

# Lost in Meaning: Validation of Understandings of Inclusive Education in Different Languages and Cultural Contexts

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## Abstract

The term “inclusive education” has become a frequently used keyword for research due to the aim of achieving inclusivity in education and society. The term is used and translated in and across global documents that shape national policy and research as well as international research. The popularity, but also the emergency of, inclusion thus yields to international research that takes place in a multilingual context. However, this goes beyond the ability to speak such languages or translate research findings correctly. In this article, we will discuss the barriers toward **translating “inclusive education”** as a challenging concept across different languages and cultures. As an increasingly popular concept, **“inclusion” is encountered as the topic of several studies from multiple disciplines. Transferring the meaning of “inclusion” can be challenging due to** the global usage of the concept in several contexts. However, there are challenges even when the issue is confined to the educational context. This article will tackle the ways used to validate the translation based on three cases derived from three studies, respectively, international research set in multiple country contexts, research translating sign languages into written language, and multilingual research in a national context. The first case will focus on the **barriers due to the cultural discrepancies between written and sign languages by concentrating on the pragmatic usages of “inclusive education” in Deaf culture in Austria, while the second case examines translingual processes while conducting research on “inclusive education” within the collaboration of Austria and Thailand and presenting research findings in native languages and English. The third case will tackle multilingual and multicultural research on “inclusive education” conducted with migrants in Austria.**

## Keywords

Inclusion, inclusive education, multilingual research, multicultural research, sign language

## Introduction

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the right to education and the goal of achieving universal education has been echoed by several international documents with an emphasis on inclusive education. The Salamanca Statement, which identified inclusive education as the

vision of how to educate children, has been accompanied by several legislative acts at the national level since its declaration. Following the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Sustainable Development Goals, several countries have taken steps to achieve these ambitions through legislation and regulations.

Inclusive education has become a global norm to

achieve across the globe (Powell, Edelstein & Blanck, 2016). As Alur and Timmons (2009) discuss, there are different interpretations of the term “inclusive education” among different countries and the scope of the inclusion changes from one country to another. Hence, sharing knowledge and experience among countries is crucial, which requires research in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

However, inclusive education cannot be defined or understood universally as it requires an in-depth and culture-specific understanding of inclusion (Krischler, Powell & Pin-Ten Cate, 2019). An analysis by Göransson and Nilholm (2014) recognized that most reviews on inclusive education ignore fundamental differences in definitions of inclusion, especially regarding its goals. The four categories regarding inclusion identified by them (placement definition, specified individualized definition, general individualized definition, and community definition) show how diverse definitions have important consequences for research on inclusive education, reforms, or practices. As Krischler et al. (2019, p. 633) suggest, inclusion **“has become a keyword in political and public discussions.” Similarly, the ongoing realities of** inclusive education in different contexts and global efforts such as the Sustainable Development Goals or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have constant but various impacts on inclusive education practices based on localities and cultures. Therefore, cross-cultural and multilingual research is required in order to expand knowledge and promote exchange at national and international levels (Goitom, 2020). Despite potential challenges, there is a strong need for empirical data collected through international and cross-cultural research on inclusive education.

Given the fact that the data are transmitted through researchers rather than data collection tools, the importance of the researcher is paramount in this kind of research. Researchers take on the responsibility of turning the data into meaningful units, where language plays an important role (Larkin, de Casterle & Schotsmans, 2007). When we conduct research in a multilingual context, we may use research methodologies and values that we prepared in one language, mainly our own language, for another language in another context by translating them (Piazzoli, 2015; Regmi, Naidoo & Pilkington, 2010). How we use language in research and how we interpret the meanings shared by participants in various languages is therefore a concern for many researchers (Goitom, 2020). Researchers face both the questions of planning the multilingual research process as well as how to present multilingual research findings to a greater audience so that readers may grasp their essence, which requires translation.

