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1 **Abstract**

2 This study presents a context-sensitive, evidence-informed framework for inclusive English for
3 Academic Purposes (EAP) in Higher Education (HE), developed through a rigorous, multi-
4 method research design. In response to persistent gaps in how inclusivity is conceptualised and
5 implemented in EAP settings, the study integrates data from a qualitative survey, co-
6 production focus groups, and a systematic literature review using Best Fit Framework
7 Synthesis. Findings reveal that meaningful inclusivity in EAP requires coordinated action across
8 three systemic levels: micro (individual practices), meso (departmental structures), and macro
9 (institutional policies). At the micro level, inclusive pedagogy is achieved through differentiated
10 instruction, culturally responsive teaching, equitable assessment, and reflective practice. The
11 meso level emphasises the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, curriculum
12 decolonisation, and staff development, while the macro level underscores the need for
13 institutional commitment to equity, linguistic justice, and multilingual policy. The resulting
14 framework is both practically applicable and adaptable, offering a strategic model for
15 embedding inclusivity into EAP instruction and aligning it with broader social justice goals. By
16 bridging theory and practice, the study contributes to the under-researched area of EAP
17 inclusivity and repositions EAP not as a neutral support function, but as a transformative site
18 for advancing equity and decolonial pedagogy in higher education. The findings offer concrete
19 recommendations for educators, programme leads, and policymakers committed to creating
20 equitable academic environments for linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

21

22 **Keywords:** Inclusive Teaching Practices; English for Academic Purposes (EAP); Higher Education
23 (HE); Recommendations for Practice

24 Introduction

25 Framing the Study: Context, Rationale & Literature Review

26 Social justice is a complex and evolving construct, closely associated with principles of human
27 rights, equity, and fairness (Bates, 2007; **Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017; Zembylas, 2018; North,**
28 **2019**). At its heart lies the pursuit of equality, which underpins democratic societies and
29 demands the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and recognition (Singh, 2011).
30 Higher education (HE) occupies a critical position in this context, serving both as a mirror of
31 existing societal inequalities and a site for their potential redress. Educational institutions are
32 thus not only shaped by social structures but are also capable of shaping them. Pedagogical
33 practices that foreground inclusion and equity are, therefore, essential to this transformative
34 role (Osman et al., 2018).

35 The concept of inclusion within HE has gained increasing prominence, recognised as both an
36 ethical imperative and an indicator of institutional excellence (Baltaru, 2020). Initially
37 associated with accessibility and the support of students with disabilities (Fuller et al., 2004;
38 Riddell et al., 2007), inclusion is now more broadly conceptualised **to encompass diversity in**
39 **culture, language, socioeconomic status, gender identity, and other intersecting dimensions**
40 **(Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2018; Ainscow, 2020)**, as a systemic process aimed at
41 ensuring full participation and academic success for all learners (Opertti & Zhang, 2014;
42 Messiou, 2017; Pasha & Dei, 2017). This shift acknowledges that educational barriers extend
43 beyond physical or cognitive impairments to include socio-economic marginalisation, linguistic
44 disadvantage, and cultural exclusion (Devlin et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Inclusive

45 approaches are increasingly seen as beneficial not only for social equity but also for enhancing
46 institutional performance and innovation through diversity (UNESCO, 2020).

47 In parallel, inclusive teaching has emerged as a central strategy for addressing these barriers
48 in HE. Inclusive pedagogy moves beyond accommodation, aiming instead to proactively design
49 learning environments that anticipate and respond to diverse needs (Equality Challenge Unit,
50 2013). Evidence demonstrates that such approaches improve student engagement, retention,
51 and attainment (Thomas, 2012; Dewsbury & Brame, 2019; Valdez & Kelp, 2023; Morgan,
52 2024). **Nevertheless, in practice inclusive teaching may often be unevenly implemented**, in part
53 due to inconsistencies in how it is defined and operationalised within institutional policy and
54 practice (Hockings, 2010; Ainscow, 2020).

55 Some institutions adopt a narrow view, framing inclusion primarily in terms of compliance with
56 disability legislation and focusing on accommodations for individual students (e.g., extended
57 time or accessible formats). Others take a broader, more proactive stance, defining inclusive
58 teaching as a pedagogical commitment to equity and justice that addresses structural
59 inequalities related to race, gender, language, and socioeconomic background (Hockings,
60 2010; Schuelka et al., 2019). Operationally, this can range from ad hoc support services to the
61 systematic embedding of inclusive principles in curriculum design, assessment, and staff
62 development. These varying interpretations can result in uneven application of inclusive
63 practices both within and across institutions.

64 Recent empirical research has begun to examine the intersection of inclusive pedagogy and
65 English for Academic Purposes (EAP), revealing a number of persistent tensions. For instance,
66 Liyanage and Bartlett (2010) explore how EAP instruction can unintentionally reinforce

67 Western academic norms, marginalising students from linguistically and culturally diverse
68 backgrounds. Wingate and Tribble (2012) highlight the challenge of aligning inclusive language
69 development with disciplinary expectations, particularly in contexts where EAP is delivered in
70 isolation from subject teaching.

71 These inconsistencies are particularly salient in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), a field
72 dedicated to supporting students' academic literacy development, particularly those from
73 international or linguistically diverse backgrounds. While EAP is positioned as a crucial support
74 structure within HE, research suggests that it often fails to account for the complexities of
75 students' linguistic and cultural identities, **reinforcing deficit narratives and privileging**
76 **normative models of academic English** (Hyland, 2006; Wingate, 2015; Benesch, 2001). Such
77 approaches often overlook the socio-political dimensions of language use, and the diverse
78 linguistic repertoires students bring to academic settings. While the broader TESOL field has
79 long engaged with issues of structural inequity and power dynamics (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999;
80 Holliday, 1994), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has been slower to confront its own
81 complicity in reproducing normative assumptions about language, identity, and academic
82 legitimacy. **There thus** remains a significant gap in research that explores how inclusive
83 teaching can be effectively enacted in EAP contexts (Mortenson, 2021; 2022).

84 More recently, studies such as those by Kormos and Nijakowska (2017) and Tai et al. (2022)
85 have examined how inclusive teaching principles are (or are not) embedded into EAP practices,
86 raising concerns about assessment fairness, linguistic bias, and the need for pedagogical
87 frameworks that reflect the multilingual realities of student populations. Despite these
88 contributions, there remains a lack of cohesive guidance on how inclusive EAP should be

89 defined, implemented, and supported at an institutional level - a gap this study seeks to
90 address.

91 Conceptualisations and operationalisation of inclusivity in EAP must therefore extend beyond
92 individualised support to include structural change. Scholars have argued for a re-examination
93 of EAP curriculum design, assessment practices, and institutional language policies to address
94 embedded inequalities (García & Li Wei, 2014; Holliday, 2020; Holliday & Amadasi, 2022).
95 Inclusivity should be viewed not as a static endpoint but as a continuous, reflective process of
96 transformation, requiring engagement with wider issues of linguistic imperialism, epistemic
97 injustice, and power relations in knowledge production (Phillipson, 1992; Mizumura, 2015;
98 Krischler et al., 2019; Ainscow, 2020). Recent critical and decolonial perspectives have further
99 challenged the assumption that academic English is neutral or universal, highlighting how EAP
100 often marginalises multilingual students by positioning their language practices as deficient
101 (Canagarajah, 1999; Ortega, 2019; Li & Garcia, 2022). Accordingly, inclusive EAP pedagogy
102 must critically interrogate its own foundations to foster a more just and equitable learning
103 environment.

