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Reimagining the language of disability and inclusion in primary teacher education through a translanguaging framework

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ABSTRACT

Whilst words such as ‘disability’ and ‘inclusion’ have some shared meanings across cultural and linguistic contexts, they also have meanings that are fluid and changing according to individual, institutional, and environmental dimensions. Deconstructing these differential understandings in special education needs and disabilities (SEND) provision is essential to challenge deeply-rooted societal deficit-based assumptions and stigmatisation that can have detrimental impacts on children and young people’s life experiences. In this UK-Vietnam collaborative project we aimed to uncover the ‘linguaging of disability and inclusion’, using Vietnamese primary teacher education as an illustrative case study with experiential insights gathered from primary school teachers, leaders and teacher educators. This paper presents findings from our six in-depth qualitative interviews. Our analytical framework, informed by key concepts in translanguaging and affective pedagogies, enables us to uncover nuances in meanings that went beyond solely Vietnamese-English linguistic translations, to take account of semiotic understandings, body language, and movement. Key findings revealed a prevailing medical-based terminology associated with SEND, practice-based contradictions attached to bureaucratic recognitions of disability, as well as repertoires associated with ‘circles of friendship’. Our paper opens up an international dialogue that both challenges potentially homogenising and harmful labelling processes and celebrates the sharing of asset-based languaging practices.

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Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation (2022), over one billion people, amounting to approximately 15% of the global population, currently experience disability: a number that is growing, resulting from increases in ageing populations and non-communicable diseases. The WHO refer to disability as ‘part of being

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human' and place emphasis on the impact of the environment on a person's experience of, and extent of, disability: 'inaccessible environments create barriers that often hinder the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others' (WHO 2022). In this paper we are concerned with how teacher education and education provision more generally, create in/accessible environments through exploring what the language of inclusion and/or exclusion looks like in practice.

Whilst to some extent there is a shared international language framing inclusive education and disability, there are inevitably many nuances tied to historical, political, cultural, and linguistic contexts at local and national levels. In this paper, we, a UK-Vietnamese research team, worked collaboratively to deconstruct the 'linguaging of disability and inclusion', using insights from Vietnamese primary teachers, leaders, and teacher educators as illustrative of this process. By illuminating the perspectives of six educational professionals working in different areas of SEND education we aimed to uncover some of the inequities in professional education in SEND and to use this as a transformative stimulus for making recommendations for new avenues of teaching practice and teacher education.

Our literature review establishes a critical overview of problematic homogenised language use and models of disability that in the long-term can impact upon children's experiences of belonging and inclusion in the classroom and wider school and society. We then explore this problematisation further in our analytical framework: drawing on interdisciplinary literature as a way to productively reimagine the languaging of disability and inclusion and with it inform professional development opportunities for teachers/teacher educators at all stages of their careers.

International context

International legislation such as the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) urges participating countries, of which Vietnam and the UK are signatories, to acknowledge four general principles in their provision of services for children:

- (1) Non-discrimination (article 2)
- (2) Best interest of the child (article 3)
- (3) Right to life survival and development (article 6)
- (4) Right to be heard (article 12) (UNICEF, 1989)

To achieve these principles countries must ensure that all children receive adequate education that 'develops every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full' (UNICEF 1989). This has implications for initial teacher training (ITT) and continuous professional development (CPD) to meet a wide range of individual abilities and needs.

The Warnock Report, published in 1978 in the UK, had implications for special education provision both nationally and internationally, with an underlying principle that education aims should be consistent across all children and young people, and acknowledgement that the methods for achieving them may differ (Lindsay *et al.* 2020). Key aspects of the Warnock Report were a critique of terminology in the areas

of disability, integration, and inclusion: aspects that we explore further in our literature review.

A critical approach to categorisation and models of disability

SEND is a term that has different meanings and uses according to its context, such as its use across national legislation and local policy across different countries, or its use in the classroom by individual practitioners. Whilst the term SEND can be used to signpost support, the label can also be used in a detrimental way, as can be the case with assigning labels to any group in society, leading to potential stigmatisation and exclusion. Labels are contextualised differently according to different models of disability. This differing contextualisation is evident when considering the medical model of disability that locates a disability within a person, or as governing a person, as compared to a social model of disability that focuses on the environment as a promoter or inhibitor of learning, or the affirmation model that perceives impairments as a core part of a person's being and of their experience (Cameron *et al.* 2008). Indeed, a general principle of the Warnock Report (1978) was a shift away from dichotomous terminology emanating from medical models of disability, to one that considered a spectrum of severity of learning difficulties and disabilities (Lindsay *et al.* 2020).

