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## Perception of English Language Teachers Teaching in Mixed-Ability Classrooms in Community Schools: A Qualitative Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how English Language Teachers perceive teaching in mixed-ability classrooms within the context of community schools in Nawalpur District. During their teaching activities, what barriers do they face while teaching in mixed-ability classrooms? I employed the qualitative case study as a research design or methodology. The data were collected from interviews, personal stories of English Language Teachers, and experiences with open-ended questions asked to four English Teachers who have been teaching in mixed-ability classrooms at the secondary level, as well as classroom observations. The issues include diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, varying levels of proficiency, different learning styles, varied instructional techniques, and varying student numbers. Teachers have been facing many challenges and issues in addressing the needs of learners in mixed-ability classrooms. The collected data was analyzed under the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky (1978) and Constructivist Learning Theory (1950). Previous research and literature have not given in-depth attention to the challenges faced by English Language Teachers, focusing instead on differentiated instruction. This research reveals that teachers should adapt their pedagogical approaches to incorporate various instructional methods, as the learning pace and style differ among students. The class size, peer learning, and teachers' scaffolding can also address the challenges they face in their classroom activities and improve and increase the student's learning outcomes. Furthermore, it contributes to the current issue of mixed-ability classrooms by filling the gap in the existing literature and providing some solutions and guidelines to enhance students' learning outcomes in community schools.

**Keywords:** mixed-ability classroom, professional development, educational settings, classroom management

### Introduction

As a student, I attended education classes at a community school, which was only a 2-minute walk from my house. In grade 4, there was a final result day that I vividly remember even today. On the day of the result publication, I got the first position in class 4 and received dozens of copies from school, as well as a red tika on my forehead and face as an accolade. I was thrilled because I had secured the first position. When the result publication was over, I went home with my mother, and on the way, my friend RAMESH's mother scolded him and said, "See your friend, Arjun, you both study in the same class."

However, he secured the first position, and you did not get any position." she was rebuking him. That day, I was overjoyed because I had made my family proud with my results. My parents prepared delicious food, such as rice pudding, for me. After dinner with my family, I went to bed. I was about to sleep when suddenly I remembered the words of my friend's mother and started thinking. I wondered why all the learners did not have the same ability. However, we take the classes together at the same time. This issue resurfaced in my mind, and when I became a secondary-level teacher, I encountered the same issue in my classroom and with other colleagues as well. The same issue has happened frequently in my academic career, both then and now. Students did not have satisfactory scores and grades in my or other subjects. The differences in their learning outcomes and the resulting disparities significantly prompted me to consider and explore the causes, factors, and perceptions of my colleagues who faced and went through the same issues. How did it happen in the learning process? These persistent challenges pushed me to conduct research. I employed a qualitative case study as a research method. How do English language teachers perceive teaching in mixed-ability classrooms in community schools? Education is one of the most potent tools for reforming socioeconomic and political systems, as well as individuals. It enriches knowledge, skills, justice, and social and economic reformation transformation. However, the quality of education is affected by various components, including textbooks, curricula, educational objectives, qualified teachers, teaching pedagogies, assessments, and student diversity.

The education revolution in NEPAL started in 2007, after the democratic revolution. It has been just 7 or 8 decades in Nepal. The education system of Nepal came from conventional and Gurukul education to the modern education system. There are several issues and challenges. One of the most challenging encounters in Nepalese government schools is the proper management of mixed-ability classrooms, where learners display varying levels of academic aptitude, learning styles, stimulation, and socio-cultural backgrounds. These kinds of issues have created huge disparities in learners' outcomes. Therefore, it is essential to explore how English language teachers perceive and address the challenges in their teaching. The Nepalese education system is intrinsically diverse, reflecting the country's diversity and composition. This vast diversity is found even in education and the classroom. The classroom is diverse in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, religion, and economic status. The students possess different levels of knowledge, styles, ages, and family backgrounds. The understanding and conceptualization of students from the same class may vary, which can lead to different learning outcomes. This is one of the widely discussed notions in academia regarding the learning variation of mixed-ability students. The diversity and dynamic learning environment help foster students' perspectives and learning through collaboration (Millrood, 2002). However, this class type presents a significant challenge for teachers to manage the classroom, engage students, provide differentiated instruction, and address students' needs (Ainslie, 1994).

