INVESTIGATING THE PROBLEMS OF ADDRESSING A CLASS OF MIXED-ABILITY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF SOME ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT SUDAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the problem of addressing a class of mixed-ability students and the effect of solving this problem on improving the students' performance in English Language at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The objectives of this study are to analyze, identify and assess this problem. The writer uses an interview addressed to (5 instructors of English language). The data were statistically analyzed by the researcher. The findings of the study indicate that instructors agree that classroom activities motivation and praising help students to be active and disciplined. Furthermore, they hold a positive attitude towards teaching a class that has students of different or blended abilities. The overall trend is that instructors generally feel positive about dealing with a class with students of different levels. The study provides some recommendations to tackle the problems addressing students with mixed abilities. This is concerned with training instructors to solve this problem and deal with the problems that may arise.

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1. Introduction

This study investigates the problem of addressing a class of mixed-ability students. Mixed-ability classes which defined by Ainslie, (1994) as classes where students differ greatly in ability, motivation for learning English, needs, interests, educational background, styles of learning, anxiety, experiences and so on. Tomlinson (1999), Berry & Williams (2002) and Shank (1995), state that every class is multileveled. Some classes can be more multileveled than others and therefore more challenging for the teacher, but all classes are mixed-ability classes. Through teaching and observing classes, the researcher believes that classroom management and students' attentions are the most important elements of the learning process. According to Jones (2007: 2), "*a student-centered classroom is a place we think of the students' requirements as groups and individuals and encourage them to participate in the learning process all the time. The teacher's role is more that of a facilitator than an instructor; the students participate actively in the learning process. Both the teacher and the textbook are the essential elements that help the students and lead them in their learning. In a student-centered class, at different times, students may be working in different formations groups, pairs or individuals, every form suits a certain situation in the learning process*".

In a class of mixed-ability students, there are different stages of conducting a lesson. Jones (2007:2) explains to them as follows, "*First, students work alone, they prepare ideas or make notes before a discussion, and they do a listening task, a short-written assignment, or do grammar or vocabulary exercises. Then, students work together in pairs or groups. Finally, they work together in discussions or in role-plays, sharing ideas, opinions, and experiences which empower students' knowledge and broaden their minds. In the group work, students interact with the teacher and the whole class, ask questions or brainstorm ideas*". During these stages, good students help the low-performance ones. According to (Hess, 2001), a mixed-ability class can seem uncooperative, the students can get bored easily and this can cause commotion in the classroom. Planning the lesson and making work-material can take too much time for the teacher and the planned material is often too easy or too difficult for the students. This may make the teacher feel inadequate and unable to cope with the class. Bowman (1992) believes that a huge problem that we must not forget, is the teacher's unawareness of the need for a new approach to deal with the mixed-ability class.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Addressing a class of mixed-ability students is a headache for most of English language instructors. Therefore, the researcher will take the problem to assess the effect of using group and pair work on improving low-performance students. From this point comes to the main title of the study "Investigating the Problem of Addressing a Class of Mixed-Ability Students". Using this method improves English language for low performance of

students at universities in Sudan. As well as the students' benefits from the use of this method of teaching and its effect academically and socially.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1) To find solutions to help low-performance students in the learning process.
2) To investigate the reasons behind using pair and group work to address a class of mixed-ability students.
3) To find suggestions to improve the learning skills of the low-performance students.

1.3 Questions of the Study

This study addresses the following questions:

1) What are the best ways that instructors should use to motivate lower-performance students?
2) Why there should be group/pair work instead of teacher-centered classroom?
3) How do instructors make the best possible environment in the classroom for low-performance students?
4) What are the ways do instructors have to use to motivate lower-performance students?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

1) Inappropriate placement tests and cultural background lead to a class of mixed-ability students.
2) Motivation is the most important element in reinforcing the students' performance.
3) There should be a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered classrooms.
4) Instructors should make the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it investigates the problem of addressing a class of mixed-ability students and the use of pair and group work on improving low-performance students. It also comes from investigating the effect of group work on classroom management. This research will be of great use to those who are involved in the educational process.