Humphrey *et al.* (2013) refer to students with SEND as comprising one of the most vulnerable groups of learners. Algraigray and Boyle (2017), in their review of SEND literature in combination with Becker's labelling theory, consider the advantages and disadvantages of using the SEND label and explore the important question of power in terms of who determines and assigns labels to children and young people with SEND. In consideration of such issues their findings indicate a stronger sense of harm caused by the labelling, which can negatively impact upon the education and employment trajectories of young people. Their findings suggest that 'conceptualising disability and impairment according to medical and social models allows professionals to classify people with SEND according to normalising judgements of diagnosis and identification' (Algraigray and Boyle 2017, p. 1). Consequently, Algraigray and Boyle (2017) recommend changing the label to be less harmful. However, this raises questions as to whether any label would have the same implications.

Alderson explored the ways in which the rights of school students with SEND need to be considered from a whole-school perspective, in terms of the rights of all school students 'through methods that are principled, humane, cost effective and democratic' (Alderson 2018, p. 176). Alderson (2018) argued that respect for rights need to be developed in multifaceted ways: through deepened understandings of social and medical models of disability; through carefully informed choices about SEND and educational psychology services; and through inclusive approaches whereby all students learn to live and work together, or in cases where this is not possible that respect develops towards the separate lives of students with and without SEND. Importantly, Alderson (2018) concluded that policies related to inclusive education and special school education need to be interconnected with larger political concerns. Alderson's (2018) point makes us consider the bigger, long-term, picture of lifelong inclusive opportunities for young people with SEND: such as an improved societal harmony gained from more diverse workforces. We propose that we need to consider what we have to gain from children with SEND meeting

their full potential, such as what they bring to the workforce and society in terms of what they can contribute, in addition to money saved from endless benefits paid out to people who are prevented from working because of their unmet potential by discourses of society.

Our paper is framed within a critical approach that problematises the proposition that global education provision tends to adopt a medical approach to SEND that focuses on treatment of the individual and locates a disability within the person. Rather, we favour a social model of disability which focuses on the environment as a promoter or inhibitor of learning. Similarly, we question the affirmation model where impairments are perceived as a core part of a person's being and of their experience (Cameron *et al.* 2008). The medical (individual) model of disability sees a problem in an individual's features, and therapy and education as modifying the individual by the cultural norms of normality (Oliver 1996). In a social model the learners need to acquire the skills that were previously or are normally automatic with a focus on how they learn, as well as what they need to learn and ensuring their psychological well-being is enhanced simultaneously. Adaptations to the environment to suit the individual are part of this according to the social model of disability (Abberley 1987, Oliver 1996, Scotch and Schriener 1997), in which disability is considered a condition caused by cultural prejudices, inadequate societal services, and physical environments which are notable to meet the different physical and mental human variations (e.g. impairments) that appear in any particular community. This leads to seeing the whole of society (and changing the circumstances) as the object of actions to be taken with the aim of full integration/inclusion into society (e.g. Oliver 1996)

Exploring meanings of the 'inclusive classroom' for children with SEND

Continuing a focus on the languaging of SEND provision, the Warnock Report (1978) called for a shift away from the use of the 'integrated' school/classroom towards the 'inclusive' school/classroom: 'this was an important conceptual difference whereby children were seen as belonging within a group (inclusion) rather than as outsiders admitted into an existing group (integration)' (Lindsay *et al.* 2020, p. 10). In this section we draw on literature that illustrates what an 'inclusive classroom' looks like in one particular SEND context as a way to interrogate this further: with the view that 'inclusion' and 'inclusivity' are also potentially taken-for-granted term that require deconstructing.

Focusing on students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Sheehy *et al.* (2013) vignette study critically examines understandings of inclusive classrooms: questioning whether the continued focus on pedagogical practices adequately acknowledge issues of inclusion, as well as the extent to which effective education for children with ASD can form part of an effective education for all. The responses from Sheehy *et al.* (2013) vignettes indicate that young children with ASD in many countries are likely to be placed within mainstream education. Whilst being placed within a mainstream setting as opposed to a specialised separate provision may benefit some young people this may not be the case for all and is a complex issue for which decision-making processes require interrogation.

Sheehy *et al.* (2013) study found that differentiation was a key aspect of pedagogy, both in terms of the curriculum content and everyday teaching practice, and mirrored

characteristics of inclusive pedagogy derived from their systematic literature reviews. They concluded that ‘everyday classroom practice is seen as the key part of inclusive pedagogy’, although emphasise the continued uncertainty of the extent to which this informs part of a ‘learning for all’ within the class (Sheehy *et al.* 2013, p. 13). Merry (2020) raises the important question of whether inclusion policies for children with ASD deliver educational justice and the extent to which ‘inclusion’ comprises not only meaningful access, but also an environment that is conducive to wellbeing and that facilitates a sense of belonging. Merry concludes that overall, notwithstanding the specifics of individual contexts, ‘both an attitude and policy of inclusion must permit parents to choose pragmatic alternatives, i.e. different learning environments, if educational justice is to remain the overriding goal’ (2020: 9).

Our reading of the literature leads us to suggest that external factors need to be interrogated in assessing both the challenges and effective aspects of inclusivity within a mainstream setting, such as resources and finance. For example, considerations need to be made as to the reasons behind decisions: such as whether there are enough special school placements and/or whether a child has been placed within a mainstream setting due to the cost for the local authority. There is also the important question of whether teachers have been adequately prepared to teach children with ASD and additional SEND contexts.

