

**EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING ENGLISH IN
MIXED ABILITY CLASS AT SMA SRIJAYA NEGARA**

A Thesis by

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FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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**EFL Teachers' perspectives on teaching English at Mixed Ability
Class at SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang**

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Palembang, July 16th, 2022

The Undersigned



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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to: My beloved and lovely parents, my mother and my father, and my grandmother mbah uti who always loved and offered me the encouragement and supports in all my journeys. Thank you for being such a supportive, caring, and loving family.

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**EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING ENGLISH IN
MIXED ABILITY CLASS AT SMA SRIJAYA NEGARA**

ABSTRACT

Teaching English in a class full of student diversity has emerged a different way of delivering the material. Every learner have their own learning style, motivation, talent, intelligence and knowledge or individual way learning and developing the lessons. One class of this variety of students is called mixed ability class which becomes one challenge for many EFL teachers. This study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on teaching English in mixed ability classes at SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang to discover the challenges and strategies teachers face in teaching English at mixed ability classes. Qualitative method was used in conducting this study and 3 English teachers from different classes at SMA Srijaya Negara were selected as participants. The data were collected through interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings showed that teaching mixed ability classes is challenging and need some strategies to cope with the diversity of students. Challenges and obstacles were faced in teaching English in mixed ability classes. Consequently, the teachers differentiate the instructions, set grouping strategies, create well-structured teaching strategies, making fun learning to motivate the diversity of students.

Keywords: *Teachers' Perspectives, Mixed Ability Class ,English Language Teaching*


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the introductory points of all the research contained within. It consists of (1) the background of the study, (2) research questions, (3) research objectives, and (4) the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

All students were born with different potential, and people can not be sure about their understanding of learning. The student has their way of capability and ability. They have different backgrounds of families, and every family has a different style of building their children's abilities, especially in learning. Students can differ in their ability and motivation to learn English, needs, interests, learning styles, and experiences. Students have various learning styles and requirements. (Valentic, 2005) states that students differ in language proficiency as well as in their attitudes toward learning a language and in their self-discipline. In this 21st-century era of teaching and learning, many students are mixed in one class. One class with different learners and different children's abilities and achievements. Chapman and King (2003) stated that a mixed ability classroom comprises students with varying learning abilities, interests, and skills.

Ansari (2013) describes a mixed-ability class consists of learners with different abilities, as well as learners with different tastes and learning styles. Some students are easy to understand, while others have little knowledge of the materials from the teacher; it is called mixed ability classes. In mixed ability classes, the participation of the students is deterred since highly proficient students tend to manage the classroom and are hindered by having no problems expressing and communicating ideas. On the other hand, less proficient students are passive-and have a limited role in the class. They may respond differently to the skills and instructions they teach. They also had different strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, these elements are only included in classes with mixed abilities, so there is no classroom where two students are all the same. In addition, since each school has different academic backgrounds, students from different

backgrounds and basic knowledge and skills are different, so it confirms that the students are not the same, especially in English subject skills. Some have already taken English lessons at a private institution for at least a year. Some may have parents who speak English, but some students may not understand how to speak English. This situation challenges many ESL/EFL teachers in teaching mixed-ability classes.

Mixed ability classes need more attention from teachers. According to Ireson and Hallam (2001), teachers should understand that a class is multi-level. This is because children have different development rates, such as different strengths and weaknesses. Hedge (2000) stated that teaching a mixed-ability classroom is a critical and real issue that educators and teachers face on a regular basis. While each learner has their own unique approach to learning English, as well as various levels of linguistic expertise and learning pace, there appears to be an overall necessity for the teachers to use approaches that will engage all pupils equally. Teachers must have their own challenges in teaching this mixed ability class, whether of their different understanding, learning styles, motivation, or proficiency level in learning English.

Mixed ability classes typically consist of a diverse group of students with a wide range of ages, abilities, motivations, educational backgrounds, and learning styles. Bremner (2008) states that a mixed ability class includes students with a variety of learning styles and interests, as well as students with varying skills. In Indonesia, especially in senior high school, some schools have attempted to classify students into groups based on their IQ scores. However, it was discovered that the new groups already had differences in student composition, and it is not feasible to modify these groups and curricula on a regular basis.