Translation guidelines for multilingual research are not always available, especially when working with rarely studied groups (Goitom, 2020) such as the Deaf community or parents from a migrant background who do not perform well in the language of their country of residence. Another challenge is the meaning-making process. Thus, the interpretation process requires negotiations between researcher and participants, but also the reflexivity of the researcher. Here, it is important to acknowledge the effect of the researcher during the translation in a multilingual process (Piazzoli, 2015). Apart from translating from one language to another, locating the generated data in the social context of the research and in the context of the participants is important, as this shapes the process of interpreting the findings. Hence, contextualizing meaning requires knowledge of

both language and culture. Further, the lack of literature presents another barrier, as the discourse on conducting multilingual and multicultural research concentrates mainly on certain Eurocentric and writing-based languages, which makes it difficult to access literature regarding specific research contexts, such as research with sign language.

In this paper, we introduce cases that refer to the barriers encountered in different research contexts while conducting research on inclusive education. Research cases that go beyond the oral-lingual tradition of research, engage tonal languages with diverse transliterations (Asian dialects) or are conducted in a context where different languages and cultures are involved will be explained with three studies that have a common topic: inclusive education.

The first case relies on research including interviews conducted with Deaf teachers from Austria and Germany. The research used two different sign languages—Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS) and German Sign Language (DGS)—and translated the collected data into written German. Due to great differences between signed (sign language-specific expressions) and written language, in addition to the cultural discrepancies between the two sign languages, many barriers were encountered. To overcome these challenges, the bimodal-bilingual researcher, the second author, reflected on possibilities and variations of meanings. The first case is an important example of how to practice informed research. As advocated by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD, 2018), inclusive education for Deaf learners should offer high-quality education with direct instruction in sign language, access to Deaf teachers and Deaf peers who use sign language, and a bilingual curriculum that includes the instruction of sign language. As

expected, including sign language in research and reaching data sources through sign language is valuable to inform the body of research. However, research in a cross-cultural context where knowledge is produced in different languages and cultures is a challenge, especially when there are not many preceding exemplary studies. Conducting research in sign language on inclusion or inclusive education combined with producing knowledge in writing has previously not been approached often, and the body of research relies on only a few studies.

The growing popularity of transnationalism in research (Amelina, 2010) is noticeable in research focusing on inclusive education, too. The second case is based on a research partnership on disability and inclusive education between Austrian and Thai researchers. This case introduces a study where the non-native language of a researcher was used in the research by data providers and fellow researchers. On the other hand, this case was an example of using the non-native language that is mostly spoken among the researcher team, which is English. Research cooperation at the international level across countries and languages requires a common language to transmit knowledge. As a lingua franca, English, therefore, is the most widely accepted medium for international projects and publications (Goitom, 2020). The second case is also concerned with the complexities of the processes of translation and interpretation when data are collected in languages other than English, but the communication is in English.

The final case tackles the issue of conducting research on inclusive education with immigrant groups whose children are overrepresented in special education schools. The increasing numbers of immigrants from across the globe and pupils from migrant background have led to a trend to conduct

research in the native languages of immigrants along with the native languages of their countries of residence (Havlin, 2022). In the educational context, it is very important to include immigrant parents in research to understand their perceptions and to support and advocate for the needs of students from a migrant background (Goldsmith & Kurpius, 2018; Turney and Kao, 2009). In this study, parents from a Turkish migrant background in Austria were asked about their aspirations for the Austrian school system in terms of switching to inclusive education settings and abandoning segregated special education settings that have been the topic of hot debates on how special education is used as a discriminatory practice against students from migrant backgrounds (Subasi Singh, 2020).

### Case 1: The Meaning of Inclusion in Deaf Culture

The first case examines the barriers related to the cultural disparities between written language and signed language by looking **into the use of the terms “inclusion” and “inclusive education” in the context of Deaf culture in Austria.**

In the course of a project pertaining to a **doctoral thesis on the topic of “experiences of Deaf teachers in Austria and Germany,”** narrative interviews following Rosenthal (2015) were conducted with Deaf teachers by the second author, who is also a Deaf researcher from Austria, using DGS or ÖGS. The interviews were video-recorded to document the signing of the interviewer and interviewee as well as their expression in sign language. The Deaf researcher is a **“late-signer” (Twomey et al., 2020) and her daily L1 is ÖGS.** For her, DGS can be considered a foreign language. The article reflects the results of the analysis of the interviews and focuses on the sign languages terms of inclusion.

