

Inclusive Language Pedagogy for Neurodiverse Learners: A Linguistic Study of Classroom Communication Strategies

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ABSTRACT:

Neurodiversity has become an important focus within contemporary education, increasing the need for inclusive language pedagogy and accessible classroom communication strategies that support neurodiverse learners in mainstream educational settings. This study aims to examine the role of inclusive language pedagogy and classroom communication strategies in supporting neurodiverse learners, particularly within multilingual, EFL/ESL, and technologically mediated learning environments. A comprehensive review design was adopted to synthesise scholarly literature related to neurodiversity, inclusive education, classroom communication, sensory-responsive pedagogy, multimodal instruction, and AI-supported educational practices. Relevant peer-reviewed studies were identified through academic databases and organised into thematic categories for analysis and synthesis. The findings indicate that neurodiverse learners benefit from explicit instruction, scaffolded communication, multimodal teaching approaches, sensory-responsive classroom environments, and flexible interaction strategies. The study also highlights the growing role of digital technologies and AI-supported tools in improving accessibility, personalized learning, and learner participation. Teacher competence, neurodiversity awareness, and inclusive communication practices emerged as significant factors influencing educational inclusion and classroom engagement. Inclusive language pedagogy plays a central role in promoting communicative accessibility, equitable participation, and learner engagement for neurodiverse students. The review further demonstrates a growing shift toward neurodiversity-affirming

educational practices that recognize diverse communication styles and support inclusive classroom participation.

Keywords: Neurodiversity; Inclusive language pedagogy; Classroom communication; Neurodiverse learners; Multimodal learning

1. Introduction

With the rise of new conceptions of neurodiversity within contemporary education, deficit models of cognitive and communicative difference are being challenged. The neurodiversity movement doesn't think of autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other neurodevelopmental differences as "ailments" but rather as natural differences in human cognition and communication. This transformation has had implications for education theory and practice, fostering a shift in education towards greater emphasis on diversity, accessibility and inclusion. With increasing integration of neurodiverse learners into mainstream classrooms, more focus is placed on pedagogies that will enable meaningful participation, communication and learning (Mirfin-Veitch et al., 2020).

As inclusive educational approaches have expanded, there has been a growing focus on the importance of rethinking the way that communication and language are used in the classroom and how these practices affect learning experiences. Inclusive education is now seen as more than the presence of children with disabilities in classrooms; it also means that learners have access to educational facilities as social, linguistic and academic learners. In this context, language is a focus of inclusion as classroom language establishes the interpretation of instructions, social relations within a classroom, and relations to the content of education. In neurodiverse classrooms (Honeybourne, 2018), therefore, flexible teaching approaches that recognize a variety of communication preferences and learning styles are becoming a more essential.

Language and communication also contribute to the learner identity and participation. The pragmatic aspects of language, figurative

language, conversational reciprocity, literacy processing, and social communication may all be areas of difficulty for neurodiverse learners, especially in verbal classrooms. Thus, school-based language support service continues to be vital to support inclusive language use and to minimise barriers to participation in the classroom for autistic learners (DeThorne & Sears-Smith, 2021). Meanwhile, studies have begun to acknowledge that there is a neurological variety of learners who are able to interact with literacy and communication in unique and meaningful ways that are different from traditional student learning. Neurodivergent literacies, then, must be understood as a way of being and doing, not a way of being or doing that is wrong. Neurodivergent literacies, therefore, need to be considered as a way of being and doing, not a way of being and doing that is against the norm.

Teachers' discourse and communication strategy, as a result, are an important factor in determining inclusive educational experiences. The interactions in the classroom, the language used during lesson, the questioning strategies used, and the feedback given by the teacher directly impact the classroom's climate for learning for neurodiverse learners. The focus of inclusive pedagogical frameworks is on clearly structuring learning, making communication more accessible, providing for multimodal communication, and creating sensory-responsive pedagogical approaches to enable learner participation and understanding. The key points of inclusive pedagogical frameworks are clearly structured learning, scaffolds for communication, multimodal communication, and sensory-responsive pedagogical approaches to ensure learner participation and understanding. This, in turn, can be effective in minimizing the barriers to communication and making classrooms more accessible to students

with a variety of cognitive and communicative profiles.

