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## Iranian EFL Teachers' Practices for Learners with Physical Disabilities in Inclusive English Language Classrooms

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### ABSTRACT

Inclusion as a vast-growing practice commits teachers, the central pillar of the inclusive education, to maximize learning outcomes for all learners. In spite of voluminous research on inclusion and the critical role of teachers in its successful implementation, there remains a paucity of research on EFL teachers' practices for students with disabilities in inclusive classes. This qualitative study aimed to detect EFL teachers' practices in inclusive English language classes and describe how inclusion may influence teacher practices. To this end, five English language classes were observed for sixteen 90-minute sessions (7200 minutes), and 30 EFL teachers (15 male and 15 female) with the experience of teaching at least one learner with physical disability over the past six months were also interviewed. This multiple-case study revealed that EFL teachers' practices are partially, but not completely, tailored to the needs of learners with disabilities in inclusive EFL classes. A conceptual framework was also developed based on 483 extracted entries, according to which teachers' inclusive practices in EFL classes were classified into support-oriented (and non-support-oriented categories). Findings also offered valuable insights into the current status of inclusive English language teaching in Iran. The pedagogical implications of the study are discussed in the paper.

**Keywords:** inclusion; inclusive class; learners with disabilities; teacher practice; physical disability

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## Introduction

There is a growing concern about the needs of learners with disabilities for an equal chance to be eligible members of the mainstream education and least segregated from their learner counterparts (Davis & Braun, 2010). It is commonly accepted that the students with disabilities should enjoy "the same rights as others in the community to achieve maximum independence as adults, and should be educated to the best of their potential towards that end" (Jenkinson, 1993, p. 320). In general, educating individuals with special needs, including the ones with disabilities, alongside their peers has proved to be effective, bringing them some behavioral, social, and academic achievements (Carter & Hughes, 2005).

Depending on the type of their disabilities, these learners face a number of difficulties, the most obvious of which are participation in group activities and communication and interaction with others (Kaiser & Roberts, 2013). The challenge now, as Slee (1997) points out, is "to consider how we support and legitimate difference through a range of resourcing arrangements, pedagogies, and curriculum initiatives to expand options for all students" (p. 416), which mounts a new challenge to teachers and pedagogues. In their research, Auhl and Bain (2021) and Finkelstein (2021) were also concerned with the same challenge.

In the field of ELT, there are poor teacher preparation programs for EFL teachers to prepare their students to reach the milestones and greater achievements in the field of English language learning (Hewett et al., 2018). The likelihood of success increases for special-need learners when they participate in supportive educational settings and work with teachers recognizing their potential contributions, not merely zooming their disabilities. Hence the need for teacher preparation programs providing EFL teachers with practices and strategies is highlighted to promote the outcomes for learners with disabilities in English language fields. This goal cannot be achieved without coming to an understanding of what inclusive practices are employed in inclusive EFL settings. Moreover, teachers need to make necessary modifications and adaptations to their instruction and schedule interventions to **appropriately accommodate** learners with disabilities within an **inclusive setting** (Reed, 2013) and to **make education individualized with respect to learners' differences, needs, interests, and learning styles** (García & Tyler, 2010). Accordingly, teachers' exhaustive perception of effective practices and methods can facilitate learning and educational developments for such learners and include them in regular classes in a true sense (Beech, 2000; Vaughn et al., 2005).

While the academic community has extensively explored teacher variables in a variety of EFL contexts (Green & Stormont, 2018), previous works have failed to address teachers' inclusive practices in an EFL context. Within the context of Iran, the majority of individuals with any kind of severe impairments are included in regular English classes, and EFL teachers are not empowered to disallow learners with disabilities in their regular classes; this makes the field a rich one for research. Relevantly, the teaching processes involved in such an inclusive setting has not been dealt with in depth. The present study, therefore, was prompted by the need to reach a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' practices adopted in inclusive EFL classes.

## Literature Review

### *Theoretical foundation of the study*

The main standpoint on which this study is established is that of the social constructivism, introduced by Lev Vygotsky (2021). As a theoretical framework, social constructivism supports education for all students. According to the social constructivism and as one of the assumptions

developed in the special education, human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. The leading figure of social constructivism, Vygotsky, showed an interest into the psychology of children with disabilities and claimed that an indispensable aspect of the general theory of human development is to recognize how children with disabilities accomplish learning (Schertz et al., 2018).

There are three critical concepts in social constructivism: reality, learning, and knowledge. Kukla (2000) stated that the reality, which is constructed through human activities, is not preplanned and is not to be discovered. The society members are the ones who invent the properties of the world. In social constructivism, knowledge is a culturally and socially constructed output of individuals' interaction (Amineh & Asl, 2015). From this viewpoint, the second assumption of social constructivism, i.e., learning, is a social process performed by individuals when they are involved in social activities (Amineh & Asl, 2015). According to social constructivists, the learning context and learners' interaction with each other during the learning process promotes learners' engagement, leading to knowledge construction. Accordingly, collaboration among learners and the practitioners in the society is of paramount importance if learning processes are to be developed and facilitated. Whitaker (2011) supported this view:

*Vygotsky believed that education is intended to develop one's personality, that personality is linked to potential, that inner values are developed through teaching, that the teacher guides and directs, and that learning must correspond to individual characteristics. Vygotskian ideals help educators to see the differences in learning styles and promote differentiated curriculum. Vygotskian theories offer the fundamental basis for inclusion by showing the importance of interactions that facilitate learning. (p. 24)*

Given the great contribution of Vygotskian theories in teaching, it can be claimed that learning is embedded in social interaction and this further paves the way for the inclusion of learners with special needs.

### ***Inclusive education***

The social constructivist assumptions and approaches find their importance when learners with disabilities get involved since these learners may lack one or some of the skills required to carry out learning tasks. In the 1970s, policy makers initiated mainstreaming students with learning disabilities and including them in regular classrooms along with their non-disabled peers. This type of education became more common when the research studies showed that learners with special needs mainly achieve better results in regular classrooms (Salend, 2011). Kochhar et al. (2000), for example, reported the benefits of mainstreaming learners with disabilities to be higher achievement, support, and ability to be more flexible.

Unlike mainstreaming which refers to transferring learners from separate schools to regular education classes for part or all of the school day, inclusion accentuates that all learners including learners with special needs should be taught in general setting classrooms unless they fail to meet their need and that learners' differences should be respected in educational systems (O'Brien et al, 2009). Over decades of research, the favorable outcomes of inclusion have been continuously confirmed for both learners with disabilities and teachers (Sáenz et al., 2005; Shyyan et al., 2008). Recognition of positive effects of inclusion has led the research to define the necessary contexts, instructional practices, and curricular efforts which result in improved outcomes for learners.

### *The importance of teacher practices*

L'ecuyer (2014) and May and Stone (2010) claimed that students with disabilities may experience many academic difficulties including anxiety, nervousness, memory organization, prioritization, helplessness, frustration, reading/reading comprehension, spelling, writing, math/math computation, study skills, meeting deadlines, following directions, receptive and expressive oral language, additional time for reading and assignments, problems with interpersonal relationships, and tendency to devalue their own achievements. They also reported some problems in foreign languages, social sciences, and humanities.