**According to the rules of translation, “a translation has to reflect the words of the original text” (Cokely 1995, p. 23).** It should also be mentioned that translation is considered a never-ending process and a translation process can never be finished, but only put aside as it might always be improved (Newmark 1981, p. 148 as cited in Cokely 1995, p. 25) as each translator brings their subjective perspectives to the task. Being Deaf and a member of Deaf culture in Austria had advantages for the researcher, the second author. However, challenges were also encountered.

With video-recorded sign language, the signed text had to be translated into written German. The videos had to be watched several times to properly check the signed text and to put it in a corresponding equivalent German text. As watching and note-taking could not be done simultaneously considering the speed of sign language, a lot of additional work had to be done.

Translating sign languages into written spoken language constitutes a special challenge, as Deaf people use sign languages in the context of their Deaf culture. The translation has to consider the characteristics of Deaf culture: language, cultural heritage, customs and traditions, arts and family (Holcomb, 2013, p. 17). By using sign language, the members of the Deaf community can express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas embedded in their culture. Hence, being engaged in the translation of written data from sign language as a person from the Deaf culture was a great advantage of this project.

Another challenge for the translation from sign language to written language concerns idiomatic expressions. There are many idiomatic expressions in sign language that are hard to translate into German (König et al., 2012, p.

141). According to Christian Stalzer's website on idiomatic expressions from Austria (2017), **"many of the sign expressions are labelled as 'untranslatable' and therefore as 'special.' Such signs/terms are not unusual and one-to-one correspondences (in spoken as well as signed languages) are relatively rare."** In his research initiative, Stalzer (2017) mentions that an adequate translation of some signed expressions into German might be challenging. Therefore, **some nuances in the interviewees' signing might have been lost in translation, e.g. the context of the exact significance of an idiomatic expression.**

In addition, DGS and ÖGS can differ in **terms of vocabulary: e.g. "school" or "teacher"** are different signs, but the non-manual aspects and the sentence structure of these two sign languages are similar (Zeshan, 2012, p. 314). There are considerable cultural differences in idiomatic expressions – DGS contains expressions that might be a challenge for people who do not live in Germany. When translating the interviews of this project from DGS, some idiomatic expressions had to be analyzed in-depth or the interviewees had to be asked for their meaning.

For this contribution, four passages of interviews stemming from studies conducted in different contexts referring to the terms **"inclusion" and "inclusive setting" were selected.** The analysis investigated the contexts in which the interviewees used these terms. For the term **"inclusion," the sign used was the same** throughout the four passages. While examining the data more closely, however, it was found that there were several underlying meanings of the term. Based on the context, the sentence structure, but also the conjunction with other terms, **"inclusion" indicated a different meaning.**

On the other hand, all interlocutors used the same sign for the term **"inclusion."** This

means that they used the technical term **"inclusion" in the same way during the** interview. That is why the translation uses the term denotatively. A definition on denotation clears that "denotational meanings equates roughly with literal meaning" (Crystal, 2009, p. 14). All interlocutors have an equivalent level of fluency in ÖGS or DGS and also in written German. Only one teacher used the term **"inclusive classroom," which clearly stresses the** inclusiveness of their teaching method. Within the translation, the focus is rather on the disparities between German spoken language and ÖGS or DGS – e.g. for word creation, German uses morphological derivation as a core strategy, a method rarely used in ÖGS (Schwager, 2012, p. 75) – instead of the secondary information included in non-manuals or language culture. In the above-mentioned example, the interviewees included a second meaning in DGS or ÖGS. In other passages referring to inclusion, such secondary meanings were not present in the translation, which might be due to the translator missing language-cultural or non-manual aspects of ÖGS or DGS.

**The lexeme "inclusion" in ÖGS and DGS has evolved from the term "all-inclusive" that is** used in the field of tourism indicating that all services are included, according to etymological research (Heßmann, Hansen & Eichmann, 2012, p. 14). However, there is a difference between **the two signs: "all-inclusive" has a comparative** form using mouth gestures, whereas the sign **"inclusion" is more neutral. The lexeme** seems to indicate a symbolic connection between an arbitrary and an iconic sign (Heßmann et al., 2012, p. 13). If one deconstructs the sign into its four components—hand shape, hand orientation, location, and movement (Becker & von Mayenn, 2012, p. 41)—it becomes clear that **the passive hand has the form of a "grip hand"** (Riemer, 2021) and the location is in front of the

upper torso, the dominant hand starts with a **“spread hand,” orientation in a right angle to the upper torso changes into the form of a “beak hand” while moving towards the passive hand, ending inside the “grip hand.”** This could indicate that several people (represented by the dominant hand) are included in a group (represented by the passive hand).