There are several studies on mixed-ability classrooms at the international level regarding classroom management and strategies; however, how do English language teachers perceive and respond to these issues in Nepal? This research is primarily focused on this aspect. Understanding education shapes an individual's life and career in significant ways. So that the effectiveness of output determines teaching and learning activities. The role of teaching and learning is always significant for students. Our education system is based on learners' needs and effective teaching strategies, which are also reflected or represented in our classrooms. Our classrooms are heterogeneous in terms of caste, religion, gender, culture, language, origin, and level of knowledge, which makes them mixed-ability classrooms. The identity of Nepal and the classroom both resemble mixed-ability classrooms or heterogeneous ones. The diverse students in the classroom make it like a beautiful garden where different students' minds consist of varied learning styles, proficiency, and fast and slow learners. The fast and slow learners make the classroom somewhat vibrant (Millrood, 2002).

The uniqueness of each other in terms of competence, positive motivation, needs, interests, learning styles, and experiences makes classrooms heterogeneous or mixed-ability. Similarly, students do not have the same level of language proficiency despite being in the same class. Teaching in such classes is taken as both positive and negative perspectives. How does the English language teacher perceive this issue? A significant literature gap was identified during an in-depth exploration of English Language Teachers' perceptions of mixed-ability classrooms in community schools in Nepal.

## **Mixed-Ability Classroom**

The notion of mixed-ability classrooms has been broadly discoursed in national and International academic research areas. This notion focuses on its practical application for teaching strategies and students' learning output. Mixed-ability classes refer to a heterogeneous class with students of varying abilities, achievements, engagement, and preparedness to learn in the classroom. However, there is research on this notion; a critical gap remains in understanding how English Language Teachers navigate the diverse learning environment, especially in community schools. Mixed-ability classrooms have been the subject of international research and analysis, with various themes explored, including differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001), collaborative learning in mixed-ability classrooms (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). However, its application in the Nepalese context remains underexplored. Another Nepali scholar, Shrestha (2020), emphasized the role of a supportive environment in developing learning among students with varied capabilities, focusing on factors rather than teaching methodologies. Similarly, another scholar, Thapa (2018), stated that socio-cultural backgrounds make the class mixed-ability, but how does it affect effective teaching? The theoretical framework measures its existing knowledge.

There is a specific theory that modifies the CIPPA model to address the needs of learners. Several empirical studies and articles have been read, and many techniques have been documented. According to Gardner (1983), his multi-intelligence theory effectively addresses the main domains of language, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal to identify the needs of mixed-ability students. Many academic scholars define it as synonymous with heterogeneous classes. Each learner is unique in their learning styles and preferences (Bremner, 2008). It is a class of learners with differences in language proficiency, learning ability based on receptive and productive skills, fluency and accuracy work, pronunciation, vocabulary knowledge, and grammar (Valentic, 2005). It is a class of multi-level learners with a broad range of abilities. The students' learning is determined through listening, reading, speaking, and writing. However, I define a mixed-ability classroom as one with diverse students who possess inherent qualities. It is also known as a heterogeneous class where students have various levels of language proficiency in the same class. We can find a significant gap in learning proficiency and approaches. However, one Nepali scholar (Shrestha, 2020) defined it as different learnings and the ability to develop a supportive environment with higher abilities. The existence of diverse talents and individual variances among students is called "mixed-ability." "Mixed-ability classroom reflects the diverse background of students with social and cultural cohesion, (Thapa, 2018). In addition to a range of abilities, a mixed-ability classroom also considers various learning preferences and styles (UNESCO, 2004). Learners in these classrooms exhibit a wide range of language proficiency, cultural backgrounds, learning preferences, ages, attitudes, interests, and readiness to accommodate diverse learning needs (Tomlinson, 2001). Students in a language course may vary in terms of their aptitudes, personalities, levels of maturity, and educational and cultural backgrounds. Schoolchildren may have varying levels of competence and exhibit diverse learning styles and rates in such a classroom. Mixed-ability groups, whose members have varying skill levels and abilities, are a common sight for teachers. Teachers work with pupils with different levels of intelligence, language proficiency, learning trajectories, and learning preferences. Nepal's educational system is conventional in terms of classrooms, assessment, and the identification of students' abilities. We have large classrooms in terms of class size and number of students.

