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# Students' Specific Needs Frequently Presented in English Language Class in Ecuador: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Hearing Disability

Wendy Nayely Ponce Ponce<sup>1</sup>, Jean Pierre Pineda Reyna<sup>2</sup>, Jhonny Villafuerte-Holguin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Student in Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. Email: e1314043041@live.ulead.edu.ec  
orcid.org/0009-0008-7472-8981

<sup>2</sup> Student in Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. Email: e1316893583@live.ulead.edu.ec  
orcid.org/0009-0000-8386-6675

<sup>3</sup> Profesor in Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. Email: jhonny.villafuerte@uleam.edu.ec  
orcid.org/0000-0001-6053-630; Research Project: Desarrollo profesional de docentes de los idiomas nacionales y extranjeros de la zona 4 de Ecuador 2022-2024. Research group: Innovaciones pedagógicas para el desarrollo sostenible en la zona 4 de Ecuador.

## Abstract

Foreign language instructors around the world require the support of pedagogical experts to find strategies to improve idiomatic practice of students having specific conditions. This work aims to provide educational communities with an analysis of the information on the most frequent specific conditions observed in the English as a foreign language class in the Manta Canton, Ecuador. It uses the socio-critical approach and Hermeneutics to review 65 scientific articles published in the period 2000 - 2024 in the Scopus, Web of Science, Scielo, and Latindex databases. The research focuses on the most frequent conditions of students observed in the local context (1) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and (2) hearing disability. The systematic review delves into the following constructs (a) Origin and current situation of Inclusive Education in Ecuador, (b) Hearing disability, and (c) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Furthermore, the authors present strategies that achieved relevant results in teaching the English language internationally and replicable in Ecuador. It concluded that inclusive education requires educational research to generate information that guides teachers to improve their inclusive educational practice in Latin America.

**Keywords:** Learning Difficulties, Disabilities, School Integration, Educational Needs

## 1. Introduction

According to Cawthon (2001), the inclusive philosophy focuses on people's interactions having or not a disability or specific needs. It demands support to improve communicational skills. Then, in 2005, UNESCO defined the term Inclusive Education (IE) as the group of actions to warrant the attention of learners' diverse needs by enhancing their involvement in learning, cultures, and communities, meanwhile minimizing their exclusion from

the educational system. Such as aims need adjustments and modifications in content, methodologies, frameworks, and teaching tactics.

However, students with specific needs related or not to disabilities face challenges in their English language learning journey (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Inclusive education is essential to ensure equal access to the national curriculum. Thus, it emphasizes the instruction of students with disabilities alongside their peers in regular classrooms for most of the school day (Schuelka, 2018).

The implementation of inclusive education is still a challenge for many educational systems around the world. It requires changes in values, systems, and practices (Lintangsari & Emaliana, 2020). They may be associated with social and emotional difficulties for students in their personal, educational, and social environments (Atar et al., 2021).

This article begins with a review of the constructs (a) Origin and current situation of Inclusive Education in Ecuador, (b) hearing disability, (c) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and (d) Tools for teaching Foreign Language for studies with specific needs. The methodology used in this article is hermeneutics to review 65 scientific articles specialized in inclusive education and available in the Scopus, Web of Science, Scielo, and Latindex data banks. The main research questions to answer are:

1. What are the most effective strategies to address hearing impairment in EFL instruction?
2. What are the most effective strategies to address attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in EFL instruction?
3. What didactics used internationally can be implemented in Ecuador?

This work aims to provide educational communities with an analysis of the information on the most frequent specific conditions observed in the English as a foreign language class in the Manta Canton, Ecuador.

## **2. Development**

### *2.1. Origin and current situation of Inclusive Education in Ecuador*

Inclusive education has as its origin the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994. A group of 300 participants, 92 governments, and 27 international organizations came to an agreement named Education for All to provide education for all children and teenagers worldwide (UNESCO, 1994). Ecuador took part in such global educational policy to consider social inclusion as part of national policies. According to Tanner et al. (1996), principals reported being highly involved in the planning process for students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Inclusive education tries to ensure that all children receive education of quality within the regular system, emphasizing a collective vision and the conviction of education for all children at the relevant ages (Unesco, 2005).

