Inclusion and Integration: Support Teachers in English Classrooms

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Abstract: *Students with specific educational needs (SEN) require the permanent support of professionals to improve their school achievements. This study aims to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses in a group of Special Education Support (SES) Teachers in the subject English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the context of province Manabí, Ecuador. The study subscribes to the interpretive and social-critical paradigms and the mixed approach of the scientific research. The participants are 26 people. 4 SES teachers, 4 SEN students, and 18 university students of the Special Education Program in an Ecuadorian public university. The instruments used are survey, interview guide, and contextual observation. The results show that Special Education Support Teachers contribute effectively to strengthening inclusive education. Their main functions are:(1) to support students with SEN in everyday classroom routines, (2) to monitor the student's school advance, (3) to coordinate the communication flow between families and schools, and (4) to regulate students' emotional and behavioral responses. It concludes that a lack of specific training for foreign language instruction persists, a situation that limits their efficient work in the subject.*

Keywords: Educational Innovations, EFL, Inclusive Education, Neurodiversity, Special Education Support

1. Introduction

Articulation of government policies, practices, and inclusive culture are factors required to access education for all people (Booth & Ainscow, 2001). In the context of Ecuador, Bravo et al. (2022) establish that for the severity of disability factor, there is a significant statistical difference in self-esteem, somatization, and anxiety. Therefore, students with severe disabilities showed significantly higher self-esteem. In addition, students with mild disabilities reported higher somatization and anxiety scores compared to those with moderate and severe levels. Thus, students with severe specific needs require the presence of SES teachers to achieve school objectives.

In such a context, professionals or university students of diverse knowledge fields often assume the role of SES teachers to assist students with specific educational needs in early education and elementary schools. Students' parents require support for their kids to have effective integration and inclusion at schools. Thus, the efficient work of the SES teachers relies on a combination of factors such as dedication, teaching motivation, knowledge across subjects, and teaching methodology to support students having specific needs with their class activities and homework. However, the observation of universities shows programs for Special Education teachers, but a lack of programs to train Special Education Support (SES) teachers (Moreira & Villafuerte, 2022).

Moreover, this study centers on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is a subject mandatory to approve in the Ecuadorian curriculum from 2nd year of elementary school to higher education, and it is an optional subject in private early educational institutions. In such a scenario, this work identifies the weaknesses to improve in a group of SES teachers for English language instruction, particularly in cases of students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), Asperger's syndrome (AS), and Motor disability (MD), to provide recommendations to enhance their teaching strategies. The study answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the SES teachers?

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2. What are the teachers' perceptions about their work with students SEN in EFL class?

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Special Education Support Teachers in EFL class?

This study aims to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses in a group of Special Education Support (SES) Teachers in the subject English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Manabí, Ecuador.

Neurodivergent Students

Neurodiversity is a concept that transcends the traditional view of human diversity, recognizing the natural variations in neurological and cognitive functioning. This approach reframes neurological differences, such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They are biological variations inherent to humans rather than focusing on deficits. Neurodiversity advocates for viewing neurodivergent individuals as having unique strengths and perspectives that can enrich society (Cruz Puerto & Sandín Vázquez, 2024). In addition, the neurodiversity model encourages a rethinking of systems designed for neurotypical individuals, calling for adjustments that allow neurodivergent people to fully participate and thrive in education, work, and daily life.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder. It requires personal and tailored interventions to the individual needs, including training in social skills and emotional development support (Lord et al., 2020). Such neurodevelopmental disorders significant challenges in communication and social interaction, as well as repetitive behaviors and restricted interests (Celis Alcalá & Ochoa Madrigal, 2022). Difficulties in social communication encompass verbal expression, understanding of social norms, and non-verbal interactions, which can hinder the formation of relationships and the development of appropriate social skills. For this reason, early educational interventions are essential to improve outcomes for individuals with ASD. In this context, De La Torre González and Martín Ortega (2024) emphasize that the specialized support professionals contributing to educational centers must possess high qualifications, teamwork capabilities, sensitivity, and emotional availability. It includes participation in coordination structures, intervention in reference classrooms, and inclusive teacher support.