104 **Positioning the Study: Scope, Aims & Overview**

105 Considering the tensions and gaps identified in the literature, this BALEAP-funded research
106 project, *“Exploring Inclusive Teaching Practices of English for Academic Purposes in Higher*
107 *Education,”* seeks to provide a structured and evidence-based response (Bakogiannis &
108 Papavasiliou, 2023). It aims to examine how inclusivity is currently understood, enacted, and
109 experienced in EAP teaching contexts, and to develop a practical framework for more equitable
110 pedagogical practice. The project recognises that inclusivity must be systematically integrated

111 at multiple levels - curriculum, pedagogy, and policy - if EAP is to fulfil its role in fostering
112 academic success for all students.

113 The study draws on a multi-method, multi-phase approach, incorporating insights from a range
114 of key stakeholders - including EAP practitioners, subject tutors, course, and program leads,
115 learning developers, academic skills advisors, and institutional coordinators - and is grounded
116 in the belief that inclusive EAP teaching must not only respond to student diversity, but actively
117 interrogate and transform the structures that perpetuate inequity (Bakogiannis, 2025a). By
118 bridging theoretical insights from social justice, critical pedagogy, and decolonial perspectives
119 with empirical data from HE contexts, the project contributes to a growing body of scholarship
120 that calls for systemic change in academic literacy education (Bakogiannis, 2024).

121 Ultimately, this paper - the final output of the project - aims to present a set of concrete,
122 actionable recommendations for inclusive EAP pedagogy. It seeks to support educators,
123 institutional leaders, and policymakers in developing teaching strategies and institutional
124 practices that are informed by research, grounded in equity, and responsive to the evolving
125 needs of a diverse student population. In doing so, the study aspires to advance the role of EAP
126 not merely as a support mechanism, but as a transformative space within HE that fosters
127 genuine educational inclusion and social justice.

128 **Methods**

129 **Structuring the Study: Design & Process**

130 This study employed a comprehensive, multi-phased qualitative research design, integrating
131 theoretical and empirical evidence to develop a robust framework for inclusive teaching

132 practices in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within higher education (Bakogiannis &
133 Papavasiliou, 2023; Bakogiannis, 2025a). The research process unfolded in two primary
134 empirical phases (Phase I and Phase II), **complemented by a systematic review of existing**
135 **literature (Phase III). This paper presents a summary of the methods employed across the three**
136 **phases of the study, focusing on the key elements necessary to understand the overall**
137 **research design and progression.** Comprehensive accounts of the study design, sampling and
138 recruitment strategies, data collection and preparation processes, analytical procedures, and
139 ethical considerations for Phases I and II are provided in the published study protocol
140 (Bakogiannis & Papavasiliou, 2023). Detailed information regarding the design, search strategy,
141 inclusion and exclusion criteria, study selection, critical appraisal, data extraction, and
142 synthesis for Phase III can be found in the systematic review protocol, registered with the
143 International Database of Education Systematic Reviews (IDESR) (Bakogiannis & Papavasiliou,
144 2024). **A detailed summary of the multi-phased methodology is presented in Table 1, outlining**
145 **key information for each phase, including study aims, design, settings, participant**
146 **characteristics, sampling and recruitment methods, data collection tools and procedures,**
147 **analysis techniques, and key findings in bullet-point form, to support transparency and clarity.**
148 **A concise summary of the methodology of each phase is provided below:**

149 **Phase I: Online Qualitative Survey**

150 In the first phase, a self-administered online qualitative survey was designed and distributed
151 to EAP practitioners working in higher education institutions. This survey sought to explore
152 perspectives, attitudes, and experiences regarding inclusive teaching, capturing detailed
153 insights into how inclusivity is conceptualised, the benefits and challenges associated with
154 implementing inclusive pedagogy, and the practical strategies educators currently employ.

155 Given the study's emphasis on depth over breadth, the survey was structured with open-ended
156 questions, allowing respondents to articulate their views in their own words. This qualitative
157 approach facilitated the collection of rich, nuanced data, avoiding the constraints of pre-
158 determined response categories. Participants were recruited via the BALEAP JISC mailing list,
159 employing a convenience and snowball sampling strategy to ensure representation from a
160 diverse range of EAP professionals. Data were exported to Microsoft Excel to provide a visual
161 summary of the dataset, facilitating the identification of commonalities, differences, and
162 emerging patterns. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, beginning with
163 deductive coding based on the structure of the survey questions to identify overarching
164 themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). This was followed by iterative, inductive coding involving
165 repeated readings of the dataset to refine the coding framework and uncover emergent
166 themes, sub-themes, and contrasting viewpoints. To enhance trustworthiness and
167 transparency, an audit trail was maintained throughout the analytic process, and the COREQ
168 checklist (Tong et al., 2007) was used to guide comprehensive and explicit reporting.

169 *Phase II: Co-production Focus Groups*

170 Building on the insights generated from the survey, the second phase of the study involved co-
171 production focus groups, which aimed to refine and expand upon the initial findings through
172 collective discussion and knowledge exchange. The design integrated the nominal group
173 technique, which captured a wide range of individual perspectives on inclusive pedagogy, with
174 co-production focus groups, which harnessed the collective dynamic to validate, deepen, and
175 extend these initial insights (Harvey et al., 2012; Varga-Atkins et al., 2015). This layered
176 approach allowed the study to progress from individual reflection to collaborative discussion,
177 fostering a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices. Building upon

178 themes identified through the initial survey, two online co-production focus groups were
179 conducted via MS Teams. Each group comprised six to eight participants purposively selected
180 from the original survey respondents to ensure broad and diverse stakeholder representation.
181 This diversity was vital in reflecting the multifaceted nature of inclusive EAP instruction,
182 encompassing pedagogical, administrative, and structural dimensions. The focus groups
183 followed a semi-structured facilitation guide, which encouraged participants to validate and
184 critique survey findings, share challenges, and best practices, and explore strategies for
185 embedding inclusive pedagogy into EAP curricula across institutional levels. These sessions
186 were video recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. An
187 iterative, inductive thematic content analysis was then carried out on the transcripts, ensuring
188 that the emerging perspectives were systematically categorised and synthesised in alignment
189 with the study's participatory and exploratory ethos (Terry et al., 2017).

190 *Phase III: Systematic Literature Review*

191 To complement the empirical findings (Bakogiannis, 2025a), a systematic review of existing
192 literature was undertaken to identify, document, and evaluate best practices and theoretical
193 models that inform inclusive EAP instruction. This process followed the Preferred Reporting
194 Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009),
195 ensuring methodological rigor and transparency. The review employed a comprehensive
196 search strategy across multiple academic databases, including Education Research Complete,
197 Education Research Information Centre (ERIC) and Web of Science, and grey literature sources,
198 retrieved through the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) Electronic Library and the Data
199 Archiving and Network Services (DANS) EASY. The review was designed to capture literature
200 that provided insights into inclusive pedagogical strategies, theoretical frameworks, and

201 institutional policies relevant to EAP instruction. Studies were included based on specific
202 inclusion criteria, prioritising peer-reviewed empirical research, theoretical models, and policy
203 reports published in English after 1994, a benchmark year when inclusion in higher education
204 became a significant global agenda. The Gough Weight of Evidence framework was used to
205 critically appraise the studies included in the review (Gough, 2007), ensuring that the
206 recommendations drawn from the literature were based on methodologically sound and
207 contextually relevant evidence. By synthesising the findings through narrative synthesis (Popay
208 et al., 2006), the study was able to identify common themes, best practices, and gaps in existing
209 research. This allowed for a structured comparison between what was already known in the
210 literature and the novel insights generated from the empirical research phases.

