INVESTIGATING INDONESIAN TEACHERS' STRATEGIES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN MIXED ABILITY CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

Mixed-ability Class (MAC) is often unavoidable in the practice of education. MAC usually consists of many students with very different characteristics, in terms of their ages, proficiency, motivations, educational backgrounds, learning styles, etc. Despite the abundant research about teachers' strategies in teaching English in homogenous classes, research of teachers' strategies in teaching MAC is relatively unexplored. This study investigated the teaching strategies used by 10 (ten) English teachers in Cimahi as the respondents. Questionnaire was used as the instrument. Using descriptive analysis, the result showed that most lecturers perceive that teaching English in MAC gives advantages as well as disadvantages. Most of them admit that MAC provides greater opportunity for teaching innovation and creativity so they can develop themselves professionally. They are challenged to adopt many problem solving approaches to the difficulties they face in the classroom. However, many of them still have problems in managing the class such as: controlling students' discipline, maintaining students' interests, conducting effective learning, error correction and selecting classroom materials. The implementation of teacher training program, classroom action research and students' placement test are recommended to avoid very diverse MAC.

Keywords: Mixed Ability Classes, English Foreign Language, Teacher Strategies

A. INTRODUCTION

Research on teachers' strategies in teaching English in various contexts have always been interesting. However, despite the abundant research about teachers' strategies in teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) homogenous classes, studies of teachers' strategies in teaching mixed-ability classes is relatively unexplored. A mixed-ability class allows for more of a social mix but relies heavily on the expertise of the teacher in helping a wide range of pupils achieve their potentials (Bremner: 2008). Teachers' attitudes play an important role in conducting effective teaching in mixed-ability classes. Teachers who are familiar with the different abilities and needs of their learners and use mixed ability teaching strategies effectively are much better equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of their learners (Šimanová, 2010). If not, there is a danger that the high achievers might not be stretched enough while the low achievers are neglected (Bremner: 2008).

The current study focuses on how teachers perceive about their teaching in mixed ability classes. Specifically, this study is intended is to investigate teachers' strategies in teaching

mixed-ability classes. This paper also sets out to explore potential teaching methods aiming to reach appropriate solutions to the problems come up in most of mixed ability classes.

The term Mixed-Ability Classes (MAC) is also known as Heterogenous Classes (HC) (Brno, 2008). Heterogeneous classes are compounded, sometimes, if they are also large classes (Faleiros, 2009). Different students have different learning styles, different levels of proficiencies and different learning motivations. Thus, Richards (1998) asserts that the majority of foreign language classes involve students of varying abilities. MAC is the term used to describe classes made up of students of different levels of proficiency (Ur, 1991). Teachers need to recognize that a class is MAC because students have their own strengths and weaknesses and develop at different rates (Ireson and Hallam, 2001).

Problems usually arise in MAC. Beside the great number of students in the classroom, students' profiles are also various. They differ greatly in terms of ages, levels of language proficiency, motivations, learning styles and so on. Judging from these learning conditions, the teaching strategies used by the teachers in non-regular (extension) class might be different from those used in regular classes. Related to this phenomenon, the writers conducted a research in finding the teachers' perception in teaching MAC and also in finding accurate portrait of strategies used by teachers in the classrooms.

This study is aimed to attempt the following two research questions: 1) How do teachers perceive teaching English in mixed-ability classes? 2) What are the teachers' strategies used in teaching mixed-ability classes?