Methodology

Overarching research project

This project is one part of a larger research project, the ‘Enhancing Teacher Education Programme’ funded by the World Bank and the Vietnamese Government informed by a collaboration between teacher education researchers from Birmingham City University in the UK working and academics from universities across Vietnam. The aim of the overarching collaboration was to create an open, collegiate space for sharing both challenges as well as inspiring practices in teacher education as a way to learn from and value contributions across different cultures, diverse traditions and experiences.

Our project and research team

The project reported on in this paper explored the views and experiences of primary school teachers and professionals working in the field of primary and special education in Vietnam’s capital city of Hanoi and its surrounding region. Our research was framed around the following questions:

- What are the experiences of teachers in urban and rural primary schools of ITT and CPD to support inclusion, diversity and special educational needs in Vietnam?
- What does SEND and inclusive practice look like in primary schools in Vietnam?
- How can practicing primary school teachers be better supported in the classroom to develop more inclusive provision for children with SEND?
- What should be included about inclusion, diversity and special educational needs in **all** teacher education programmes in Vietnam?

Our methods included an online survey for primary school teachers across Vietnam (Blackburn *et al.* 2022) as well as six in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews focused on in this paper.

The complexities of working with translation

The six interviews took place between November 2021 and February 2022 and were all conducted in Vietnamese. Thu and Tiana, the Vietnamese half of our research team, carried out the interviews online using Microsoft Teams as the research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and were later translated into English using a combination of the transcription facility on Teams, google translate, and Tiana's additional translations using her English skills and informal translating experience. The whole translation process was not without its complexities and raised some important ethical considerations and learning for us as an international interdisciplinary research team. In discussing this further, we differentiate between the terms 'interpreter', referring to face-to-face interaction, and 'translator' referring to translation from written texts, and acknowledge that each comes with its own unique challenges (Temple and Edwards 2002). As Vietnamese was the first language of all the participants and the half of the research team carrying out the primary data collection, in this section we focus our discussion primarily on the process of translation. Potential challenges can arise regarding the ownership of translated language content, and 'assumptions about community familiarity and cultural similarity between researchers, translators, and participants' (Berman and Tyyskä 2011, p. 186). In our study, Tiana was performing the role of a non-professional translator who had also been involved in carrying out the data collection and whose own academic expertise was in Chemistry, and therefore outside of the research focus of this paper. Tiana had not met any of the participants previously. We together discussed that Tiana occupying a more detached position, in both the subject matter and participant familiarity, would hopefully reduce potential bias in the translation process. Throughout this process, the UK team were relying on discussions in our online meetings to develop cultural understandings of the Vietnamese SEND context, as we did not have the community familiarity that Thu and Tiana had. This formed an important basis of our evolving translanguaging framework. We found ourselves spending more time discussing concepts as opposed to words: aspects which we explore further in the 'semiotic systems' element of our later analysis. Throughout our online meetings and the writing of this paper, we had to consider the non-neutrality of language, the hidden power dynamics within the presentation of words in another language, and the challenges faced by interpreters and translators when locating and presenting corresponding (or absent) cultural realities (Puttick 2021). The power-embedded process of translating data from another language for an English-speaking academic audience presented us with an array of practical and ideological questions concerning the level of detail chosen in the transcription, and of the way in which the translations are physically presented in print (Nikander 2008): aspects importantly informing our decisions to include longer quotes in an unedited format to help build cultural context, as well as the inclusion of a glossary at the end of the paper.

Introducing our research participants

In this section we introduce our interview participants and their workplaces, with pseudonyms used for all names in order to maintain confidentiality, in accordance with our ethical procedures.

Interviews were carried out with four teachers, two of whom had roles on the school leadership team. The four teachers worked in a variety of schools including three public sector (comprehensive) schools: one of them a general primary school, and two at an ‘integrated school’, with a specialist special education department. Another teacher worked at a private sector school. Two further interviews were conducted with professionals who had another involvement in teacher education at a training and policy level to add further perspectives to the data.

School-based teachers/leaders

Yen (participant 1) is a newly qualified teacher and has been teaching for two years in a primary school in Hanoi. He is a primary teacher graduate and also took a subject specialist special education module as part of his undergraduate degree. Am (participant 2) has been teaching at a private sector primary school for 14 years in an urban setting and is also the headteacher of the school. She is a primary teacher graduate. Linh (participant 3) is a graduate of special education. She is the vice-principal of an integrated primary school in Hanoi that specialises in special education and she is also the manager of the school’s special education department. At the start of her interview Linh wanted to share that rather than answering the interview questions from her own personal opinion, she was rather acting as a representative on behalf of her colleagues too: ‘what I shared is also the shared opinion of my colleagues. I act as a representative to express our thoughts, our wishes, our aspirations’. Mai (participant 5) is also a graduate of special education and has been teaching for six years at the same integration school as Linh in Hanoi. The integrated school has both classes solely for children with SEND as well as integrated classes for children with and without SEND.