It will benefit the instructors, as it suggests ideas that can help them to facilitate and enhance their teaching performance in classrooms and to provide some new ideas about how to teach a class of mixed ability students It will help syllabus designers to think about the ideas to pick what is useful and design activities in their textbooks to suit this method of teaching. Moreover, language supervisors need to make some efforts and to follow up on the application of the learner-centered approach inside the classroom.

They must remind and encourage teachers about the importance of pair/group work in enhancing English language for low-performance students.

1.6 Limits of the Study

The study is mainly devoted to investigating the perspectives of Sudanese EFL university instructors about how to solve the problems of addressing a class of mixed ability students at Sudan University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Languages, Department of English language in the academic year 2020/2021 during the second semester. The population of this study covers all EFL teaching staff in the Department of English Language in the abovementioned college. A structured interview is used as a tool for collecting data.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Addressing a Class of Mixed-ability Students

Mixed-ability classes are found in almost all educational organizations throughout the world. These classes accommodate students of different learning styles. Providing the same environment of learning for all those students in a class is a real challenge. To successfully face this challenge, teachers should take many considerations into account: the learners, the learning environment and the best way to plan and deliver instructions which meet their needs. Freeman (2000, p. 182) states, "*Different methods are suitable for different teachers and learners in different contexts.*"

First, teachers should know what kind of learners they are dealing with. Using techniques like questionnaires or tests, they can easily determine their learners' strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences. Other important things to know about the learners are their cultural backgrounds, personalities, ages and attitudes towards learning. Second, once the learners' styles have been identified, the teacher can design teaching aids accordingly and choose the approach which suits them. Moreover, teachers can put the learners in balanced groups when doing cooperative activities. In this way, they can provide the right atmosphere which makes learning occur. Strict pacing schedules and limited class time are real obstacles in the way. To minimize the effects of this problem, some organizations include 'Review' classes, remedial classes (Remac) and self-directed learning classes (SDL) in their teaching schedules. Such classes make the pacing schedule more flexible so that teachers can spend more time with the learners and provide additional learning opportunities for them. Third, teachers should not stick to one teaching method as they have to address learners of diverse learning styles. Instead, they can select principles from each method and shape their own approach which works with the dominant learning style. Freeman (2000:182) states, "*Indeed, learners are very versatile and can learn well sometimes despite a given method rather than because of it.*"

For example, contemporary methods of teaching consider guessing words from the context as the best way of teaching vocabulary. However, not all the students have the ability to do so. Teachers, then, should prepare other ways to help struggling learners.

Acting, showing pictures or tangible objects, displaying words on flashcards, dividing words into smaller components, and using words in sentences are other ways of teaching vocabulary. Translating is another way of learning new words, but it should be the last resort. Brown (2007:436) states referring to translation, "*It rarely helps the students to internalize the word for a later call or use.*" Some teachers prefer teaching grammar implicitly through the other skills of learning a language. This way, however, does not apply to all kinds of learners. Teachers may need to teach grammar explicitly from time to time. They need to explain rules and exceptions to meet the needs of slow learners. Another way of teaching grammar is having the students listen to a grammar item in a song, provided that it does not contradict the learners' culture. Harmer (2007:87) stated, "*Different cultures value different learning behaviors…When we espouse some of the techniques…we risk imposing a methodology on our students that is inimical to their culture.*" Games with cards sometimes work in teaching grammar, especially in matching columns or unscrambling words to form correct sentences. A balanced approach should, then, be taken into consideration to address all kinds of learners.

The time factor should be considered when teaching reading. While some students have the ability of 'photographic' reading, others have to read more than once before solving the related exercises. Teachers can, then, help the students do the pre-reading activities during the class and assign the reading as homework. To make sure the students do the reading assignment, teachers can ask them to make notes of what they read or summarize the reading passage. Harmer (2007:87) believes that oral reading is appreciated by some learners, but involving all students in such an activity is time-consuming. Therefore, the teacher can be selective and choose samples each time.