Teaching in large classes and learning for the students is not special learning. Teachers have to adjust various things in such classes. We have an insufficient number of teachers about the number of students. Teachers must take large classes despite students' mixed-ability learning levels and styles. Large classes have many challenges for students that teachers must manage effectively. The different levels of students in mixed-ability classrooms present both challenges and opportunities, particularly for teachers in community schools where learners come from diverse academic backgrounds. The notion of mixed-ability classrooms is widely discoursed and churned. Teaching in mixed-ability classrooms where teachers need to address the needs of students in a single classroom setting. However, different strategies, such as differentiated instruction, inclusive education, and student belonging and involvement, are widely discussed in the educational sector; there are significant gaps in understanding how English Language teachers perceive and react to these kinds of challenges. Various research and investigations have been done in mixed-ability classrooms (Westwood, 2001; Tomlinson, 2014). Few empirical studies

have been conducted in Nepal, focusing on policy frameworks rather than taking into account teachers' perceptions and experiences (Kafle, 2017; Poudel, 2020).

This research enhances teaching and learning by reducing the gap between theoretical and practical classroom discourse. The primary objective is to address the gap by examining the theory and its practical implications. Many scholars from different parts of the world have conducted research and studies from diverse perspectives, including differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and scaffolding. However, in the context of Nepal, it remains largely unexplored. How do English language teachers perceive navigating teaching in mixed-ability classrooms? Several empirical studies have shown various strategies for accommodating and managing mixed-ability classrooms (Rock et al., 2008).

## **Literature Review**

### **Mixed-Ability Learning Environment: A Few Scenarios**

Various components design mixed-ability classrooms. Nepal has a large classroom with many students and diverse learners. Teachers can utilize relevant literature, best practices, similar case studies, and diverse learning environments in mixed-ability classrooms to enhance their teaching. Teachers employ various skills and techniques in mixed-ability classrooms. These techniques are implemented inside the classrooms. Learning through collaboration inside the classroom deepens the strengths of each individual (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Supporting one another in the same class can reinforce the principle that learning is a shared process through collective efforts (Vygotsky, 1978). A mixed-ability classroom can benefit if educators know how to use the variations. When students with different skill levels are together in the same classroom, they can demonstrate their comprehension skills by accessing content at their skill level within the same core lesson (Tomlinson, 2001). Therefore, teachers may have different experiences with mixed-ability classrooms.

Less experienced and slower learners may gain significantly from sharing their knowledge and perspectives with their peers. Teachers have their own instructions or content delivery. Differentiated instruction can easily address and meet diverse learning needs (Rock et al., 2008). Similarly, learners' autonomy builds confidence and supports diverse learning styles for the students. (Eisner, 2002). Students can develop cross-cultural collaboration skills and learning communities where members play to each other's strengths in these classes. According to Ur (1996, p. 305), in this particular setting, noble instruction and alliance are likely to be shared in these kinds of courses, encouraging a cooperative troposphere. Correspondingly, Hess (2006, p. 3) notes that cross-ability grouping enables more advanced apprentices to progress in their linguistic proficiency by refining their skills to clarify ideas, speak with clarity, and provide practical examples while also offering substantial assistance to students with lower abilities. I found various evidence and narratives about mixed-ability classrooms and students' local, national, and international learning scenarios.

Diverse learners demonstrate their abilities through varying levels of cognitive performance in the classroom despite their uneven output. It is a rigid teaching activity for teachers who must use various teaching-learning materials to provide equal access (Brimfield et al., 2002). It is demanding and challenging for teachers to face such diversity in their classrooms, which is the primary research issue addressed in this study, in order to conduct profound and insightful research. I employed the socio-cultural theory and lens of Vygotsky (1978). employ the different theoretical lenses in my research. In the mixed-ability classrooms context, there are in-depth practice and discussions with the perspective of Krashen's (1981) hypothesis; similarly, differentiation principles of Tomlinson (2001) and Multiple Intelligence theory are expansively used.' learning level is varied. The diverse classroom is a microcosm of society, where individuals from diverse backgrounds, including different genders, languages, proficiency levels, abilities, and performance levels, coexist. This social bond also fosters social interaction, which is crucial for cognitive learning among learners. At different levels, students, when they collaborate, facilitate knowledge and then construct new knowledge (Khadka, 2019). Not all learners have the same learning style. Some of them learn from peers' groups through discussion, and at one level, they understand. Likewise, the theory of multiple intelligences supports the sociocultural theory, which allows students to feel more comfortable and flexible with their learning preferences. Flexible grouping helps teachers create a learning environment in the classroom where students receive assistance tailored to their proficiency level. Some empirical studies also show that flexible grouping enhances student participation, motivation, and comprehension in language learning contexts (Sathorn



et al., 2019). This study or paper explores how English Language Teachers perceive and implement the sociocultural principle to address the needs of diverse learners. The outcomes of this study will help bridge the gap between theoretical principles and classroom practices, providing insightful perspectives on handling mixed-ability classrooms.

