

# Tackling SEN in the EFL Classroom within the Ecuadorian Higher Education Context

*Abordando la NEE en el aula de EFL en el contexto ecuatoriano de la  
educación superior*

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## RESUMEN

Giving attention to SEN is not a new concern worldwide; actually, UNESCO declared that countries around the world should take urgent actions to set up inclusive educational systems, which is easier said than done, particularly in low-income countries where the

resources shortage turns the attention to SEN into a daunting challenge. In Ecuador, MinEduc took some measures to meet SEN in primary and secondary education. Unfortunately, these actions did not reach tertiary education where there is no practical application of the Guide to Equality and Educational Environment published by (Senescyt). Regarding EFL teaching, the horizon is even worse as there is neither framework nor awareness about SEN. This fact sets the gap to carry out this descriptive-combined investigation that selected the convenience sample method due to the pandemic drawbacks as well as the fact that most students with SEN object to being labeled as disabled persons. The data was gathered by using interviews and surveys, the first one gathered information through semi-structured questions, while the second one was through structured questions. The findings show that most students with disabilities were supported during their former education. Moreover, most English teachers claimed they know the process; the curricular adaptations; and the stakeholders' responsibility to give attention to SEN, only when it is not their sole responsibility. In an attempt to tackle this issue, this study suggests responsibilities and proposes strategies that might be of great benefit for English teachers when it comes to teaching students with SEN.

Keywords: Special Educational Needs, Inclusive Education, English as Foreign Language Teaching, Ecuadorian Higher Education.

### **ABSTRACT**

Dar atención a las NEE no es una preocupación nueva a nivel mundial. De hecho, la UNESCO declaró que todos los países del mundo deberían tomar medidas urgentes para establecer sistemas educativos inclusivos. No tan fácil como parece, particularmente en países de bajos ingresos donde la escasez de recursos hace que la atención a las NEE sea un gran desafío. En Ecuador, el MinEduc tomó algunas medidas para atender las NEE en la educación primaria y secundaria. Lamentablemente, estas acciones no se enfocaron en la educación superior donde no existe una aplicación práctica de modelos como la Guía de Igualdad y Ambiente Educativo publicada por (Senescyt). En lo referente a la enseñanza del idioma inglés el horizonte es aún peor ya que no existe un marco de referencia ni preocupación sobre las NEE. Esto representa el vacío que permite realizar esta investigación descriptiva-combinada, la cual seleccionó el método de muestreo por conveniencia debido a los inconvenientes causados por la pandemia, así como a que la

mayoría de los estudiantes con NEE se oponen a ser etiquetados como personas con discapacidad. Los datos se recolectaron mediante entrevistas y encuestas, la primera recopiló información a través de preguntas semiestructuradas y la segunda a través de preguntas estructuradas. Los hallazgos muestran que muchos estudiantes con discapacidades recibieron apoyo durante su educación previa. Por otra parte, la mayoría de los participantes afirmaron conocer el proceso; las adaptaciones curriculares; y las responsabilidades de todas las partes involucradas en dar atención a las NEE, pero solo cuando no está bajo su responsabilidad. En un intento por abordar este problema, se sugieren responsabilidades y estrategias que pueden ser de gran beneficio para los profesores de inglés cuando se trata de enseñar a estudiantes con NEE.

Palabras clave: Necesidades Educativas Especiales, Educación Inclusiva, Enseñanza del Inglés como Idioma Extranjero, Educación Superior del Ecuador.

## INTRODUCCIÓN

One of The United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) main goals is to motivate countries to provide equal access to schooling. In this respect, some of the issues faced by disabled learners were discussed in the World Conference on Education for All: Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (UNESCO, 1990) where it was established that “The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system” This fact was just the tip of the iceberg because beyond the suggestions made at the conference there was still a long way ahead and some years later some actions would be taken.

In reply to the conference’s suggestions, some countries took up projects to cope with this matter. To illustrate, The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB], (2002) was enacted in the United States of America not only to improve their educational system but also to give attention to SEN. Despite its aims, Jewell (2008) claims that it is unfair to include special education students, for example, only 1 percent of the students with LD reached the required achievement standard. Likewise, in Ecuador the Ministry of Education enacted decrees and published guidelines and frameworks. These documents were useful

to give attention to the SEN in elementary or secondary education but did not target tertiary education, despite year after year an increasing number of students with SEN are getting enrolled in universities. In an attempt to cope with this issue, the Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior (Consejo de Educación Superior [CES], 2010) set the attention and access to higher education for students with SEN as a paramount and assigned the responsibility of creating plans and programs to the departments of Student Well-being which are expected to track and backup their performance during their majors.