In the four passages, different aspects of **the term “inclusion” could be found in terms of** its content and implications. The following examples show three interpretations that vary depending on the content:

\*One view considers inclusion as a mindset, implying that the Deaf child has to be given full access (to education).

\*There are several views of inclusion as **“access for all”**: one school welcomes hearing students at a special school for Deaf and hard of hearing students. Each child is automatically provided with teaching in its natural L1.

\*The last interpretation is: inclusion or an inclusive classroom means a bilingual classroom.

In the process of validation, the researcher **found that the term “inclusion” has different** meanings according to the lived experience of the interviewee, which may vary strongly among individuals, but that it was increasingly used in an abstract and general way. In the process of translation, some signed information was lost as sign languages can modulate meaning (such as by using space and visual representations of actions). Sentence structure, non-manual markings (e.g., movements of the brows, body language, mouth gestures, space, and temporal movements) can add meaning to a sign—a process that cannot be easily fully replicated in

written language. This means that the signed data analyzed from a translation into the written text are a reduced variant of the original.

Here are two examples of the different **meanings of “inclusion” used by the** interviewees:

**\*The use of “inclusion” as an abstract concept was depicted by the teachers’** modified mimics and gestures, by using neutral mimics and minimized gestures.

**\*One interviewee signed “inclusion”** with intensive and strong expression (non-manuals). This can be interpreted as a sign of the strong advocacy for the inclusion of Deaf children. For example, the interviewer asked the interviewee whether a certain class was an inclusion class or an integrated class. They **replied, “This is inclusion, a bilingual class.”**

The denotative meaning of the German lexeme and the sign are identical, whereas in sign languages there are connotations, especially social ones, as can be found in the interviews presented. The translation of the lexeme **“inclusion” from ÖGS and DGS works as a** technical term, but for Deaf people, there are many additional connotations, e.g. for the mimics Non-manual markings play an important role and refer to the language performance. These connotations and views of **“inclusion” of Deaf people in the context of Deaf** culture have been clearly stated by the World Federation of the Deaf and by the Austrian **Association of the Deaf (ÖGLB): “Inclusive education” means bilingual language instruction** in sign languages with Deaf peers and Deaf teachers. Finally, it is a challenge to demonstrate how the sign languages of the interviewees lose

nuances, when expressed in written language. This point will be addressed in the conclusion.

### Case 2: Multilingual Research in a Non-Native Language

The second case deals with research set in a cultural and linguistic context that the researcher had only barely been exposed to before. Working transculturally, the third author was not a native, but a recent learner of the Thai language at the outset of the research. As a German and English speaker, the researcher conducted research on disability, education, and inclusion in the course of her PhD study as part of an international comparative research project and follow-up research in a language foreign to her. The language of most of the interviews with children, parents, teachers, as well as educational experts was Thai. Collaboration partners from the Thai cooperation institution spoke Thai and English. They supported the translation of interview guidelines and conducted most of the interviews. Summarized translations passages were either provided simultaneously or during small breaks during the interviews. The latter was also used to reconfigure interview questions, the order of questions or shape the thematic focus within the broader frame of Grounded Theory Methodology (Charmaz, 2014).

In order to tackle the challenge of conducting research on disability and inclusive education, respectively, in a non-native language context, a couple of aspects have to be considered. So far, not many researchers have dealt with the challenges and opportunities of working in different or multiple or unknown languages in qualitative research in different cultural settings (Goitom, 2020; Havlin, 2022; Larkin et al., 2007). In their paper “Qualitative

Research and Translation Dilemmas,” Temple and Young (2004) summarized the main challenges related to working with non-native data in qualitative research along with the following three questions:

- 1) Does it matter if the translation act is identified or not?
- 2) Does it matter who does the translation?
- 3) When is a translator not only a translator?