Teacher education professionals

Huong (participant 4) works as the vice principal in the teacher education faculty of a university in Vietnam and manages the training courses for the faculty. Trinh (participant 6) is Dean of the primary education department of a regional training school for educational officers. Her team’s job is to do the training related to the training of primary school teachers and staff in Hanoi city. She has primary teacher education training.

Analytical framework: thinking through translanguaging to explore SEND teaching practice and teacher development

Responding to the research team

In our first paper (Blackburn *et al.* 2022) our theoretical approach was informed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) to aid in our explorations of the ecologies of primary school inclusive practice for children with SEND in ITT and CPD in Vietnam. In this paper, we turn to approaches within the fields of applied linguistics, particularly drawing on key concepts in languaging and translanguaging. Through our research questions and data

collection we aim to explore new innovative approaches to development in teacher education that intersect and learn from cross-cultural perspectives, in this paper using the data from the Vietnamese teachers and teacher education professionals to speak to this aim.

We came to translanguaging initially as a way to productively address some of the complexities of the research process, that took place online across two countries, languages, and time zones within the context of a global health pandemic. Our research team comprises expertise across diverse research disciplines, including specialisms in SEND (Carolyn and Thu), Chemistry (Tiana), and refugee family and community education (Mary-Rose). As discussed earlier regarding the complexities of the translation process, through our regular online research meetings we developed ways to communicate differences and similarities in lexicon and understandings of inclusion and SEND across Vietnamese and UK contexts, whilst always remaining mindful of the sensitivities around language and potential misunderstandings. Rather than solely focusing on literal lexical translations of key vocabulary, such as ‘inclusion’, we have rather used words as discussion points from which to draw out multiple contextual meanings. This includes meanings rooted within histories, political changes, and education spaces that have contributed to our dialogues around shared meanings of current inclusive education practices in Vietnam and the UK, as well as our future thinking. Through this negotiated process, translanguaging for us became a ‘teachable pedagogic resource’ (Arthur and Martin 2006) from which we in the research team were all learning and which helped to shape our analytical framework and our later recommendations.

Whilst ‘special education’ and its acronym ‘SEND’ are used internationally as part of inclusive education policies, as discussed in our literature review, this label/category has the danger, like any categorising term, of being homogenising, added to which the category may not cross-cultural contexts in the same way. Translanguaging, within our ecological systems lens, therefore assisted us in making sense of trans/multi-modal practices of SEND teaching practice and teacher education practice from a broad perspective: pushing us to continuously delve deeper into this perhaps taken-for-granted term and to challenge one another to ask questions across Vietnamese and UK contexts. In analysing the individual interview transcripts in Vietnamese and English we chose some key concepts from the translanguaging field to serve a specific purpose for the aims of our research, elucidated further in [Table 2](#) below.

Our framework uses ‘repertoire’ as a starting point. Repertoire was a term used by Gumperz in the 1960s to describe the multiple languages in one community (Rymes 2014a). The term has since developed in its usage, for example to describe the multiple forms of linguistic and non-linguistic communication modes used by individuals as a ‘communicative repertoire’ (Rymes 2010) and in education research: ‘as a way to describe the diverse forms of knowledge that students bring into the classroom’ (Rymes 2014b, p. 9). In our research we propose that SEND is a form of language that has distinct characteristics and considerations according to the individual communicator that should be valued and drawn upon as resources in the classroom and that the repertoires of primary teachers and teacher educators in SEND should consider some distinct yet interconnecting key dimensions (see [Table 1](#)). This framework informs part of our contribution to the teacher education field.

Table 1. Interview participants: summary of qualifications.

Gender	Working places	Training expertise	Level of training	Number of years teaching
5 female	City (Ha Noi capital) 5 Province (Nam Dinh province) 1	Special Education 2	Bachelor 3 Master 3 (postgraduate 1)	Under 5 years: 1
1 male		Primary Education 4		From 5–10 years 1
				From 10–20 years 4

Table 2. Analytical framework: the repertoire of primary teachers/teacher educators in SEND.

Concept:	Purpose for our research:
‘Languaging of inclusion’: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asset versus deficit • multisensory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenge prevailing deficit language/using the assets of the interlocutor/communicator as a starting point for classroom practice • exploring possible lack of confidence/teacher development for non-SEND specialist teacher in multisensory modes • recognising and valuing another level of teacher-student relationship that goes beyond solely curriculum content and assessment • supporting us as a research team to understand cross-cultural contextual meanings of SEND practice, e.g. metaphors and symbols • recognising both challenges and inspiring practice that is already happening as a result of practice experiences/peer sharing/post qualification training/leadership strategies
‘Affect and emotion in pedagogical practice’ ‘Semiotic systems’	
‘Resources’: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional development • shared learning with peers • learning from leadership 	

Literature informing our framework

‘Languaging of inclusion’