Furthermore, if learners with SEN expect to get graduated, they will have to acquire another language, which leads us to the English Language teaching field since it is one of chosen ones by university students. Thus, the following questions are raised: What are the perceptions of students with SEN about the process of English Language acquisition at tertiary levels? Are English teachers trained to teach English to students with SEN? What are the curricular adaptations that should be implemented to meet the SEN in the EFL classroom? Furthermore, this research also attempts to propose strategies to give attention to the SEN in the EFL classroom.

## **DESARROLLO**

### **An overview of SEN**

To begin with, Florian (2013) holds that in the 18th century persons with disabilities were generally subject to callous, cruel, or dismissive attitudes. Because it was widely held that disability was inflicted by God or the devil and could be cured only by divine intervention. Ainscow (1994) sets that across the world many children do not receive adequate education, including large numbers who have disabilities, who were believed to be incapable and incompetent, unable to benefit from instruction of any kind which placed them as target to promote discrimination.

A global awareness about this issue made authorities rethink some biased concepts. Thus, “The term special educational needs came into use in the late 1960s as a result of increasing dissatisfaction with the terminology used in Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations which classified handicapped children into ten categories” (Gulliford & Upton, 2002, p.1) As time passed by, educational concepts such as additional

needs, inclusive education, education for all, learning disabilities, among others gained recognition. However, giving the attention they deserved was not that easy because they used to be grouped according to fields such as medicine, psychology, sociology, etc. Regarding this issue, Florian (2013) claims that it was possible to use only a single broad category by using the term “special educational needs” This move avoided the issue of overlapping disabilities categories and enabled a focus on the individual needs of children.

Nonetheless, it was nothing but the beginning of a long-run project. Concordantly, Florian (2013) acknowledged that categories were still needed to inform and determine decisions about curriculum, teaching, and placement for children as well as to determine teachers’ preparation, and training. As a result, Florian (2013) highlighted that in the 19th century Tomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurence Clerc founded the first institution for the education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons. This system integrated students with SEN into its programs but also relieved the world of them.

In this respect, the World Conference on Education for All: Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (UNESCO, 1990) claimed that education should be provided to all ages while setting that learning does not take place in isolation since learners need physical and emotional support to benefit from their education. Along the same vein, the United States of America enacted The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB], (2002) in which schools had the responsibility to achieve established educational standards as well as to identify students who needed extra help to design Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Similarly, in Ecuador the awareness of giving attention to students with SEN raised and (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008, art. 46) stated that “the State will ensure the inclusion of disabled people into the mainstream education” although there was not guidance to determine the disability degrees that were and were not suitable for each sort of schools.

#### Giving attention to SENs in Ecuador

It is expected that to meet learners’ educational needs teachers should know their background, feelings, culture, psychological and medical condition, among other aspects.

Furthermore, when dealing with students with disabilities, the analysis should go beyond what a teacher can determine at first glance since it is necessary to have specialized diagnostics to establish whether students are able to go to mainstream or specialized schools. Skipping this analysis might reduce the chances of students' success. Nevertheless, there are countries which are for and against rating disabilities in scales that provide them a ticket entrance to mainstream or to specialized schools.

“In Italy special schools have been closed down and all schoolchildren with disabilities have been integrated into mainstream education – the project called “The Didactic Center as Foundation for School and Educational Integration” has promoted the setting up of inclusive classes with a maximum of 25 children, with or without disabilities. The curriculum was adjusted to the needs of the children with special educational needs, both in respect of the subjects studied and in respect of the therapies they required”. (Blândul, 2010, p.30)

The project mentioned above is easier said than done, particularly in low-income countries, where a classroom with 25 students is just a utopia even for private schools. The situation is even worse in public schools where a class size might go between 35 and 50, to say the least. A more realistic project for the Ecuadorian educational context was set out in Romania. Research carried out by Blândul (2010) concluded that “The schoolchildren with medium and severe learning difficulties, as well as those whose deficiencies make them unable to attend ordinary preschools, primary and secondary educational institutions, go to special schools, according to their specific deficiencies”

That is, students with mild learning disabilities (MLD), behavior disorders, and moderate physical disabilities were integrated into the mainstream schools, where the curriculum was adjusted to give attention to no more than 25 students' needs, with or without disabilities. To do so, Romania needed a staff of specialists to determine the level of disability as well as to meet their educational needs, aside from the facilities and equipment required to achieve success (Blândul, 2010). Nonetheless, in Ecuador the shortage of facilities and equipment, specialists and teachers play a paramount role in Ecuador, since the education budget is not enough or not devoted to taking up such a

daunting challenge; however, MinEduc published models, guidelines, and frameworks to deal with this issue.