Thus, working with data needing translation, researchers must ask themselves whether the process of translation is being acknowledged or not (Lopez et al., 2008; Regmi et al., 2010). If it is, the choice of the translator and their background need to be taken into consideration.

In the given context, these questions are highly interrelated. The process of translation, in this case, was acknowledged and even turned into a methodological asset. In talking about the deeper meaning of words, additional knowledge and density of analyses could be gained. As the Thai-Austrian research team used English as a connecting language throughout their collaboration. However, as most of the interviews with experts, teachers, parents, and children were conducted in Thai, many hours were spent re-listening to interviews and re-checking English transcripts to catch as much of the initial linguistic meaning as possible. This process can be referred to as translingual research practice in Thai and English and, in some cases, German language (one of the Thai researchers had started to take German classes after some months and the Austrian researcher took up learning Thai from earlier exposure to the language) that was used to make sense of literal meaning. The practice proved very helpful

in the complex context of talking about disability and inclusion.

The nexus of language, understanding, and disability has been subject to research for a very long time. One of the main efforts can be **found in the ICF's (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health)** accompanying Cultural Applicability research:

There is, however, a fundamental dilemma that poses an obstacle to this research agenda. It is generally agreed that the appropriate aim of a classification tool such as the ICFIDH-2 is to provide an international common language, as well as a universal conceptual framework for disability across languages and cultures. Yet the experience of disability is unique to each individual, not only because the precise manifestation of a disease, disorder or injury is unique, but also because the consequences of these health conditions will be influenced by a complex combination of factors from personal differences in experience, background and basic emotional, psychological and intellectual make-up to differences in the physical, social and cultural context in which a person lives (Üstün, 2001, p. 9).

The mammoth efforts to frame the meaning of disability globally—as intended by the study, the interview passages stem from—also entail considerations of the meaning of disabilities in specific societal and cultural, and thereby, language-related contexts. Nevertheless, it is important to take localized differences and variations into account. Groce nails the challenge of developing a universal **approach by stating, “However, arguably the most substantial change in the understanding of**

disability is not in the realm of clinical services, but in the growing body of research that finds that while disability is universal, there is marked **variation in how cultures interpret disability”** (1999, p. 756). In that sense, addressing cultural differences in research that enables localized understandings of disability, as well as the role of inclusion in education, can be understood as essential. The choice of language to describe specific phenomena is subject to several complex decisions and what Sriussadaporn-Charoenngam & Jablin call the need for “context sensitivity” (1999, p. 386). The language used to talk about disability is an interesting area to explore societal attitudes since language is an important part of the culture. Talking about personal, complex, and critical issues thus poses even more of a challenge, as this implies the need to cover up certain parts of oneself, **relinquish one’s opinion, stand up for one’s** opinion or project similar and above all personal accounts.

In the given case study where more than 200 interviews were conducted, two aspects proved especially interesting in relation to the nexus of language, disability, and inclusion. One refers to the fact that disability as such is often **not directly addressed when it comes to one’s** own children. The other refers to the direct reference and description of physical characteristics to refer to disability.

#### 1) Disability does not exist

Interestingly, most of the children and some of the parents as well as a few teachers said that they perceived themselves/the(ir) children as non-disabled. An associated aspect is a certain kind of normalcy that is produced by referencing similarities to so-called **‘normal people’ as shown in the example below.**

Int.: What is a disability?



Mrs A: At first I felt very bad about this word. I get used to my child and think that she is just like other normal people. My daughter can go anywhere but she has **to be with me**" (2TILFGDP, 2011)

## 2) Addressing disabilities literally

The following list presents an overview of Thai words used to describe different types of disabilities in the interviews. It becomes obvious that the descriptors refer to physical, literal, and apparent characteristics.

Table 1: Thai Words Describing Disabilities

Disability	Thai translation and meaning
HD	หูหนวก [huu nuak, ear deaf]
VD	ตาบอด [dta boot, eye weakened]
ID	ปัญญาอ่อน [bpan ya, intellect soft]
PD	คนพิการ [khon pigaan, person special]

The descriptors do not all match the institutionalized context of how disabilities are described in Thailand. Many of the categorizations used by the Ministry of Education in order to classify needs for special needs stem from non-Thai or Westernized discourses, respectively, which can impact localized understandings of disabilities.