211 Table 1: Overview of Study Phases

Phase	Aim	Research Question(s)	Study Design	Study Setting	Study Participants	Sampling	Recruitment	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis	Key Findings
Phase I ¹	To explore barriers to and strategies for inclusive teaching practices in EAP within higher education contexts.	What are the barriers to inclusive teaching in EAP? What strategies / approaches can promote inclusive EAP practices?	Exploratory Qualitative Survey-based Study	Online International (primarily UK) ²	Twenty-three (n=23) EAP practitioners from a range of roles (e.g., subject tutors, programme leads, learning developers, skills advisors) across 15 institutions in 4 countries	Non-probability convenience sampling	Recruited via BALEAP JISC mail list	Online qualitative questionnaire with open-ended questions via Microsoft Forms Designed to take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete, depending on the depth of participants' responses Questions were designed to elicit in-depth insights into conceptualisations of inclusion, perceived barriers, implementation strategies, and practitioner roles and attributes ³	Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes through iterative coding. Initial deductive coding, aligned with the survey questions, was followed by inductive refinement to capture emergent insights. An audit trail and the COREQ checklist were used to ensure rigour and transparency	Barriers: Lack of awareness / training, prescriptive delivery, limited diversity consideration, high course costs, time constraints. Approaches: Inclusive curriculum, equality & diversity, personalised learning, autonomy, differentiated instruction ⁵ , culturally responsive teaching, reflective practice.
Phase II ¹	To explore stakeholder-informed	What strategies, approaches,	Sequential Exploratory Qualitative	Online International	Twelve (n=12) EAP practitioners	Non-probability	Selected from Phase I	Two 90-minute online workshops	Thematic analysis using an inductive, data-	Micro: Needs analysis, differentiated

	approaches to inclusive EAP teaching.	or practices can be used to promote inclusive teaching in the classroom?	Study using Nominal Group Technique and Co-production Focus Groups ⁴	(primarily UK) ²	from diverse roles (e.g., subject tutors, programme leads, learning developers, skills advisors) and experiences	purposive sampling	survey participants	conducted via MS Teams First, the Nominal Group Technique was employed to gather individual written responses to key questions, followed by participant-led prioritisation of ideas. Second, Focus Group Discussions were conducted to explore, validate, and elaborate on these responses through facilitated dialogue and collaborative co-production. A structured focus group guide was developed and used to ensure consistency across sessions,	driven approach. Transcripts were open-coded, and codes were iteratively grouped into themes through constant comparison. An audit trail and the COREQ checklist were used to ensure transparency and rigour.	briefs, challenging stereotypes, reflexivity Meso: Decolonising curriculum, embedding EAP into disciplines, collaboration with subject tutors, CPD investment Macro: Providing time/resources, top-down collaboration, EDI/social justice initiatives
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								facilitate in-depth discussion, and align the dialogue with the study aims ³		
Phase III	To identify recommended approaches for fostering inclusivity in the EAP classroom and examine the theoretical frameworks that inform inclusive EAP teaching.	What are the recommended approaches for promoting inclusivity in the EAP classroom within higher education? What theoretical frameworks inform inclusive practices of EAP in higher education settings?	Systematic Review	International (literature from multiple international contexts)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Searches across 5 academic databases (ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, Education Research Complete, British Education Index) Grey literature included Search terms combined “EAP,” “inclusive teaching,” “higher education,” and “pedagogy”	Narrative synthesis incorporating thematic coding to identify patterns across diverse study designs. Relationships between themes were explored through iterative comparison. The Gough Weight of Evidence framework was applied to assess methodological quality, relevance, and contribution, ensuring rigour and transparency in	Inclusive approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive curriculum design • Culturally responsive / social justice pedagogy • Equitable assessment / language support • Intercultural communication and campus climate • Decolonial and multilingual practices Frameworks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural competence • Culturally responsive pedagogy • Critical pedagogy • Translingual /

										the synthesis process.	decolonial theory • Needs-based / contextualised learning
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213 ¹ Ethical approval for Phases I and II was obtained from the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Law Research Ethics Committee at Teesside University, UK
 214 (Reference No: 7080, March 2022). Both phases adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, in
 215 accordance with institutional and disciplinary ethical guidelines. Participants were informed of the study's aims, procedures, and their rights prior to participation, and
 216 provided informed consent in line with institutional ethical standards

217 ² Participants were drawn from diverse institutional contexts, ensuring a range of perspectives reflective of contemporary EAP settings in the UK and beyond.

218 ³ The survey questionnaire and the focus group guide were developed based on a review of current literature on inclusive education and were informally piloted to
 219 ensure clarity and alignment with the study's aims.

220 ⁴ Unlike traditional focus group interviews, the co-production focus groups followed a participatory model, using collaborative dialogue to jointly construct and prioritise
 221 inclusive teaching strategies.

222 ⁵ Differentiated instruction is a pedagogical approach that adapts teaching methods, materials, and assessments to meet the diverse needs, backgrounds, and learning
 223 preferences of students, particularly those marginalised by linguistic, cultural, or cognitive differences. It promotes flexibility in curriculum design to ensure equitable
 224 access and engagement, recognising diversity as a strength and responding through planned variation in content, process, and product (Tomlinson, 2014)."

225 Constructing the Framework: Evidence Synthesis & Integration

226 To synthesise and integrate findings across all phases of this multi-stage study, an adaptation
227 of the Best Fit Framework Synthesis (BFFS) method was employed (Carroll et al., 2013). This
228 approach was selected for its ability to - pragmatically and systematically - integrate existing
229 theoretical evidence with new qualitative evidence, thereby producing a coherent, context-
230 sensitive framework of actionable recommendations. Unlike purely inductive methods, BFFS
231 combines both deductive coding against a predefined (a priori) framework and inductive
232 thematic analysis to incorporate emerging insights, making it ideally suited to complex, policy-
233 relevant research questions such as those surrounding inclusive EAP instruction in HE.

234 The BFFS approach - harnessing the established strengths of both framework synthesis and
235 thematic synthesis (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009) - begins with identifying or developing a
236 framework grounded in existing theory or models relevant to the phenomenon under study
237 (Carroll et al., 2013). In this study, the approach was slightly adapted; instead of using existing
238 theory, the framework was initially structured around three overarching systemic levels - micro
239 (individual/practitioner level), meso (departmental/programme level), and macro

240 (institutional/structural level) - as these levels consistently emerged during Phase II focus group
241 analysis as key loci for systemic change (Bakogiannis et al., 2024). These domains served as
242 guiding pillars to anchor and organise the synthesis, within which both theoretical evidence
243 from the systematic review and empirical evidence from the primary research was integrated.

244 The method has been effectively applied in a range of settings, particularly in public health and
245 education, where timely, theory-informed evidence synthesis is needed to guide policy and
246 practice (Carroll et al., 2013). Its strength lies in balancing the interpretive richness of
247 qualitative data with the systematic transparency of framework synthesis, making it especially
248 useful for generating conceptual models or frameworks that are both rigorous and applicable
249 to real-world contexts.

