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IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: DEALING WITH LARGE HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES

BY

VERA EKUWA MANSA ARHIN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN LINGUISTICS.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is the result of my research work, carried out in the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana, Legon, under the supervision of Dr. L.A. Anyidoho (Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana, Legon) and Dr. K. Andoh Kumi (Language Centre).

References cited have been duly acknowledged.

.....

VERA EKUWA MANSA ARHIN

(Candidate)

.....

DR. L.A. ANYIDOHO

(Supervisor)

.....

DR. K ANDOH-KUMI

(Supervisor)

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Shadrack Arhin, who gave me all the needed support and encouragement to carry out this research. And to my children for their patience.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COLT	Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching
ELT	English Language Teaching
GES	Ghana Education Service
SSS	Senior Secondary School
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
TALOS	Target Language Observation Scheme

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ABSTRACT

In Ghana, the medium of instruction in schools and the language of official business is English. However, many people in the country complain about the falling standard of the language. Over the years, the chief examiners' reports on SSS English examinations indicate that there is a crisis in the language and communication skills of the students in Ghana.

To help solve the language problem, some researchers have identified a number of weaknesses in students' writing, which have to be addressed by teachers. This work is different. It is a case study which identifies the issue of poor handling of large heterogeneous classes by teachers, as a probable reason why many students cannot communicate effectively even after they have gone through the English language programme for SSS students. Two SSS classrooms of the Tema Methodist Day Secondary School were investigated for the purpose of this research.

The results obtained after classroom observation and analyses of data show that students in the classrooms are from diverse linguistic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, which seem to have some influence on their ability to communicate well. Again, teachers use classroom activities and textbooks which do not seem to cater for the needs of students.

This work identifies the specific needs of the students and offers a range of suitable activities and teaching methods which may be used by the teachers who handle such large heterogeneous classes.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the problems faced by teachers and learners in large heterogeneous classes at the Senior Secondary School Level in Ghana. The broad aim of the study is to propose appropriate interventions which may be used by English Language teachers to help all learners benefit from lessons taught. The nature of heterogeneity, which exists in the classrooms observed, is discussed. However, for the purpose of this study the term heterogeneous class is used narrowly to refer to the different English language proficiency levels of students in a class. This term is used interchangeably with "mixed ability class". Additionally, the problems of large classes will be looked at since handling mixed ability classes, which are also large, seems to add to the problems faced by Ghanaian teachers.

The main motivation for focusing on the issue of handling large heterogeneous classes is based on concerns expressed by many English language teachers when asked to comment on the falling standards of the English language in Ghana. Teachers often say that in spite of the fact that the time allotted to the teaching of English on the time table is inadequate and that they are unable to cover the English syllabus, they wish that they could pay a little more attention to the less proficient students. They add that it is unfortunate that many of their students complete their secondary education without being able to communicate

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effectively in the English language. Since English is the official language of Ghanaians, there is the need to ensure that all students benefit from English language lessons.

In this chapter, the following will be discussed:

a) Background to the problem

b) The problem

c) Scope

d) Data and research procedure

e) Importance of study

1.2 Background to the Problem

In Ghana the medium of instruction in schools beyond Primary 4 and the language of official business is English. In fact, English plays a dominant role in many domains. First, it is the language of administration and all other official business. Second, it is used at social functions where the participants come from different linguistic backgrounds. Third, English is the language of journalism; most newspapers, and radio and television programmes are done in English. Also in education, English plays a major role. The language policy is that the prevalent Ghanaian language of the locality should be the language of instruction from Primary 1-3, after which it becomes a subject. English then becomes the medium of instruction from Primary 4 onwards. In Primary 1-3, English is a subject on the timetable. At this stage, pupils learn to read, write and develop basic vocabulary in English. Additionally, English is the unifying force among educated people of

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different ethnic groups who speak languages which are not mutually intelligible. English is also the language for inter-ethnic as well as international communication; therefore, the acquisition of a high level of communicative competence in it is imperative for those who wish to go beyond the boundaries of their communities. However, many Ghanaians complain that the standard of students' performance in English is falling. Over the years, the Chief Examiners' reports on the SSSCE indicates that even though Ghanaians aim at standard British English, the language and communication skills of students fall far below the standard aimed at.

Some researchers who have acknowledged that the proficiency level of many students in Ghana is generally low are Tandoh (1987), Hyde (1991), Odamtten et al. (1994), Adika and Owusu-Sekyere (1997), Adam (1997), Dako (1997), and Dzameshie (1997).

Problems in communication skills among students that these studies have identified are many. For example, Dzameshie (1997) observes that there is very little use of Communicative Language Teaching methods in the classroom while Odamtten et al. (1994) trace the problem to inadequate time allotted to the comprehensive syllabus of the English Language as a subject in the Senior Secondary Schools, student-teacher ratios and the caliber of teachers. Tandoh (1987), Hyde (1991), Adika and Owusu-Sekyere (1997), Adam (1997) and Dako (1997) investigate the written English of University of Ghana undergraduates and identify various errors in students' writing such as concord, spelling, vocabulary and expression. They conclude that there are instances where the writing quality of

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language lessons difficult. In fact, statistics show that each year large numbers of students qualify for Senior Secondary education and due to parental pressure, heads of secondary schools are forced to enrol these students in the few schools available. New classrooms are hardly built and so class size eventually swells up.

Through informal discussions with teachers, it was discovered that the average class size of many Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana is 48, but some schools have classes with 50 students and above. Kraft (1994:7) reports that research done at the University of Colorado provides evidence "that class size does not really affect student achievement when the size is between 20 and 40 students, but ... when the class size rises above 40, achievement takes a serious downward turn." This is the problem that the teachers in most schools face. Unfortunately, the training programmes for teachers do not adequately prepare them to handle large classes effectively.

Another reason why it is important to find appropriate ways of handling large heterogeneous classes is that teachers are trained to teach a class assuming they have a homogeneous group of learners. Unfortunately, many textbook writers also make the same assumption. For example, an explicit statement made by the SSS English textbook writers on how teachers should use the SSS English textbooks puts the teachers in the rather challenging position of figuring out how to meet the individual needs of heterogeneous groups of learners. The statement says:

> The authors would be glad if all teachers would assiduously take their students through every detail of the units page by page. If this is done, every

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> teaching point in these books will be covered and our students will emerge with a worthy command of core English. (1991:x)

Since the textbooks have not been carefully designed to meet the needs of mixed ability classes, the suggestion above has to be modified. No handbook has been provided for teachers, and teachers will need guidelines for handling their large mixed ability classes. Having outlined some problems faced by the teachers in the classroom, a brief background to the teaching of English in the secondary schools may help explain why materials for teaching should be carefully chosen.

1.3.1 The Teaching of English

Many Ghanaian students rely mostly on textbooks and their teachers. This means that it is very important to use good textbooks which will help students to communicate effectively. Teachers must be trained to use suitable teaching methods and have their own proficiency in English raised so that they can provide appropriate language models.

Many teachers teach by going through the textbook page by page because more time is devoted to teaching teacher trainees the English language rather than ways of teaching it. Some schools are also flooded with university graduates who have not gone through any training in education. For these teachers, textbooks greatly influence teaching methods instead of acting as a guide in the absence of teachers' handbooks.

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The heavy reliance on English textbooks in the secondary schools by both teachers and students makes one believe that if textbooks are carefully written and careful instructions are provided for their use, the quality of written and spoken English of Ghanaian students will improve. Even though many researchers have said this, specific guidelines for teaching have not been provided. It is this that the study hopes to provide.

1.4 Scope

This study aims at investigating the English language situation in Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana. Teachers' qualification and background is looked at, and teaching methods used in the classrooms are assessed. Finally, suggestions for handling large mixed ability classes are made.

Studies that have already been done on handling large mixed ability classes in the context of ELT have been reviewed. These include Slaven (1983), Scheibl (1984), Webb (1989), Villegas (1991), Hadfield (1992), Arends (1994), Prodromou (1995), Ur (1996), and Joyce and Weil (1996). The literature review shows the main purpose of embarking upon the current study.

Primary data collected is also analysed. It comprises the following:

a) Classroom interaction

b) Structured and unstructured interviews with teachers and students

c) Questionnaires

d) Marked essays

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Suggestions offered in this study cover the following areas:

a) Effective learning for all students in class

b) Useful materials/activities for classroom teaching

c) Sustaining interest

d) Monitoring student's achievement

1.5 Data and Research Procedure

A focus group was used for the purpose of this study. This was a science class and an arts class of the Tema Methodist Day Secondary School. Tema Methodist Day Secondary School was chosen for this case study. This school was chosen for several reasons.

First, it represents majority of schools in Ghana in that its students are admitted into the school from Junior Secondary Schools with average grades. This school is not considered as one of the grade A schools in the country. Second, the class sizes of both classes observed are above 40 pupils, which represent most large classes in Ghanaian schools. It is therefore likely that suggestions offered in this study will work for other schools. Finally, the teachers in this school were enthusiastic about the study and willingly offered assistance throughout the first term of the 1998/99 academic year when the research started.

One second year science class and an arts class were chosen for this study. This was to investigate the extent to which seemingly homogeneous groups would exhibit signs of heterogeneity.

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1.6 Importance of Study

This study is important in three main respects. First, it offers suggestions which may help teachers handle large mixed ability classes effectively within the limited time provided for the teaching of the English language in schools. Second, this study reviews course materials and teaching methods which should be useful to curriculum planners, textbook developers, teacher trainers and teachers. Finally, the study will be beneficial to researchers in that it may provide a basis for further research in the area and also improve the English language situation in Ghana.

1.7 Conclusion

This study aims at creating awareness that in teaching large mixed ability classes, classroom activities will have to be designed to suit the specific needs of all learners so that each member benefits from the lessons. Additionally, it will provide suggestions for teaching which could be included in a teachers' handbook.

The study comprises five chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction; chapter two reviews existing literature on handling mixed ability classes; chapter three presents the collection and analyses of data; chapter four is a discussion of the findings and implications of the study. Chapter five which concludes this study suggests ways of handling large heterogeneous classes.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE TEAHING:

ISSUES IN TEACHING MIXED ABILITY CLASSES

2.1 Introduction

Researchers who have done some work in the area of handling mixed ability classes seem to agree that all classes are made up of students who differ in a number of ways. Differences such as intelligence, cognitive style, socio-economic background, knowledge of the world, cultural background and gender would affect the teaching and learning process. Some researchers have therefore proposed that the lock-step approach, where the teacher stands in front of the class while all the students move at the same pace, may not help the students to get the most out of the class.

Scheibl (1984), Hadfield (1992), Prodromou (1995), Woolfolk (1995), Joyce and Weil (1996), and Ur (1996) believe that students can learn how to learn and respond to a number of teaching and learning environments which will help them acquire the much needed knowledge if teaching methods used by teachers in language classrooms are carefully planned. A number of activities and ways of handling mixed ability classes have therefore been suggested. These activities ensure that teachers highlight similarities among students instead of differences. Many researchers who look at ways of handling mixed ability classes suggest

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similar strategies for EFL situations. This chapter carefully analyses suggestions offered.

2.2 Group Work

Scheibl (1984) suggests that group work is an obvious choice for mixed ability classes. This is because a maximum number of pupils in a class are actively involved in the lesson as they occupy themselves with tasks. Similar views have been expressed by Arends (1994), Prodromou (1995), Woolfolk (1995), and Ur (1996). These researchers discuss the advantages of group work. Ur (1996: 305) asserts that learners are able to work co-operatively to ensure higher achievement, and peers teach and appreciate one another's effort. According to research findings, if each member of the group is made to contribute to the group according to his/her ability, members are likely to learn quickly from one another's effort. Woolfolk (1995: 378) discusses the need for each individual in a group to actively participate in tasks since asking questions and attempting to explain issues to group members help the individual to organise information. This, according to Webb (1989) and King (1990), is an excellent learning strategy since the more a student provides thoughtful explanations to other students, the more the explainer learns.

Slaven (1983) also notes that learners' achievement is increased when the group is rewarded based on the average grades of the group members. In a research on co-operative learning with heterogeneous groups and elements of competition and reward, Slaven and his associates developed a system called

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Student Teams - Achievement Divisions, or *STAD* (Slaven 1995). The average test scores from each individual's previous work are recorded. Then students prepare for class quizzes in their groups even though students are made to take quizzes individually. Based on how each member improves on his/her individual average score, each team member can earn one to three scores for the group. Thus, only when an individual improves on previous work does he/she earn a mark for the group. According to Woolfolk (1995), this makes every student work hard and avoids the problem of students' unequal contribution to a group project.

Even though the STAD may seem a good way of encouraging members of a group to work hard to achieve better results, courses organised for teachers must provide guidelines for effective teaching otherwise the objective of this revision done in groups will be thrown overboard.

In another research which investigates the value of group work, Doughty and Pica (1986) compared a "teacher-fronted" class and group work on a problem solving task. The research proved that, interactive behaviours such as comprehension checks, confirmation, clarification, requests, repair, etc. were more frequently used in groups with regard to information exchange than the "teacher-fronted" classroom.

In recent times group work has been identified as a useful way of learning in the classroom. Unfortunately, not much has been said about effective ways of handling group work in large classes. Even though Prodromou (1995) states that the mere existence of group work will not solve the problem if attention is not paid to what goes on in the group, no detailed suggestions are offered for second

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language teachers. Prodromou, for example, suggests community communication that encourages groups to interact in their first language while the teacher reformulates what has been said into English. However, he does not provide detailed guidelines for doing this in the classroom. Ghanaian teachers who handle large mixed ability classes will like to know where group work fits in the language curriculum. They will also like to know how much time must be spent on group work if it should contribute positively to the learning process. This information will be beneficial to them because learners are usually constrained by time and a loaded syllabus. Current research in the area of group work does not seem to address these peculiar needs of Ghanaian teachers. It is this vacuum that this project seeks to fill.

2.3 Individual Learning Style

Another suggestion that has been offered for handling mixed ability classes effectively is the need for teachers to be aware of the learning styles of students in the classroom. Hunt (1970: 2) says that, "... the closer a teaching strategy is tailored to the learner's conceptual level, the more learning will take place." This view has been reiterated by Rubin (1987), Arends (1994), Banks (1994) Prodromou (1995), Woolfolk (1995), Ur (1996), Joyce and Weil (1996).

Teachers are advised to adopt teaching styles which suit individual needs, learning style, and aptitude. Banks (1994:5) advocates an 'equity pedagogy,' which is a term used for matching teaching styles to students' learning styles in order to facilitate academic achievements of students from diverse backgrounds.

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Arends (1994) and Prodromou (1995) also suggest that a variety of activities and teaching methods should be used in class to enable each learner to use strategies with which he or she is comfortable. For example, while some learners do better when given the opportunity to work on projects, others need to visualize concepts being taught. If teachers are conscious of varied learning styles in the classroom, learners are more likely to benefit from the teaching if an eclectic approach is adopted. For example, Woolfolk (1995) provides a range of ways of accommodating learning styles. In a reading lesson, for example, a wide range of activities such as the use of verbal materials, visual materials, tapes for listening and viewing as well as activities such as the use of projects could be provided at different reading levels. This variety made available to learners will definitely offer each learner a chance to do something he/she likes doing or something which falls in line with his/her study technique.

What makes the idea of varying lessons in class more relevant is the research conducted by Naiman et al. (1978) and Pickett (1978). Through classroom observation and interviews, the research established that there is tremendous variety in the techniques employed by different learners which needs to be explored. In their survey, learners reported that they developed their L2 vocabulary in varied ways. Examples listed are: memorizing vocabulary lists, learning words in context, practicing vocabulary by putting words into different structures in order to drill themselves and reading to reinforce vocabulary. Others also reported that they played games which involved thinking of words with the same ending, and repeating words to themselves. Arends (1994) sums this up by

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suggesting that learning activities must be designed to merge with a variety of learning styles, ie. visual, auditory, tactile, etc.

Prodromou (1995) adds that in a mixed ability class, learners must be made responsible for their own learning. Since the teacher cannot see to the needs of every member in a class, a conducive environment should be created for self-development. Prodromou (1995) suggests that self-access activities must be used in the classroom. This implies that students should be encouraged to do independent work through the use of independent study techniques, which enable them to work on materials of their own choice. In addition to this, students must monitor their own progress as they build their grammar and vocabulary. Joyce and Weil (1996) provide an example of an Individually Prescribed Instructional programme (IPI) to support this point. This programme was developed by the Learning Research and Development Centre of the University of Pittsburgh, in collaboration with Baldwin Whitehall School District. IPI is designed to assist pupils to work at their own pace, develop self-initiation and self-direction of learning, which also encourage self-evaluation. The expectation is that in a mixed ability class, activities of this nature may help all students to perform well in class. Ur (1996) also admits that allowing learners a choice in tasks they have to tackle in class promotes effective learning.

Indeed the idea of varying activities in class is crucial to handling mixed ability classes. However options available for Ghanaian teachers and learners to choose from are limited. For example, many schools do not have access to audio visual aids and so rely mainly on textbook activities. Furthermore if a teacher is

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dealing with a large class, monitoring the progress of each student in a systematic way is not an easy task. Also, because lessons are examination oriented, teachers as well as learners need to work in a certain time frame. Thus, students cannot have the luxury of choosing what they want to learn or deciding on how much time they wish to spend on their own projects. If students will benefit from suggestions offered, teachers need to be taught ways of modifying these suggestions to meet the needs of Ghanaian students. This project hopes to assist the Ghanaian teacher in this regard.

In an attempt to solve the problems faced by students in mixed ability classes, Prodromou (1995) and Ur (1996) propose that students work on both closed-ended and open-ended activities, which provide variety in such classes within the framework of one and the same lesson. This proposal will be reviewed in the section below.

