

Challenges and Prospects of Teaching English for Journalism Students

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Abstract

This article is designed to review the literature that revolves around the topic of the present research: EFL Teachers' strategies to cope with pupils' mixed abilities. The first part provides the definitions of mixed-ability classes is given. After that, it explains Gardner types of intelligence that serve as a theoretical framework for the present study. The different problems of mixed-ability classes is presented. Solutions to overcome multileveled classes is suggested. The strategies used by teachers to cope with pupils' mixed abilities provide this research with clear outcomes about its effective strategies to teach multileveled classes. Our investigation is limited to middle school, so further researches on the same study can be conducted on the secondary school.

Key words: strategies, broad range of preferences, multi-level classes, materials

Also Bell argues that, "every teacher to some extent must face the challenges of designing a program that addresses the concerns and interests of students of different abilities" (Richards & Burns, 2012, p.87). That is, the teacher should keep in mind that teaching a mixed ability class is not an easy task as it might seem at first perception; rather, it seems to require much efforts and attention. Similarly, Ansari (2013) for instance identifies a mixed-ability class as comprising of not only learners with various capacities but also that have a broad range of preferences and learning styles. Ireson and Hallam (2001, p.183) propose that, "instructors need to recognize that a class is of mixed-ability because learners have different strengths and weaknesses and improve at different rates". Indeed, mixed-ability classes consist mainly of two types of students which are high ability learners who are autonomous and self-directing; they like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and

are highly inquisitive unlike low learners who depend on the instructor to guide them, tries to make them further explanations and so on.

There is a variety of strategies that can be put into practice in order to meet all students' needs, but unfortunately, no "magic method" guarantees every student's development and success with regard to learning. In present time, English is the most preferred language. For the natives, learning English is a natural process. But for the students of other languages, we require big efforts to learn a foreign language. The students as well as in our school face such problems because English is not the mother tongue. Nowadays, most of the schools are with mixed ability students of different levels which are challenges to teachers.

In order to give all students, the chance to benefit from their lessons. It is necessary to design lesson plans or activities within the lesson properly. To be able to do that, English teachers need to know what are possible problems and solutions of working with multi-level classes. In addition, some of the possible problems which a teacher may encounter when working with students with different language ability can be summarized: Most language text books are designed for an ideal homogenous class and students react in the different ways to them due to individual differences and preferred learning styles.

Possible ways to overcome the effect in mixed ability classrooms:

The teacher should

- adapt some of the materials to make the language simple.
- design own teaching materials.
- use visual teaching materials to attract the students' attention and to motivate them to get interest in the subject.
- vary the level of tasks to the slow learners, for example, should not give the more difficult choices in multiple level exercises.
- set up groups of weaker and stronger students separately and give different tasks to these groups, for example, stronger and quicker students are assigned to do more complicated tasks, whereas the weaker students deal with simpler tasks or work with the teacher as a group member.
- try to know the learners, their language level and interests.
- try to find every single students' strength by offering a variety of activities.
- try to find the strengths and preferred learning style of every one.
- encourage the shy learners.
- the teacher should give extra work that students would enjoy doing on their favorite topic.
- help students to improve their skills and abilities.
- prepare additional activities for the active learner

The issue of combining students with differing ability levels in the same classroom is very controversial. While some may see mixed ability grouping as an egalitarian solution to the growing achievement gap, others see this approach as denying gifted students the specialized education they deserve. The literature on this subject illuminates the issues even further as demonstrated by the studies that reject mixed ability grouping and those studies that support mixed ability grouping, including studies that demonstrate how a mixed ability environment can function successfully.

Teaching large classes is a demanding endeavor for both teachers and students. While the former considers it challenging to attend to the needs of every individual in the classroom, sustain constructive feedback, manage the classroom and monitor the learners' work, the latter cannot interact with the teacher and the classmates. Aware of this stressful and frustrating situation, the teachers

suggested some interactive strategies to actively engage the learners and motivate them. They highlighted the significance of introducing group work and project and task-based teaching. Peer feedback and collective oral feedback are also viable in the context of large classes.

The present study is mainly qualitative in nature, and its findings are related to the teaching of writing skill at the English Department, Sultan My Slimane University. Therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to other contexts and other courses. Furthermore, the results could have been different had the researcher taken the perceptions of students into consideration or conducted quantitative research. Our results are promising and should be validated by a larger sample size. It is recommended, thus, that future studies on this vital topic should be undertaken to come up with conclusive strategies that allow teachers to overcome the challenges teaching large cohorts create and enhance the quality of teaching in tertiary education

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