This research is expected to give contribution to two aspects: which are academically and practically. Academically, the significance of the study is to provide readers (especially the management of institution and the stakeholders) information about the real picture of teaching learning process of non-regular classes which are considered to be mixed-ability classes. This information will be compared to the theories that are expected may provide comprehensive portrait on teaching strategies in mixed-ability classes which should be implemented. Therefore, practically, the ideal portrait of teaching English in mixed-ability classes may become guidance for the teachers to apply those strategies in their classes which further can develop their teaching professionalism.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Mixed Ability Classes

Every learner has his own learning style, linguistic background knowledge or individual pace of learning and developing. Hence, the majority of foreign language classes involve students of varying abilities (Richards, 1998). Mixed-Ability Class (MAC) or Heterogeneous Classes (HC) are terms used to describe classes made up of students of different levels of proficiency (Ur, 1991). Ainslie (1994) also explains that MAC means classes where students differ greatly in ability, motivation, needs, interests, educational background, learning styles, anxiety, experiences and so on. Teachers need to recognize that a class is MAC because students have their own strengths and weaknesses and develop at different rates (Ireson and Hallam, 2001). Heterogeneous classes are compounded, sometimes, if they are also large classes (Faleiros, 2009).

In terms of language proficiency level, learner populations vary to a range of characteristics: beginner, intermediate or advance learners. While in terms of age, learners can be grouped into young learners, teenagers and adult learners (Ur, 1991).

2. Factors of Mixed Ability Classes (MAC)

There are many factors that influence the characteristics of the learners in MAC. Roberts (2007) elaborates some of these factors. The first factor is age, personality and motivation.

a. Age, Personality and Motivation
   Generally speaking, the older the student, the more challenging it will be for students to retain the information. Personality also plays a great role in student's willingness to participate in classroom activities and to be part of a larger classrom community. Research on student persistence is clear that the more specific a student's goal, the more motivated that students is to attend class. However, personality and motivation tend to have a greater impact on acquisition rather than age.

b. Educational Background
   Students come to the class with different educational backgrounds. As literacy is tied to educational background, students in mixed-ability classes can range from having low proficiency, average proficiency and high proficiency.

c. Learning Styles
   Students in the class might appear with different learning styles: audio, visual and tactile. Teachers must ensure that the classroom instruction and activities accommodate these different styles of learning.

d. Cultural Background
   Cultural background becomes one of the crucial factors in students' personality. Many countries still conduct classes that are 100 percent teacher-directed. Thus, active learning or student-centered are considered bad by students.

3. Challenges of Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes (MAC)

Many teachers see a MAC as the one which consists of a group of average and able students with a subset students who have learning problems (McKeown, 2004). These learning problems will cause some challenges that might teachers face in the classroom. Ur (1991) elaborates some problems might occur in a mixed-ability class:

a. Discipline
   Teachers may find students in MAC is difficult to control. Discipline problems usually occur due to different opinions of students towards the learning process. Some high achievers might think that certain materials are too easy for them and they become bored. On the other hand, some low achievers may feel frustrated because certain materials are too hard for them. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to provide effective learning for all students.

b. Interest
   Learners might differ in their interests, motivation and also learning styles. Teachers might find it difficult to provide content and activities that are motivating and intresting for all learners.

c. Materials
   Materials provided in the textbooks are usually rigid and only fit to certain kinds of learners. Therefore, it does not offer flexibility for teachers to adjust the materials into different students' proficiency levels.

d. Individual Awareness, Assessment and Correction
   Since most of MAC is also a large class, it is hard for teachers to get to know the students, to monitor their progress individually and to give correction on their errors. This is in accordance to what Simanova (2010) says that in classes where there are many differences, teachers are not able to devote time and attention equally to all learners.

e. Participation
   In most of MAC, high achievers tend to dominate the class. They tend to participate more actively than low achievers. Lack of participation and attention from the teachers may further affect low achievers' proficiency in the lesson.

4. Benefits of Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes (MAC)

Despite the challenges and problems found in mixed-ability classes, however, there are also a number of advantages of MAC (Ur, 1991), namely:

a. MAC provides a rich pool of human resources. Students come to the class with different knowledge, ideas, interests which can be drawn on to be interesting varied student-center lessons (Hess, 1999).

b. MAC provides educational value of cooperative learning. Students are mostly assigned to interact, help and learn from each others. This is the value of cooperative learning that students can gain.

c. MAC provides learner autonomy. Learning environment in MAC enhances students either to work individually or to work together or to teach each others. These activities can develop learning autonomy since teachers may not always be able to observe individual student in the class.

d. MAC provides opportunity for teachers to develop professionally. It can promote teachers' professionalism. This is due to the fact that teachers need to adopt and experiment various approaches in solving the problems found in mixed ability classes.