Autism Spectrum Disorder has three levels of severity based on the amount of support an individual requires to perform daily activities. At Level 1, individuals -require support- due to social communication difficulties that are apparent without assistance. They may struggle to initiate interactions and exhibit inflexible behaviors that interfere with functioning. At Level 2, individuals -require substantial support- as they display more significant deficits in verbal and non-verbal communication, and their inflexible behavior notably interferes in various contexts. Finally, at Level 3, individuals require very substantial support to show severe deficits in communication and extreme behavioral inflexibility that severely impairs their ability to function in any sphere of life, as outlined in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In addition, Asperger's Syndrome, first described by Hans Asperger in 1944, is a developmental disorder marked by challenges in social behavior, pragmatic language use, and specific cognitive traits. Initially, it is a distinct pervasive developmental disorder in the DSM-IVI. It later merged into the broader autism spectrum disorders (ASD) category in the DSM-5, sparking considerable debate.

González-Alba et al. (2019) argues the reclassification of terms does not consider the rationale for including Asperger's within the ASD framework. Scholars such as Tahoces Fernández (2022) insist on early detection, intervention, and support for students with special educational needs. Although the syndrome shares similarities with other forms of autism, some researchers emphasize its unique features, particularly in social communication, where individuals may struggle with the nuances of interaction, even without a language delay (Malo Gracia et al., 2024). These distinctions led to the question of whether people with Asperger's respond to separate conditions within the autism spectrum, requiring tailored educational and therapeutic approaches.

Motor disability is a condition that affects movement and participation in daily activities due to the motor system, originating from the nervous system, muscles, bones, or joints. They have two main types: motor

disorders, which affect the musculoskeletal system, and neuromotor disorders, which involve movement control impairments from nervous system damage, such as cerebral palsy (Bastarrachea et al., 2022). Students with motor disabilities encounter significant challenges in mobility, communication, and social interaction, impacting their self-esteem and active participation. A thorough assessment helps educators identify specific needs and implement tailored support, including classroom accommodations and assistive technology (Mondragón Merino & Lobera Gracida, n.d.). Creating an inclusive environment enhances mobility and participation in school activities. They promote personal and social development. Including these students enriches the educational community for fostering empathy in the classrooms.

Inclusive Education in English as a Foreign Language Classroom

The principles of inclusive education in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction need a careful approach to lesson planning and execution. According to Halliday (1978), language is a social semiotic product. It plays a vital role in learning and comprehension, underscoring the importance of contextual understanding for effective teaching.

These strategies are beneficial for students with diverse needs and interests, facilitating active learning experiences. Thus, as Martos (2019) suggests, visual aids and music therapy can improve understanding and communication, mitigate anxiety, and contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere. In this context, En-abilities (2020) asserts that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a valuable tool for developing inclusive language courses for both adults and children with special needs.

According to COCEMFE (2021), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) seeks to eliminate barriers to access and promote learner participation, ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners. The formation of learning communities enhances interaction and teamwork, while methodologies of Problem-Based Learning and Flipped Classrooms enable students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Furthermore, Betancourt and Castro (2020) highlight the necessity of exploring didactic strategies that enhance the success of inclusive education in EFL classes.

Building on this foundation, Carrión (2022) states that curricular adaptations are vital for promoting inclusive education by acknowledging and valuing diversity as essential for fostering equality and dismantling barriers. In this regard, Castro (cited in the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2022) emphasizes that curriculum adaptations should be flexible, student-centered, and contextual for addressing student-specific needs. Besides, García Melgar et al. (2022) emphasize that effective collaboration is crucial for children's success and inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education. Schools, teachers, parents, and health professionals must work together toward shared goals, aligning their roles and responsibilities. Open communication is vital for optimizing resources and time, enhancing teamwork quality, and fostering an inclusive educational experience. However, adaptations must be realistic, involving collaborative efforts across disciplines and considering the educational and familial context to ensure their efficacy.

Palacios García (2024) states that curricular adaptations provide tailored learning opportunities that enhance the development of cognitive, linguistic, motor, social, and emotional skills, thereby promoting autonomy and social integration for students. Therefore, Carrillo and Castro (2024) assert that lesson planning must consider the unique characteristics of each learner to foster active engagement and participation.

Special Education Support Teachers

Educational inclusion is a fundamental principle that seeks to ensure respect for the dignity and abilities of each student. In this regard, Cruz-Vadillo and Iturbide-Fernández (2019) argue that inclusion should go beyond mere physical integration, focusing on recognizing the potentiality of students and supporting their full development.