250 The rationale for employing BFFS in this study rests on its capacity to manage the diverse and
251 layered data generated across three phases - from individual qualitative survey responses to
252 co-production focus groups, to a systematic qualitative evidence review. This integrative
253 method allowed the research team to map recurrent and emerging themes from all phases of
254 data collection, ensuring that both the confirmatory and novel insights were systematically
255 accounted for in the resulting framework. The deductive aspect allowed alignment with
256 established domains of systemic educational change, while the inductive component ensured
257 responsiveness to stakeholder perspectives and contextual nuances identified in the empirical
258 and theoretical evidence.

259 **To construct the framework, the findings from each phase - survey (Phase I), co-production**
260 **focus groups (Phase II), and the systematic review (Phase III) - were first analysed separately**
261 **to identify key inclusive teaching practices. Each dataset was coded using a consistent thematic**

262 structure that included both a priori categories and emergent codes, facilitating cross-phase
263 comparability. The synthesis process began by mapping all data from Phases I–III against the
264 three overarching themes (micro, meso, and macro), which were informed by both the
265 project’s theoretical framing and the nature of the data itself. **Insights from each phase were**
266 **then cross-referenced within these levels to identify convergences (i.e., practices that**
267 **appeared across two or more phases) and divergences (i.e., unique practices or tensions**
268 **identified in only one phase).**

269 Within each of these domains, sub-themes were generated to reflect both recurrent patterns
270 across phases and newly identified insights that had not been captured in earlier analyses. For
271 instance, at the micro level, themes included practitioner reflexivity, differentiated
272 instructional design, and inclusive feedback practices. **By layering findings in this way, the**
273 **framework captures both depth and breadth, providing a nuanced picture of inclusive EAP**
274 **practice that reflects stakeholder perspectives, practitioner insight, and established literature.**

275 In this way, the BFFS method enabled a layered and integrative approach to evidence synthesis,
276 ensuring that all data were accounted for, no relevant finding was excluded, and the final
277 framework provided a holistic, multi-level set of recommendations for embedding inclusive
278 pedagogy within EAP instruction. This structured but flexible approach also ensured analytical
279 transparency, as each stage of the synthesis - from initial framework construction, through
280 iterative coding, to final model development - was systematically documented and open to
281 external scrutiny. Ultimately, the application of Best Fit Framework Synthesis in this study not
282 only ensured a rigorous integration of evidence but also supported the development of a
283 practical, evidence-informed framework for systemic change, relevant to educators,
284 programme leaders, and institutional policymakers.

285 **Safeguarding the Study: Ethical Approval & Oversight**

286 Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Ethical approval was
287 obtained from the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Law Research Ethics Committee
288 at Teesside University, UK. All participants provided informed consent before engaging in the
289 study, and confidentiality was maintained through secure data storage and anonymisation
290 procedures. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage, and every effort was made to
291 ensure that the study upheld the highest ethical standards in qualitative research.

292 **Results**

293 The findings of this study present a structured and multi-dimensional approach to fostering
294 inclusive teaching practices of EAP in HE. The recommendations operate across three levels:
295 micro, which focuses on individual instructional strategies; meso, which encompasses
296 departmental and faculty-wide initiatives; and macro, which deals with institutional policies
297 and systemic support. This section provides a detailed exploration of these findings,
298 synthesising the proposed strategies and illustrating their implementation with explicit
299 examples.

300 **Reporting the Study: Micro-Level Strategies & Implementation**

301 At the micro level, as illustrated in Table 2, inclusive teaching begins with differentiated
302 instruction, which ensures that teaching methods and materials are tailored to students'
303 diverse linguistic, cognitive, and cultural needs. This is achieved through the use of scaffolding
304 techniques that allow students to build their understanding progressively, as well as through
305 adaptive technologies such as text-to-speech tools that support students with reading

306 difficulties. Educators who employ differentiated instruction might design tasks with varying
307 difficulty levels, allowing students to engage at a pace and depth that suits their capabilities.
308 For example, in an EAP writing class, an instructor might provide multiple options for
309 completing an assignment - one involving structured sentence frames for those who need
310 additional linguistic support, and another offering more open-ended prompts for advanced
311 learners.

312 Personalised learning and needs analysis further enhance inclusive instruction by centering the
313 learning experience around individual students. A key component of this approach involves
314 conducting diagnostic assessments at the beginning of a course to identify each student's
315 linguistic proficiency, cultural background, and academic aspirations. These assessments are
316 followed by one-on-one meetings where instructors work with students to develop
317 individualised learning plans. By incorporating student feedback loops, these plans can evolve
318 throughout the course, ensuring that students receive the necessary support as their language
319 skills develop. For instance, a student struggling with academic writing conventions may
320 receive additional one-on-one tutoring and customised exercises, while another student
321 requiring support in listening comprehension may be given access to targeted audio resources.

322 Table 2: Micro-Level Strategies & Implementation

Level ¹	Approaches ²	Description/Strategies ³	Actionable Steps ⁴
Micro/Individual	Differentiated Instruction	Tailor methods and materials to students' diverse needs. Use scaffolding, adaptive technologies, and multimodal resources to ensure all students can engage meaningfully.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Design tasks with varying difficulty levels. ● Use multimedia resources (audio, visual, textual). ● Scaffold tasks for step-by-step engagement. ● Pair advanced learners with beginners. ● Incorporate adaptive technologies (e.g., text-to-speech tools). ● Provide optional pathways for assignments. ● Monitor and adjust methods based on student feedback.
	Personalised Learning & Needs Analysis	Conduct comprehensive diagnostics to identify linguistic, cultural, and academic needs. Develop individualised support plans and adaptive tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement initial diagnostic tests and interviews. ● Conduct one-on-one meetings to identify goals. ● Create tailored support plans based on diagnostics. ● Incorporate individual feedback loops. ● Regularly update plans to reflect progress. ● Offer flexible deadlines for assignments. ● Include peer mentoring tailored to student needs.
	Culturally Responsive Teaching	Incorporate cultural and linguistic diversity into content. Use examples relevant to students' backgrounds, fostering identity validation and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use culturally relevant texts and examples. ● Incorporate case studies from diverse cultural contexts. ● Celebrate cultural events or traditions in discussions. ● Engage students in sharing their cultural experiences. ● Adapt assignments to allow multiple cultural perspectives. ● Use inclusive language in teaching materials. ● Address cultural stereotypes directly through discussions.
	Reflective Practice	Encourage continuous self-reflection among educators to challenge biases. Collect student feedback and adapt teaching based on inclusivity metrics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain a teaching journal to reflect on inclusivity. ● Use student feedback surveys regularly. ● Attend workshops on reflective and inclusive teaching. ● Engage in peer observations and discussions. ● Analyse classroom participation patterns for inclusivity. ● Adjust lesson plans to address identified gaps. ● Discuss inclusivity goals with colleagues for accountability.