5. Strategies in Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes (MAC)

As have been stated earlier, in teaching MAC, various problems usually come up, such as difficulty to control discipline, difficulty to be certain that all students are learning effectively, difficulty to find appropriated materials, difficulty to follow individual progress in large classes and difficulty to activate all learners' participation. Simanova (2010) and Bremner (2008) elaborate some useful strategies for managing those problems in teaching mixed-ability classes. They are:

a. Supporting Learning Environment. Teachers must create supportive learning environment in which learners feel confident and able to perform their best in the classroom.

b. Classroom Management. Teachers must ensure themselves that all students are involved as much as possible in the lesson. Good classroom management covers need analysis,

    classroom layout for maximum learning potential, getting to know students individually, rewards and encouragement, concept of checking questions, setting time limit, providing feedback, etc. Teachers can use need analysis to prompt the students upon their learning styles, learning strategies, language needs, learning enjoyment, motivation as well as language strengths and weaknesses.

c. Variety. In order to accommodate all students in MAC, teachers must apply variety in the classroom. The variety includes: topics of the lesson, methods of teaching, materials and classroom activities, which generate learners' interests, motivations, proficiency levels and their learning styles. There are various types of classroom activities which can be implemented in mixed-ability classes.

The first variety which can be used in teaching MAC is open ended task. Open-ended tasks are associated with communicative methodology as they provide choice to all students of the mixed-ability classes (Prodromou, 1995). Providing communicative activities which force all students to communicate with teacher or their classmates in order to give and receive missing information can be helpful for language learners at all linguistic levels. Communicative activities will allow learners at all levels to work on the same task but at their own pace. Therefore, MAC is perceived as a unified whole rather than a mixture of different parts (Xanthou and Pavlou, 2009). As the example in the classroom activities, low achievers can give short answers, while middle and high achievers are given the opportunity to test, practice and strengthen their syntactic knowledge of using the target language.

The second variety is language games and other relaxing learning activities. Even though MAC exhibits differences in prior knowledge and ability, but they seem to share a great similarity: they all value pleasure (Prodromou, 1995). Language games are not only fun but also purposeful in terms of reinforcing certain linguistic rules. Uberman (1998) says that a relaxing learning atmosphere is created when games are used in the classroom so students with poor linguistic background have the opportunity to report whatever they know or the teacher has taught them in a non-stressful way. When playing language games, students will pay attention on the message instead of the correctness of linguistic forms. Therefore, the fear of negative evaluation in the class is eliminated (Horwittz et.al, 1986).

The third variety is task differentiation. Course books are designed for particular language level and usually do not offer much flexibility. Teachers need to adapt the materials by doing task differentiation. Teachers ask students to do different tasks with the same materials according to students' level of proficiencies (Harmer, 1998). In line with this notion, Hess (2001) also says that differentiated instruction can raise the bar for all learners of the mixed-ability classes. The process of teaching can be differentiated if activities move from simple and basic to complex in order to satisfy all linguistic levels of the mixed-ability classes. For example, teachers can provide multiple reading materials which are suitable to all students' readability levels.

The forth variety is compulsory plus optional tasks. Teachers must provide compulsory tasks with additional tasks that students must do after finishing the core tasks. By providing those materials, all learners will be engaged in the lesson and can feel a sense of achievement when completing a task. The fifth strategy is giving homework. Homework can also be done to provide learners of all levels and abilities with an opportunity to review and consolidate the materials studied in class. And the last strategy is different types of grouping. Grouping students is one of the effective ways in teaching mixed-ability classes. Types of students

work can be individualization, pairwork, whole class, homogeneous grouping, and heterogeneous grouping.