The special education support teachers, also known as educational assistants or shadow teachers *profesores sombra* in Ecuador, have an essential role in promoting educational inclusion by acting as a support in the classroom. Martínez López (2021) highlights their crucial role in fostering inclusive school environments,

serving as agents of change to facilitate access to education for all students, particularly those with Specific Educational Needs (SEN). Thus, the skills required for the SES teachers are diverse and specific. Thus, Blas González and Jiménez Calvo (2021) note that relevant professional competencies including facilitating social interactions during recess, providing emotional and behavioral support to help students manage anxiety and avoid behavioral crises, or helping them focus during lessons. These professionals can benefit individual students and contribute to their overall well-being and dynamics of the entire class group.

Pérez Castro and Santana Valencia (2022) states that inclusive education is a fundamental human right that promotes the integral development of each individual and values differences as learning opportunities for all. In line with this perspective, Molina Morales (2023) emphasizes the contribution of collaborative work between Special Educations Support Teachers and multidisciplinary teachers' teams to ensure the academic and social students with SEN progress through pedagogical adaptations that address their specific needs.

Besides, Elizalde (2023) also points SES teachers assist students in communicating and socializing, fostering an inclusive educational environment that promotes school and personal development. Meanwhile, Padilla Molina (2023) states that these professionals provide individualized support to children having specific educational needs to ensure their participation in classroom activities.

Similarly, the Thames Valley District School Board (2024) emphasizes that special education support teachers collaborate to have more creative, equitable, and inclusive educational environments for high-quality education. Furthermore, Albán-Vera et al. (2024) underscores the relevance of the intervention of educational assistants, tutors, and SES teachers. They provide individualized help that facilitates the integration of learners into the school environment, ensuring they receive inclusive and equitable education. Their contribution fosters a collaborative learning atmosphere that enriches the educational experience for all. In addition, Vásconez Torres (2024) states that SES teachers ease the burden on regular teachers, contributing to their work when they experience a lack of training to work with students having SEN.

Concerning the previous studies, the work of Martínez López (2021) ratifies that the presence of Especial Education Support Teachers fosters inclusive environments in classrooms. Their direct contribution centers on the student with Specific Educational Needs but also, indirect contribution supporting to regular teachers, administrator, parents and students. The research conducted by Castañón Rodríguez et al. (2022) present the case of Edgar, a 10-year-old boy in a primary school in Mexico, who receives support from an especial education support teacher due to difficulties in social interaction and managing anxiety during curricular and not curricular activities at school. Nevertheless, the study underscores a lack of meaningful dialogue between the SES teacher and Edgar, which restricts his cognitive development and comprehension of academic tasks. This points to a broader issue: while the presence of SES staff is critical, their effectiveness can be hindered without proper communication strategies and a deeper understanding of the student needs. In addition, Polo Márquez et al. (2022) conducted research in Málaga, Spain, emphasizing the vital role of SES teachers in facilitating the inclusion of students within mainstream classrooms. Through semi-structured interviews, they examine the various functions of these professionals, including their role in managing classroom routines and regulating students' emotional and behavioral responses. However, their findings also highlight limitations about the small sample size and the lack of official data regarding the work of SES teachers. The study of Escarbajal et al. (2023) refers to SES teachers working with students diagnosed autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Andalucia, Spain. Their research shows that these professionals have become key figures in inclusive classrooms, providing students' assistance at school and fostering the social and emotional engagement. This highlights the multifaceted nature of the SES teachers' roles, which extends beyond academic support to facilitating holistic development and social integration, core components of inclusive education. The work of Malo Gracia et al. (2024) remarks the need to train teachers to identify as best as possible the forms and levels of autism which include social communication and language delay. The study run by Nallib (2024) discusses the legal framework surrounding SES teachers, particularly in the context of Argentina. The resolution 3401/18 of the Province of Mendoza, situates the role of the inclusion support teacher within a collaborative paradigm that involves

multiple stakeholders, such as classroom teachers, families, and peers. The goal is to cultivate an inclusive educational culture that recognizes the relevance of the shared responsibilities.

2. Materials and Methods

This work subscribes to social-critical paradigms and the mixed approach of scientific research to collect information of the following participants. The participants are 26 people. 4 SES teachers, 4 SEN students, and 18 university students of the Special Education program in an Ecuadorian public university. See table 1.

Groups	Diagnoses of student in charged	Quantity
SES teachers	N/A	4
SEN students	Autism level 3. 2nd grade.	1
	Autism level 2. 2nd grade.	1
	Asperger's syndrome 4th grade.	1
	Physical disability. 8th grade.	1
University students	N/A.	18
	Total	26

Table 1: Participants (Source: Research registers)

Instruments: The instruments used in the research are survey, interview guide and observation.

