

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING MIXED-ABILITY EFL CLASSES: A STUDY OF TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Daneth Heng¹, Sina Pang², Sereyrath Em³

¹School of Foreign Languages, The University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

²Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University, Japan

³Khemarak University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

¹hengdaneth5510@gmail.com, ²pang.sina.hs@moeys.gov.kh, ³sereyrathem.edu@gmail.com

Abstract

English teaching and learning were first encouraged in Cambodia between 1970 and 1975. However, it then disappeared until 1989. During the last decade, English has become Cambodia's most prominent foreign language. The popularity and vital roles of English in Cambodia's political and economic development have then resulted in the establishment of many private English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools across the nation. English teaching and learning at these private EFL schools have various challenges. Mixed-ability classes, one of the challenging issues, are still common in many of these EFL schools. As these private EFL schools have played important roles in English education in Cambodia, it is interesting to learn more about their teachers' challenges in instructing mixed-ability students and their teaching strategies for mixed-ability classes. The current study involves 20 male and 30 female teachers who were teaching at two private EFL schools in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from them. The findings proved that these EFL teachers had many challenges dealing with mixed-ability classes, and appropriate and immediate actions from their school management team were required. Thus, effective classroom management and a variety of teaching methods were applied in mixed-ability classrooms. Besides, teachers' experience did not affect the strategies' effectiveness. The present study also suggests that a future study be carried out with a large sample size at various locations. The use of various forms, including qualitative and mixed techniques, is also encouraged. It is also advised to consider how students view courses with diverse ability levels.

Keywords: Challenges; EFL Classes; Mixed-Ability Students; Private School; Cambodia

INTRODUCTION

English education appeared in Cambodia between 1970 and 1975 and was then prohibited until 1989 (Neau, 2003; see Em, 2022). English education was then legal and introduced into the Cambodian school curriculum only after 1990. The change in political circumstances and economic opportunities allowed the English language to exist in the Cambodian education system. Since then, the English language has played more important roles in Cambodia's political and economic development. During the last decade, with the impact of globalization and increased foreign investment in Cambodia, English has gained more popularity and become the most prominent foreign language in this nation (see Neau, 2003).

English training has been seen to exist in both private and public schools from primary to higher education levels and in many different parts of Cambodia, including rural areas. Although English is regarded as the most important foreign language, English education still lags behind other countries in the region. English teaching and learning is still a great challenge for most instructors and students in Cambodia (Em, 2022). With limited resources and teaching hours in the state curriculum, students turn to private schools for additional instruction. This allows numerous private EFL schools to exist alongside public schools. These private schools have

made a significant contribution to the improvement of English training in Cambodia (see Dawson, 2010; Khan & Em, 2022).

As the characteristics of English training at these private institutions may vary according to the social and economic factors of the school bases and their students, it is interesting to have a better understanding of the issues and challenges these private schools are facing (see Dawson, 2009).

In the Cambodian context, mixed-ability classes remain the most challenging issue faced by EFL teachers. As mixed-ability classes are very common in most private EFL schools, with insufficient training, mixed-ability classes become one of their main difficulties. Therefore, it is interesting to learn more about the difficulties these EFL instructors are facing and the techniques they use to teach mixed-ability students (Nget et al., 2020). Employing a survey questionnaire, the current study aims to identify the challenge levels these EFL teachers have and the teaching techniques they use with mixed-ability students.

Characteristics of mixed-ability EFL classes

Mixed-ability classes have drawn more and more attention from teachers, researchers, and academia in the education sector, especially in teaching EFL. In general, mixed-ability classes consist of students who have different characteristics. These characteristics may vary from student to student, including their attitude, motivation, and discipline (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Mixed-ability classes are classes that have not only students with different interests but also different capacities (Ansari, 2013). This difference makes it hard for teachers to plan effective lessons to meet every student's needs. In EFL classes, mixed-ability students may have different levels of grammatical skills, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and receptive and productive skills (Valentic, 2005). Mixed-ability students have their styles of learning, different language backgrounds, and learning paces. Their levels of academic performance are also very different. This causes more challenges for EFL teachers (Ansari, 2003).