### Case 3: Research on Inclusion with Immigrant Groups

The third case reports from multilingual and multicultural research on “inclusive education” conducted with parents from a

Turkish migrant background in Austria. This **case shows how the term “inclusive education” is understood by immigrants who keep their traditional cultural predispositions but at the same time try to be a part of the Austrian education system by understanding the terms in the way they are used in the local context.** The research aim was to understand how parents make sense of their experiences in terms of their **children’s schooling in inclusive or segregated special education settings.** As the percentage of students from a migrant background in schools reaches 27.2 percent in Austria and 53.3 percent in the capital city of Vienna, the population categorized as “students from a migrant background” has considerably less academic achievement and poorer German language skills (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). The distribution of students from migrant backgrounds over different types of school points to another dimension of educational inequity in the country (Subasi Singh, 2020). In all federal states, students from a migrant background are overrepresented in technical/vocational, non-academic secondary, or special education schools and underrepresented in academic secondary schools leading to the tertiary level. Hence, it is important to include the experiences of immigrant parents during the referral to an inclusive or segregated special education setting and their perceptions of inclusive education in the research.

This research was conducted in Vienna by using intensive interview techniques (Charmaz, 2014) with parents. The researcher, the first author who is also a migrant from a Turkish background, was the only researcher included in the process and used German and Turkish during the research. Getting an insider perspective, being a migrant, helped the researcher to be alert to the differences and

variations in different steps throughout the research process. As Charmaz (2014) discussed, seeing the lives of participants from the inside of their cultural and linguistic world is very important as what we bring to the research as researchers and what we learn from the field are different from what our participants may mean. Being involved in the research process through cultural and linguistic competencies as an immigrant researcher rather than a distanced researcher position was fruitful in terms of achieving the constructivist stance. Hence, to grasp the meanings of the research participants, the researcher paid attention to the way participants used the language while talking about inclusive education or inclusion. The language and cultural characteristics of participants could give hints to understanding their underlying meanings.

Being a “communicationally informed fieldworker” (Gal, 2012, p. 40) helped the first author use participants' linguistic practices to learn about cultural categories, forms of knowledge, social lives, and social relations. This was required especially during the interviews, where communicative skills were used to detect metacommunication by participants. During interviews, metacommunication could be considered as a simultaneous meta-message that instructed how to interpret any signal from the data providers (Bahri & Williams, 2017). A meta-message can be any gestures or signals of a speech event or any other language use. Therefore, apart from referential modalities, the first author was alert to the non-referential modalities such as intonation or gestures. In this research, these signals pointed to the aspects of speech events, to the participants' attitudes, identities, or roles. Throughout the research, attending to indexical meanings along with referentiality, but also asking the appropriate

questions required being aware of different language usages.

Another barrier in a multicultural research context can be asking the same questions to data providers who are distributed over a wide range of cultural perspectives or linguistic competencies. Asking proper questions on inclusive education by considering the cultural and linguistic background of the participants, but at the same time questioning, answers which can be used to shed light on the same issue was challenging. The difference between special education and inclusive education was not known to several parents as the discourse on inclusive education in Austria is relatively recent and has an academic and political discourse, which makes it an unknown concept in the daily lives of many parents. Explaining inclusive education in Turkish was no help either, as this concept is similarly new in Turkish, and parents who left Turkey even a year ago could not have known about this new term. The researcher had to ensure that participants were aware of the difference between special education and inclusive education while explaining their experiences.

Sometimes, researchers and research participants may think they are engaged in different events. While researchers think that they are engaged in a data collection process, participants may be thinking about a platform where they can complain about the system and make their complaints heard through the researcher. In addition, during interviews or other data collection steps, research participants may overwhelm the data collection process with single-sided conversation, or they may narrate unrelated debates (Gal, 2012). As Robben (2007) suggests, especially traumatic experiences of data sources may result in exaggeration or misinformation during data collection. Such discussions can be interfering,

but at the same time contribute to a greater understanding. Several participants had the tendency to use the interviews as a platform to complain about the complexity of the special education system in Austria. During the research, the first author tried to build trust and empathy by remembering that speech can be divergent and by paying attention to the impact of different language usages.