2.4 Closed-Ended and Open-Ended Activities

Prodromou and Ur classify most textbook exercises such as "yes/no" questions, "Wh" questions, multiple choice, true/false questions, substitution drills, comprehension exercises, etc. as closed-ended. Closed-ended exercises are homogenous in nature and only address the needs of a limited range of learners who have mastered the relevant language. Learners at a lower level, according to these writers, may either not respond to such questions or are likely to get answers wrong. They further claim that advanced learners are also neglected in that these activities do not give them a chance to show what they can do with the language.

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Open-ended activities, on the other hand, take into cognizance differences in learning styles as well as proficiency levels of students. Open-ended tasks do not have one predetermined answer. Ur explains that open-ended tasks enable students to be constructive in their knowledge, since such activities are constructed in ways that enable advanced learners to provide long or complex answers while weaker students may use monosyllabic or fewer words.

Both Prodromou and Ur suggest that activities in textbooks which are closed-ended by nature should be modified by teachers into open-ended tasks since open-ended tasks allow all students to work comfortably at their own level. For example, students can reorder questions under comprehension texts. They should be given the opportunity to answer easier questions first instead of sticking to the order in which questions are asked in the textbook. Ur adds that students should be given the chance to delete questions they do not think they wish to work on. Again for questions which demand either true or false answers, both researchers suggest that they can be made more open-ended by asking students to grade their answers by showing how true or how false the answer is, on a scale of one to three or one to five. Answers may then be presented for whole class discussions or debates. In the same way, "yes/no" questions may be constructed in such a way that answers can be partly right or partly wrong.

Apart from adapting exercises in textbooks, Prodromou and Ur encourage teachers to use tasks which are naturally open-ended in class. This, they say, may give all students a chance to fully participate in lessons. Activities which elicit individual response to situations, and those that have no one right answer but draw

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on the experience and knowledge of individual members in the classroom are examples of naturally open-ended tasks. These include prediction and brainstorming activities as well as reordering of jumbled sentences.

Other researchers agree that open-ended exercises may allow students to participate in class at their own pace and at their own level. Such tasks also seem to create the much-needed low anxiety environment, which promotes learning for slow learners. It must be pointed out, however, that even though research conducted in the 1990's supports the efficacy of open-ended tasks, research on effective teaching of low achievers conducted in the 1980's seems to suggest that it is better to avoid open-ended questions and games and rather emphasize short, frequent paper-and-pencil exercises so that learners will have a sense of direction (Ebmeier & Ziomek 1982; Emmer et al. 1989; Slaven, Karweit and Madden 1989). In Ghana since students at the SSS level are expected to write examinations at the end of their course, learners must be introduced to assignment types which reflect the final examination. In addition to this, weaker learners must be assisted to grapple with the challenging tasks that more proficient students are able to handle.

2.5 Building On What Learners Know

Knowledge of student's background is said to be a valuable tool that teachers can make use of in the classroom. A teacher can draw on student's knowledge of the world, language differences and cultural background in order to make lessons effective. (Rosenshine and Stephens 1986, Prodromou 1995,

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Woolfolk 1995, Arends 1996). This knowledge should help teachers to select appropriate texts which students are familiar with. This idea emerges from the notion that some students who seem ignorant or lack high linguistic aptitude are very witty and voluble in their own language and culture (Ur 1996). Villegas (1991) also adds that children whose language use at home corresponds with what is expected in the classroom have an advantage in the learning process. Again, Bennett (1990) says that it is useful for teachers to become familiar with features of students' dialect because such knowledge helps them to understand how students' first language interferes with the target language. Knowledge of the students' dialect may also be an added advantage in vocabulary expansion. Brumfit (1980) and Prodromou (1995) remind teachers that some learners may not contribute in class not because they are not clever, but because they are being confronted with questions that assume an experience of the world they do not have.

There are other reasons why researchers advise teachers to study the cultural background of students. Wong (1996) and Flowerdew (1998) suggest that the attitude of a group of people towards life may help teachers choose appropriate teaching methods to facilitate the learning process. For students in Hong Kong, for example, Flowerdew says that the concepts of "face" and self effacement that exist in their culture make collaborative learning strategies the best choice for classrooms since a non-stressful environment is created.

Apart from knowing the learners cultural and linguistic background, Arends, Ur, and Woolfolk stress the need for teachers to find out from students the

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Woolfolk 1995, Arends 1996). This knowledge should help teachers to select appropriate texts which students are familiar with. This idea emerges from the notion that some students who seem ignorant or lack high linguistic aptitude are very witty and voluble in their own language and culture (Ur 1996). Villegas (1991) also adds that children whose language use at home corresponds with what is expected in the classroom have an advantage in the learning process. Again, Bennett (1990) says that it is useful for teachers to become familiar with features of students' dialect because such knowledge helps them to understand how students' first language interferes with the target language. Knowledge of the students' dialect may also be an added advantage in vocabulary expansion. Brumfit (1980) and Prodromou (1995) remind teachers that some learners may not contribute in class not because they are not clever, but because they are being confronted with questions that assume an experience of the world they do not have.

There are other reasons why researchers advise teachers to study the cultural background of students. Wong (1996) and Flowerdew (1998) suggest that the attitude of a group of people towards life may help teachers choose appropriate teaching methods to facilitate the learning process. For students in Hong Kong, for example, Flowerdew says that the concepts of "face" and self effacement that exist in their culture make collaborative learning strategies the best choice for classrooms since a non-stressful environment is created.

Apart from knowing the learners cultural and linguistic background, Arends, Ur, and Woolfolk stress the need for teachers to find out from students the

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kind of teaching methods they are used to for learning in the classroom. Prodromou adds that teachers should know students' previous educational experience and its possible influence on their attitude towards learning English.

Knowing student's background and taking advantage of that knowledge to improve teaching is crucial to the issue of handling mixed ability classes. Even though it may not be easy for teachers to have students describe teaching methods used in previous schools they attended, they should be aware of language teaching methodologies available and draw on such resources freely to help individual students learn the language in their preferred ways (Prodromou 1995).

2.6 Attitude of Teachers Towards Learners

Apart from modifying teaching methods to suit individual needs of learners in mixed ability classrooms, researchers advice teachers to be sensitive to the emotions of the individual learners, who are different in a number of ways. Arends (1994) and Woolfolk (1995) suggest that raising the self- esteem of learners can help even the slow learner achieve greater success. Prodromou (1995) examines the role of the teacher and proposes that in order to be successful in a mixed ability class, the teacher has to play the role of a friend, manager, counsellor, facilitator of learning, reliable informant on the language, social worker and a model for students. Clifford (1990; 1991) also adds that a teacher must be supportive, patient and must not embarrass students when they make mistakes in class.

The issue of sexism is discussed by a number of researchers. Prodromou, Areinds and Joyce and Weil (1996) say that sexism should be avoided in teaching.

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As much as possible, gender-free language should be used in class and sex roles, which reflect gender bias in teaching materials, should be discussed in class. Arends identifies forms of sex-bias in curriculum materials. These are linguistic bias, (where masculine terms are used to refer to all people) stereotyping, invisibility (where women are either omitted or under represented in texts) and imbalance/unreality (eg. representing a nuclear family as typical instead of a single parent family). Fragmentation is also seen as another type of bias. Here, information about women is usually separated from the body of the main text. Often teachers unconsciously contribute to biases by paying more attention to boys than girls (Sadker and Sadker 1990, Cushner, McClelland and Safford 1992). Indeed, neither teachers nor materials should make any student feel less important in class. Linn and Hyde (1989:17) in their meta-analyses concluded that differences between boys and girls were always small and so educational programs if carefully planned could bring out the best in both sexes. Arends also records that overall IQ score of males and females are not significantly different on the average.

Prodromou (1995) advances the argument that the welfare of each student must be sought. Early finishers of tasks must not be allowed to intimidate slower students. They must be allowed to work on other tasks while slower learners are helped to consolidate old material while sustaining the interest of the entire class. Ur suggests that compulsory and optional tasks should be assigned to students so that the fast or more advanced students will always have tasks to work on. This may ease the pressure on each student.

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Furthermore, attitude towards students from low economic backgrounds should be carefully looked at. According to Woolfolk (1995) such students feel they are not academically competent and teachers respond to them by asking them to memorize materials through teacher dominated activities. Coleman et al. (1966) assure teachers that children of the poor have as much potential as the children of the rich, but schools have not learnt to use the appropriate teaching techniques to enhance their ability. Joyce and Weil (1996) reiterate this. Arends also adds that socio-economic status has rather dramatic effects on school learning when teachers exhibit biases against such students. Heider, Cazden and Brown (1968) suggest that students from low economic backgrounds require more prompts than middle class students. To support this idea, Addae Mensah et al. (1973) explain that the elite knows what it takes to make a child successful at school. Therefore every effort is made at home for such students to do well. This puts the less fortunate at a disadvantage and teachers need to be aware of that. This information is very useful because teachers may be guided to exhibit appropriate behaviour towards learners of all backgrounds. Even though it has been recorded that appropriate models of teaching may elevate the achievement of children of the poor, (Slavin et al., 1990, Joyce and Showers 1995), methods which may serve as a guide to teachers have not been given. This project will contribute in that direction.

2.7 Conclusion

So far, research done in the area of handling mixed ability classes considers knowledge of learners' learning styles and background as an essential

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factor towards designing appropriate tasks and teaching methods. The researchers have come up with a number of arguments and generalizations which may help teachers to do their work effectively in mixed ability classes. These suggestions however do not fully address the needs of students who learn English in schools as a second language. Secondly, classroom situations in Ghana also reveal that any suggestion offered for the improvement of the teaching and learning situation has to consider a number of local factors which include the following: large classes, a loaded syllabus, insufficient time and non availability of equipment. Therefore, this study derives its motivation from the lapses that the review of the existing literature has revealed.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Subjects

Tema Methodist Day Secondary School was chosen for the study because, unlike other schools visited, teachers were willing to offer the assistance needed at every stage of the research. However, time and resources would not allow for all the classes in the school to be chosen as samples; therefore, two second-year classes were observed. The choice of form 2C, a science class, and form 2D, an arts class was deliberate since the existence of heterogeneity had to be investigated in groups of learners which seem homogeneous.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Two data collection methods were employed for this study. They are the Descriptive and the Survey Methods. The descriptive method is a systematic method of narrating and describing a situation without judgement. This procedure enables one to later on investigate how teaching methods currently adopted (i.e. process) may have affected learning outcomes (i.e. product). According to Rosenshine and Furst (1973), the descriptive method follows an approach in the literature of the "Process and Product" model proposed for classroom observation where the descriptive variables are related to measures of student growth.

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3.3 Descriptive Research

The descriptive research method was used to examine the following:

a) Textbooks and syllabus recommended by G.E.S. for senior secondary schools.

b) Classroom interaction and learning process.

Furthermore, the main approaches for gathering data for descriptive research were used, and they are:

a) The examination and analysis of written texts and

b) The direct observation method.

These methods were very useful tools for gaining an insight into English language teaching and learning at the Senior Secondary School level. While syllabi, SSS English textbooks, examiners' reports and written assignments were examined for analysis, the direct observation method was used for investigating classroom interaction and the learning process.

3.3.1 Examination and Analysis of Written Texts

The written texts which were studied for the purpose of this research are the SSS syllabus, Core English textbooks, Examiners' reports and Essays written by students. The examination of these materials helped the researcher to understand what teachers and learners are expected to do in the English language classrooms as well as the state of English in the school. This background information may also help the researcher to assess how appropriate the suggested methods being used by teachers are. The examination of students' essays also

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helped the researcher to identify the different proficiency levels in each class investigated.

3.3.2 The Direct Observation Method

To investigate classroom interaction and the learning process the following observation plan was prepared.

WEEK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 MID	8	9	10	11 PREPARING	12 PREPARING
WEDNES DAY	2c 1.25 P.M. to 2.45P.M.						TEST	2c 1.25 P.M. to 2.45 P.M			FOR	FOR
THURS DAY	2d 1.25 P.M. to 2.45 P.M.						REMBR	2d 1..25P.M to 2.45P.M.			EXA	EXA
FRIDAY	2e ... 12.45P.M. to 1.25P.M. 2d 2.05P.M to 2.45P.M.						BAK	2e . 12.45P.M. to 1.25P.M. 2d . 2.05P.M to 2.45P.M			MS	MS

The classes were observed by the researcher for nine weeks in the first term of the 1998/99 academic year, which lasted thirteen weeks. Three, forty-minute periods

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for each class were observed each week, bringing the total number of periods observed for each class to twenty seven. The structured and unstructured non-participant methods of classroom observation were used (Lynch 1996). Classroom activities were observed from a corner at the back of each class. This corner was chosen because as much as possible the researcher wanted to avoid being noticed so that lessons would go on undisturbed. This non-participant stand was taken so that notes could be written as classes were taught, with the aim of getting a holistic view of the classroom setting.

3.3.2.1 Unstructured Observation

To get a fair idea about the general atmosphere in the classrooms, the class teachers were initially asked to slip a mini-size tape recorder in their pockets as they did the first week of teaching. This was supposed to help the researcher gain some insight into the 'real' classroom situation where normal classes went on without the presence of a researcher. Again, this was to help identify changes in attitude of students (if any) when researcher was present.

In the second week of the term, the researcher went to observe lessons. Observation was not structured in the sense that no particular issues had been singled out for observation. Every step of each lesson was watched critically and general notes were put down in a note book.

At the end of the second week, a pattern of teaching emerged and decisions on what was to be observed more critically for the rest of the time spent in the

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At the end of the second week, a pattern of teaching emerged and decisions on what was to be observed more critically for the rest of the time spent in the

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school were made. This meant that a more structured type of observation had to be done.

3.3.2.2 Structured Observation

Various checklists have been designed for observing second language classroom activities. Examples of these are Ullman & Geva (1981, 1985) for example, who used structured schedules to describe an observation instrument called "Target Language Observation Scheme" (TALOS). There is also the (COLT) scheme developed by Allen et al. (1984) (see Appendix 1 for Checklists). Others who have used other structured checklists are Moskowitz (1970) and Bialystok et al. (1979). Most of these checklists require that the observer regularly ticks off what happens in class on his/her list at very short intervals. These types of checklists are not appropriate for this research since attitudes of students to lessons had to be carefully observed and often keeping ones head down while ticking off checklists at regular intervals might make the observer skip some vital incidents which needed to be recorded. Secondly, this is a qualitative research and general descriptions of events are needed rather than frequency checks.

For the purpose of this research, simpler checklists were designed. Guidelines for observation were written and room was created in the note-book for open-ended notes. (See appendix 2 for an example of the guidelines used).



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During a lesson, short notes were written under broad headings listed on the observation guide at appropriate intervals of the lesson. These are:

a) Style of teacher's presentation.

b) Students participation.

c) Major strengths of lesson.

d) Classroom atmosphere.

e) Uncertainties.

f) Suggestions.

These short notes described exactly what went on during the lesson. Immediately after each lesson however, details under each broad heading on the plan were filled in. Any teaching point which was not quite clear was discussed with the class teacher in the staff common room of the school. This method of gathering classroom data was used throughout the period of observation and a pattern emerged for analysis.



3.4 The Survey Method

Under the survey research two methods were also used in this study. They are the use of questionnaires and personal interviews. Moore (1983) notes that these methods help a researcher to draw conclusions from information collected. Since it was difficult to reach into the minds of teachers and learners by merely observing classroom activities, the survey method was very useful. This method was also used to gather background information on teachers and learners.

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3.4.1 The Questionnaire

A series of questions were designed to investigate the linguistic background of respondents. It was hoped that this would reveal the nature of heterogeneity in the classes observed. The questionnaire provided the opportunity for respondents to give frank answers since respondents were not required to disclose their names. After filling in the questionnaire, students wrote essays evaluating the SSS English Course on their answer sheets provided. The essays were graded and proficiency scores were matched with background information.

The questionnaires and essays were used to establish three major issues among others:

a) that the classes were made of mixed ability groups.

b) that respondents in each class were from different social, economic, and linguistic backgrounds.

c) that there was a possible relationship between one's background and proficiency level.

Format of Questionnaire

The questionnaire is provided in Appendix 3. It comprises five sections which generally investigate linguistic exposure of students at both primary and secondary school level. These five sections are explained below.

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Section One

This section generally seeks to find out the different languages spoken by the respondent. Furthermore, it investigates how often respondents communicate in English at home.

Section Two

This section actually investigates how often respondents practice the four basic skills in English (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Section Three

To establish the importance of the use of appropriate teaching methods and materials to make the teaching and learning of the English language more effective, respondents were asked in the third section of the questionnaire to say how much English they learnt from reading materials, friends, relations, etc. as against English learnt from teachers and school textbooks.

Section Four

This section is a self evaluation section which allows respondents to rate their own written English. Other questions in this section, which are open- ended, help to reveal the following: a) Written English of students and b) Suggestions they wish to offer, which may help improve the writing skills of students.

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Section Five

General information about students is elicited in this section: age, gender, educational background and socio-economic background. This will establish the issue of heterogeneity. The final part of this section asks students to write an essay on the usefulness of the core English programme. The purpose of this task is two fold:

1) to find out students' perception of the English programme for senior secondary schools.

2) to assess students proficiency level.

The questionnaire was administered by the class teachers after the purpose of the questionnaire and the manner in which it should be answered were explained to students. The questionnaire was completed in forty minutes, during one of their free periods. The essay topic was taken home and respondents were asked to take their time to write their essays and present them, together with questionnaires the following week. Students were given ample time to write the essay so that they would have enough time to write well and read over their work.