- **Survey:** The survey was designed to gather information on the characteristics of Special Educations Support Teachers in the Ecuadorian educational system. It is based on a set of questions with the aim of assessing different aspects of SES teachers' profiles, including their knowledge of the English Language, familiarity with specific methods for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), and use of educational technology tools. The survey was initially created through 17 questions. The final version was developed with special education and English teaching experts, ensuring the collection of the relevant and effective information. After a review process, the research team adjusted the survey to focus on the most important aspects of SES teachers' characteristics. The survey was given to participants in their educational institutions, allowing for the collection of complete information about their professional profiles and teaching practices.

- **Interview Guide:** The instrument ad hoc, has the purpose of collect information about the SES teacher perceptions concerning to their work in the categories (1) school activities with 6 questions, (2) emotional management with 5 questions, and (3) English language knowledge with 3 questions. The original instrument consisted of 5 categories and 4 questions per category. A panel of professionals in the fields of Special Education, Psyche didactics, English language instruction evaluated the instrument. They recommended to reduce the number of categories and questions. The research team conducted the interviews in the educational institutions where work the informants. Each interview lasted 45 minutes. Total time of interviews recorded is 180 minutes.

- **Observation:** The observation sheet was designed to gather relevant details about the teaching practices of SES Teachers in EFL classrooms, with structured categories (1) SES teachers' interventions with 4 items, (2) knowledge of the English Language with 4 items, (3) adaptability of the students' needs with 3 items, (4) teaching in a friendly environment with 3 items, (5) showing professionalism in the position with 3 items, (6) planification with 3 items, and (7) communication styles with 5 items. Each category guide observers in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the SES teachers' methodologies and qualities. This tool provides valuable insights into the practical application of their skills and challenges they encounter in delivering inclusive education. The research team completed a total of 15 observations forms.

Procedure: The stages carried out during the field work stage are as follows:

- *Stage 1. Select informants*- The selected participants for the research were chosen strategically to ensure a well-rounded perspective, including SES teachers to be observed and special education university students' perceptions. This approach allowed capturing a comprehensive view of the interaction and impact of SES teachers within an inclusive education framework.

- *Stage 2. Select instruments*- The choice of instruments was the careful and deliberate step. The team considered several tools, analyzed and selected those that best fit the research objectives. The final choice was the survey, the interview guide and the observation form which were chosen to ensure that the information obtained was in line with the research.

- *Stage 3. Execute the instruments to collect information*- The instruments were chosen in order to collect comprehensive data: surveys to understand students' perceptions, interviews to explore SES teachers' teaching strengths and challenges, and observation sheets to systematically record classroom dynamics.

- *Stage 4. Analyze the information collected*- In addition, the statistical analysis of the data and categorial analysis of information collected. The research lies in deeply understanding and exploring inclusion in classrooms since a scientific perspective.

- *Stage 5. Elaborate the research report*- The writing of the final report was a collaborative effort to translate the findings into clear and practical ideas. The research team summarized the data, analyzed key trends, and highlighted possible interpretations. The report aims to inform interested parties and propose practical recommendations for improving inclusive education practices.

3. Results

The results of this research are presented following the order of the research questions, offering a detailed analysis of teacher training, use of materials and technologies, as well as perceptions of the difficulties of working with students with special educational needs (SEN).

Special Education Support Teachers' Characteristics

In response to the first research question: What are the characteristics of the SES teachers? The survey allowed to find the following data:

- *SES teachers' English language knowledge:* 72.2% of the SES teachers and university students have a basic level of English language knowledge, 22% have an intermediate level, but 5.6% reported no knowledge of English language

- *SES teachers' knowledge about specific methodologies to teach EFL:* 100% informants expressed the lack of knowledge of English language specific teaching methodologies such as ECRIF, CLIL, PP, TTT and STEM.

- *SES teachers' educational technology tools usage:* The most frequently didactic materials used by SES teachers include pictograms, flashcards, and photographs. However, when analyzing the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), the responses are 61.1% of the respondents use sometimes ICT in the support to students with SEN, 22.2% use ICT very often, 11.1% use ICT rarely, and 5.6% never use ICTs in their teaching support.

- *SES teachers' perceptions about difficulties in working with students with SEN:* 22% of the participants perceive low difficulty to teach to students with SEN, 61% of the participants perceived moderately difficult, and 16% of the participants perceived high level of difficulty.

- *SES teachers' professional profile:* Participants highlighted several important SES teachers' characteristics for working with students with SEN, including (a) Knowledge of educational inclusion,

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(b) Monitoring student learning progress, (c) Mastering on the use of curricular adaptations, and (d) Articulation with other teachers.

