

# EFL Pre-Service Teachers' High Inclusive Awareness: Researching Practical Implementation

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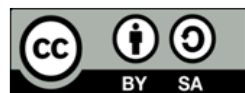
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## ABSTRAK

Jumlah siswa penyandang disabilitas yang mendaftar untuk belajar di Indonesia diperkirakan akan meningkat pada tahun 2024. Hal ini berarti bahwa guru perlu mengetahui tentang pendidikan inklusif, terutama penelitian ini akan berfokus pada calon guru bahasa Inggris. Maka dari itu, penelitian ini menginvestigasi sikap calon guru bahasa Inggris terhadap Inclusive Education, tekad mereka untuk mengajar kelas inklusif, dan implikasinya dalam praktek mengajar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi pemahaman dan penerapan inklusivitas, mengeksplorasi pengalaman praktis guru dalam menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang inklusif, serta mengevaluasi efektivitas strategi yang digunakan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kombinasi dengan explanatory sequential design. 100 calon guru bahasa Inggris dari beberapa universitas di Indonesia terlibat sebagai partisipan untuk menjawab kuesioner. Kuesioner tersebut berisikan 17 pertanyaan. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan SPSS versi 25 untuk menentukan nilai rata-rata dan korelasi antara sikap dan tekad. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa calon guru bahasa Inggris mempunyai nilai rata-rata yang tinggi dalam sikap dan tekad. Tetapi, hasil wawancara menunjukkan bahwa mereka memiliki keraguan untuk mengajar di kelas inklusi karena kurangnya persiapan. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa terlepas dari sikap dan tekad positif yang mereka miliki, para calon guru ini akan mendapatkan manfaat dari kursus dan program pengembangan profesional untuk mempersiapkan diri mereka dengan lebih baik dalam mengajar di kelas inklusi, yang akan mengurangi keraguan mereka. Implikasi penelitian ini dapat memberikan wawasan bagi pembuat kebijakan pendidikan dalam merancang kurikulum yang mendukung penerapan prinsip inklusivitas di sekolah.

## ABSTRACT

The number of students with disabilities registering to study in Indonesia is expected to increase by 2024. This means that teachers need to know about inclusive education, especially this research will focus on prospective English teachers. Therefore, this study investigates the attitudes of prospective English teachers towards Inclusive Education, their determination to teach inclusive classes, and the implications for teaching practice. This research aims to identify factors that influence the understanding and implementation of inclusivity, explore teachers' practical experiences in creating an inclusive learning environment, and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used. This research uses a combined research method with explanatory sequential design. 100 prospective English teachers from several universities in Indonesia were involved as participants to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 17 questions. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 to determine the average value and correlation between attitude and determination. The results showed that prospective English teachers had high average scores in attitude and determination. However, the interview results showed that they had doubts about teaching in inclusion classes due to lack of preparation. This study shows that despite their positive attitude and determination, these prospective teachers would benefit from professional development courses and programs to better prepare themselves to teach in inclusion classes, which would reduce their doubts. The implications of this research can provide insight for educational policy makers in designing curricula that support the implementation of the principle of inclusivity in schools.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Data collected in 2018 shows that there are 993,000 students with disabilities registered in Indonesia, and this is expected to increase to 49% by 2024. (Arcangeli et al., 2020; Creswell, 2017). The importance of inclusive education can be seen from the high number of students with disabilities. This needs to be considered because inclusive education plays a role in building a better society both around the family and the community (Adl-Amini et al., 2020; Awang-Hashim et al., 2019). In addition, inclusive education increases participation in learning, culture, and communication by implementing Differentiated Teaching (DI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as teaching strategies (Toyon, 2019; Triviño-Amigo et al., 2020). This evidence strengthens the importance of inclusive education to be implemented in schools, especially in Indonesia. Therefore, to achieve this goal, teachers need to be aware of inclusive education, both in terms of learning strategies and attitudes. In addition, inclusive teaching strategies can effectively meet the needs of students with various disabilities and optimize their potential (Simonian & Brand, 2020; Ven, 2018). Additionally, to engage students and respect diversity, teachers in inclusive teaching practices need to identify student strengths and needs, accessibility materials, methodologies, and strategies (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019; Wipulanusat et al., 2019). Therefore, teacher preparation in developing appropriate methods to realize inclusive education requires a period of time and several aspects that need to be considered. This happens because inclusive teaching practices must emphasize strategies for how material is delivered well and students, whatever their abilities, can achieve learning outcomes. In addition, to devise appropriate strategies, teachers can plan collaboratively, adapt to different levels of preparation, and utilize cognitive features and other individual differences to assess student differences (Nishina et al., 2019; Volker et al., 2020).

