

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**



**University of Tlemcen  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English**

**Dealing with Mixed Ability Classes in Comprehension and  
Written Expression Teaching: The Case of 1st year EFL  
Students of the Department of English, Tlemcen University**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master in Language Studies

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**Academic Year: 2018-2019**

## Dedication

*I dedicate this work to:*

- \* My beloved parents for their love, encouragements, and prayers.*
- \* My sisters and my brother Abd Alhak for their unconditional support without forgetting my dear aunt Houria.*
- \* My close friends Soulef, Ghezlane, Fatima, Asma, Mohammed, and Hamza.*
- \* My husband Issam.*

## Acknowledgements

*First of all I thank Allah for giving me the strenght to finish this work.*

*I would like to express my thanks to my dear supervisor Dr.Fatima Zohra BELKHIR for her help and encouragement to complete this thesis.*

*Great thanks and respect go to the members of the jury Dr. Fatima Zohra ADDER and Dr. Hadia HAKEM for their acceptance to read and examine my thesis.*

*Finally,I would like to thank all teachers who took part in this research work for their time and cooperation.*

## **Abstract**

There is no doubt that all classes have students with different abilities, mixed ability classes combine students with varied qualities, competences, levels, skills, and needs. Being teachers in heterogeneous classes requires a great deal, awareness, efforts, and responsibility. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the factors that put students in heterogeneity issue, the challenges EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers meet in teaching those classes and the teaching strategies teachers deem appropriate and helpful to fulfill the students' needs when dealing with mixed ability classes. This research work was carried out in the University of Tlemcen at the Department of English. It strives to investigate the situation the case study was about in the module of Comprehension and Written Expression (CWE) in the first year level. Two main research instruments were employed in order to collect data that are teachers' questionnaire which was addressed to first year CWE teachers and classroom observation which was done with the permission teachers. After reviewing and analyzing the data collected from the two research instruments employed in this study, the results showed that dealing with mixed ability classes in teaching writing skill needs big efforts from both teachers and learners, there should be a suitable, flourishing, and thriving strategies and techniques to create a helpful teaching/learning environment for both of them and meet all students' needs in those classes.

# Table of Contents

Dediction.....	I
Acknowledgement.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Table of Contents.....	IV
List of Tables .....	VI
List of Figures.....	VII
List of Acronyms .....	VIII
List of Abbreviation .....	IX
General introduction.....	1
<b>Chapter One: Review of the Related Literature</b>	
1.1. Introduction.....	6
1.2. Mixed Ability Classes .....	6
1.2.1. Definition.....	6
1.2.2. Characteristics.....	7
1.3. Teaching Mixed Ability Classes.....	8
1.3.1. Teachers Role in Mixed Ability Classes .....	9
1.4. Factors of Mixed Ability Classes .....	10
1.5. Challenges of Mixed Ability Classes .....	17
1.6 .Teaching Strategies in Mixed Ability Classes .....	21
1.7. Teaching Writing Skill .....	25
1.7.1. Definition of Writing as a Skill .....	25
1.7.2. Reasons of Writing .....	27
1.7.3. Teaching Writing in Mixed Ability Classes .....	28
1.8. Conclusion .....	29
<b>Chapter Two : Research Design and Data Analysis.</b>	
2.1. Introduction.....	31
2.2. Field Work.....	31
2.3. Methodology.....	32

2.3.1. Methods.....	32
2.3.2. The sample population.....	32
2.3.3. Research Instrument.....	33
2.3.3.1. Teachers' Questionnaires.....	33
2.3.3.2. Classroom Observation.....	34
2.4. Data Analysis.....	35
2.4.1. Teachers' Questionnaire Results.....	36
2.4.2. Classroom Observation Results.....	41
2.5. Discussion.....	48
2.6. Suggestions and Recommendations.....	49
2.7. Conclusion.....	50
General Conclusion.....	53
References.....	56
Appendices.....	60

## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1. Classroom Management .....	42
Table 2.2. Teachers' Lecture Presentation.....	43
Table 2.3. Students' Participation.....	45
Table 2.4. Methods and Materials.....	46
Table 2.5. Students' Involvement in the Classroom.....	47
Table 2.6. Students' Mixed Abilities.....	48

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Classes with different abilities.....	37
Figure 2.2. Students' Learning Styles.....	38
Figure 2.3. Classroom division .....	41



## **List of Acronyms**

EFL English as a Foreign Language.

MLAT Modern Language Aptitude Tests.

PLAB Pinsleur Language Aptitude Battery.

CEIL Centre d'Enseignement Intense de Langues.

LMD Licence Master Doctorat.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CWE Comprehension and Written Expression.

# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

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Teaching plays a vital role in the educational process in which teachers transfer knowledge to learners in order to make them learn. Teaching can be defined as a life project that requires teachers to be successful and more responsible in their teaching professions since they are considered as key elements in the classroom. Teaching English is not an exception. Its teaching and learning entails skills and capacities from teachers and learners alike for the purpose of helping them to achieve good results in their professional and educational career especially when the English classes consist of students with varied ways and qualities of learning in that, each student has his own or unique learning style, level, motivation, capacity, personality, performance, competence, interest, and so on. All these differences among students make them learn in a mess of differences and difficulties and a fact that leads teachers to be in struggle and trouble with their learners' mixed abilities in that they have to deal with all their differences and fulfil all their needs.

This research work focuses on teaching writing skill in mixed ability classes. More precisely, this study aims to investigate the factors of heterogeneity in the teaching of Comprehension and Written Expression (CWE) module and contributes in providing teachers with further insights into how to deal with mixed ability classes in CWE teaching. Thus, the current research identified two important questions that are as follow :

1. Do mixed ability classes affect teachers' practices in CWE teaching ?
2. How do teachers react toward their students' mixed abilities as far as CWE teaching is concerned ?

Based on these research questions, the next hypotheses are formulated :

1. Perhaps, mixed ability classes affect teachers' practices as to teaching writing and demands much time and efforts from the part of the teacher than from the part of the learner.

## General Introduction

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2. In mixed ability classes, teachers should be all the time to be aware of students' different abilities and needs by using appropriate teaching techniques that cater all their differences.

In this research work, the researcher dealt with two methods, in which, there is a descriptive research which describes the situation in question, and, there is the analytic method which relies on analyzing those data. The researcher employed two main research instruments to gather data ; they are the teachers' questionnaire and classroom observation. Both were carried out by first year CWE teachers of the Department of English.

This research dissertation is divided into two chapters, the first one is the theoretical part ; it deals with literature review. It contains the definition and the teaching methods and strategies used in mixed ability classes. It also reviews the importance of teachers' role and presents the different factors that result in students with mixed abilities. Moreover, the chapter pinpoints various challenges that teachers are struggling and fighting them when teaching writing in heterogeneous classes together with the strategies that teachers can use and work by in order to deal with these problems. After that, the chapter provided an overview about writing skill and teaching writing in mixed ability classes. Moving to the second chapter, that is the practical part which is concerned with the description of this research field work, subjects, instruments, and methods. The chapter proceeds with the data collection analysis and discussion to finish with some suggestions and recommendations.

# **Chapter One**

**Review of the Related Literature**

### 1.1. Introduction

English becomes the language of the world that leads most of people in a way or another to acquire it. On the one hand, teachers play a vital role in teaching English in which they provide every student a chance to learn it and succeed in using it. On the other hand, teachers are subjects to face various challenges and one of these big difficulties is dealing with mixed ability in EFL classrooms as each class has students with varied learning qualities, skills, levels, educational background, motivation, experience, learning styles, performance, competence, and so on. It is argued that these differences cause some factors that will result in a classroom with many dissimilarities in students abilities. This situation makes EFL teachers face and encounter several challenges. Among these problems there are: discipline, interest, ect...In order to have a perfect, managed classroom, teachers should think and use numerous strategies for the purpose of coping with those challenges, they have to be aware and know how to deal with Mixed Ability Classes especially when in teaching writing.

### 1.2. Mixed Ability Classes

The next sub-sections will provide several definitions of Mixed Ability Classes and give some characteristics of these classes. These differences make every student vary from one to the other one.

#### 1.2.1. Definition

There are two terms which are used to describe irregular and untypical language abilities. The first term is Mixed Ability which is defined as: « Involving students of different levels of ability ».Combridge Dictionary (as cited in Bc. Adela Simanova). The second one is Heterogeneous, which is also by the Combridge Dictionary (as cited in Bc. Adela Simanova) described as « Consisting of parts or things that are very different from each other». The two terms are used when talking about different language abilities in classes. Scholars and educators give different definitions,

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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descriptions, and explanations for Mixed Ability or heterogeneous classrooms. Some educators describe Mixed Ability Classes as synonymous with multi level or heterogeneous classes where learners vary in the level of achievement. As Brenner (2008, p.2) pointed « Mixed Ability Classes do not just contain students with different abilities, but also students with a range of learning styles and preferences ». That is to say, depending on the topic being examined and studied and learning styles dealt with, all learners expose strength at varied times . As long as students are dealing with their preferred and favored learning styles they will not get a good result. The whole classroom even those who have been prepared and organized are of mixed abilities to certain level. Moreover, Gordon(2010, p.15) defined Mixed Ability Classes by asserting that « It is clear that this descriptor is widely used by international educators and researchers. This descriptor tends to look at students who have similar backgrounds, who are in the same grade, but divided by their ability in subject area ». That means, mixed ability classes are seen as a tool or method which is used to identify and select students qualities and properties who have the same degree, level, and background whereas their varied abilities are displayed in the content.

Henceforth, the terms mixed ability or heterogeneous classes are used interchangeably through the present research work to mean classes that consist of learners with different levels of proficiency.

### 1.2.2. Characteristics

There are several characteristics of mixed ability classes that learners are different and varied in. Valentic (2005,p.74) noted that « There are differences in the level of their abilities in the receptive and productive skills, fluency and accuracy work, grammatical knowledge, size of vocabulary, command of pronunciation, and so on ». To say it differently, learners vary in their learning capacities, encouragements for learning English language levels, demands, experiences, desires, and interests. In addition to that, learners are different in the four communicative skills that are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Then, Gurgendze (2012, p.56) stated that



Mixed Ability Classes are facts not only a language but of all courses. Since no two students can be the same in terms of language background, learning speed, learning ability, and motivation; no matter where do we live in the world or at which school we teach. Therefore, the language teachers should be aware of the problems of mixed ability classes and their solution to identify the source of trouble in their classes and to cure them.