The problems are further complicated in multilingual and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, where the neurodiverse students have to contend with the additional challenges of language and culture. The idea of bilingual neurodiverse learners highlights the potential for multiple issues related to accessing communication, learning language, and language learning expectations to overlap. Professionals serving bilingual autistic learners have noted that there is a challenge in meeting the dual needs of language development and inclusion in linguistically diverse contexts of education (Howard et al., 2021). These findings indicate that simultaneously with adopting inclusive language pedagogy, it is necessary to take into account the themes of multilingual identity, language adaptation, and culturally responsive teaching.

At the same time, inclusive education is continually being reshaped by digital technologies and learning tools with AI technology. Personalised learning and language support through adaptive learning systems, digital communication platforms and AI language-learning tools. But, with these technological advances come questions of linguistic accessibility, ethics, and teacher readiness. It is important to reflect on the possible deficit-based interpretations of the communication of neurodivergent students and how this is valid for digitally mediated learning environments (Bottema-Beutel, 2024).

Although considerable research has emerged over the last few years on what has become known as the neurodiversity and inclusion movement, there are still essential areas that need to be explored and investigated in the linguistic analysis of classroom communication strategies for neurodiverse learners. Previous studies tend to be macro-level studies with little nuances on the role of discourse, interaction patterns and communicative expectations in participation and learning experiences of educational inclusion. Moreover, the intersection of ableism and

linguicism may be more complex for the neurodivergent learner who speaks English as an additional language, and while some of these forms of ableism have been studied in education, there is still a lack of awareness of them within this field (David, 2025).

In the light of this, the present review explores the impact of inclusive language pedagogy and classroom language strategies on the success of neurodiverse students. This study is an attempt to bring together existing research in the field of neurodiverse communication, inclusive teaching practices, multimodal teaching, teacher competence and new technologies in inclusive education.

2. Methodology

This research work follows a comprehensive review design to synthesize existing scholarly evidence on inclusive language pedagogy and the communication techniques in the classroom of the neurodiverse. The relevant literature was systematically retrieved from peer-reviewed articles in Google Scholar, DOAJ and Science Direct that focused on the concepts of neurodiversity in inclusive education, language learning, classroom communication, EFL/ESL education, sensory-responsive pedagogy and AI-assisted education. This was primarily empirical studies and review articles, and not opinion-based publications, non-academic, dissertations, or studies that were not directly related to the context of educational communication with neurodiverse learners. A keyword strategy was followed, with combinations of keywords like: Inclusive language pedagogy, multisensory pedagogy, inclusive education, AI in inclusive education, autism and language learning, ADHD in education, classroom communication, or neurodivergent learners, and neurodiversity. Studies retrieved were screened for title and abstract for relevance and eligibility, and then the full text was assessed. The chosen studies were then grouped into themes, such as the linguistic and communicative features of neurodiversity, inclusive classroom communication, multimodal and sensory-responsive teaching, digital and AI-based support of inclusive education, teacher

competencies, and educational practices of a neurodiversity-positive classroom. The synthesis process entailed a comparison and integration of findings across the areas of themes to reveal patterns and trends and to uncover any gaps in

the existing research on inclusive language pedagogy. The overall review process is shown in Figure 1, consisting of identification of the literature, screening, thematic classification and synthesis.