- *SES teachers' personal profile:* Participants highlighted (a) Willingness to work with students with SEN, (b) Patience and discipline, (c) Control of the student's behavior. Informants ratify that (d) Maintaining a good state of mind and (e) emotional self-control are key vital factors to achieve high performance in working with students with SEN.

- *SES teachers' collaboration with regular teachers*: 50% of the informants answered that collaboration occurs very often between SES and regular teachers. 50% answered communication occurs sometimes. Although there is positive collaboration, it persists as a challenge in day-to-day activities.

- *SES teachers' interaction with regular students*: 22% informants answered low interaction, 61.1% of informants responded moderate level, and 16% answered high interaction.

SES require to improve their level of English language knowledge and increment the frequency on the usage of specific methodologies to teach EFL. The most difficult situations mentioned by teachers include controlling students with SEN in the process of aggression toward other classmates and managing their self-regulation. The coordination between SES teachers with regular teachers should be improved. However, the greatest satisfaction comes from seeing the students with SEN progress and their parents' joy in noticing the progress in their children's learning.

SES Teachers' Perceptions about Their Work with Students SEN in EFL Class

In answer to question 2. What are the SES teachers' perceptions about their work with students SEN in EFL class? The research team built the following categorial tree to the analysis of evidence collected with the interviews.

Categorial Tree:

- *Category 1: School activities:* Curricular adaptability and the incorporation of creative educational practices is relevant for fostering a supportive learning environment for SEN students. Barreiro Collazo (2022) empathizes that practices that are manipulatives like game-based activities, and technological resources boosts students' motivation and knowledge acquisition. Such approaches allow future educators to gain the skills needed to create inclusive and adaptive classrooms.

- *Category 2: Emotional management.* Emotional management is crucial for teachers since this influences their ability to create a positive and productive learning environment, as they can recognize students' needs, fostering a supportive atmosphere where students feel understood and valued. This skill is especially fundamental when addressing diverse emotional challenges within the classroom. According to Valente, Veiga-Branco, Rebelo, Lourenço, and Cristóvão (2020), adaptive teachers who are able to recognize and understand emotions can effectively gauge their student' emotional states and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

- *Category 3: English Language Knowledge.* The mastery of the English Language is essential for teachers that are working with SEN students, as it enables them to implement inclusive strategies that foster the development of effective communication skills in their learners. Mendoza Zúñiga (2024) states the importance of programs for SES teachers in order to attend the specific students' needs, such as the use of different approaches like the multisensory approach which uses different channels like visually, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile) to help students learn more effectively.

Subcategories: The subcategories used for the analysis of each category are: High, Medium, and Low.

Evidence	Subcategory
Category 1: SES teachers school activities	

1.	Organizes the classes and its correspondent time.	Low grade: ✓
2.	The support teacher only helps the student when they get frustrated or distracted during school.	High grade: ✓
3.	Helping students with their homework.	Medium grade: ✓
4.	Working with different activities and resources.	High grade: ✓
5.	The most difficult part of the job is establishing rapport.	High grade: ✓
6.	Accompany students to their therapies.	Low grade: ✓
Category 2: SES teachers motional management		
1.	Keeping patience is the most important part for teachers in general.	High grade: ✓
2.	To deal students through assertiveness.	Medium grade: ✓
3.	Engaging students while being participative and collaborative.	Medium grade: ✓
4.	Controlling student's behavior is one of the most challenging parts of being a support teacher.	High grade: ✓
5.	Establishing limits between the teacher-student relationship.	High grade: ✓
Category 3: SES teachers English language knowledge.		
1.	The support teacher only has knowledge from the most basic topics in English language.	High grade: ✓
2.	With the lack of knowledge, the teacher helps the student though internet searching.	Medium grade: ✓
3.	Despite the little knowledge from the support teacher, the student domains the subject in an easier way.	Medium grade: ✓

Table 2: SES teachers' perceptions about their work with students in EFL class (Source: Interview to Special Educations Support Teachers 2024)

For category 1. School activities: The evidence shows that the most difficult challenges that supportive teacher do are: (1) managing student emotions and behaviors, (2) helping student during frustration, or (3) working with multiple resources at the same time. The results highlight the needs for strength the Special Educations Support Teachers' profile in techniques for improving students' emotional regulation, behavior management, and adaptability to changes.