Accordingly, all learners in class cannot be similar in their interests, learning needs and demands so teachers have to pay attention in order to provide and give right and suitable methods and solutions to deal with their learners.

All in all, classes with differences in learners' abilities and qualities are generally described as Mixed Ability Classes. Age, motivation, self discipline, attitude, literacy skills, ect...are different characteristics in which learners are varied not only in language but also in all ordinary classrooms involve students with mixed abilities because each student is different from the other. Generally speaking, all classrooms to ceratin degree or level contain students who differ in various situations; they have varied weaknesses, strengths, and methods to learning.

### **1.3. Teaching Mixed Ability Classes**

If all learners are allowed and permitted to experience success also to get and gain knowledge as individuals or particulars, teaching mixed ability classes will work and be an appropriate method when teachers affirm and focus on all students needs and weaknesses. Teaching heterogeneous classes is not an easy task; it requires a great deal since classes consist and are made up of students with several qualities and abilities. This concept leads the teachers as the basic and important responsible to treat all the differences between their learners. That is why, working with mixed ability classes necessitates a hard and complex task that involves them in adopting and setting a flexible methodology, they must putting more efforts ,especially in designing their

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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courses ,getting new setting and /or classroom management skills and then supplying the appropriate demands and requirements in order to fulfill all students' demands. For this, achieving success in multi-level classes is very challenging.

### **1.3.1. The Teachers' Role in Mixed Ability Classes**

Harmer (1998,p.127) suggested that « Teachers can face different levels of students in a giving lesson in which some of them are competent while others their English is not good at all ». It is reviewed that, teachers are encouraging all the time various degrees and levels of learners in which certain are able and capable whereas others are very weak. Teachers in general play a vital role in teaching their students in an effective way. In addition to that, Harmer (2007, p.23) said that « One of the reasons that it is difficult to give general descriptions of good teachers is that different teachers are often successful in different way ». Accordingly, teachers are the main source of each class; they have a great impact on the learners' achievement in various ways and manners. This means good teachers provide a good result and several accomplishments because they are able to make mixed ability classes under control also they can pay attention to each student's needs. Additionally, this situation leads teachers to be more responsible about their ways of teaching. Also, Harmer (2007, p.25) mentioned that « A good teacher has the ability to adopt certain roles in class that depends on what students are doing ». It can be concluded that, teachers seen as the main and essential part in teaching heterogeneous classes, since they have the capacity and ability to guide and lead the whole classroom by controlling them, providing and giving them opportunities, also, teachers have great contribution in motivating their students and helping them to do more efforts. All in all, teaching mixed ability classes includes a number of difficulties but good teachers can deal with these complexities with great attention, success, and pleasure.

### 1.4. Factors of Mixed Ability Classes

Typically, language learners vary in various aspects which impact on their language qualities. In view of that, teachers must be familiar and connected with learners' differences for the sake of being capable to satisfy diverse learning requirements. Normally, teachers should be creative, imaginative, and flexible or changeable. Also, teachers should teach students by using several teaching strategies and techniques. Based on the various factors which influence the characteristics of learners involving a single class. Amongst others, age; language aptitude, intelligence and multiple intelligence, motivation, learning styles, learner autonomy are the most common factors of mixed ability classes.

#### 1.4.1. Age

As Harmer (1998, p.37) said: « Age is the major factor which influences the way how and what we teach students of different ages, have different needs, competences, and cognitive skills ». That means that, age is considered as an important factor in mixed ability classes as it impacts on the learners learning styles, at their varied ages, demands, and skills. Scholars as Harmer, Lighbown, Spada, Ur, and others mentioned certain studies about learning a language in teaching specific age groups in heterogeneous classes.

##### 1.4.1.1. Young Learners

Harmer (1998, p.37) declared that a young learner « has something to do with the plasticity of young brain ». That is to say, a brain of young learners can grasp and take information easily and rapidly. Also, Harmer (1998, p.38) claimed that « Your children learn differently from older children, teenagers, and adult learners ». So that, here young students get and accept the idea then learning it indirectly without knowing, accounting, or planning. Additionally, they have the ability to catch up this information from all sides in various domains because they have the sense of curiosity

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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to focus on more than one topic, and use and participate with all the senses they have to acquire knowledge. However, they have a limited period of time to stay in attention when teachers explain the courses. That was noticed by Harmer (1998, p.38) who said that « It is not easy to keep them engaged because of their limited attention span-they can concentrate for only ten minutes at time ».

### 1.4.1.2. Adult Learners

Harmer (1998, p.40) stated that « Adult language learners are characterized by a number of unique features. First to be said is that they have a whole range of life experience to draw on ». In this line of thought, adult learners have special characteristics, and that they are more experienced and able to learn. Yet, at certain ages some adults have not the voluntary and ability to get a language and they lose their confidence in that they have a negative thinking about themselves. That is, they are slow and weak learners in comparison to young learners and because of that they get bored and tired easily especially in mixed ability classes. Adult learners have neither the capacity, desire, sense, nor the interests of learning because they have somehow an educational career before that. Although, adult students have the appropriate way of learning, they still have a simple and clear aim that is to learn a language by listening to the clarification and teacher explanation by following their teachers' instructions for the purpose of improving their experiences, grades, and get successful results.

All of these facts considered, these two situations can combine together as an essential concern in which it is difficult to convince young students about their easiness studies and way of learning, however, the adult learners have numerous difficulties but they still have the chance to learn and catch up a language. So, these points demand stable reinforcement and positive encouragement for both young and adult learners. Thus, learners have different factors for learning not only the factor of age but also there are different ones that lead to cause a mixture of abilities in classes.

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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Even though, age is considered as a main factor in mixed ability classes, but this is not the case in our classes because almost all students in a regular language classe have the same age, except exceptional classes like CEIL.

### 1.4.2. Intelligence and Multiple Intelligence

Language aptitude is familiar with Intelligence and Multiple Intelligence which is another factor related to learning in mixed ability classes. The concept of intelligence comes from psychology domain. It has to do with a theory that was imposed to establish the reality that human beings are at very types and genres of intelligences. Learners have the ability to deal with the learning process and to describe things in their brain, ect...In case there is a similarity in humans' brains, there will be the same kind of thinking and intelligence, the situation here will change because teachers will deal all the time with analogous, similar ways but the teaching career concerns in learners with different intelligences and multiple intelligence, they will be in varied manners as certain learners are intelligent, others are good ,and some are weak. Also, while some are logical, other students are good in reflecting and others in writing and so on. As a result, teaching intelligence and multiple intelligence in multi-leveled classes provide teachers the chance to examine and develop their teaching process. Whereas, the concept of this factor entails a small role in heterogeneous classroom, where the focus and concentration is on communication process. (Howard Gardner, 1993). According to Gardner's theory, people have multiple intelligences; they are:

1. Linguistic intelligence: as writing, speaking, using words, giving solutions, ect.
2. Spatial intelligence: as painting, dawning, dealing with colours, ect.
3. Musical intelligence: as using tones, music, listening, ect.
4. Logical and Mathematical intelligence: as grammar rules, calculations, neutralization, ect.
5. Bodily /Feeling intelligence: as drama, theatre, body language , ect.
6. Interpersonal intelligence: as communication, talking with other people, ect.
7. Intrapersonal intelligence: as own beliefs, self knowledge, self confidence ,ect.

8. Naturalistic intelligence: as dealing and understanding the nature of animals , plants, objects, ect.

Concerning mixed ability classes, Intelligence and Multiple Inteligence play an important role in the students' minds with varied thoughts and reflections.

### **1.4.3. Learning Styles**

Scarella and Oxford (2010, p.61) defined learning styles as « General approaches that students use to learn a new language. These are the same styles they employ in learning many other subjects and solving various problems ». According to their definition, learning styles concern and include methods or ways of learning a new language or dealing with several problems and situations. Further, Dunn and Griggs (1998, p.3) noted « Learning styles is the biological and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others ». Accordingly, learning styles have a great impact and influence to order, set, and organize qualities, features, also the properties for the sake of putting equal teaching manners or systems which can be accounted and considered as an amazing for some while dire for others. Typically, David Kolb's model in 1984, considered as an example which is recognized as learning styles that are: Converger, Divergers, Assimilators, and Accomodator. Learning styles are ways in which students gather knowledge, process, understand, or remember realities and details. There are several examples of learning styles which differentiate and distinguish learners. There are students under the category of visual learners, who prefer having information in front of them to learn, while, there are others who like to add physical actions into their learning; these are called kinesthetic learners. In addition to that, there are aural learners who refer to students'abilities and performance to hear information through repetition. Furthermore, it is argued that learning styles can be built and based on students' personalities that play a vital role to get a good result when learning in mixed ability classes. To this point, teachers of mixed ability classes should concern as a

model with varied learning styles so that all learners learn about subjects including languages in different manners and situations.

### **1.4.4. Language Aptitude**

As Lightbown and Spada (1999, p.53) argued « There is evidence in the research literature that some individuals have an optional aptitude for the language learning ». This means that the literature studied validities and confirms that certain individuals have an unusual and special aptitude and ability to learn a language. Typically ,Lightbown and Spada (1999,p.53) noticed « The two most widely used aptitude tests were the Modern Language Aptitude Tests (MLAT) designed by John Carroll , and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) designed by Pimsleur in 1960s . They measured the ability to identify and memorize sounds, understand the function of particular words in sentences, find out grammatical rules from the language samples and remember new sounds ». According to the scholars' arguments, there are two major aptitude tests. The first is the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT). It was allowed by John Carroll in five years of studies from (1953 to 1958), to declare and proclaim a student' likelihood of success to get a language. Also, there is the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) which was examined by Pimsleur in 1960s. For this, both tests are concerned with the quality to distinguish, memorize, and study new sounds and gather, understand the reception and function of special and specific words in sentences. Additionally, these tests enable students discover grammatical rules from language samples. Typically, Lightbown and Spada (2002, p.53) stated « Learning quickly is the distinguishing feature of aptitude ». That is to say, language aptitude is connected to fast learning. Yet, Thornbury (2006, p.15) defined language aptitude as« Your innate talent or pre-disposition for language learning ». This situation relies on natural and inborn ability and aptitude or temperament to learn a language.