The researcher observes many classes and concludes that auditory learners achieve a lot in listening classes. They can hear a long aural activity only once and summarize the main points. Yet, teachers should not forget those who need to hear more than once. To set the scene, a pre-listening stage that includes oral, aural or visual activities is necessary. Moreover, the listening material can be played twice and the students can be allowed to take notes while listening. When teaching speaking, teachers should take into consideration that although some learners can improvise a speech, others may need pre-task rehearsal. They may need to listen to a recorded topic or read a passage beforehand. Physical style learners can be asked to describe processes using tangible objects (e.g. the steps of making a cup of tea for oneself). They can present and demonstrate at the same time.

2.1 Definition of Mixed-ability Classes
Mixed-ability classes are classes where students differ greatly in ability, motivation for learning English, needs, interests, educational background, styles of learning, anxiety, experiences and so on (Ainslie, 1994).

2.4 A Review of Some Previous Related Studies

There are several studies carried out in the field of mixed-ability classes. For instance: A study conducted by Ann-Christin Svärd (2006) agreed with the researcher that it was important for the teacher working in a mixed ability class to create a good atmosphere where the students feel secure, can voice their opinions and ask questions without feeling anxious. One of the most important things for the teacher to aim for is to be clear and structured, according to the learners I spoke to. The literature I read also brought up this point as a vital element to focus on when working in mixed-ability classes. According to the written sources of An-Christen Svärd, it was important to help students improve their own learning techniques and develop their cooperation and collaboration with their peers. This was also something that the teachers mentioned, as they thought small groups work and peer work were beneficial for the students. The study states that a large part of the written sources focused on differentiation and motivation. They stressed using a variety of teaching methods, different materials and types of tasks as well as incorporating the students´ own experiences and ideas into the work. The teachers did not focus as much on these aspects. The special teacher did not agree with the opinions of the written sources on this as she did not find it necessary at all. She never appealed to the students´ interests. She only worked systematically and in a structured way with each text to create routines, and the weaker students worked really well with this and do improve. She believes that being clear and setting routines are more important since the weaker students´ lives are often unstructured, and they feel comfortable with stable routines because they cannot handle too much free thinking and choices, according to her. I found her approach very convincing.

There are some similarities between the researcher's study and Svärd (2006) study. Both studies seek to create a good atmosphere where the students feel secure, can voice their opinions and ask questions without feeling anxious.

The second study was performed by Muneerah S. Al-Subaiei (2017), This study reveals that the mixed-ability students found in nearly all schools and classes present their teachers with marked difficulty in teaching effectively. Teachers are also noted to feel out of touch with students or not in control of the students when they post negatively unexpected results. These challenges require the instructors to employ effective management methods in addressing the said challenges. This can be achieved by using different methods in a bid to experiment with different strategies and settle on the most effective ones. Apart from employing these management practices, it is paramount that instructors focus on the positive aspects of the classes. Teaching these classes can somehow be challenging due to the complexities involved, but mixed-ability classes are known for their diverse strengths. The instructors should subsequently focus more on these strengths. An appropriate method of doing this is by coming up with specific tasks for the various levels to keep the students always engaged, hence improving their learning capabilities. Moreover, teachers who have a positive attitude toward diversity in terms of student abilities are more successful in teaching mixed-ability classes. Planning for specific tasks for the various levels of ability of the students will ensure that

all learners are engaged in the learning process and at personal levels and this, in turn, will ensure efficiency and success in the teaching of mixed-ability classes.

Muneerah comes to the conclusion there are several strategies that influence teachers in mixed-ability classes to think in a different way to help their students attain academic success. These strategies are also meant to help them cope with the many challenges they face. The recommended strategy for addressing teaching in a diverse classroom is differentiation. This strategy has grown in status becoming a recurring theme in classroom instructional strategies (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Winebrenner, 2001). Instructors can divide their pupils into various groups, incorporating different student-centered methods to improve their studies and motivate them to participate more in their preferred learning method. Some of the student-centered methods include; game competition, in-class activities, extra homework, and dramatization (Pedersen & Kronborg, 2014). To help address the challenges in mixed-ability classes, the teachers should incorporate other strategies like open-ended plans, contingency plans, appeal to all senses, self-access centers, and personalized tasks into their teaching methods. To enhance the effectiveness in the teaching of language in these classes, there should be good management of classroom activity coupled with the effectiveness of presentation and the use of teaching aids such as audio-visual material in the learning process

The researcher's study and Muneerah's agree that mixed-ability classes are everywhere. The more the teachers have a positive attitude towards diversity in terms of student abilities the more they are successful in the teaching of mixed-ability classes.