From the literature review above, MAC can be seen through a more positive perspective. Teachers should be aware of the varied needs of students so that they can provide a number of teaching strategies that will fulfill their needs in a way that activities are suitable challenged. Teachers need to reinforce themselves with the guidelines and strategies of teaching in MAC and the most important part is to implement the strategies in their mixed-ability classes.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the writer used qualitative method as the research design. Qualitative research methods are used to examine questions that can best be answered by verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and interpret various aspect of their environment (Crowl, 1996). Afterwards, the data was presented through descriptive analysis. A descriptive study asks what is or what was and it reports things the way they are or they were (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Population is defined as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria (McMillan, 1996: 85). Meanwhile respondent is defined as subsets of people used to represent population (Crowl, 1996). In this research, the writer chose 20 English teachers in one university in Cimahi West Java. The selection of the sample was convenient sampling due to the teachers' availability who have teaching schedule on the day of data collection. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Crowl, 1996). To gain the data, an open-ended questionnaire (which consists of 5 questions related to teaching strategies in mixed-ability classes) was distributed to elicit teachers' perceptions on teaching MAC as well as to investigate the strategies used in the classroom.

The next process after collecting the data is to analyze it. Practically, several steps were conducted. First, questionnaire was distributed to 10 (ten) English teachers as the respondents. The data gained from the questionnaire were categorized into two categories: questions numbers 1-2 are related to teachers' strategies in teaching MAC and questions numbers 3-5 are related to teachers' perception on teaching MAC. Here is the summary of the questionnaire:

Table 1 (Summary of the Questionnaire)

NO	QUESTIONS
1	Most of students of non-regular (extension) classes have different educational backgrounds, different motivation, and different levels of proficiencies. Therefore, in each class, there are always 3 student categories: high-achievers, average-achievers and low-achievers. What methods and techniques of teaching that you usually you to cope with those three students categories?
2	What obstacles that you usually found in teaching mixed ability classes (e.g. discipline, effective learning, participation and materials)?
3	Do you think that materials/ classroom instructions in mixed ability classes should be made similar for all students? Elaborate your reasons.
4	Do you think that students should be placed in the classes/ grades that is in accordance to their levels of proficiencies? Elaborate your reasons.
5	If you could choose, which do you prefer: teaching English in homogenous or heterogeneous (mixed ability) classes? Elaborate your reasons.

Next, to simplify the data presentation, the writer calculated the result of the questionnaire in form of percentage by using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P= Percentage
F= Frequency of occurrences and
N=The total number of students

Lastly, the writer presented the data through descriptive analysis. Descriptive case study is allowing an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 1994). Zonabend (1992) cited in Tellis (1997) states that case study is done by giving special attention to completeness in observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the cases under study. In this case study, the writer focused on a single entity as it exists in its natural environment (Johnson, 1992). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also state that a descriptive research using a descriptive mode of inquiry simply describes an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterize individuals or a group. It assesses the nature of existing conditions.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are two research questions in this study, they are: 1) *How do teachers perceive teaching English in mixed-ability classes?* 2) *What are the teachers' strategies used in teaching mixed-ability classes?* To make sure that the research questions have been answered, the data gained from the instrument were elaborated and analyzed thoroughly. The first elaboration will be related to question number 1 (*Most of students of non-regular (extension) classes have different educational backgrounds, different motivation, and different levels of proficiencies. Therefore, in each class, there are always 3 student categories: high-achievers, average-achievers and low-achievers. What methods and techniques of teaching that you usually you to cope with those three students categories?),* teachers have shown different answers.