#### Teachers' training and their perceptions of SEN

In education, teachers play one of the most important roles as they are in charge of applying methodologies, techniques, and strategies to achieve the curriculum's goals. Therefore, their perception of SEN deserves a deeper analysis due to the huge challenge they have to take up when it comes to achieving the expected educational outcomes. A study carried out in Mexico by Sevilla et al. (2018) revealed that most of the participants had a negative view of Inclusive Education; yet, their perceptions were positive when it comes to expressing their opinions of SEN. The authors hold that it might have happened due to the social influence that prevents people from showing their actual opinion about students with LD. Similar results were found by Tenorio (2011) in Chile. She concluded that most of the majors' curricula neither tackle issues related to the SEN nor include activities focused on the students' diversity. These findings seem to be in sync with the common reality happening in other Latin American countries.

In Ecuador, Moreno et al. (2020) carried out a study to gather teachers' perceptions of SEN before and after attending a training in SEN. Before attending the training, the results showed that 78.2% of the teachers thought that students with SEN were not able to reach the same level of competence as students without LD; 65.7% said their pupils were not ready to have students with LD attending their classes; while most participants claimed their schools' facilities were not adjusted to give attention to students with SEN. The training changed participants' mind-sets about SEN while provided evidence on the need for permanent training and highlighted the lack of subjects focused on giving attention to SEN in the teachers' basic training. In an attempt to cope with these issues, some Ecuadorian universities added Inclusive Education and SEN subjects to their curriculum, but only addressed childhood and adolescence. That is, neither Inclusive Education nor SEN are thought to be of great utility in tertiary education, fortunately, it seems this reality is about to come to an ending.

#### Students with LD in higher education

Carrión & Santos (2019) hold that “The inclusive education in university contexts as the key factor to get an inclusive society in which humans rights are assured” However, having realized that most of the educative projects and programs designed to tackle SEN do not go further than secondary education boundaries – despite the number of students with LD getting enrolled in tertiary education is meant to rise every year, which might lead students with LD to keep secret their disabilities to avoid biases or labels. However, these challenges are not only taken up by students with LD but also by teachers who are meant to adapt aims, contents, methodologies, materials, and assessments during the teaching-learning process.

Regarding this matter, a study carried out by Mera & Espin (2019) at Universidad Técnica de Ambato affirmed that “There is evidence that non-significant curricular adaptations are made in an incipient manner and that the academic performance of students with hearing and intellectual disabilities is below average” This fact shows it is still early days for giving appropriate attention to SEN. In fact, some doubts remain about the roles each stakeholder has to play when dealing with LD.

According to LOES (2010), Student Well-Being Department is in charge of planning and organizing study programs for students with LD which should assign medical professionals, psychologists, and tutors to determine students’ impairing degrees as well as to support them during their learning process. By doing so, teachers could know whether a student suffers from a mild or severe disability in advance, which would allow them to tailor the lessons to meet their educational needs. Concordantly Vera et al. (2019) concluded that in Ecuador there is a legal framework that theoretically eases the educational inclusion of people with disabilities yet the reality is distinct since there are still obstacles regarding access, permanence, and educational promotion to address the diversity. They also outlined that the only action taken was to set up the Student Well-being Department which is fated to give attention to any sort of students’ affairs or concerns.

Giving attention to SEN in the EFL classroom



Taking into consideration that the Ecuadorian Educational System and its staff of professionals should categorize and assign students with LD either to the mainstream schools or specialized educational institutions, it could be assumed that those attending universities classes do not suffer from profound or severe impairing but moderate or mild ones. This fact allows English teachers to apply methodologies and strategies to meet their educational needs based on the prior knowledge acquired during their teacher training since most Ecuadorian universities have added subjects such as curricular adaptations and inclusive education to their curriculum. Nonetheless, it seems it is still early days to take for granted that SEN is appropriately understood and tackled in this context.