For Hornby (2014), the recognition of such difficulties by teachers would not suffice for the successful implementation of inclusion, and teachers need to be aware of various teaching practices tailored to the type of disability; thus, comprehensive teaching guidelines are required to enhance inclusive practices.

Previous research has confirmed that teachers in inclusive classes exhibit multiple teaching styles and vary their inclusion practices (Hodge et al., 2004). According to Orelus and Hills (2010), for any inclusive education policy to be successful, the foremost prerequisites are the issues of improvement in learning settings and supports for increased learning opportunities. Such supports can be provided by multiple resources such as instructional materials, special learning and teaching equipment, alternative curriculums, or other parties.

Wright (2003) developed a 10-step hierarchy to help teachers enhance opportunities for the disabled learners included in regular classes. In this hierarchy, as listed below, the first steps are accompanied by no or little support and the support-based practices in this last steps deal with variables such as time, level of difficulty, and quantity.

1. Learners need nothing special in this class;
2. There needs to be a change in the instruction/environment affecting this student;
3. There needs to be a change in individualized access to reinforcers that provide fun, freedom, empowerment, belonging (i.e., behavior support);
4. Teacher decides whether the student can participate with additional environmental accommodations (level of support from peers, teacher, and other adults; level of engagement/participation);
5. Teacher decides whether the student can participate with INPUT or OUTPUT adaptations.
6. Teacher decides whether the student can learn better and demonstrate that knowledge with changes in TIME allotted for work and/or testing;
7. Teacher decides whether the student can master the material without completing all the work assigned? Reduce QUANTITY;
8. Teacher decides whether the student can master the material with reduction in DIFFICULTY of material presented;
9. Teacher decides whether the student can participate in activities to master ALTERNATE GOALS, not completing work to master the standards; and
10. Teacher decides whether the student can master different curricular components, alternate functional skills curriculum for a student with severe disabilities (Wright, 2003; pp. 22-23).

Supports can be manifested in the form of instructional and environmental changes. Such permitted changes in educational environments are called adaptations and provide all students with equal access, achievements, benefits, and consequences (Wright, 2003). Wright also further elaborated on this hierarchy and classified curriculum adaptations into nine categories: Quantity,

time, level of support, input, difficulty, output, participation, alternate goals, and substitute curriculum.

In addition to the adaptations, accommodations and modifications are other critical requirements of having a fruitful inclusive education movement. The former contains instructional and assessment-related decisions made to accommodate an individual's educational needs in order to ensure that learners with disabilities can join the class activities and takes some benefits from the curriculum to the greatest extent possible. Green and Stormont (2018) define accommodations as changes applied to materials and teaching methods, scheduling, assignments, settings, assessments, time, and special communication systems. The latter (i.e., modifications) as changes toward what a learner is expected to learn also indicate changes in the learning materials content, test content, or the performance level expected from learners with disabilities (Elliot & McKeivitt, 2000). This can be reflected as the partial completion of requirements, curriculum expectations below grade level or age, alternate curriculum goals, and alternate assessments as well as changes in testing materials and methods as the most frequently documented type of modification (Finch et al., 2009; Lewandowski et al., 2008; Li, 2014; Pennock-Roman & Rivera, 2011; Robert et al., 2018; Stone et al., 2010; Stone & Davey, 2011).

From a more general perspective, Rahaman (2011) examined inclusive education practices for secondary school students with disabilities in Bangladesh and developed a conceptual framework of inclusive practices at two Macro and Micro levels based on interviews. The macro level focused on policies, curriculum, inclusive values, legislation, and teacher development. On the other hand, the micro level consisted of school perspectives and investigated quality of instruction (classroom practice), teachers' values and attitudes, accessibility, support services, interaction with peer and teachers, collaboration and partnership, and parental involvement.

Later, Wang et al. (2015) summed up the following core dimensions of classroom support for inclusive education teachers' practices to be successful: Provision of human support (including specialist support, peer support, ancillary support and parent support), provision of institutional support, provision of a well-functioning classroom and provision of a supportive culture. Considering the literature review, they then developed a five-dimensional model for classroom support to inclusive education teachers, which contained physical, specialist, peer, cultural, and institutional supports. Their model was examined using a researcher-made 40-item questionnaire and its validity and reliability were confirmed. Their study highlighted the fact that inclusion is not merely an ideal ideology but can be improved and developed practically. These five types of supports would assist teachers as the main agents and practitioners of inclusive education to implement the ideology more practically.

### ***Inclusive education in Iran's EFL context***

According to Sadeghi and Richards (2016), English at the time of Islamic revolution was given the official status of 'alien' language and was known as a foreign language, indicating the Iranian's attitudes towards the language spoken by their enemies, especially America. As they added, Imam Khomeini's (PBUH), Iran's late leader, emphasis on the need to learn this international foreign language changed the status of English and it was viewed differently. Since then, English has been featured prominently in school curriculums and even so in the private education sector.

Regarding the private education sector, different language institutes are providing a variety of learning services for EFL learners to develop their practical skills. English institutes vary in size, ranging from the ones with 30 students to those with more than three thousand (with the highest frequency of enrollment being related to summer semesters). Some language institutes offer localized textbooks; however, others use non-localized textbooks such as Headway, Interchange,

Four Corners, Top Notch, etc. In terms of instructors at these institutes, they are undergraduates or graduates majored in English or non-English fields.

In Iranian EFL context, majority of individuals with any kind of disability attend the regular English classes held in private language institutes. Despite the lack of appropriate underlying conditions, EFL teachers cannot refuse to accept learners with physical disabilities in their regular classes. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has been conducted focusing on EFL teachers' practices in inclusive English language classes in Iran. In addition to the dearth of research on inclusive EFL practices and on what EFL teachers do, the need for further research on inclusive teachers has always been asserted. This provided the primary impetus for the present study. The study thus set out to answer the following question:

- What practices do EFL teachers adopt when teaching learners with physical disabilities in inclusive classes?

## Methodology

### *Context and participants*

This qualitative study sought to generate insights informing a long-standing educational issue, i.e., practices, provided by EFL teachers for learners with physical disabilities included in English language classrooms. Multiple case study approach was selected in this research with the aim of outlining, enhancing and expanding theories and concepts around the issue of teaching practices for inclusive settings and confirming the findings across more than one case. More "authentic" and "in-depth" examinations of the phenomenon are provided when case studies are added with a qualitative approach (Yin, 2003) since they employ an amalgamation of resources to explore or describe a phenomenon in context more deeply or to gain perspectives from individuals or groups (Willig, 2008). Five EFL teachers who were already teaching a disabled language learner were selected using purposive homogenous sampling method (Patton, 2002). The demographics of five observed English teachers are presented in Table 1 (see Appendix A for features of their learners with physical disabilities included in the observed classes).

Table 1  
*Observed EFL Teachers' Characteristics*

Teachers	Gender	Age	Years of experience	Experience of teaching students with disabilities	Level of education/major
1	Male	34	7	No	MA/TEFL
2	Female	28	9	Yes	BA/Chemistry
3	Male	30	7.6	No	MA/ TEFL
4	Female	33	12	Yes	PhD/ TEFL
5	Male	40	16	Yes	BA/Mathematics

According to this table, out of the five observed teachers, two teachers had no previous experience of teaching a student with physical disabilities. There were 2 female and three male teachers receiving no specific training on inclusive education. They were graduates of English and non-English (chemistry and mathematics) majors.