Furthermore, one of the challenges teachers face in inclusive teaching practices is readiness. The limitations of teachers in inclusive education are limited competence in theoretical learning and different stages of education, lack of focus on diversity, and limited application of practical interventions (Hymel & Katz, 2019; Sandoval et al., 2018; Sari et al., 2020). Therefore, to meet the needs of students, whatever their disabilities, teachers need to be trained and have real practice to improve their competence in inclusive teaching. One simple way to enlighten their perspective on inclusive education is by providing courses related to inclusive education. These institutions need to equip prospective teachers with courses on inclusive education. This plays an important role in making them aware of inclusivity and helps them take other steps in implementing inclusive education. Therefore, stronger school involvement in supporting teachers can help overcome barriers to inclusive teaching for teachers by offering professional learning opportunities, finances, and access (Kiel et al., 2020; Y. J. Kim & Kim, 2017).

In the past ten years, studies of inclusive teaching have emphasized teacher preparation (Jury et al., 2020; Juvonen et al., 2020). In addition, an investigation into teachers' intentions to implement inclusive education shows that their self-efficacy significantly influences their intentions to implement inclusive teaching (Boxtel & Sugita, 2019; Chano et al., 2020; E. Kim & Lee, 2019). Teachers who support inclusion tend to implement the techniques necessary to accommodate a variety of learning needs. In terms of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are very bad, and lack of knowledge (Garcia et al., 2020; Günay et al., 2020). Apart from that, similar research was previously carried out in the Middle East, America, Africa, Europe and Australia, but little was carried out in Asia, especially Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, pre-service EFL teachers' awareness of inclusive teaching practices is still unclear. In addition, with results and suggestions based on previous research, teachers can make improvements to their attitudes and intentions for teaching in inclusive classes. In fact, due to class sizes and teachers' lack of experience, inclusion in primary schools in rural areas in Indonesia is more difficult than in urban areas. This underlines the need for professional development to increase teacher competence and understanding of inclusive education techniques (Dewsbury & Brame, 2018; Fang et al., 2020). Therefore, this research aims to determine the awareness of pre-service EFL teachers towards inclusive teaching practices involving pre-service teachers from several universities in Indonesia to determine their attitudes and intentions to teach in inclusive classes.

Supports that inclusive teaching practices have a positive relationship to teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, and intentions to teach in inclusive classrooms (Duncan et al., 2018; Gatti et al., 2020). Mixed methods, especially explanatory sequential design, are used by carrying out a quantitative stage and continuing with a qualitative stage to obtain specific results. (Cologon, 2019; Lee & Griffin, 2024). The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the practical implementation of inclusive awareness in pre-service EFL teachers in a foreign language learning context. In contrast to previous research which tends to be oriented towards theory or the development of conceptual models, this research specifically examines how inclusive awareness is applied in real situations, including strategies used by pre-service teachers to accommodate the needs of diverse students. In addition, this research also provides a new perspective on

the relationship between professional training, field experience, and the level of inclusive awareness, especially in the context of multicultural and multilingual education. Thus, it is hoped that this research can enrich academic literature and offer a new approach in supporting the creation of more inclusive and responsive education.

This research aims to show and explain EFL pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive teaching practices in Indonesia which could be one of the reasons why it is important to train EFL pre-service teachers about inclusive teaching before they teach in actual classrooms. Thus, the results obtained can be taken into consideration in developing the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia in order to provide equal educational services to all students, starting with an educational program in the form of inclusive education courses to prepare teachers for implementing inclusive education.