Accordingly, language aptitude refers to the capacity and quality of learning besides the way to learn rapidly or quickly in which a student with high and good aptitude is supposed to be able or capable to gather and catch up knowledge with greater speed.

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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So that, language aptitude is a cognitive procedure which accounts as a necessary factor to mull over in mixed ability classes.

### **1.4.5. Learner Autonomy**

Another factor of mixed ability classes is learner autonomy. Scharle (2000, p.4) described the word autonomy as « Freedom and ability to manage one's own affairs which entail the right to make decisions well». That is to say, an autonomous learner is someone responsible of his own learning or who takes his self performance, competence, decision, and so on when learning a language. According to that, teachers in heterogeneous classes have to be aware, mindful about autonomous learners and why not evolve more in their students the sense of responsibility. Moreover, learner autonomy must be encouraged to result in more effective and active learners in their classrooms.

### **1.4.6. Language Levels**

Language levels describe the learners' grade, average, capacity, and ability. Harmer (1998, p.12) stated « There are various classifications which are used to divide learners in groups according to their language level. The most common classification divides students in three main groups; beginner, intermediate, and advanced ». There are many categories and divisions that are given to order and classify learners in three grades in relation to their language levels which differ from one to another.

Heterogeneous classes contain these characteristics of students' classifications and in different cases because language levels are among the main factors which compose mixed qualities and properties in a classroom. By way of illustration, students have varied levels in learning English starting by beginner learners. The latter who refers to learners who do not know English at all; they have very weak level in learning, they classified at the lowest grade. While, they have the chance to get knowledge from teachers through time, to eventually realize success and have good consequences.



## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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Then, there are intermediate learners; this team has certain capacities: it means less information and practice of language; they are between high and low performance. That is why they are called intermediate learners. In this type, students face different difficulties and struggles because they achieve and realize a lot before so that they see that success is complex and far for them, for this reason, teachers have to help them to set and put their goals and aims and to support and convince them that they can do more and can have better achievements. The last category is named advanced learners. They are considered as the most competent ones; they are those who are able and capable in knowing English because they have a lot in their minds that is why their level of English is higher than the previous ones in that they are considered the strongest group in mixed ability classes. So, this group of learners has the ability to be good in their future career and all they needs to have the sense of responsibility and more on concentration. To sum up, language levels can contribute in creating great and huge differences between learners in which this will result in a mixture of levels and abilities in classes.

### **1.4.7. Motivation**

Motivation is an important factor of mixed ability classes for the students who have a good result and are thriving, they are motivated and do care about their studies. Harmer (1991, p.3) defined motivation as « An internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action ». This means that motivation is considered as an innate or an inside feeling that guides and supports someone to be in the right or appropriate way. From their part, Gardner and Lambert (1972, p. 39) argued «There are two types of motivation. The first one is integrative motivation; it is linked to personal development. The second one is instrumental motivation; it involves learning for practical reasons ». In this vein, integrative motivation refers to the learners' development and growth, whereas, instrumental motivation is considered with specific reasons learners have in order to evaluate the value of their learning.

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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In addition to that, Brown (2002, p.28) noticed« Students will be more motivated to become proficient in the target language». That is to say, teachers have to be more competent and able in their language teaching as they have to create and set appropriate activities for the purpose of ensuring each student encouragement in heterogeneous classrooms. Also, they should create a good classroom atmosphere that includes an interesting and applicable programs that match with learners' ability, quality, in addition to level. To conclude, mixed ability classes made up by one of the most necessary factor which is motivation; that has a great influence on students learning since the teachers are the basic contributors in motivating learners then they take a big responsibility when designing a course which must have suitable content, activities in order to be well perceived by learners.

As a consequence, dealing with all these factors make the teaching/learning process challenging and more complex in mixed ability classes for teachers and learners, alike due to the mixture of abilities in one class a situation that requires and demands a big responsibility from both teachers and learners because they together complete each other .

### **1.5. Challenges of Mixed Ability Classes**

Since, mixed ability classes are the result of many factors such as: motivation, language levels, learner autonomy, and so on, teachers may find various difficulties in preparing and planning lessons in order to guarantee that all learners meet their requirements, demands, and advantages from the lesson. Venacio (2009, p.117) noted that « Teachers are in the process of making their students learn effectively. Even if their differences, teachers should undertake every single detail to over what is going on in class. Furthermore, these differences may lead to various problems ». This is especially, a challenge for the language educators who are not ready and prepared with the required skills and teaching approaches to deal with mixed ability classes. As a result, the problems encountered in heterogeneous classrooms are very challenging for both teachers and students as both of them are fighting to realize an effective and

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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successful learning process. As Ur (1991, p.303, 304) suggested there is a number of problems teachers face in teaching mixed ability classes; they are:

### **1.5.1. Discipline**

Mixed ability classes entail hard work when in controlling and teaching learners and the discipline considered as the first challenge. Language qualities and abilities include many differences which cause a struggle in the classroom. From one side, learners find themselves bored and dissatisfied because of the brilliant learners who have high level aptitude. In the other side, these learners can lose their concentration and be in inattention due to the other group of students with lower capacity and competence. That is why; teachers may find a complexity to pay and give equal attention to both students and to control the whole classroom because weak learners take too much time to complete their activities. For that reason, teachers are subject to be busy with them, they spend most of their time helping and guiding them. Hence, when teachers care just about this kind of students, they forget about the other students. For this, this group of brilliant learners will be outside the class since they cannot be in work or cannot deal with their teachers and therefore, they will be discouraged and cannot be able to do something, also, they will be absent minded. For the fact, they finish their tasks quickly while the others are still looking for answers since they do have not the ability to absorb in rapid way since they meet various difficulties to start. Accordingly, teachers can be in very complicated problem and they lose control of the whole classroom. (According to some references as Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenedze).

### **1.5.2. Interest**

Another critical and important problem of heterogeneous classrooms is the learners' interest. This concept is connected to learning in general and to language in particular. For instance, when group of weaker students who have problems of speaking skills, do not enjoy tasks that have to do with the spoken form, the good learners favor and like

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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communicative tasks, debate and discussions. In addition to that, learners' interests may be shown when certain learners enter in the course just to take a rest and make a funny atmosphere where others are fighting to learn and evolve their grades. Moreover, this challenge deals with the dissimilarities in what students favor when it learning comes to their learning styles, motivation. From their part, teachers should cater their learners' interests by presenting and giving exercises or activities that match their likes a situation that may make teachers in trouble.

Thus, interest refers to the students' differences in personality, attitude ect,. There are some students who feel bored when the teachers are explaining the course. These students might not interest in the course because the teachers tend to explain with details and take too much time repeating. Then, teachers do not leave time to the other students to speak or to express their thoughts. For this, teachers have to pay attention to the students' interest in order to set and put solutions that fit their learners as a whole. (According to some references Diploma Simanova, Brenner, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze).

### **1.5.3. Effective learning for all**

Since the goal of teachers is to fulfill the needs of every learner , it is not an easy task to give and supply an effective learning for the whole class because every student varies in comparison to the other one in his thinking , learning . Furthermore, learners come from different learning situations, families, cultures, and so on and all these dissimilarities lead to a huge challenge for teachers because effective learning for all focuses on what learners have and bring with them in their mixed abilities classes. Following this, there are plenty and numerous cases, for instance, some students do their activities without any complexity or find the tasks facile and clear and answer them easily. Yet, this is not the case of all students as others cannot do the activity either because they cannot understand what is required from them to do in order to respond it or because they find it hard and ambiguous. These dissimilarities among students may cause an obstacle for teachers due to the difficulty of keeping all learners

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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do their tasks in an effective way and see what every learner does in his work. Because of the varied degrees and levels between learners to grasp knowledge, it is necessary for teachers to pay attention to their students and help them better their achievements by ensuring an effective learning for all of them. (According to some references as Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, and Maia Gurgenzidze).

### **1.5.4. Materials**

Teachers of mixed ability classes are facing another challenge which is the choice of teaching materials to design their courses. Teaching heterogeneous classrooms all the time with text-books push certain learners to feel dissatisfied and annoyed, while other students may find this enjoyable and helpful. Furthermore, other group may find themselves lost because the topics are not interesting or meaningless, here, learners can have bad feelings and can be in a very bad mood. Therefore, teachers have to add suitable materials in order to use and adapt in their courses to change somehow the teaching environment in mixed ability classes and to create a more meaningful and successful classroom environment for the whole class. In a word, it is necessary to try and employ new and more developed and helpful teaching materials. . (According to some references as Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Ur, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenzidze).

### **1.5.5. Individual awareness**

Mixed ability classes provide multi-leveled cases and situations, due to the differences between students. Teachers in these classes tend to find the dealing with individual awareness a challenge. This challenge refers to the students favor their own awareness, i.e., self personal, individual way or method of learning. This capability differs from a student to another because everyone has his unique way of learning and heterogeneous classes combine together all the differences of students. To sum up, teachers cannot pay attention and care to everyone own way of learning so that there will be a problem

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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in the progression of all students. . (According to some references as Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze).

### 1.5.6. Participation

The problem of participation has a great impact on the teaching process in mixed ability classes. From one hand, certain students have the fear to speak and express their ideas, they cannot exchange their points of views or give their opinions. This is may be because they feel shy and /or they do not believe in themselves or they lose their confidence and they do not have the ability to participate, or even they cannot have an eye-contact with their teachers and prefer to sit in hidden and concealed way. In the other hand, some students are totally different; they cannot keep calm; they have to participate by expressing everything that comes to their minds; they are curious thus; they are asking questions all the time, ect ,... As a result, heterogeneous classes consist of an active and risk- taking learners who are always participating in explicit way and interaction in that they contribute in creating a thriving and flourishing atmosphere rather than the weaker ones who are just sitting and hidden. . (According to some references as Diploma Simanova, Ur, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze).

These challenges discipline, interest, effective learner for all... to participation do differ from one student to another and this result in more complexity when it comes teaching process in mixed ability classes. Teachers should face these problems and know how to deal with them in mixed ability classes for the purpose of having an effective learning process. . (According to some references as Ur, Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze).

### 1.6. Teaching Strategies of Mixed Ability Classes

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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Actually, both students and teachers are struggling with various problems in mixed ability classes. That is why; teachers have to make a list of applicable and appropriate techniques or strategies to cope with those challenges.