To further delve into EFL teachers' practices, 30 EFL teachers who had experienced teaching learners with physical disabilities were also selected purposefully and interviewed. Since teachers

may forget their teaching methodologies used for learners with disabilities in the long run and with regard to the nature of the interview questions, another inclusion criterion set for these teachers was that they should have taught physically-disabled learners within the last six months. To control the effect of mediating variables affecting teachers' practices and to provide more efficient implications for novice teachers, at least five years of teaching experience, as a commonly accepted criterion in the selection of experienced teachers, was another inclusion criterion in this study (Tsui, 2003). The demographics of these 30 interviewees are tabulated below (Table 2).

Table 2  
*Interviewed EFL Teachers' Characteristics*

	N	Male	Female	Mean Years of experience	Level of Education		Age Range (Years)		
					Undergraduate	Postgraduate	<25	25-45	>45
Teachers	30	15	15	12.3	12	18	5	19	6

As it can be seen in Table 2, 30 teachers (15 males and 15 females) who had experienced teaching students with physical disabilities were interviewed, among whom there were five teachers aged below 25 years, 19 teachers aged 25-45 years, and six teachers aged above 45 years. In order for the sample to be representative of Iranian EFL teachers to some extent, the participants were selected from four metropolitan cities (10 teachers from Arak, 5 teachers from Mashhad, 10 teachers from Tehran, and 5 teachers from Shiraz) since individuals from different rural and urban areas immigrate to these cities, especially Tehran.

### ***Instrumentation***

Regarding the objectives and type of the present study, the following instruments were used to collect data.

### ***Observations***

Observation of classes allows researcher to collect data on classroom events and practices adopted by teachers. In this study, the observations helped the researcher notice what practices EFL teachers provide in inclusive classes. The researcher personally, as a non-participant observer, observed each class three days a week for 16 90-minute sessions (a total of 7200 minutes). To obtain comprehensive information, the researcher also used checklists, narrative comments, and notes. They provided examples of support, modifications and adaptations employed by the EFL teachers as inclusive practices and allowed the researcher to compare the observed patterns and find out whether they could be observed for other cases as well. The researcher carefully looked for instructional practices, including tasks, assignments, interactions, and feedbacks. Significant cases not addressed in the checklists were written down by the researcher.

### ***Checklists***

To record EFL teaching practices in inclusive classes during the observation period, Quality Indicators for Effective Inclusive Education Checklist (NJCIE, 2010) was used in observations. According to New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE), this checklist can be adopted as a guide to assess the status of inclusiveness and specify the priorities in an educational setting and provide a framework to guide programming and evaluate progress in the successful

implementation of inclusive education. Since the class observations in the present study aimed to describe teachers' inclusive practices for physically-disabled learners, some sections of this checklist which were relevant to teachers and teachers' practices (e.g., scheduling and participation, curriculum, program implementation and assessment, individual student supports, collaborative planning and teaching, professional development, planning for continued best, and practice improvement) were only taken into consideration during the observations.

The second checklist used in the present study was "A Classroom Checkup: Best Teaching Practices in Special Education" developed by Sikorski et al. (1996). This checklist, which was used to explore specific teaching practices in more details, assesses four major areas: introducing the lesson, presenting the lesson, student participation, and corrective feedback (Sikorski et al., 1996).

### *Interviews*

Interviews are supporting qualitative inquiries to the research questions aiding researchers to carry out their research by exploring interviewees' perspectives on a particular opinion. In this study, the researcher further explored teachers' practices for EFL learners with physical disabilities in inclusive English classes. To achieve the objective of the study, semi-structured researcher-developed interviews were performed until data saturation was achieved. The interview questions were formulated according to thorough reviews of the literature.

In all research investigations, validity is of paramount importance and "any research can be affected by various factors which, while extraneous of the concerns of the research, can validate the findings" (Selinger & Shohamy, 1985, p. 95). Validation can also guarantee the efficiency, trustworthiness, reliability, and representativeness of the collected data (White & Simon, 2011). In this study, White and Simon's Survey/Interview Validation Rubric for Export Panel (VREP) was used to ensure the face validity, construct validity, and content validity of the interview questions. The interview questions were first pilot-tested by interviewing five randomly selected teachers. Main themes were then extracted out of the responses to each question and the questions along with the extracted themes were submitted to three university professors. Regarding the comments received from these experts, the most valuable interview questions which addressed the main concerns of this study and deemed to be sufficient and relevant to the topic of the study were kept and the other questions were removed. The final interview questions are presented in Appendix B.

To make the interviewees feel comfortable, the researcher submitted them the interview questions and gave them a few minutes to review and reflect on the questions before deciding to participate in the interview. They also had the opportunity not to answer the questions. When the participants spontaneously described all that could be mentioned, the interviewer posed one or more follow-up questions (e.g., taking the points you mentioned into account, can you elaborate more on such and such?). The follow-up questions as an interviewing technique were intended to let the interviewees elaborate more on the aspects which were not fully presented. The mean length of interviews in this study was about 45 minutes. In order to enhance the reliability and decrease such pitfalls to the extent possible, the researcher shortly interviewed the five observed teachers immediately after their classes and asked them to further elaborate on what happened in their classroom and on their practices and decisions (stimulated recall) and their responses were also added to the collected data.

### *Data analysis*

When the data was collected, all information related to participating teachers' identity was removed to ensure anonymity. The collected data were analyzed in terms of a couple of categories



for research question based on Wright (2003), Rahaman (2011), and Wang et al. (2015). The researchers used open and axial coding to code the entries (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding was adopted to extract the general categories of information through reading and rereading. During this step, the author broke down the data into discrete points and closely examined them. The researchers grouped the entries under more abstract categories. Accordingly, the main points were summarized and an outline of what was concerned in each entry was prepared by referring to the interesting and revealing areas. Then, unnecessary and unrelated information was discarded.

In the next step, axial coding was utilized to link the identified categories and to integrate them into more encompassing concepts (Tse, 2000). The labels were arranged in an outline. The more general categories and more particular ones were organized so that differentiation could be made between major themes and subordinate themes (Tse, 2000). In the process of coding and data analysis, new concepts and issues emerged. Therefore, new questions and hypotheses were formulated and examined in the data set. The iterative process of coding continued to the point that no further concept was developed through additional analysis. Finally, the main categories and their sub-categories of our analysis were presented as a conceptual framework of teachers' inclusive practices to describe types of EFL practices employed in inclusive classes. The main themes were extracted and rechecked by two other experts to insure the inter coder consistency (simple percentage agreement 87%). In the case of any controversy, the points were discussed until an agreement was achieved.