3. The Methodology

The aim of the study is to diagnose and analyze the problems of Addressing a Class of Mixed-Ability Students at Universities in Sudan. In this research, the researcher is trying to reveal the attitudes of instructors towards dealing with the above-mentioned problem through an interview. Teachers' interviews will be distributed to five expert instructors of English language.

In this research, the researcher uses the descriptive-analytical method by applying an interview to describe the situation and analyze it from the point of view of the instructors. Eventually, recommendations based on the findings will be made.

3.1 Population
The population of this study targets some EFL university instructors at Sudanese Universities, in the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022.

3.2 Sample of the Study
5 EFL university instructors at some Sudanese universities are randomly chosen as a sample for this study.

3.3 Instrument of Data Collection

The study employs a structured interview as a tool for data collection. This interview is conducted with the EFL university instructors at some Sudanese Universities. The interview seeks to reveal EFL university instructors' perspectives on the reasons for having classes with many different ability levels, their opinion about dividing the English classes into ability groups and whether it is a good way to deal with the problem, the suggestions recommended for English instruction to improve the learning skills for the low-performance students, the ways of motivating lower-performance students, and the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students.

3.4 Procedure of the Study

The researcher distributed the interview to 5 EFL instructors at some Sudanese Universities. It was distributed to them and they were given time to answer the questions. The researcher sometimes interfered to explain some difficult words to the subjects. The collected data of the EFL instructors' interviews will be statically analyzed and discussed in the following part, which will be about the data analysis and discussions.

3.5 Instructors' Interview

Dear Participants,

Would you please answer the following questions? Your opinion and time are highly valued, and your help is greatly appreciated. The information obtained here will be for analysis purposes only and will remain strictly confidential.

Investigating the Problem of Addressing a Class of Mixed-Ability Students (A Case Study of Some English Language Learners at some Sudanese Universities)
Section 1: Personal Information
Please put the mark (x) in the place that suits your case:
1. Gender:
   a. Male ( )
   b. Female ( )
2. Qualification:
   a. PhD ( )
   b. Master ( )
   c. Bachelor ( )
3. College of Graduation:
   a. Education ( )
   b. Arts ( )
4. Job Title (Designation):
   a. Teaching assistant ( )
   b. Lecturer ( )
   c. Assistant professor ( )
   d. Professor ( )

5. Years of experience:
   a. One-five years ( )
   b. Six-ten years ( )
   c. More than 15 years ( )

Section 2: Answer the following questions briefly
   1) Why/Why not do you think that students, in general, in English classes are at many different ability levels?
   2) What's your opinion about dividing the English classes into ability groups would be a good way to deal with the problem?
   3) What suggestions do you recommend for English instruction to improve the learning skills of the low-performance students?
   4) What are ways do you use to motivate lower-performance students?
   5) How do you make the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students?

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Analysis of EFL University Instructors' Interviews
This part focuses on the findings of the EFL university instructors' interviews. This interview consists of two sections as follows:

A. Section One: Personal Information
This section of the interview focuses on demographical information about the participants in terms of gender, qualification, and years of experience. The following tables and charts show the characteristics of the sample:

**Table 4.1:** Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	5	100%
Female	0	0%

Chart 4.1: Gender
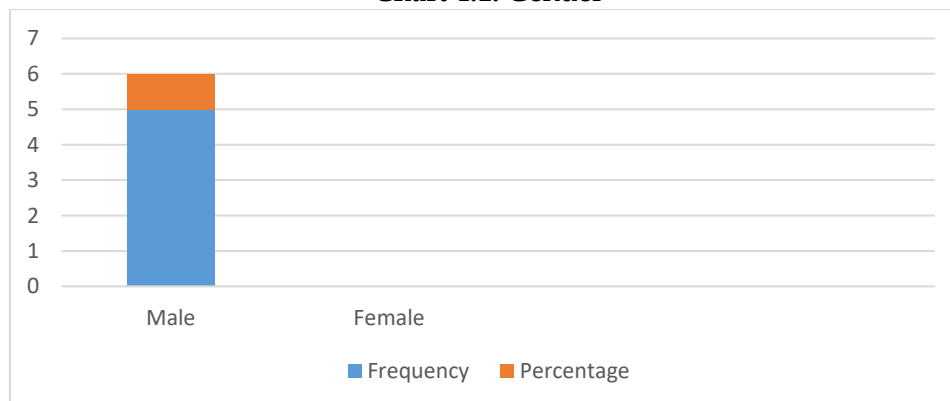
Table 4.2: Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor	1	20%
Master	2	40%
Doctorate	2	40%
Total	5	100%

Chart 4.2: Qualification
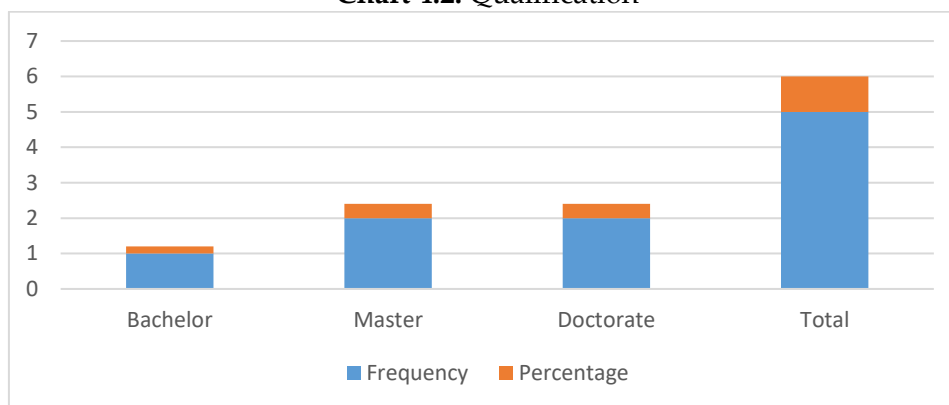
Table 4.3: College of Graduation

College of Graduation	Frequency	Percentage
Education	2	40%
Arts	3	60%
Total	5	100%

Chart 4.3: College of Graduation
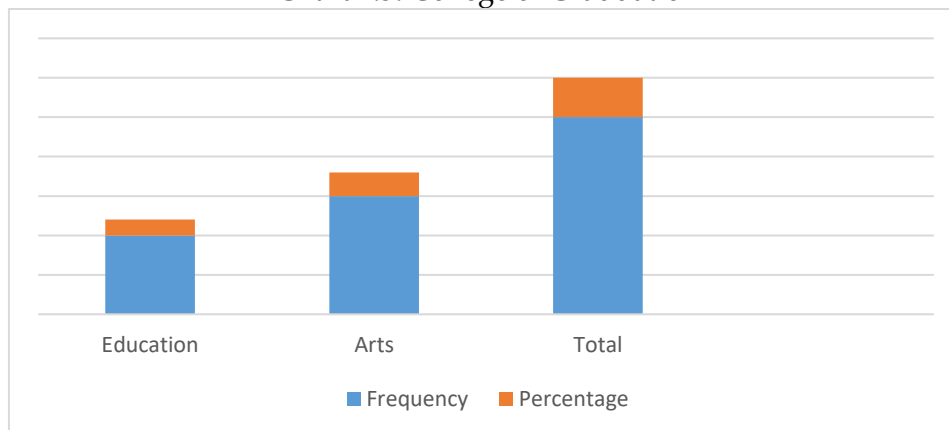
Table 4.4: Job Title (Designation)

Job Title (Designation)	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching assistant	1	20%
Lecturer	1	20%
Assistant professor	2	40%
Professor	1	20%
Total	5	100%