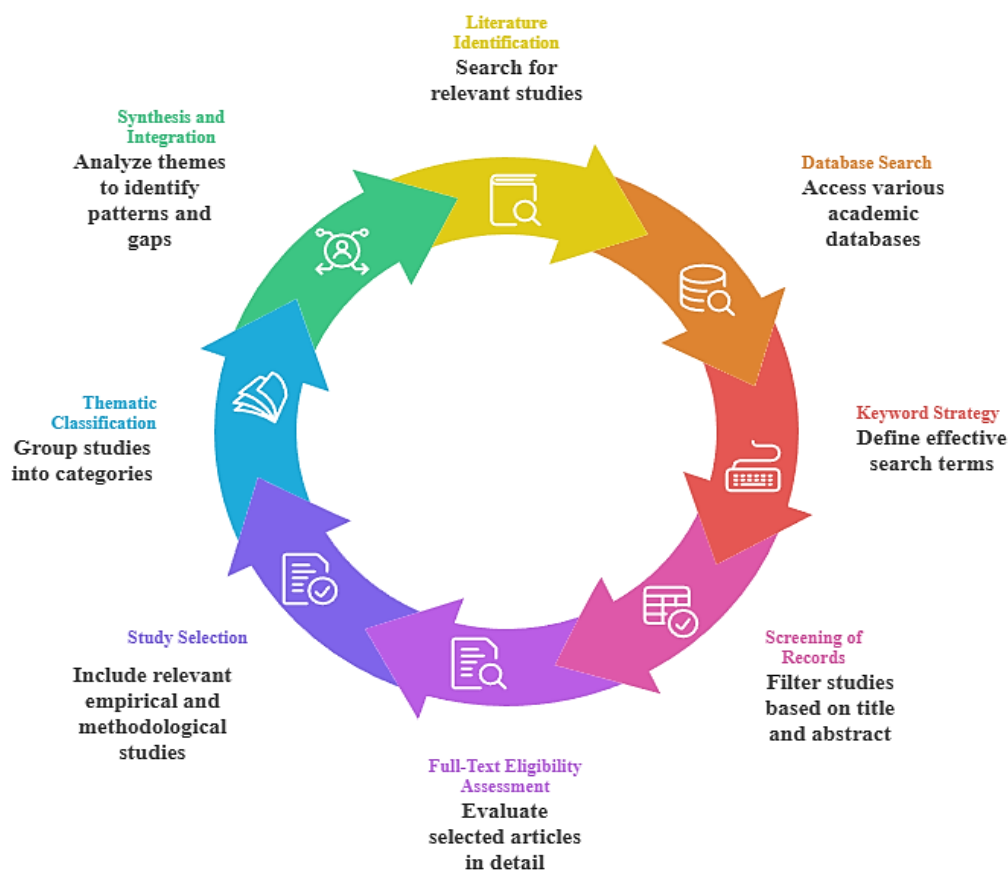


Figure 1. Overview of the Comprehensive Review Process

3. Results

3.1 Linguistic and Communication Characteristics of Neurodiverse Learners

A review of the literature reveals that the communication and language-processing patterns of neurodiverse learners are varied and impact participation in the classroom and language learning processes. Pragmatic language differences, literal interpretation, and social communication challenges are common in learners with autism, and attention difficulties,

literacy processing, and inability to sustain attention in language activities are common in learners with ADHD and dyslexia. Research also shows that multilingual environments in educational contexts, especially in EFL settings, need bilingual and culturally responsive supports for bilingual neurodiverse learners. Verbal participation and interaction in the classroom are also impacted by sensory-processing differences, which means flexibility and responsiveness in communication are essential (Table 1).

Table 1. Linguistic and Communication Characteristics of Neurodiverse Learners

Neurodiverse Condition	Linguistic Characteristics	Educational Impact	Supporting Reference
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Pragmatic language differences and literal interpretation	Difficulty interpreting indirect classroom communication	Adio and Ali (2024)
Echolalic Communication	Repetition and scripted speech patterns	Requires affirming communicative interpretation	Cohn and Harrison (2025)
ADHD	Attention fluctuation and impulsive responses	Reduced concentration during language tasks	Howard (2023)
Dyslexia	Reading and literacy-processing difficulties	Challenges in written language activities	Howard (2021)
Bilingual Neurodiverse Learners	Interaction between multilingualism and neurodivergence	Increased linguistic adaptation demands	Rodriguez (2025)
Sensory-Sensitive Learners	Sensory overload affecting verbal processing	Reduced classroom participation	Yphantides (2024)

3.2 Inclusive Classroom Communication Strategies

Findings showed that implementing inclusive classroom communication strategies enhances accessibility and participation of learners with a diverse range of disabilities. Language is simplified, language is explained, repetition is used, scaffolding is provided, and wait time is used to minimize language ambiguity and

facilitate language processing. Positive feedback and affirming teacher talk further contribute to learner confidence and belongingness in the classroom, especially in language-learning contexts with potentially high levels of communication anxiety. In conclusion, the literature indicates that inclusive communication should offer several modes of learner participation, with the interaction being clear, structured and supportive (Table 2).