3.4.2 Personal Interviews

The interview technique took the form of verbal communication with respondents. This technique has an added advantage over questionnaires in that one is able to ask respondents for clarification. There are three types of interviews. These are highly structured/standardized interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured/informal interviews. For this qualitative research, the semi-

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structured interview technique was employed. Teachers' group interviews took place in a very relaxed atmosphere in the staff common room. Students' interview took place in their classroom. Each of these interviews lasted forty minutes.

3.4.3 The Semi-Structured Interview

For the semi-structured interview for students and teachers, interview guides were prepared. These contained several specific questions and open ended questions which would encourage interviewees to talk freely about their attitude towards the SSS English course. (See appendix 4 for interview guides for teachers and students).

Because of time constraint, group interviews were done instead of individual interviews since they have the advantage of sampling a greater number of people within the same amount of time that a one-on-one interview might take for a single person. Participants were also allowed to question and clarify each others' responses. The Interviews were recorded on tape and notes were also taken as discussions went on. These interviews helped to give a clear understanding of the problem being investigated.

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, methods used for the purpose of this research have been discussed. Since it would have been extremely difficult to use one method to gain an insight into the problem being investigated in the two Form 2 classes observed,

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the researcher had to survey texts, observe the teaching and learning process in classrooms, analyse questionnaires and conduct interviews. In chapter 4, data gathered through these methods are analyzed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data, which comprises data collected from questionnaires, interviews, classroom observation, written essays and textbooks. The analysis is presented in terms of the major questions raised: (a) the nature of the heterogeneous class, (b) the extent to which teachers as well as students may be affected by the heterogeneous nature of the class, and (c) the effectiveness of teaching methods and textbooks used in classroom activities in large heterogeneous classes.

4.2 The Nature of the Heterogeneous Class

The following differences between the learners in the classes investigated were identified: language background, gender, socio-economic background, English Language Proficiency level and learning style.



4.2.1 Language Background

A section of the questionnaire, designed to seek information on the respondents' language background, reveals the local language(s) the students speak and the language(s) they interact in when they go back home daily after school. The responses recorded (see Fig.1 on page 37) indicate that even though the school is situated in the Accra metropolitan area, the majority of the students speak Akan,

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Figure 1

Local languages	Science (%)	Arts (%)
Akan	49	55
Ga / Dangme	36	28
Ewe	8	11
Northern	4	4
Foreign	2	0
Other local languages	1	2

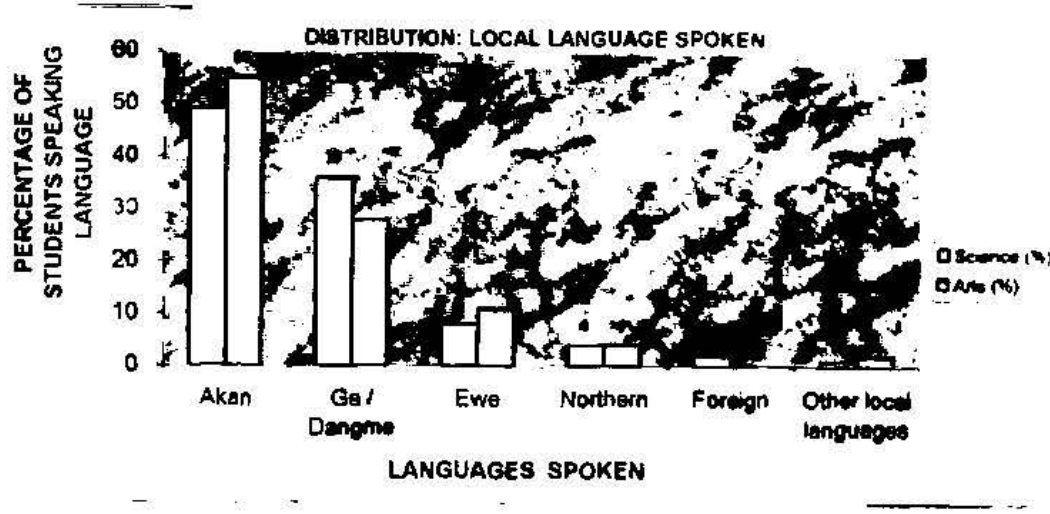
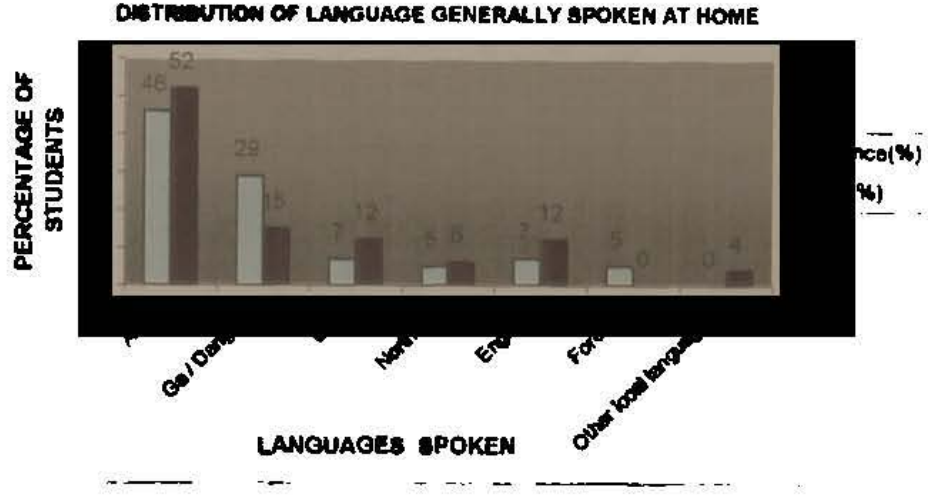


Figure 2

Local Languages	Science(%)	Arts(%)
Akan	46	52
Ga / Dangme	29	15
Ewe	7	12
Northern	5	6
English	7	12
Foreign	5	0
Other local languages	0	4



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To support the claim made in section 4.2.1 that the school does not fully provide the needed exposure to ensure English language proficiency, the questionnaire sought to find out where students felt they could be helped to communicate more effectively in English. Respondents were therefore asked how much English they had learnt from various sources i.e. home, school (teaching and textbooks) or media (radio, television, newspapers). Figure 3, on the page 39 depicts the main source through which students learn English. Again, both the science and arts class recorded similar results. Generally, students admitted that not very much English is learnt through the media and in their home environment. The graph shows that the principal means by which students learn to speak English is through the school system. It is at school that they find themselves practising the four skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Both the science and arts class record an average of 80% of students who say that the school is where they really get exposed to the English language. This observation therefore means that the load of responsibility is on the school system to ensure that students are helped to come into contact with the English language as often as possible. Each child spends, at least, an average of eight hours a day in school so if students have sufficient contact with spoken and written English, the English language situation in Ghana may improve.

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Figure 3a

SOURCE	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%	(%)
HOME	3	34	38	20	4
SCHOOL	76	16	9	0	0
MEDIA	0	40	58	3	

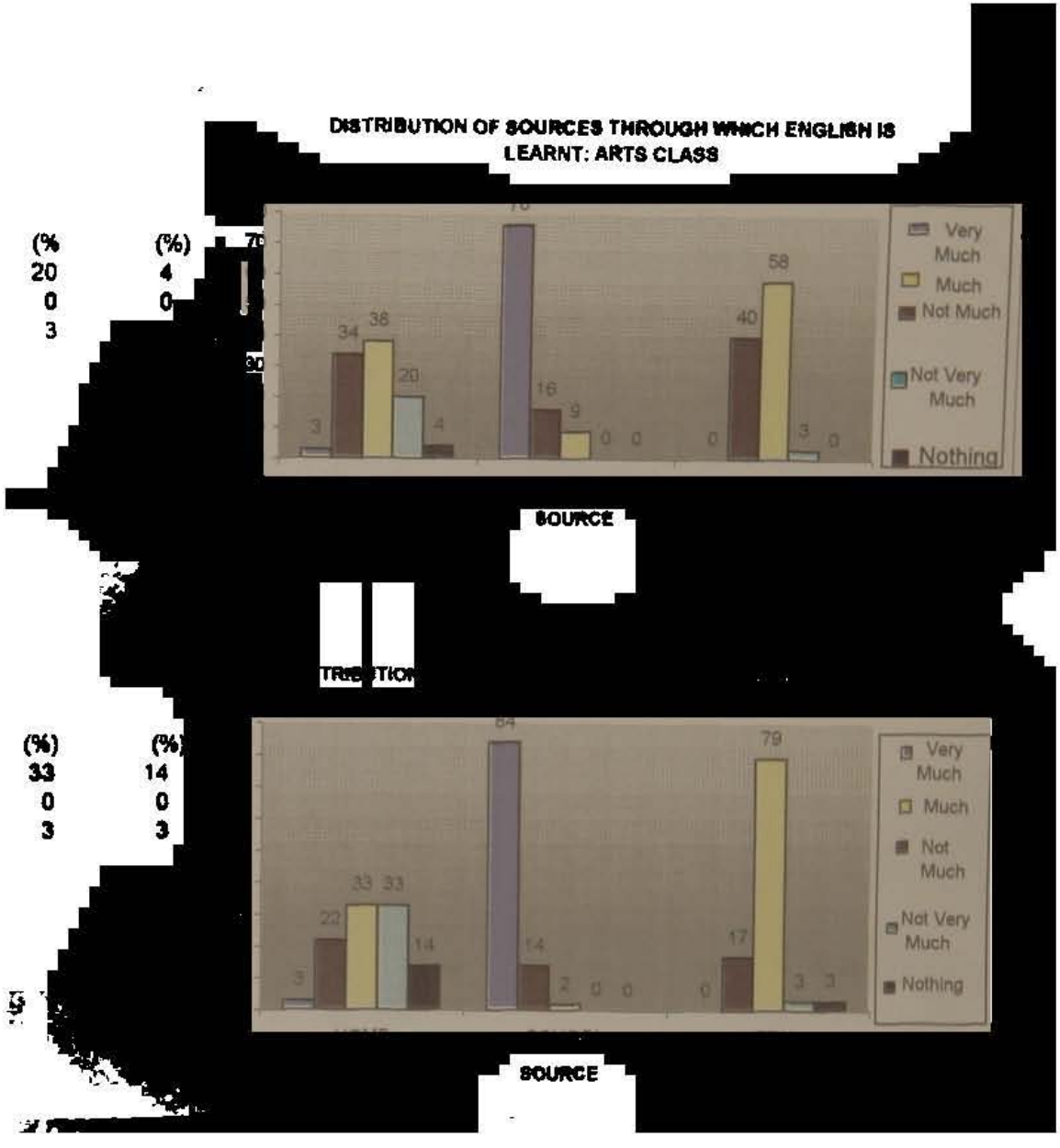


Figure 3b

SOURCE	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
HOME	3	22	33	33	14
SCHOOL	84	14	2	0	0
MEDIA	0	17	79	3	3

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4.2.2 Gender Distribution

Gender distribution was analyzed in terms of percentages. (See Fig.4 on page 41). In the science class, we had 68% males and 32% females. An interview with the class teacher revealed that students were admitted into the science class only when they passed a test specially designed for the selection of science students. It turned out that most of the students who qualified were males.

The arts class investigated, on the other hand, had more female students than male. Female students formed 94% of the population with only 6% male students. There seemed to be an explanation for this. Students in this particular class had the option to do any of the courses in home economics and more female students than males opted for it. This finding seems to indicate that one's gender affects subject choice. What cannot be said for certain is whether or not stereotypical ideas about appropriate courses for boys and girls has a role to play in the picture observed here. This issue was not directly investigated. However, for the teacher, this certainly implies that male and female students have varied interests and this should inform the choice of topics for ELT.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION FOR THE SCIENCE AND ARTS CLASS

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Figure 4a

Gender	Science (%)
Male	68
Female	32

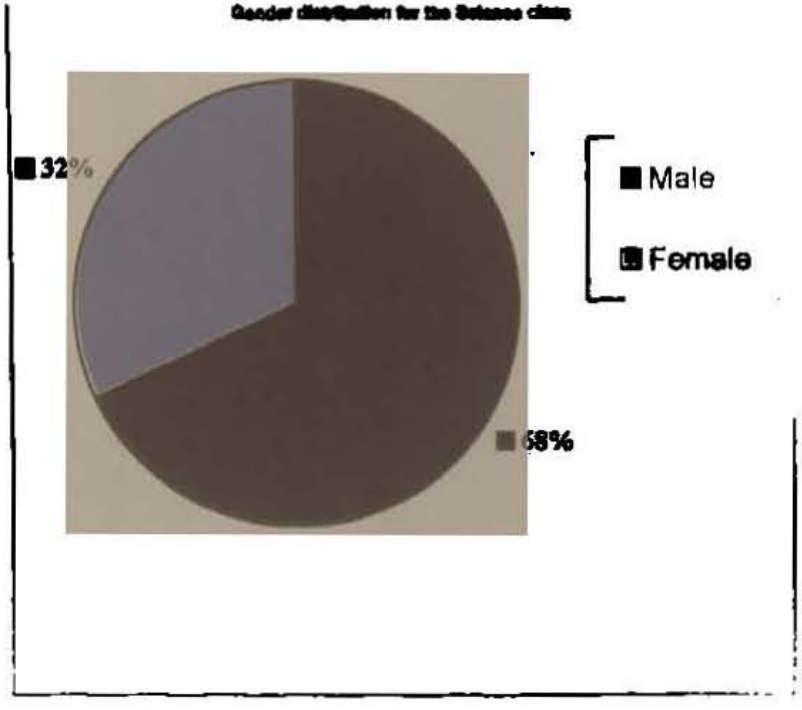
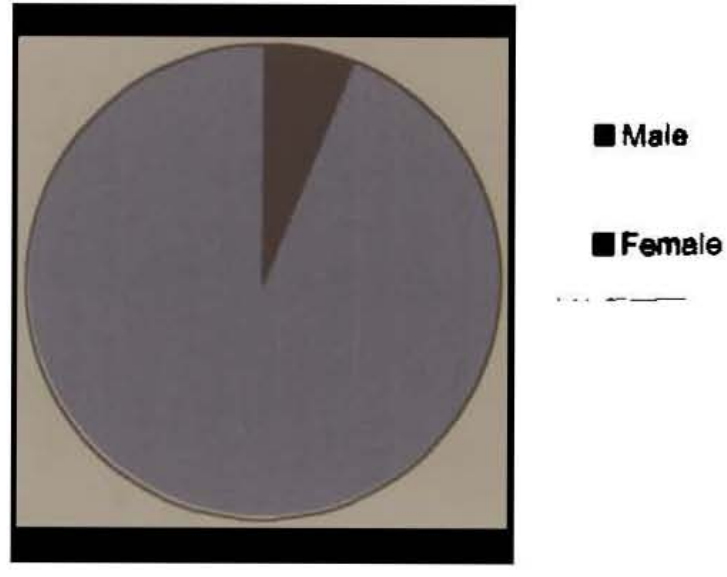


Figure 4b

Gender	Arts (%)
Male	6
Female	94



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4.2.3 Socio-Economic Background

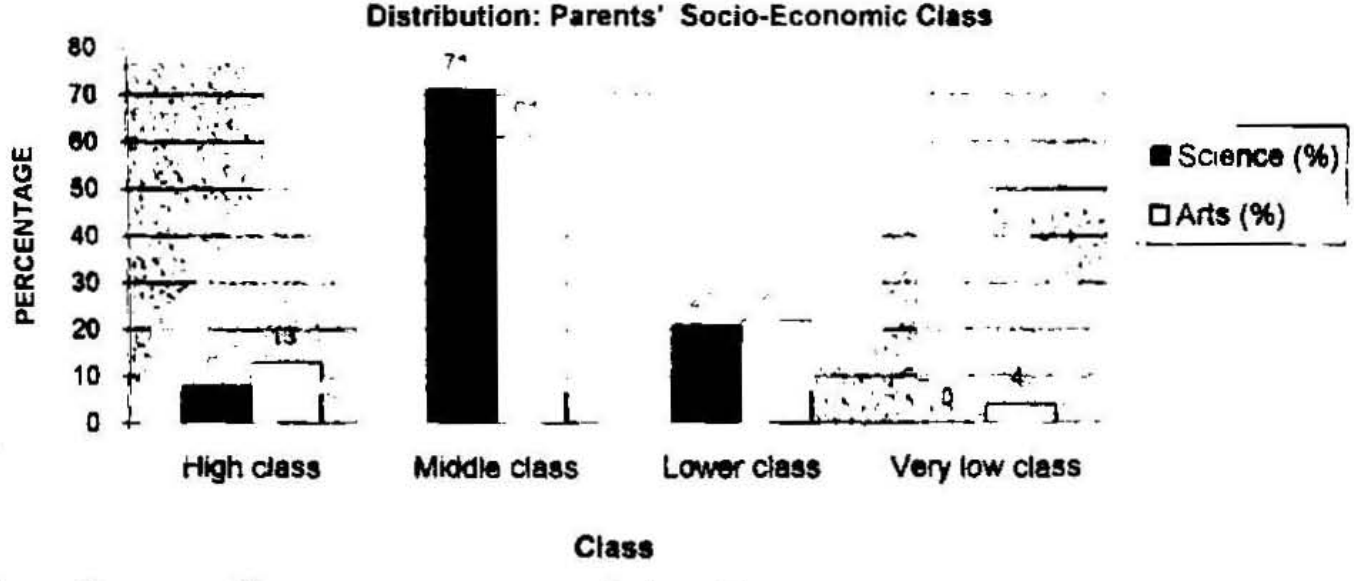
To be able to investigate the socio-economic background of students, it was important to provide a working definition for the categories high class, middle class, lower class and very low class since there seems to be an absence of a well-defined class structure in Ghana (Assimeng 1981: 123). For the purpose of this research, the respondents were made to understand that 'high class' represents the elite in society, who have a very strong educational background and are financially sound. Examples of people in this category are university degree holders who excel in their profession. 'Middle class' represents educated/semi-educated parents who place great premium on the education and training of their children but may have to forgo luxuries to achieve this goal. These may be said to represent the working class in the developed countries.