The evaluation of advances in Inclusive Education can be set by instruments such as the Technical Manual for Attitudes Towards Teaching All Students (ATTAS-mm), which is a 9-item scale reliable and valid for checking teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities and analyzing the results by cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Gregory and Noto, 2016). According to Haug (2017), international organizations and many governments globally agree about the vital importance of inclusive education in guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for all students. The core principles of inclusive education are closely tied to democratic values and the pursuit of social justice. Ideally, inclusion is a multi-faceted concept with different social components to support or weaken (Haug, 2017). Haug also considers that inclusive education can address the needs of all students requiring special educational support, rather than solely focusing on students with disabilities, which is currently the prevailing viewpoint.

According to Castro et al. (2018), inclusive education responds to the needs of students by developing didactic proposals that promote diversity and inclusion. According to Larissa Rodrigues & Beckmann Menezes (2019), the social interactions between children with disabilities and their peers can be indicative of the degree of inclusion in

a school and fundamental in the development of social competence. Additionally, some countries consider access to education for all students to be inclusive education. On the other hand, the concept of disabilities may differ depending on people's attitudes toward inclusive education policy and practices of the education system (Krischler et al., 2019).

To Lorente et al. (2020), inclusive education became increasingly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for policies focused on promoting equity and inclusive education became essential in ensuring and enhancing the right to education in today's context. Meanwhile, Charitaki et al. (2022) suggest that the Attitudes of Teachers Toward Teaching All Students—mild to moderate (ATTAS-mm) is a reliable and valid tool for observing teachers' attitudes toward disabilities. The study related the attitudes in the dimensions (a) cognitive, (a) affective, and (c) behavioral/conative. Additionally, when teachers have more chances to engage with students who have special education needs, the fosters greater collaboration among teachers and encourages additional support for pursuing specialized coursework in the field of special education.

Regarding the situation in our country, Ecuador, the State will guarantee policies for the prevention of disabilities and, together with society and the family, will seek to equalize opportunities for people with disabilities and their social integration.

According to Santos et al., (2017) to achieve true inclusion, it is necessary to do so based on the acceptance of differences as a potentiality. This is the only way to understand the magnitude of the university processes that must be redefined, designed, implemented, and, above all, evaluated for future decision-making.

According to Loor et al., (2021), they conducted a Lickert-type questionnaire with 5 response options about how they consider inclusion to be in their country and province. By their results, they observed that the situation of educational inclusion in Manabí is deficient because the student with motor disabilities is immersed in schools whose values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes have not been able to strengthen the inclusive culture.

To Vargas-Castro et al., (2024) to educators in Ecuador, there is a perception of higher education that is not being managed effectively, with vulnerable positions being the training of teachers and knowledge, the recognition of the staff and scholars' body, curricular facets, and not academic materials, especially for hearing and visual impaired students. Additionally, it is mentioned that higher education in Ecuador does not state according to the theoretical approach, and establishment of national laws and regulations. The legal ignorance, poor infrastructure, and retrograde thinking about inclusive education that is sought to be eliminated.

According to Clavijo Castillo & Bautista-Cerro, (2020), The term inclusive education is of relatively recent use and is still in the process of consolidation, both interpretative and practical. As we already know, inclusive education in other Latin American countries has already come a long way; however, in Ecuador, the topic began to be addressed in depth at the beginning of this century.

According to Jaramillo et al., (2024) In Ecuador, inclusion in the education system is a major challenge that requires effective public policies to achieve significant improvements. Inclusive education goes beyond providing support to students with special needs. It is essential to analyze educational policies considering cultural and social differences, identify barriers that exclude students, and adopt more inclusive practices to fulfill the true purpose of inclusion in education.

According to Hernández Pico & Samada Grasst, (2021) One of the main challenges facing education in Ecuador is to increase coverage, which in turn must be of quality and warmth. The goal is to expand coverage to meet the needs of all students. And in this aspect, inclusive education plays a preponderant role.

According to Vélez Calvo, 2(017) Ecuador's education system is currently undergoing a profound transformation because of the recent approval of different national laws that have proposed to integrate the principles of inclusive education into this system.

Research conducted in 350 public schools in Ecuador by Jiménez et al., (2024) revealed significant disparities in academic performance and dropout rates between students with and without disabilities. Socioeconomic, cultural, and attitudinal barriers to full inclusion were identified.