## Results

With regard to the models proposed by Wright (2003), Rahaman (2011), and Wang et al. (2015), a total of 483 entries were extracted from the collected data and the themes and sub-themes related to the EFL teachers' practices in inclusive classes for learners with physical disabilities were specified (Fig. 1). According to this figure, teachers' inclusion practices can be classified into two categories of support-oriented (318 entries) and non-support-oriented (165) inclusive practices. The support-oriented practices focus on the tasks, activities, and behaviors highlighting the strengths of the disabled learners and addressing their weaknesses by setting achievable targets for them, regularly probing to check their understanding, and breaking the tasks down into small steps achievable to such learners. In this case, teachers provided regular quality feedback and independent feedback. They modeled what the learners were supposed to do. On the contrary, non-support practices ignored the presence of learners with impairments in inclusive classes. No feedback was provided to the physically-disabled language learners and no picture, diagram, or aids was adopted to support instruction and understanding.

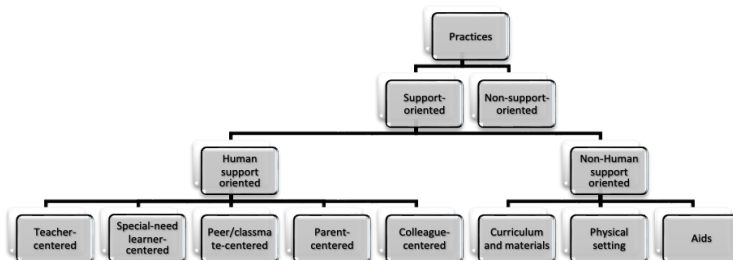


Figure 1. EFL teachers' practices in inclusive classes (Source: Research data)

### ***Support-oriented Practices***

The focus of support-oriented practices was on the disabled learners' educational achievement, happiness, confidence, and self-esteem. Teachers made learning a foreign language fun and comfortable through presenting concrete and meaningful activities and encouraging learners to explore the areas of interest to them. To this end, parents as well as non-disabled peers occasionally collaborated with the teacher. In this type of practice, the preference was to provide one instruction at a time and ask questions in a clarifying manner. The observed teacher No. 2, for example, was supposed to teach directions and addresses. The teacher wrote the common phrases and terms on the whiteboard and asked the visually-impaired learner to tell the class her home address. When the physically-disabled learner was trying to tell the class his address, the teacher simultaneously provided him with some positive and negative kinds of feedbacks like "yes, that's right. Ok.... alley or street?". Then, the teacher wrote down the address on the board and asked other learners to do the same. As her learners were writing down their home addresses, the teacher was drawing a big map on the board. She marked the disabled learners' house with a big star at the bottom of the map. Then, the teacher asked learners to tell her their addresses and modified them through providing negative and positive feedback. After that, the teacher asked the physically-disabled learner to use the terms and phrases on the board to guide the teacher find her home. With the help of the teacher and his non-disabled classmates, she managed to direct the teacher. After that, other students were asked to draw a map and do the same procedure in writing.

In general, support-oriented practices in the inclusive EFL classes promoted learning and eased frustrations over disabilities. Such practices were further divided into two subcategories of human-support (190 entries) and non-human support (128 entries) -oriented practices. The former contained five subcategories with a focus on teacher (45 entries), disabled learner (54 entries), non-disabled learner (70 entries), parents (21 entries), and teacher colleagues. The latter also was associated with curriculum and materials (86 entries), physical setting (27 entries) and aids (15 entries).

### ***Human support***

Inclusive classes provide better learning opportunities for all learners and are effective in changing discriminatory attitudes, enabling social interactions and communications. In inclusive EFL classes, the focus seemed to be on practices corroborating with disabled learners' educational priorities and achievements. To make inclusion work, special-need learners and their teachers, non-disabled peers, colleagues, and parents should be involved in teaching practices. According to the observations and interviews, it was found that EFL teachers were most decisive components of inclusive education in English language classes. They decided on what to be done and what not to be done in inclusive classes; however, they might deliberately seek support from parents, peers, and disabled learners themselves to make inclusion work. As the following excerpt reveals, many EFL teachers explicitly believed in themselves as the most powerful authority in an inclusive classroom.

*Interviewee No.13: ...I, as a language teacher, concluded that I am the one who plays the most decisive role in the class. In this situation, collaboration with parents, disabled learners, and other students in the class is the first step I take in supporting learners with physical disabilities.*

In spite of their vital role, EFL teachers asserted that they sometimes failed to implement inclusion appropriately, and that they faced some problems handling disabled learners' learning alongside their non-disabled peers as well as managing the diversity observed in their classes. In response to this problem, EFL teachers revealed different reactions. Some discussed asked for

help from their colleagues, and others tried to involve the non-disabled peers and disabled learners in teaching practices and tasks to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, there were also some reports seeking help from the parents of physically-disabled learners.

### *Teacher-centered*

Considering Sikorski et al.'s (1996) specified practice-related categories (namely introducing the lesson; presenting the lesson; student participation; and corrective feedback) for the observed EFL classes, all EFL teachers presenting a lesson in their inclusive classes provided brief overviews of new concepts, specified the lesson objectives, and related new information to old information in small steps; however, they did not specify the goals or benefits of a lesson. The collected data revealed that teachers as the decision makers and transmitters of knowledge in inclusive classes consistently used eye-contact, various vocal tones, and monitoring. Daily examples and various learning modalities were often observed to be adopted by the teachers. They encouraged learners to employ strategies like summarizing, problem-solving, note-taking, and comprehension checking and adopted a variety of comprehension checks to ensure understanding. Furthermore, EFL teachers made attempts to motivate all learners, including the physically-disabled ones, to participate in class interactions, activities, and discussions. Some teachers had homework adaptations to meet all learners' needs. For example, teachers allowed learners to use a typewriter or computer, look for words in dictionaries or have electronic spelling aids, write directly in their workbook, and use special word processing software predicting what students were to write in cases of difficulties in expressing ideas. Furthermore, teachers might separately score the content and materials for the disabled learners, and consequently provided them with a second chance to correct spelling and grammar errors.

In addition to instructional input and outputs, teachers' level of support and personal assistance also differed for some observed cases. As an example, the level of support and adaptation for *Rahman* was high; however, little support was provided for *Sharareh* in the observed classes. The interviewed EFL teachers' self-reports also confirmed this issue. Taking the disabled learners' needs into account, the teachers reported the use of games, role plays, know-how projects, hands-on experiences, and so on. In addition to language skills, teachers focused on nurturing social and cultural skills to enable the whole class involving the disabled learners as well as their non-disabled peers to communicate, collaborate, and support each other. In this regard, it was observed that EFL teachers make attempts to disseminate the social and cultural skills of asking for help, playing with others, non-downgrading and respecting others, being concerned about others' problems especially the ones with disabilities included in classes, conveying positive feelings to others through using gesture, attentive listening, eye contact and touching, avoiding contemptuous, scornful, and annoying behaviors, socializing with other people.

With their partial knowledge of inclusive strategies and practices, the EFL teachers were to manage English language classes by encouraging learning and discovery among all learners through incorporating lots of repetition, praise, and encouragement. There were consistently rewards for appropriate behavior scores, positive marks, stars points, and so on.