Table 2. Inclusive Classroom Communication Strategies

Communication Strategy	Purpose	Classroom Benefit	Supporting Reference
Simplified Instructional Language	Reduce linguistic ambiguity	Improves comprehension and task clarity	Howard (2023)
Explicit Communication	Clarify classroom expectations	Reduces anxiety and misunderstanding	Adio and Ali (2024)
Repetition and Paraphrasing	Reinforce language processing	Improves retention and understanding	Ellinger-Cruz and Hord (2025)
Scaffolded Interaction	Gradually support communication participation	Builds learner confidence	Ubaque-Casallas (2024)

Wait-Time Strategies	Allow additional processing time	Encourages inclusive participation	Yphantides (2021)
Positive Reinforcement	Support learner motivation	Enhances engagement and belongingness	Fernando (2025)

3.3 Multimodal and Sensory-Responsive Language Pedagogy

There is strong support in the literature for the use of multimodal and sensory responsive approaches in inclusive language classrooms. Using visual supports, storytelling, drama pedagogy, music-assisted learning and multisensory teaching strategies, understanding, expressive communication, participation and

engagement in neurodiverse learners are enhanced. Another key benefit of a sensory-responsive classroom is that it helps to minimize communication barriers caused by sensory overload and enhances the sense of comfort and participation of learners in language learning. The results indicate that language pedagogy needs to use more than just the verbal teaching channel, using other senses and communication channels as well (Table 3).

Table 3. Multimodal and Sensory-Responsive Teaching Approaches

Teaching Approach	Linguistic Function	Educational Benefit	Supporting Reference
Visual Supports	Clarify vocabulary and instructions	Improves comprehension and organization	Sobel et al. (2024)
Storytelling	Develop narrative and expressive language	Encourages communication participation	Poláčeková (2025)
Drama Pedagogy	Promote dialogue and interaction	Supports social communication confidence	Kotsidis and Dima (2025)
Music-Assisted Learning	Reinforce pronunciation and memory	Enhances engagement and retention	Smith (2019)
Multisensory Pedagogy	Integrate multiple sensory pathways	Supports diverse cognitive profiles	Gansa (2025)
Sensory-Responsive Teaching	Adapt communication to sensory needs	Reduces overload and anxiety	Yphantides (2024)

3.4 Digital Technologies and AI-Supported Inclusive Communication

Digital technologies and tools supported by AI proved to be valuable tools for inclusive language pedagogy. Research has shown that adaptive learning systems, e-learning platforms and AI-powered tools like ChatGPT enhance

accessibility, tailor learning to individual needs and engage students more in language classes. Personalization technology in education can also help pace the learning process more flexibly for neurodiversity. Researchers point out, however, that technology should not be used in place of teacher-supported inclusive communication practices (Table 4).

Table 4. AI and Digital Tools Supporting Inclusive Language Learning

Technology	Educational Application	Educational Benefit	Supporting Reference
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ChatGPT and AI Writing Tools	Writing support and adaptive feedback	Supports personalized language learning	Rangkuti and Setyarini (2025)
Adaptive Learning Systems	Personalized instructional pacing	Supports individual learning needs	Anapey et al. (2025)
E-learning Platforms	Flexible digital language instruction	Enhances accessibility and repetition	Blume and Bündgens-Kosten (2023)
Digital Storytelling Tools	Interactive literacy development	Encourages expressive communication	Poláčková (2025)
Assistive Communication Technologies	Alternative communication support	Expands expressive participation	Coles-White et al. (2025)
Educational Personalization Technologies	Customized content delivery	Improves learner accessibility	Ramos Saes et al. (2024)

3.5 Teacher Competence and Inclusive Language Practices

The importance of teacher competence was always pointed out as a key determinant in inclusive language pedagogy. Based on the reviewed studies, it is recommended that teachers need to be aware of neurodiversity, understand and have the competence in inclusive communication, Digital literacy, sensory responsive teaching skills and Multimodal

instructional strategies to support neurodiversity learners. The results also show that reflective teaching is very significant and cross-cultural responsiveness is also important, especially in multilingual and EFL classrooms with complex communication demands. Overall, teachers' competence directly impacts on a neurodiverse learner's experience of classroom communication, participation and educational inclusion (Table 5).