### **Mixed-Ability Classrooms: Difficulties for English Language Instructors**

A wide range of language skill levels among students is one of the inherent obstacles of teaching a mixed-ability class; this makes it challenging for instructors to modify their message strategies to suit the unique erudition demands of each person. Teachers face challenges when trying to keep their students' attention simultaneously in mixed-ability groups due to the varying competency levels of their students. Harmer (2008) shares a similar viewpoint: Having pupils with diverse abilities in the classroom at various competency stages raises concerns for teachers. Most educators are concerned about mixed-ability classes since they make lesson planning and execution more difficult (p. 127). Students in every classroom come from diverse backgrounds and speak various dialects. Maintaining order, grading written assignments, ensuring that everyone learns effectively, encouraging participation, addressing students' lack of interest in learning, being aware of individual needs, engaging quieter students, and selecting appropriate materials are just some of the challenges that instructors face in classrooms with diverse levels of learners. Finding subjects and exercises that interest every student and promote efficient learning is a common challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. For many students, the tasks may be easy or too difficult. Teachers may find it challenging to locate relevant materials because most textbooks are written for a uniform population of typical learners without providing choices or flexibility.

Furthermore, it cannot be easy to modify teaching strategies, as not every method will be effective for every student at the same time. Teachers may encounter different difficulties when instructing mixed-ability classrooms, depending on the realm, the range, and the specific institute. Less-skilled kids may go unnoticed, while more gifted students may not receive enough challenges. Teachers are expected to be increasingly proficient with technology, which presents a difficulty as new IT skills must be learned regularly to stay updated with technological changes. Students in varied learning ability classrooms may not be cooperative; some may finish chores before their friends have even started, while others may shy away from speaking out or ignore assignments.

### **Research Method**

A qualitative case study is the research method the researcher employed. The case focuses on the perception of English Language Teachers teaching in mixed-ability classrooms in community schools in Kawasoti Municipality, the district headquarters of Nawalparasi, Bardaghat Susta Purva in Nepal. I chose the qualitative case study method to obtain in-depth insights and understanding of real-life settings and contexts, as well as live experiences and perceptions. What is the perception of English language teachers about mixed-ability classrooms, and what are the different challenges or practices that have been followed within mixed-ability settings (Yin, 1994)? This research approach examines the challenges inherent in Nepalese educational settings, particularly in the context of diverse student learners (Stake, 1995). The reliability and credibility depend on how we collect the data. I chose four English Language Teachers teaching in a mixed-ability classroom in the community. They were purposefully selected to guarantee rich and authentic insights into the encounters and instructional techniques in mixed-ability classrooms.

The participants were selected through purposeful sampling to identify those with substantial experiences and perceptions who are dealing with the needs of mixed-ability students and whose outlooks are significant to understanding the realities of mixed-ability teaching. The four participants were contacted via direct phone calls, informed of the research's purpose, and sent formal invitations along with consent forms via email. Quality, ethical consideration, and confidentiality were strictly followed while including them in the research. Selected four English Language Teachers teaching English for over five years in mixed-ability classes. They were selected purposefully to certify rich and authentic insights into the challenges and practices of teaching mixed-ability classrooms, as per my research requirements. I decided to use this research method for specific reasons. A Qualitative case study examines the real and natural phenomenon in its setting (Yin, 1994). It gives in-depth results of real cases within a natural and genuine setting. It helps to employ the different applicability of theories derived from various

observations and practices (Meredith, 1998). To identify the natural causes and their associated practices, it is helpful to explore questions like 'why,' 'what,' and 'how' in depth (Stake, 1995). This research method is suitable for my research due to its effectiveness in educational research, as opposed to others. It deeply explores the complexities encountered in real-world issues, such as how English language teachers perceive teaching in mixed-ability classrooms. It encounters genuine factors affecting our instructional strategies and student outcomes (Yin, 2014).