Alquinga, (2024) suggests that teachers should take courses or trainings that contribute and disseminate the meaning of inclusion in the school environment, especially that teachers know and use new inclusive strategies that respect the integrity of children and contribute significantly to the teaching-learning process.

An inclusive environment in Ecuador is also of utmost importance, Ycaza Feraud (2024) mentions that achieving an inclusive environment in the classroom requires not only the implementation of appropriate strategies, adaptations to the academic curriculum, and the commitment and willingness of teachers, but also and above all the collaboration of the family; in short, to be successful it must be a joint effort.

According to Delgado, (2013) one of the biggest victories for the disabled in Ecuador was Moreno's creation of (the Ecuador Without Barriers project). The objective is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in society, making them more sensitive to their needs in their studies, work, and daily life.

## 2.2. *Hearing disability*

According to Joseph & Nadol (1993), 4% of the population under 45 years old manifest a hearing loss synthon in the United States. A speech communication level between 45-60 decibels (dB.) is considered an upper-level hearing disability. Around 20% of the population has an impairment of 25 dB, which is a disability. The study by Mohr et al. (2001) determined that individuals in the USA who acquired hearing impairment in 1998 caused an additional \$4.6 billion in expenses over their lifetime. It represents an economic impact on social programs. Thus, early identification and proactive medical intervention could lead to substantial long-term benefits, given the significant expenses linked to severe to profound hearing impairment that occurred before the acquisition of language skills.

Rawool and Colligon-Wayne (2008) stated that college students are frequently exposed to occupational noise without ear protection. They use noisy equipment without ear protection and expose themselves to potentially harmful music volumes. These exposures, alone or in combination, can increase the risk of hearing loss. Frank Lin (2011) states that approximately 66% of adults aged 70 and above in the United States have hearing loss (Lin et al., 2011). In addition, young individuals with hearing loss are more likely to be unemployed and earn significantly lower salaries than adults without hearing impairments (Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012).

Regarding the causes of hearing loss, Cohen et al. (2014) affirm that several viral infections have the potential to result in hearing loss. It is crucial to assess and supply specific treatment of affected individuals to reduce the hearing loss progress as much as possible. Gurgel et al. (2014) state that older adults with hearing loss have a higher likelihood of developing dementia and show a faster decline in cognitive function compared to those without hearing impairment. It suggests that hearing loss could potentially serve as an indicator of cognitive dysfunction in individuals aged 65 years and older. People face the challenge of teaching classes to students with special needs, which requires knowledge and understanding of appropriate adaptations (Pizarro Chacón & Cordero Badilla, 2015).

Meanwhile, Portnuff (2016) affirms that teenagers who use personal listening devices expose themselves to the risk of music-induced hearing loss due to their daily listening habits. Consequently, people's attitudes and beliefs toward hearing loss and their listening behaviors are influenced by their complex relationship with music and portable devices, among other factors.

The causes of hearing loss can be diverse, including noise pollution, mechanical damage to hair cells, cilia, synapses, metabolically induced damage after exposure to loud noises, genetic factors, and the absence of effective treatments or preventative strategies (Ding et al., 2019). Children with mild bilateral hearing loss (MBHL) are more likely to experience ongoing language difficulties by the fourth grade, especially in areas of language related

to structure and grammar. However, consistent use of properly fitted hearing aids can enhance listening comprehension, although the extent of benefit from hearing aids may be diminished for children with higher levels of unassisted hearing (Walter, 2020).

According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD), the condition of hearing loss is when a person can hear in their better ear, taken as the pure-tone average of audiometric levels of 0.5 kHz, 1 kHz, 2 kHz, and 4 kHz (Haile et al., 2021). Furthermore, Powell et al. (2022) emphasize the need to consider interdependent and synergistic processes of hearing and cognition. Nevertheless, hearing disabilities can restrict input stimulus, communication, and environmental reception, which become a challenge for instructors in the college context (Atar et al., 2021).

To Suryanti et al. (2023), teaching English vocabulary to deaf and HL students requires more patience and time to explain the class. They also argue that strategies used on the HL students were suitable. Strategies used in instruction are sign language, body movement, through-the-air language comprehension, lip reading, drilling, repetition, and media.