	Supportive Classroom Environment	Build safe, inclusive spaces that foster open dialogue, respect, and belonging. Use trauma-informed practices and flexible participation structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and communicate clear classroom norms for respect. • Use structured, low-stakes interaction early in the course (e.g., collaborative tasks, reflective sharing, or purpose-driven dialogue) to foster trust • Encourage anonymous feedback to identify barriers. • Provide varied participation options (e.g., written, verbal). • Avoid high-stakes public critiques. • Incorporate well-being check-ins at intervals. • Use inclusive seating arrangements and collaborative spaces.
	Equitable Assessment	Design fair assessments that account for multilingual and cultural backgrounds. Use open-ended tasks, portfolios, and iterative feedback processes to reduce bias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use multiple assessment formats (e.g., written, oral, digital). • Include opportunities for self-assessment. • Develop rubrics that value process over perfection. • Provide drafts and allow resubmissions. • Use group projects to promote collaborative learning. • Train graders on inclusive evaluation practices. • Collect student input on assessment fairness.
	Task-Based and Discipline-Specific Learning	Develop tasks and content specific to students' academic disciplines, ensuring practical application and alignment with professional goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with subject tutors to align EAP tasks with disciplinary needs. • Use real-world problems from students' fields for tasks. • Integrate case studies from target disciplines. • Develop glossaries of discipline-specific terms. • Design presentations simulating professional scenarios. • Assign reflective writing tasks linked to disciplines. • Provide feedback focused on both language and content relevance.

323

324 ¹**Level:** Refers to the scale/systemic level at which the intervention is applied.

325 ²**Approaches:** Identifies the main (recommended) approach being implemented to promote inclusivity.

326 ³**Description/Strategies:** Offers a brief overview of the approach and explains how it contributes to inclusivity, including common strategies that align with the approach.

327 ⁴**Actionable Steps:** Details specific, practical actions that can be taken to implement the approach effectively in day-to-day practice.

328 Culturally responsive teaching is another fundamental micro-level strategy that enhances
329 inclusivity by integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum. This method
330 acknowledges and validates diverse identities, using course materials and examples that reflect
331 the lived experiences of students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In practice,
332 this could mean selecting readings and case studies from multiple global perspectives, allowing
333 students to engage with familiar cultural contexts while also being exposed to new ones. For
334 instance, an EAP instructor teaching argumentation skills might incorporate debate topics
335 related to international education policies, enabling students to contribute insights from their
336 own countries while learning to articulate arguments in academic English.

337 In addition to instructional approaches, reflective practice among educators is essential for
338 fostering inclusive teaching. Continuous self-reflection helps instructors identify biases and
339 areas for improvement. By maintaining a teaching journal, conducting regular student
340 feedback surveys, and participating in peer observations, educators can systematically assess
341 whether their teaching methods are truly inclusive. For example, an instructor who notices
342 that certain student groups are less engaged in class discussions might adjust their
343 participation structures, offering written response options in addition to verbal contributions
344 to accommodate varying levels of confidence in spoken English.

345 Creating a supportive classroom environment is equally critical. This involves fostering a sense
346 of belonging, trust, and respect through trauma-informed practices and flexible participation
347 structures. Educators can build such an environment by setting clear norms for respectful
348 communication, using **structured low-stakes interaction early in the course (e.g., collaborative**
349 **tasks, reflective sharing, or purpose-driven dialogue)** to foster trust, rather than relying on
350 **conventional 'icebreakers' which may not align with students' academic expectations or**

351 **cultural norms; they can also implement** well-being check-ins to monitor students' emotional
352 and mental health. In an EAP seminar, for instance, a teacher might allow students to
353 participate in discussions in different ways - some contributing verbally, others through written
354 reflections - so that those who experience anxiety in public speaking settings are not
355 disadvantaged.

356 **Equitable assessment is a cornerstone of inclusive EAP instruction. Traditional assessment**
357 **models, which often emphasise native-like accuracy and familiarity with Western academic**
358 **conventions, may inadvertently advantage learners with prior exposure to these norms,**
359 **thereby creating barriers for others,** potentially disadvantaging multilingual learners. By
360 designing assessments that include multiple formats -such as written, oral, and digital
361 submissions - educators can better accommodate diverse learning preferences. Additionally,
362 allowing students to submit drafts for formative feedback before final grading ensures that
363 assessment is a tool for learning rather than merely a measurement of ability. **This aligns with**
364 **long-standing EAP practices, such as process-based writing instruction, where students receive**
365 **formative feedback on early drafts and are given opportunities to revise before final**
366 **assessment - an approach that supports inclusion by valuing growth and learner development.**

367 **Reporting the Study: Meso-Level Strategies & Implementation**

368 At the meso level, which pertains to departmental and faculty-wide initiatives, several
369 strategies ensure that inclusivity is institutionalised within academic programs, as illustrated in
370 Table 3. One of the most significant initiatives is decolonising the curriculum, which involves
371 expanding reading lists to include non-Western perspectives and challenging dominant
372 Eurocentric narratives. Academic departments can conduct curriculum audits to ensure
373 representation and equity, involving faculty from diverse backgrounds and student

374 representatives in the process. For instance, an EAP program might introduce texts by African,
375 Asian, and Indigenous scholars, providing a broader and more representative academic
376 foundation for students.

377 EAP-discipline integration is another crucial strategy at the meso level, emphasising the need
378 for language learning to be embedded within students' academic fields. **Collaboration between**
379 **EAP instructors and subject-area specialists has long been a feature of effective EAP provision,**
380 **supporting discipline-specific language development and enabling students to engage with the**
381 **terminology, genres, and communicative conventions of their academic fields. Inclusive EAP**
382 **practices can build on this foundation by more deliberately co-designing syllabi and**
383 **interdisciplinary workshops that align language instruction with diverse disciplinary**
384 **expectations and learner needs.**

385 Interdepartmental collaboration is further strengthened through initiatives that encourage
386 interdisciplinary teaching and professional development. Faculty training workshops on
387 inclusive pedagogy and cross-disciplinary teaching strategies can help educators refine their
388 approaches and share best practices. Establishing mentorship pairs between EAP tutors and
389 subject-area instructors fosters collaboration, while online resource portals ensure that faculty
390 have access to inclusive teaching materials.

391 Ongoing staff training is enhanced through structured initiatives focused on inclusive practices,
392 DEI principles, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Annual workshops provide dedicated space
393 for developing trauma-informed and translingual teaching strategies, while certification
394 opportunities and professional development incentives encourage sustained engagement.
395 Peer-led sessions and case-based training scenarios offer practical, context-specific learning,

396 helping staff apply theory to classroom realities. Follow-up evaluations are used to assess the
397 impact and effectiveness of these training efforts over time.

398 Finally, support for bilingual and multilingual pedagogy is promoted through the integration of
399 students' home languages into both learning and assessment. Translanguaging practices, such
400 as encouraging code-switching and allowing multilingual submissions where appropriate, help
401 reduce language barriers and build academic confidence. Bilingual glossaries, subtitled
402 materials, and the inclusion of multilingual peer mentors further facilitate access and
403 engagement. Training tutors in these approaches and embedding linguistic diversity into
404 classroom tasks creates a more inclusive and affirming learning environment.

405 **Reporting the Study: Macro-Level Strategies & Implementation**

406 At the macro level, institutional policies and systemic support mechanisms play a vital role in
407 sustaining inclusive EAP practices, as illustrated in Table 4. Allocating financial and
408 administrative resources ensures that departments and faculty have the means to develop
409 inclusive curricula and support students effectively. Universities can dedicate budgets to DEI
410 initiatives, provide grants for faculty engagement in inclusive teaching projects, and invest in
411 software and tools that enhance accessibility for students with diverse needs.

412 Top-down collaboration ensures that inclusivity is not treated as an optional effort but is
413 embedded into the institutional fabric. Universities can establish diversity and inclusion
414 committees, publish public progress reports, and implement leadership training programs to
415 ensure that inclusion is a priority at all levels of decision-making.