Challenges of teaching mixed-ability classes

Although student factors, administrative decisions, contexts, and financial-related factors may also contribute to its existence, the teacher factor is the most relevant factor when discussing the challenges of teaching mixed-ability classes. However, those who are affected the most by mixed-ability classrooms are teachers and students (see Xiao, 2020).

The disconnection between students who are fast learners and those who are slow learners generally exists (McDermott & Zerr, 2019). In some cases, teachers try to focus their instructional materials on the average. It is challenging for teachers to provide instruction that meets every student's needs (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Thus, teachers are required to have good knowledge of teaching methodologies and strategies to respond to the needs of the majority. For novices or teachers who received little or no training in teaching methodology, this task is more challenging (Em et al., 2021). This is also a very challenging task for most EFL teachers, especially those who have a large class size to handle (Em, 2022). Teachers may use teaching methods aiming to help the majority of students; that is the average students. Such practice makes the slow students struggle with the instructions while the good students get lost since the learning procedure viably ignores their needs (Winebrenner, 2001). All students, including fast learners, need instructional experience that helps them achieve their greatest potential (Burney, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2005). Teaching gifted learners in a diverse classroom has shown success but is not consistent in having all learning abilities involved (Tyler, 2006). Thus, both teachers and students may feel that not much progress in their teaching and learning is recorded.

Large class sizes are common in mixed-ability classes, and teachers have to manage students and deliver effective lessons (Em et al., 2021). With many students to deal with, the teacher may not be able to fill the needs of every student. Good students get bored as teachers spend

more time explaining average and poor students. The real issues are not only the large class size but also the different levels of ability (Baker, 2002).

Regardless of students' varying levels of learning ability, the difficult aspect of teaching EFL mixed-ability classrooms is that teachers must assist students at their speed (Ansari, 2013). One of the most frequent difficulties faced by teachers of mixed-ability courses is keeping all pupils' attention. If every student's requirements aren't met, active students may continue to be active while passive pupils continue to be passive, resulting in little discernible improvement. (Hedge, 2000). When instructors fail to keep the class in order, students lose motivation (Em et al, 2022; Phann et al., 2023).

Because they were unable to find the time to assist struggling pupils, teachers themselves are dissatisfied with their performance as instructors. The teacher's motivation and sense of pride will suffer in such a circumstance. Teachers must have appropriate training on how to handle these classes. It will be difficult to teach mixed-ability classes without the right credentials (Bishay, 1996).

Teaching strategies for mixed-ability classes

Most school group students, according to their age, are to deal with the above-mentioned challenges. However, the random grouping of students according to their age may not prevent mixed-ability students from being in the same class (Kotob & Abadi, 2019). Teachers have to keep in mind that students' strengths and weaknesses are the fundamental causes of mixed-ability classes. This different level of knowledge will improve at different paces and rates (Ireson & Hallanm, 2001). Providing equal chances to all these students in the same class prevents challenges for teachers (Cheng et al., 2009).

One good strategy which is effective for mixed-ability classrooms is to have an open-class discussion. Students discuss the answers to the above questions with their partners or in small groups. Teachers then collect the information and prepare a statistical representation of the key questions and answers. An explanation of the mixed-level condition to students and give a list of possible approaches to teaching and learning should be given. In pairs, students number the ideas according to their suitability. By developing strategies and writing a standard practice for activities, the teacher can increase the sense of belonging in the class (see Gwozdz, 2020).

Differentiation is another good strategy for teaching in a mixed-ability classroom. Teachers can divide students into different groups and motivate them to involve more in their preferred learning style. Pairwork can be used to pair fast learners with fast learners, slow learners with slow learners, or slow learners with fast learners. Group work is also very good for students with different levels to work with each other. Teachers should also be thoughtful about the general connections between different students. Student-centered approaches such as game competitions, in-class activities, extra homework, and dramatization to create a lively classroom dynamic should also be incorporated (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Winebrenner, 2001).

Good classroom management is very important because it can enhance effective teaching. Effective classroom management has always required good classroom discipline, which is one of the most important components of effective teaching. Effective classroom management may refer to the effectiveness of how teachers lead their students in learning. Classroom management without routines and high expectations will make it difficult for teachers to perform their tasks well. When teachers spend most of their time controlling students' behavior problems, they will lose important time for teaching (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016).