Lower class represents parents with very little or no education who also have financial problems. Very low class represents the group of parents who are not educated and have to shift all financial responsibilities on people who are willing to help since members of the extended family are not financially sound either. The graph i.e. Figure 5 on page 43, represents socio-economic class of both arts and science students.

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Figure 5

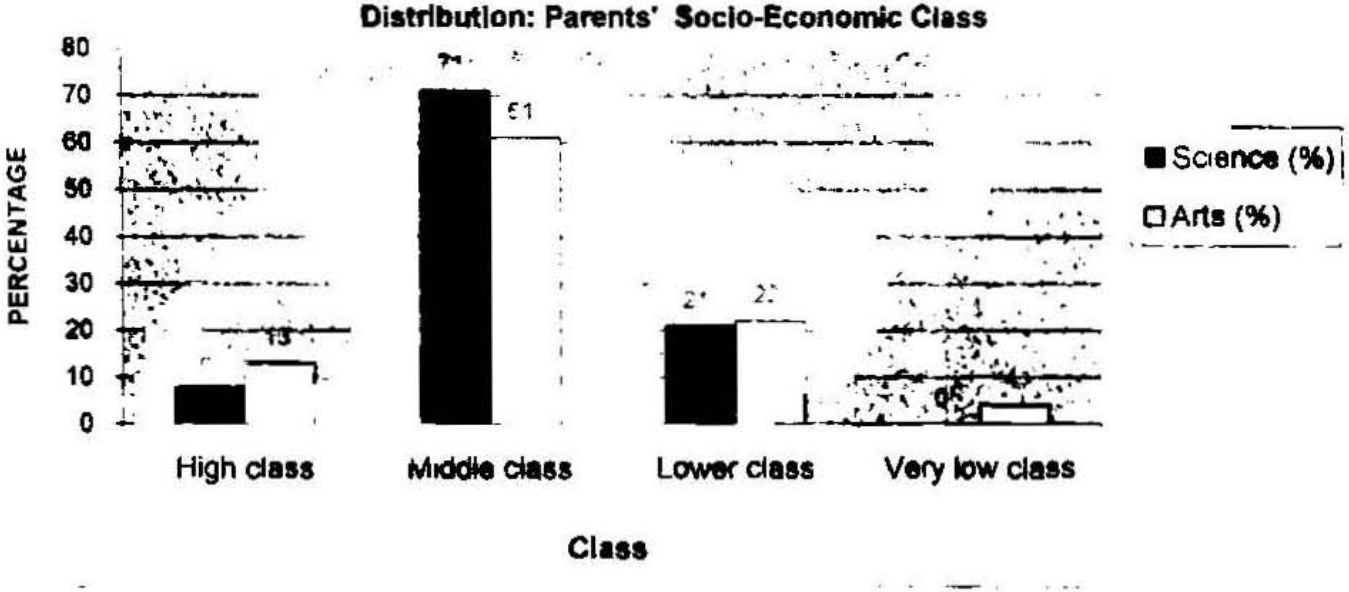
Class	Science (%)	Arts (%)
High class	8	13
Middle class	71	61
Lower class	21	22
Very low class	0	4



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Figure 5

Class	Science (%)	Arts (%)
High class	8	13
Middle class	71	61
Lower class	21	22
Very low class	0	4



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The graph clearly shows that the majority of the students (i.e. 60% and above) have parents who make sacrifices in order to educate their children. This may imply that unless such parents are very convinced about the need to get books for their children, they are not likely to buy them. Again, such parents may be too busy working to pay school fees that they may not give their children all the attention they need to improve on their schoolwork. The presence of about 10% of respondents who belong to the high class, another 20% who belong to the lower class and about 4% (arts class only) who belong to the very low class may offer a great challenge to the teacher. This is because the issue of socio-economic class may affect ones knowledge of the world as well. A poor Ghanaian student with illiterate, non-English speaking parents, and with no access to television or books might hear, speak, read or write English only in school. Thus, strategies may have to be put in place to help such children.

4.2.4 English Language Proficiency Score

Test scores of essays written by students generally reveal that most of the students have to be assisted to write more effectively. Members of the arts class seem to communicate better in writing than the science students. (See Figure 6 on next page, for distribution).

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Figure 6a

Proficiency Score (%)	Arts (%)
0% - 40%	33
41% - 50%	30
51% - 60%	26
61% - 70%	11

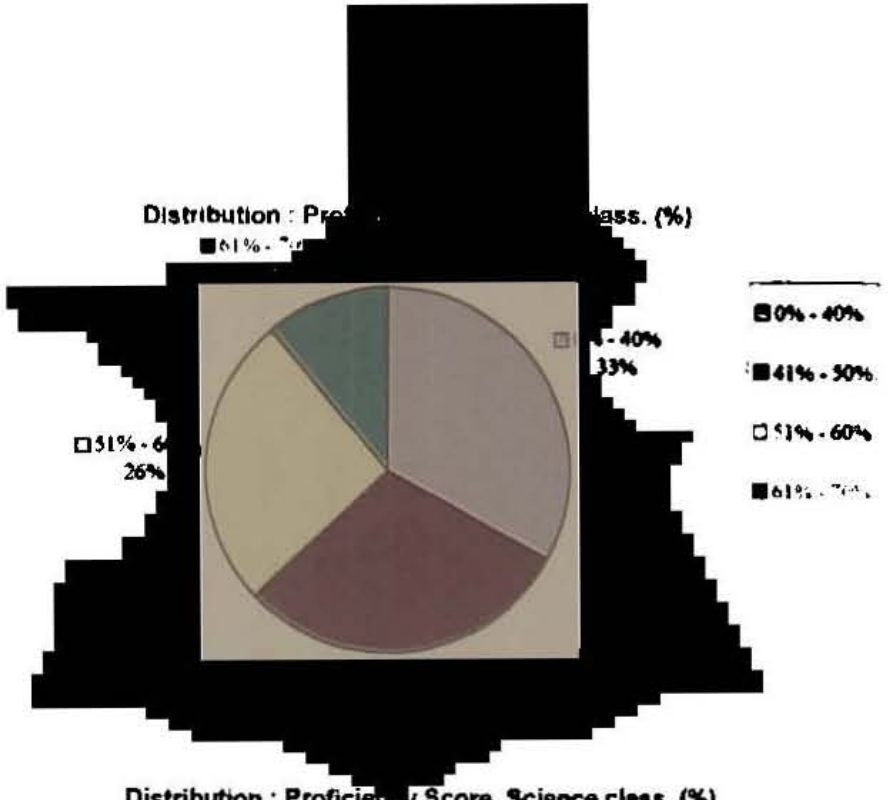
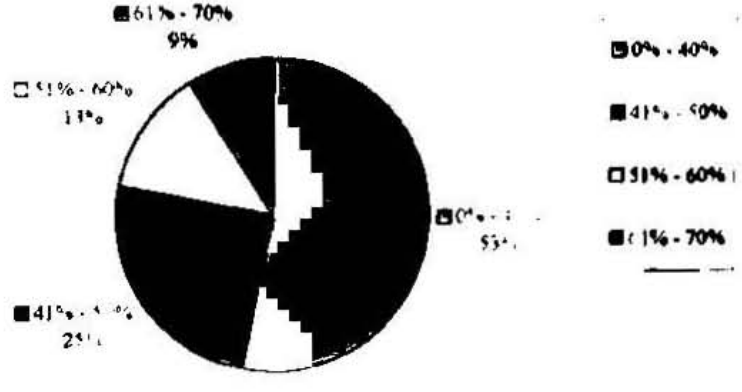


Figure 6b

Proficiency Score (%)	Science (%)
0% - 40%	53
41% - 50%	25
51% - 60%	13
61% - 70%	9



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The majority of the members of the science class scored between 0-40%. In an interview with the class teacher, it was revealed that the scores tallied with average scores obtained in class work and tests. It was also revealed during an interview that respondents in the science class, (most of them being male students), admitted that they usually spoke Pidgin English, and hardly paid attention to grammar. Additionally, they read very little outside textbooks recommended for their course.

The scores obtained in the arts class revealed a more even spread of English language proficiency levels, which may pose a challenge to the class teacher, since each student must benefit from lessons taught.

A further step was taken to find out if there was a correlation between proficiency scores and background of students. The difference between the scores obtained by group members was also tested statistically through analyses of variance (ANOVA). The results established certain trends. For example, proficiency scores were significantly different at 10% for students in the arts class, who scored higher than the science students. The mean scores were 40% and 50% respectively for science and arts students. (See figure 7 on next page).

Another issue that came to light was that gender significantly affects proficiency score. (See figure 8 also on next page). Females scored an average of 49% as compared to males who had 44%. Thus, since members of the arts class were mostly females, one could understand why members of the arts class scored higher grades than those in the science class.

Figure 7

SUBJECTS	MEAN SCORE
SCIENCE	45
ARTS	50

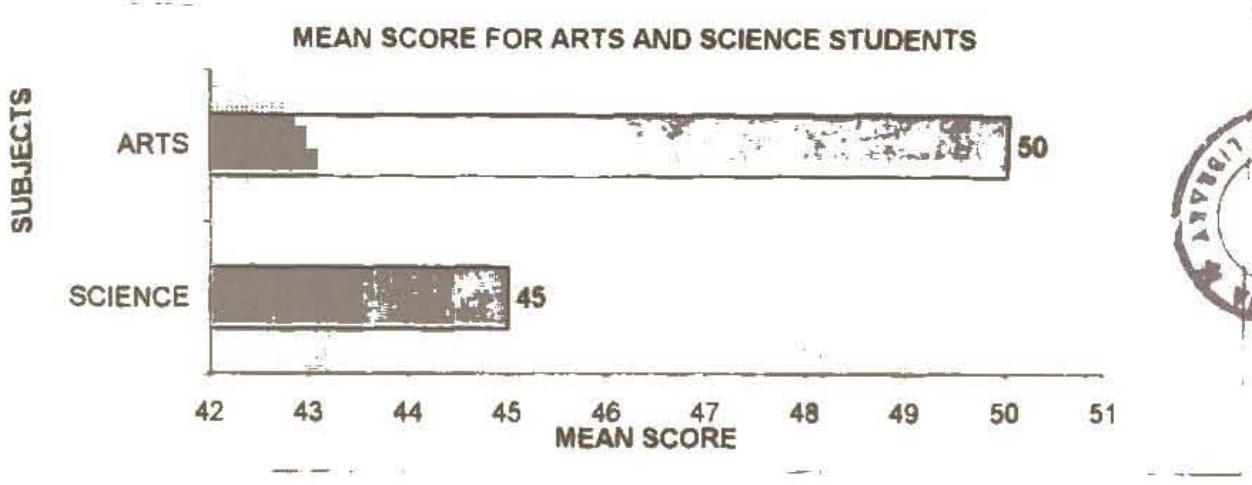


Figure 8

GENDER	MEAN SCORE
FEMALE	49
MALE	43

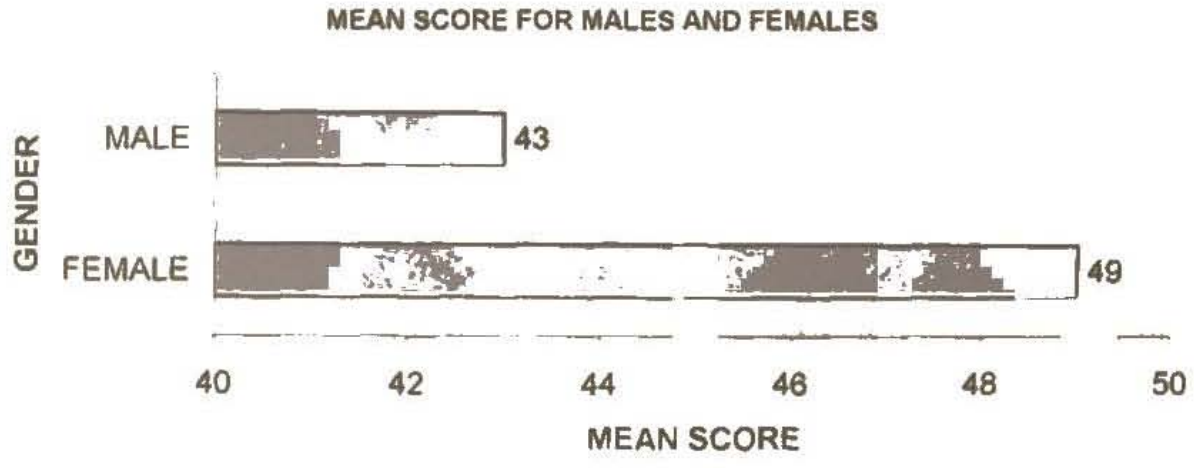


Figure 7

SUBJECTS	MEAN SCORE
SCIENCE	45
ARTS	50

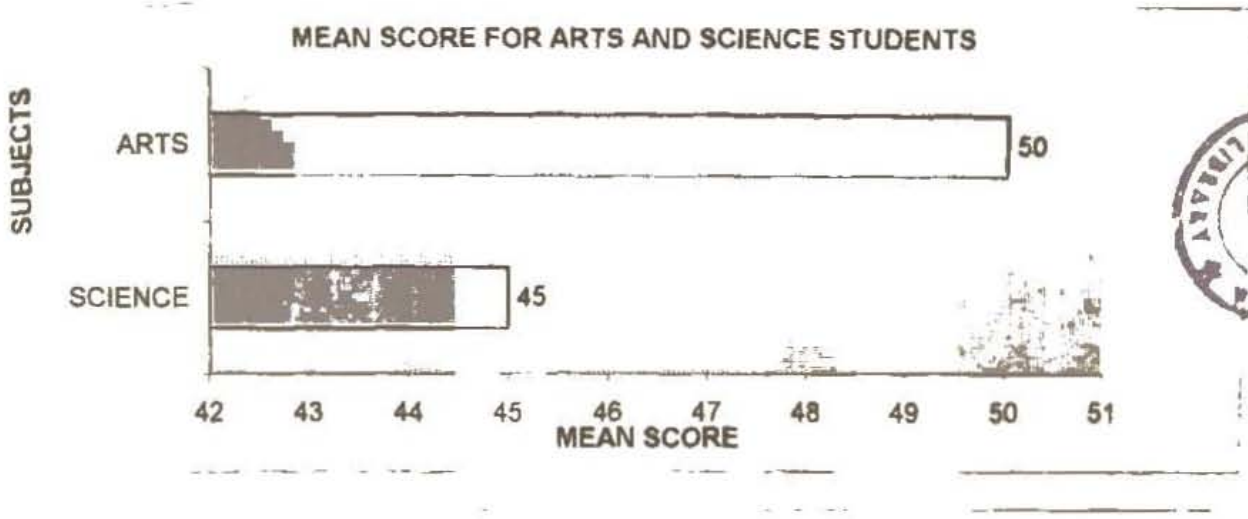
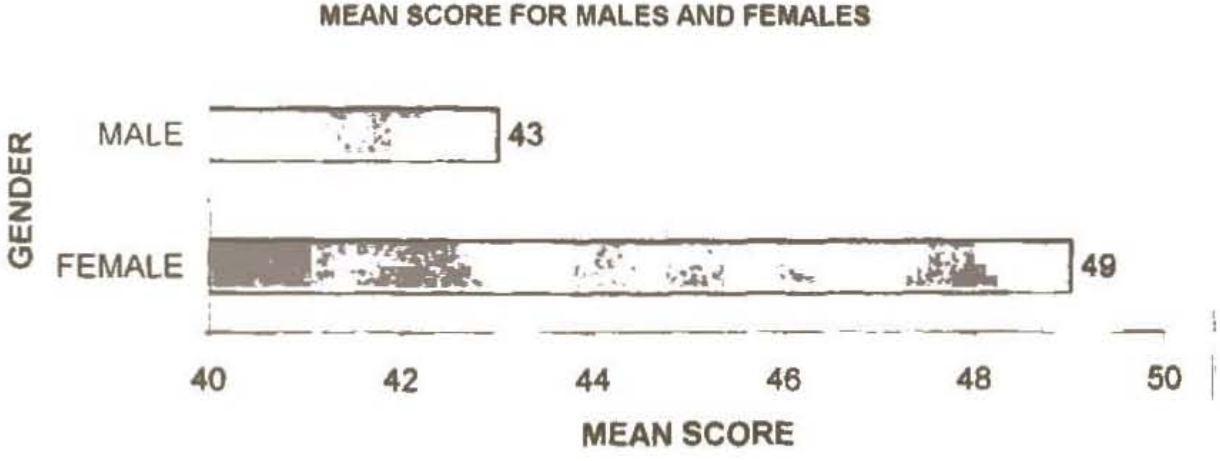