Learning a foreign language takes place at all levels of education (Bhowmik, 2015; Motteram, 2013). Successful learning of a foreign language depends on many factors such as intelligence, attitude, skills, and motivation (Mantiri, 2015; Santana et al., 2016; Støen and Haugan, 2016). Learning English is very important, especially for senior high school students. Learning a language in

senior high school makes students develop their skills in communicating using English in the classroom.

Several studies focusing on investigating teaching in mixed ability class have been conducted by scholars. First, a study conducted by Fatma Al-Shammakhil & Salma Al-Humaidi (2015) entitled "Challenges Facing EFL Teachers in Mixed Ability Classes and Strategies Used to Overcome Them" was to investigate the challenges faced by EFL teachers in mixed ability classes. It aimed to consider strategies used by teachers to mitigate and overcome these challenges. It means the teacher may be aware that teaching English in classes from different backgrounds may or may not be difficult. On the other hand, since each student has different abilities and skills in learning a foreign language, the teacher must devise a strategy to properly teach English to students. Even students with weak language learning skills or aptitudes can learn and understand quickly with the teacher's strategy. In the classroom, teachers can find motivated students who are integral to language acquisition and other students who are not interested in learning the new language (Simanova, 2010).

Furthermore, their research shows that even though students are divided into groups based on their test scores, related to variations in teaching techniques, tools, and learning styles, their success rates will often be at different levels. As a result, while some students may find the learning task easy, others may find it challenging to comprehend. Aside from that, what students bring to class often influences learning. Since each student comes from a different background, environment, or the classroom's multi-cultural population, it presents a barrier for the teachers in reaching the students, resulting in ineffective learning.

Subaiei conducted a research entitled "Challenges in Mixed Ability Classes and Strategies Utilized by ELI Teachers to Cope with Them". The study aims to find out the teacher's perception of teaching English in mixed ability classes. The results showed that the challenges in mixed-class education were high and that there needed to be an appropriate solution. Class management and differentiation strategies are most effective at mitigating the adverse effects of varied learning skills on learning outcomes.

This research is different from the previous one. In this case, the researchers focus on the teacher's perspective and opinions on teaching English in the high school or upper school, whereas the previous study found this research in the primary school. The researcher wants to know about English teachers' experiences teaching the English subject in mixed ability classes. The previous study only talked and found out about the teacher's strategies and how the teacher would take these strategies to handle mixed ability classes. This study includes investigating factors that make teachers challenge teaching English in mixed ability classes. This research is also curious about teachers' perspectives on teaching English in mixed ability classes with the students' diversity, whether it is easier or more difficult for them. Although there is a great deal of variety in the mixed ability classes mentioned by the researcher, this study motivates students to practice and learn English with their language level, student skills, and other students in the mixed ability class.

1.2 The problem of the study

Based on the explanation above, the problems of the present study are formulated into these questions:

1. What are the teachers' perspectives on teaching English in the mixed ability class?
2. What challenges and strategies do teachers have in teaching English in mixed ability classes?

1.3 The objectives of the study

The present study is aimed to :

1. To find out the teacher's perspective on teaching English in the mixed ability class,
2. To identify the challenges and the strategies that teacher have in teaching English in the mixed ability class

1.4 Significance of the study

The writer hopes this study will contribute to English teaching and learning development, and it is not only for the teachers and students but also for other researchers' further studies.

First, this study can be helpful for the teacher. The teacher can learn about experiences in teaching English in a mixed ability class. The teachers are expected to get to know their students, who are very diverse, especially in their language proficiency and skill levels. This research is also expected to give insights about challenges faced when teaching English in mixed-ability classes.

Secondly, this research is beneficial for students later, especially those who are studying English as a foreign language in mixed ability classes. They should know factors in learning English that can affect their performance in English language subjects. It is hoped that this study will provide information concerning students' learning performances with classmates with different abilities and approaches to learning English.

Finally, it is expected for future researchers, this study provides valuable information to researchers conducting investigations related to mixed ability class. This research aims to offer new perspectives to the stakeholders of the English language and future researchers to get a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts used in this study.

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