When presenting new information, the teachers ensured that the pace of the task required is suitable to minimize learners' stress levels. Relevantly, they fostered a supportive classroom in which all English language learners are valued. In this regard, some teachers took instructional advice from other teachers and colleagues. Some even stated that they used to discuss the case of physical disability with their psychologist friends/relatives. They also asserted that inclusion provided them greater opportunity to compare their curricular and instructional strategies and practices to the ones adopted by their colleagues since they felt no self-esteem and incompetence when consulting their colleagues regarding an EFL learner with disabilities and his problems.

They also added that they mostly raised their disabled students' problems and discussed the challenges and solutions with their colleagues during their breaks. In this way, they could have benefited from other teachers' experiences and creativity which opened new opportunities to learn.

When the special-need learner was talking, the teacher listened attentively to determine their difficulties. On the other hand, the teachers tried to speed down the tasks, especially oral presentations and discussions, and model appropriate speech and language. For this purpose, the EFL teachers employed different strategies such as rephrasing, summarizing, concept-mapping, and repeating phrases and words not understood, even if the words and sentences were uttered by other learners. The teachers used questioning as frequent checking in order to probe into deeper understanding. They claimed that they set different levels of difficulty and progression in their inclusive classes. EFL teachers acknowledged that some slight modifications and adaptations were required for disabled learners to be able to do most of the work their peers did and that some more time and patience were needed to internalize new concepts for the learners.

*Interviewer: In response to a disabled EFL learner as a member of your class, what changes do you make to your regular instructional practices?*

*Interviewee No.21: I did exactly as I did in my other classes. She was not different from others for me and she was also trying to keep up with others. Her classmates also helped her. The progress of this learner and other did not mean the same to me. I didn't expect her as much as I expected others. At their final exam, the pass scores were 70 and above for all students but 50 and above for the disabled ones.*

In the five observed classes, an interesting point was noticed, even though, it was not reported in interviews. When giving instructions, the teachers did not walk around the classroom to make sure that the students could see teachers' face when listening.

*Interviewer: How do you decide on the most supportive teaching practices?*

*Interviewed Teacher No. 7: ... When talking, I sometimes placed myself at the eyelevel of my student in wheelchair.*

As it was also reported, teachers would double-check to ensure that the disabled learners had their all physical aids (e.g., magnifier, glasses, hearing aid, and so on). When using other learning aids such as computers, the teachers ensured that the disabled learners could use them appropriately.

Some teachers reiterated that lesson plans were essential in helping the disabled learners improve their language skills. It was stated by the interviewed teachers that the inclusion of learners with disabilities did not let them use the same regular instructional strategies and they were obliged to prepare more specific lesson plans before their class time. One of the teachers in the observed classes (Teacher No. 2) used a lesson plan. As the researchers observed, regardless of the number of classes per day (5 classes per day), this teacher was concerned and prepared some materials and contents for his disabled learner; whereas other teachers did not undertake the same responsibility even though two of them did not teach as many classes as Teacher No. 2. Here is a sample statement iterated by one of the teachers:

*Interviewer: How do you plan for including a physically-disabled EFL learner as a member of your class?*

*Observed Teacher No. 3: ...I and many other teachers have no enough time to prepare a schedule or lesson plan for our class. But, you know, not the same when I have a pupil with disabilities in my classes. Regular practices may not work for my blind, hard of hearing or wheelchair-bound student. I have to prepare a lesson plan in these cases.*

### ***Special-need learner-centered***

Semi-structured interviews encouraged teachers to articulate their views regarding the critical role of learners with physical disabilities in inclusive classes. Learners with difficulties themselves must spare their efforts to create the best educational environment possible. Practices employed with a focus on special-need learners taught social skills and encouraged socialization. They also were supposed to encourage the physically-disabled learners to develop study skills and self-directed learning. As explicitly stated, EFL teachers try to provide practices involving special-need learners in games and competitions and make learners let their voices be heard. Teachers were observed to provide these learners with a number of options when improving their language skills.

*Interviewee No.5. Empowerment is what I always keep in my mind regarding disabled learners learning English language....We should let their voices be heard.*

Some practices also focused on the emotional aspects of learners with physical disabilities as the special-need learners' motivation and life expectancy improve according to EFL teachers' claims.

*Interviewee No.23: I convey a feeling that you are a normal person, nothing is going to happen. Even though language is not a critical skill for people of your condition, you are here, sitting and learning a language....*

### ***Peer/classmate-centered***

When a learner with disability enrolls in an English language classroom, it becomes natural for other learners to get to know him as a classmate. This was more probable when the teacher let other learners learn how to support their disabled classmate. Relevantly, some observed and self-reported practices were as follows:

- Seating a disabled learner adjacent to top learners;
- Seating a disabled learner adjacent to those learners who are a good model in speaking;
- Seating a disabled learner adjacent to supportive and considerate learners;
- Allowing peers to check whether their disabled classmate has understood and followed the instructions;
- Providing the grounds for cooperative learning/peer tutoring to develop language/social skills;
- Assigning all learners to study groups and letting top learners to act as mentors;
- Assigning joint tasks based on task-based principles;
- Letting learners teach each other; and
- Letting learners keep track of each other's assignments.

Some teachers assisted the learners with physical disabilities to borrow notes from a peer when necessary. Here is an example practice stated by one of the interviewees:

*Interviewee No.18: When I found a disabled learner having a difficulty in writing in my class, I set a buddy system. By buddy system, I mean, one learner being in charge of taking notes for the disabled learner each session so that non-disabled learners could cooperate and help their disabled classmate in learning English language.*

*Interviewee No. 7: Role plays and class presentations, I think, open the door to effective relationships among the classmates.*

From EFL teachers' perspectives, not only does inclusion benefit disabled learners but it also promotes non-disabled EFL learners' communication skills. When a disabled learner was included in English language classes, other learners helped him/her in accomplishing the challenging task of learning a foreign language. Making disabled learners involved in group discussions, adding them to social networks such as Telegram for offering further resources and assistance, and assigning tasks and responsibilities for non-disabled learners to be helped in learning (e.g., each individual's being responsible for audio recording a lesson to help a visually-impaired classmate) improved communication and interaction among disabled and non-disabled peers. In one of the observed classes, the learner with physical disabilities actively took part in games and role plays and tried to compete and win. The other learner who had movement difficulties had two of her classmates always sitting beside her and helping her in tasks. Here is an excerpt remarked by one of the EFL teachers:

*Interviewee No. 19: I'm not saying that they should not be included. For example, when a visually-impaired learner attends a class and keeps up with others, his classmates cooperate with him. That's even interesting for them to play a supporting role. For example, I had a blind student and our top student sitting close to him was always helping the blind.*

Drawing on the data collected, the non-disabled learners had some educational progress as well. This was obviously because of the type of activities and practices they were involved in. They tried to assist their disabled peers through some techniques such as discussions, recording files, further explanations, note taking, repeating or paraphrasing statements uttered by teachers or tapes. In the case of the learner who had kinesthetic difficulties, she was slow in writing and her classmates used to write down what she needed. Teachers believed that adaptation of these practices by non-disabled learners doubles their attention and concentration, and consequently their academic achievements.