Perlaza (2018) holds that English teachers do not identify learners with cognitive disabilities and concludes that “Not all the educational community has been empowered in the curricular adaptation process and DCE staff has not been trained with specific information to orientate parents and teachers about adaptations” In this respect, Herdoíza (2015) cited by Fierro et al. (2019) identified that 6% of the students enrolled in undergraduate programs suffered from disabilities. About four years later Fierro et al. (2019), backed up this data through an investigation carried out in 5 universities based in the Ecuadorian coastal region where 92 out of 1814 students suffered from different types of disabilities which means the rate is hiking. Hence, English teachers should be aware that between 5% and 6% of their pupils might be affected by any impairments and they should be trained to give the attention they deserve.

Furthermore, Luna et al. (2016) recommended the preparation and training of qualified professionals whose functions are the development of strategies and teaching practicum focused on characteristics, strengths, and needs of students with LD in the tertiary education. Likewise, some researchers have proposed approaches and methodologies to support teachers and educative institutions when tackling SEN. To illustrate Echevarria & Graves (1998) suggested sheltered instruction like support until the student is ready for mainstream classes although it is necessary to identify and prepare those students for the mainstream EFL classroom in advance.

On the other hand, (Park & Thomas (2012) reckoned that ELLs with disabilities can be misunderstood as struggling learners due to their cultural and linguistic differences as well as difficulties with second language acquisition because these differences and difficulties commonly lead to underachievement in the classroom. In this regard, Sowell (2022) proposed some approaches that might be applied in the EFL classroom such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Scaffolding, and Peer-assisted Learning Strategy (PALS). Regarding UDL, Rapp (2014) claims that it addresses the variability of all learners – with or without any kind of disability – and provides multiple means of engagement, representation, and actions and expressions to meet their needs. Concerning scaffolding, Santamaría et al. (2002) cited by Sowell (2022), states that it is a successful technique with ELL with LD as they are assisted by their teachers or peers to complete a task by following a step-by-step process so that they will later be able to complete the task alone. On the subject of PALS, Sowell (2022) holds that research has shown that this strategy has improved the reading ability of students of all performance levels, from low to high, including students with learning disabilities. Therefore, it is worth analyzing whether these and other strategies might be turned into a proposal that might be applied successfully in the EFL classroom.

## **METODOLOGÍA UTILIZADA EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN**

### Research materials

The instruments utilized to gather the data that backup this research are the survey and the interview. The survey aims to get information about English teachers' training; procedures; and adaptations used to meet SEN in the EFL classroom. The survey is made up of three sections: research aim briefing; participants' consent; and the survey per se. It was designed by using google forms following the Likert scale model which includes 5 levels ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The weighing system considered 5 points, the highest weighs 5, the neutral 3, and the lowest 1.

On the other hand, the interviews were conducted through app Zoom virtual conferencing by asking semi-structured questions since its main purpose is to gather data about students

with SEN experiences at acquiring the English language either online or onsite mode and their perceptions about the procedures and adaptations to give attention to their SEN. Lastly, the interview' answers were organized by using Word tables so that readers are able to interpret the results easily while the survey results were organized and tabulated by using Excel worksheets.

### Research methods

As this investigation attempts to identify the students with SEN's perceptions about the process of acquiring English in the tertiary context; to analyze whether English teachers are trained to give attention to SEN as well as to review the aspects of the curriculum that should be tailored to deal with the SEN in the EFL classroom, the chosen type of investigation was descriptive. In this respect, Bernal ( 2010) holds that "such studies show, narrate, review, or identify facts, issues, features, characteristics of a study object (...) but they neither give explanations nor reasons on the situations, facts, phenomena, etc." (p.113), which frames this study that also seeks to establish a set of strategies to enhance the attention to SEN in the EFL classroom.

Furthermore, this study is also supported on the ethnographic method, which seeks to describe what usually occurs in the day-to-day English teaching practice. It is worth pointing out that this investigation applies the mixed method to analyze the gathered data. Regarding the qualitative method, Bernal ( 2010) states that "its concern is not mainly to measure but qualify and describe the social phenomenon from determining features, as perceived by the elements within the studied issue" (p.60). Concerning the quantitative method Bernal ( 2010) sets that "it is based on the measurement of social phenomena features which are supposed to be derived from a conceptual framework related to the analyzed problem" (p.60).

The previous insights target the research purpose since on one hand, it seeks to get the general view of students with LD through a set of semi-structured questions asked to 5 interviewees. On the other hand, it is expected to find out whether English teachers are capable of tackling SEN in the EFL classroom and to identify the needed curricular adaptations to give attention to SEN in the same context. Through this process, it is

expected to gather this information through surveys made up of a set of six structured questions replied to by 30 English teachers who teach both in public and private higher educational institutions.