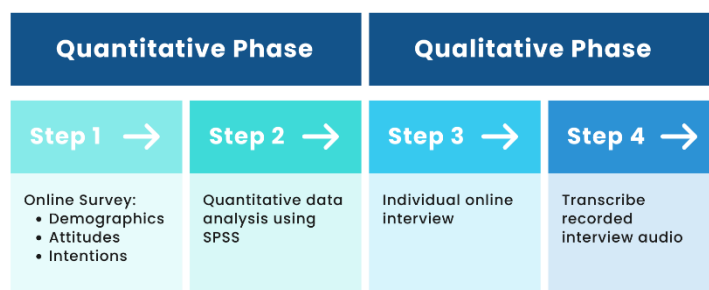
## 2. METHOD

This research uses a mixed method with an explanatory sequential design (Draucker et al., 2021; Finkelstein et al., 2018). The mixed methods explanatory sequential design involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in two consecutive phases within one study, allowing for a deeper understanding of EFL pre-service teachers' inclusive consciousness (Hope, 2023; Kurniawati, 2018). The reason for conducting qualitative analysis after quantitative analysis is to explain the findings and possibly interpret outliers that are not in line with the data collected. (Laranjeira et al., 2020; Monsen et al., 2018). Data collection began by distributing questionnaires via WhatsApp and Twitter. There were 100 students from 14 universities in Indonesia who were involved as participants in quantitative data collection. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed online via WhatsApp and Twitter within ten days. Then, to obtain more in-depth results, an interview was conducted by inviting two participants selected based on the results of the questionnaire: one student who had a high mean attitude and intention, and one student who had a low mean attitude and intention. . Participation Participants who are students majoring in English Education and have teaching experience at all levels starting from elementary school, middle school, high school and vocational school are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. School Distribution of Participants' Teaching Experience, N = 100**

School Level	N	%
Elementary School	62	62
Junior High School	17	17
Senior High School	18	18
Vocational High School	3	3

The data collected in this research was divided into two stages. The quantitative stage was carried out by distributing an online survey. Participants filled out a consent form before they completed the survey and by responding to it, they agreed to take part in the study. Through an online survey, demographic information, attitudes, and intentions of teacher candidates were collected. Participants completed a 10-15 minute online survey. Then, in the qualitative stage, individual interviews were conducted with two participants via Zoom Meeting for one hour each to obtain further reasons for their answers to the online survey. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The study flow diagram is presented in Figure 1.



Source: (Creswell, 2014).

**Figure 1. Study Flow Diagram**

To collect quantitative data, a seven-point Likert scale questionnaire was used. Researchers adopted the Attitudes to Inclusion Scale (AIS) and Intention to Teach in Inclusive Classroom Scale (ITICS) by Sharma and Jacobs (2016) as instruments. The Attitudes towards Inclusion Scale (AIS) consists of 10

questions with initially two questions written negatively (namely questions number 5 and 6). Then, to help participants understand the question, the researcher reworded it as a positive. The Intention to Teach in an Inclusive Classroom Scale (ITICS) consists of 7 questions that assess participants' willingness to teach in an inclusive class. Participants responded on both scales by selecting one of 7 anchors.

Then the validity of the instrument was tested using Pearson Correlation with a significance level of 0.05. Question items are considered valid if they meet the  $r$  value criteria  $r_{count} \geq r_{table}$ . In addition, qualitative data was collected by conducting individual interviews via online Zoom Meetings. The researchers used an interview guide and asked each participant for their reasons based on the questionnaire answers. SPSS version 25 was used to analyze quantitative data to obtain the mean for each question and the correlation of attitudes to intentions. Based on the mean results, the researcher decided on 2 participants to be interviewed. Then, the data collected through audio interviews were transcribed and analyzed by conducting IS analysis.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