Table 2. Strategies in Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes

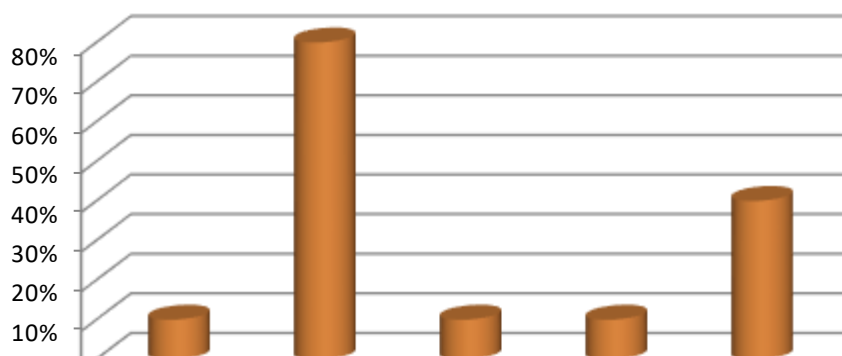| NO	STRATEGIES	TEACHERS' ANSWERS										%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Lecturing	√										10
2	Cooperative Learning		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	80
3	Relaxing Activities			√								10
4	Supportive Learning Environment					√						10
5	Variety		√		√			√			√	40
6	Pairwork						√					10

Figure 1 (Strategies in Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes)

Figure 1 shows that 80% of the English teachers have already applied cooperative learning in their classes as one of the strategies in coping with mixed-ability classes. The other strategy implemented is the use of variety in teaching method to maintain students' interest and motivation (40%). And the other strategies applied are doing some relaxing activities (10%), pairwork (10%) and creating supporting learning environment (10%). However, lecturing, as one of traditional teaching techniques is still implemented in the mixed-ability classes (10%).

The result shows that in terms of strategies in teaching mixed-ability classes, majority of English teachers (80%) have already applied cooperative learning (CL) as one of several strategies recommended by Johnson and Johnson (1987). In CL, teachers can assign students of high, medium and low abilities in the same group to maximize the heterogeneous make up of each group. This is also in line with what has been stated by Lyle (1999) that in CL, both low and high achieving students value the opportunity to work together as all pupils believed that they benefited. Roger and Johnson (2009) also point out that in CL, students of heterogeneous groups are given equal opportunities to work together and to make their own contributions. That is why, cooperative learning can make students' learning more effective, especially in multilevel classes.

The result also shows that some teachers have accommodated students' differences in the classroom by doing other strategies in teaching mixed-ability classes, namely: pair-work (10%), teaching variety (40%), relaxing activities (10%) and creating supporting activities (10%). In teaching mixed-ability classes, as explained by Hess (2001), teachers can enhance students to help each other through pairing activities.Also, in order to accommodate all students in the mixed-ability classes, teachers must apply variety in the classroom. The variety can cover: topics of the lesson, methods of teaching, materials and classroom activities, which generate learners' interests, motivations, proficiency levels and their learning styles.

Some teachers (10%) also have used games and other relaxing activities to present not only fun activities but also purposeful in terms of reinforcing certain linguistic rules. This is in line with what Uberman (1998) says that in games, students with poor linguistic background have the opportunity to report whatever they know or the teacher has taught them in a non-stressful way. When playing language games, students will pay attention on the message instead of the correctness of linguitic forms. Therefore, the fear of negative evaluation in the

class is eliminated (Horwittz et.al, 1986). At last, the result surprisingly shows that there is one teacher (10%) who still uses lecturing as the traditional technique of teaching.

The next elaboration will be related to the question number 2: *What challenges that you usually found in teaching heterogenous classes*

Table 3. Challenges in Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes

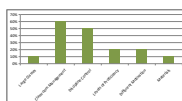| NO	CHALLENGES	TEACHERS' ANSWERS										%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Large Classes	√										10
2	Classroom Management	√				√		√	√	√	√	60
3	Control of Discipline	√		√		√	√				√	50
4	Different Levels of Proficiency		√	√								20
5	Different Motivation			√	√							20
6	Materials				√							10

Figure 2 (Challenges in Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes)

From figure 4.2 we can gain the information that classroom management is the most challenging factor faced by teachers in teaching mixed-ability classes (60%). Since the effective classroom management is quite difficult to do, so the control of discipline becomes something challenging too (50%). Other challenging factors in the mixed-ability classes are the use and the presentation of materials (10%) which should fit different levels of proficiencies (10%) and different motivation (10%) of the learners.