### **1.6.1. Classroom Management**

Teaching mixed ability classes requires a great deal from the teachers. In fact, teachers should manage their classes not only by setting effective teaching methods, goals, aims but also by considering each student needs and preferences. Consequently, teachers have to organize the method of teaching by referring to classroom management. Examples of good classroom management involve making learners work individually, in pairs or in groups not to bore them, preparing several oral presentations for the purpose of achieving all learners' desires, wants, to help auditory, visuals, kinesthetic learners, and personalizing learning. Therefore, dealing with mixed ability classes needs to apply a mixture of method and strategies to cope with all the demands of each student. . (According to Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze' references).

### **1.6.2. Pace**

Working with mixed ability classes have to deal with a correct pacing which needs and requires a long observation. If teachers use too slow or too quick way of teaching they will damage students' forms. This case will influence the mood of some students; they will be unsatisfied and feel bored because everyone has a unique, specific working pace. So that, teachers must make each task or activity at the right pace in order not to discourage, upset, or angry both fast and slow students. Since students learn from varied paces, teachers should contribute in helping them by using varied paces and setting appropriate paces whenever needed. . (According to Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze' references).

### 1.6.3. Interest

When a group of learners lose interest, they are assembly to influence and affect their learning confidence .That is to say, teachers must deal and cope with the kind of questions that design the treat of most students. Additionally, teachers should add certain methods which have match with students'preferences; such as giving interactive exercises, performing plays, using games, ect ...In order to arose their interest and attract them. In fact, changing and modifying every time the type of tasks play a significant role to make students interested in mixed ability classes and give them the opportunity to be inside the classroom in each lesson teachers do. . (According to Diploma Simanova, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze' references).

### 1.6.4. Individualization and Personalization

Ur (1991, p.306) defined individualization as « Allowing learners choice in what tasks and materials should students use and how». Individualization permits the chance of choosing what are the appropriate activities, materials for learners and the way they use them. Further, Natalie Hess (2001, p. 12) suggested« providing opportunities for students to work at their own pace, in their own style, and on topics of their choice ». In other words, in personalization strategy is necessary to give students the chance to express their sensations, present themselves, show their experiences, give their opinions, ideas, and so on. Moreover, teachers have to motivate and support their learners to develop and extend their knowledge according to their own individualization and personalization by using activities as listening tasks, individual writing activities, reading, using personalized dictionaries, ect. Following these activities, students will feel integrated with their teachers and classrooms. As a result, teachers of mixed ability classes should take care of their learners' personalities and individualization in order to facilitate for them the difficulties they are subject to



encounter in mixed ability classes and help them being interested and supported learners.

### **1.6.5. Collaboration**

Another strategy that helps teachers to deal with students differences in mixed ability classes is collaboration. It refers to working together and in a cooperative way. In this technique, learners are learning from each other when they work in pairs or groups. To help learners work collaboratively, teachers have to prepare and give their learners activities and exercises for the purpose of letting them sharing information, exchange their ideas and discuss tasks together. Mixed ability classes offer the chance for students to learn from each other since they have different qualities. For example, if teachers put strong learners with weaker ones the students can be here the basic and main source of knowledge in this team work; they will be more encouraged and motivated. Accordingly, this way of teaching in heterogeneous classes can create a secured atmosphere for both groups. That is to say, from one side, slower students will feel relaxed when learning as they can make mistakes without being shy or fearful. From the other side, the other students feel more confident and motivated while in collaboration with the other students. Whereas, sometimes the weak students discouraged when in collaboration with the good learners as the latter do most of the task. . (According to Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze' references).

### **1.6.6. Variety**

As Hess (2001, p .8) claimed « A variety of activities and techniques is important in all learning situations but particularly relevant in mixed ability classes because verities of tasks can accommodate different levels in our class ». For Hess, dealing with different tasks and methods is necessary in the learning process especially in heterogeneous classes since varied activities can cater all learners' level in a class.

For the purpose to accommodate all learners, teachers are recommended to vary subjects, teaching approaches and methods, material, and tasks because the techniques that may be suitable for some students may be inappropriate for others. Teachers have to vary activities and tasks which entail varied skills to lead the whole class to interact with. For instance, there are learners who do not support speaking activities but they experience success in writing activities or the other skills. Moreover, learners have to work individually, in pairs, or in groups to avoid boredom and cater their learning styles. In other words, heterogeneity or diversity of techniques, exercises, lessons, tools, topics, and so on is important in mixed ability classes.

### **1.6.7. Open-Endless**

According to Hess (2001, p .13) examples of open –ended exercises are:

- Giving students the beginning of a sentence and asking them to finish it.
- Giving students a number of questions and allowing them to answer any number of these.
- Brainstorming, ideas.
- Writing their own definition of words.
- Matching answers where several matches are acceptable as correct.
- Answers.
- Questions that may be answered in many different ways.

Open-ended tasks give students the opportunity to present and express themselves with a number of possible correct and right answers or responds. These exercises permit each student to accomplish and fulfill his own capacity imagination.

### **1.6.8. Adapting Materials**

In fact, presenting the course with several teaching materials makes learning enjoyable. When adapting materials; such as: videos, pictures, games, plays, songs

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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...ect. Language teaching/learning becomes simple, clear, and easy. When teachers design their own materials, the course will be rich and students won't feel bored. Therefore, mixed ability classes need mixed, different materials in order to have rich, varied, and suitable input.

As a conclusion, these are some classroom remedies to deal with mixed ability classes problems or challenges that teachers are witnessing and struggling with. These different strategies guarantee the good environment classroom, additionally; they can change the difficulties to high success and achievement for both teachers in their educational career and students' varied abilities. . (According to Diploma Simanova, Brenmer, Harmer, and Maia Gurgenidze' references).

### **1.7. Teaching Writing Skill**

The following sub-sections present a definition and give different reasons of writing skill also it's include teaching writing in mixed ability classes.

#### **1.7.1. Definition of Writing Skill**

Among the four language skills, writing is the most important and focused skill in the teaching and learning process of any language. Cumming (1995, p.148) said « The main importance of writing in that level is that it helps students to learn. Writing new words and structures help students to remember them; and as writing is done more slowly and carefully than speaking, written practice helps to focus students attention on what they are learning». Accordingly, the writing skill refers to the way students express their ideas through writing, it enriches their learning abilities and knowledge. Additionally, this skill gives a high voluntary to students to be more capable and provides them an emphasis about the value of learning. Also, Hedge (2000, p.124) claimed «Writing involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas , organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making drafts, reading and

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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reviewing them, then, revising and editing. It involves a complex process which is either easy or spontaneous for many second language writers». In other words, writing skill contributes with a big role in teaching students and give them the way to put and make their aims, form ideas, information in addition to use suitable language and give them the opportunity to work with draft, revising what they wrote for many times, and, editing their work. According to these scholars, the writing skill is a hard and difficult process that requires students' efforts and time. Teaching the writing skill helps learners to have a good level in the language they are learning, enhances their exchange of ideas and opinions, give them the chance to convey messages to their readers with right and correct spelling, punctuation, structure of grammar, in addition to the use of vocabulary. In this line of thoughts, Ur (1996, p.163) explained « Much higher standard of language are normally demanded in writing than in speech: more careful construction, more precise and varied vocabulary, and more correctness of expressions in general. Writing is a mess business which requires passing through a number of untidy drafts before reaching a final version». In spite of it necessary, writing skill examined and considered as the 'bête noire' by the Algerian EFL students written products (students' marks) ». Since, writing is a complex process which does not come naturally, but it requires a lot of practice and efforts, it needs a variety of techniques, strategies, and tasks. Writing has a list of reasons that every writer should know and work by it.

### 1.7.2. Reasons of Writing

Students have to be guided by the concept of writing methods in which there are various reasons that they have to work by. As Harmer (2001 ,p.72) mentioned« The reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement , language development , learning styles , and most importantly , writing as a skill in its own right ». These reasons are:

1. Reinforcement

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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Harmer (2001, p.79) said« The majority of students acquire language in a purely oral/aural way, most of us benefit greatly from seeing the language down. Therefore, written language can be traced greatly in the memory than in the oral way. Student often find it useful to write sentences using new language shortly after they had studied it ». Students have to be supported and encouraged by using their spoken ideas in their written skill, when student write something, they cannot forget it. Thus, writing helps them to keep the language in their minds and this contributes in the development of their language skills.

### 2. Language Development

Harmer (2001,p.97) stated « The mental activity we have to go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience ». That is to say, writing skill goes in deep and in the last point in the brain, writers can have a great experience with it ,they will have a high and more advanced grade of knowledge.

### 3. Learning Styles

According to Harmer (2001, p.79) « for many learners, the time to think things through, to produce language in slower way, is invaluable. Writing is appropriate for such learners». For Harmer, there are some learners who cannot express their ideas and knowledge, just by writing them. When students write they can list and mention every details.

### 4. Writing as a skill

Teaching writing skill is considered a different task. Learners should have an idea about how to write a letter or to make written reports together, and how to answer an advertisements, ect. For this, students should pay attention to its importance. In this context, Harmer (2001, p.80) noted« We can get beginners to write simple poems, but we probably won't give them an extended report on town planning to do. When we set tasks for elementary students, we will make sure that the students have or can get enough language to complete the task ». Therefore, writing skill has a great impact in the learning process as it helps the students to get their abilities to be good writers.

### 1.7.3. Teaching Writing in Mixed Ability Classes

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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Teaching Writing skill in mixed ability classes provides the chance for learners to improve their writing abilities, develop more practice and exercises that lead them not only to know their capacities, improvement in the writing achievement and acquirement but also to better their academic achievements as most exams are based on writing. When, student are in heterogeneous classes, they have the opportunity to use and learn from more than one source because Written Expression subject offers learners a big help for example; it supports collaborative tasks and activities which combine the whole class with mixed abilities and they use their writing qualities to express themselves by writing drafts and editing them with the whole group and re-write and revising their final drafts and so on. Moreover, writing skill is good way to express ideas, information, and so on, since there dissimilarities between students, this skill give them the way to write what they have in their minds because not all learners can speak , participate , and interact. Seeing that, some are shy or not motivated in front of their teachers and classmates, writing is therefore the best solution for them, those learners who prefer writing than the other skills can do better and perform better in their writing assignments.

Consequently, writing is an important skill for all learners especially in mixed ability classes because it gives them the chance to exhibit their differences, writing helps teachers evaluate the abilities and capabilities of each student and at various language levels (spelling, vocabulary, punctuation).