Walton (2015) elucidates that the term ‘languaging’, in the second language acquisition field, has traditionally focused on the connection between language and cognitive activity (e.g. Swain 2006). In her work exploring the ‘language of inclusive education’ Walton explains the way in which she appropriates the term languaging to ‘indicate the human actors who do the languaging, and also to emphasise the role that language plays in the development of the idea of inclusive education’ (Walton 2015, p. 7). Walton summarises:

Inclusive education is (and has been) languaged by those who write and speak it. These ‘languagers’ are often people with power, either because of their status or because of their influence. Like other languages, inclusive education is spoken with many ‘accents’ and written in many styles. People are also languaged by inclusive education. These people include actors in the education sphere, but especially teachers and learners, particularly those who are devalued by society and marginalised in education (Walton 2015, p. 3).

Walton’s (2015) work resonates with part of our research aims in this project to explore the language of SEND inclusive education from the perspectives of Vietnamese teachers and teacher educators who may for complex reasons be marginalised from policy making: this research therefore opens up agentic spaces for their voices to be heard. Through this we aim to draw attention to the ways in which teachers may subconsciously frame children with SEND in deficit terms. Rather than foregrounding such examples in a critical way, we rather use this as a stimulus to think about how this can be transformed into an asset-based approach

that starts from the position of what the repertoire of the child ‘has rather than what it lacks’ (Lorimer-Leonard 2017, p. 7). We propose that such subconscious aspects of deficit languaging are relevant, albeit in different guises, to teaching practice internationally with any group that is marginalised (e.g. Kendall and Puttick 2020).

We add to our use of the languaging concept consideration of the use of multisensory communicative modes, attuned to the wide research that supports the use of multisensory environments for children with SEND (e.g. Pagliano 2017). Considering that only a third of our interview participants had a specialist qualification in SEND we wanted to explore whether any points emerged from the interviews relating to multisensory modes, such as challenges or recognised needs for further training.

‘Affect and emotion in pedagogical practice’

Added to our theorising we also draw on literature that brings to the fore the importance of emotion and effect in the teaching and learning process. Jensen (2014), for example, refers to the embedded place of emotion and affect within languaging; arguing that in linguistics research they have tended to be viewed as distinct entities. Considering how we could productively apply this aspect of languaging into teacher education we add to this Hickey-Moody’s and Haworth (2009) conceptualisation of an ‘affective pedagogy’ and use our interview data to think about the importance of the languaging of emotion and affect in the teaching and learning process with children with SEND.

‘Semiotic systems’

This section of our framework is informed by Blackledge and Creese’s (2017) notion of the ‘semiotic repertoire’, that incorporates symbolic modes of communication beyond orality, such as body language, movement, and multisensory communication and is also used to account for the ways in which individuals exercise choices over the ‘resources’ they use to communicate in different situations. For our research this provides us with a tool for deconstructing categorisations within the field of SEND, as well as in making meaning of culturally specific metaphorical terms in order to learn from current trans-SEND effective practice and challenges.

‘Resources’

In the final section of our analytical framework we are interested in the evidence of resources in teaching/teacher education practice emanating from such aspects as direction from school leadership; experiences gained from professional development activities, and resources informed by peer sharing of effective practice. The recognition of resources, or indeed lack of resources, has important implications for school-home relations and developing the role that parents of children with SEND play in their experiences at school. Price-Mitchell, for example, refers to the need for a paradigm shift from a ‘unidirectional’ to a ‘multi-directional’ model of school-home that becomes a collective, dialogic process where teachers and parents learn from one another and prescribed roles are disrupted (Price-Mitchell 2009 in Kendall and Puttick 2020).

Findings and discussion

In this section we apply the key concepts from our analytical framework to the insights gathered through our six interviews with educational professionals and end our findings section with some provocations, informed by our participants, for transforming teacher education in SEND.

Languageing: deficit versus asset

In many cases our interview participants expressed themselves using a mixture of what we are referring to as deficit and asset-based language, and we acknowledge that the use of deficit language may at times be subconscious and a product/outcome of societal discourses of disability. Throughout the majority of the interviews, a common thread that emerged was a binary between ‘normal’ students and ‘special students’.

... in the last two years I have been a homeroom teacher and have a student who has been treated for autism. And it is very fortunate that he was discovered by his family very early and given treatment, so that his symptoms gradually disappeared, and he soon reintegrated with his classmates. But this is like a disease, if we detect it early, we treat it early, there is still a chance to recover, but the longer it is, the problem of their children will develop and when their children grow up, it will be a very disadvantageous thing for the family itself, as well as the society (Yen, primary school teacher).

In this case Yen’s language use parallels that of medical models of disability (e.g. Oliver 1996) in which disability, in this case autism, is seen as an individual medical problem that requires treatment, with the implication that it is a condition that needs to be eliminated. In the case of another participant, Trinh, who had been in the teacher education profession for much longer than Yen medical terminology also emerged and in many respects paralleled Yen’s:

I take a special case such as a child with a language disorder for example. These children must have a different approach to language because there are many mechanisms of language disorders ... In the process of working, I found that the teachers often had problems with the psychophysiological characteristics of their students. Usually, for example, if we receive a student with a language disorder or a mild motor disability, we still have to understand the psychological problems caused by that weakness (Trinh, Dean of primary education regional training department).

