroom reality, citing shortages of qualified specialists, inadequately adapted school infrastructure, and insufficient societal preparedness for inclusive values as ongoing obstacles [11].

Because a language classroom inherently brings together learners with varied auditory, visual, cognitive, and linguistic profiles, inclusive principles carry particular weight in EFL settings. The reviewed literature converges on several recurrent strategies:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - designing lessons from the outset for multiple means of representation, action, and expression (e.g., presenting instructions in both written and audio form, or allowing learners to demonstrate understanding orally, in writing, or visually) [12];
- Differentiated instruction - offering tasks of varying complexity and levels of scaffolding within a single lesson;
- Culturally responsive teaching - selecting texts and topics that connect to learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds [12];
- Cooperative learning and peer tutoring - reported as effective particularly in classrooms including hearing-impaired or otherwise diverse learners [13; 14].

At the same time, studies of EFL teachers consistently identify barriers to implementing these strategies: insufficient specialized training, a shortage of adapted materials and assistive technology, and limited support from parents and the wider school community [13; 15]. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their sense of professional preparedness emerge across this literature as the strongest predictors of successful inclusive practice [15].

Discussion. Read together, the four thematic strands point to a consistent pattern: the conceptual and legal architecture of inclusive education - internationally and within Uzbekistan specifically - has advanced considerably faster than its translation into day-to-day classroom practice. Uzbekistan's policy framework, anchored in Article 20 of the Law "On Education" and the 2020–2025 Concept, compares favorably in scope with international standards articulated since Salamanca. However, the same gap between regulation and implementation that local researchers report for the education system in general [11] reappears, in a more specific form, in the EFL literature's finding that teacher preparedness and resources - not policy intent - are the binding constraint on inclusive practice [13; 15].

This convergence suggests that further progress in Uzbekistan is likely to depend less on additional legislation and more on embedding inclusive pedagogy - including concrete tools such as Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction - into the initial training and continuing professional development of teachers, and specifically of foreign language teachers, whose classrooms are structurally diverse by nature. It further points to a research gap: while the EFL-inclusion literature reviewed here is drawn largely from other national contexts, empirical research specifically examining inclusive practice in Uzbekistani English-language classrooms is limited, and would be a natural next step for future study.

As a narrative rather than a systematic review, this study has clear limitations: source identification was targeted rather than exhaustive, coverage was largely restricted to English- and Uzbek-language material, and no formal quality appraisal of the included sources was undertaken. The findings should therefore be read as a synthesis of prevailing themes in the literature rather than a definitive or exhaustive account.

Conclusion. Inclusive education has evolved from a specialized concern for learners with disabilities into a systemic principle applicable to the education system as a whole. Uzbekistan has, since 2017, built a substantial legal and policy foundation for inclusive education, culminating in the

2020 Law "On Education" and its accompanying national concept. The literature on English language teaching specifically identifies concrete, transferable strategies - Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and peer collaboration - capable of supporting inclusive practice in the language classroom, provided that teachers receive adequate preparation and support. Closing the gap between Uzbekistan's policy commitments and classroom-level practice, particularly within foreign language teacher education, remains the central task ahead.

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