On the other hand, logistical or routine tasks, such as organizing classes and accompanying students to therapy, are seen as low difficult. It suggests that such kind of responsibilities are well executed as part of teachers' common tasks. In addition, homework assistance is rated in the middle, balancing between the complexion, structured nature of the activity, and the need for individualized academic support.

For category 2: SES Emotional management: Special Educations Support Teachers rated keeping patience as the most important and difficult aspect of their role, indicating that emotional control and resilience are essential when managing student behavior, particularly in stressful situations. Dealing with students and engaging them in a participative and collaborative manner were rated as medium difficulty, suggesting that while these skills are challenging, they are more manageable with experience and training. Overall, the analysis highlights the critical role of emotional regulation and effective communication in fostering a positive and productive learning environment.

This category states that Special Educations Support Teachers find the most challenging aspects of their role to be controlling student behavior, and setting boundaries in teacher-student relationships, all rated as high difficulty. These tasks require strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, which formal training may not fully address. However, they find their preparation through seminars and experience to be relatively easy, indicating confidence in their formal training but a need for additional support in managing the relational and behavioral complexities of the job.

For category 3: ESE English language Knowledge: Special Educations Support Teachers rated their basic knowledge of English as a high difficulty, indicating that limited language proficiency poses a significant challenge. However, they manage by using resources like internet searches, which they find moderately difficult. Despite their limited English skills, students tend to understand the subject more easily, which is rated as medium difficulty, suggesting that students may have a better domain of the subject even with minimal

assistance from the support teacher. This still doesn't exclude the need for improved English proficiency among teachers to better support student learning.

Teaching Strengths and Weaknesses in A Group of Special Education Support Teachers Centered on English as A Foreign Language (EFL)

In answer to question 3.- What are the challenges to the SES teachers. Table 3 shows SES teachers' weakness and strength for the work with SEN students.

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Category 1. SES teachers' frequent functions										
1.1 Accompanies the student in the classroom.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
1.2 Explains each activity to be performed.	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%	0%
1.3 Helps to carry out the established activities.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	24%	0%	0%	25%	50%
1.4 Assessors to students	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	50%	25%
Category 2. SES teachers' knowledge of the English language										
2.1 She is fluent in the language and explains the topics fluently.	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2.2 Applies correct vocabulary when interacting with the student.	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2.3 Has a correct pronunciation of the words.	0%	25%	50%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2.4 Uses correct grammatical structure when speaking.	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Category 3. SES teachers' adaptability of the student's needs										
3.1 Uses diverse didactic materials in classes.	0%	0%	50%	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%
3.2 Applies technologies to facilitate learning.	25%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	0%	25%	0%
3.3 Uses different teaching strategies and methods.	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%
Category 4. Teachers' ability to create a friendly environment										
4.1 Executes collaborative work in conjunction with the teacher.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
4.2 Encourages collaborative work among peers.	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%
4.3 Has a well-equipped classroom.	0%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Category 5. SES Teachers' emotional control										
5.1 SES teachers show a pleasant behavior for the student.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
5.2 Shows appropriate mood when teaching.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	25%	25%
5.3 Correctly manages emotions (stress, frustration).	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%
Category 6. SES Teachers' planification ability										
6.1 Demonstrates planned works.	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%
6.2 There is previous communication with the main teacher to know the topics of the class beforehand.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	25%	25%
6.3. Employs one or several planning approaches (PPP, TTT, PDP, ECRIF).	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Category 7. SES teachers' communication Styles										
7.1 Demonstrates assertive communication (clear and honest, mutual respect, empathy, active listening).	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	50%	25%
7.2 Demonstrates dictatorial communication (absolute control, monologue).	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%
7.3 Demonstrates democratic communication (Participation, open discussion, shared responsibility).	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	50%	25%	0%	0%
7.4 Demonstrates passive communication	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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(conflict avoidance, lack of authority).									
7.5 Demonstrates passive-aggressive communication (indirect, sarcastic and cynical).	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 3: SES teachers' weakness and strength for the work with SEN students (Source: SES teachers)

- **For category 1. SES teachers' intervention**- The support teacher accompanies the student in the classroom with total regularity, handling the student the most performed activity. However, it can be noted that when explaining the activities to be performed, her participation in the classroom is moderate. On the other hand, she is present when helping to execute the established activities.

- **For category 2. SES teachers' knowledge of the English language**- During the observation, it was possible to note the lack of knowledge regarding the English language due to the poor fluency during the classes, the lack of a correct application of vocabulary, poor pronunciation of words, and poor mastery of grammatical structures when communicating.