Figure 8

GENDER	MEAN SCORE
FEMALE	49
MALE	43



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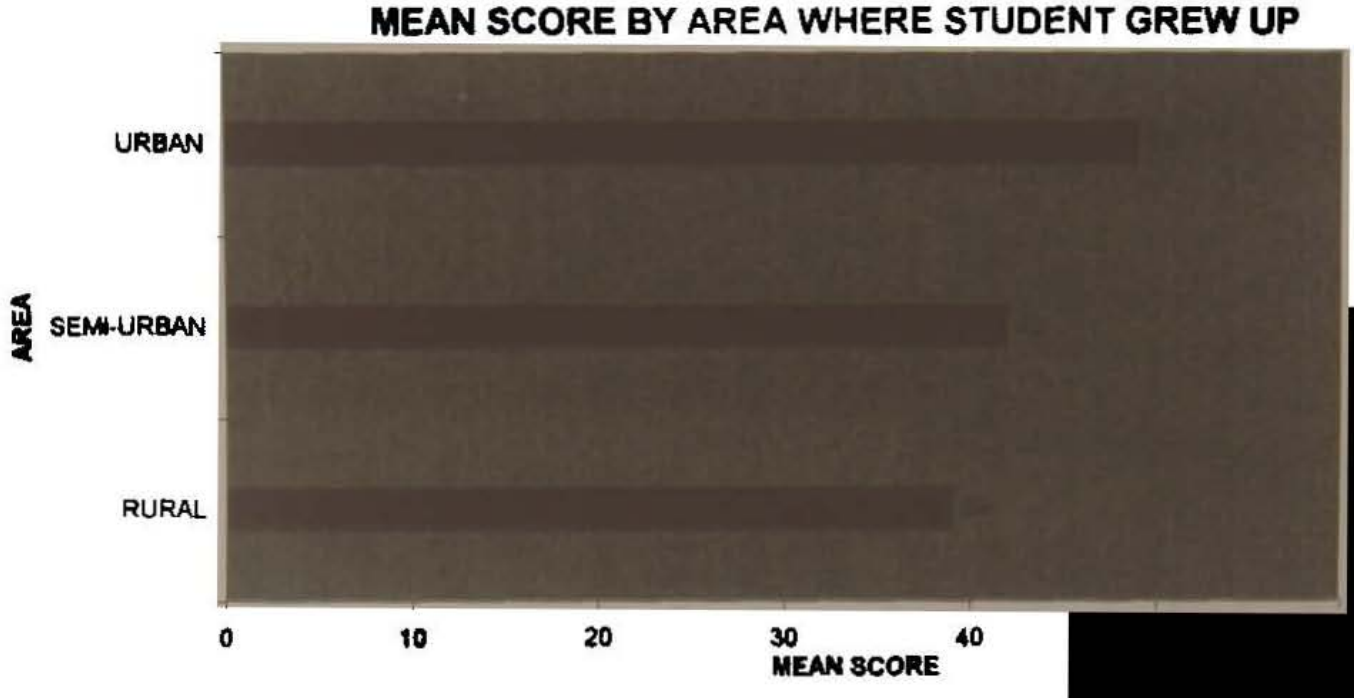
In the 7th June, 2000, edition of 'Every Woman' broadcast on the BBC World Service, it was observed that female students in the U.K. are, on the average, scoring higher grades in school now than ten years ago. This was attributed to the availability of opportunities after completing their courses, which seemed to be motivating females to get to the top. This seems to reflect the situation in Ghana. Another factor, which may have given rise to females scoring better grades is that most male students admitted that they did not like reading and often spoke pidgin English outside the classroom. The arts students, by the nature of their course, happen to read more textbooks which seem to contain more authentic language which they may need to use in their day-to-day communication. The arts students are also compelled to write more essays in their subject areas. Reading more and writing more, seems to give the arts students more opportunity to practise using the English language.

The place where students grow up and stay for most part of their life also affects the English proficiency. When proficiency scores were analyzed in terms of where students stay, it was found out that those who usually find themselves in the urban areas had an average score of 49% and those in the semi-urban areas had 42%. Those in the rural areas had an average of 40%. (See Figure 9 on next page).

The results of this survey may imply that if teachers are aware of the area students usually find themselves, they may adopt teaching strategies which will help all students to forge ahead without allowing their background to affect them negatively.

FIGURE 9

AREA	MEAN SCORE
RURAL	39
SEMI-URBAN	42
URBAN	49



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The students may also be helped to learn independently while students from the rural areas may be given opportunities to use the English language in a school environment. Such an environment is necessary since Kraft (1994), in a study conducted in Ghanaian schools, found that, Ghanaian children, particularly those in the rural areas, have only 1% of the English language contact hours that a child growing up in the United States of America might have. He said, this might make it extremely difficult for such Ghanaian students to master the English language.

Looking at the results discussed in the preceding section, it can be concluded that the background of students may have a bearing on proficiency scores. Knowledge of the background of students is therefore necessary if the English language teacher is to succeed in satisfying the individual language needs of students.

4.2.5 Learning Styles

Subjects were interviewed to find out if they all preferred the teacher centered lock-step approach (Prodromou 1995) being used by their teachers to teach English. Out of forty-six students present in the arts class at the time of the interview, only one student said the lock-step approach made learning easy. Forty-five students however said they preferred to study in a class in which lessons were taught in a variety of interesting ways. They added that they would perhaps gain more from the lessons if their teacher could rely less on the core English textbook and create interesting lessons by herself instead of helping them to go through the

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book page by page. When asked if they had any "interesting" ideas to offer, thirty-five members of the class suggested group work because they enjoyed studying in groups outside class hours. Thirty members of the group also suggested that, for more difficult comprehension passages, the teacher should extend the silent reading period instead of asking some students to read aloud.

When asked if the classroom environment was such that they could freely communicate in a relaxed atmosphere, twenty-four members of the class said it was. They added that they were people who generally liked asking questions and contributing to lively discussions. Six admitted that in order to save face, they would neither contribute out of their own will nor ask questions even if they did not understand a lesson. When asked what they usually did to catch up with the rest of the class, they said that they normally asked friends to teach them when classes were over.

Questions, similar to those posed in the arts class, were asked in the science class. There were forty-four students present on the day of the interview. None of the students in the class wanted a teacher-centered class even though twenty-three students said they would still need their teacher in the background to reassure them. In all, thirty students admitted that they learnt by interacting with teachers and friends so would prefer a teaching method which enabled them to use the language in a number of ways including group work.

The answers given by students during this interview clearly showed that students were, to some extent, aware of their preferred learning styles and wished that teachers would respond to them. The responses given by members of the two

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heterogeneous classes are interesting in that the focus of the science students seems to indicate that they prefer an analytical approach to learning. They mainly wanted to learn the language by asking a lot of questions, practising the language in groups and having a teacher in the background to tell them when they were going wrong. This response is interesting in the sense that this approach reflects the procedure in conducting science experiments. The arts students, on the other hand, still needed their teacher to control the class but wished that there was more variety in the method of teaching adopted.

The responses to the questionnaires and interviews seem to suggest that learners in the class differ in a number of ways. The differences do not only exist in the background of the learners but also in learning styles and proficiency levels.

4.3 Extent to Which Teachers and Students May Be Affected By the Heterogeneous Nature of the Class

This section examines the extent to which learners, as well as teachers, may be affected and therefore respond to the heterogeneous "environment" in which they find themselves. During the focus group discussion, students expressed their feelings. It is worthy to note that students were willing to express their views in the presence of the teachers who asked if they could sit in the discussion.

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4.3.1 Attitude of Students

Even though students admitted that the presence of their colleagues who did better in English offered them a standard to strive at, they still could not face that challenge. This made them feel rather frustrated because the attitude of their teachers and teaching methods used by their teachers did not meet the needs of the less proficient students, who formed the majority. (See Figure 10 on next page). While some said their teachers were impatient with the weaker students, others said the teacher talked all the time and hardly paused for questions from those who did not understand the lessons. The less proficient students, most of whom were from low economic background, said that to save their face and to prevent their class mates from laughing at them, they did not ask questions in class. These students said they felt 'discriminated' against since their teachers always paid attention to the proficient learners.

4.3.2 Attitude of Teachers

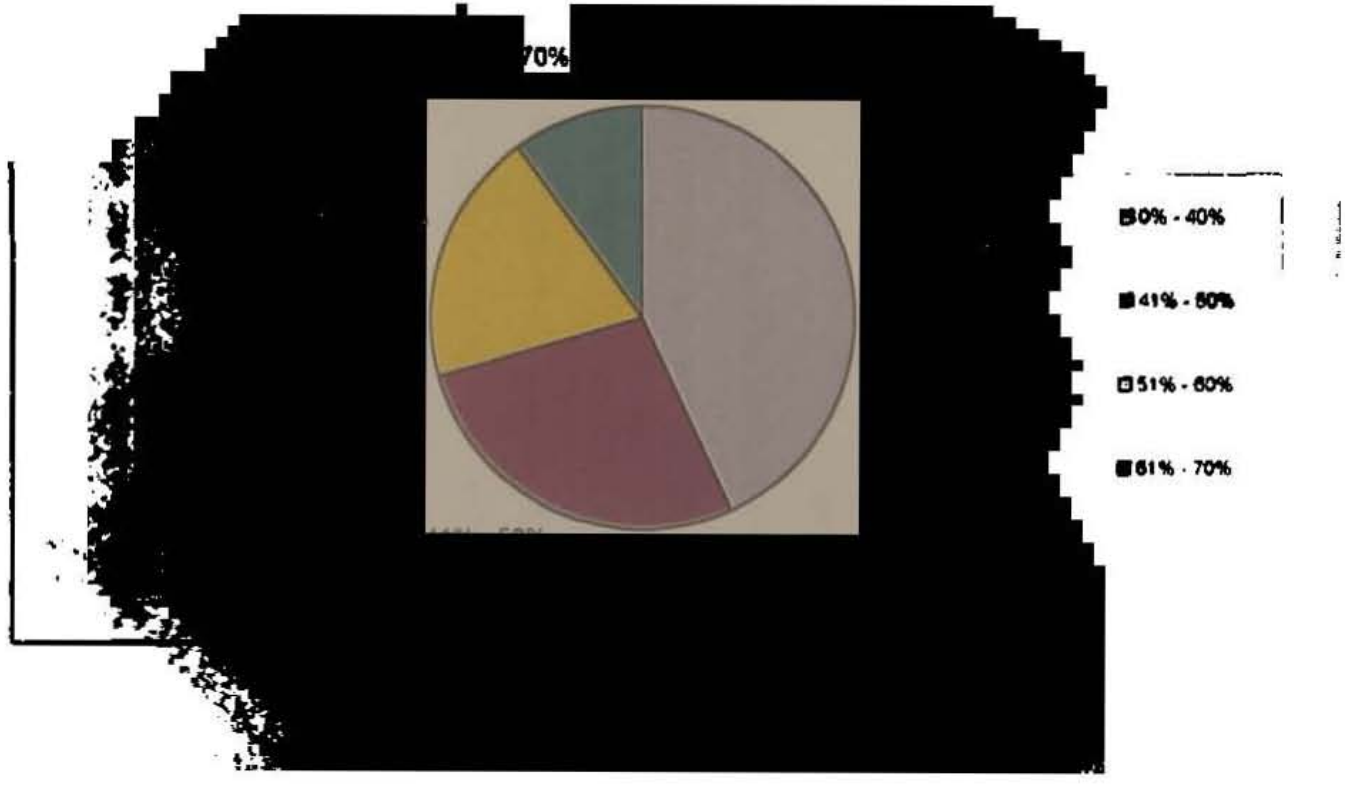
In a separate discussion with teachers, they admitted that what the learners said concerning their style of teaching was true. The teachers also expressed their frustration about the situation. First, they admitted that they did not know how to handle such mixed ability classes, which seemed to pose problems to the learners. They also said the recommended English textbooks did not come with teacher's handbooks and this further added to their problems.

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Figure 10

Proficiency Score (%)	Science (%)	Arts (%)	Total (%)
0% - 40%	53	33	43
41% - 50%	25	30	28
51% - 60%	13	26	20
61% - 70%	9	11	10



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They added that weak students, who were admitted to the first year class remained weak students in the final year and this obviously meant they were not using the right teaching strategies. This comment is interesting in the sense that the same concern has been raised by Tandoh (1987:112) in a research which looks at the English language of University of Ghana students. Tandoh concludes that the level of language skills among first year students remain unchanged even after they have progressed to the final year; when any improvement does occur, it is only minimal and occurs in an unpredictable way.

According to the teachers, about 70% of their class needed one kind of help or another to enable them to perform better in class. However, the loaded syllabus, which they had to complete in a short time, made it difficult for them to pause to ask questions during lessons. The issue of 'time' came up several times during the discussion. The teachers explained that the Ghana Education Service expected them to teach a minimum of twenty-eight, forty-minute periods each week. At the end of each term, teachers were expected to hand in grades for twelve marked assignments which comprised class work, project work, class assignment/tests and homework.

When all the English language teachers of the school were interviewed, most of them said that they taught five classes with an average class size of forty-five students. Therefore, grading took much of their time and prevented them from thinking about strategies which could help their students. It was discovered during the discussion with the students that eight of the assignment types, which were

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given to them as either class or homework, were not a true reflection of their ability since they copied from friends because they did not understand the work.

From the discussion above, it is clear that teachers and students alike need help to cope with the situation. Both teachers and students recognize that there is a gap between the proficient and the less proficient student, which needs to be bridged. There is therefore the need to come up with teaching strategies that will address the needs of large mixed ability classes. These strategies should also help teachers to use effectively the short time available for language teaching. In addition, assignments must also be seen as useful tools in the learning process, and teachers need guidance in making such work interesting and useful.

To enable the researcher to have a first-hand information about the situation that both the students and teachers described, teaching was observed for one term and the textbook used was evaluated. The findings are discussed below.

4.4 The Effectiveness of Teaching Methods and Textbook Used

This section describes and assesses the teaching methods used by both teachers and evaluates the textbooks used in terms of the issue of heterogeneity.

4.4.1 Classroom Observation

Both teachers either stood or sat in front of the class and taught lessons by following the textbook very closely. In fact they went through the book from one

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page to another. The teachers usually asked a student to read relevant portions of the book to the class and explained points made. The blackboard, which is a useful tool in the classroom for varying activities as well as getting students to actively participate in class, was mainly used during grammar lessons to explain some grammar points. In the arts class, for example, the teacher seldom wrote on the blackboard. This may place "visual people" at a disadvantage. Such people like to see the language written down for analysis.

Group work was not organized for students. This limited active involvement by students. For example, most of the questions asked during the period of observation were teacher initiated. Thus cooperative learning, student directed learning, and small group interaction were not encouraged. Questions mostly came from the teachers and were usually answered by students who volunteered to do so. Some students therefore did not actively participate in lessons throughout the period of observation.

Some aspects of the English syllabus received more attention than others. A great deal of time was spent on the teaching of grammar and reading comprehension. No time was spent on speech work and very little attention was given to writing activities. The teachers, during an interview, said that much attention was not paid to speech work because they had very little time to cover the grammar and reading comprehension sections of their textbook which was rather extensive. Perhaps if teachers adapt a more integrative approach to the teaching of English in the classroom by paying equal attention to all components of the language, they may cater for the varied needs and interest of the students.

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They will also help students to see the link between the varied aspects of the English language.

Since both teachers strictly adhered to the textbook, there was very little difference in the teaching method they used. During grammar lessons, the teachers explained the grammar points to the class, and students were asked questions based on what had been taught as well as on the previous lesson. The striking thing about these grammar lessons was that it seemed that students always had problems answering questions based on previous grammar lessons taught. Teachers verbally expressed their disappointment when students could not, for example, tell what a clause was. Grammar was taught in a very traditional way, so a lot of attention was paid to the rules of grammar.

During comprehension lessons students who could read well were asked to read aloud after which the questions in the course books were answered orally. For their homework, students were also asked to answer some of the questions in writing. Again, during these lessons it was observed that only particular students volunteered to answer questions while the rest of the students sat down and listened.

Having discussed what happened in the classes observed, this work will now examine the contents of the textbook, since it seems to play a key role in the teaching and learning process.

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4.4.2 The Senior Secondary Core English Textbook

The Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) and some examiners of the West African Examination Council prepared the syllabus on which the textbook is based.

According to the authors, a needs analysis was conducted and the results, which appear on the first page of the syllabus, form the objective of the Senior Secondary Core English programme, which every student is expected to study. The authors hope that the textbook would:

1. Remedy the deficiencies in the Senior Secondary School products' communicative competence;
2. Reinforce and develop further those language skills and competencies which were acquired at the Junior Secondary School level;
3. Generate in students a love for reading for enjoyment.
4. Revise students' level of proficiency in English usage to enable them to understand what they hear and read and to communicate ably with other users of English;
5. Prepare them to be able to function effectively either i) on their own or ii) in offices and other work situations or iii) in tertiary institutions;
6. Enable all products of the Senior Secondary School to have access to the accumulated knowledge of their chosen fields and also to facilitate their sharing and benefits of such knowledge with others.

(1991:1)

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CRDD proposed that the textbook should include activities that help students to describe aspects of Ghanaian cultural practice in appropriate ways to improve students' spoken English. English literature is introduced in the textbook to generate in students a love of reading for enjoyment and to give them the opportunity to see language in use.

4.4.2.1 Content

The textbook uses an integrated approach. A unit may therefore contain lessons in reading comprehension, vocabulary, language study (which is mainly grammar but sometimes discusses appropriate use of language for writing activities), speech work, note taking, composition writing and literature. To perhaps prevent monotony, each unit of the course does not follow one particular pattern of sequence. For example, while Unit One starts with "language study", Unit Two starts with reading and unit six starts with "writing".

Books 2 of the Senior Secondary School English textbook which was used in both classes observed contains activities that have been written or selected for their functional and interest value. Relevant material based on the Ghanaian situation and culture is familiar to learners and therefore creates the opportunity to use authentic language. For example the book has passages on health care, football, and other day-to-day activities. It is evident from the selected passages that the authors of the book tried to select some passages to suit the backgrounds of learners.

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Even though the activities provided in the textbook might help students to achieve communicative skills, they are not enough. There are certain aspects of the book which need to be carefully looked at, and these are discussed below.