Birinci and Sariçobanin (2021) showed that using materials along with sign language is much better than only using sign language teaching to students with Hearing loss because it was easier to retain the new vocabulary in the group.

### *2.3. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*

According to Viskari (2005), any tool for teaching students with disabilities requires considering the whole education experience in teaching a foreign language and the local context. The speech recognition software can help students translate their voice into text. Thus, students with visual disability, spell checking, and text-to-speech conversion help compose and decode words, especially in foreign language instruction (Young & MacCormack, 2014).

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder shows a high degree of morbidity associated with other disorders, such as learning disabilities, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety, emotional disorders, and tics (Moro Ramos, 2021).

For students with ADHD, it is crucial to divide complex tasks into smaller, manageable parts and to schedule time gradually to complete them. Clares Almagro (2013) suggests using a poster, such as a calendar, to display schedules. Students can provide a visual representation of progress.

People with disabilities need all the resources to enhance their four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking when they learn a foreign language. Teachers must adapt methods and resources appropriate to gain knowledge about a foreign language (Villao Villacrés & Pérez Mato, 2015).

In Ecuador, instructors are not highly trained to teach their classes due to a lack of knowledge, which means that the teaching-learning process is not well-suited to achieve optimal development of skills according to their possibilities.

Instructors must go beyond the transmission of content and support a process of knowledge and information construction, both individual and collective, articulated in intra- and extracurricular spaces (Mitjan et al., 2020).

Thus, instructors play a crucial role in mediating methods and tools that allow students to face their limitations and achieve their full potential (Acosta and Arráez, 2014; Villafuerte et al., 2017).

Martyushev et al. (2021) state that the increasing usage of online communication tools in foreign language instruction shows a technological upgrade of the learning process.



According to the CDC (2022), tools and strategies for teaching the English language to students with ADHD can consider their learning pace, using technology and music, and encouraging exercise to improve focus and attention, classroom behavioral management or organizational training can also help children with ADHD succeed in the classroom.

According to Gutierrez Romero (2022), diversity is essential in inclusive education because it allows teachers to understand the needs of their students and create tools to involve and engage them in class. Lo (2022) notes that many assistive technology tools are free and easy to use, and they not only address the needs of students with various types of disabilities but also enhance their learning process. Thus, pictures, videos, or music may help students with disabilities in reading or writing practice in the target language.

It is important to note that modifying lesson plans for students with disabilities is not a one-size-fits-all approach, as teachers must work closely with inclusive education staff and parents to determine the best modifications for each student (Kessler & Schneider, 2022). It is essential for teachers to be open to experimentation and to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of students. Neese (2023) suggests that technology tools can help students with disabilities learn a foreign language.

### *2.5. Teaching strategies for improving inclusive education*

According to Cawthon (2001), instructors supply adaptations and adjustments to class sizes, curriculum, and assessments, providing enough language input to make the impaired student part of the class with or without the presence of specific stuff. Freeman (2002) stated that the perception of inclusive education depends on their points of view about social identity. In addition, Wamae and Kang'ethe-Kamau (2004) stated that many educators believe that favorable teacher attitudes are critical to the successful practice of inclusive education.

Besides, Paneque and Barbetta (2006) stated that teachers' training evolved from a general area of work of self-efficacy to the theory suggestion that studies perceptions concerning an ability to improve thoughts, feelings, motivation, and actions. However, Smith (2006) planted that English Language Teaching (ELT) will be a cyclical and graduate process, beginning with TEFL certification. In addition, English instructors demonstrated a strong preference for learning through experience. Furthermore, more students with a condition of disability must be encouraged into classrooms at the same time and enrolled in inclusive education teachers.

Berent and Clymer (2007) found that teachers trained in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teach in environments with a unique group of learners consisting of students with or without disability conditions. It shows a similar output using the PEN-International workshop as a highly effective model for training instructors.

According to Nguyen (2012), teachers need to know the English proficiency level of learners. It will allow them to plan relevant activities and ask language-appropriate questions. Meanwhile, training teachers with the model of American Sign Language to instructors must be necessary in modern classrooms. Components of technologies such as touchscreen to prepare teachers for new students will make education more innovative and engaging for HL students (Humphries, 2013).