### Research sample

Due to the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the lockdown that forced teachers and students to teach and learn from home, the convenience sampling method was applied to select the research sample. Regarding the survey, it targeted 30 EFL teachers working in higher educational institutions. On the other hand, 5 English language learners with SEN, attending at distance classes at Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas – ESPE, were selected to be interviewed. Despite the fact that they did not report their disabilities at the beginning of the term, their impairments turned out evident as the term went on which set them as suitable participants who are highly likely to provide reliable insights to backup this study. It is also worth mentioning that both groups agreed to participate in this research by accepting informed consent.

## RESULTADOS

### Interviews results

Having explained the aspects of the research methodology, it is necessary to mention the methods applied to tabulate the results gotten from the interviews and surveys. In an attempt to make clear the students with LD perceptions, the answers will be showed in a logical and organized way. The interview results were organized by using Word tables following the next order: questions, table caption, interviewee number, and interviewees' responses.

**Question 1:** Have you attended Specialized Special Education Schools? What is your opinion?

**Table 1** - Perception of the role played by Specialized Special Education Schools

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Interviewee	Perception
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1	Yes, it helped me to dabble in the mainstream schools and raise concern over my hearing impairment.
2,3	No, but my school psychologist provided me with support to deal with my intellectual disability.
4,5	Yes, this experience let me learn how to overcome challenges regarding inclusion. I also learned there is nothing that can hold us back when it comes to becoming professionals.

**Question 2:** Did you attend English language lessons in your former education?

**Table 2 -** Previous experience at learning English

Interviewee	Perception
1,2	In elementary school just a little bit. In high school, I had peers with hearing impairment who attended aside classes but I preferred learning with my English teachers as she used to teach and correct me better.
3	Yes, I received a lot of support from my English teacher. This experience helped me to know new learning methods despite my impairment.
4,5	Yes, my English teacher used to help me with the pronunciation and writing as well as giving me lessons according to my intellectual impairment.

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**Question 3:** Do you prefer learning the English language onsite or online?

**Table 3 -** Learning modality preferences.

Interviewee	Perception
1	I think online lessons are better as long as the technological resources are used to improve the classes.

2,3	I'd rather learn English in this modality (at distance) since new technologies had improved my experience. I hope to keep learning.
4,5	I prefer the distance-online modality as I can learn at my own pace. Onsite takes longer to go to University and I might use that time to learn more.

**Question 4:** What is your opinion about the attention given to SEN in your University?

**Table 4 -** Opinion about attention to SEN.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Perception</b>
1,2	My English teacher have supported me but other departments and specialists could have helped as well.
3,4	In my view, the communication with my support teacher allowed me to meet my English teacher who used the technology to teach me. He also used to devote time to talking about my concerns and progress.
5	It is quite good, but teachers should come up with an idea to make it easier to understand the English audio.

By Intriago

**Question 5:** Roles played by your support teacher and the Students Well-being Department?

**Table 5 -** Role of the support teachers and Students Well-being Department

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Perception</b>
1	My support teacher has done well but the Students Well-being Department did not play any role during my studies.
2,3	I cannot tell anything about the Students Well-being Department due to the new normal; however, my support teacher always advises me to do my best.
4,5	Some support teachers make their best effort while others do not care about us. Psychologists do not work well because some teachers do not

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know we exist. Some students with SEN fail exams or do not understand topics.

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### **Interviews results' analysis**

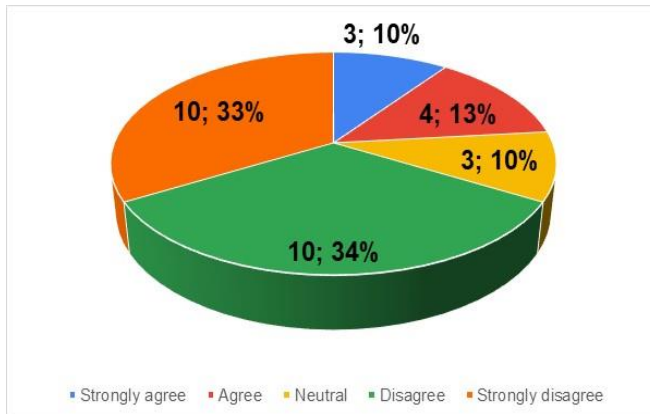
Based on the interviews' results, it is possible to claim that: 1) Either Specialized Special Education Schools or schools' specialists supported most students with LD during their former education. This fact is beneficial for them as they have already participated in inclusion processes. 2) Most students with LD attended English classes before getting enrolled in tertiary education; that is to say, English language learning is a subject they are familiar with; 3) They prefer learning at distance to face-to-face, as they can learn on their own pace and benefit of technological resources that eases their learning process; 4) They acknowledge English teachers' efforts during their former education to meet their SEN, although they still struggle with the listening activities; 5) They think the Students Well-Being Department lacks awareness on their SEN; however, the role played by support teachers was stood out since they could make them feel confident enough.