Multiple data collection techniques, including interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, were employed to confirm the inclusive case figure. The first is planning, designing, preparing, collecting, analyzing, and publishing. I thoroughly used thematic analysis to interpret the collected data. This data analysis identified recurring themes and structures associated with teachers' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in coping with mixed-ability classrooms. It helped identify the gaps, issues, and most suitable practices, which can be particularly insightful for stakeholders, policymakers, and educators. It is described in various ways, such as words, narratives, and images (Creswell, 2013). The relevance of this case study lies in providing concrete and detailed explorations of the experiences of English Language Teachers in mixed-ability classrooms, as well as the best remedies to address the issues. The findings of this research contribute to policymakers and educators in Nepalese schools, where these kinds of classrooms are prevalent.

### **Differentiated Learning or Instructions**

I define differentiated instruction as a teaching practice based on the readiness level, interests, learning profile, and socioeconomic, cultural, and emotional needs of students. The teachers implement changes in their instructional approaches, methods, and learning activities to maximize learning opportunities for every learner (Bearne, 1996). Differentiated learning and instruction are effective in meeting the diverse needs, strengths, interests, and learning styles of students (Tomlinson, 2005). It offers an appropriate class size, a prepared lesson plan, teachers' adjustments, and the creation of a learning environment tailored to students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. The conventional and homogenous methods do not assist in constructing knowledge for all learners in mixed-ability classrooms (Valiande, 2010). This method enables students to engage at their appropriate levels and maximizes the potential of everyone.

This methodology is generally based on constructivist theories that focus on active and student-centered learning, as well as multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983), which posits that students possess several types of intelligence. The learners' room is not a homogeneous group but comprises individuals. The classroom accommodates students with diverse abilities, which vary in terms of age, interests, cognitive styles, and language competency, among other factors (Heacox, 2017). Significant differences in age, skill, personal characteristics, interests, and knowledge can exist. The core aim of education is to include adaptable learner capacity (Confucianism). During the causal interview with my participants, they shared their experiences and perceptions of mixed-ability classrooms, where differentiated instruction can vary based on factors such as age, motivation, learning objectives, aptitude, zone of proximal development, gender, socioeconomic situation, and linguistic and cultural heritage, all of which can impact learning. During the interview, my participants shared all these ability classifications.

### **Learning Style**

Learning style refers to each person's way of gaining and learning. Complete concentration and comprehension influence the learner's overall habits, behaviors, and engagement (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). The learners have varied learning styles based on their experiences (Kolb, 1984). Learners have different learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (Felder & Silverman, 1988). Kinesthetic learning is a learning style in which learners engage in physical activities, demonstrations, and experiments (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). It is a matter of learning by doing (Fleming & Mills, 1992). Similarly, in visual learning, students learn best by seeing and observing. Visual learning multimedia supports the learners in depth (Mayer, 2001). Some learners are more affected by aural input and respond well to what they hear; others are more influenced—according to Dhanu, most students like to see different learning materials in the classroom. Some of them are to learn through tape, projectors, pictures, and practical projects, which align with their learning styles in the classroom.

There are various people with different learning styles and preferences in any classroom. Effective, diversified instruction in a mixed-ability classroom depends on understanding and the capacity to accommodate students' unique learning styles. The preferred methods students perceive, process, and remember knowledge are their learning styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1978; Fleming, 2001). English language instructors adapt their lessons to different learning styles in mixed-ability community school settings. Tilak Bhattarai said that my class has different students with different learning styles. I also use tapes, a projector, posters, and an audio track; not all students have the same learning style. It shows the fast and slow learners. The various learning tools influence the underlying learning process, either at a fast or slow pace (Hassabis, 2019). Some of them learn through visual means, whereas others learn through auditory means. We can apply all these learning materials to students' needs (Cepeda et al., 2006). We have to avoid the conventional way of learning. They are reading and writing, but they may not be able to address all the students' needs in a single classroom.

### **Educational and Cultural Background**

The integration of formal and informal learning experiences influences everyone's knowledge. Students' educational and cultural backgrounds represent another area of individual variance. Educational background encompasses the schooling, curriculum, and quality instruction from the educational setting (Bourdieu, 1973). Children learn at home, and whatever they learn from their first school is significant in their academic career. On the other hand, some children do not have a supportive home environment that facilitates their learning. As a result, it affects their way of learning. If a family is well-educated and has a strong cultural background, its children tend to learn more easily. During the interview, one of my participants, Mrs. Dhanu Chhetri, claimed that I teach students with different abilities. Some students excel in their studies, while others struggle due to the educational and cultural background of their families and society. It also supports addressing the problem of mixed-ability classrooms. The importance of education in each learner's life highly influences their educational and cultural background. This different level of student learning may enhance and challenge traditional teaching approaches (Gay, 2018).