416 Table 3: Meso-Level Strategies & Implementation

Level	Approaches	Description/Strategies	Actionable Steps
Meso/Departmental	Decolonising the Curriculum	Include non-Western authors and perspectives in reading lists. Partner with stakeholders to redesign materials, ensuring representation and equity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update reading lists for diversity. • Partner with faculty from diverse backgrounds. • Conduct curriculum audits with DEI focus groups. • Include student representatives in material review processes. • Offer workshops on decolonising pedagogy. • Integrate Non-Western media (videos, articles). • Create modules exploring global perspectives.
	EAP-Discipline Integration	Collaborate with subject-area specialists to embed EAP skills in disciplinary contexts, ensuring that language learning supports academic success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host joint planning sessions with subject-area tutors. • Co-design syllabi with EAP and discipline-specific components. • Develop cross-disciplinary workshops for students. • Create shared resource banks for tutors. • Organise peer teaching sessions between EAP and discipline tutors. • Incorporate interdisciplinary projects into EAP classes. • Monitor alignment through regular cross-departmental evaluations.
	Collaborative Teaching Initiatives	Promote regular inter-departmental workshops between EAP and disciplinary tutors to co-create inclusive teaching strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mentorship pairs between EAP and subject tutors. • Facilitate biannual inclusion workshops. • Share best practices through departmental meetings. • Develop case studies showcasing successful collaborations. • Create an online portal for sharing resources. • Host reflection sessions to evaluate progress. • Encourage interdisciplinary teaching exchanges.
	Staff Training & Professional Development	Provide continuous training on inclusive practices, DEI principles, and culturally responsive pedagogy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise annual DEI training workshops. • Incorporate trauma-informed modules in staff training. • Offer certifications in inclusive pedagogy. • Provide incentives for professional development.

		Include modules on trauma-informed teaching and translingual strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host peer-led training sessions. • Use case studies for practical training scenarios. • Evaluate training effectiveness through follow-ups.
	Bilingual and Multilingual Pedagogy	Support the use of students' native languages in learning and assessments. Employ translanguaging approaches to bridge language barriers and support academic confidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage code-switching in classroom discussions. • Allow multilingual submissions where feasible. • Provide bilingual glossaries. • Include multilingual peer mentors. • Use subtitled videos and bilingual resources. • Train tutors in translanguaging practices. • Celebrate linguistic diversity in classroom tasks.

418 Supporting multilingualism is another critical institutional responsibility. Many students
419 entering EAP programs speak multiple languages, yet academic policies often reinforce
420 monolingual norms. **Institutions can support inclusive EAP practices by funding research on**
421 **translanguaging pedagogy, particularly in relation to classroom strategies that recognise and**
422 **build on students' full linguistic repertoires. While formal submissions in EAP contexts typically**
423 **require English, translanguaging can be meaningfully incorporated into formative activities**
424 **such as brainstorming, peer discussion, and drafting, thereby supporting deeper engagement**
425 **and learning.**

426 Intercultural communication initiatives further enhance inclusivity by fostering meaningful
427 cross-cultural engagement. Universities can host intercultural events, create shared social
428 spaces for students from diverse backgrounds, and integrate intercultural communication
429 training into coursework. For instance, a university might establish a student-led mentorship
430 program where domestic and international students collaborate on academic and cultural
431 exchange projects.

432 Financial barriers also play a significant role in access to EAP programs, particularly for students
433 from low-income backgrounds. **While many institutions already offer need-based scholarships,**
434 **flexible payment plans, and emergency financial aid to support students from such**
435 **backgrounds, continued efforts are needed to ensure these provisions are consistently**
436 **available and accessible to EAP students, who may face unique financial vulnerabilities during**
437 **pre-sessional or bridging programmes.**

438 Finally, incorporating social justice pedagogy into EAP instruction builds on the foundational
439 work of scholars such as Benesch (2001), who argued that EAP should engage explicitly with

440 issues of equity, power, and representation. This approach ensures that students are not only
441 developing academic English proficiency but also critically engaging with the socio-political
442 dimensions of language and education. By integrating themes such as linguistic discrimination,
443 educational inequities, and global social justice movements into coursework, educators help
444 students develop both linguistic competence and critical awareness.

445 These findings highlight that inclusive EAP instruction requires a multi-tiered approach, in
446 which micro-level teaching strategies, meso-level faculty initiatives, and macro-level
447 institutional policies are aligned to create a genuinely equitable learning environment. For
448 example, an educator who adopts a culturally responsive teaching approach at the classroom
449 level will be more effective if their department supports professional development in inclusive
450 pedagogy, and if the institution provides resources for multilingual learning. By integrating
451 these strategies holistically, higher education institutions can move toward a model of EAP
452 instruction that truly prioritises equity, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring that all students -
453 regardless of their linguistic or cultural background - have opportunities to succeed.

454 Discussion

455 Summarising the Study: Core Findings & Insights

456 The findings underscore the need for a multi-level, systemic approach to inclusive EAP
457 instruction, with interrelated strategies operating at the micro (classroom), meso
458 (departmental), and macro (institutional) levels.

459 Table 4: Macro-Level Strategies & Implementation

Level	Approaches	Description/Strategies	Actionable Steps
Macro/Institutional	Allocating Time and Resources	Provide dedicated budgets and institutional support for developing inclusive teaching materials and staff training programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set aside annual budgets for DEI in education. • Offer grants for EAP-related inclusion projects. • Allocate paid time for curriculum development. • Provide access to inclusive teaching tools and software. • Establish a central fund for student accessibility services. • Conduct annual budget reviews for DEI effectiveness. • Include DEI goals in institutional strategic plans.
	Top-Down Collaboration	Embed inclusivity in institutional policies. Encourage collaboration between leadership, staff, and external stakeholders to promote systemic equity initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish inclusion goals in institutional mission statements. • Facilitate town halls on inclusion policies. • Create DEI committees at all levels. • Mandate leadership training on inclusion. • Partner with external DEI organisations. • Develop public progress reports. • Set measurable inclusion benchmarks.
	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Initiatives	Develop institutional frameworks for EDI. Encourage diverse hiring practices and regular reviews of curricular inclusivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate DEI audits of academic programs. • Recruit faculty from underrepresented backgrounds. • Host annual EDI conferences. • Publish diversity statistics and goals. • Incentivise faculty for inclusive practices. • Create DEI ambassador roles. • Partner with underrepresented student groups.
	Decolonial and Multilingual Practices	Foster a culture of linguistic justice by challenging monolingual norms. Introduce policies supporting translingual academic writing and multilingual resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish institutional language policies for multilingual use. • Fund research into translingual practices. • Publish translingual teaching guides. • Host workshops on decolonial language use. • Support publications in multiple languages. • Provide access to multilingual academic journals. • Integrate multilingual modules in teacher training.