According to Freiberge et al. (1980), a teacher who has good classroom management skills can ensure consistent learning outcomes for his or her students. The main objective of classroom management is also to prevent misbehavior in class. Good classroom management provides no

opportunity for students to disobey the classroom rules. Brown (2004) noted that when teachers created and communicated clearly with students, there is no excuse to break the classroom rules. Thus, the present study attempts to investigate the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by EFL teachers in mixed-ability classrooms?
2. What strategies do EFL teachers use to handle these challenges?

METHOD

Research design and tools

The current study employs a quantitative design. In this study, a survey questionnaire was used to collect responses from all EFL teachers who were currently teaching at two private schools in Phnom Penh. The survey tool was adapted and developed from the works of Al-Subaiei (2017) and Brehm and Silova (2014).

Ethical consideration

Before filling out the questionnaire, each participant was explained and given chances to ask questions vis-à-vis the study. Teachers' participation in this study was entirely voluntary and with prior approval from the management team of the two schools.

Then the participants were also informed that their identities were not required to be filled out and that all information would be kept entirely confidential and used only for the study. Moreover, it was made sure that they could withdraw from the study if they felt uneasy, particularly if they had privacy issues with the study, and that their data would be destroyed five years after the study was finished. The four principles of ethics are (1) preventing harm to participants, (2) ensuring that participants' permission is given, (3) respecting participant privacy, and (4) averting disappointment, as proposed by Goldblatt et al. (2011), were applied to the ethical problems in this research.

Participants

Table1. Participants' demographic information

Demographic	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)	
Gender	Male	20	40.00
	Female	30	60.00
	Total	50	100
Age	18-26	20	40.00
	27-40	27	54.00
	41-55	03	6.00
	Total	50	100
Teaching year Experience	One month-1 year	08	16.00
	One year-5 years	16	32.00
	Five years-up	26	52.00
	Total	50	100
Attend Training Course	One time/year	19	38.00
	Two times/year	16	32.00
	Three times/year	13	26.00
	Four times/year	02	4.00
	Total	50	100

A total number of 50 EFL teachers including both full and part-time classes from the two schools were the participants in the study. Among the total participants, 60% of them were female and 40% of them were male. The majority of participants, accounting for 54%, were between 27-40 years old, following 18-26 which account for 40%. Only 06% is between 41-45. Most participants have taught for at least five years, represented by 52%. Thirty-two percent of them have taught from one to five years of teaching experience. Most teachers were female, and they were young.

Data analysis

Since this study was done quantitatively, the data collected from the participants were analyzed with the aid of the computer software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were applied. The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of teachers' responses were analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges of mixed-ability classes

Table 2. Teaching and learning

No.	Description	M	SD	Inter.
1.	I do not find the pacing guide supportive in following individual students.	2.98	0.55	Moderate
2.	Most students could not communicate using English	3.06	0.86	Moderate
3.	There is a big gap between students' levels and skills.	3.08	0.82	Moderate
4.	The activities in the textbook do not fit the different levels of the students.	2.92	0.92	Moderate
5.	Planning a lesson that suits all students with their different levels is difficult.	3.08	0.92	Moderate
6.	I cannot fulfill the needs of every student.	2.74	0.94	Moderate
7.	Overall	2.97	0.83	Moderate

Note: Mean scores of 1.00-1.80 = Lowest, 1.81-2.60 = Low, 2.61-3.40 = Moderate, 3.41-4.20 = High, and 4.21-5.00 = Highest; Inter. = Interpretation

As presented in Table 2, all the items (items 1-6) were moderate, and the overall score was also moderate (M = 2,97, SD = 0.83). The information means that the situations of the mixed-ability classes might not fully satisfy both educators and learners.

Maintaining students' motivation

Table 3. Students' motivation

No.	Description	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Some students could not communicate in class because they don't have confidence.	3.40	0.88	Moderate
2.	Some students with very low language ability lose interest quickly.	3.22	0.93	Moderate
3.	Simplifying the lesson for slow learners decreases fast learners' interest.	3.16	0.73	Moderate
4.	In the class, some students do not have confidence.	2.86	0.78	Moderate

5.	In mixed-ability classes, slow learners feel that they are not treated fairly.	2.88	1.04	Moderate
6.	Ensuring that all students are challenged and interested is difficult.	3.18	0.89	Moderate
7.	In mixed-ability classes, fast learners feel that they are not treated fairly.	3.00	0.88	Moderate
8.	Overall	2.81	0.87	Moderate

As shown in Table 3, the participants rated all the items (items 1-7) as moderate. The overall items were also moderate ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.87$). Therefore, in terms of maintaining students' motivation learning English in the studied context was not so good. Thus, some measures are needed to be taken to push for more motivation for students.