Another aspect that connected Yen and Trinh was their graduate backgrounds with both having completed a general primary teacher degree. In contrast to this, three of the other participants, Mai, Am and Linh, two of whom studied in a special education faculty and work at the same integrated school in Hanoi, articulated a language use that was inherently more asset-based. Mai’s words imply that she starts from the position of the repertoire of the individual child, or the teacher’s responsibility to unearth what the child’s repertoire is:

... teachers must have an approach to discover the ability of students, this student has an ability to learn, or this student has the ability to approach through communication since

each special student will definitely have a unique ability. Elementary teachers must find out, and schools can create sharing sessions with both elementary and special education teachers so that both parties can support each other in finding the child's ability then suggesting methods for helping the child (Mai, teacher at integrated primary school).

Another participant, Am, also refers to this responsibility of the school to recognise the abilities of each individual child, suggesting that it needs to come from an improved observation process where teachers are supported to carry out in-depth observations:

it should be from the school's side, the school should also strengthen teachers to attend class visits, but it must be really comfortable, being able to observe the learning style of the students, in order to recognize the children's abilities and to provide methods and directions to exploit their true abilities (Am, teacher and headteacher at a private school).

Linh's approach similarly starts from the repertoire of the child and also implies a responsibility, in this case from a broader perspective on the part of the institution of the whole school and its leadership:

Our school has been established for nearly 30 years and during which we are also trying every day to do our political duty well to teach our children, take care of them and create opportunities for children with disabilities to learn to integrate into the school environment (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school – participant 3).

Linh continued to elaborate in more depth the vision of the school in terms of opening up opportunities for children with SEND:

... the third thing that we also want is career orientation for students. Because for special children, the sooner the career orientation, the earlier it is accessible to the child, the better, it needs to be early and continuous for the child. Being trained, introduced, and built a program that orients careers, jobs suitable for special children, approaching from the age of 6 to 10, divided into stages for example (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school).

The way in which Mai and Linh focus on the abilities and long-term career prospects of children sits in juxtaposition to the problems raised by Algraigray and Boyle (2017) in terms of the potentially harmful effects of labelling on the employment and educational trajectories of children.

Languageing: "invisible parents" versus "parents as companions"

Perspectives on parents was prominent amongst all of the participants and in this section we highlight a number of examples to show the framing of parents in deficit versus asset terms in order to shape future thinking in this area.

And at the same time, the fact that parents bring their children to integrate with other children, invisibly push their children into a special object in the eyes of other children ... this invisibly creates an impact and is also a part of the burden on teachers in public schools ... that is quite a lot of pressure when they themselves only have a very vague or even non-specialized understanding of the field of inclusive education (Yen, primary school teacher).

In this example, Yen appears to be articulating that parents should not send their children to general primary schools that do not have specialist education teachers and

highlights pressures on teachers such as himself who feel at a deficit with their own knowledge and professional development in this area. A different perspective comes from another participant, Am, who is critical of parents who withhold their children from schooling:

in a class where there are one or few students who suffer from some syndromes and are not studying equally or have difficulties, some parents do not agree for their children to attend that class, which means people still perceive it in a selfish way (Am, teacher and headteacher at a private school).

Am's words imply a potential stigmatisation on the part of parents who do not want to have their children singled out in mainstream schools. This is echoed by other participants in terms of a deficit in knowledge on the part of parents:

the first difficulty is about the parents of the students because there are still a lot of parents who do not have sufficient awareness about their child's disability to be able to accompany their children in the development and learning process. So, there are also situations like parents leave their children to the mercy of the school and the teacher (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school).

In differing ways Yen's, Am's and Linh's words all foreground the delicate balance of responsibility that is needed between the teachers, the school as a whole, and the parents. The participants' words also bring to the fore the potential pressures that teachers face if they do not have sufficient support from parents or specialised knowledge themselves. This leads to considerations of examples where this relationship is working well or of future thinking to improve relationships. In our semiotic dimension of our translanguaging framework Linh, referred to 'the 3-sides of school' that she saw as key elements for a successful relationship and to break down barriers at all levels, that is 'the school-the family-and society'. She elaborates:

"between the family, the school, and society there must always be a companionship . . . for example, when parents are aware of the child's disability, the child's ability, then the parents will accompany the school and the teacher in the teaching process . . . we have not been able to do it yet, but we really want to do it, which is the cooperation between teachers and parents in building an individual education plan for each student (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school – participant 3).