Chart 4.4: Job Title (Designation)
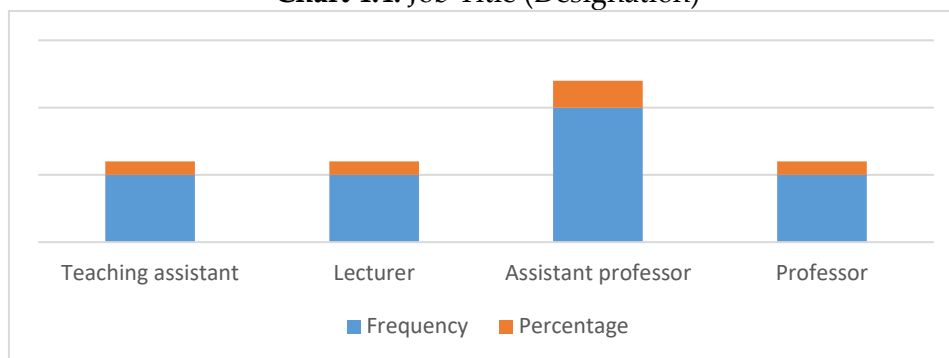
Table 4.5: Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	1	20%
6-10	2	40%
15 and above	2	40%
Total	5	100%

Chart 4.5: Years of Experience
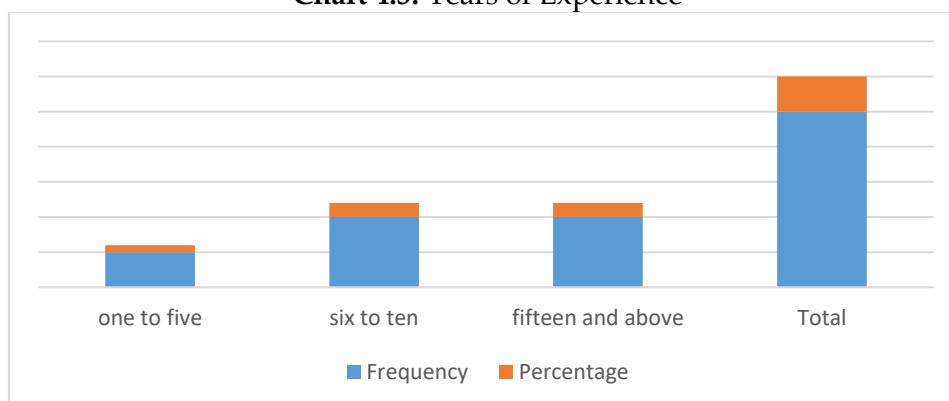
B. Section Two: Analysis & discussion of the interview questions

In this section of the interview, the participants are requested to answer certain questions (See Appendix A). The following are the participants' responses:

Question one: Why/Why not do you think that students, in general, in English classes are at many different ability levels?
1) Students' cultural background: the environment where they grow up (this includes uneducated parents and acquaintances), the types of schools they go to (including poorly furnished schools and unskilled teachers) are reasons why some students are slow learners. In short lack of parental and educators' guidance. Mindset is another reason. Many students do not have a growth mindset. Their fixed mindset makes them think that they cannot be changed.
2) I think that might be due to the inappropriacy of the placement tests.

3) Students in English classes are at many different levels, due to, some students have never studied the language, while others may practice the language at home or with friends. Also, some students are very interested in learning the language on their own. Moreover, some students may be visual learners whereas others are audio learners.

4) Different abilities seen in language learners might result from a lack of motivation among some students in the class. Some learners have the potential talent to acquire languages than others. On the other hand, dunce learners are there in many English classes. Sometimes the learners' goal of attending English class may affect their performance. In addition to their resilience and perseverance. However, the procedures of enrolling learners in one level may not be accurate. For example, the placement test conducting.

5) According to my own experience, I came across different ability levels in the same class. Therefore, I take into consideration these types of classes.

Question Two: What's your opinion about dividing the English classes into ability groups would be a good way to deal with the problem?

1) Mixed-ability classes are much better than ability groups because students learn from each other.

2) In my opinion this should happen.

3) I strongly support the idea of dividing the English classes into ability groups, because for instance, teaching the basics to advanced students' means, isn't learning anything new. And teaching more difficult topics isn't learning those basics. Both of them will get bored. But if you seat students at the same level, your students can help each other and understand the material easily.

