

ESL Teacher Challenges in Dealing with Heterogeneity among Undergraduates

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Heterogeneity refers to various proficiencies of students in a classroom where the learners are endowed with mixed abilities and intellectual variety along with knowledge extremes can be seen. Teaching heterogeneous students is one of the major issues faced by many teachers around the world as it is common in any learning community. When considering the field of ELT, heterogeneity becomes crucial as it determines the acquisition of a target language which is different from one's mother tongue. There may be individual needs and demands of learners due to their own proficiency levels. Thus it is important for teachers to be aware of the problems resulting due to the heterogeneity in ESL classes and to discover the strategies to minimize or solve this issue. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the challenges faced by ESL teachers in teaching heterogeneous groups of undergraduates and strategies they use to overcome these challenges. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers utilized interviews and observation as data collection methods. Five ESL teachers of a state university of Sri Lanka were selected as participants for this study. The findings revealed that there are multiple challenges in teaching heterogeneous classes. These challenges were categorized under four factors: materials, teaching, evaluation and students' motivation with the intent of contributing new pedagogical strategies into the field of ESL in Sri Lanka.

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