The development of the 3-sides of school resonates with Price-Mitchell's (2009) positing of the need for a multilateral approach to relationships that schools have with parents. Another participant, Trinh, emphasises the essential need for this companionship and cooperation from early on in the child's entry to school:

Even from the first meeting, teachers need to share the wish of understanding from parents to teachers as well as from teacher to parents. It will be better to cooperate, and when teachers discover those cases, they won't face such strong reactions from parents . . . Our education system only focuses on teachers but forgets about the student's family, including grandparents and parents. So, I think if it's possible to come up with content that works synchronously for both, it will be good. . . sometimes it is not academic documents, it can be tips, or ways of doing things . . . that make parents at various levels can use (Trinh, Dean of primary education regional training department).

In this example, Trinh appears to point to the parents as resources that need to be utilised in different ways and at every step of the education process. This parallels wider research referring to the essential role that parents play in the inclusive classroom, the differing attitudes of parents according to the type of disability and the acknowledgement that this is a neglected area of research (e.g. Paseka and Schwab 2020). We propose that parents are an underused yet productive resource: a resource that requires long-term investment on the part of teachers and schools yet is a complex and sensitive relationship to manage amidst wider school pressures, particularly in mainstream public schools.

Affect and emotion: “a united group and big family”

One such way that this complex relationship could be developed is shown where our participants talked about emotions and affective relationships with parents:

the teachers themselves have to treat the students as their own children to be able to be close to them. I have taught here for many years and also talked with many parents, they also loved me very much and sometimes considered me as a family member. I think, in order for parents to understand, to make the class group a united group and consider it as a big family, the most important thing is that the teacher, the teacher must be very sincere, love, and care for students (Am, teacher and headteacher at a private school).

Here, Am emphasises the need for love and care of students and the need to consider the class, and indeed the whole school, as a family. She continues to elaborate that in order for this to happen, the teachers and the school leadership needs to recognise and understand the emotional needs of parents:

And I communicate with parents so that they can feel that today, student A or student B is making progress, it is a great effort and it is really remarkable, and make parents feel that the joy of other people’s children is also their own children’s joy and their own joy. And if we want to do that, we must first pay attention to the psychology of parents, so that parents can have humanity and love in a class . . . I have to show that I am very understanding, empathetic and share the difficulties and questions that parents are facing (Am, teacher and headteacher at a private school).

Linh, another participant in a school leadership role similarly recognised the importance of affective relationships in building an inclusive ethos, with her emphasis focusing particularly on developing support between teachers:

we need to build an understanding with each other, understanding the difficulties of teachers in special education, even our teachers in inclusive education also face difficulties since our school’s model is to have inclusive students with disabilities in every class . . . The companion here is that we always have the encouragement of comrades, which is spiritual (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school – participant 3).

Echoing both Am and Linh’s words, Trinh also adds the need for teachers to build a community of understanding amongst all students:

it’s very impressive if teachers create a learning environment where students know how to help each other, not feel sorry for each other, this is the difference . . . In fact, there are students that cannot even self-serve, it is only because of sympathy and love that make teachers become more like a mother at school (Trinh, Dean of primary education regional training department – participant 6).

Such aspects illuminate an idea of ‘professional love’ (Page 2018) that was also prominent in our survey analysis in the first part of our research (Blackburn *et al.* 2022). In our survey, professional love emerged strongly with regard to the importance of relational and emotional characteristics and skills of teachers, and through our interviews this concept is extended to include the need for professional love on the part of everyone in the school community: the teachers, leadership team, students, parents, and in the overall ethos of the school. Developing this community of support based on love can then be more productively used as an ‘affective pedagogy’ (Hickey-Moody and Haworth 2009) in teacher education in which trainee teachers can be supported to realise the importance of holistic and emotional aspects in the teaching and learning process. Turning now to one of our findings in the dimension of our analytical framework on ‘semiotic systems’ enables us to expand our thinking from a cross-cultural perspective on the move towards more respectful relationships in which all parties in the school are valued (Alderson 2018).

Semiotics: ‘circles of friendship’

The term ‘circle of friendship’ emerged from one of our participants:

I build a circle of homeroom teachers of each class, the former supporting the latter with expertise, homework, or in life. That circle creates a close connection between classes, between teachers, teachers understand each other and remind each other. I can change the personnel, their positions in the circle, monthly. We have such support in terms of management. We always share with each other, connect with each other in many activities, so that teachers can be relieved when sharing, through sharing to understand each other, we love each other, and we support each other . . . that circle works clockwise, arranging personnel positions clockwise and the latter supporting the former. When applying the circle form, when arranging positions, myself as a manager, I also have an intention for teachers who are close can help each other in which ways (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school).

As the term ‘circle of friendship’ was a term that neither of the UK research team had come across, we asked our Vietnamese colleagues to elaborate in one of our online research meetings. Thu explained that this is an idea rather than a physical activity: a concept and approach to inclusion in teacher education in Vietnam with which many people are familiar. Thu continued to explain that whilst it is a common approach that is used widely across Vietnam with student teachers it varies across Vietnam in how it is implemented. This means that your classmates need to be responsible for supporting and helping each other in learning. In inclusive education in Vietnam, she explained, teacher education approaches always attach importance to creating community links, for instance support from friends with students with disabilities is an important factor but this can be very dependent upon resources of the school or training provider. Therefore, although the idea is a positive one, how it works in practice can be more problematic.