	Intercultural Communication & Shared Campus Spaces	Create initiatives that encourage cross-cultural engagement among students, such as intercultural events and shared academic-social spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise cultural exchange events on campus. • Develop intercultural training for staff. • Fund student-led intercultural initiatives. • Include intercultural communication modules in coursework. • Set up inclusive student hubs. • Monitor intercultural engagement outcomes. • Include alumni in intercultural mentoring programs.
	Reducing Financial Barriers	Offer scholarships, subsidies, and alternative funding models to ensure equitable access to EAP programs for low-income students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop need-based scholarships for EAP students. • Partner with governments for subsidised fees. • Offer flexible payment plans for courses. • Provide emergency financial aid for EAP students. • Waive fees for high-performing low-income students. • Introduce work-study options for EAP programs. • Review fee structures regularly for accessibility.
	Social Justice Pedagogy	Incorporate critical awareness and social justice themes in curriculum design to promote equity and foster broader societal engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include social justice topics in EAP coursework. • Develop case studies highlighting equity challenges. • Partner with NGOs for applied projects. • Host seminars on global social justice. • Assign research projects addressing inequities. • Use multimedia on societal issues in EAP lessons. • Publish student work on social justice topics.

461 At the micro level, inclusive teaching is supported by differentiated instruction, personalised
462 learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy. These approaches validate students' linguistic
463 and cultural identities, and are further strengthened by reflective teaching, supportive
464 classroom climates, and equitable assessment practices. The meso level highlights the
465 importance of structural support within academic departments. Key strategies include
466 integrating EAP with disciplinary content, decolonising the curriculum, and promoting
467 collaborative teaching between EAP and subject faculty. Professional development is central
468 to enabling staff to adopt inclusive, responsive practices across curricula. At the macro level,
469 the findings point to the necessity of institutional commitment. Sustainable change depends
470 on inclusive policies, strategic funding, and structural alignment with diversity, equity, and
471 inclusion (DEI) goals. This includes supporting multilingualism, removing financial barriers, and
472 embedding inclusive EAP within broader university governance.

473 Taken together, the findings advocate for a coordinated and embedded model of inclusive EAP
474 that spans individual teaching practices, departmental structures, and institutional policies -
475 ensuring alignment with the wider principles of social justice in higher education.

476 **Interpreting the Study: Comparison with Existing Literature**

477 The study's findings align strongly with and meaningfully extend existing literature on inclusive
478 education, particularly in how inclusivity should be addressed across micro, meso, and macro
479 levels. By embedding differentiated, culturally responsive, and reflective teaching practices at
480 the micro level, the study echoes the pedagogical emphasis seen in Kumar and Wideman
481 (2014), who advocate for instructional customisation and student-centred approaches to
482 account for learner heterogeneity. This reflects a broader pedagogical shift in higher

483 education, from uniform delivery models towards more fluid and dynamic approaches that
484 account for students' lived realities and prior knowledge. This emphasis on proactive
485 curriculum design represents a significant shift from deficit models to a more empowering,
486 participatory pedagogy - an approach also supported by Hughes et al. (2015) and aligned with
487 Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles (Garcia-Campos et al., 2018; Gheysens et al.,
488 2022). **UDL is a research-based educational framework that promotes flexible learning**
489 **environments and curricula to accommodate individual learning differences.** It emphasises the
490 **provision of multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to support access**
491 **and participation for all learners.** Importantly, these models reposition the learner not as a
492 passive recipient of knowledge but as an active co-creator, thus challenging traditional
493 hierarchical teacher-student relationships in academic settings.

494 Furthermore, the call for multimodal and adaptive learning technologies in the study resonates
495 with the work of Mihovska et al. (2021) and Westwood (2018), who underscore the importance
496 of adaptive tools in supporting diverse learning styles. Multimodal approaches - engaging
497 visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic modalities - are particularly effective for neurodiverse and
498 multilingual learners, promoting cognitive flexibility and enhancing the ability to process
499 complex academic content (Mayer, 2009). Grounded in principles from educational
500 psychology, such technology-enhanced practices allow for content to be tailored and delivered
501 in ways that meet students at their individual levels of readiness, thereby improving
502 engagement, motivation, and attainment (Rose & Meyer, 2002; CAST, 2018). These findings
503 not only confirm the educational psychology perspective on diverse learner needs but also
504 suggest that inclusive EAP practice can serve as a testing ground for personalised and equitable

505 instructional models. In this sense, EAP classrooms may act as microcosms of wider
506 institutional equity goals, offering valuable insights into scalable inclusion practices.

507 The emphasis on equitable assessment methods and the creation of safe, supportive
508 classrooms also aligns with critical work on inclusive evaluation (Shohamy, 2017; Tai et al.,
509 2022). As Scott et al. (2013) and Bain (2023) argue, assessments rooted in monolingual and
510 standardised norms often exclude multilingual students and reinforce deficit narratives. This
511 critique is particularly salient in EAP, where language proficiency is often conflated with
512 intellectual capacity, inadvertently perpetuating inequality. The study's findings - particularly
513 the advocacy for learner-centered, formative assessments - support calls for transformation
514 toward frameworks that validate multilingual identities and knowledge repertoires (Ortega,
515 2019; Lillis & Turner, 2001). By reimagining assessment as a dialogic and developmental
516 process rather than a summative judgement, EAP instructors can shift the emphasis from
517 language as a gatekeeping mechanism to language as a means of access and empowerment.

518 At the meso (departmental) level, the study builds upon existing research by highlighting the
519 structural role academic departments must play in normalising inclusive practices. Notably, the
520 recommendation to integrate EAP instruction within disciplinary teaching resonates with
521 Maldoni and Lear (2016) and Tan and Scott (2021), who advocate for embedding academic
522 literacy into disciplinary learning contexts. This cross-pollination between language and
523 subject-area teaching not only enhances relevance but also supports epistemological
524 inclusivity, allowing students to see how language operates differently across academic fields.
525 Such integration helps dismantle the binary between language and content, a divide that often
526 marginalises EAP within the academy. Additionally, the study's emphasis on decolonising the
527 curriculum draws on the work of Walton (2018) and Meda (2019), who argue for the

528 incorporation of marginalised knowledge systems and multilingual resources to counter
529 Eurocentric dominance. Decolonising efforts in EAP not only broaden the representational
530 landscape of course content but also invite critical engagement with whose knowledge counts
531 in academic spaces, challenging students, and educators alike to question inherited power
532 dynamics.

533 These recommendations extend beyond surface-level curriculum changes to promote
534 epistemological transformation. As the literature suggests, interdisciplinary collaboration and
535 professional development are foundational to this transformation (Li, 2021; Alhassan et al.,
536 2021). However, such collaboration must go beyond tokenistic partnerships and foster
537 sustained dialogue between EAP professionals and subject-matter experts to co-construct
538 pedagogically sound and inclusive curricula. By equipping educators with cultural
539 competencies and inclusive pedagogical strategies (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021; Ng'andu, 2023),
540 faculties can ensure that inclusivity is more than an individual commitment - it becomes a
541 shared departmental ethos. This also addresses the issue of uneven inclusivity practices across
542 departments, which can undermine institutional goals and lead to inconsistent student
543 experiences.

544 At the macro-institutional level, the study's findings strongly reinforce the urgent need for
545 structural and policy-level commitments to inclusivity and linguistic justice. Literature has long
546 called for institutional buy-in and policy alignment (May & Bridger, 2010; Salmi & D'Addio,
547 2020), and the study underlines this by advocating for strategic funding, policy integration, and
548 resource allocation. These systemic supports are crucial, as reliance on individual champions
549 of inclusion often leads to burnout and unsustainable efforts. Moreover, the emphasis on
550 removing financial barriers and supporting DEI initiatives aligns with the growing recognition

551 in higher education of the links between social justice, inclusion, and academic success
552 (Howard et al., 2022; Ramlackhan & Catania, 2022). Without such top-down policy alignment
553 (Bakogiannis, 2025b), inclusive practices risk remaining peripheral and vulnerable to
554 institutional neglect, especially in resource-strapped environments.