- **For category 3. SES teachers' adaptability of the student's needs**- It was observed that most of them do not use diverse didactic materials, except for one support teacher. Regarding the application of technologies, there is a dispersion in the responses, but for the most part, the Special Educations Support Teachers use them sparingly. However, there is not an extensive list of activities to perform during class in relation to the topic explained, with one exception among the teachers.

- **For category 4. SES Teachers' ability to create a friendly environment**- According to what has been previously seen, the Special Educations Support Teachers use collaborative work together with the main teacher, with a high degree of communication. However, there is a dispersion when it comes to students, finding a high degree of communication from two SES teachers, one moderate and one low. It was also noted that, for the most part, the classroom is not adapted for all types of students with special educational needs.

- **For category 5. SES Teachers' emotional control**- SES teachers or Shadow teachers demonstrate pleasant behavior toward students, as well as being motivated and managing their emotions correctly when interacting with students, including moments of stress and frustration.

- **For category 6. SES Teachers' planification ability**- When working with new subjects, the shadow teachers are concerned about the contents to be studied, and communication with the teacher is a fundamental part of this. However, they do not present an adequate planning for the English class, since in the rest of the subjects they do not use the same planning approaches.

- **For category 7. SES teachers' communication Styles**- The predominant communication style among the shadow teachers is assertive and democratic, being clear about their instructions, as well as honest, without omitting mutual respect, empathy towards the students and provides active listening, in addition there is an open discussion and shared responsibility. There is a case of dictatorial communication, where the shadow teacher has absolute control of the student because of the disability presented.

4. Discussion

The research conducted allows authors to declare that the role of special education Support Teachers ratifies the position of Martínez López (2021) remarks the SES teachers' lack in foreign language teaching. The authors agree with the position of Castañón Rodríguez et al. (2022) concerning the lack of confidence and meaningful dialogue between the SES teachers and students having SEN influence directly to student motivation for learning, cognitive development, and comprehension of school activities. The authors remark that suggestive communication from teachers to students is a vital factor in motivating the teaching and learning process.

The authors also found a coincidence with the work of Polo Márquez et al. (2022), concerning the limited number of studies centered on the SES teachers, official data ability, and their contributions towards inclusive education. In addition, authors find harmony with the work of Escarbajal et al. (2023) when referring to the

multifaceted nature of the SES teachers' roles. Besides, they argue that the work of SES teachers with students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) requires deeper training considering the similarities in the levels of delay of communication function, social development, and emotional engagement.

Furthermore, the authors agree with Malo Gracia et al. (2024) that inclusive education requires a comprehensive approach that considers the physical integration of students with disabilities and their active participation in the learning process. However, the results emerging from the research, authors state that SES Teachers play a crucial role in assisting learners diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and motor disabilities. Thus, data collected shows that that 61.1% of participants reported moderate difficulty in student interaction, suggesting that, although there are efforts by SES Teachers, significant barriers to inclusive education persist in the educational communities which limits the total inclusion of students with SEN. The finding shows that it is essential to improve the training of SES teachers and encourage the use of diversified pedagogical strategies according to the individual needs of students. Finally, the authors agree with Nallib (2024) concerning the lack of legal labor situation for SES teachers. In such a condition, it is necessary to value the contribution of professionals who work for students to reach their potential in an equitable educational environment.

The challenges for SES teachers in English classrooms are diverse and cover several critical areas, according to the results obtained. Regarding support activities, the greatest difficulty lies in managing students' emotions and behaviors, as well as assisting them during moments of frustration. Special Educations Support Teachers need to develop specialized skills in emotional regulation and behavior management, in addition to being flexible enough to adapt to different resources and activities. More logistical tasks, such as organizing classes or accompanying students to therapies, are not perceived as difficult, suggesting that routine responsibilities are within their usual capabilities. Concerning emotional intelligence, maintaining patience is considered crucial and one of the most challenging aspects of the job, particularly in stressful situations involving behavior control. It is also difficult to establish clear boundaries in the teacher-student relationship, which requires strong interpersonal skills not fully addressed in professional training. Concerning English language knowledge, support teachers acknowledge their limited proficiency in the language, which hinders their ability to teach the content effectively. They often rely on internet searches to compensate for this gap, although students seem to handle the subject more easily. This highlights the need to improve teachers' language proficiency to offer better support. Finally, regarding professional training, many SES teachers did not receive specific formal preparation for their role, adding another layer of difficulty to their work. Although some feel competent thanks to seminars and prior experiences, the lack of solid and specific training in areas such as English teaching and the management of special educational needs remains a significant challenge.