### **1.8. Conclusion**

To conclude, when classes compose of learners who are different in terms of ability, knowledge,culture,personality,skills,capacities,performance,competence,properties, and so on, it can be described as mixed ability classes. There are several factors that lead to have heterogeneous classes and make a mixture of abilities between students these are: motivation, aptitude, learning style, learner autonomy, language levels, intelligence and multiple intelligence, and age. Therefore, teachers have to pay

## Chapter One : Theoretical Part

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attention and care a lot about these factors for the purpose of avoiding difficulties in teaching/learning process. Dealing with mixed ability classes obliges teachers to encounter many challenges that worsen classroom management and influence the classroom environment. Accordingly, teachers including EFL teachers ability deal with various strategies and techniques for the sake of improving the teaching and learning process in mixed ability classes to satisfy the needs of all learners of language learning in general and of writing skill in particular which is considered as the most necessary and interesting skill in language learning. Variety, pace, interest, collaboration, individualization, open-ended, adapting materials, and classroom managements can create a flourishing and successful atmosphere. As a result, working with all these strategies to cope with each problem learners are dealing with, support and motivate to extend also to raise students' interests in addition to helping teachers to distinguish the learners' weaknesses to aid them accordingly. To sum up, dealing with mixed ability classes in writing skill requires great efforts from both teachers and learners.

# **Chapter Two**

**Research Design and Data Analysis**



### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section concerns the description of the research design used in the present research work that includes the field work, the research method, subjects, and instruments. The second section deals with the data analysis and discussion of the results and finally, the third one presents helpful suggestions and recommandations of the research study.

### **2.2. Field Work**

The study is conducted in the Department of English at Tlemcen University in the accademic year 2018/2019. The English section changed and developed through time, there were a lot of innovation and new creations, till it gets its autonomous establishments in. For examples, students are started to be enrolled through the LMD system in which their educational career pass through five years. In the first three years they get the Licence degree. After that, they go directly to the Master level in which they learn and study for two years. In the second year, students will prepare a dissertation research in order to get their Master degree. Afterward, those Master students who want to carry on their studies have the opportunity to sit for a context for the sake of carrying on their doctorate studies. Typically, first year Licence students have ten subjects; they are; Linguistics, Phonetic, Study skills, Literature , Grammar, Comprehension and Oral Production, Civilization, Humman and Social Sciences, and Comprehension and Written Expression. In this research study, the researcher focuses her research on Comprehension and Written Expression (CWE) module since this subject is studied from the first to the third year Licence. There are 8 CWE teachers at the first year level in which 10 groups, each of 40 to 45 students encompass that level. CWE is a fundamental module whose coefficient is 4. Its teaching takes in two sessions per-week and each session has one hour and half.

The purpose of this study is to collect data about whan dealing with mixed ability classes in teaching writing skill for the sake of good improvement and flourishing atmosphere in the classroom, for the sake of better learning.

### **2.3. Methodology**

Methodology is a way or a form to solve the research problem. This section provides an overview of the two research methods involving this work ; they are descriptive and analytical methods that were both used in this research to collect data and gain results by means of two research instruments, namely teachers questionnaire and classroom observation.

#### **2.3.1. Descriptive Method**

Descriptive method includes observing and describing subjects, situations, behaviours, ect. It is considered as a tool or instrument to present, systemize, or classify data. Gay (1992, p.217) clarified that the « Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypothe sis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study ». This descriptive method concerns as a instrument to provide a response to the research study for collecting data.

In this research study, the researcher provides some definitions, descriptions, and explanations to different factors, challenges, and strategies or techniques that deal with mixed ability classes in teaching writing.

#### **2.3.2. Analytic Method**

Analytic method comes from analysis; it is a process for measuring, discovering, and analyzing problem, reality, thesis, or status. Analytic method evaluates, examines, and answers the data collected by separating and breaking up each situation or thesis then analyze it to get results and give solutions.

In the present study, the researcher dealt first with a description of the situation in question in order to get more information, to eventually analyse the obtained data , analyzing teachers'questionnaires, and the classroom observations.

### **2.3.3. Sample Population**

Sampling is the procedure of selecting individuals which named the population. As stated before, the sample population concerning my research takes in 8 CWE teachers but only 7 of the total number of teachers was taken into consideration to complete a questionnaire, there were 6 females and 1male, their ages were between 24 to 51, in addition, to their teaching experience that is range from less than 5 years to more than 10 years. Yet, the classroom observation was done by the researcher with three of these teachers for three sessions of each.

### **2.3.4. Research Instruments**

This research work focus on two important tools of research which are questionnaire and classroom observation to have a detailed understanding about the way of dealing with mixed ability classes in teaching CWE.

#### **2.3.3.1. Teachers'questionnaire**

A questionnaire is about a series or a list of questions, it is considered as a research instrument to gain and collect data. In this line of thoght, Brown(2001,p.1)noted that a questionnaire is « any written instrument that present respodent with a series of questions or statements to which they are to reach either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers ».

In this research study, a questionnaire(appendix A) was handed to7 CWE teachers of the first year students of the department of English in order to get information about the teachers views, opinions, and teaching methods they used when dealing with mixed abilities in CWE classes.

The researcher make a questionnaire consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions for the purpose of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. For close-ended questions, the researcher formulates a number of questions in which the teachers select the appropriate answer. While, in open-ended questions teachers have

to answer and give their ideas and point of views in their own words. The questionnaire has only 12 questions but the teachers spent 21 days to give it back.

The questionnaire questions are as follow:

The researcher sets three rubrics in her questionnaire (see Appendix A), the first rubric concerns with the Bibliography Information which includes 2 questions that refer to the teachers' gender and age. The aim of this rubric is to have an idea about the teachers' gender, age, and profile. Then, the researcher used the second rubric that is about Professional Information, this section contains 2 questions in which the first question talks about teaching experience and the second one concerns the average number students in the classroom. The aim of this rubric is to know the teachers' experience and their professional teaching also to get information about the average students' number that teachers are dealing with in each class. Finally, the third one is dealing with mixed ability classes, this rubric has 8 questions which rely on the students' different abilities in the classroom especially in teaching CWE, this section provide a series of questions to get a clear results about this thesis in which the aim here is to have more information about the students mixed abilities, levels, learning styles, and capacities. Also, to get a knowledge about the different factors, challenges, and the strategies in order to know the way to deal with in teaching heterogeneous classes.

### **2.3.3.2. Classroom observation**

Classroom observation is a research instrument to examine the teaching and learninprocess. Hennink et al (2013, p.170) described observation as :

A research method that enables researchers to systematically observe and record people's behaviour, action, and interactions. The method also allows researchers to obtain a detailed description of social setting or

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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events in order to situate people's behaviour within their socio-cultural contex .

Accordingly, in the classroom observation was used to investigate more about the students, teachers, and every thing. This too, is considered as a data collection tool which gives the researcher the opportunity to get direct information about the situation under discussion.

The researcher makes use of this method to know and have more information that might be missed or not included in the teachers' questionnaire. It is important to note that, while observing the researcher stays away from the group she was observing and that she did not interact with anyone in the group. Hennink et al (2013, p.185) stated that « Conducting an observation without participating in the activities that you are observing. In order to do this you often observe people activities or events from a distance, so that you are not part of the situation you are observing ».

The investigator used classroom observation to evaluate and observe teachers' way of teaching and students interactions and way of learning. The researcher made classroom observation after taking permission from three CWE teachers. The total number of the classroom observation of the first year in three sessions was 9, three sessions per-teacher and each session lasted one hour and half. All sessions were in the 1st semester of the academic year 2018-2019.

In the observation grid (see Appendix B), the researcher employed various aspects to work with. The first is classroom management which presents the teachers' role and control over the whole class. The second is teachers' course presentation that deals with the way teachers present and explain their courses. The third is about students' participation ; its aim is to show the students' interactions. That is, if they are motivated and participating or not. Then, the fourth aspect is concerned with methods and materials teachers use and employ in teaching. The fifth aspect is about students' level of interest and care towards what they are learning and the course teachers are

instructing them about. And, the last aspect is to know the different abilities' students characterized by in the same classroom.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

The data analysis is the process of assessing and estimating the collected data for the purpose of aiding the researcher to get an answer to the questions of the research. Mills (2011, p.126) noticed that data analysis is « an attempt by the researcher to summarize collected data in a dependable and accurate manner ».

In this study, the researcher analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively the obtained results first from the teachers' questionnaire then from the classroom observation.

#### **2.4.1. Teachers' Questionnaire Results**

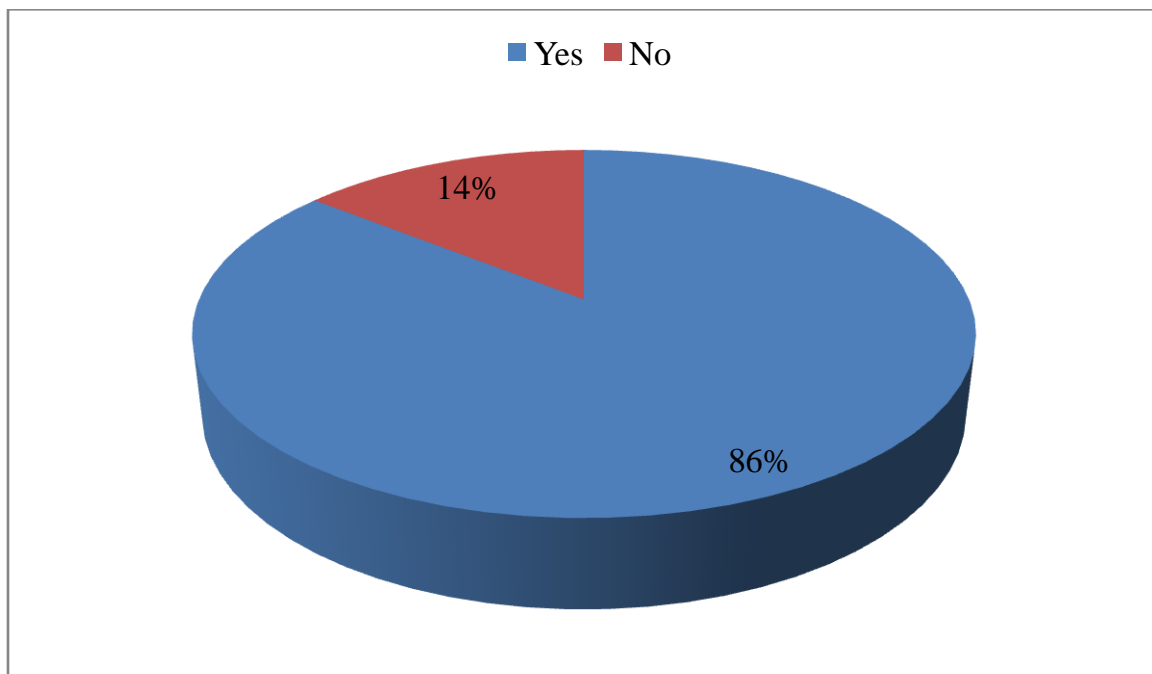
The first rubric of the questionnaire includes two questions; one is about teachers' gender and the other is about their age. The analysis showed that the researcher dealt with 6 females and 1 male, and their age is between 24 to 51. The second rubric entitle Professional Information encompasses two questions. The first question is about CWE teachers' experience while the second is about the average number of their students. The results show that teaching experience differs from one to another; one of CWE teachers has less than 5 years of experience, four have 5 to 10 years, and two teachers have more than 10 years of experience. When asked about the average number of students, the majority of teachers answered that is about 40 to 45 students in the classroom. The third rubric concerns itself with mixed ability classes in CWE teaching. The first question of this rubric asks whether the classroom contains students of mixed ability classes in Comprehension and Written Expression.