The result shows that most of teachers (60%) found that classroom management is the most problematic matter that they face in teaching mixed-ability classes. Control of discipline was also found to be hard in mixed-ability classes. This is in accordance to what Keown (2004) and Ur (1991) that teachers may find students in mixed-ability classes are difficult to control. Discipline problems usually occur due to different opinions of students towards the learning process. Some other teachers (10%) also found that selecting and presenting materials are quite complicated in mixed-ability classes. Ur (1991) explains that this is due to the fact that students have different motivations and different levels of proficiencies so that some high

achievers might think that certain materials are too easy for them and they become bored. On the other hand, some low achievers may feel frustrated because certain materials are too hard for them. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to provide effective learning for all students.

The next discussion will be related to the clasroom instruction. *(Do you think that materials/ classroom instructions in heterogenous classes should be made similar for all students?)* The answers are summarized in the table below:

Table 4. Differentiated and Non-Differentiated Instruction

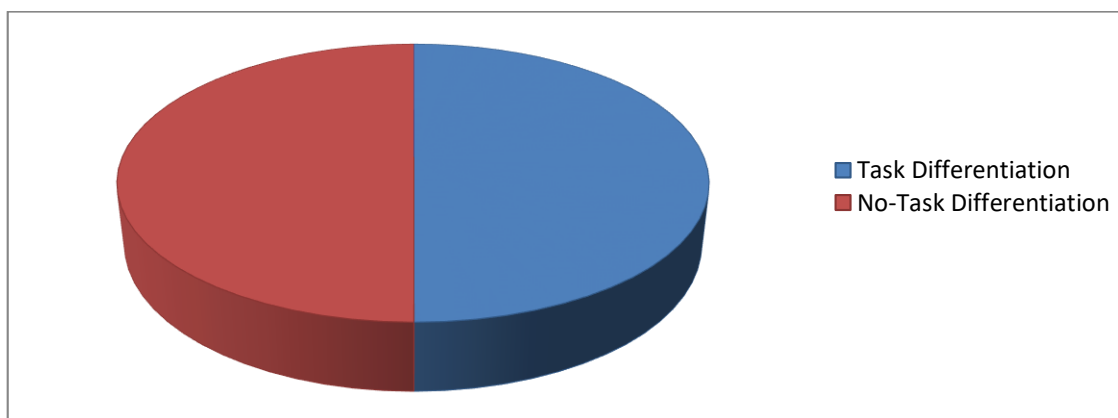| NO	INSTRUCTION	TEACHERS' ANSWERS										%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Non-Differentiated Instruction	√		√			√			√	√	50
2	Differentiated Instruction		√		√	√		√	√			50

Figure 3. Differentiated and Non-Differentiated Instruction

Figure 3 shows that teachers who prefer differentiated instructions in teaching mixed-ability classes (50%) are equally balanced with those who prefer non-differentiated instructions (50%). There are various reasons behind these opinions. Teachers who prefer differentiated instructions think that they will respectively fit to learners' different levels of proficiencies. On the other hand, sticking to the curriculum is behind the idea of using non-differentiated instructions.

The result shows that half of respondents (50%) say that differentiated instruction is needed.This is in line to what Harmer (1998) that most of course books used in English classes are designed for particular language levels and usually do not offer much flexibility, therefore teachers needs to adapt the materials by doing Task Differentation (TD). In TD, teachers ask students to do different tasks with the same materials according to students' level of proficiencies. In line with this notion, Hess (2001) also says that differentiated instruction can raise the bar for all learners of the mixed-ability classes. The process of teaching can be differentiated if activities move from simple and basic to complex in order to satisfy all linguistic levels of the mixed-ability classes. For example, teachers can provide

multiple reading materials which are suitable to all students' readability levels. However, the other half of respondents (50%) assume that differentiated instruction is not needed. This is due to limited time for catching up learning objectives and materials to be learnt before the schedule of final tests. Yet, some of them further explain that they can provide homework for students to reinforce themselves with the materials that they learn in the class.