The support teacher's intervention in the inclusion and integration of students with special educational needs in the English class varies in its effectiveness due to factors such as the level of language proficiency, the adaptation to the environment, and the employed communication styles. Although their participation is constant, in most cases it is limited to supervising the student, with moderate intervention during explanations. Lack of fluency and adequate English proficiency negatively impact their ability to support language learning, and lack of diversity in teaching materials and insufficient adaptation of the learning environment restrict academic inclusion. Although they maintain effective communication with the teacher and manage their emotions well, facilitating an emotionally positive environment, interaction with students is inconsistent. Despite their professionalism, the lack of adequate planning of English instruction and the occasional presence of more restrictive communication styles limit integration. To sum up, their work is crucial for emotional inclusion, but effective academic integration requires language training, greater diversification of resources, and better planning of English instruction.

What is the level of training that Special Educations Support Teachers have in working with English students with SEN?

SES teachers have a limited English level, with 72.2% showing a basic level, 22% an intermediate level, and 5.6% with no knowledge of the language, which shows significant difficulties in teaching English effectively. In

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addition, the use of ICT is low, with 61.1% using it only occasionally. Teachers acknowledge that they rely on the Internet to supplement their lack of English proficiency, which confirms the difficulties observed in their use of didactic resources, which are traditional and lack innovation, such as flashcards and pictograms. This shows that, although they strive to support students, their capacity is restricted by both their level of English and the lack of technological tools.

What are the challenges faced by Special Educations Support Teachers in English classrooms?

SES teachers face significant challenges in emotional and behavioral management, in addition to their limited English proficiency. Most of them consider working with SEN students to be of moderate difficulty, although lack of coordination with other teachers and dealing with aggression are key obstacles. The interviews confirm that teachers face interpersonal difficulties and rely on their patience to adapt, which aligns with the difficulties observed in classroom behavior management. To sum up, the main challenges are in emotional regulation and collaboration with the teaching team, aspects that complicate their work.

How does the intervention of shadow teachers contribute to the inclusion and integration of students with SEN in the English class?

SES teachers are essential for the emotional inclusion of students with SEN, but their lack of English proficiency and insufficient environmental adaptation limit their contribution to academic integration. Although collaboration with tenured teachers is positive, it is inconsistent and does not always facilitate full integration in language learning. In daily practice, it is observed that female teachers focus more on regulating emotions than on supporting English learning. Thus, their emotional intervention is valuable but is limited by a lack of language training and effective accommodation within the classroom.

An unexpected finding was the disagreement surrounding the terms in the Spanish language -*Profesores de Apoyo or Profesores Sombra*- Special Educations Support Teachers or Shadow Teachers- as some educators believe this role should be more specific and specialized rather than an extension of general special education. To improve the current situation, researchers suggest introducing innovations into the current training programs for SES Teachers in areas such as English as a Foreign Language instruction considering that the educational policy states that every student should approve the subjects related to foreign language. Additionally, fostering collaboration between SES Teachers and EFL teachers is essential to create a more inclusive learning environment and responsibility sharing.

It becomes clear that SES teachers or shadow teachers are essential to increase inclusion for students having SEN. However, there are still considerable obstacles to resolve such as expanding research on the contribution of these professionals, improving communication between teachers and students, SES teacher's Laboral framework, and collaboration with regular instructors since the collective and shared responsibility.

5. Conclusion

Based on the literature review and the data analysis, authors declare 100% achievement of this research aims: This work aims to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses in a group of Especial Education Support Teachers in the subject English as a Foreign Language. The results show that SES Teachers contribute positively to the educational inclusion process of students under diverse specific educational needs. Their main functions are (1) support students in everyday classroom routines, (2) monitoring the students school advance, (3) coordination school and family, and (4) regulating students' emotional and behavioral responses. It concludes that the lack of specific training for foreign language instruction persists, a situation that limits SES teachers' work on the subject. These findings can be utilized by educational institutions and policymakers to design training programs that address improvement to the SES teachers' training. In addition, the results can be used for curriculum designers, educational administrators or Ecuadorian educational policies stakeholders to propose changes in the recognizing of the contribution of SES teachers. The weakness of the study is the limited by the sample size, which does not allow authors to propose any generalizability of the results. A proposal for future

research would be to explore the impact of specific training programs on the practice of SES Teachers using an important sample. Ultimately, it is crucial to continue researching and improving educational practices to ensure that all students have access to inclusive and quality education.

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