The findings in figure(2.1) expose that the most of teachers(86%) asserted that classes of CWE are made up of students with mixed abilities, they consider that some students learn easily and more rapidly than others, while some students prefer analysing and understanding the information more than learning by heart. Others said

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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that they teach students with mixed abilities and teaching CWE become quite difficult. Other teachers of CWE thought that students who experience difficulties in acquiring fluent and efficient writing may struggle to generate ideas construct meaningful sentences, sequence and organize their ideas into paragraphs, and use grammar appropriately. Other teachers found that certain students are highly competent and demonstrate a sound mastery of the English language writing, while others are weak and with a low language proficiency. However, (14%) of teachers reported that their classes do not involve students with mixed abilities.

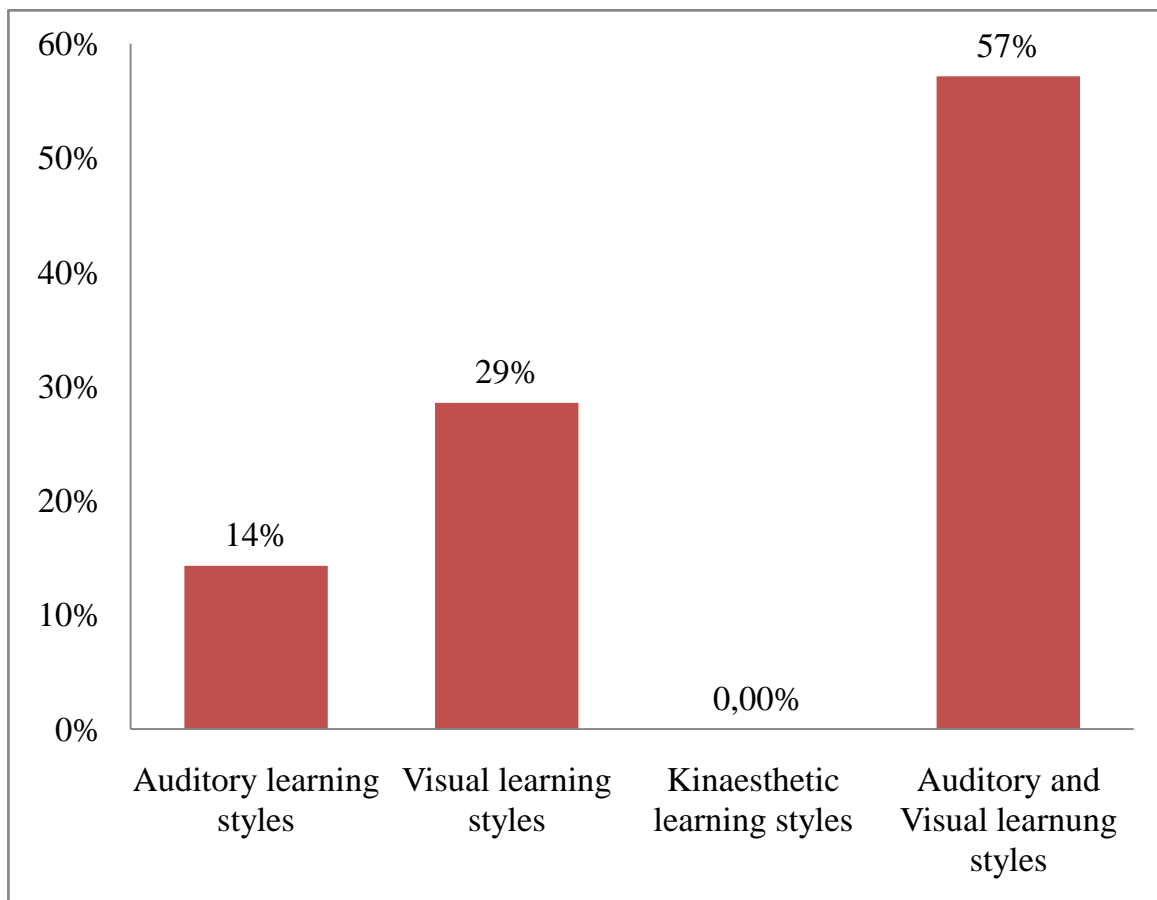


**Figure 2.1. Classes with Different Abilities**

Next, teachers were asked the question if you think that students are at many different levels. All teachers responded that all students are with various levels though some teachers reported before that they do not experience students with mixed abilities in their CWE teaching.

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

Subsequently the teachers were questioned about their students' learning styles. The findings in figure (2.2) show that (14%) of teachers reported that their learners have auditory learning styles, while, (29%) of teachers claimed that their classes have just students with visual learners. In addition to that, all of them confirmed that there are no students with kinaesthetic learning styles in their classes. But, the majority of teachers (57%) stated that their learners use both auditory and visual learning styles.



**Figure 2.2. Students' Learning Styles**

When asked about the factors that lead students to be in mixed ability classes, teachers gave different answers, they though that the following factors stand behind their students' mixed abilities:



## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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- Difficulty with express language processing and visual reasoning skill.
- Significant difficulty in completing school work involving writing.
- Inability to use words to express, organize , and complete thoughts in writing.
- Difficulties in understanding the content of the lectures and activities.
- Bordom of good students when the teacher repeats information many times for a concept that they find easy.
- Intensive explanation.
- Difficult levels of motivation, participation, and intelligence.
- Variety of learning styles.

To collect data vis-a-vis the challenges of teaching mixed ability classes, the teachers were asked to answer the question : what are the challenges of teaching mixed ability classes ?

The results show that teachers agreed that when teaching mixed ability classes, they face different challenges. Their challenges are presented in the points that follow :

- Difficulty of designing a suitable course for all students.
- Difficulty of providing explanations, activities, and designing of tests, exam,...
- Problem of different motivation, levels of learning styles, language proficiency levels.
- Problem of time, and students' different intelligences.
- Problem of ability level (multi-leveled).
- Demotivation, frustration, noisy atmosphere.
- Lack of cooperation among learners.
- Unawarness of all students' needs.
- Difficulty of catching all students' attention.
- Problem of assessing appropriate materials.
- Difficulty of keeping the whole class interrested.

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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In response to these challenges, teachers were asked about the strategies they use to cope with those problems. Which strategies do you use in order to cope with those problems ?

The results exposed that teachers tried to find and implement appropriate and helpful strategies to deal with classes of students' mixed abilities such as :

- Designing simple/basic course at the beginning, and then moving toward to the most complicated one.
- Using different ways of explanations that suit every student.
- Providing different activities to cater all their students' learning styles.
- Start with the very easy activity to the complex one in order to make all students work and participate.
- Trying to facilitate learning by creating an appropriate atmosphere for all learners.
- Having a good behaviour management.
- Developing the students' responsibility for learning.
- Giving clear instructions.
- Creating cooperative atmosphere.
- Enagaging all students to participate.
- Support pair/team works

Subsequently, teachers were asked to specify the most helpful strategies. Based on your CWE experience, what are the most helpful strategies for you to deal with in heterogeneous classes?. Based on their responses, the following strategies are believed to be the most useful ones :

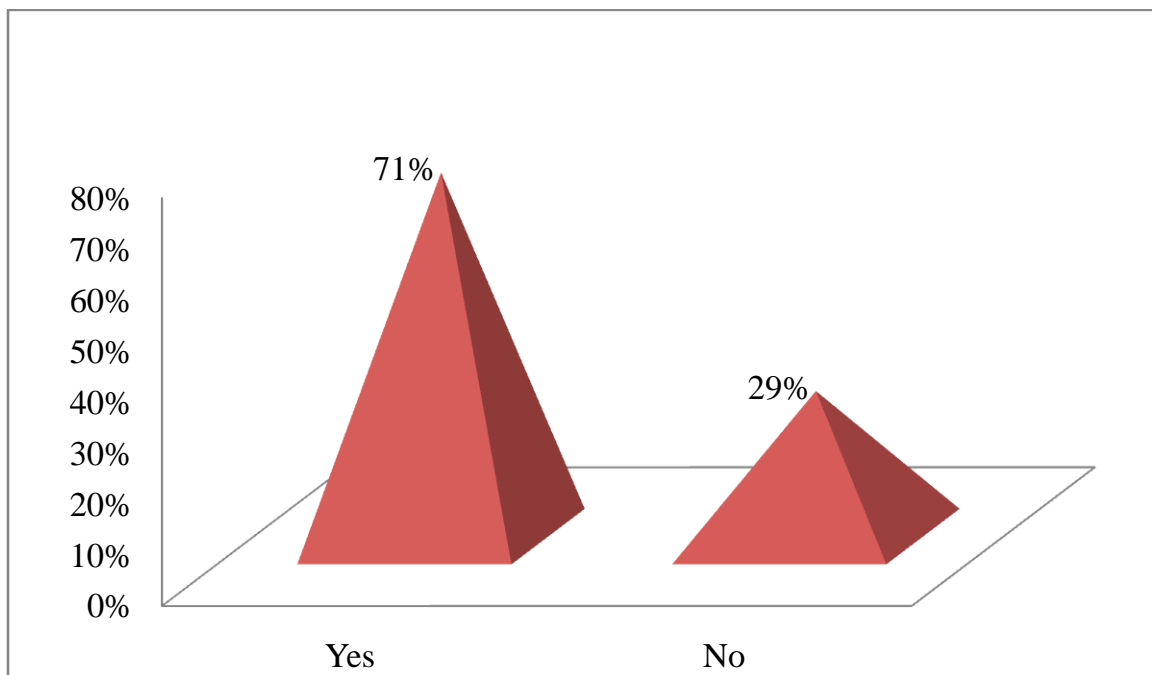
- Adapting tasks.
- Extending tasks.

