

Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching English to Journalism Students

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Abstract

This article is designed to review the literature revolving around the topic of the present research: EFL teachers' strategies to cope with pupils' mixed abilities. The first part provides definitions of mixed-ability classes. Following that, it explains Gardner's types of intelligence, which serve as a theoretical framework for the present study. The various problems of mixed-ability classes are then presented, followed by suggested solutions to overcome multilevel classes. The strategies used by teachers to cope with pupils' mixed abilities provide this research with clear outcomes regarding effective strategies to teach multilevel classes. Our investigation is limited to middle school, so further research on the same study can be conducted at the secondary school level.

Key words: Vocabulary, mixed-ability classes, language, abilities

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). This means that teachers should understand that teaching a mixed-ability class is not as simple as it may initially appear; rather, it requires considerable effort and attention. Similarly, Ansari (2013) identifies a mixed-ability class as comprising learners with various capacities, as well as 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: high-ability learners, who are autonomous and self-directing, like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and are highly inquisitive; and low-ability learners, who depend on the instructor for guidance, require further explanations, and so on.

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However, for students whose first language is not English, considerable effort is required to learn it as a foreign language" means that students who do not grow up speaking English at home or in their community must work harder to learn English compared to native speakers. This is because they have to:

1. **Learn New Vocabulary:** They need to acquire a vast number of new words and phrases that are not part of their everyday language use.
2. **Understand Grammar Rules:** English grammar can be complex and different from the grammar rules of their native language, requiring them to learn and apply new structures.
3. **Develop Pronunciation Skills:** Pronouncing English words correctly can be challenging, especially when the sounds in English do not exist in their native language.
4. **Adapt to Cultural Contexts:** Language learning is not just about words and grammar; it also involves understanding the cultural contexts in which the language is used.
5. **Practice Listening and Speaking:** Non-native speakers often need more practice to develop their listening and speaking skills to understand and communicate effectively in English.

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 do this effectively, English teachers need to understand the possible problems and solutions associated with working with multi-level classes. Some of the potential problems that a teacher may encounter when working with students of different language abilities can be summarized as follows: **Textbook Limitations:** Most language textbooks are designed for an ideal homogeneous class. This means they may not adequately address the diverse needs and abilities present in a mixed-ability classroom. Students may react differently to these textbooks due to their individual differences and preferred learning styles. **Differing Learning Paces:** Students in a mixed-ability class may learn at different paces, with some grasping new concepts quickly while others may need more time and support. This can create challenges in maintaining a cohesive lesson flow. **Varying Levels of Engagement:** High-ability learners may become bored or disengaged if the material is too easy, while lower-ability learners may feel overwhelmed if it is too difficult. This can affect overall classroom dynamics and student motivation. **Assessment Challenges:** It can be difficult to assess students fairly and accurately in a mixed-ability class. Standardized tests and assessments may not reflect the true abilities and progress of all students. **Classroom Management:** Managing a classroom with diverse abilities requires careful planning and differentiation. Teachers need to create activities that cater to various skill levels without singling out or stigmatizing any group of students. Understanding these challenges, teachers can implement strategies to address them, such as differentiating instruction, using a variety of teaching methods, and providing individualized support. This ensures that all students, regardless of their language abilities, have the opportunity to benefit from their lessons. Understanding these challenges, teachers can implement strategies to address them, such as differentiating instruction, using a variety of

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