

Identifying inclusive training needs for English teachers in Japan teaching students with disabilities

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Identifying Language Teachers' Training Needs to Provide More Inclusive Education

To realize inclusive education, language teachers should be well-prepared to teach students with disabilities (SWDs)

However, studies show that English language teachers (ELTs) often lack training in inclusive education and meeting the needs of SWDs

What specific training do ELTs need to better accommodate SWDs?

Inclusive Practices in English Language Teaching Observation Scale (IPELT)
A novel instrument to determine inclusive training needs

ELTs working at the postsecondary level in Japan (N = 13)

- Direct lesson observations
- Post-observation interviews and thematic analyses
- Grading of 40 inclusive behaviors in 10 pedagogical domains

Teachers could benefit from targeted training in differentiation and specific considerations pertaining to SWDs

- Student development
- Classroom management
- Disability assessment

Foundational skillsets to realize inclusive learning are present among ELTs despite lack of training

IPELT will help develop inclusive practices and training programs for language teachers suited to their particular context

Identifying inclusive training needs with the inclusive practices in English language teaching observation scale
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IPELT revealed that while many teachers feel unprepared and lack specific training in inclusive education, they possess foundational skills that could be enhanced through targeted training. Credit: Dr. Davey Young from Sophia University, Japan

Access to education is recognized as one of the pillars of sustainability; it

is certainly a necessary foundation if we are to build a better world for ourselves and future generations. However, education needs to be not only accessible, but also inclusive. That is, it should extend to people with all kinds of disabilities and suit their particular needs.

According to a recent report by the World Health Organization, it is estimated that a striking 16% of the world's population lives with some form of disability. Considering there are about 1.5 billion English language teachers (ELTs) worldwide, there is a great need for adequately trained ELTs that can teach students with disabilities (SWDs).

Unfortunately, multiple studies suggest that ELTs lack training in [inclusive education](#) and feel unprepared to accommodate SWDs in their classes. Despite these findings, the specific training needs of ELTs in this area remain unclear.

In a recent study [published](#) on July 8, 2024 in *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, Dr. Davey Young from the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Department of English Studies, Sophia University, Japan, set out to address this knowledge gap. Young's paper reports on the use of a novel instrument called the Inclusive Practices in English Language Teaching Observation Scale (IPELT), to evaluate the practices of English teachers working in Japan.

"After spending several years working in English language education, I became aware of how unprepared we are as a field to properly accommodate students with a variety of support needs, especially those with specific learning difficulties that can pose further barriers to [language learning](#)," says Young. "We must do better as a field to teach more inclusively, and helping to steer the field in this direction has become my ultimate career goal."

Young developed the IPELT based on previously existing guidelines and quality indicators regarding inclusive education, but adapted it to apply

better in a TESOL (Teaching English as a second or [foreign language](#)) context. This scaling tool consists of 40 inclusive behaviors categorized into 10 pedagogical domains. Of these 40 behaviors, 22 are observed directly during lessons, while the remaining 18 are assessed through questionnaires in post-observation interviews. For his study, Young recruited 13 post-secondary ELTs from various public and private universities across different prefectures in Japan.

The results provide some interesting insights into the situation of ELTs in Japan. Most participants felt they were unprepared and that they needed more knowledge and skills about [teaching](#) SWDs. While they did not all agree on how to acquire such skills, IPELT results revealed that they would benefit from targeted training, especially in differentiation and specific considerations when teaching SWDs. On top of this, and to a lesser extent, it appears ELTs would likely benefit from more inclusive knowledge and skills related to student development, classroom management, and assessment.

On a more positive note, teachers may already "have what it takes" to properly teach SWDs. As Young comments, "Fortunately, the findings also suggest that many ELTs likely already have a foundational skillset to create inclusive learning environments and may simply need increased awareness of how do this for a wider variety of student needs."

Overall, this study illuminates potential areas for improvement among ELTs in advancing inclusive education. Notably, the IPELT could be useful in other ways as well. As Young points out, "The IPELT has the potential to be used as a reflective tool, as teachers could assign their own magnitude code weights or collaborate with a critical partner to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching in including or accommodating SWDs. Thus, the IPELT could also be valuable for pre- or in-service professional development across various English-language teaching contexts."

Striving for more inclusive teaching is akin to planting and nurturing seeds that will grow into full inclusion over time. As this is a broad social initiative, let us all contribute to the best of our ability and work towards a world where everyone has equal access to education.

More information: Davey Young, Identifying inclusive training needs with the inclusive practices in English language teaching observation scale, *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* (2024). [DOI: 10.1186/s40862-024-00287-9](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00287-9)

Provided by Sophia University

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