4) Ability grouping can increase student achievement by allowing teachers to go fast in giving instructions and lesson stages. Also, a class of high achievers might be given more opportunities for independent activities such as discussion and research writing. But this grouping might make students feel depressed and monotonous. I personally think classes with mixed abilities give opportunities to weaker learners to learn more from their higher-level colleagues. This comes from pair/group work.

5) I do agree without being known that they are divided for the mentioned purpose because such division will definitely affect negatively on the weak ones.

Question Three: What suggestions do you recommend for English instruction to improve the learning skills of low-performance students?

1) Trying all teaching methods is the best way to deal with them. The eclectic method can meet their needs.

2) I suggest that low-performance students should be given extra activities that suit their levels.

3) Building self-confidence among low-performance students by using simplified and understandable language. Encourage and reward teamwork. Giving them extra attention.

4) There are many strategies teachers can follow to improve low learners' performance. Some of these are to increase team assignments, encourage and reward teamwork, especially where 'mixed' teams (peer groups) have helped weak students improve.

5) Additional and private classes will help much to deal with this dilemma; besides, encouraging them to feel confident.

Question Four: What are the ways do you use to motivate lower-performance students?

1) Praise, praise, and praise. Praise can make wonders for them. Acknowledge their achievements even if they are small. Giving rewards for each milestone is a requirement

2) I motivate them by sharing with them similar experiences to their own, and tell them how those low-performing students made difference by taking action (accomplishing the activities they are given).

What are the ways do you use to motivate lower-performance students?

3) What are the ways do you use to motivate lower-performance students?
   a) Knowing students' level well.
   b) Choose topics that are familiar to their interests.
   c) Connect lessons to the real world.
   d) Use technology.
   e) Communicate with parents.
   f) Give extra lessons in the areas where the students perform low.
   g) I don't allow my students to give up on their work or themselves.

4) What are the ways do you use to motivate lower-performance students?
   a) Let students feel secure.
   b) Be clear about learning objectives. ...
   c) Change your class atmosphere and seating
   d) Offer varied experiences. ...
   e) Use positive competition. ...
   f) Offer rewards. ...
   g) Give students enough responsibility.

5) Creating an atmosphere of confidence among students. Moreover, assign extra material to help them feel that they are improving and able to reach their colleagues' level.

Question Five: How do you make the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students?

1) Student-centered classes are efficient as students learn from their classmates rather than instructors. Being realistic and understanding the students as far as their

abilities are concerned is essential. For example, assign a task which is achievable for the student and set questions accordingly. Be patient and encourage them to explore and learn at their own pace until they succeed. Praise in public and criticize in private. From time to time make use of technology and display shows, sports and music followed by discussions.

2) I will make the emotional environment safe for them by stating that mistakes and errors and part of the language learning process. As for the physical environment, I will group them with students higher than them in performance so as take advantage of the fact that students learn more from their peers.

3) How do you make the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students?
   a) Building a positive relationship with low-performance students through communication with them and their parents.
   b) Appreciate their efforts among their classmates.
   c) Focus on low- performance students' needs (employ activities).
   d) Interact with each student individually to know his/ her interests, strength, weakness and personal challenges.

4) How do you make the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students?
   a) Have a plan and clear instructions, be aware of your subject.
   b) After each unit, including formative assessment.
   c) Provide consistent feedback, weekly or daily.
   d) Give positive feedback.
   e) Self-assess regularly.

5) Conveying to the class that mistakes is the most important element that helps students know and consequently avoid them.

4.2 Interview Analyses

As for the first question, most of the interviewers do agree that students' cultural background: the environment where they grow up, placement tests and mindset are the reasons for finding mixed-ability students in the same class. Moreover, many students do not have a growth mindset. Their fixed mindset makes them think that they cannot be changed. In addition to the fact that different abilities seen in language learners might result from a lack of motivation among some students in the class. Some learners have the potential talent to acquire languages more than others. On the other hand, dunce learners are there in many English classes. Sometimes the learners' goal of attending English class may affect their performance. In addition to their resilience and perseverance. However, the procedures of enrolling learners in one level may not be accurate.