Table 5. Teacher Competencies for Inclusive Language Pedagogy

Teacher Competency	Role in Inclusion	Educational Significance	Supporting Reference
Neurodiversity Awareness	Understanding diverse learner profiles	Reduces deficit-oriented teaching	Dyosini (2025)
Inclusive Communication Competence	Using accessible classroom language	Improves learner participation	Howard (2023)
Sensory-Responsive Teaching Skills	Adapting instruction to sensory needs	Enhances classroom engagement	Yphantides (2024)
Multimodal Instructional Skills	Integrating varied communication methods	Supports diverse learning preferences	Aguilar et al. (2020)
Digital Literacy	Using AI and educational technologies effectively	Supports adaptive learning	Blume and Bündgens-Kosten (2023)
Reflective Teaching Practice	Evaluating inclusive communication methods	Promotes pedagogical improvement	Ubaque-Casallas (2024)

3.6 Neurodiversity-Affirming Language and Emerging Inclusive Trends

Literature reviewed reflects a general trend towards a language and discourse of inclusion in education that values and respects the neurodiversity of individuals. The ableist and deficit-based view is increasingly challenged by researchers, and they promote the use of respectful language and respectful learner agency, along with respecting ND

communication as an acceptable way to engage in the classroom. Other trends are the use of AI to support personalized learning, as well as sensory-responsive education, interdisciplinary education, and the increased consideration of the voices of neurodivergent students in classroom communication and decision-making. The developmental trends indicated above argue for future inclusive language instruction to be more personalized, multimodal, technologically integrated, and identity-affirming (Table 6).

Table 6. Emerging Trends in Inclusive Language Pedagogy

Emerging Trend	Description	Educational Significance	Supporting Reference
Neurodiversity-Affirming Pedagogy	Shift from deficit-based educational models	Promotes learner dignity and inclusion	Manalili (2021)
Inclusive Terminology Awareness	Recognition of respectful language practices	Supports identity-sensitive communication	Lei et al. (2021)
AI-Supported Personalized Learning	Integration of adaptive AI tools	Enhances individualized instruction	Rangkuti and Setyarini (2025)
Sensory-Responsive Education	Adaptation to sensory-processing needs	Reduces communication barriers	Yphantides (2024)
Interdisciplinary Educational Approaches	Integration of linguistics and neuroscience	Expands understanding of language learning	Peña and Cubo (2025)
Student Voice and Agency	Inclusion of neurodivergent learner perspectives	Encourages participatory education	Brice and Dwan (2025)

4. Discussion

The results of this study reveal the importance of inclusive language pedagogy in assisting the educational participation and development of communication for neurodiverse learners. In the literature examined, flexible communication in the classroom, multimodal teaching methods, sensory responsive teaching and a neurodiversity affirming classroom were consistently linked to effective inclusion. The findings indicate that the most effective approach to enhance the learning of a neurodivergent student in a Language Classroom is to set up flexible communication expectations and employ learning strategies that accommodate students' language, cognitive and sensory differences. Inclusive communication, however, is not just a pedagogical approach, it is

also a mechanism to facilitate learner agency, participation and educational equity.

The results also suggest that classroom discourse has significant impacts on the classroom experience of neurodiverse learners. Use of explicit instruction, scaffolding, wait time, and multimodal explanation in the classroom makes it easier to communicate with students, thereby minimizing language barriers to learning. Sensory-responsive pedagogy is also relevant especially in the context of how sensory overload can impact language learning contexts in terms of understanding, involvement and social relations. In the context of learning in multilingual schools, as well as in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms, where communication requirements are more complex, AI-supported and digital educational tools offer new opportunities for

personalized learning and new alternatives in communication support. The review proposes, however, that integrating technology needs to stay human-centered and pedagogically guided to ensure that there are no further obstacles to inclusion.