### **Surveys results**

After gathering data about students with LD perceptions about the process followed to learn English in both their former educational institutions and in the university context as well as their opinions about the attention given to their SEN, it is necessary to collect information from other stakeholders who play a paramount role within this process. Namely, this investigation attempts to show the English teachers' insights into their training and experiences when giving attention to SEN. The statements were set over the graphs' names as a sort of heading in order to ease the analysis of information presented in each one of them.

**Statement 1:** My teacher training curriculum includes subjects to give attention to SEN?

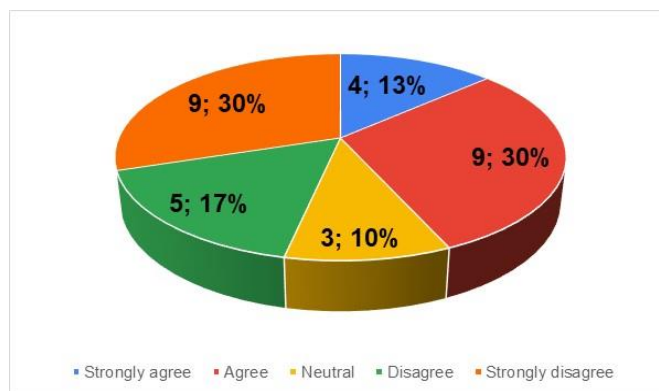
**Figure 1** - Inclusion of SEN subjects in teacher training.



The graph shows a tendency toward strongly disagree (33%) and disagree (34%) while 10% neither agree nor disagree.

**Statement 2:** I know the process to be followed to meet the students' educational needs.

**Figure 2** - Knowledge of the process to give attention to SEN



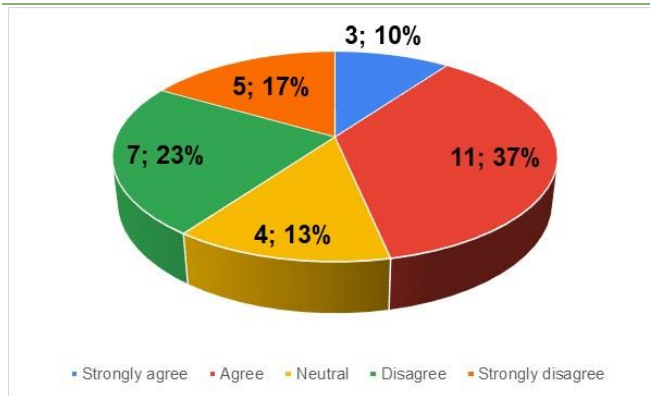
By Intriago

Figure 2 shows that 13 out of 30 teachers (43%) are familiar with the process to give attention to SEN in the EFL classroom, while 14 (47%) are not.

**Statement 3:** I know the stakeholders' responsibility to give attention to SEN.

**Figure 3** - Stakeholders' duties to give attention to SEN



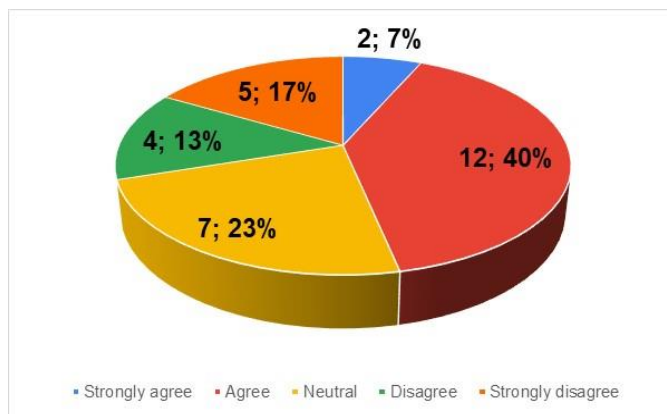


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Figure 3 shows a tendency that favors agree and strongly agree, that is 47% hold they know the stakeholders' responsibilities, 40% do not, while 13% remain neutral.