The second question result shows that almost all the interviewers think classes with mixed abilities give opportunities to weaker learners to learn more from their

higher-level colleagues. This comes from pair/group work. Also, they believe that mixed-ability classes are much better than ability groups because students learn from each other.

The third question seeks the suggestions the interviewers recommend for English instruction to improve the learning skills of the low-performance students, they suggest that low-performance students should be given extra activities that suit their levels. They also suggest that trying all teaching methods is the best way to deal with them. The eclectic method can meet their needs. All the interviewers agree that motivation rewards and building self-confidence are the most suggested elements to increase low-performance students' levels.

The fourth question tries to find the ways instructors use to motivate lower-performance students. All the interviewers say to assign the task which is achievable for the student and set questions accordingly. Be patient and encourage them to explore and learn at their own pace until they succeed. Praise in public and criticize in private. From time to time make use of technology and display shows, sports and music followed by discussions. They also state that it is essential to provide consistent feedback, weekly or daily.

The fifth question is about how to make the best possible environment in the classroom for low-performance students. All interviewers agree to make the emotional environment safe for them by stating that mistakes and errors and part of the language learning process. As for the physical environment, they say they have to group them with students higher than them in performance so as take advantage of the fact that students learn more from their peers.

5. The Findings of the Study

This study tried to investigate the problems of Addressing a Class of Mixed-Ability Students at Universities in Sudan.

In investigating the problem of the research, the following questions were raised:
1) What are the best ways that instructors should use to motivate lower-performance students?
2) Why there should be group/pair work instead of a teacher-centered classroom?
3) How do instructors make the best possible environment in the classroom for low-performance students?
4) What are the ways do instructors have to use to motivate lower-performance students?

In searching for answers to the above questions the following hypotheses have been made:
1) Inappropriate placement tests and cultural background lead to a class of mixed-ability students.
2) Motivation is the most important element in reinforcing the students' performance.
3) There should be a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered classroom.

4) Instructors should make the best possible environment in the classroom for the low-performance students.
   The above hypotheses have been verified in terms of the following findings:
1) Instructors do agree that students' cultural background: the environment where they grow up, placement tests and mindset are the reasons for finding mixed-ability students in the same class.
2) Instructors agree that motivation is one of the best ways to help lower-performance students. All the interviewers say to assign the task which is achievable for the student and set questions accordingly. Be patient and encourage them to explore and learn at their own pace until they succeed.
3) Instructors believe that student-centered classes are efficient as students learn from their classmates rather than instructors.
4) Instructors agree to make the emotional environment safe for students by stating that mistakes and errors and part of the language learning process.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that all of the instructors agree that motivation is one of the best ways to help lower-performance students. The results, also show that it is essential to make the emotional environment safe for students by stating that mistakes and errors and part of the language learning process. Moreover, the interviewed instructors do agree that students' cultural background: the environment where they grow up, placement tests and mindset are the reasons for finding mixed-ability students in the same class.

6.1 Recommendations
Based on the research conclusions, the researcher finds it important to recommend the following:
1) This study focused on some universities in Khartoum, further studies for future research could have more universities from other States to have a large number of subjects.
2) The study concerns university students, further research should be concerned with students at secondary schools, too.
3) Instructors must motivate students to help them improve their language skills.
4) Instructed should be oriented and trained teachers to implement the best approaches to motivate students and deal with the problems that may arise.
   Problems are such as:
1) How to deal with crowded classrooms in terms of keeping track of all the students.
2) How to deal with mixed-ability classes by changing the seating plan every now and then so that factors can share ideas. Moreover, when and how to switch from one method to another to meet different personalities, different ages, and different learning styles.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Studies

According to the research conclusions, researchers in the future should select a larger population and sample size in order to get accurate findings. Further studies on the same topic should explore more factors that could make the implementation of the student-centered an important issue so as to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of its effect on improving lower-performance students at universities in Sudan. Moreover, researchers are required to conduct more studies on gauging students' English language levels through perfect placement tests. For further studies, other factors which have not been covered in this study can be identified to see how they lead to the improvement of the students' performance.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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