The uneven spread of topics in the individual units may reveal that some topics receive very little attention. An examination of the textbook used revealed that there is only one guided conversation activity, two note-taking activities, six composition writing exercises, five selections on literature, and eight speech work activities. On the other hand, twenty reading activities have been presented, while twenty-five activities have been devoted to language study, mainly grammar. If teachers are to strictly follow the book, then this is a cause for worry.

Even though a textbook may emphasize certain aspects of English over others, teachers must learn to constantly find out what students need most by asking them to say what they really have problems with. The response received during the interview showed that students needed more writing activities.

Even though the developers of the syllabus emphasize the need to communicate, writing activities and conversation practice exercises are given very little attention. Secondly, the textbook encourages a teacher-centered approach, which gives very little opportunity for students to interact in groups. Points are usually explained after which students are asked to answer questions. Therefore learners with different learning styles are not given the chance to work on a variety of activities.

Controlled grammar practice features significantly in the textbooks. Again this may have to be carefully looked at since recent research seems to agree with

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Ellis (1990:192) that 'controlled practice appears to have little long term effect on accuracy with which new structures are performed'. Even though controlled practice is good, too much of it does not help the learner to experiment with the language.

The hold on the learners and the teachers by the writers of the textbook seems to be too rigid. For example, specific instructions, as opposed to guidelines, are sometimes given to show how the class should be managed. On page 139 of Book 2 for example, the textbook writers give students the following instructions:

> Draw a line down the middle of one page of your exercise book, so that the page is divided into two sections... What you are doing in this exercise is learning how to group the points that belong together...

This assumes that students could not arrive at the same conclusion by using their own preferred learning styles. Learners should be left to make discoveries for themselves because there are several learners who learn better that way. Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith (1988) assert that the role of the classroom and of teaching materials is to aid the learner to make efficient use of the resources in order to facilitate self-discovery. Tomlinson (1994), Bolitho and Tomlinson (1995) and Prodromou (1995) have expressed similar views. Different learners have different learning styles so teachers must ensure that just as this style of teaching is suitable for those who are dependent learners, students who are more independent and want to learn from their own experience should have their needs catered for at one time or the other. This implies that language

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instruction, as much as possible, has to be based on a variety of cognitive styles (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991) and teachers must be helped to vary their teaching style by drawing on information from learner's background.

A look at the book helps one to see why some students are dissatisfied with the classroom activities. The materials do not offer the learners the much-needed variety. For example, students could be encouraged to do some pair and group work. Independent learning as well as cooperative learning should be encouraged in class so that the learning process will be more effective. Additionally, it is important that learners are given the opportunity to interact for several reasons. If learners are given the opportunity to use the target language in several ways, they will be helped to check the effectiveness of their internal hypotheses especially if activities encourage them to use language slightly above their current proficiency (Swain 1985). Sharwood-Smith (1981) also adds that communicative interaction among students provide opportunities for learners to pick up language from the new input generated by students themselves while learners output becomes an informative source of input. Knowledge of theories such as these helps one to understand what students miss when cooperative learning is not encouraged in class. In the final chapter of this work, tasks based on these theories will be suggested for classroom use.

While Hadfield (1992) and Ur (1996) offer teachers practical guidelines on how to teach mixed ability groups in their English language textbooks, Ghanaian teachers have been left alone in this matter which concerns them. If all Ghanaian teachers were trained in ELT methods and therefore had some

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background knowledge on how to handle such classes, and if there were teacher handbooks and supplementary instructional materials, then the current textbook would be considered adequate. However, since many of the teachers are not experts in ELT, it is crucial for them to be assisted in handling such classes effectively. The textbooks that they are expected to use should provide such help.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine the nature of heterogeneity in two-second year classes of the Tema Methodist Day Secondary School.

By means of questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation, the study revealed that the classes were made up of mixed ability groups of learners, whose background seemed to have something to do with their proficiency levels. Knowledge of this should help the teacher to provide facilities which enhance students' communicative skills in the classroom. Again the interviews revealed that students' learning styles and needs were not being catered for and that could be one of the causes for the poor performance in English. Finally, a look at textbooks and teaching methods adopted by the teachers revealed a lack of variety in classroom activities, and of effective methods of assessing students' work. If teachers organized feedback sessions, some of the frustration experienced by the learners and teachers could be eliminated. This calls for a learner-centered atmosphere in spite of the number of students in each class and the short time within which teachers are supposed to complete the syllabus.

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Indeed a look at the teaching that went on in both classes revealed certain lapses which need to be addressed if students should be helped to communicate effectively in English. Students must be assisted to be more open, and to express their needs to teachers.

In the final chapter of this study, suggestions will be offered to help teachers to handle more effectively large heterogeneous classes in Ghana.



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CHAPTER FIVE

WAYS OF DEALING WITH LARGE HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Rinvoluncri (1986), who has studied mixed ability classes, has one important thing to say about them. He says the idea of teaching unitary lessons is odd and classes should be considered as having separate individuals and not a group. This is to say that any teacher who does not vary his or her teaching style is not doing the right thing. Brown (1987:95) reiterates this point by saying that "The teacher needs to recognize and understand a multiplicity of cognitive variables active in the second language process and to make appropriate judgements about individual learners, meeting them where they are and providing them with the best possible opportunities for learning".

The assertions made by both Rinvoluncri and Brown above seem to suggest that if all students in large heterogeneous classrooms should benefit from their English lessons, and be able to communicate more effectively, then teachers must plan a variety of appropriate lessons to meet the needs of learners. This chapter therefore looks at how teachers can vary classroom activities to suit the needs of learners in these mixed ability classes.

Recommendations for the improvement of the teaching and learning situation in the SSS classes will be done in the light of the following limitations identified.

1) Calibre of Teachers

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a) The teacher of the arts class investigated is a graduate teacher who read French and specialized in the teaching of French.

b) The teacher of the science class is a graduate of the University of Science and Technology, who read English and French at the university level but has no background in Education.

2) Textbooks

a) Handbooks for teachers, which should go with the recommended textbooks for the course, are not available.

b) No provision has been made in the textbook for low achievers or high achievers. The books have been written for learners who can learn at the same pace.

c) Lack of supplementary readers and teaching equipment.

3) Recommendations by GES

a) Syllabus: Time for the completion of the heavily loaded syllabus is too short.

b) Work Load: GES insists that teachers teach a minimum of twenty-eight periods per week. Teachers handle five classes with an average of forty-five students. Thus the minimum number of students each teacher teaches is two hundred and twenty-two. Again, these students are to present at least, twelve assignments for marking and recording for continuous

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assessment. This adds up to at least, a total of 2,475 scripts for each teacher for each term.

In spite of these issues raised, the teacher in the Ghanaian secondary school must be helped to teach learners in the short teaching time available. The teachers have to adopt methods which will keep their learners motivated while ensuring that all learners in the class are taught effectively, in spite of their varied background.

Suggestions offered in this chapter include the use of the following:

1) A culture/background sensitive pedagogy.
2) Effective classroom interaction.
3) Teaching methods and materials to suit the needs of learners.
4) Group-work in large heterogeneous classes.

It is hoped that these suggestions will bring together the differences exhibited by each learner and allow these differences to turn into the strength which is necessary for the achievement of the common goal of the English language lessons.



5.2.1 Culture/Background Sensitive Pedagogy

A culture/background sensitive pedagogy requires the teacher to investigate the background of learners in an informal way, and use the information in innovative ways to help them to develop their language skills effectively.

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This recommendation is based on the fact that learners do not go to the classroom with no knowledge of the world. Their cultural and linguistic background, among others, will help them view the content of lessons from various angles. Some students in a particular class may understand lessons taught because they are familiar with the issues addressed. Other students may struggle with those same concepts, merely because of their limited linguistic exposure and knowledge of the world, which provide appropriate schema for understanding the text used in the class.

As has already been discussed, students who come from a fairly affluent background, who have been helped by their parents to acquire a reading culture, may be familiar with several issues raised in class and therefore may only have few problems in the English language class. On the other hand, students who have not had that opportunity will not only have to try to understand the grammar point taught, but the context in which the language is learnt. This is not to suggest that the more proficient students will always be at an advantage. There are times when they will be handicapped because the lesson may perhaps be based on activities or cultural practices which the less proficient learners are more familiar with.

A culture/background sensitive pedagogy should take these issues into consideration and explore the previous knowledge of students before any lesson. Teachers are required to ask several questions, not only based on what was learnt in the previous lesson (as has been the usual practice) but on the text to be used. While students talk about what they know, the teacher can use that opportunity to

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help all students to use appropriate language to talk about their culture. This, if well done, may equip students to use the English language in real situations which they are likely to encounter. Students with limited exposure will also be privileged to add to their knowledge of the world if the teacher creates added opportunities for them to use the new language in different contexts. The reading passage on page 23 of the course book for example may be used to illustrate this point. The passage is an extract from Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. It describes the home of the boy and introduces readers to members of his family. Quite a lot is said about his strict father who he feared and had no real relationship with. Questions that have been asked in the book are purely content questions. However this passage may be used in several different ways in the classroom to enable students to share their own experiences by describing their varied home environments. This would certainly help them use appropriate language to describe their own home environments and help members of the class to learn more about what happens in other homes.

Again, if the teacher is able to find out from students how often they read, listen, and communicate in the English language, he/she may adopt strategies to whip up interest in reading, which in turn will help students to improve on their communication skills. For example, if students are not enthusiastic about reading books, newspapers and magazines, the teacher could display books, newspapers and magazines which have further information on interesting issues discussed in class, to illustrate how healthy reading habits may be an added advantage in the language classroom. She could motivate them to read, by reading out interesting

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portions to the class. Another way of motivating students to read widely is to tell students that they will score marks for identifying, reading and summarizing short pieces of information they read, which highlight grammar points learnt or topics discussed in class.

The students may also be encouraged to write short articles based on lessons taught for a class magazine or notice board. This will serve as a useful assignment which may reduce the risk of copying. Students may also be encouraged to learn to listen to English programmes. At least, once a week, they should be given the chance to listen to a recorded version of the news broadcast on radio in class. This will be a valuable activity to improve their listening comprehension. Students must be encouraged to capitalize on their English speaking environment to refine their English. Perhaps this integrated approach to learning may help the students to see and use the target language in several interesting ways.

Again, teachers using culture/background pedagogy must know the cultural practices of students which enhance or inhibit the communication and learning processes in learners' own cultural or home environments. Teachers can capitalize on this information to improve and modify their own teaching techniques. Some students, for example, come from homes where they are encouraged to exchange ideas freely with adults while others come from homes where they have been told it is rude to do so. It is likely that students will display the same habits in class. Teachers should therefore not rashly conclude that those who do not usually talk do not have valuable contributions to make in class.

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Teachers in the classrooms investigated, for example, admitted that they were tempted to call upon those who usually answered questions to do so because of lack of time. If the classroom is where students learn to communicate in English, opportunity must be given to as many students as possible to share ideas in the target language. Students who will not readily volunteer to speak in class should be encouraged to do so in an accommodating classroom environment. Knowledge of the behaviour of introverts and extroverts should help the teacher to be more accommodating. Studies have shown (Kurcinka 1991), for example, that introverts get their energy by being alone or sharing ideas with one or two special people. They prefer to react with the world on the inside by reflecting on their thoughts before sharing them with others. With this knowledge, teachers must vary their techniques by offering the opportunity for students to reflect on questions in pairs or individually.

Furthermore, a careful look at what happens in Ghanaian homes shows that many Ghanaian children learn in groups. They are made to perform many household tasks in pairs or in groups. Usually the 'leader' of the group teaches the rest how to perform the task successfully while the other member or members of the group ask for clarification through negotiation of meaning. In addition, children and adolescents have always used groups as a face saving device at home. Ideas or requests they wish to express to parents are done through a more vocal sibling. It is therefore unfortunate that such skills used by students at home are not often drawn into language classes. Group-work is therefore one technique a culture/background sensitive pedagogy should take advantage of in the

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Ghanaian classroom. This technique may help to bridge the gap between the proficient and less proficient students if handled well. Group-work may also serve as an avenue through which shy or less proficient students may convey their valuable ideas. These ideas will be discussed in the group but conveyed to the class by the leader.

By carefully listening to interactions within the groups, the teachers can focus their attention on language problems students come to the class with. They may therefore reduce their work load by focusing more on these language items through interesting activities while paying less attention to parts of the syllabus which students are familiar with.

As a further illustration of how the culture sensitive pedagogy can affect classroom work, the students in the science class who admitted that they used very little English outside class and rarely read anything outside the recommended textbooks could be encouraged to read and take turns to share interesting information in the first ten minutes of the English class. Again, they could be assisted to pay attention to how the writers of their science textbooks are able to convey appropriate meaning through the correct use of language items being learnt in class. Such methods may go a long way to help solve language problems and provide a way for students who cannot read storybooks because they have so much to do in their subject areas.

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5.2.2 Effective Classroom Interaction

Teachers' own competence in English is central to effective classroom interaction between teachers and students as well as between students and students. For example, the data analyzed show that for the majority of the subjects for this study, the environment for learning English is the school; this suggests that teachers' own proficiency should be high in order that they can provide the appropriate language model.

Teachers must remember that there are students who learn to speak by listening to them. Consequently, those who do not work on their own proficiency will create problems for such students. There are several ways in which teachers can improve on their own communication skills. First, there are quite a number of English textbooks which are useful and contain self-help study guides in many bookshops all over the country. It will be worthwhile for teachers to buy these and use them to improve their own competence. Second, all teachers in the English department must be encouraged to write papers on language issues they wish to discuss and read them at departmental seminars every term. If this is done, members will be encouraged to find out appropriate ways of conveying their ideas. Finally, it may be a useful idea for teachers to take short proficiency courses or regularly listen to good English language programmes on radio. They may help each other if they make it a point to use the language they have acquired by speaking English at all times on the school compound.

Teacher-student interaction can take many forms. For example, teachers can provide a rich variety of input by building on what learners say. Restating

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itself. For example, 'Sister' or ' A sister'. "WH"-questions are formed in the same way as Yes/No questions, but they begin with a "WH"-word. Examples of these are, 'when', 'where', 'why', 'how', etc. These also elicit information. Teachers must use these question types to elicit short or long answers as well as whole class or individual response from learners. When a student does not produce the expected answer, short prompts may help. For example, 'Tell me more about your sister'. This cue will definitely make the student say more about her sister. If the student does not know how to begin, a further cue may help. If teachers constantly elicit information by using appropriate question types, students are likely to learn these appropriate norms which will make them feel more confident when asking their own questions. Some time should also be spent on teaching these norms.

Instructions and explanations must be given simply and clearly. Teachers should consciously use simple expressions over and over again. More complex language can later on be used. Initially, the teacher must ensure that students understand what is being said by asking some students to say the same thing in other acceptable ways. This strategy provides listening practice which is useful and also provides students with authentic language they will need.



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5.2.3 Modifying Teaching Methods to Suit the Needs of the Mixed Ability Class

Since the current textbook used does not seem to meet all the language needs of the students in the classes investigated, it will be advisable for teachers to look beyond the SSS textbook for classroom activities.

The English language teacher must on regular basis vary methods used in teaching. These must be based on existing theory and practice. To be able to blend different methods of teaching to suit the varied needs of the individuals, student-teachers must be exposed to current issues in language learning and teaching. In addition the Ministry of Education, through seminars, workshops and journals must provide on-going training for teachers. Teachers in the classes investigated knew neither the methods they were using nor the outcome of those methods. This seems to suggest that such teachers need information on the variety of methods they can use, and the strengths and weaknesses of such methods. This knowledge will help teachers know, for example, that the Audio-lingual method, which places emphasis on pattern practice drills, is not suitable for the analytical minded students, who tend to prefer the Academic or Grammar Translation method. Again, while some students need to visualize concepts, others require time to reflect on what has been taught. The teacher is therefore supposed to reflect on his teaching and make appropriate choices which will meet the needs of the individual learners.

What is being suggested here is that teacher-trainees require some information in language teaching so that they can make informed decisions on the

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appropriate method to use in each situation. In addition, opportunities should be provided for teachers in the field to update their knowledge and skills.

Since the students need opportunities in the classroom to practice the English language, teachers must adopt a learner-centered approach to teaching. This means that just as students were able to say what they needed most during the focus group discussion, they should periodically be encouraged by teachers to discuss the portions of the syllabus they do not quite understand. Students are then given the opportunity to perform tasks in those areas while the teacher acts as a facilitator. Group work is very useful here since learners will be given an opportunity to use the target language to ask each other questions and also make relevant contributions. The tasks should be interesting, and clear instructions must be given orally and then written on the blackboard for the successful completion of the tasks.

The teacher must not only go through the recommended SSS textbook page by page with students but must lead whole class discussions in such a way that many students will do more of the talking. Shy students for example can be encouraged to contribute in class. This should be done in such a way that the learner does not feel intimidated. For example, the teacher may say: "We have not heard from you today, Ama, What's your opinion?" Again student comments and questions should be directed back to another student. For example: "This is a good idea, Kofi; Mary, what do you think about that?". This way students will actively participate in the lessons. The teacher must build upon ideas provided in textbooks and allow as many students as possible to share their ideas.

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The teacher must also constantly assess students' learning and progress. For example, the less proficient student will learn better if asked to answer questions verbally at short intervals (i.e. after each major concept has been explained). In addition, short assignments based on what has been taught should be given as homework. In the classes observed, teachers hardly ever allowed students to give an overview of the lessons. The teacher should ask several students to say what they have gained from the lesson. Lessons should be planned in such a way that learners are allowed to ask questions. This strategy will help the teacher to further clarify ideas presented in each lesson. If students have clearly understood the lesson, the risk of copying from friends will be lessened. When teachers accumulate assignments and dish them out to students for the sake of continuous assessment records, then the whole purpose of assignments, which is to find out how well students understood the lesson, is defeated.