The next discussion will be related to teachers' perception on homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping. (*Do you think that students should be placed in the classes/ grades that is in accordance to their levels of proficiencies?*). The answers are summarized in table 5 below:

Table 5 (Grouping Students)

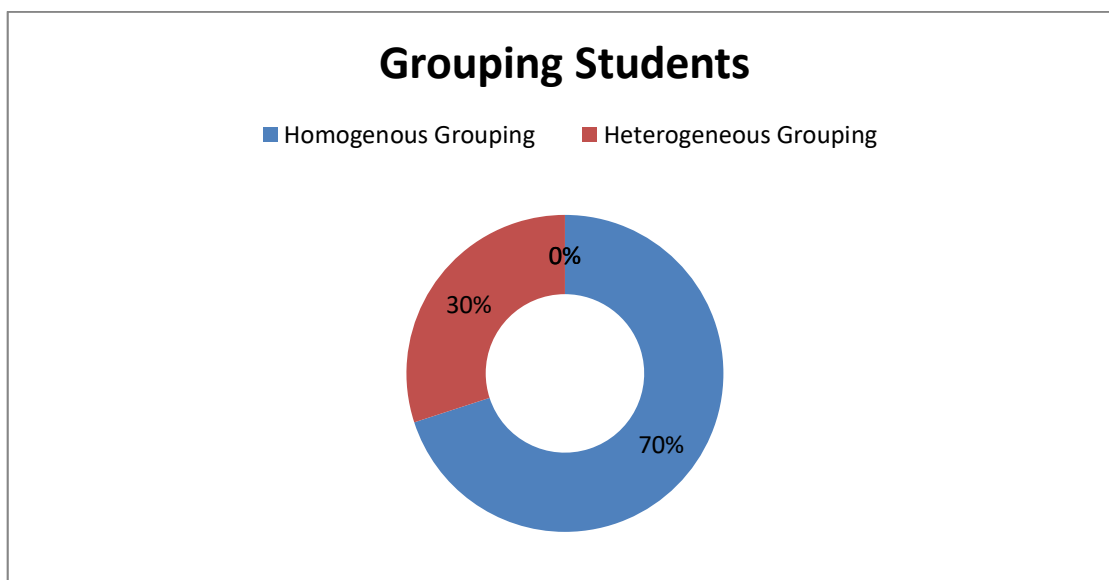| NO	GROUPING	TEACHERS' ANSWERS										%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Homogeneous Grouping (HG)		√	√	√	√	√	√			√	70
2	Heterogeneous Grouping (HeG)	√							√	√		30

Figure 4 (Grouping Students)

Figure 4 shows that most teachers prefer homogeneous grouping (70%). They think that it is the best way to focus on students' competence among other equal students' levels of proficiencies. However, 30% of the respondents say that heterogeneous grouping is better to motivate learners in the classroom. High and low achievers can value the cooperative learning by sharing and helping each others.

The result shows that majority of teachers (70%) positively perceive grouping students into homogeneous classes. Most of them say that teaching learning process will be conducted more effectively in homogeneous classes. This is in line with what Ansalone (2000) says that grouping students into homogeneous grouping is based on pedagogical principle that teachers have advantages to focus the instruction at the level of all the students in the particular group. Marsh (1987) also supports that homogeneous grouping is a way of coping with mixed-ability classes assuming that grouping children homogenously enables those in

lower ability groups to profit with respect to self-evaluation by being isolated from advanced peers.

The last discussion is related to teachers' preference in teaching homogeneous or heterogeneous classes. The answers are summarized in table 6 below.

