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**CONNECTED MINDS, UNITED ACTIONS: Digital and Peer
Collaboration for Inclusion and Sustainability
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ACT 2.2 INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

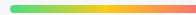
Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Inclusive Practices for Emotionally Safe Classrooms
AKİF SAĞLAM, PhD – MEB, TÜRKİYE

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Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Inclusive Practices for Emotionally Safe Classrooms



Creating welcoming environments where all students feel valued and supported



For educators



From a counselor's perspective



Practical strategies

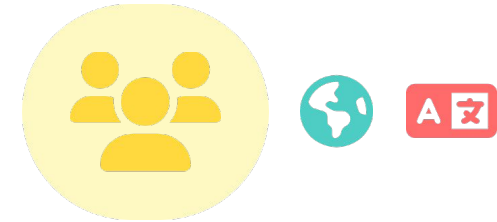
Opening

2/20

Good evening everyone,

It's a pleasure to be here with such a diverse group of educators from different countries. Today, I'm speaking from the perspective of a school counselor—a role where we see not only how students learn, but also how they feel, how they adapt, and how they struggle when their language or culture is different from the dominant classroom environment.

"Linguistic and cultural diversity is not simply an academic challenge. It is deeply connected to students' emotional well-being, their sense of identity, and their belief that they belong in the learning community."



School Counselor's Perspective



Emotional Well-being



Cognitive Needs



Support Systems

Opening (continued)

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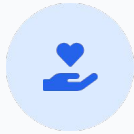


Linguistic and cultural diversity is not simply an academic challenge.

It is deeply connected to students' emotional well-being, their sense of identity, and their belief that they belong in the learning community.



In the next twenty minutes, I will share:



Emotionally Safe

Strategies that create psychological
safety



Culturally Sensitive

Approaches that honor diversity



Practical Applications

Techniques you can use
immediately

Why Inclusion Is a Mental Health Priority

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From a counseling perspective: Inclusion is not only about accessibility—it is about psychological safety.

Students who speak a different language or come from a different cultural background often experience:



Anxiety

About not being understood



Fear

Of making mistakes



Embarrassment

Due to accents



Confusion

Around unfamiliar cultural norms



Trauma

Related to migration or displacement



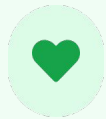
Impact

These experiences directly affect mental health and academic engagement

Why Inclusion Is a Mental Health Priority (continued)

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! These experiences are not minor. They directly affect mental health and academic engagement.



Inclusive Environments

Research shows inclusive environments act as protective factors for students.

🛡️ Students develop stronger resilience

📈 Higher motivation to learn

👥 Deeper social connection



Exclusive Environments

When students feel unsafe or unwelcome, it negatively impacts their well-being.

🧠 Increased anxiety and stress

👎 Lower motivation and engagement

🚫 Reduced sense of belonging

Inclusion heals.



Exclusion harms.

Understanding Linguistic Diversity Through a Counselor's Lens

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A linguistically diverse student is often doing twice the cognitive work of their peers:

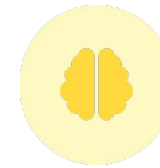
They are learning the content and learning the language of the content at the same time.



Content
Knowledge



Language
Comprehension



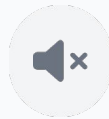
Dual
Cognitive Load

These experiences often lead to emotional responses:



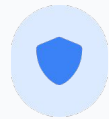
Frustration

Struggles to express thoughts



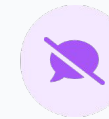
Silence

Avoids participation



Avoidance

Steers clear of challenges



Fear of Speaking

Worries about mistakes



Self-Doubt

Believes they're not smart
enough

 Our goal is to reduce pressure, lower anxiety, and create classroom conditions where students feel safe enough to express themselves.



Counselor's Perspective

As counselors, we know these reactions are emotional responses, not academic limitations.



Emotional Responses

Reactions to language learning challenges



Not Academic Limitations

Language barriers aren't learning disabilities



Safety First

Creating secure environments for expression

Our Goal



Our goal is to reduce pressure, lower anxiety, and create classroom conditions where students feel safe enough to express themselves—even if their words aren't perfect yet.



A. Normalize Mistakes Securely

Teachers should frequently highlight that language errors are a natural part of development.

Example messages students need to hear:

"Your mistakes show that you're learning. Keep going."

Why This Matters

-  Reduces external shame and internal self-criticism
-  Creates a growth mindset around language learning
-  Builds emotional safety in the classroom

"You made a mistake, so you must not be good at this."

"Your mistake helped me understand what you know."

Strategies for Linguistic Inclusion (continued)

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B. Use Emotionally Safe Communication Frames

Students benefit greatly from sentence starters that reduce the fear of speaking:

"These phrases help structure both academic responses and emotional expression, creating a supportive environment where students feel safe to participate."

-  Reduces anxiety
-  Supports cognitive processing
-  Builds emotional resilience



One idea I'd like to share is...

Opens academic participation without fear of judgment

-  Academic safe space



I feel... because...