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

- Encouraging cooperation among students and among teachers and their students.
- Enriching the lessons by many activities.
- Knowing how to deal with learners' grammatical problems.
- Guiding students to have a good sentences structure.
- Giving them extra homework for more practice.
- Providing learners the basic written mechanics or rules and ask them to respect them.

After providing the most useful strategies when dealing with mixed ability classes, the respondents were asked to state whether or not dividing the classroom into small groups(based on their ability)can be an effective way to manage this situation ?.

The findings in figure (2.3) show that (71%) of teachers agreed to divide the class into groups for the purposse of having a successful way of teaching and good results.While, the rest of teachers (29%) disagree and thought that this way is not suitable.



**Figure 2.3 : Classroom Division**

### 2.4.2. Classroom Observation Results

As it was mentioned previously, classroom observation was done to give answers to the research problematic, it helped to get further data about both teachers and students dealing with the situation. The objective of this observation was to evaluate, observe, and take notes on the teachers' way of teaching and students' interactions and their way of learning in mixed ability classes.

The researcher classroom observation takes in three sessions, each with one hour and a half. When the researcher attended for classroom, the students' number was different from a class to another, there were between 30 to 40 students. The researcher set her classroom observation grid on six aspects, namely classroom management, teachers' lecture presentation, students' participation, methods and materials, students' involvement in the classroom, students' mixed abilities according to Likert scale organized into a set of four alternatives for a rating scale from never observed to often observed which involves ; never observed, rarely observed, sometimes observed, and often observed as displayed in the tables that follow.

#### a. Classroom Management

The following table shows the researcher' observations about the classroom management in teaching CWE.

Part One : Classroom Management				
Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Attracting' students attention.			2	1
Teachers' control of the whole class.			2	1

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

Students' sitting organization.	3			
Create a humour and enjoyble atmosphere.		1	2	
Individual work.		1		2
Work in pairs. U shape /O shape			2	1
Group work.	3			
Teachers' awarness.			1	2
Time management.	3			

**Table 2.1: Classroom Management' Results**

The above table shows that, teachers need to be more workable and responsible about their students in that, they have to pay attention to their way of sitting, and how much they friendly and kind they are with them. Teachers should create an enjoyable atmosphere, there is quality between all the students. Also, the researcher observed that there is no cooperation or group work between students as teachers make them working either individually or in pairs. Also, the researcher noticed that teachers are somehow did not control the whole class and they did not aware enough of their students, then, teachers have to manage their time and try to make it as an essential part.

### **b. Teachers' Lecture Presentation**

The next table presents the way teachers explain their courses and their way of teaching.

Part Two : Teachers' Lecture Presentation				
Likert Scale	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Concerned area				

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

Relate the current lesson to the previous one.				3
Teachers' explanation based on handouts.	2	1		
Teachers' explanation based on the use of board.	2	1		
Teachers' explanation based on debates /discussions.				3
Teachers' explanation based on dictation.		1	2	
Giving exmples for better understanding.			2	1
Using L1.		1	2	
Using only English.				3
Activities based on receptive skills.				3
Activities based on productive skills.			2	1
Providing in-class activities.				3
Providing out-class activities.				3
Making a recapitulation at the end of the course.				3

**Table 2.2: Teachers' Lectures Presentation Results**

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

The results show that, teachers started their lessons by relating the previous lesson to the current one, also, they tried to give good explanation to their students in order to get a successful teaching process, their lecture' presentation was based on explanation and discussion, with a kind of debate. The observer noticed that there were teachers who use just handouts to explain their lessons, while there are others who permitted their students to read from their smart phones and they sometimes use dictations in giving their lectures. Yet, there is only one teacher who employed the board for the correction of activities. Teachers used English to adopt more their students but they sometimes refer to Arabic for a better understanding. In addition to that, they give examples to clarify many things for their students. The researcher observed that students delt just with activities that focused on receptive skills while less emphasis is put on activities that focused on productive skills. Furthermore, the researcher evaluated a good thing that teachers accomplished in that they gave worksheets for their students during the course, restated or recapitulated for them the whole lesson, and gave them homework by the end of each session.

### c. Students' Participation

The following table elicits data about the students' participation, motivation, and interation.

Part Three: Students' Participation				
Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Students' attention to teachers.		2	1	
Students' sense of learning.	3			
Taking notes.	3			
Asking questions.	3			

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

Students' interaction among each other.		2	1	
Students' interaction with teachers.		3		

**Table 2.3: Students' Participation Results**

The observer noticed that students did rarely follow their teachers, there is some troubles in their concentration, the observer found that they were occupied with other things but not with their studies, they have no sense of interest or responsibility as they showed interest and focus whenever they liked to but it is worth nothing that they tried to correct some classmates' mistakes. Furthermore, the students' carelessness about the lectures could be explained by the fact that they did not take notes, ask questions, and communicate or exchange ideas with their teachers.

### d. Methods and Materials

In this part, the researcher took notes a propos about the methods and materials teachers use in their CWE teaching.

Part Four :Methods and Materials				
Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Using chalk/board.	2		1	
Using books.	3			
Using teaching aids.	3			
Using interactive methods.	3			

**Table 2.4: Methods and Materials Results**



## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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The results show that, teachers do not use chalk or board in presenting their courses, the observer attended just one session with just one teacher who works sometimes with chalk. Then, there are no interactive methods to catch students' attention or motivate them, no books or teaching aids are employed on order to meke the course rich.

### e. Students' Involvement in the classroom

The researcher analyzed this part and give an explanation about how the students are involved in their classroom and what situation and way of learning are in.

Part Five : Students' Involvement in the classroom				
Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Students' active involvement.		3		
Students' passive involvement.		3		
Students' anxiety.		1		2
Students' enthusiasm.		2	1	
Students' motivation		3		
Students' attention.		3		

**Table 2.5: Students' Involvements Results**

The results showed that, students did rarely get involved in CWE learning and that caused them boredom, lack of motivation, and participation or even shyness when in CWE sessions. Also, the researcher noticed that sudents did not prefer neither writing activities nor reading tasks, without forgetting to mention that there were noisy and talkative to the point that they disturb their teachers and their classmates. Here, it is worth reminding that teachers have to do more efforts to get those students involved and to make the classroom under control.

### f. Students' Mixed Abilities

The table below presents the different abilities amongst students when in CWE sessions.

Part Six : Students' Mixed Abilities				
Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Intelligence and Multiple Intelligence.				3
Language Aptitude.			2	1
Learner Autonomy.			3	
Language Levels.			3	
Motivation.				3
Learning Styles.			2	1

**Table 2.6 : Students' Mixed Abilities Results**

The classroom observation results as to part six showed that, students studied and learned with different qualities and abilities. The researcher noticed that each student had his own way of thinking, reflecting, giving opinions and decisions, using different personality traits and skills to reveal his own interests, aptitude, learning styles. This fact confirmed that each classroom is made up of a mixture of abilities and competencies.

### 2.5. Discussion

After analyzing the research instruments, teachers' questionnaire and classroom observation, the researcher finds and gets finale and convincing responses to the present research questions, namely; the first one; Do mixed ability classes affect teachers' practices in teaching ? Then, the second one is about, How do teachers react towards their students' mixed abilities as far as is concerned?

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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Starting with the first research hypothesis that is about mixed ability classes affect teachers' practices as to teaching writing and demands much time and efforts from the part of the teacher than from the learner, when the results of questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in rubric three of the teachers questionnaire and the first, second, and the fourth parts of the classroom observation grid validate the hypothesis. Moving to the second hypothesis which confirms that in mixed ability classes, teachers could be all the time aware of students' different abilities and needs by giving them the opportunity to express their needs through discussions or questionnaires, be kind and patient with them and encourage and praise them from time to time. Thus, teachers' questionnaires assumed that students need a good learning atmosphere that requires a big responsibility and useful and successful strategies from the part of teachers. Also, in order to deal with a class with mixed abilities teachers should first build a strong and friendship relation with their students so that they can raise their attention and motivation in their classes. Therefore, the two research instruments the researcher dealt with, lead him to find out that this hypothesis is correct when studying the teachers' questionnaires in (Q, 6, 7, 8) and the third, fifth, and the six part of the classroom observation grid result in a validation of the second research hypothesis.

### **2.6. Suggestions and Reccomandations**

The researcher tried to give a list of some suggestions and reccomandations that might help teachers in their teaching profession and students in their schooling career when in teaching and learning in class with mixed abilities.

#### **2.6.1. For teachers**

- Using more effective strategies, methods of teaching in teaching writing.
- Presenting the course by using flexible teaching methods and techniques.
- Focusing more on varied group work settings especially in teaching writing to build cooperative learning atmosphere.

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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- Creating the last time about 10 to 15 minutes to students' preferences, learning styles, intelligence levels and so on to set teaching methods and strategies that cater all their differences.
- Emaphasising the use of teaching aids such as : pictures, data-show, speakers, and so on.
- Selecting some sessions to use books to design and present the course and activities (refer to traditional way of teaching from time to time).
- Revising teachers' responsibility about students' different abilities, interests, and needs.

### 2.6.2. For learners

- Being more responsible and interested in their learning.
- Paying attention with teachers and considering their instructions and pieces of advice and the like.
- Being attentive in classes and forgetting about the other things when in the classroom.
- Keeping good, strong relation with their mates when working in pairs/groups as the first step to help each others.
- Writing compositions and short stories and participating in competitions, clubs, conferences to ameliorate their productive skills and abilities.