Teaching materials

Table 4. Materials

No.	Description	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Designing activities for different abilities to achieve the same goal is difficult.	3.44	0.76	High
2.	With fixed lesson plans, I cannot adapt my teaching to various activities.	3.30	0.76	Moderate
3.	The strategies in the teacher's guide do not help me with mixed-ability classes.	3.12	1.04	Moderate
4.	Textbooks are prepared for average learners, neglecting slow and fast learners.	3.02	0.95	Moderate
5.	Finding good teaching resources for mixed-ability levels is difficult.	3.08	0.82	Moderate
6.	Designing or adapting a variety of materials regularly is difficult for me.	3.24	0.98	Moderate
7.	Overall	3.20	0.88	Moderate

Among all the items presented in Table 4, the participants only rate the first item as high while the others (items 2-6) were rated as moderate. Finally, the overall items were moderate. This also means the participants perceived teaching materials as not so good. Thus, all related stakeholders such as schools or related ministries need to help teachers produce more convenient teaching and learning materials.

Challenges faced by teachers in mixed-ability classes

Table 5. Overall M and SD of the challenges faced by teachers in mixed-ability classes

No.	Category	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Teaching and learning	3.24	0.74	Moderate
2.	Motivation	3.38	0.66	Moderate
3.	Material	3.42	0.70	High
4.	Overall	3.34	0.70	Moderate

Table 5 illustrates that teachers encounter many challenges in mixed-ability classes in terms of teaching and learning ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.74$), motivation ($M = 3.38, SD = 0.66$), and material ($M = 3.42, SD = 0.70$). Finally, the overall perceptions were moderate. This information means that teaching and learning activities, motivation, teaching, and learning materials still needed more measures to improve.

Teaching strategies used in mixed-ability classes

Classroom management

Table 6. Classroom management

No.	Description	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Calling student's names makes them feel respected and pay attention	4.14	0.85	High
2.	Involving fast learners in the class save teachers time.	3.50	0.90	High
3.	Using voice projection to make clear meaning and draw students' attention.	3.98	0.79	High
4.	Providing students time to note important information from the whiteboard.	3.90	0.88	High
5.	Working closely with slow learners to maintain their motivation.	4.06	0.76	High
6.	Providing more activities to students who finish the task early.	3.54	0.88	High
7.	Using various paces and levels of instructions.	3.60	0.80	High
8.	Using pictures and art to draw students' attention.	3.46	0.83	High
9.	Putting students in groups making different shapes.	3.20	0.83	Moderate
10.	Changing partners very often.	3.50	0.90	High
11.	Personalizing student's tasks	3.46	0.70	High
12.	Assigning mixed-ability group projects.	3.46	0.83	High
13.	Using in-class peer tutoring.	3.26	0.87	Moderate
14.	Overall	3.62	0.83	High

As presented in Table 7, the participants rated items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 as high, while items 9 and 13 as moderate. Finally, the overall themes were high ($M = 3.62, SD = 0.83$). This information means that classroom management is already good, and it may not need much improvement.

Teaching materials

Table 7. Materials

No.	Description	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Using simplified materials that are not designed solely for low-level students.	3.04	0.78	Moderate
2.	Using a set of materials with activities for different levels.	3.34	0.91	Moderate
3.	Preparing handouts before the start of the semester.	3.94	0.84	High

4.	Employing open-ended tasks.	3.58	0.75	High
5.	Using Jigsaw activities.	3.24	0.77	Moderate
6.	Using communicative activities.	3.58	0.94	High
7.	Use more authentic materials in addition to the course book.	3.54	0.86	High
8.	Overall	3.46	0.83	High

As shown in Table 7, the participants rated items 3, 4, 6, and 7 as high while items 1, 2, and 5 as moderate. Finally, the overall themes were high ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.83$). These findings mean that the material is good, and improvement may be needed in some specific cases.