This research investigates the awareness of English Language Education students at several universities in Indonesia who have teaching experience. To collect data, researchers used an online survey with a total of 17 questions divided into two parts. The first part consisted of ten questions asked regarding their attitudes towards inclusion, and the second part consisted of seven questions asked regarding their intentions to teach in an inclusive classroom. Based on data analysis shows that their attitude towards inclusion is relatively high and has a total mean score of 5.38. Additionally, eight out of ten statements were highly rated. The data above has an average of 5.47, 5.69, 5.87, and 5.87. This means that teachers feel helped to improve themselves by the diversity of students' characteristics and abilities. Furthermore, the table below shows data on teachers' intentions to teach in inclusive classes. Based on data analysis shows that the total average score for teachers' intentions to teach in inclusive classes is 5.76, which is considered high. Furthermore, based on correlation analysis, the table below presents the Pearson product correlation results. The correlation value is between -1 and 1 and is categorized into positive and negative. Pearson Correlation Results are presented in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.** Pearson Correlation Results

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Attitudes	0.416	0.000	100
Intention	0.416	0.000	100

Based on data analysis, the significance value of attitudes and intentions is 0.000, where there is a correlation between attitudes and intentions because the significance value is smaller than 0.05. Moreover, [Table 2](#) shows that the p-value is 0.416 and is positive, which means that if attitudes increase, intentions will also increase. In addition, the findings from the interviews were expressed to provide teachers with reasons for each statement in the questionnaire. Two pre-service EFL teachers were invited as participants. Participants were divided into 2, pre-service EFL teachers who had high average scores, and teachers who had low average scores on attitudes and intentions. In terms of attitudes towards inclusion, pre-service EFL teachers with high average scores noted this.

"From my experience, there is discrimination against students' intelligence and physics. In elementary schools, students with different abilities are separated so they cannot socialize with other people. So, I think all students have the right to communicate and socialize with other people because it will also have an impact on their academics."

It may be noted that all students, regardless of their abilities, should be integrated into regular classes. These students need to socialize and help each other both during the learning process and not. Apart from that, students' involvement in regular classes also has an impact on their academics because by being able to study together, each student will help fill in other people's weaknesses with their strengths, and vice versa.

"I think teachers need to prepare themselves well before teaching in inclusive classes in order to meet students' needs. They have to know the characteristics of students whatever their abilities and build chemistry with them which is quite difficult to do. Apart from that, in this case schools must support teachers by providing training and accommodation. So, because it is a challenge for teachers to teach in inclusive classes, it will certainly increase their ability to teach."

Furthermore, the readiness of schools and teachers needs to be considered. It was also found that teachers lacked confidence to teach in inclusive classes because although they had the knowledge, they were

not sure whether they were able to handle the class. Therefore, schools also need to prepare and support both teachers and students in terms of accommodation and training for teachers. In addition, through the process and involvement of diverse students, teachers can increase their competence in teaching.

On the other hand, pre-service EFL teachers with low average scores stated:

"I think, first of all, students should be aware of inclusivity. If everyone involved is not aware of inclusivity, then students with different abilities should be separated. In addition, inclusivity does not always have an impact on academic or social fields. These students may be good at academics but don't care about social matters. Even as the curriculum has changed, students who want to achieve better academic performance need determination."

There are several considerations regarding the impact of inclusion on students' academic and social outcomes. It is possible that inclusion has no impact on students' academic or social outcomes. Additionally, to foster inclusivity, it is important for teachers and students to be careful in ensuring effective learning. It is also difficult to encourage students to achieve better achievements both academically and socially.

"I am still not confident in my ability to control the inclusion class. From what I see, teachers have to be patient in handling the class. And, I'm still not enthusiastic about teaching in an inclusive class because I don't have any experience in it, and I need more time to develop myself. Of course, if I teach in a class with diverse characteristics and abilities, it will really help me to become a better teacher. Apart from that, I think it would be difficult if I had students who needed help with daily activities because it could interfere with learning activities."

Teachers' readiness and self-efficacy are problems for them which makes them less confident in handling inclusive classes. This readiness includes mental and competency that can be improved from experience. Moreover, teachers will face big challenges if there are students who experience difficulties in daily activities because teachers need to divide their focus, help students and explain the material.