### 2.7. Conclusion

The objective of this research work was to investigate the situation of dealing with mixed ability classes in teaching writing. The researcher in this chapter tried to provide a review about the situation by collecting data using the teachers' questionnaires and classroom observation and by analysing those data using both methods that are the descriptive and analytic methods. Based on research findings, it was found that teachers found classes with many different learning styles, levels, abilities, and so on. Also, the researcher noticed a list of challenges teachers are facing each time and get

## Chapter Two : Pratical Part

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every teacher point of view and way of thinking. After analysing those problems, there were a number of strategies teachers proposed in order to cope with the situation of students' mixed abilities. Eventually, on account of these findings some suggestions and recommandations were provided for teachers in their teaching profession as ; being more responsible, aware, and creative and also for students in their schooling career such as ; respect teachers, being interested, and being more motivated.

# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

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Teachers are facing many challenges in teaching nowadays. One of is how to deal with mixed ability classes, i.e, heterogeneous classes that are made up of students with different abilities, qualities, and needs. A very important aspect is dealing with this challenge in teaching writing skill. The current research focused on teaching heterogeneous classes and the role of teacher as an essential part of the classroom, the main factors that result in students with mixed abilities, lead them to be under the challenges encountered by their teachers, and the strategies teachers use to overcome their students' mixed abilities in teaching the writing skill.

This study tried to answer the following research questions :

1. Do Mixed Abilities Classes affect teachers' practices in teaching ?
2. How do teachers react towards their students' mixed abilities as far as is concerned ?

Based on these research questions the following hypotheses are put forward :

- Perhaps, Mixed Abilities Classes affect teachers' practices as to teaching writing and demands much time and efforts from the part of the teacher than from the part of the learner.
- In Mixed Abilities writing Classes, teachers should be all the time to be aware of students' different abilities and needs by using appropriate teaching techniques that cater all their differences.

To answer the above listed research questions and check the validity of their relevant hypotheses two research instruments were designed and employed in this study ; namely the teachers' questionnaire and classroom observation. The obtained results showed that dealing with Mixed Ability Classes required efforts from teachers and learners alike. Also, mixed ability classes has a great impact in teaching and learning process since both teachers and learners are somehow fighting to better their teaching and learning situation. Accordingly, students and have the different factors which push them to be heterogeneous in their learning.

## General Conclusion

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Teachers have different challenges that make them use specific strategies to deal with when in teaching writing. The results achieved from this study confirm that the first and second research hypotheses put are correct to higher extent. As a conclusion and necessary point of the limitations of this research, the researcher found and encountered some difficulties and problems when she was doing her research and analyse her work. The first difficulty was when the researcher started looking for CWE teachers to answer the questionnaire tool and finished with waiting them to give it back. The next one was when the researcher tried to attend in observation, there were no lectures because of the public manifestation that my country was witnessing.



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# **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

You are kindly invited to fill in the following questionnaire. Please, tick the appropriate answer and justify it whenever possible. I extremely appreciate your collaboration.

#### Rubric One :

##### Bibliography : Information

1) Gender :

a) Male

b) Female

2) Age :

#### Rubric Two : Professional Information.

1) Is your CWE teaching experience :

a) Less than 5 years

b) 5 to 10 years

c) More than 10years

2) What is the average number of students in your classroom ?

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#### Rubric Three: Dealing with Mixed Ability Classes in Comprehension and Written Expression.

1) Does the classroom contain students of Mixed Ability in Comprehension Written Expression ?

Yes

No

If yes what is the learning capacity of students when teaching Comprehension Written Expression in classroom ?

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2) Do you think that students are at many different levels ? It is a problem ? why ?

Yes

No

3) Your students in the classroom are with ;

a) Auditory learning styles.

b) Visual learning styles.

c) Kinaesthetic learning styles.

4) In your opinion, what factors are students facing when dealing with Mixed Ability Classes ?

a)

b)

c)

d)

5) What are the challenges of teaching Mixed Ability Classes ?

a)

b)

c)

d)

6) Which strategies do you use in order to cope with those problems ?

a)

b)

c)

d)

7) Based on your Comprehension Written Expression experience, what are the most helpful strategies for teachers deal with Mixed Ability Classes in Comprehension and Written Expression ?

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8) Do you think that dividing the classroom into smaller groups (based on their ability) can be effective way to handle these issues ?

Yes

No



## Appendix B

### Classroom Observation Grid

Part One : Classroom Management				
Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Attracting' students attention.				
Teachers' control of the whole class.				
Students' sitting organization.				
Create a humour and enjoyble atmosphere.				
Individual work.				
Work in pairs. U shape /O shape				
Group work.				
Teachers' awarness.				
Time management.				
Part Two : Teachers' Lecture Presentation				
Likert area Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Relate the current lesson to the previous one.				
Teachers' explanation based on handouts.				
Teachers' explanation based on the use of board.				

Teachers' explanation based on debates /discussions.				
Teachers' explanation based on dictation.				
Giving exmples for better understanding.				
Using L1.				
Using only English.				
Activities based on receptive skills.				
Activities based on productive skills.				
Providing in-class activities.				
Providing out-class activities.				
Making a recapitulation at the end of the course.				

Part Three : Students' Participation

Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes Observed	Often observed
Students' attention to teachers.				
Students' sense of learning.				
Taking notes.				

Asking questions.				
Students' interaction among each others.				
Students' interrection with teachers.				

**Part Four : Methods and Materials**

Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Using chalk/board.				
Using handouts.				
Using teaching aids.				
Using interactive methods.				

**Part Five : Students' Involvement in the classroom**

Likert Scale Concerned area	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Students' active involvement.				
Students' passive involvement.				
Students' anxiety.				
Students' enthusiasm.				
Students' motivation				

Students' attention.				
Part Six : Students' Mixed abilities				
Likert Scale	Never observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Often observed
Concerned area				
Intelligence and Multiple Intelligence.				
Language Aptitude.				
Learner Autonomy.				
Language Levels.				
Motivation.				
Learning Styles.				

## Summary :

There is no doubt that all classes have students with different abilities, mixed ability classes combine students with varied qualities, competences, levels, skills, and needs. Being teachers in heterogeneous classes requires a great deal, awareness, efforts, and responsibility. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the factors that put students in heterogeneity issue, the challenges EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers meet in teaching those classes and the teaching strategies teachers deem appropriate and helpful to fulfill the students' needs when dealing with mixed ability classes. This research work was carried out in the University of Tlemcen at the Department of English. It strives to investigate the situation the case study was about in the module of Comprehension and Written Expression (CWE) in the first year level. Two main research instruments were employed in order to collect data that are teachers' questionnaire which was addressed to first year CWE teachers and classroom observation which was done with the permission teachers. After reviewing and analyzing the data collected from the two research instruments employed in this study, the results showed that dealing with mixed ability classes in teaching writing skill needs big efforts from both teachers and learners, there should be a suitable, flourishing, and thriving strategies and techniques to create a helpful teaching/learning environment for both of them and meet all students' needs in those classes.

**Key words :** Mixed Ability Classes, factors, teachers, challenges, and strategies

## Résumé :

Il ne fait aucun doute que toutes les classes ont des étudiants de capacités différentes, les classes de capacités mixtes combinent des étudiants de qualités, de compétences, de niveaux, et de besoins variés. Etre enseignant dans des classes hétérogènes nécessite beaucoup de sensibilisation, d'efforts et de responsabilité. Ainsi, le but de cette étude est d'identifier les facteurs qui placent les étudiants dans l'hétérogénéité, les défis que les enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère rencontrent pour enseigner ces cours et les stratégies d'enseignement que les enseignants jugent appropriées et utiles pour répondre aux besoins des étudiants lorsqu'ils gèrent cours d'aptitude. Ce travail de recherche a été effectué à l'université de Tlemcen au Département d'Anglais. Il s'efforce d'enquêter sur la situation dont traite l'étude de cas dans le module de compréhension et d'expression écrite de la première année. Deux principaux instruments de recherche ont été utilisés afin de collecter des données, à savoir du questionnaire destiné aux enseignants et destiné aux enseignants de première année en compréhension et expression écrite et à l'observation en classe, réalisé avec l'autorisation des enseignants. Après avoir examiné et analysé les données recueillies à partir des deux instruments de recherche utilisés dans cette étude, les résultats ont montré que le fait de gérer des classes d'habiletés mixtes en écriture nécessitant de gros efforts de la part des enseignants et des apprenants, il devrait exister une stratégie appropriée, florissante et techniques pour créer un environnement d'apprentissage pédagogique utile pour les deux et répondre aux besoins de tout les étudiants dans ces cours.

**Les mots clé :** Cours mixte, facteurs, défis, et stratégies

## ملخص

لا يوجد شك في أن جميع الفصول تحتوي طلاب ذات قدرات مختلفة فالفصول المختلطة تجمع بين الطلاب بكفاءات و مستويات و مهارات و احتياجات و صفات متنوعة. كونك مدرسا في فصول غير متجانسة يتطلب قدرا كبيرا من المسؤولية والجدد والاهتمام. و بالتالي فان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو تحديد العوامل التي تضع الطلاب في مسالة عدم التجانس و التحديات التي تواجه اللغة الانجليزية كمدربين لغة أجنبية في تدريس تلك الصفوف و استراتيجيات التدريس التي يعتبرها المعلمون مناسبة و مفيدة لتلبية احتياجات الطلاب عند التعامل مع فصول القدرة المختلطة. تم تنفيذ هذا العمل البحثي في جامعة تلمسان في قسم اللغة الانجليزية حيث تسعى هذه الدراسة جاهدة للتحقيق في الحالة التي كانت عليها دراسة الحالة في وحدة الفهم و التعبير الكتابي في المستوى الأول. لقد تم استخدام أداتين بحثيتين رئيسيتين من اجل جمع البيانات التي هي استبيانات المعلمين و التي ادرجت للسنة الاولى و معلمي التعبير الكتابي و ملاحظة الفصول الدراسية التي تمت بادن المعلمين. بعد مراجعة و تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها من صكين البحث المستخدم في هذه الدراسة البحثية حيث أظهرت النتائج أن التعامل مع فصول القدرة المختلطة في مهارة تدريس الكتابة يحتاج إلى جهود كبيرة لكل من المعلمين و المتعلمين ك فينبغي أن تكون هناك استراتيجيات مناسبة و مزدهرة و تقنيات لخلق بيئة تعليمية مفيدة لكل منهما و تلبية جميع احتياجات الطلاب في تلك الفصول.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اقسام ذات كفاءات مختلفة. عوامل. تحديات. تقنيات.