All students in the classroom must be taught to grapple with the challenging tasks suggested in the syllabus since all learners will be made to write the same final examinations. It was therefore suggested in the review of available literature in chapter two that individualized and open-ended activities as suggested by Ur and Prodromou had to be modified to suit the Ghanaian context. This is because both activities highlight flexibility. Learners, according to the researchers, are allowed to decide what they want to learn when they do not find the recommended tasks appealing. Teachers in Ghana may not be able to do this in their classes because of time constraint and the need to complete a syllabus. However, these teachers may provide open-ended tasks, which the more proficient

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students may be encouraged to answer. Open-ended activities may be extended so that those proficient students will write their own stories in tense forms introduced in lessons. These activities can be given as homework. The students must be encouraged to read some of their interesting stories to the class since they may serve as an encouragement to the rest. Again, slower learners should be helped to gradually move from answering close-ended tasks to more open-ended ones instead of having that option all the time. The less proficient students may further be given short assignments on aspects of the course they have problems with.

Teachers often complain that there is very little time available for individualized tasks in the classroom. However, because this strategy encourages individuals to identify areas they need to work on, a place should be found for such activities especially when teachers cannot give much individual attention to students during lessons because of time and the number of students in class. It may be advisable for teachers to make meaningful comments on students' work, and to ask them to pay careful attention to those comments. Students should be encouraged to improve on the quality of their work in their own private study periods. Corrections should be marked promptly by teachers, as students often rely on how well they do as a way of monitoring their own progress



5.2.4 Organizing Group-Work in a Large Heterogeneous Class

The importance of group-work cannot be overemphasized. Group-work is an activity which helps learners to communicate and pool together the rich diversity of knowledge they come to the classroom with. However, what

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determines its usefulness is how it is organized and what goes into it. Many teachers in Ghanaian secondary schools avoid it because their classes are large.

A useful way to organize group-work in large classes is to create mixed ability groups of five, (since grouping by ability may slow down the progress of learners) and engage them in collaborative writing tasks or discussions. When a lesson on paragraph writing, for example, is taught, the teacher may ask students to develop four paragraphs of an essay topic. Groups are excellent for brainstorming activities before individuals write essays so; students can sit in groups and decide what to write. They may also pool their ideas together and write four topic sentences. Each member of the group should be asked to develop one topic sentence while the fifth member of the group acts as secretary. Finally, the secretary may read what the group has been able to write. As this is being done, students may edit the work. When the group returns to the classroom, issues that emerge from their group work should be discussed. Some group secretaries should be allowed to read at least one paragraph to the whole class for discussion.

For reading activities, it may be helpful for teachers to assess the reading level of students. Learners with similar reading problems must periodically be grouped together so that assistance may easily be offered. This must not be done often since every member of the class has something to contribute to the others.

Material for group-work must be varied. In fact, subject matter should sometimes be inter-disciplinary to cater for the varied interests of learners. For example, group work must be organized for all aspects of the English language

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programme so that some learners who are not very proficient may have very useful ideas in their preferred areas of study.

To reduce the workload on teachers, learners may sometimes be asked to edit their friend's first draft of essays. This will also expose learners to various ways of writing and give them the opportunity to use what they have learnt in class in practical ways. Activities must be carefully designed so that students share their varied experiences. These activities allow students to initiate learning and create the opportunity for learners to use the English language.

For large classes, it may be useful for the Ministry of Education to employ national service personnel, or newly trained teachers as assistant teachers in future. These teachers may also help by offering the needed assistance to groups. Again, marking of assignments may be reduced by occasionally allowing members of a group to present one essay for marking. In this case, each member of the group who contributed to the work scores the same mark. To ensure that members make meaningful contributions, the secretary may attach a note to the completed assignment spelling out how each member contributed to the work.

Group work creates an opportunity to speak English and encourages students to be more involved in classroom activities. Shy students feel more secure and are encouraged to contribute to the lesson. For the less proficient student or students with particular language problems, group work provides an opportunity to learn from other students. It is therefore an activity which must be encouraged in the language classroom.

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5.2.5 Modifying Textbook Materials

Considering the fact that a number of untrained teachers are handling mixed ability classes, textbooks have to be modified to meet the needs of learners. Additionally, these textbooks must be accompanied by handbooks. In this section some suggestions for improving the books will be offered.

The textbook activities have to provide for the broad range of abilities and needs of the students. For example, they should promote individualized as well as cooperative learning. Apart from the exercises provided in the book, a number of group work activities which may also promote creativity and discovery learning should be introduced. For example, learners may sometimes be encouraged to discover some rules of grammar by themselves if they are provided with a number of sentences in which the language point has been used. Students may be encouraged to do these activities as individuals or in groups. For the early finisher of tasks, the textbook must provide extended activities that one can work on. As discussed in chapter four of this work, textbooks used must also provide a model for expressing social and cultural concepts in English through activities which allow students to express their point of view.

Traditional stereotypical gender roles offered in textbooks must be changed to reflect the current trend in society. For example, we encounter men helping in the kitchen and female boxers or footballers and these should sometimes be portrayed in the books.

Maps and charts must also be present in the textbook for visual learners while silent reading as well as reading aloud activities must be provided for

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analytic and auditory learners. There must also be a balance between written and oral activities, while equal attention should also be given to all components of the subject, namely, reading, writing, grammar and speech work and literature.

Comprehension questions must require not only literal responses that demonstrate the ability of students to understand the surface meaning of a text but deductive, inferential and evaluative responses. Questions in textbooks must include both open and closed-ended tasks

Deductive responses help students to demonstrate the ability to reach a logical conclusion by drawing on personal experience beyond the immediate context of the passage. For example, the meaning of idiomatic expressions used in a passage may be asked. Inferential questions help teachers to demonstrate a logical conclusion based on information given. For example, "How do you know..." types of questions help students to make inferences. Finally, evaluative questions encourage the ability to appraise; to form judgements and weigh the issues raised in the text. Here open-ended questions may be asked. For example, students may be asked if issues raised also affect members of their society, etc.

Answering reading comprehension questions can be very challenging for learners with limited writing skills; so the textbook writers must include self-help activities that may help such learners. These may include copying out and completing sentences from texts, and sequencing activities which require students to write out sentences in logical order. The weak students can begin with these and gradually move to some challenging ones described above.

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Comprehension activities could be used to develop the understanding of structure, vocabulary and grammar of Standard English. If tasks are carefully designed students with individual language needs will be given the opportunity to work on their problem areas. See appendix 5 for useful tasks for teaching reading, writing, listening/speaking, grammar etc in the SSS class.

5.3 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the nature of heterogeneity in two senior secondary classrooms and to find out what problems it created for both teachers and learners in the context of English Language Teaching. It was discovered that learners came to the classroom with varied language needs and mixed abilities, which to a large extent emerged from their diverse background such as linguistic, educational, cultural and socio-economical.

The two teachers used in the study, who strictly adhered to the SSS English course books when teaching, discovered that their students were not improving on their communication skills. This work offers suggestions which demand that teachers constantly investigate the needs of students and adapt teaching methods and materials to suit their needs. Again, a culture/background sensitive pedagogy and effective classroom interaction activities have been proposed to meet the needs of these Ghanaian learners. Activities proposed will not place extra demands on teachers who handle large classes.

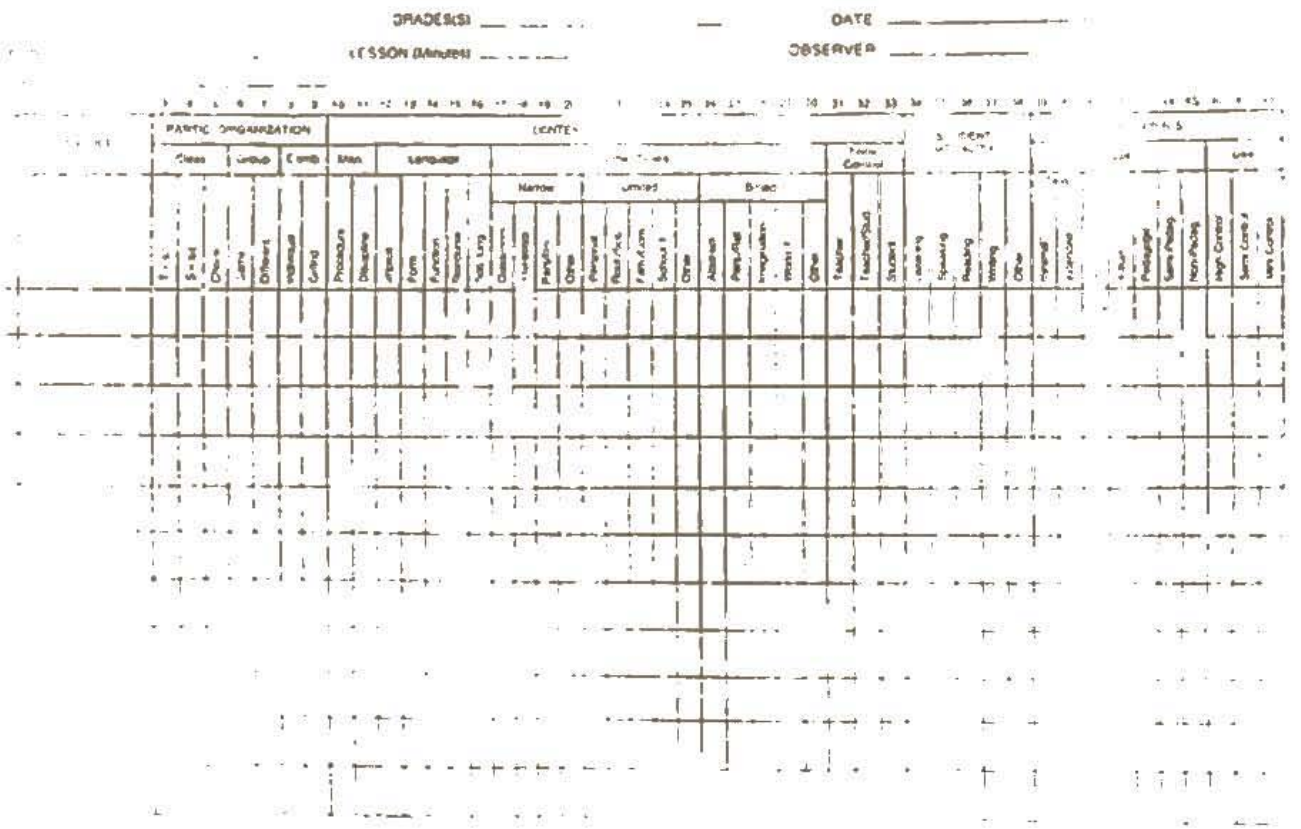
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It is recommended that teachers use knowledge of background of learners as a means of creating a rich classroom environment, where students will learn from each other. For learners who do not communicate well in the English language because they do not hear nor read enough English, teachers are advised to use the radio in classroom activities and encourage reading. If students complain that they do not have enough time to read, they must be encouraged to read their recommended textbooks more carefully and comment on how language they have learnt in the classroom has been used in meaningful contexts. On the whole, the findings and recommendations that have emerged from this research may be useful to English language teachers, syllabus and textbook writers, and policy makers. It is hoped that this work will initiate further interest for future research in the field.

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APPENDIX 1a

THE COLT OBSERVATION SCHEME

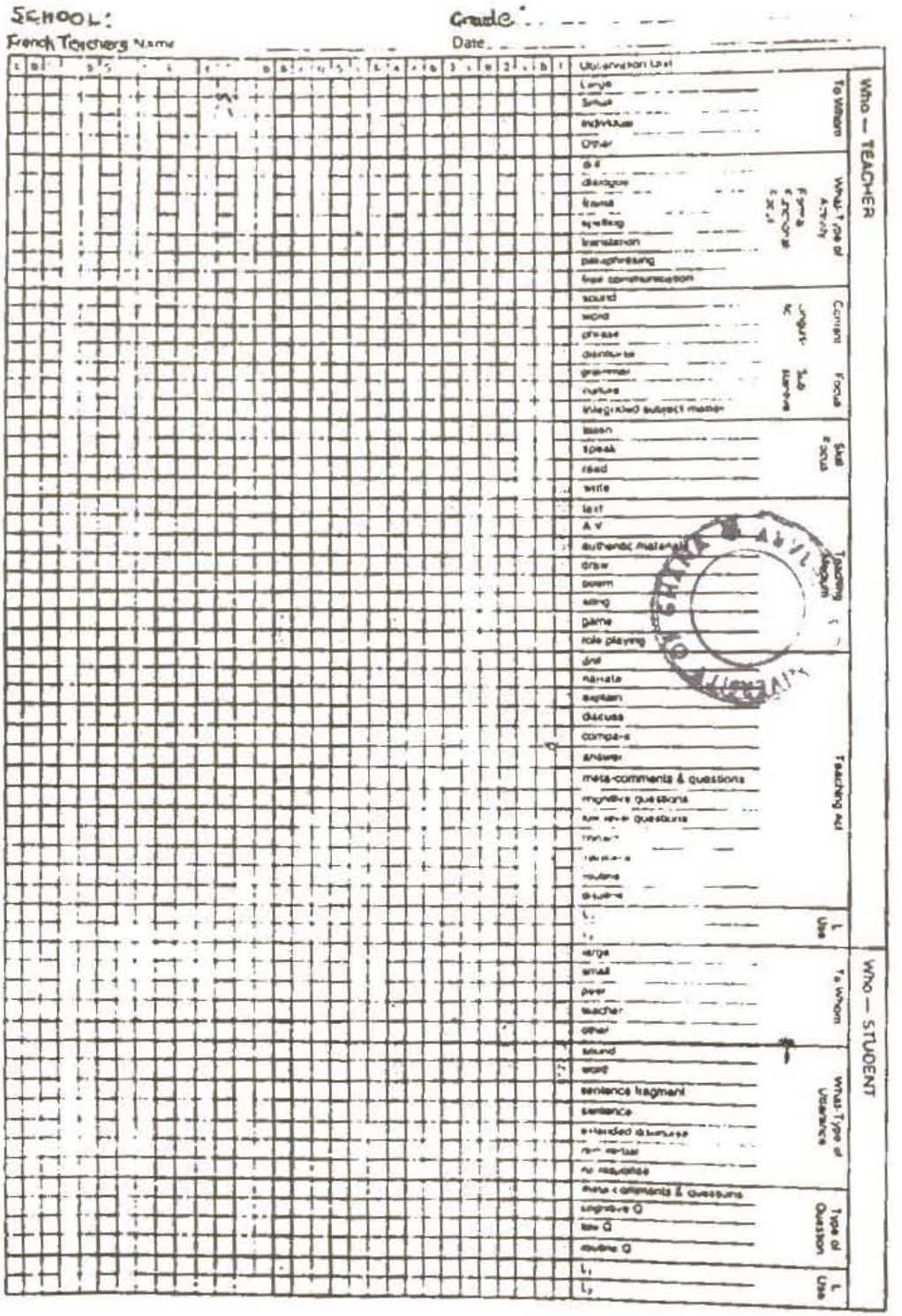


observation scheme.

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APPENDIX 1b

THE TALOS OBSERVATION SCHEME



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APPENDIX 2

OBSERVATIONAL FOCUS

STYLE(S) OF TEACHERS PRESENTATION (Describe)

Variety? .....

Teacher centred or learner centred? .....

Use of Textbooks.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATION

Controlled practice?.....

Group work? .....

Communication .....

Participation (Other).....



MAJOR STRENGTH OF LESSON

Interesting? .....

No cultural misunderstandings? .....

Comprehension checks?

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE (Describe)

Good relationship between teacher and student?

Any uncertainties about the lesson?

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(Issues which need to be clarified by teacher)

Suggestions:

.....

.....

.....

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APPENDIX 3
RESEARCH ON LINGUISTIC EXPOSURE OF STUDENTS

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed as part of a research to investigate the language background of Senior Secondary School students in Ghana.

Please be sincere in your responses. Information provided will be treated as confidential and will be used for the purpose of this research only.

Thank you.

1) PLEASE DO NOT INDICATE YOUR NAME.
2) TICK ONLY ONE ALTERNATIVE IN EACH OF THE QUESTIONS EXCEPT WHERE INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE.

EXAMPLE:

How often do you read?

a) very often b) often c) sometimes d) never

SECTION ONE

1. Which local language(s) do you speak?

.....

2. In which of your local languages can you read and write?

.....

3. In which language(s) were you brought up?

   a) Local language(s) only

   b) English language only

   c) Both local and English

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4. Generally, which language do you speak at home?.....