Furthermore, regarding the intention to teach in an inclusive class, the two participants also had different opinions. EFL pre-service teachers with high average scores stated the following:

"I think curriculum changes are a small step to improve the quality of inclusive classes. Apart from that, teachers also need to discuss with students' parents and students to find out the characteristics and needs of students. Then the teacher will discuss again with his colleagues to get better strategies to apply in class along with how the teacher assesses students. And I am sure, I also need a professional program to improve my competence as an educator."

This can be interpreted as meaning that teachers are willing to make improvements starting from the curriculum to making further improvements to teaching strategies and student assessment. Teachers are willing to discuss with parents, students and colleagues to obtain information before developing strategies. Apart from that, teachers are also encouraged to take part in professional development programs to improve their competence as teachers.

Meanwhile, pre-service EFL teachers with low average scores stated the following:

"First, I don't want to teach in an inclusive class. Regarding the curriculum, I can ask the principal to make adjustments. If you discuss it with parents, students and colleagues, I don't think there's a need to do that because I don't want to teach in an inclusive class. But, if necessary, I think I will do it because as a teacher, I need to get information about students. Additionally, I may not change the assessment tasks because all students will probably respond differently regarding their abilities."

The reason teachers are reluctant to teach in inclusive classes is because this is still not their priority. Teachers still want to focus on regular classes. Moreover, in cases where teachers have to teach in inclusive classes, curriculum adjustments are a major responsibility. In addition, the assessment may have different responses from all students regarding their abilities.

## Discussion

Based on these results, prospective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia show a strong will and positive mindset towards inclusivity. Moreover, as shown in the correlation results, pre-service EFL teachers' intention to teach in inclusive classes will increase as attitudes improve. Teachers who have a positive outlook and strong belief in their own abilities are more likely to implement inclusive teaching practices (Muslim et al., 2019; Obah, 2020).

However, by interviewing two participants with different average scores, this study found contradictory results, although they had a high attitude towards inclusive education, but they had doubts about themselves. Pre-service EFL teachers in Indonesia are not sufficiently prepared to teach in inclusive classrooms. They have difficulty controlling inclusive classes because they have not received training so it is a challenge for them to develop teaching strategies in inclusive classes because they still lack basic knowledge about inclusive education (Ngadni et al., 2023; Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020). In addition, most EFL

pre-service teachers are not confident about their competence in teaching. Even though they know the material to be explained, they are not sure whether they can manage the class during the learning activities. Additionally, EFL pre-service teachers argue that teaching in inclusive classrooms is still not their priority.

Furthermore, pre-service teachers' reluctance to teach in inclusive classes is caused by several things, including readiness. Teachers may hesitate to teach inclusive classrooms because of concerns about managing diversity, community, and challenging behavior in a positive, proactive, and educative way, as well as about treating students fairly, providing equal access to learning, and valuing each student's learning. The doubts found in Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers arise due to a lack of self-confidence. Supported by previous research, teachers often report that they feel unprepared to receive inclusive education due to important issues such as concerns about class size, resources, managing other adults, and addressing a variety of special educational needs and challenges in teacher professional development (Paseka & Schwab, 2019; Sánchez et al., 2023). Additionally, when teaching students with varying learning needs, teacher candidates often face cultural challenges, which can lead to frustration and burnout. Therefore, they will try not to take risks by carrying out learning activities as usual without any improvements and adjustments to implement inclusive education.

Additionally, five themes were identified related to high-quality inclusion in the classroom: collaboration, teamwork, instructional support, organizational practices, and social/emotional/behavioral support (Schwab & Alnahdi, 2019; Tanzi & Hermanto, 2019). Based on the results obtained, EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia still lack knowledge and practice, although they are willing to consult and discuss with other colleagues and parents and other parties to collaborate for appropriate learning activities. Supported by previous research, inclusive practices have a big impact on teachers' performance and competence in teaching in inclusive classes because they have basic knowledge about how to manage a class which also influences their attitudes and beliefs (Manrique et al., 2020; Smets et al., 2020). The involvement of teachers who have students with disabilities in general and special education settings can change their attitudes toward inclusion as well as their interactions with parents (Opoku et al., 2022; Steen & Wilson, 2020). Thus, Teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion in the learning environment lead to increased student satisfaction, fostering a positive environment

As found in this research, students need professional training programs, therefore, to create a better inclusive education environment, teachers need to consider several things. They must pay attention to strategies so that students have good achievements and participate in class. To keep students engaged in the classroom with balanced performance in social and academic areas, opportunities in social and academic areas need to be carefully designed to ensure engagement in relationships. This goal can be achieved by using UDL in learning activities. Several researchers found that the impact of implementing UDL can significantly improve student learning and teacher teaching performance (Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Sharma & Jacobs, 2019).