In terms of expectations from school leaders, participants further mentioned the support and guidance needed from leadership to support them in their role. This included visiting classes regularly to provide expert advice, providing reserve

teachers to work with groups of children with SEND to alleviate teacher pressure, allowing differentiated lessons and exams, sharing their expertise with teachers, ensuring the curriculum is career oriented and providing support and specialist training and conditions, including the ‘circles of friendship’ discussed above.

Resources: multisensory

In the final section of our framework, we turn to further consideration of resources: some of which have already been alluded to in the examples so far. The evidence of multisensory practices in the classroom have been shown to have a positive impact on the experiences of children with disabilities and learning difficulties. For example, Young et al.’s (2011) study shows the importance of multisensory storytelling approaches with children with profound intellectual learning disabilities. In our interviews, Linh, using the use of puppets as an example, spoke of multisensory communicative modes as integral for the development of ITT and in developing inclusive classrooms where all children work together:

we also found that for special children, the approach through the arts is very effective . . . if we have teachers or can have training geared towards the arts that are relevant to the child, so that we have an opportunity throughout the program, we would also be able to include them in schools to increase the educational effectiveness . . . in that performance with puppets we have both our special students and normal students working together to create such a performance and there develops a very strong connection (Linh, vice principal of integrated primary school – participant 3).

Notably, evidence of multisensory aspects was not prominent in the languaging of our participants, leading us to consider whether perhaps this implies a training need in this area, or whether it could be due to wider pressures on teachers as a number of teachers referred to challenges emanating from large class sizes that impacted on the opportunity they had to implement individual and creative approaches. Indeed, our teacher education participant referred explicitly to this issue as potentially hindering the development of inclusive education, aspects which we propose are paralleled from a wider international perspective:

especially in public schools, there are so many students, to meet this diversity is really difficult. At present, they can only be divided into groups of students with special talents, or groups of students who are in need of support, students who need academic support . . . but in order to meet the characteristics of each student, I think it is a fundamental problem to divide the class, it is very difficult to implement diverse education in such a large class . . . so one more policy is that the size is what is important in making this diversity education doable (Huong, vice principal, university teacher education faculty).

Huong suggested that to improve the effectiveness and quality of diverse education, it was necessary to increase the practice-based aspects of teacher education, with a move away from a theoretically dominated course that gave student teachers more opportunities to apply what they learn on their training to practice: sentiments that were echoed by additional participants. Huong further suggests that students need to develop skills in adapting to changes in teaching methods and content; research skills; independent study skills; and communication skills with parents.

Future thinking for teacher education

In thinking to the future of teaching practice and teacher education, and with it attempting to respond meaningfully to the diverse needs of children with disabilities and learning difficulties across international contexts, we have produced some provocations that have emerged from our thinking through translanguaging as an international interdisciplinary team, combined with the insights of our participants:

- Inclusive education needs to be considered from a whole-school perspective, rather than solely an approach used in classes with children with SEND.
- Researchers and teachers need to be given opportunities to share and learn from challenges and effective practice across international contexts.
- Deficit languaging needs to be foregrounded and transformed through teacher education and professional development into asset-based productive language that works to address challenges in meaningful ways.
- Parents need to be recognised as key to the implementation of inclusive education practices that go beyond the classroom. Whilst recognising the challenges that can be presented by parents, schools also need to work with the challenges and recognise the emotional vulnerabilities of parents that may also require support.
- For teachers who do not have specialisms in SEND, professional development and peer sharing opportunities need to be prioritised including support with observations, expertise sharing, and multisensory practice-based support.
- Trainee and practising teachers need preparation, and ongoing development, for supporting children at a developmental rather than chronological age of development. This will support them to embrace children's capacities individually rather than judging children as deficit based on their age-related expected performance.
- Teachers need theoretical understanding of different models of disability (social, medical and ecological) to prepare them for developing a fully inclusive learning environment that supports all learners regardless of ability or competency.
- A translanguaging framework can be used in international teacher education in SEND and SEND related modules to support trainee teachers to develop an understanding of what an asset-based communicative repertoire approach looks like in practice and to apply this to their teaching context.

Finally, we have developed a shared English-Vietnamese glossary that we encourage teachers working in SEND internationally to add to across languages, considering the semiotic systems in their context, such as the 'circle of friendship' approach in Vietnam. This process can work productively to develop a collaborative international dialogue to learn from challenges and to share inspiring languaging practices across a global community.

Glossary emanating from our research

Inclusive education – Giáo dục hoà nhập
 Special education – Giáo dục chuyên biệt
 Diversity - Đa dạng

Disability – Khuyết tật
 Community support – Hỗ trợ cộng đồng
 Parent support – Hỗ trợ cha mẹ/phụ huynh
 Circle of friendship – Vòng tròn bạn bè

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