555 Crucially, the study contributes to the under-researched area of EAP inclusivity - a gap that
556 Mortenson (2021; 2022) has identified as problematic, given the increasingly diverse linguistic
557 profiles of higher education cohorts. While broader HE literature is rich with inclusivity
558 discourse (Stentiford et al., 2021; Collins et al., 2018), specific and sustained attention to
559 inclusive EAP remains scarce. The study addresses this gap directly, proposing a model that not
560 only adapts but innovatively applies inclusive principles in EAP contexts. This represents a
561 critical intervention in the field, as EAP has traditionally been framed as a neutral, skills-based
562 discipline, thereby sidestepping important questions of equity, power, and representation. By
563 situating inclusive EAP within wider discourses of decoloniality and translingualism
564 (Canagarajah, 2013; Li & Garcia, 2022), the study highlights how language education can serve
565 as a site of resistance against colonial and monolingual ideologies. Such positioning reframes
566 EAP not as a gatekeeping function, but as a transformative space where linguistic diversity is
567 leveraged as a pedagogical asset and a political stance.

568 In sum, this study does not merely affirm current understandings of inclusivity in higher
569 education; it meaningfully extends them by providing a comprehensive, multi-tiered
570 framework for EAP. It supports the transformation of EAP from a marginalised, remedial
571 support area into a dynamic site for equity-driven pedagogy. By addressing individual learner
572 needs, departmental practices, and institutional policy simultaneously, the study constructs a
573 compelling argument that inclusive EAP is both necessary and achievable. The challenge now

574 lies in translating this vision into practice through sustained institutional will, educator
575 capacity-building, and critical reflection on entrenched norms. Most importantly, it reframes
576 EAP as an active agent in higher education's broader project of social justice, equity, and
577 decolonisation. As such, the study marks an important step in redefining not just how EAP is
578 taught, but why it matters in the contemporary educational landscape.

579 **Translating the Study: Implications for Practice & Policy**

580 The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for a systemic transformation in EAP
581 education, requiring coordinated efforts at the individual, departmental, and institutional
582 levels. At the micro level, educators must adopt differentiated instruction, culturally responsive
583 teaching, and equitable assessment strategies to support the diverse needs of multilingual
584 students. This necessitates professional development in inclusive teaching methods,
585 particularly in areas such as translanguaging pedagogy, trauma-informed practices, and
586 scaffolded learning approaches. Institutions should invest in teacher training programs that
587 equip EAP instructors with the tools to create inclusive learning environments, ensuring that
588 pedagogy is not only accessible but also responsive to students' cultural and linguistic
589 backgrounds.

590 At the meso level, academic departments must play a pivotal role in institutionalising inclusivity
591 within EAP programs. The integration of EAP instruction with subject-area disciplines should
592 become a standard practice rather than an ad hoc initiative, ensuring that students acquire the
593 discipline-specific academic language skills necessary for success in their respective fields. To
594 achieve this, universities should foster interdisciplinary collaboration by establishing joint
595 curriculum development initiatives, interdisciplinary teaching partnerships, and faculty-wide

596 discussions on inclusive education. Additionally, the decolonisation of EAP curricula should be
597 a formalised institutional priority, with curriculum audits, diverse reading lists, and the
598 inclusion of non-Western academic perspectives becoming integral to program design.

599 At the macro level, institutions must implement comprehensive policies and resource
600 allocation strategies that sustain inclusive EAP instruction. This includes establishing Diversity,
601 Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committees, setting institutional benchmarks for inclusivity, and
602 embedding equity-focused goals in university mission statements. Funding allocation is a
603 crucial factor in ensuring the long-term viability of inclusive initiatives. Institutions should
604 earmark dedicated budgets for EAP-related DEI projects, support research into multilingual
605 pedagogies, and provide financial assistance for students who face barriers to accessing
606 language support. Furthermore, policies that support multilingual academic writing,
607 multilingual assessment options, and translingual communication in the classroom should be
608 formally integrated into institutional guidelines.

609 Beyond the university setting, policymakers and accrediting bodies must also play a role in
610 fostering inclusive EAP instruction. National and international educational organisations should
611 establish guidelines and quality assurance measures that require universities to implement
612 inclusive teaching practices in their language programs. This could be achieved through the
613 accreditation of EAP programs based on inclusivity metrics, the provision of government-
614 funded initiatives for multilingual education, and policy frameworks that mandate equitable
615 access to language learning resources. By embedding inclusive EAP instruction into broader
616 national and institutional educational policies, the higher education sector can move toward a
617 sustainable and equity-driven approach to academic language learning.

618 **Extending the Study: Recommendations for further research**

619 While this study provides a comprehensive framework for inclusive EAP instruction, several
620 areas require further research to deepen our understanding of effective implementation
621 strategies and long-term impacts. One critical area for future investigation is the effectiveness
622 of translanguaging approaches in EAP contexts, particularly in higher education settings where
623 academic discourse is traditionally monolingual. Research should explore how students
624 navigate multiple languages in academic writing, how educators can assess multilingual
625 compositions fairly, and how translanguaging can be formally incorporated into EAP curricula
626 without reinforcing linguistic hierarchies. Longitudinal studies are particularly needed to
627 examine the impact of multilingual pedagogies on student academic performance and
628 engagement over time.

629 Additionally, further research should examine the institutional and policy-level challenges
630 associated with embedding inclusive EAP instruction into university structures. While this study
631 highlights funding allocation, faculty training, and DEI initiatives as critical factors, more
632 empirical research is required to understand the specific barriers that institutions face in
633 implementing these policies at scale. Comparative studies across different higher education
634 contexts, including Global North and Global South institutions, could provide valuable insights
635 into how inclusive EAP practices can be adapted to different linguistic, cultural, and socio-
636 political settings. Investigating how universities can collaborate with policymakers to
637 standardise inclusive teaching practices in EAP would also be a valuable avenue for future
638 research, ensuring that systemic change extends beyond individual institutions and influences
639 the broader landscape of academic language education.

640 Conclusion

641 This study developed a context-sensitive, evidence-informed framework for inclusive EAP in
642 HE through a rigorous, multi-method design. **By integrating qualitative surveys, co-production
643 focus groups, and a systematic literature review using Best Fit Framework Synthesis, the
644 research generated findings intend to inform both theory and practice.** The framework offers
645 a clear, adaptable roadmap for advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in EAP, bridging the
646 gap between inclusive teaching principles and classroom realities. It contributes not only to
647 the improvement of instructional practices but also to the broader discourse on inclusive
648 pedagogy in higher education.

649 The findings emphasise that meaningful inclusivity in EAP requires a coordinated, multi-level
650 approach - micro (individual), meso (departmental), and macro (institutional). While strategies
651 like differentiated instruction and equitable assessment can improve student outcomes at the
652 classroom level, long-term impact depends on supportive departmental cultures, cross-
653 disciplinary collaboration, and institutional policies that prioritise accessibility, linguistic
654 diversity, and social justice. Although challenges remain - such as inconsistent institutional
655 support and limited faculty engagement - this study addresses those gaps by offering a flexible,
656 scalable model for inclusive practice. Moving forward, institutions must centre equity and
657 linguistic justice in their academic language policies, ensuring EAP instruction evolves in
658 alignment with the wider goals of inclusive, globally responsive higher education.

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