In this multilingual research, German and Turkish were used for access to the research field, communication with research participants, data collection, and also for data analysis. Several dimensions of the research had to be considered in a multilingual way where all aspects make sense in both languages for those involved. However, the communication with Turkish-speaking participants included German words as well. Parents who had already been living in Austria for a long time and used German for communicating in the school system used German words and terms related to the school context. These words were mainly about integration classrooms, school direction or special education schools. This showed that knowing only the language of the immigrant group would not offer the flexibility to switch between the two languages when needed.

The languages used in research have an impact not only on data collection but also on **data analysis. Charmaz (2014) explains that “the characteristics of specific languages matter as do the character of cultural traditions and norms”** (p. 331). Hence, it is important for constructivist researchers to understand beyond the meaning of the words uttered by the research participants. The necessity of using a translator could be eliminated by the researcher who is competent in the languages of the research. As Kruse et al. (2012) suggest, translation can lead to subjective interpretations by translators. Hence, collecting data in the language or

languages of the participants and analyzing them in the original language prevented many issues that could have arisen due to the translation of the data. As a result, the embedded culture in words (Kruse et al., 2012) was not lost, either.

## Conclusion

These three qualitative studies where data were collected or analyzed in more than one language involved challenging stages throughout the research process. Based on these three cases, the authors presented their own experiences with and reflections on multilingual and multicultural studies on inclusive education. These cases showed how research on inclusive education proceeds in a multilingual/multicultural context. Challenges, validation strategies and affecting factors were discussed and the diversity of the understanding of the term was explained via these three examples. The increasing attention given to the research on inclusive education points to further research that takes and will take place at the international level, which requires multilingual and multicultural perspectives.

**The first case showed that “inclusion”** can be used in an abstract and general way in different sign languages and the connotations of **“inclusion” in Deaf culture can include varying perspectives.** To avoid gaps in the translation, a different approach may be suggested for future research. The researcher identified a major challenge in the fact that the video-recorded sign language data were translated into a written language where some of the characteristics of Deaf culture got lost (Holcomb, 2013). On the other hand, idiomatic expressions in sign languages are a special issue as there are many **nuances in Deaf people’s signing that might get**

lost in translation (Stalzer, 2017). Consequently, direct analysis of the original language may be more practical and accurate instead of translating sign language into written language. However, it remains unclear how this dilemma could be solved, as using written language enables access to academia, and at which stage to translate sign language to written language. In empirical scientific translation, further research must be conducted in order not to lose the nuances of Deaf culture by analyzing the data collected through sign language from translated data. The sign language sender will communicate his message to the receiver in order to motivate him to decode it. This scene is reflected in the video where the translator translates into written language. The concept can be discussed profoundly in the future.

Different lingual competencies and backgrounds in the third case related to Thai have proved to be an asset as they allowed an in-depth analysis of the meaning behind words used by interviewees. The engagement of the Austrian researcher in Thai language and that of Thai researcher in German introduced flexibilities during the research process. This supported the idea that the engagement of researchers is crucial during the translation process although there are people to translate and to interpret the data (Lopez et al., 2008). On the one hand, these point to the fact that disability might not need to be addressed as such or play a role at all. On the other hand, words used to address disabilities are often quite literal in the Thai language. The latter implication would have been lost in translation when working with English transcripts only. Culturally-sensitive approaches proved worthwhile and led to new methodological approaches stemming from joint translanguaging efforts.

Including a rarely studied group of participants—the immigrant community—is a necessity to enhance the body of knowledge, especially on a sensitive topic such as parental **involvement and parents' perceptions**. The final case presented how researchers should be **knowledgeable about the participants' language and culture** in order to be able to ask appropriate questions and to make meaning of the data collected. Negotiation among the participants and researcher in terms of locating the meaning of participants in the social and cultural context of the study proved to be important (Goitom, 2020; Havlin, 2022). The third case revealed that parents from a Turkish background could not make use of their native tongues, which is mainly the colloquial language, as the discourse on inclusive education is also very limited in Turkish. Furthermore, speaking the same language as the data sources and not using a translator helped to build rapport between the participants and the researcher, which also made it possible for the researcher to get an insider perspective and not to rely on the meaning-making of a translator (Kruse et al., 2012).

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