*Interviewee No. 8: When recording the texts for their blind peers, my students' reading skills and speech intonation significantly improved over a semester. I think his inclusion was not without benefits.*

### ***Parent-centered***

Some teachers explained that developing educational and social support plans by sharing idea and support of parents was of essence. Teachers held educational meetings with parents of the special-need learners to ensure that the instructions and practices were adaptive to the needs of these learners as well. This would ensure teachers and parents' consistent approach and practices. When teachers were informed of learners' difficulties and concerns, they accordingly modified their teaching and assessment practices in a way to address those difficulties and concerns. Parents also discussed homework assignments and let the teachers know whether the disabled learner finds the assignments too difficult or too easy.

*Interviewee No.12: My student had better achievements, I mean educationally and socially, when the same goals were followed at home and in the class. This [positive aftereffect] make[s] English language teachers have ongoing two-way communication with parents.*

### ***Colleague-centered***

As a key to professional development, EFL teachers sometimes asked the experienced teachers for help. They explained what was going on, discussed the problems and challenges in their inclusive classroom, and acted accordingly. Although the frequency of this category of practices was not high in comparison to other support-oriented practices, some relevant statements extracted from semi-structured interviews strengthened it.

*Interviewee No.12. I am not ashamed not afraid to ask for help from my friends and colleagues when having a disabled learner in my class. In my opinion, two heads are better than one.*

*Interviewee No. 27: Once I had a problem teaching reading skill to a blind student, my experienced colleague let me observe her class. I learned a lot and it worked. I adopted the same practices in my class.*

### ***Non-Human support***

In addition to the afore-mentioned human-support practices, several non-human practices emerged from the data. This category contains some slight modifications and adaptations in curriculum and materials, physical setting, and aids. The subcategories are discussed below.

#### ***Curriculum and materials***

Achievable goals were set and followed step-by-step in order for the language learners with physical disabilities to reach the desired progress. In this regard, teachers formed their teaching and assessment practices based on what the language learner knew and then proceed to further stages.

Although the institute asks the teachers to teach based on a pre-planned syllabus and curriculum, the EFL teachers make some modifications to match all learners' language proficiency levels and interests. They do not follow the exact materials specified by the institute. They break tasks into small segments, each to be completed at a time, by allowing adequate time for task completion, downgrading some aspects highlighting the others.

Some teachers explicitly stated that they even simplified their language in order not to impose extra burden on the learners with special needs. They even focused on communicative language teaching methods and used role-playing and modeling to teach social skills. To sum up, they considered alternate activities/exercises that could be utilized with less difficulty for the physically-disabled students, while keeping the same learning objectives in mind. This is possible through extending the learners' knowledge but not rushing through the syllabus. The teachers also used concrete materials such as puppets, whiteboard, video and audio clips, pictured stories, drawings, maps, visual aids, cards, computers, cell phones, audiovisual aids such as iPad, video/audio recorder, overhead projector for tasks such as word formation, sentence processing, skill building and so on. Teachers also took worksheets with correct print size, enlarged if necessary, to the class.

Teachers believe that the boards (namely whiteboards, blackboards, and smart boards) play a significant role in inclusive classes since they write new vocabularies, draw pictures and maps, provide visual clues, emphasize important instructions or key words, introduce new topics, and put words of larger size on the boards to resolve some difficulties learners may face in inclusive English language classes. The teachers, though, minimize copying from the board for such learners.

They were not just watering down the curriculum via modifications but encouraging more critical and complicated thinking for disabled learners. In spite of using similar materials, some teachers paid attention to diversity through adapting the input, changing the classroom layout, incorporating visual, tactile and kinesthetic materials and activities and having multiple formats of instruction to meet a variety of needs in inclusive classes. Some of the interviewees relevantly claimed:

*Interviewee No. 3: I downloaded some audio files for my blind student to listen.*

*Interviewee No. 18: My only help was to magnify the fonts when copying written materials.*

*Interviewee No. 25: I incorporated computers and assistive technologies to help them in my class and identify their fields of strength.*

Regarding assessment, the observed teachers No. 2, 3, and 4 used dynamic and formative assessments rather than summative one to evaluate the ongoing progress of their disabled learners. In this way, they presented ongoing feedback to improve the learners' skills and their own teaching. Through such a kind of assessment, the learners with physical disabilities could identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Teachers No. 1 and 5, however, used summative assessment and took mid-term and final exams.

*Observed Teacher No. 5: Once I had a blind learner in my class. To make the other "non-blind" learners accept his individual differences, I planned my students to have a short story book... you know for improving their command of language... that was what they thought. Umm, you see, I selected a targeted story. In that story, the hero was a blind man acting as a healthy person. After each session reading and role playing a part of the story, my students could digest their differences with their visually-impaired classmate better. They showed more respect to him and even tried to help him in the case of need. On the other hand, the blind learner played the role of the blind hero and this could obviously improve his self-esteem and courage. Totally, the book helped the learners both linguistically and socially, as manifested in several different ways.*

### **Physical setting**

For each student to participate in the classroom, all boundaries and barriers must be detected and resolved. This would ensure equality for all learners. EFL teachers were partially aware of and expressed this fact. Regardless of the type of disability, majority of the teachers preferred to sit the disabled learner toward the front row of the class and present instructions when the class is quiet in order to ensure their understanding. The teachers arranged the seats so that the learners, including the special-need learners, could have face to face interaction with each other and move around easily. Some interviewees also noted that they provided a larger desk or two chairs for the disabled learner so that she/he could handle books and papers more easily. They arranged the seats in a way to eliminate glare from the disabled learners' desk and the blackboard and make sure the classroom lighting is optimal. To sum, teachers change and rearrange the environment in order to make sure that the child can seat comfortably in a good position.

*Interviewee No. 3: I put his desk beside mine. She was always sitting close to me and I used to speak out loud in order for her to be able to hear what I was saying. I never asked him to write for me but to record his voice.*

### **Aids**

In some rare cases, the teachers even noted that they adopted some practices encouraging the learners with physical disabilities to use the aids, e.g., glasses and magnifiers.

*Interviewee No.2: I developed a game with magnifiers in my class in order for him not to shy use it in the classroom.*

### **Non-support-oriented Practices**

Contrary to teachers seeking for and implementing support-oriented practices, some teachers started to confront or ignore such a diversity in their English language classroom. They reported



regular practices as applied in non-inclusive classes. In the observed classes, the teachers were not mostly engaged in inclusive education and the interviewed teachers lamented on lack of incentive to be promoted to accept inclusion practices. The following excerpts clarify the point:

*Interviewee No.10: I am not in charge of teaching such learners. After one or a maximum of two sessions, if I ensured that a disabled learner, irrespective of type of disability, does not keep up with my class, I would inform the institute supervisor and let him go. If I were obliged to have him in my class, for example, because he has passed the previous term, I would let him stay in the class; however, I would not bother myself for his presence.*

*Interviewee No.2: Why should I spend more time on planning a class with one or more disabled learners? No change in payments!*

*Interviewee No.23: Unfortunately, I never had enough time to ask about his hearing difficulties. But when you have a hearing problem, the family is to solve the problem. It is not my duty since I am an institute teacher not even a school teacher. I think this represents his family's negligence. That's why I never thought about it.*

*Interviewee No.22: When there is no significant gain for a learner with any kind of difficulty, so what's the use of adapting something to his needs? Anyway, they cannot keep up with the class.*