Table 6. Teaching Preference

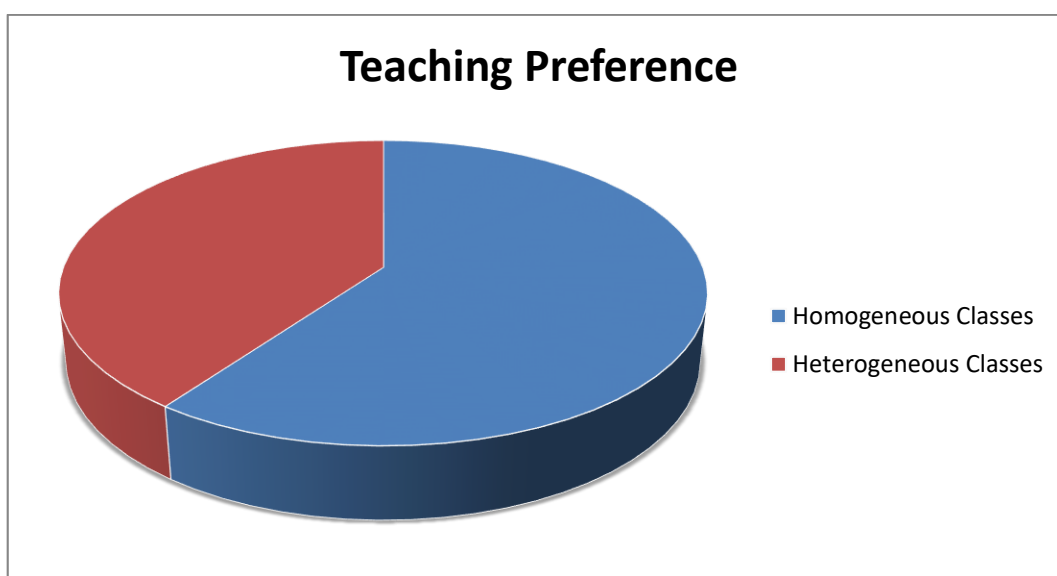| NO	TEACHING PREFERENCE	TEACHERS' ANSWERS										%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Homogeneous Classes	√		√	√		√	√			√	60
2	Heterogeneous Classes		√			√			√	√		40

Figure 5 (Teaching Preference)

Figure 5 shows that 60% of the teachers prefer teaching homogeneous classes. They think that they can teach best and can focus on the students' competence if students are grouped based on their proficiency levels. On the other hand, 40% of teachers prefer teaching heterogeneous classes as they feel challenged to explore teaching strategies which can solve difficulties they face in teaching mixed-ability classes.

The result shows that minority of teachers (40%) prefer teaching heterogeneous classes. Heterogeneous Grouping (HeG) is a way of grouping students of varying abilities in the same groups as a strategy to promote academic development of students who have diverse background knowledge and abilities (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). They perceive that teaching heterogeneous classes can promote their professionalism. This is due to the fact that they need to adopt and experiment various approaches in solving the problems found in heterogeneous classes. In heterogeneous classes, they also perceive that students are mostly assigned to interact, help and learn from each others. This is in line to what Lyle (1999) says that both low and high achieving students value the opportunity to work together as all pupils believed that they benefited. However, the result also shows that majority of teachers (60%) prefer teaching homogeneous classes. Homogeneous class is a way of grouping students of different language background and language abilities into groups of the same ability thereby

facilitating instruction (Slavin, 1987). This idea is also supported by Marsh (1987) who says that HG is a way of coping with mixed-ability classes assuming that grouping children homogenously enables those in lower ability groups to profit with respect to self-evaluation by being isolated from advanced peers.

E. CONCLUSION

All findings which have elaborated above lead to the conclusion that the two research questions have been answered. For the first research question about teachers' perception of teaching mixed-ability classes, it can be concluded that most teachers perceive positively that teaching English in MAC gives them advantages. They admit that MAC provides greater opportunity for teaching innovation and creativity so they can develop themselves professionally. They are also challenged to adopt many problem solving approaches to the difficulties they face in the classrooms and experiment with them. For the second research question about strategies the teachers used in teaching MAC, it can be concluded that majority of teachers have already implemented the strategies suggested by the experts, such as: applying teaching variety (materials, method, techniques, and so on) and applying various techniques of grouping students (whole class, individual, pair work, homogeneous grouping and heterogeneous grouping). However, most of them still have some problems in the classes, especially about certain aspects related to the classroom management such as: controlling students' discipline, maintaining students' interests, conducting effective learning for all students, error correction, selecting and presenting classroom instructions.

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