Additionally, teachers can use simulation, discussion, and collaboration in their approach to promoting inclusive education. Teachers can develop their professionalism in inclusive education through experiential learning in simulation games (Adl-Amini et al., 2020; Boxel & Sugita, 2019). Additionally, to encourage improvement, feedback plays a role in it. Feedback needs to provide positive, constructive and critical suggestions in order to improve a person's competence (Cologon, 2019; Muslim et al., 2019). On the other hand, negative feedback can make individuals feel threatened (Manrique et al., 2020; Triviño-Amigo et al., 2020).

Furthermore, to support students in learning activities, teachers need to know their characteristics and needs. Discussions with students' parents are necessary to obtain comprehensive information about students. Apart from that, discussions with fellow teachers are also needed to be able to develop learning strategies that suit students' needs. By involving students with diverse abilities, teachers can improve their teaching competence through evaluation. In addition, apart from the role of teachers in realizing inclusive education, schools also play a role in supporting both teachers and students in implementing inclusive education by providing accommodations and policies. Apart from teaching staff, administrative staff and school principals are also responsible for creating an inclusive learning environment (Muslim et al., 2019; Opoku et al., 2022). Therefore, both pre-service EFL teachers and schools need professional development programs to improve their performance in realizing inclusive simulation education (Smets et al., 2020; Tanzi & Hermanto, 2019).

The results of this research can be used to evaluate the implementation of inclusive classes in Indonesia. To increase inclusivity, professional development programs for prospective teachers and courses related to inclusivity should be provided in schools to build a strong foundation of knowledge. Additionally, prospective teachers need professional development programs that focus on inclusive teaching to increase their self-confidence and equip them with theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This program will help students improve their teaching abilities and develop appropriate teaching

strategies for students of all abilities. In addition, educational facilities must be accessible to all students regardless of ability. Therefore, in order to successfully implement inclusive education, teachers together with external parties involved need to be aware of inclusivity. The implications of this research cover various aspects in developing more inclusive education. The research findings can be used to design pre-service teacher training programs that emphasize the importance of inclusive awareness in managing EFL classrooms. This can help teachers understand and appreciate student diversity, including differences in language, culture and special needs. In addition, this research can provide insight for educational policy makers in designing curricula that support the implementation of the principle of inclusivity in schools. In practice, it is also hoped that the results of this research will be able to encourage collaboration between teachers, students and the community to create a fairer learning environment and support optimal development for all students.

However, the scope of this study was limited due to the limited number of participants and equal representation across universities. Further research should be carried out with a wider scope involving various universities in Indonesia with different focuses. In addition, the use of an experimental research design is recommended to obtain more detailed practical data. This will provide broader and in-depth information regarding inclusive education to help teachers improve their competence in teaching in inclusive classes.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Through this research, it can be concluded that pre-service EFL teachers in Indonesia have a very positive attitude towards inclusion and have a strong intention to teach in inclusive classes. This research has revealed a clear correlation between attitudes and intentions. As pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes became more positive, their intentions to teach in inclusive classrooms also increased. Despite having positive attitudes and intentions, these teachers often experience difficulties in teaching in inclusive classrooms due to inadequate preparation and training. Managing the class and developing appropriate teaching strategies is a challenge for them. This research has implications for the importance of increasing EFL pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive education and their effectiveness in teaching in inclusive classrooms. The successful implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia requires not only internal support by providing the necessary training but also external support from schools and parents to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their abilities.

#### 5. CONFESSION

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