## Discussion

The data analysis above indicates that EFL teachers' practices are partially, but not completely, tailored to the needs of learners with physical disabilities. According to the Quality Indicators for Effective Inclusive Education checklist (NJCIE, 2010), the teachers partly met some quality indicators of effective inclusive education including varied instructional and structural strategies by teachers, formative assessments, active engagement of learners, consideration of diversities, modifications of curriculum, different layouts of chairs and lights, as well as lesson plans and ideas shared with other teachers. Findings also reflect different levels of support, tasks of different difficulty levels, a variety of tasks to be completed, different time allotted for learning, testing or task completion, various input and output in terms of instructions and how to respond to instructions, and modified goals and levels of participation in inclusive classes for learners with physical disabilities. Based on the observations and reports, some instructional strategies such as frequent monitoring, providing more feedback, greater number of repetitions, peer tutoring, clarifying the new concepts with the use of more examples and illustrations, cooperative grouping, and lower speed of speech for students with disabilities in the inclusive EFL classes promoted learning opportunities for other learners. Such activities bring them closer together and provide invaluable support for the learners suffering from impairments.

The results of this study brought evidence to support the existence of human and non-human inclusive practices (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Black-Hawkins et al., 2021) in inclusive EFL classes. In his study on inclusion models, Whitaker (2011) also observed individualized support, supported instruction, co-teaching, natural peer support, and consultation and stop-in support depending on how the teachers interact with learners having special needs. The findings of this study were partly in line with the five-dimensional model proposed by Wang et al. (2015). According to them, inclusive practices are affected by physical, specialist, peer, cultural, and institutional supports. The findings of the present study revealed that physical, peer, and cultural supports were evident in inclusive practices adopted by Iranian EFL teachers as they used colleague-centered and peer-centered practices and physical-setting; however, such inclusive practices reflect no institutional or specialist supports. This difference may be explained with regard to the differences in the study settings. The present study was conducted in private language institutes and the main policy of the institutes is unfortunately to focus on increasing the

number of learners rather than focusing on the promotion of the quality of their teachers and thus teaching. From the perspective of the institutes, there is no difference between physically-disabled learners and their non-disabled peers so that no further support (either institutional or specialist) is reflected in teachers' inclusive practices. In Iranian EFL context and in line with the proclaimed principle of inclusive education, the role of the disabled learner as an individual who makes a difference in teacher's practices (i.e., special-need learner-centered practices) is highlighted; however, Wang et al. (2015) disregarded this aspect in their inclusive practices.

Regarding peer-centered inclusive practices, in line with Kloo and Zigmond (2008) and Black-Hawkins et al. (2021), a different version of co-teaching can be found in inclusive EFL classes held in Iran. In its common sense, co-teaching is defined as the joint collaboration of a special/support teacher or expertise beside the regular teacher. In the inclusive EFL classes, such a joint action of teaching takes place through the cooperation of teachers and peers as peer-oriented support practices with a total of 70 entries were the most frequent type of inclusive practices observed and reported for the EFL teachers. EFL teachers and non-disabled EFL learners both paved the way for the learners with disabilities to reach their goals.

The permissible changes and adaptations in curriculum and educational environments lend support to the hierarchy of adaptations proposed by Wright (2003). In this study, there were reported and observed adaptations regarding time, quantity, support level, difficulty, participation, alternate goals and substitute curriculum, consistent with Wright's (2003) claim. Remarkably, the EFL teachers adapted the methods of delivering instructions to the learners and also tailored their classroom practices to the reactions of their disadvantaged learners. The participant teachers provided the grounds for individualized learning goals and outcomes and ensured equal access for all learners attending in inclusive classes.

The extracted model confirmed some of the factors (e.g., teachers' values and attitudes, curriculum, interaction with peer and teachers, collaboration and partnership, and parental involvement) proposed by Rahaman (2011) for inclusive education practices. His study was aimed for secondary school students with disabilities and evidently a greater number of macro and micro level factors were reflected in teachers' practices. Furthermore, Iranian teachers report nothing about policies, legislation, and teacher development, which might be influenced by their cultural considerations.

The results of the present study offered an invaluable witness to the idea that the teachers attempt to present practices which address equity in education as their practices involved supports provided through modifications, accommodations, and adaptations. On the other hand, some teachers seemed not to be encouraged to take instructional responsibility for the disabled pupils in their classrooms and they had no incentive to accept the inclusion and promote their inclusive practices, failed to employ technologies in their inclusive classes extensively, lacked special training and did not take part in inclusion workshops and seminars.

Findings also indicate the decisive role of teachers in inclusive classes. This finding is supported by Anastasiou et al. (2015). They highlighted the undeniable role of teachers as they believed that providing appropriate educational response to specific needs of learners with disabilities is much more important than the uncritical inclusion. In a similar vein, Faulkner et al. (2012) stated that inclusive classroom reaches its real meaning when teachers as the main pillars of such a system focus on student experiences, identities, and concerns, become a reflexive and responsive instructor, and reinforce the interpersonal relationship between instructor and students.

In general, the findings suggest that EFL teachers are versatile practitioners who possess unique talents in working with learners with physical disabilities, which were proposed by Johns et al.

(2010). The findings indisputably revealed that majority of EFL teachers possess great expertise and flexibility to tackle the realities and challenges emerging in their teaching practices since they invest their efforts to establish rapport, develop individualized teaching practices, promote collaboration and adaptation with a focus on individuals' needs.

Some conditions affecting the effective inclusion of disabled learners were identified by Larrivee (1985): (a) efficient use of time by both teacher and students, (b) frequent positive feedbacks by teachers in terms of appropriate behavior and achievement, (c) an appropriate level of difficulty for tasks assigned by teachers, (d) adopting supportive rather than judgmental interventions by teachers, (e) frequent monitoring of students' work, and (f) open and positive attitudes towards diversity. Unfortunately, the findings of the present study revealed that most of the abovementioned prerequisites are not observed in EFL classes. As teachers in majority of cases stated, and it was also observed by the researcher, the presence of disabled learners experiencing some types of difficulty waste teachers and non-disabled learners' time and teachers failed to effectively manage their inclusive classes. They spend more time for disabled learners and there remains less academic or social/emotional achievements due to teachers' ignoring the right of equality for other learners. In some reported cases, there is no checking for disabled learners' understanding and consequently no positive feedback. Although the relationship between teacher-student rapport and student achievement is clearly acknowledged by research (Johns et al., 2010), such an interaction was neither observed in any English language class nor reported by the interviewees. This would decrease the disabled EFL learners' opportunities to learn a foreign language. According to these researchers, the optimal learning opportunities are provided for learners when there is a direct interaction between teachers and learners through receiving teacher's feedbacks, questioning and responding techniques, monitoring the activities and discussions.

Dixon (1999) argues that teachers who feel underpaid and overworked cannot find time and resources to deal with disabled learners in regular classes. This point was also reported by the teachers; they honestly asserted that they had no lesson plan and they were mostly preoccupied with some kinds of concerns when they were teaching. They lamented the low payments in language institutes.