Teaching and learning

Table 8. Teaching and learning

No.	Description	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Explaining the purpose of homework.	4.00	0.69	High
2.	Regular class observations among teachers.	3.36	0.80	Moderate
3.	Write the aims of the lesson on the board regularly.	3.18	0.98	Moderate
4.	Planning to observe a few students every day while walking around the class.	3.72	0.96	High
5.	Applying creative tasks that allow students to work at their levels.	3.50	0.81	High
6.	Designing vocabulary cards to improve reading ability.	3.38	0.96	Moderate
7.	Summarize the lesson with the students.	3.76	0.79	High
8.	Giving extra lessons for some students.	3.64	0.85	High
9.	Exchanging ideas with other teachers	3.68	0.84	High
10.	Teaching students the importance of note-taking.	3.56	0.76	High
11.	Providing students with information gap activities	3.44	0.78	High
12.	Using different levels of stories and folktales.	3.30	0.86	Moderate
13.	Encouraging students to reconstruct stories.	3.18	0.77	Moderate
14.	Mixing compulsory with optional tasks.	3.42	0.83	High
15.	Applying multilevel dictation (blank sheet of paper, a medium-level cloze, and a cloze with only a few blanks).	3.36	0.94	Moderate
16.	Having drama and sketching (miming, role play, etc.) in class to have a stress-free environment.	3.36	0.85	Moderate
17.	Providing a menu of work for the students and their choice.	2.84	0.76	Moderate
18.	Involving low-level students in English Club Activities.	3.22	1.11	Moderate
19.	Overall	3.43	0.98	High

As revealed in Table 8, the participants rated 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 8, 10, 11, and 14 as high, while items 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18 as moderate. A combined and divided, the overall items were

high ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.98$). These results mean that teaching and learning activities are already good. Thus, only specific measures are needed if necessary.

Teaching strategies

Table 9. M and SD of the strategies utilized by SPS teachers in mixed-ability classes

No.	Category	M	SD	Inter.
1.	Classroom management	3.84	0.65	High
2.	Materials	3.44	0.64	High
3.	Teaching and Learning	3.48	0.64	High
4.	Overall	3.58	0.64	High

Table 9 shows that teachers want to use management strategies more than other strategies ($M = 3.84, SD = 0.65$), while the other two strategies ($M = 3.44, SD = 0.64$) and ($M = 3.48, SD = 0.64$). The overall was rated as high ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.64$). The results confirm the idea that teacher training is a necessity, as teachers who lack training could affect the students' proficiency. The previous outcome may be explained by the fact that the first school teachers could benefit from training courses and practicing different strategies with the students.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that mixed-ability classrooms provide several challenges for EFL instructors. The results are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the difficulties experienced by teachers of mixed-ability courses. Because of the differences in attitudes, motivation, and self-discipline among pupils in a class, teachers frequently struggle to match the learning demands of every student. It becomes difficult for teachers to design classes that are acceptable and can satisfy the needs of the pupils. The cause is that these teachers might not have the necessary education to instruct kids successfully (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Teachers who get ongoing training can get over the challenges they frequently face. (Butterworth, 2010). Both earlier research and the results of this study support the idea that instructors who get insufficient training will be unable to choose the strategy that is most suited to their circumstances. The problem is that the majority of instructors don't have adequate time for professional development and preparation. Teachers of mixed-ability classes should be supported in receiving ongoing professional development so they can handle the demands of their different students. (Butterworth, 2010). Teachers are unable to instruct mixed-ability classrooms effectively without adequate training. The problem, according to Loiacono and Allen (2008), is that most teachers don't have the necessary professional development, planning time, or differentiation implementation skills, and especially don't have the skills to create materials that are tailored to each student's needs.

Teachers could feel unsatisfied with their work when they don't have enough time to assist the poorer students. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Poor communication in the classroom is caused by teachers who may not feel confident in their ability to instruct and communicate with particular pupils. Some pupils' lack of linguistic proficiency causes them to quickly lose interest. Additionally, it might be difficult to keep all students interested in class activities while simplifying the lesson for low-ability pupils. This might lower the interest of good pupils in the session if there is poor lesson planning. Low-level students feel they are treated unfairly in other mixed-ability classrooms, while some of the class's other students lack enthusiasm.