**Statement 4:** I identify the curriculum elements that have to be adapted to tackle the SEN.

**Figure 4 -** Curriculum elements that should be adapted to tackle SEN

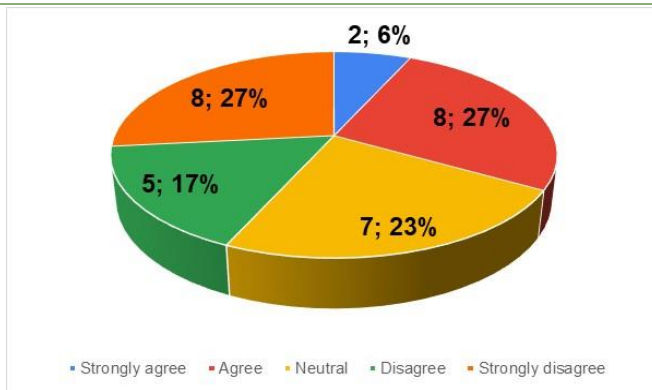


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Figure 4 shows that (47%) agree and strongly agree with the statement, 23% still hesitate, and 30% said they do not know what elements should be adapted.

**Statement 5:** I can recognize the English syllabus' elements that should be tailored to meet SEN.

**Figure 5 -** English language syllabus' adaptations

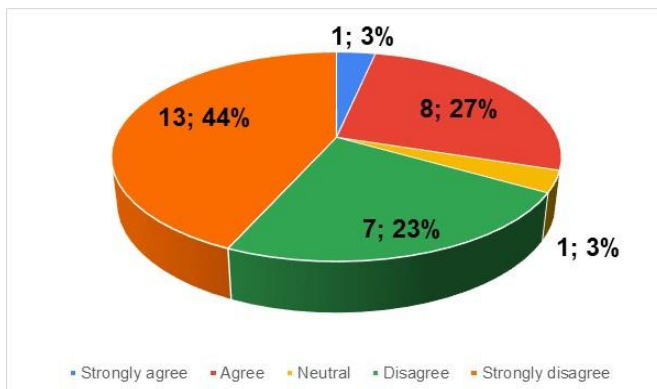


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The above data shows that just 33% recognize the syllabus' elements that should be adapted to give attention to SEN in the EFL classroom, 44% do not, and 23% are not sure about this matter.

**Statement 6:** I can apply methods and strategies in EFL teaching that meet students SEN.

**Figure 6 -** English teachers' training to meet SEN



By Intriago

Figure 6 clearly states that a great number of participants think they lack the capabilities to give attention to SEN in the EFL classroom. To illustrate, only 30% agree and strongly agree with the statement while 67% disagree and strongly disagree.

### Survey results' analysis

Figure 1 shows that only 7 out of 30 respondents were trained to meet SEN in the EFL classroom, despite currently most of the university majors related to education and language teaching fields include attention to SEN and inclusive education subjects in their curricula. This becomes a major issue that demands urgent action by university authorities as not only

does it affect students with LD performance but also may lower their self-esteem and confidence.

Figure 2 and 3 have to do with the process and responsibilities to give attention to SEN. The data shows that about 50% out of the sample neither know the process to be followed nor the stakeholders' responsibilities. This downside might have serious implications due to the fact that at least 5% of the students are likely to suffer from any kind of LD; for that reason, English language teachers should keep updated with regard to this matter; otherwise, they might put the entire responsibility on their shoulders and end up causing worse consequences within the teaching process.

Figure 4, 5, and 6 have to do with the adaptations to tackle SEN when designing the curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plans. Consequently, the questions focused on identifying and recognizing adaptations in the highest levels and being able to tailor the lowest one. Graph 4 demonstrates that 47% of the contestants are able to identify the curriculum aspects that should be adapted; graph 5 shows that 33% can recognize the syllabus elements that should be adjusted while in both cases 23% remain neutral; nonetheless, only 30% are capable of tailoring their lessons or applying methods and strategies to teach students with LD. This tendency reflects that the fewer duties the more proficient teachers claim to be and vice-versa. That is, when teachers have to take practical measures within their sole responsibility, they reckon to have not been trained to do so.