### **Motivation**

The internal and external driving forces that motivate us to do and achieve something are motivation. In the educational setting, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are present. The inherent satisfaction and learning enjoyment are intrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The rewards, name, identity, and sound recognition are extrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Every learner seeks praise and rewards for their effort and progress regardless of ability level (Skinner, 1953). Similarly, each student's needs and interests make learning more relevant and engaging (Tomlison, 2001). Many different things can motivate someone to learn. Students may be interested in the selected subject or curious about its content. The importance that a person places on the goal they want to accomplish determines how motivated they are. Another participant, Mrs. Dhanu Chhetri, said, "Motivation is essential in a classroom with mixed-ability students in a school with varied abilities. Students are more likely to be involved in class and driven to study when they feel appreciated and supported. It is crucial to provide them with chances to achieve at their own speed and ability level." The above-mentioned data and references prove that motivation is crucial in addressing mixed-ability classrooms. It influences the amount of effort, persistence, and concentration applied to their studies (Gay, 2018). It helps each student's learning outcomes remain dynamic and diverse, meeting all learners' needs. The participation of students can be increased if they are motivated through collaboration, peers, and mentoring (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Issue of Correction**

Constructive feedback and corrections to students' mistakes are known as issues of correction. Continuous feedback and corrections enhance students' learning and build confidence, resulting in more accurate and consistent performance. Students do not need the same feedback, but it benefits their learning outcome (Hattie & Timperley). Typically, teaching and learning involve discipline as a prerequisite.

Regarding this issue, Seema Chalise (P1) stated that I have been teaching English for over five years at the secondary level and have been dealing with mixed-ability classrooms. During classwork, fast learners complete the assignment before the given time, whereas slow learners feel uneasy and lose

confidence. This hampers their study because they are psychologically not capable students. It can be addressed through regular feedback and correction. They do not hesitate to learn and ask questions in the classroom.

Suppose the teacher addresses this issue in class and, instead of punishing and scolding or showing their inability, they provide constructive feedback and correction, which builds self-confidence and self-efficacy. It is an error sensitivity, and confidence minimizes errors (Bandura, 1997). Nevertheless, peer correction can also be an effective method in mixed-ability classrooms, where students can learn the significance of collaborative learning in a supportive environment (Topping, 2005).

### **Classroom Management and Student Engagement**

Classroom management is a well-organized learning environment in the classroom where teachers use specific techniques, strategies, and practices to facilitate effective learning, one of the key factors or components of effective learning and personal development. In a well-organized classroom with active participation, students have a positive attitude, motivation, safety, and support for learning. The preparation for creating a learning environment through different teacher activities (Everton & Weinstein, 2006). In another way, the plan, techniques, and strategies are designed to maintain a conducive learning environment for students. A well-structured set-up class for the students also defines classroom management (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). The learning environment is significantly influenced by two interrelated components: classroom management and student engagement. Effective classroom management maximizes student involvement by creating a controlled and orderly environment (Marzano & Pickering, 2003). The teacher ensures that every required classroom setting is in place to provide a comfortable environment and adjustable space (Marzano & Pickering, 2003). The enthusiastic involvement of students in the learning process is referred to as student engagement. The multidimensional constructive involvement of students in their learning process (Fredricks et al., 2004). Active participation in lessons, memory retention, and higher academic performance is more common among engaged pupils (Brophy, 2006). Classroom management techniques can enhance learning outcomes as we explore the relationship between classroom management and student engagement.

In mixed-ability classrooms, where children have varied language proficiency, academic capabilities, and social-emotional development levels, teachers must balance their students' diverse needs and behaviors. This requires effective classroom management (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Participant data could show the tactics used by teachers. Several research studies indicate that student achievement is influenced by effective classroom management. During the interview, one participant, Unnati Sigdel (p4), stated, I have two classes in class 10, A1 and A2. When I attend school to take classes, the students are proactively involved and learn quickly, and I have found that behind this output is effective classroom management. The number of students and the mixing of talented and less talented students helped to address the mixed-ability classroom. The proper strategies and plans of teachers assist the students both academically and socially in learning in the classroom (Everston & Weinstein, 2006)