5. How often do you speak English at home?

a) i. Very often ii. Often iii. Sometimes
iv. Rarely v. Never

b) How often does your father speak English at home?
i. Very often ii. Often iii. Sometimes
iv. Rarely v. Never

c) How often does your mother speak English at home?
i. Very often ii. Often iii. Sometimes
iv. Rarely v. Never

d) How often do your brothers and sisters speak English at home?
i. Very often ii. Often iii. Sometimes
iv. Rarely v. Never

e) How often do your parents correct your mistakes (English)?
i. Very often ii. Often iii. Sometimes
iv. Rarely v. Never

f) How often do your parents encourage you to speak English?
i. Very often ii. Often iii. Sometimes
iv. Rarely v. Never

SECTION TWO [At the Primary School Level]

1. As a child, how often did you watch TV programmes?

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a) Very often a) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

2. As a child, how often did you listen to Radio/news in English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

3. As a child, how often did you attend English Service (Church/mosque)?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

4. As a child, how often did you read newspapers?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

5. As a child, how often did you read magazines written in English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

6. As a child, how often did you read English novels/story books?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

7. As a child, how often did you read books not recommended by your teacher?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

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8. As a child, how often did you use the dictionary?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

9. As a child, how often did you write compositions (in English)?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

10. As a child, how often did you tell stories in English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

11. As a child, how often did you speak English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

12. As a child, how often did you speak Pidgin English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

13. As a child, how often did you speak your local language(s)?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

14. As a child, how often did you participate in group discussion?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

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SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

1. As a student how often do you watch TV programmes in English?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never

2. As a student how often do you watch English films/video?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never

3. As a student how often do you listen to radio programmes in English?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never

4. As a student how often do you listen to Radio/TV news in English?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never



5. As a student how often do you attend seminars?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never

6. As a student how often do you listen to public lectures/talks?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never

7. As a student how often do you read English newspapers?

   a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

   d) Rarely e) Never

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8. As a student how often do you read magazines written in English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

9. As a student how often do you read English novels?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

10. As a student how often do you read recommended textbooks/journals?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

11. As a student how often do you use books not recommended?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

12. As a student how often do you use the dictionary?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

13. As a student how often do you use the encyclopedia?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

14. As a student how often do you write essays?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

15. As a student how often do you write reports?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes d)Rarely e)Never

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a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes d)Rarely e)Never

16. As a student how often do you give talks?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

17. As a student how often do you deliver oral reports?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

18. As a student how often do you speak English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

19. As a student how often do you speak Pidgin English?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

20. As a student how often do you speak your local language(s)?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

21. As a student how often do you participate in group discussions?

a) Very often b) Often c) Sometimes

d) Rarely e) Never

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SECTION THREE

How much English have you learnt from the following:

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1. Father a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
2. Mothera) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
3. Brother, Sisters and relatives
   a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
4. Teacher/Lecturers
   a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
5. Textbooks a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
6. Novels a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
7. Newspapers a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
8. Magazines a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
9. Television a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
10. Radio a) Very much b) Much c)Not much
    d) Not very much e) Nothing

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1. Father a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
2. Mothera) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
3. Brother, Sisters and relatives
   a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
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   d) Not very much e) Nothing
6. Novels a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
7. Newspapers a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
8. Magazines a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
9. Television a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
   d) Not very much e) Nothing
10. Radio a) Very much b) Much c)Not much
    d) Not very much e) Nothing

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11. Films/Video a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
d) Not very much e) Nothing

12. Public Lectures a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
d) Not very much e) Nothing

13. Friends/Colleagues a) Very much b) Much c)Not much
d) Not very much e) Nothing

14. Any other (Please specify)

SECTION FOUR

1. Assess your writing

a) Very good b) Good c) Average d) Fair e) Poor

2. Assess your written English

a) Very good b) Good c) Average d) Fair e) Poor

3. Indicate your grade in English language in the JSS examination.

.....

.....

4. Some students in the secondary schools speak/write poor English. What do you think is responsible for this?

.....

.....

5. Suggest ways by which the writing skills of all students in your class can be improved.

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11. Films/Video a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
d) Not very much e) Nothing

12. Public Lectures a) Very much b) Much c) Not much
d) Not very much e) Nothing

13. Friends/Colleagues a) Very much b) Much c)Not much
d) Not very much e) Nothing

14. Any other (Please specify)

SECTION FOUR

1. Assess your writing

a) Very good b) Good c) Average d) Fair e) Poor

2. Assess your written English

a) Very good b) Good c) Average d) Fair e) Poor

3. Indicate your grade in English language in the JSS examination.

.....

.....

4. Some students in the secondary schools speak/write poor English. What do you think is responsible for this?

.....

.....

5. Suggest ways by which the writing skills of all students in your class can be improved.

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.....

.....

SECTION FIVE

1. Gendera) Female b) Male

2. Age: a) Below 13 years b) 13-15 c) 16-18
   d) 19-21 e) Above 21

3. Schools attended:

Nursery:	Private school	Government school
Primary:	Private school	Government school
Middle:	Private school	Government school
JSS:	Private school	Government school

4. Parents' socio-economic class:
   a) High class b) Middle class c) Lower class
   d) Very low class



5. Parents' educational background:
   Father a) Highly educated (i.e. University graduate)
   b) Educated c) Not educated
   Mother a) Highly educated (i.e. University graduate)

6. Where did you grow up?
   a) Urban area b) Semi-urban area c) Rural area

7. i) Have you ever lived abroad? a) Yes b) No

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ii) If yes, where did you live and for how long?

.....

ESSAY WRITING

The purpose of this essay is two fold:

i) To find out students' perception of the English programme for SSS with a view to improving the programme.

ii) To assess the writing ability of students.

DO NOT INDICATE YOUR NAME

Essay Topic: My Impression of the SSS Core English Programme

This essay should include a paragraph which indicates how you have/have not gained from the large, mixed ability class you belong to. (Not more than two foolscap pages).

PLEASE ATTACH THE ESSAY TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU.

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APPENDIX 4

Interview Guide for Teachers

Questions

- For how long have you taught in this school?
- How do you compare the old system with the new?
- Does the syllabus enable you to use your own ideas/teaching methods?
- Are you able to complete the syllabus on schedule?
- Which teaching methods do you usually find yourself using?
- What results do you gain from each method?
- Are there certain things you think the course lacks? ie. do you think the course adequately meets the needs of students?

- What is the average class size?
- How many of such classes do you teach?
- How many assignments are you supposed to give per week/per term?
- What components of English do you teach?
- Do you find yourself teaching a mixed ability group of learners?
- Do you find yourself concentrating only on those who are fairly proficient?
- How do you deal with those who need extra help?
- What percentage of the class needs this kind of help?

- How much time do you give students to ask questions?
- Do you allow students time to correct mistakes in written assignments?

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- Which component of English is emphasized?
- Which will you rather emphasize and why?
- Do you think all students have the same language needs? Explain your answer.
- How do you deal with this?

- What are some of your concerns?
- What are some of the challenges you face in your class?
- Do you think you have been able to help some students in your class who are not very proficient? How?

Interview Guide for Students' Interview

(FOCUS GROUP)

- Do you think as students learning English as a second language you have gained a lot to communicate with?
- What other things would you have liked the course to teach?
- Considering the large classes you belong to, do you think your language needs are met as individuals?
- How would you like your teachers to deal with this?
- What are some of your problems (as language learners)?
- A lot of people complain that students of today have serious language problems. Do you think this is true? If so, what in your opinion is the reason for this and how do you think your teachers can solve the problem?



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- Even though you belong to the same class, do you recognize that some students in your class speak and write better English than others?
- How do you feel about this?
- How well do you think your teacher handles the situation?

  Any suggestions?
- How have the listening, reading, writing and speaking lessons (input) affected your writing (output).

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APPENDIX 5

A TEACHING GUIDE FOR THE SSS 2 TEACHERS IN LARGE HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES. (COMPREHENSION,WRITING, LISTENING/SPEAKING,GRAMMAR, EXTENDED AND (INDIVIDUALIZED ACTIVITIES)

Type of student(s)	Recommended Reading Comprehension Activities (Questions)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner.	1) Copy out part of a sentence and complete it in your own words. 2) Write out sentences in logical order (sequencing) 3) Answer questions in your own words.	For students with limited writing skills, a variety of approaches may be used to familiarize them with the kinds of structures useful for answering questions in their own words. The recommended questions may help. (Writing answers in carefully controlled conditions).
.....	.....	
More proficient student who is also an early finisher.	1) Ask students to provide additional questions. 2) Write a newspaper article. Using information in text. 3)Write a similar story based on personal	Provide additional tasks/extended activity.

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	experience or express point of view	
.....	.....	.....
Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles	Provide a variety of tasks: Sentence completion, multiple choice, true/false questions requiring complete answers. Also literal, deductive, inferential and evaluative questions must be asked.	If such a range is provided, all students will at least be able to provide answers for some of the questions asked.
.....	.....	.....
Time savers		Encourage students to discuss answers in class. Encourage peer-editing. Students should sometimes correct each other's work. Sometimes texts can be discussed in class but ask students to write answers at home.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Reading Comprehension Activities (Reading Activities)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner.	1) Attention of student should be drawn to a variety of styles, structures, genres, etc. 2) They should also be introduced to modern fiction, texts from a variety of cultures. 3) Transactional texts must also be used in class. 4) Reading for different purposes and at different speeds must be taught.	1) Students should be given interesting passages. Their reading should be developed through the use of progressively more challenging and demanding texts. Ignore sequence in textbook if it does not follow this pattern. 2) Teach variety of reading strategies a) Search reading i.e. skimming and scanning (for information location) b) Detailed reading
More proficient student who is also an early finisher ..... Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles ..... *Time savers*	..... See suggestions above	.... Make sure sometime is spent on getting the learners to understand reading skills taught (through practice) in the first few weeks. They will then be able to apply skills on their own for the rest of the time.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Reading Comprehension Activities (Meaning)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner.	a) In classroom discussion and writing, students must show that they understand the main supporting ideas and can provide the gist of the passage	Help learners to read for meaning.
More proficient student who is also an early finisher.	b) Students must be encouraged to develop their understanding of the grammar, structure and vocabulary. c) <u>Pre-reading</u> Prediction - discuss unfamiliar content/ideas.	b) Encourage students to write answers in complete sentences, using appropriate standard English. c) Do pre-reading, during reading and post-reading activities.
Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles	<u>Reading</u> d) Questions, which draw attention to meaning <u>Post-reading</u> Using text as model for their own writing. Also ask students to relate text to their own experiences, during whole class discussion.	(Provide close and open-ended tasks)
.....	.....	.....
Time savers	<u>Integrative approach</u> Build on their grammar and writing skills during reading comprehension lessons.	a) At the end of the lesson, it may be helpful for you to draw students attention to how some grammar points discussed previous lessons have been used in meaningful context. b) Also draw their attention to paragraph structure.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Writing Activity (Pre-writing)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner		Based on the fact that prior experience or knowledge of a subject give learners confidence and help them to perform better, provide experience through sharing of ideas in class. The essay topics may be discussed and outlines may be written in groups.
.....	.....	.....
More proficient student who is also an early finisher	Provide more than one question based on topic so student chooses a more demanding ones if they wish.	
.....	.....	.....
Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles	A variety of essay topics/questions must be provided. Students should be given the option to choose which they want to deal with. However, all topics must be discussed in class	A discussion of all topics will expose all students to experiences they have not had an opportunity to experience.
.....	.....	.....
Time savers		a) Groups should write outlines/plan of essay Cease opportunity to do speaking/listening here.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Writing Activity (Writing)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. And Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles.	Student to be encouraged through group work to learn how to write parts of his/her essay. Here, ideas are exchanged for planning the essays as well.	1) Group work is useful for helping students to assist each other to write portions of an essay. Part skills may be taught and in pairs or groups students can be encouraged to write either the introduction or conclusion of their essays.
.....	.....	.....
More proficient student who is also an early finisher.	More proficient students can be asked to act as group secretaries. They may also assist in peer editing	Sometimes it will be useful to ask some of the more proficient students to tell the class what they usually do to achieve good results.
.....	.....	
Time savers	Peer teaching may be done outside class hours and discussion of what learners have come up with may be discussed in class.	

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Types of Student(s)	Recommended Writing Activity (Editing)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles. ..... *Time savers*		a) Teacher may ask students to edit essays in groups. b) Individual essays marked by teacher must not just have generalized comments. Specific guidelines to help students improve or write better essays must be provided on separate sheets of paper. ..... Passing such comments may seem a waste of time but will eventually save a lot of time since students will begin to work on their problems identified.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Listening/Speaking Activities	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher. Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles.	Learners must be given the opportunity to listen to more proficient class members talking about a book they read or an interesting programme on T.V. etc. In groups, less proficient learners may also share ideas on their culture etc.	As students do group discussions, teacher must identify language problems which stem from their first language. These should be taught. b) Listening and speaking activities should help students to use appropriate language to express social and cultural concepts in English language. .....
Time savers	Instead of devoting a whole lesson to listening and speaking activities, ten minutes of each lesson may indirectly be used for it.	



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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Listening/Speaking Activities	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles. ..... Time savers	a) Students answer questions which deal with their language problems. b) Students must be helped to pronounce words properly so that there will be no problems of ambiguity	Listening/speaking lessons may be used for evaluating the programme. The teaching method, used may be discussed and learners must be encouraged to express themselves clearly. ..... Teacher may cause this opportunity to reflect on his/her teaching methods used.

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Types of Student(s)	Recommended Listening/Speaking Activities (Using Audio-Visuals)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles	Once a week (at least) students must be made to listen to news on radio in class and, once a month, watch an educational programme on television.	Teacher must find out how much they are able to hear from these two sources and help them overcome their problems through further drills.
.....	.....	.....
Time savers	These listening and speaking activities may be used to reinforce grammar points learnt.	Refer to 'time savers' for comprehension.

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Types of Student(s)	Recommended Listening/Speaking Activities (Using Audio-Visuals)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles	Once a week (at least) students must be made to listen to news on radio in class and, once a month, watch an educational programme on television.	Teacher must find out how much they are able to hear from these two sources and help them overcome their problems through further drills.
.....	.....	.....
Time savers	These listening and speaking activities may be used to reinforce grammar points learnt.	Refer to 'time savers' for comprehension.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Grammar Activities (Objectives to be considered)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles	a) Activities which enable students to use language appropriately to express meaning. b) Group work will encourage opinion gap tasks. Students should exchange ideas in groups *Examples used must be drawn from background of students	English used by students must be correct, clear and intelligible a) Intelligibility (Conveying ones message in an appropriate way). b) Clarity (Persons ability to understand the message or be understood. c) Correctness (What is appropriate in one situation may not be appropriate in another - Grammar rules must not be taught in isolation but contexts must be created to help students.

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Types of Student(s)	Recommended Grammar Activities (For all students)	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher. Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles.	Step 1: Students listen to examples provided Students work out how the grammar works (good for analytic students.) Teacher provides model and students provide language in controlled contexts i.e. gap filling, transformations etc. - create short sentences - write short paragraph	Step 1: Provide model (i.e. target structure in context) in a short dialogue or short story. Step 2: Isolate item and explain how they function, what they mean and rules that govern them (use L_1 background where appropriate) Step 3: Practice - Let learners show understanding by producing examples through drills - transformations, gap filling exercises etc. *aim at gradually allowing learners to gain a measure of autonomy as grammar is leant

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Grammar Activities	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner.	Grammar lesson	Use pair and group - work to practice target structure. - Give learners time to think after structure has been taught. - Provide black board work for learners who need to see the structure.
More proficient student who is also an early finisher.		- Provide written exercises for those who need practice.
Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles.		- Help learners produce correct answers by providing appropriate ones.
Time savers.		- Do not leave them alone to make mistakes.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Extended/Individua-lized Activities	Note for the Teacher
Not very proficient, slow learner. More proficient student who is also an early finisher. Mixed ability class with students with varied learning styles. ..... Time savers.	Each students should be encouraged to read the materials available. These may help to improve their work. ..... Students must be encouraged to monitor their own progress and discuss further issues with teacher.	Provide readers for each level. - Primary school readers, newspapers, magazines, a variety of English language textbooks may be displayed for students to choose from. - Teacher may use one of the free periods on school time table to answer individual questions and attend to individual needs. (It is likely that the more analytical science students will like to work on their own. But encourage them to talk).

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Type of Student(s)	Recommended Reading Activity. *Note for the Teacher*
Not very proficient, slow learner, from semi-urban or rural background	Read an interesting section of books or newspaper to increase knowledge of the world' of students. This may increase their desire to record on their own. - No reading tests should be given. Reading should be a pleasurable activity.
More proficient student who is also an early finisher *Mixed ability class, students with varied learning styles.*	Provide books for different levels. Provide a variety of genres. All literature have specific conventions and unique styles. Thus once understood through repeated reading, students will be able to discuss interesting features of the books they have read. They will also be exposed to ways of writing newspaper articles etc.

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Type of Student(s)	**Recommended Reading Activity.** *Note for the Teacher*
Not very proficient, slow learner, from semi-urban or rural background	Read an interesting section of books or newspaper to increase knowledge of the world' of students. This may increase their desire to record on their own. - No reading tests should be given. Reading should be a pleasurable activity.
More proficient student who is also an early finisher *Mixed ability class, students with varied learning styles.*	Provide books for different levels. Provide a variety of genres. All literature have specific conventions and unique styles. Thus once understood through repeated reading, students will be able to discuss interesting features of the books they have read. They will also be exposed to ways of writing newspaper articles etc.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommendation Reading *Note for the Teacher* Activity.
Not very proficient, slow learner, from semi-urban or rural background	If students who write better English came from a 'reading background' then, it will be useful to encourage all learners to read interesting books pegged at their own level. They may be encouraged to borrow these books and write summaries. At least, once in 2 weeks, students must be encouraged to sit in groups while reading. Teacher may then discuss reading faults and how to read more effectively with students.
More proficient student who is also an early finisher. *Mixed ability class, students with varied learning styles*	As students, discuss books they have read, teach them conventions of the genres i.e. language, character types and character development. Also, issues on plot, setting, dialogue, mood etc. may be discussed. Helping students to form healthy reading habits will help them communicate better in the English language.

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Type of Student(s)	Recommendation Reading *Note for the Teacher* Activity.
Not very proficient, slow learner, from semi-urban or rural background	If students who write better English came from a 'reading background' then, it will be useful to encourage all learners to read interesting books pegged at their own level. They may be encouraged to borrow these books and write summaries. At least, once in 2 weeks, students must be encouraged to sit in groups while reading. Teacher may then discuss reading faults and how to read more effectively with students.
More proficient student who is also an early finisher. *Mixed ability class, students with varied learning styles*	As students, discuss books they have read, teach them conventions of the genres i.e. language, character types and character development. Also, issues on plot, setting, dialogue, mood etc. may be discussed. Helping students to form healthy reading habits will help them communicate better in the English language.

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