

ASSESSING LEARNERS IN A MIXED-ABILITY CLASSROOM

*Barno Shag'darovna Rahmonova*

*Tashkent "Temurbeklar maktabi" military-academic lyceum of  
the National Guard of the Republic of Uzbekistan*

**Annotation:** The mixed-ability classroom students have different levels of English language in the classroom. They differ in their language proficiency from beginners to advanced level learners, with their background knowledge of English.

**Key words:** diverse abilities, mixed-ability classroom, challenges, assessment, discouraging, self-assessment, methods.

**Annotatsiya:** Sinfda turli darajadagi ingliz tiliga ega bo'lgan aralash qobiliyatli sinf o'quvchilari. Ular boshlang'ichlardan yuqori darajadagi o'quvchilargacha bo'lgan tilni bilishlari, ingliz tilini bilishlari bilan farqlanadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** turli qobiliyatlar, aralash qobiliyatli sinf, qiyinchiliklar, baholash, tushkunlikka tushish, o'z-o'zini baholash, usullar

In any English classroom, it is common to find students with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning paces. This diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for educators. It is crucial to ensure that all students, regardless of their skill levels, are assessed fairly and effectively.

A mixed-ability classroom is characterized by students who possess different levels of understanding, skills, and learning priorities. A mixed-ability classroom includes students who differ in their:

- Language proficiency (beginner to advanced).
- Learning speeds.
- Interests and motivations.
- Background knowledge.
- Preferred learning styles.

One of greatest challenges facing teachers of mixed-ability classes is assessment, especially in contexts where perfectly administered tests and giving grades are part of the requirements of the educational system.

These forms of assessment, however, tend to lead to unfair results. They are like holding a running event where participants set off from a different spot on the track. Naturally, in each case the distance covered and the rate of progress will depend on individual abilities. It is easy to imagine that there may be several students who cover the same distance within the given period of time, putting in the same amount of effort, but will be awarded with different grades for their performance. This can be extremely discouraging to them and may easily result in lack of motivation to learn the foreign

languages.

Also, students tend to interpret their grades competitively, comparing their own performance to the others in the group, which, again, leads to anxiety and low self-esteem, becoming an obstacle to further improvement. The gap between learners, therefore, is very likely to increase, making learning and teaching ever more difficult.

The teachers are challenged to find different forms of assessment within this structure, where all students achieve the best they can without feeling punishment, but continue to remain motivated and invested in their learning.

Self-assessment and continuous assessment are significant in the mixed-ability classroom as they give learners the opportunity to reflect on their individual results, give learners information on what they need to improve in smaller and manageable pieces help learners make up action plans that suit their language level and learning desire inform the teacher about their teaching and about their individual students.

These differences pose challenges in assessment, as traditional, one-size-fits-all methods may not adequately capture each student's progress and potential.

So we need differentiated assessment with these learners. Differentiated assessment strategies ensure that all learners have a fair-minded opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

There are some strategies for assessing mixed-ability learners:

1. Use a Variety of Assessment Methods

- Written assessments (essays, grammar exercises) for those who are excellent in textual work.

- Oral assessments (interviews, presentations) to evaluate speaking and listening skills.

- Project-based assessments for creative and collaborative learners.

- Self-assessments and peer reviews to encourage reflection and mutual learning.

2. Implement Formative Assessments

Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback and help throughout the learning process. Examples include:

- Quick quizzes: at the beginning or ending of lessons.

- Question and answer session, where students summarize what they've learned.

- Peer feedback, where students reflect on their progress.

These low-level assessments are especially useful for mixed-ability classes as they focus on learning rather than grading.

3. Create tasks with different levels of complexity to challenge students at their respective skill levels. For instance:

- Elementary tasks: Fill-in-the-blank or matching exercises.

- Intermediate tasks: Sentence completion or short paragraph writing.

- Advanced tasks: Essay writing or analysis of complex texts.

These tasks allow students to work at a level that suits them while still aiming for shared learning objectives.

4. Evaluate students' overall growth by considering their participation, effort, and improvement over time. Methods include:

- Portfolios: Collect samples of students' work to showcase their progress.
- Observation: Note how students interact during group work or class discussions.
- Rubrics: Use clear criteria for subjective tasks like writing and speaking, ensuring transparency and consistency.

5. Provide some helpful recommendations for the low level students.

Feedback should be:

- Highlight what the student did well and what needs improvement.
- Offer clear steps for improvement.
- Encourage your young learners by acknowledging their efforts and progress.

For mixed-ability learners, personalized feedback boosts confidence and guides them on their learning journey.

6. Use Technology for Personalized Assessment

All digital tools and language platforms, language apps and online quizzes can help the teachers to differentiate assessment. Many of these tools adapt to the learner's level, providing tasks and feedback that match their abilities.

Technology can enhance assessment in mixed-ability classrooms.

- Online Quizzes and Surveys: Platforms like Kahoot! or Google Forms can provide instant feedback and cater to different learning styles.

- Learning Management Systems (LMS): These can track student progress and provide personalized learning paths.

Assessing mixed-ability learners in English lessons requires creativity, flexibility, and a deep understanding of your students' needs. By using varied, differentiated, and continuous assessment methods, teachers can provide a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This approach not only measures students' progress accurately but also empowers them to reach their full potential.

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