The results of this review are aligned with the previous research that highlights the need for inclusion and adaptation in relation to learners with neurodiversity. Studies on music therapy and inclusive pedagogy showed that the use of multisensory and therapeutic pedagogies generates an increase in engagement, communication and participation for neurodiverse students (Moya-Pérez et al., 2024). Likewise, research from a stakeholder perspective also highlighted the critical role of classroom environments, collaborative education and the flexibility of the curriculum in enabling the successful inclusion of neurodiversity (Ndou-Chikwena & Sefotho, 2025). Research on inclusive support in speech-language pathology (SLP) programs also found that educating learners with diverse communication needs and identities is better facilitated by adapting the communication practices in SLP (Nico & Gevarter, 2025). Furthermore, the literature on literacy found that teachers' classroom talk and literacy practices have an impact on how they experience inclusion and participation in a learning environment as a neurodiverse learner (Ryant, 2025). The current results were also supported by a study of adaptive teaching strategies, which highlighted the importance of flexibility in the teaching approach in modern classrooms to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles and communication profiles (Yang, 2025).

This review has implications for teachers, curriculum developers, teachers' preparation programs and policy makers. First, there should be flexible communication strategies in the first language classroom to meet the communicative and sensory needs of students. Second, teacher education programs need to offer more training in the field of understanding and communicating with neurodiversity and in multimodal pedagogy

and sensory-responsive teaching. Third, educational institutions must make sure that the use of AI supported and digital learning technologies are done in ways that are accessible and inclusive, and not standardising and excluding. Lastly, inclusive educational policies must acknowledge the value and legitimacy of neurodivergent communication within classroom diversity and not see it as a deficit to be fixed.

Although these contributions are made, there are some limitations in the review. Most of the study was based on literature that was already published, and therefore may not necessarily reflect the different types of classrooms in different cultural and educational settings. Furthermore, methodological designs, study populations, and educational contexts varied across the reviewed studies, and certain studies included multiple schools, with some having smaller samples. In addition, methodological designs, participant populations, and educational contexts differed across studies and some studies had more than one school and some had fewer participants. The review also was limited to educational research in English, which may have failed to capture research in other languages that might also be relevant. Additionally, the review focused on AI-aided teaching and learning, but new developments in educational technology may not be captured in the existing literature due to its dynamism.

The use of inclusive language pedagogy needs to be looked into in future research in more interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and longitudinal perspective. Further research is required into the ways in which neurodiverse learners have classroom communication in a variety of educational contexts, age groups and multilingual settings. Studies should also explore the long-term effects of the use of sensory-responsive teaching, the use of AI tools in communication and the pedagogies that focus on the neurodiversity of learners on their participation and performance. Incorporating students' voice of the neurodivergent further enhances the understanding of how inclusive communication

practices can enhance a classroom learning environment that is both equitable and meaningful.

5. Conclusion

The present study emphasizes the significance of inclusive language pedagogy in the context of inclusive education for neurodiversity in the modern school. The results show that key factors in creating successful classroom inclusion are accessible communication practices and flexible instructional approaches, as well as learning environments that acknowledge the diverse linguistic, cognitive and sensory profiles. In all the reviewed studies, the explicit instruction, scaffolding the interaction, multimodal teaching methods, sensory responsive pedagogy, and the communication practices that affirmed neurodiversity were all found to be beneficial to neurodiverse learners. It was discovered that these strategies increased learner participation, comprehension, confidence and engagement in the classroom. Another key finding of the study was the growing importance of digital technologies and AI-assisted learning resources in the context of inclusive communication and

personalized language learning. With the use of adaptive learning systems, assistive technologies and AI-supported platforms like ChatGPT, the possibilities for flexible and individual teaching are created within supportive and ethically sound pedagogical frameworks. Furthermore, teacher competence was identified as a key issue that affects successful inclusion, specifically in terms of being aware of the neurodiversity, inclusive communication skills, use of multimodal teaching and culturally responsive practices. The other significant data point is the increasing move away from deficit models to neurodiversity-affirming education that embraces difference in communication styles and learners' identities. Therefore, inclusive language pedagogy should not only aim to accommodate learners academically, but also foster linguistic justice and learner agency and participation in the classroom in an equitable manner. In summary, the study highlights the importance of inclusive communication in fostering supportive, accessible, and learner-centred learning environments for learners with a neurodiversity.

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