According to the present research, instructors find it challenging to create multiple activities for various skill levels that achieve the same aim when utilizing resources, and rigid lesson plans prohibit them from adapting to new activities. Teachers must be aware that students in a class are of varying abilities, that they have distinct strengths and limitations, and that they develop at various speeds, according to Ireson and Hallam (2001). The stronger pupils present a big challenge to any instructor, even if they can do all of the assignments in half the time allocated while the weaker students need more time to complete their work. If they can't hold our interest, they become bored. A disobedient or even disruptive learner can be bored.

According to Nunan (1998), implementing cooperative learning techniques and methods in the classroom can raise student engagement and accomplishment. Although most students do not have a choice in what they study, they do have a choice in how they learn, even if we teachers often keep an eye on the curriculum. Students should be exposed to a variety of second language learning methods by their teachers so they may choose the one that works best for them. Students that receive this kind of assistance develop more adaptable and flexible learning methods.

Because a disorganized classroom routine makes it difficult for instructors to carry out their tasks, it has been discovered in the past that classroom management is essential to utilize in mixed-ability courses. The best way to approach this difficulty is to have frank discussions about how things work in the classroom. (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). It is best to embrace reality and necessitates consensus on the solution to secure a positive outcome for every kid. Utilizing a need analysis is the best technique to focus attention on a topic and structure the conversation. The requirements of each student, including style, methods, motivation, and strengths and weaknesses, are urged to be taken into account.

However, this most recent finding has stated that making handouts before the start of the semester and adapting open-ended tasks are very helpful to teachers and students in getting ready for their classes. The most recent findings regarding the application of materials in mixed-ability classes were consistent with earlier findings. This type of class benefits from the use of more interactive exercises and real-world resources in addition to course content. Low-level pupils may not find simplified content difficult.

According to past studies, teachers can employ mixed-ability courses in several ways. In mixed-ability courses, teachers have highlighted the value of homework and the necessity for pupils to properly complete it. (Pedersen & Kronborg, 2014). As they move around the classroom to watch 3–4 students each day, they also ask the kids a few questions at the end of the lecture. Furthermore, there is a free conversation both within and outside of the classroom. Instructors frequently share difficulties they have had in the classroom with other instructors and provide extra lessons to those students who finish their work more quickly than other students. They also teach the importance of taking notes to the pupils. In addition, the teachers encourage students to reconstruct stories, use multilevel dictation (blank sheets of paper, a medium-level cloze, and a close with a few blanks), and provide scaffolding for the students as other effective methods for helping the mixed-ability students.

CONCLUSION

According to the survey, the majority of first and second-school instructors find it challenging to instruct mixed-ability courses. They have used a wide range of efficient classroom

management tactics and strategies to get over this challenge. The several ways in which these classroom methods and tactics are applied seem to work well. Instructors of mixed-ability classrooms must pay attention to the good aspects of their classes while also using effective classroom management tactics and procedures. Mixed-ability classes negatively influence instructors' motivation, which harms their ability to teach. Teachers more or less deal with a lot of difficulties because of the intricacy of mixed-ability classrooms. Teachers must thus provide customized assignments for varied levels. Additionally crucial are maintaining students' interests and improving their learning capacity.

In the Cambodian context, mixed-ability and large-class sizes are inevitable. Hence, teachers of English must also face these situations inevitably, and they need to learn to motivate students to learn the language since motivation is essential. There have been some studies concerning motivation in learning English that can be taken into consideration (see Bon et al., 2022; Heng, 2017; Keo et al., 2022; Sor et al., 2022). Besides, teachers need to evaluate students' learning regularly to make sure they are still motivated to learn the language (see Nhor et al., 2022). Finally, teachers should always use different techniques to teach students so that they are highly motivated (see Houn & Em, 2022).

The limitation is the usual thing for all studies. Like all those studies, the current study has its limitations such as a small scale, only two schools, and its design. Thus, a future study can be conducted with a large sample size at different places. Different designs such as qualitative and mixed methods are also welcome. Students' perceptions of mixed-ability classes are also recommended.

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