Based on the findings from Soudy et al. (2015), ELL (English Language Learning) assessments between students and instructors enhance the capability of encouraging and class planning. The assessments may involve model technology games for ELLs. It can favor the student by helping him to generate a greater reflective capacity, corresponding to a positive effect on the intellectual type.

Cimermanová (2017) reported that teachers should improve their attitudes toward inclusive education. Schools create and provide educational programs that specialize according to the type of disability. Atar (2021) stated that technology has become an accessible way to teach English to HL students. Thus, YouTube, webpages, and language applications have free access for instructors and learners and offer educational benefits. In addition, it is relevant to special educational instruction the parents' perception about integration. They want the best support

and educational opportunities for children, but relatively little research has focused on this issue (Kast & Schwab, 2023).

### 3. Conclusion

Inclusion has faced several challenges and a historical journey to improve teaching practice over the years 2000-2024 to access children, teenagers, and adults to quality education. Therefore, English language teaching assumes the adaptations to students' needs in Ecuador, considering the type of disability they may have. The strategies, methods, and curricular reforms are different for each case.

Referring to hearing loss hurts English as a foreign language learning. Thus, learners are not able to perfectly repeat the word's sounds and understand grammatical structures. According to the findings, authors such as Ding et al. (2019) and Powell et al. (2022) agree that HL is directly related to an increase in the risk of dementia and a cognitive decline that can be intensified through the age of individuals. Such conditions affect negatively the normal life of young people, for example, lower salaries in adulthood (Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012). The literature review shows that the strategies more used successfully to teach English as a foreign language to students with hearing impairment are:

1. Natural Components in Classes: According to Humphries (2013) natural components such as a touchscreen can be to facilitate the engagement in classes to HL students.
2. American Sign Language: According to Nguyen (2013) ASL is one of the easier ways to teach English to students with HL disabilities. In addition, Birinci & Sariçahana argue that materials along with sign language are much better and easier to retain new information for HL students.
3. Online Services: Atar (2021) affirms that online services such as YouTube channels, web pages, and other online Apps have multiple benefits for HL students and help them to engage in English learning.

On the other hand, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is associated with other disorders such as Anxiety Disorders, Mood Disorders, and behavioral disorders that affect the student's behavior and emotional state. The strategies to counteract it are the use.

1. Technology: Focus@Will, a music-centric app designed to help users maintain a healthy work-life balance, aims to create a hyper-focused "flow" that increases productivity.

1. Music to engage their attention: Brain.fm is an app that you have to register in the application, completing the short evaluation to adjust the music to the specific needs of the young brain, avoiding boredom or overstimulation. As for the time of use, the duration may vary according to the child's response. It is advisable to observe how the music affects their concentration and adjust accordingly.

2. Computer applications designed to practice EFL language are available on the Internet: Duolingo, Babbel, and Quizlet are very popular language learning apps that use gamification to make practicing English fun and engaging by offering lessons, exercises, and games to help students improve their vocabulary, grammar and conversational skills. The time of use may vary depending on the complexity of the language and the dedication of the student.

In addressing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), several scholars have highlighted the importance of implementing effective strategies to support children with this condition. Moro Ramos (2021), Clares Almagro (2013), and Cimermanova (2015) stress the importance of using specific approaches that can be beneficial for teaching language to students with ADHD. They emphasize the need to adapt teaching methods to the individual learning pace of each student. In contrast, Viskari (2005) stresses the essential role of educational institutions in providing the expertise and resources needed to effectively implement these strategies. This includes having access to appropriate tools, support systems, and trained professionals who can effectively address the unique needs of these learners. Building on this perspective, Acosta and Arráez (2014) elaborate on the critical role of educators in supporting students with ADHD. They highlight that teachers play a crucial role in selecting and implementing methods and tools that can empower students to overcome their challenges and maximize their potential. By fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment, teachers can create opportunities for students with ADHD to thrive academically and develop essential skills for success.



In Ecuador, the educational system still faces limitations related to the national curricular protocols and learners' diagnostics. The proposal route is to address inclusion in Ecuador not from the macro and general regulations, unfortunately, not all of them recognize the importance of education and the impact it has as a universal right. To be able to influence the micro to the participants in education could significantly improve the adoption and application of all new methodologies and strategies to unify most of the students.

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