To sum up, it can be held that the majority of English teachers did not train to meet SEN in the EFL classroom during their teacher training; about half of them neither know the process to be followed nor stakeholders' responsibilities when it comes to giving attention to students with LD; 50% can identify and recognize the curriculum and syllabus' elements that should be adapted, yet most of them do not know what elements of their lessons should be adapted to meet SEN in the EFL classroom.

## CONCLUSIONES

Based on the above results as well as on the literature review, it is worth mentioning that most students with LD taking majors at universities do not need individualized education programs at tertiary education as it is highly likely they have already been part of

inclusion processes or specialized treatments. If that is not the case, teachers should not diagnose their disabilities nor determine their level or type of impairment but work on their sole responsibility. That is, they are expected to make the adaptations needed to meet SEN in the EFL classroom based on the specialists or the Students Well-being's reports or remarks. Furthermore, most students with LD are familiar with the English language subject because they have already studied this subject. They are also used to taking advantage of the technology to ease their learning; therefore, teachers need to get updated in the usage of technological resources. They also reckon both English teachers and support teachers' efforts to teach and guide them within their learning process.

Moreover, a great number of respondents are not able to identify stakeholders' responsibilities or the process to follow when it comes to giving attention to students with LD needs, which might happen due to the lack of subjects focused on inclusive education and SEN during their training. In the same vein, it is worth pointing out that about half of them are thought to know the elements or aspects that should be adapted in the macro curricular planning, yet most of them hesitate when it comes to making adaptations in their level of responsibility, which may be the consequence of poor teacher training and lack of awareness related to these matters. Without any doubt, it is urgent to take action to enhance the quality of attention given to this group of students by considering this is not an individual but teamwork. To do so, the next measures are just some insights that could be easily put into practice in the short term:

- 1) University authorities
  - a) Adjust the enrollment process to identify students' educational needs.
  - b) Assign specialists to diagnose students' level and type of impairments.
  - c) Regulate the requirements students with SEN have to meet to get graduated.
  - d) Carry out courses to raise awareness about SEN in the university community.
- 2) Students Well-being Department:
  - a) Keep updated lists of students with LD taking majors at university.

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- b) Design study programs to give attention to students with LD
  - c) Set guidelines so that English teachers can know whether they have to adapt, objectives, material, methodology, or assessment in the EFL classroom.
  - d) Launch ongoing socialization campaigns to raise awareness about SEN.
  - e) Select and train teachers or professors to play the role of support teachers.
  - f) Set boundaries within each stakeholder's responsibility to meet SEN.
  - g) Schedule ongoing meetings to track students with disabilities' progress.
  - h) Report, analyze, and take actions based on students with LD progress.
- 3) English teacher
- a) Do not attempt to diagnose students' level or type of impairment.
  - b) Bear in mind that about 5% of your students might suffer from any impairment.
  - c) Devote time to talk to struggling students before drawing conclusions.
  - d) Get used to working with the needed adaptations to tackle each impairment type.
  - e) If one student is thought to suffer from any impairment, talk to specialists first.
  - f) Do not work by your own. Coordinate with the support teacher before taking any measure.
  - g) Think of the elements – Objectives, material, methodology, assessment – you should adapt
  - h) Adjust the objectives for each SEN. To illustrate, a deaf or blind student should not be expected to master the four English skills but two or three according to his/her impairment.
  - i) Tailor the material or content you are using in your lessons. For example, you have to use a variety of ways to present your material. To illustrate, you should not only speak out but also write instructions; not only play audios but also show the audio scripts,

not only show images but also their captions, and so forth. By using this approach, your students are going to be able to understand your content in one way or another.

j) Use methodologies or approaches that have proven to be useful in inclusive classrooms such as Scaffolding, Bottom-up, Collaborative Learning Methods, Project-Based Learning, and Universal Learning Design (ULD) which might be adjusted by each teacher and used for a variety of purposes.

k) Adjust the assessment criteria according to the reported level of disability. For instance, the length of a reading text could be reduced; the audio length could be shortened or it could be played with the audio script; the grammar items might be tailored or reduced, and so forth.

l) Take advantage of technological resources such as translators, online dictionaries, educative games, Google voice recognition, private chats, and others when you are teaching students with SEN either online or onsite to get your students engaged with the class topic.

m) Never forget to plan and carry out activities where they can participate with their classmates and devote time to talk with them, as it is highly likely you will not need to make any adaptations but motivate them to keep moving forward.

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