Validates emotional expression and creates connection

-  Emotional clarity



I think... maybe...

Encourages risk-taking in academic expression

-  Reduces perfectionism

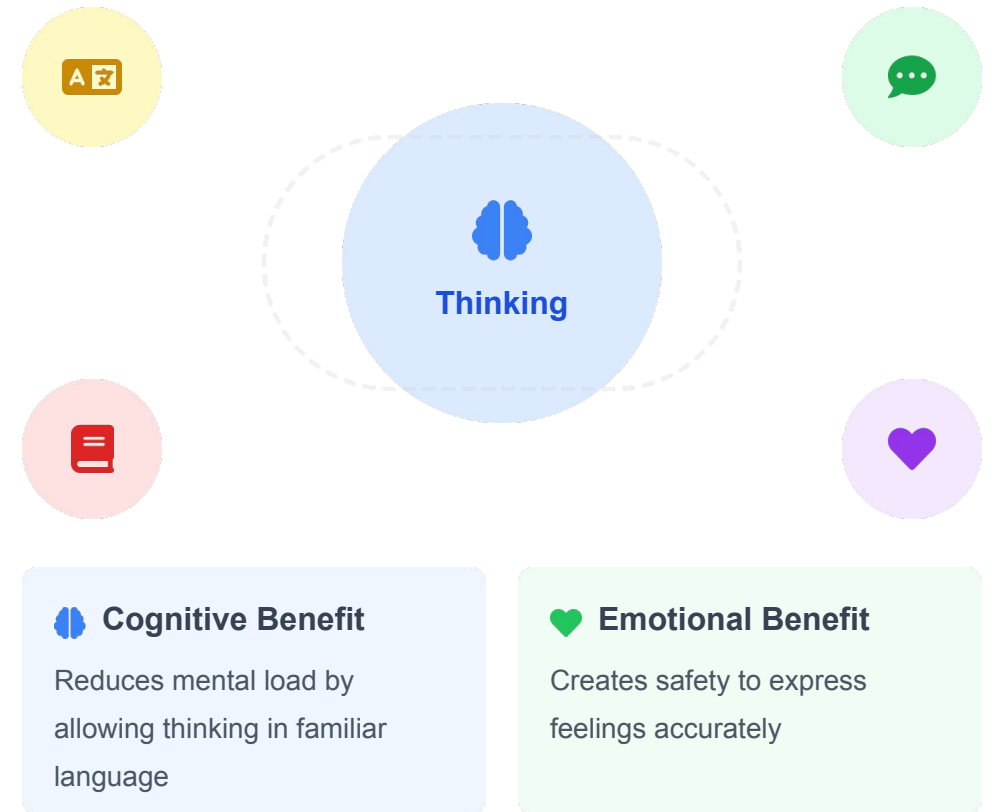
Strategies for Linguistic Inclusion (continued)

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C. Allow Translanguaging for Emotional and Cognitive Relief

- ✓ Students should be allowed to think, brainstorm, and reflect in their own languages
- ✓ They can take notes in their home language or express feelings more accurately using familiar words
- ✓ This supports emotional clarity and reduces cognitive overload

💡 **Key Benefit:** Translanguaging creates a bridge between students' home languages and academic content, making learning more accessible while validating their linguistic identity.





D. Offer Dual Scaffolding: Academic + Emotional



Academic Scaffolds

Visuals, gestures, and simplified instructions are academic scaffolds that support language learning.



Visual Supports

Use images, charts, and realia to make content comprehensible



Simplified Instructions

Break tasks into smaller steps with clear visual cues



Content Delivery

Use familiar contexts and gradually introduce new concepts



Emotional Scaffolds

Emotional scaffolding creates a safe environment where language can flourish.



Short Check-ins

Regular brief interactions to gauge student comfort and understanding



Validating Statements

Acknowledges effort and communicates belief in student abilities



Predictable Routines

Consistent patterns create safety and reduce anxiety



Encouraging Tone

Positive vocal cues signal support and create a welcoming atmosphere



Key Insight: When emotional load decreases, language confidence grows.

E Build Peer Alliances, Not Just Groups

Assign buddy partners who understand empathy—not just language.

Peer alliances reduce isolation and increase belonging.

Why It Matters

- ✓ Creates emotional safety nets
- ✓ Provides authentic language support
- ✓ Builds cross-cultural understanding

Train peers to:



Wait patiently

Allow time for expression



Rephrase kindly

Support without correcting



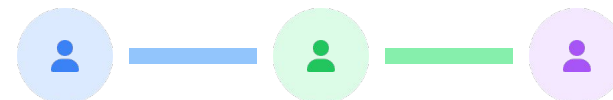
Use gestures

Non-verbal communication



Avoid aggressive correction

Reduce anxiety and embarrassment



Strategies for Linguistic Inclusion (continued)

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F. Provide Alternative Pathways for Expression

Students may not yet have the linguistic tools to express their ideas or emotions verbally.



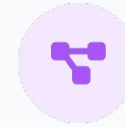
Drawing

Visual representation helps students express complex ideas and emotions.