### **Set up the Routine**

The consistent and structured day-to-day activities that create a learning environment, i.e., setting up a routine in the classroom. Every learner needs a well-structured schedule and plan. Teaching in a mixed-ability classroom is a challenging job. Teachers often face numerous unforeseen issues related to their students. To overcome this issue, they need to establish a routine. In order to preserve a supportive and welcoming learning environment (Tomlinson, 2001). Teachers can explain how they establish explicit behavioral expectations and conduct reliable classroom procedures (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). This makes students feel safe in the classroom environment and helps them comprehend the expected norms, regardless of their ability. In this context, one of the participants, Mrs. Dhanu Chhetri, stated that teaching is the process of demonstrating knowledge and ethics and that it helps guide and instruct students. Effective teaching conveys information and fosters inquisitiveness, problem-solving, and a love for learning. I always set up my class with clear rules and regulations, well-organized seating arrangements, prepared lesson plans, and a positive learning environment.

The above quote clarifies that establishing a routine supports students' learning and addresses their diverse needs. How flexible and comfortable is felt and found in the class that addresses the student's needs in a mixed-ability classroom. The classroom's flexibility supports learning, autonomy, and high



engagement (Fisher et al., 2016). It emphasizes the individuality of learning practices. They can be inclusiveness participation regardless of their level; physical traits are removed to learn and participation (Booth & Ainscow, 2002)

### **Creating a Feeling of Belonging and Community**

Every student can feel a sense of belonging through active engagement in the classroom, where the specific needs of students are addressed in a way that fosters a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943). The community is the unit of society. The community is diverse in terms of age, level, language, objectives, and culture. They should have a sense of togetherness and living in a single family, which fosters mutual respect and values (Tomlinson, 2001). The classroom of students is one community despite their different abilities and identity. In mixed-ability classes, fostering a sense of community and belonging is crucial for creating a friendly and encouraging learning environment within the classroom, promoting readiness for engagement (Vygotsky, 1978). Students are more likely to be involved, motivated, and successful when they sense a connection to their peers and the classroom community.

### **Collaborative Education**

Collaborative education deals with learning through social interaction and cooperation. Sometimes, the teacher can assign project work by forming different groups where each student is freely involved and shares their ideas. On the other hand, collaborative education is one aspect of socialization (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Cooperative learning is an instructional approach in which students work in small groups to achieve common learning objectives. It strongly emphasizes the importance of group members' cooperation, communication, and interdependence to enhance social skills and academic learning. This approach diverges from conventional teacher-centered education by empowering students to participate actively in their education and provide mutual support. Learning together through activities such as group projects and jigsaw puzzles can help children adapt socially, form bonds, and encourage one another (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Peer groups or divisions within mixed-ability classrooms help students. Tilak Bhattarai added, "In my class, the students are around 40 to 45. I always set up my class into different groups, either small or large. Sometimes, I mixed them in a group. It refers to the categories of students, including boys and girls, as excellent, medium, average, and poor. This collaborative learning became fruitful for my students to address the problems of mixed-ability students in the classrooms." It justifies that collaborative learning can effectively address the mixed-ability classroom, where learners of different abilities can learn the subject together conveniently. It provides to get academic success and social skills development. (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). Implementing this approach in mixed-ability classrooms is essential, as inclusiveness, the value of socialization, and the sense of ownership are crucial.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated the experiences and perspectives of secondary-level English language instructors working in community school classrooms with diverse ability levels. The substantial influence of individual differences on classroom dynamics and learning outcomes was the primary focus of the entire study. The main conclusions revealed several elements that have been crucial in meeting the various requirements of students, including individualized education, students' interests, age, motivation, teamwork, classroom management, and the use of instructional resources. To preserve the inclusive and flexible learning environment in mixed-ability classrooms, these studies concentrate on a variety of learner-centered strategies. These classrooms in our institutions also contribute to the education industry. This study examined the viewpoints and experiences of secondary-level English language teachers interacting with students of different skill levels in community school classrooms. The study focused on how individual differences significantly impact classroom dynamics and learning outcomes. According to the principal conclusions, various factors, including tailored education, students' interests, age, motivation, teamwork, classroom management, and the utilization of instructional materials, have been essential in meeting the diverse needs of students. These studies focus on learner-centered solutions to maintain an inclusive and adaptable learning environment in mixed-ability classes. The use of these classrooms by our institutions also significantly contributes to the education sector.

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