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## **THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING READING TO MIXED-LEVEL CLASSES**

**Abstract:** This article examines the challenges of teaching reading in mixed-level classrooms. It explores key methodologies for effectively teaching reading to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students of varying proficiency levels. The study considers crucial factors influencing reading instruction and practical strategies to enhance student engagement. Additionally, it evaluates the effectiveness of different grouping techniques and instructional approaches.

**Keywords:** teaching reading, EFL learners, mixed-level classrooms, instructional methods, classroom management, reading strategies.

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**Introduction:** Teaching reading in mixed-level classrooms presents unique challenges, as students have varying levels of proficiency, learning paces, and comprehension skills. Mixed-level classes, also known as composite or multi-grade classes, consist of students from different grades or skill levels learning together No the guidance of one teacher. These classes exist due to factors such as limited student enrollment, rural school settings, or pedagogical preferences favoring multi-age learning. This article aims to analyze the impact of mixed-level classroom strategies on reading instruction. It explores methods that facilitate learning in such environments, examines practical classroom activities, and highlights best practices for motivating students. The study also discusses how teachers can effectively manage a diverse classroom to ensure an inclusive and productive learning experience.

**Research Methodology:** This qualitative study is based on interviews and classroom observations. A purposive sampling method was used to select teachers working in mixed-level classrooms. The study was conducted in Namangan city, school number 15. The primary participant was interviewed for at least 30 minutes at the beginning of the study using semi-structured questions. Additionally, two classroom observations were conducted where the researcher acted as a non-participant observer. Observations focused on lesson delivery, critical thinking in instruction, student engagement, and the variety of activities used in mixed-level settings. Effective teaching in mixed-level classrooms requires diverse instructional methods to keep students engaged. Teachers can use the following grouping strategies:

- Homogeneous grouping: Students with similar proficiency levels work together to reinforce their strengths.
- Heterogeneous grouping: Advanced learners assist struggling peers, fostering peer learning.
- Flexible grouping: Students switch groups based on task complexity and learning objectives.

A practical technique involves writing instructions on the board, allowing younger or less proficient students to develop confidence by following written directions.

**Self-Directed Learning: Since teachers must divide their time among different proficiency groups, students must develop independent learning skills. The following strategies can promote self-directed learning:**

- Providing structured work plans with a list of reading activities.
- Setting up a classroom library with leveled reading materials.
- Using guided self-learning exercises, such as comprehension worksheets or digital resources.

These methods empower students to progress at their own pace while reinforcing key reading skills.

**Classroom Management and Discipline: Effective classroom management is crucial for maintaining order in mixed-level environments. Teachers should establish clear routines so that students understand expectations. Key strategies include:**

- Using visual or auditory signals (such as a hand signal or bell) to gain students' attention.
- Setting clear rules about noise levels and behavior during reading activities.
- Encouraging students to reflect on lessons, helping teachers refine instructional strategies.

In some cases, parental volunteers or teaching assistants can help manage activities, ensuring that all students receive adequate attention.

**Findings and Discussion: Analysis of collected data revealed six key factors affecting reading instruction in mixed-level classrooms:**

1. Classroom Structure: A well-organized environment enhances engagement and minimizes distractions.
2. Lesson Activities: Engaging, level-appropriate reading tasks improve comprehension and retention.
3. Classroom Displays: Visual aids, such as word walls and reading charts, support literacy development.
4. Teacher-Student Interaction: Personalized feedback boosts student motivation.
5. Classroom Size: Smaller class sizes facilitate more individualized instruction.
6. Learning Environment: A positive and inclusive atmosphere promotes student participation.

**Conclusion:** Conducting this research has given me valuable insights into the complexities of teaching reading in mixed-level classrooms. Before starting this study, I had a general understanding of the challenges that teachers face in such environments, but through my analysis, I gained a deeper appreciation of the strategies that can be used to overcome these difficulties. One of the key takeaways from my research is that student engagement plays a crucial role in reading development. Simply providing reading materials is not enough—students need interactive and structured activities that suit their skill levels. Differentiated instruction, peer-assisted learning, and self-directed activities are all essential in ensuring that no student is left behind. Another important realization for me was the role of teacher flexibility. Managing a mixed-level classroom requires teachers to constantly adapt their teaching methods. The most successful educators in my study were those who could switch between instructional techniques depending on student needs. Additionally, I found that classroom management is just as important as instruction. Even the best teaching methods will not be effective in an environment where students are disengaged or distracted. Teachers must establish clear expectations, routines, and discipline strategies to create an optimal learning atmosphere. However, despite the advantages of mixed-level instruction, it is clear that teacher training is essential for success. Many teachers struggle with classroom management and lesson planning because they have not

received adequate training in handling multi-grade situations. This suggests that teacher education programs should place more emphasis on preparing educators for mixed-level environments. Overall, my research has confirmed that mixed-level classrooms, when managed effectively, can provide unique learning opportunities. These classes promote peer collaboration, encourage independent learning, and allow for creative teaching approaches. However, without proper support and structured planning, they can become overwhelming for both teachers and students. I believe that future studies should focus on long-term literacy outcomes for students in mixed-level classrooms. It would be valuable to explore whether students from these environments perform better or worse in standardized assessments compared to their peers in single-grade classes. This research has been a rewarding experience, and I hope that my findings contribute to improving reading instruction in diverse classroom settings.

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