Acting Out

Physical expression allows students to demonstrate understanding through movement.



Concept Mapping

Visual organization of ideas helps structure thinking and relationships.



Short Videos

Creating videos enables students to combine visual and verbal expression.



Voice Recordings

Audio expression allows students to focus on content rather than writing.



Bilingual Dictionaries

Supporting translation helps students bridge languages and express ideas.



Key benefit: Choice lowers anxiety and reveals strengths hidden behind language barriers.

Understanding Cultural Diversity Through a Counselor's Lens

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Culture influences how students:



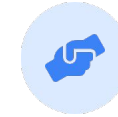
Show Respect

Cultural norms determine gestures, eye contact, and forms of address used to show respect.



Respond to Authority

Students from different cultures may show deference through silence, indirect communication, or specific gestures.



Ask for Help

Cultural backgrounds influence whether students ask for help publicly, privately, or through specific intermediaries.



Group Work Participation

Some cultures emphasize collective decision-making, while others focus on individual contributions.



Express Emotions

Cultural norms dictate whether emotions are expressed openly, reserved, or communicated through non-verbal cues.



Interpret Feedback

Students from different cultures may respond to praise or criticism with humility, pride, or different levels of self-disclosure.



Counselors remind teachers to interpret behaviour through cultural context, not personal judgment.

Understanding Cultural Diversity Through a Counselor's Lens (continued)

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Counselors remind teachers to interpret behaviour through cultural context, not personal judgment.



"Unmotivated"

Appears passive or disengaged

→ Culturally learned form of politeness

In some cultures, direct engagement is considered impolite. Students may show respect through apparent disengagement.



"Rude"

May seem disrespectful or confrontational

→ Respect for silence

Some cultures value thoughtful silence before speaking. What appears rude may be a sign of respect for the speaking turn.



"Passive"

Minimal participation or input

→ Hesitation to stand out

In cultures that value group harmony, students may avoid standing out publicly to maintain collective comfort.



Counselor's Reminder

When interpreting student behavior, ask yourself: "Is this behavior a reflection of my cultural lens, or is it rooted in the student's cultural background?"

Create Predictable, Emotionally Calm Routines

Predictability is safety.

Students from different cultural backgrounds feel more secure when they know exactly:

What will happen in class

Clear structure helps students understand the flow of activities

How to participate

Known protocols reduce anxiety and confusion

How success is measured

Transparent expectations help all students succeed

Implementation Tips:



Use visual agendas
Daily schedules with icons



Consistent instructions
Same words, same order



Routine-based transitions
Predictable patterns between activities

💡 *When students feel safe and secure, they're better able to learn and take risks.*



B. Validate Cultural Identities Openly

Affirming cultural differences creates a sense of belonging and validates students' identities.

"Different cultures see this differently—and that's valuable."

"There's more than one right way to do this."



Benefits: Validation protects identity and increases academic confidence.



C. Avoid Cultural Tokenism

Cultural tokenism occurs when students are asked to represent their entire culture.

❌ **Don't ask:** "What is your culture like?"

✅ **Try asking:** "Would anyone like to share an example from their background?"



Outcome: This respects autonomy and avoids pressure.



D. Respond to Microaggressions Immediately

"Comments about accents, names, clothing, or traditions can be deeply hurtful."

“ In this classroom, every culture deserves respect. Let's rephrase that.

- ✓ This sets boundaries and protects well-being.



E. Integrate Culturally Relevant Stories

"Representation matters."

Using texts, visuals, and examples from many cultures allows students to see their identities mirrored in the curriculum.



Diverse Authors



Cultural Narratives



Global Perspectives



Community Connections

Case Example: Bringing It All Together

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 **Scenario:** Let's imagine a newly arrived student with limited proficiency in the school language. How might we create an inclusive, counselor-informed classroom environment to support their integration?



Visual Agenda

Provides clear structure and reduces uncertainty about classroom activities and routines



Calm Emotional Climate

Creates safety and reduces anxiety, allowing student to focus on learning rather than feeling threatened



Vocabulary Pre-teaching

Using images to introduce key vocabulary before lessons, reducing language barriers



Peer Buddies

Empathetic peer partners who provide support and reduce isolation



Non-verbal Response Options

Providing ways to participate without speaking, such as drawing or using symbols



Culturally Diverse Examples

Weaving examples from many cultures into lessons to increase representation



The Key Message:

"You are safe here. You belong here. Your voice matters—even before your language is fully formed."

Final Reflection and Closing

20/20

"As counselors and educators, we shape the emotional ecology of the classroom. Students learn best when their language, culture, and identity are honored rather than corrected or suppressed."

Building Blocks of Emotionally Safe Classrooms



Small Daily Interactions



Supportive Tone



Intentional Routines



Positive Peer Structures



Culturally Aware
Communication

Our Commitment

Inclusion is not about perfection—it's about consistency. By supporting linguistic and cultural diversity, we are not only improving academic outcomes—we are improving lives.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to inclusive education.



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