In short, although a large number of EFL teachers' practices supported the inclusion of EFL learners with physical disabilities in inclusive EFL classes through using support-based inclusive practices, it should not be downgraded that these practices were not employed by all EFL teachers as the frequency of non-support practices was high as well. With regard to the critical role of teachers in inclusion, Iranian EFL teachers' lack of knowledge about the diversity in their classroom may hinder the successful implementation of inclusion and consequently be a barrier to learners with disabilities to obtain language achievements. As Lee and Recchia (2016) asked for taking a transformative stance to support diversity for all learners, there is such an urgent need in Iran's EFL context to transform EFL teachers' negative attitudes by training them how to behave in teach inclusive classes when learners with some kinds of difficulty are included and by eliminating their concerns.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The main focus of the present study was on the type of practices employed by EFL teachers in inclusive classes. Through these practices, one could follow how inclusive education is being implemented in Iran's private language institutes and how learners with disabilities are learning a foreign language alongside their non-disabled peers in inclusive classes. The results demonstrate the possibilities of studying teachers' inclusive practices with regard to constructivism and

relevant models proposed in inclusive education (Rahaman, 2011; Wang et al., 2015; Wright, 2003).

Although all teachers do not fully second the inclusion of the disabled learners and do not consider inclusion as the best approach to serve disabled individuals, they would like to accept this challenge in order to assess their teaching potentials. The EFL teachers' practices are partially tailored to the needs of learners with physical disabilities, and human and non-human supports are provided in inclusive EFL classes. Iranian EFL teachers differ in providing assessment techniques, time allotted for learning, instructional input and output, levels of support, tasks of different difficulty levels, and modified goals set for learners with physical disabilities. Some quality indicators of effective inclusive education (e.g., formative assessments, consideration of diversities, varied instructional and structural strategies by teachers, active engagement of learners, and modifications of curriculum) are also observed in EFL classes held in Iran's private language institutes.

These findings can contribute to a growing body of literature on inclusion in educational settings, including EFL classes. Moreover, the extent to which supports are provided by teachers to disabled and non-disabled learners in inclusive classes seems to be affected by factors such as teachers' daily schedules. The findings of the current study cannot be definitely generalized to all situations and more and more research should be conducted in this area to come up with more definite results. Future research could address the limitations of this study in order to further examine EFL teachers' actual practices in inclusive classes. As one of the limitations of the present study, the participants were limited to the Iranian EFL teachers and caution must be applied as the findings might not be absolutely generalizable to the other EFL settings. Further confirmatory studies could incorporate a larger variety of teachers. Different teacher preparation programs should also be investigated in terms of their effectiveness in preparing preservice EFL teachers to be inclusive teachers who are willing to accept and teach students with disabilities and who possess appropriate skills and knowledge to serve all disabled learners and non-disabled peers equally in their classrooms. The findings can assist pre-service and in-service teacher educators as well as decision-makers and authorities in the field of inclusive language education in the development of effective and relevant programs. The findings of this study would also serve as a research forum for a diverse group of EFL educators and practitioners. Little, if not none, is known about how EFL teachers deal with learners suffering from disabilities of different severity in inclusive classes or how they feel about the disabled learners in their classrooms.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

In this study, the EFL learners with disabilities were selected using a homogenous sampling as one type of purposive sampling in an attempt to select disabled EFL learners with the greatest homogeneity. The purposive sample of EFL learners with physical disabilities were selected from elementary levels of English learning; the EFL learners were suffering from at least one type of physical disability; and the severity of their disability was also taken into consideration. One of the inclusion criteria for physically disabled EFL learners was participation in inclusive, but not segregated, classes.

#### *Characteristics of EFL Learners with Disabilities*

Learners (Pseudonyms)	age	gender	Level of English	Learning English experience in institutes(Months)	Types of disability
Rahman	17	male	Elementary	10	vision impairment
Sharareh	20	female	Elementary	18	hearing and vision impairment
Jahan	45	male	Elementary	11	vision impairment
Fatemeh	26	female	Elementary	8	speech and kinesthetic difficulties
Majid	30	male	Elementary	5	epilepsy and speech difficulties

*Rahman* was a high school boy participating in English language institutes for 10 months. He was suffering from visual impairment. He had partially lost his vision due to an accident in his childhood. Visual impairment had caused him some problems in English classes. For example, he always needed to take his magnifying equipment with him to the classroom and he needed the teacher to aid him by enlarging or simplifying materials. *Rahman* also required modified versions of tasks such as role plays. In spite of his difficulty, *Rahman* was a lively and energetic boy making class laugh by telling jokes.

*Sharareh* was a 20-year old girl with visual and hearing difficulties. She was good looking and quiet. She was always wearing glasses and putting books in front of her face to be able to read. *Sharareh* had also some problems with processing auditory input and it took her some more time to process the perceptual information than her peers. *Sharareh* was also slow in writing due to visual difficulties. As the manager of the institute reported, *Sharareh* had changed her class several times during the last semesters since she could not integrate well with her classmates; however, she matched her current classmates and they aided her in tasks.

*Jahan* was 45 years old. He was visually impaired and took aiding equipment like rods, recorders, and a cellphone with installed text to speech applications. *Jahan* was married and had a son and a daughter. He was a university professor residing in the university dormitory. His aim was to learn English in order to take part in high-stake tests like TOEFL so as to migrate into foreign countries. He was a smart man and had a PhD in Persian Literature. In addition to being fluent at speaking Persian language, he had great knowledge of Persian poems and novels. He did not like to request for help and tried to perform the tasks with no help of his classmates. He also noted that his wife was assisting him in learning English since she was an English translator too.

*Fatemeh* was a 26-year-old single girl confined to a wheelchair. She was also suffering from speech difficulties caused by bone deformities. She was from a rural area. In addition to taking English classes, she was simultaneously taking physiotherapy. She had no problem using her hands or eyes or eye-hand movements; therefore, she had no severe problem writing or reading (not reading aloud). Her mother took her to the institute each session and waited for her class to be over. It was somehow difficult to understand her speech in her first language and subsequently in English as well. She was living in a big family with her sister assisting her in assignments.

*Majid* was suffering from epilepsy. He was 30 years old and had just started to learn English in order to be integrated with other people. He was a fan of movies and liked to watch English-language movies with no Persian subtitles. He had a kind of mild speech difficulty since he was not a fluent speaker. Uttering words or

reading aloud took him a longer time than usual. His speech was not hard to understand as much as *Fateme*'s. Due to epilepsy and recurrent headaches, he had difficulty concentrating for a long span of time or participating in discussions. He did not take part in the class for some session due to the aftereffects of his problem. He took no aids to the class, and his parents were illiterate so that there was no one else helping him in his assignments outside the class.

## **Appendix B**

### **Semi-structured Interview Questions**

1. How do you decide a student has disabilities? How do you decide a person with such a disability needs special teaching practices?
2. Do you need professional preparation or specific teaching practices for teaching an inclusive EFL classroom?
3. How do you plan for including a disabled EFL learner as a member of your class? Why?
4. In response to a disabled EFL learner as a member of your class, what changes do you make to your regular instructional practices?
5. What factors affect your decision about the type of practices provided for EFL learners with disabilities in an inclusive classroom? How do you decide on the most supportive teaching practices?