

# Chapter 8

## Teaching English as a Mother Tongue Language at Primary and Secondary Schools in Sweden From Theory to Practice: An Autoethnographic Perspective Focused on Mixed- Ability Class Challenges

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Through an autoethnographic lens, the chapter presents a reflective experience of an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who has worked across various primary and secondary schools in Stockholm, Sweden. The author seeks to delve into the personal insights and pedagogical challenges faced in the classroom management process; therefore, to provide a broader and in-depth discourse on adapting effective methodological lesson plans that address the trials and inherent problems of teaching English in a Nordic context. The focus of the study is narrowed down to the context of English Mother Tongue lessons in which participants are mixed-ability students.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The motivation for writing the chapter is grounded in an event when a doctoral student suggested I, as the author, share my pedagogical teaching experience in a Nordic country. The initial thought that came to my mind pertained to Mother Tongue Language Education in Sweden, in particular, English as a Mother Tongue Language (EMTL). Having changed my teaching environment from an Asia country, Vietnam, to Sweden, I struggled to adapt the Communicative Language Teaching methodology (CLT) in Sweden, which I have used for years in Vietnam, and to utilise the best teaching techniques to suit the Swedish multicultural educational curriculums and objectives - the country categorised English as being a crucial perceived language in society. While reflecting on my EMTL lessons and discovering why CLT has failed to be implemented in the classroom, I figured that the framework itself, employed in the English as a second language environment, does not efficiently thoroughly serve the nature of the EMTL classroom, a first language classroom approach. In addition to teachers' perceptions, some occurrences, including students' profiles and mixed-ability classrooms, are in question.

Regarding students' profiles, for example, Sweden is famous for receiving immigrants. As indicated in research by Oral and Lund (2022), 26% of the population in Sweden were immigrants in 2020. These numbers do not include undocumented immigrant residents. This trend has continued until now. Therefore, in terms of Mother Tongue Education, the majority of students participating in EMTL lessons are from countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, or Australia, where English is the first and official language. Those students are competitively good at speaking and listening because their parents are native English speakers, and they are raised in a multicultural environment like Sweden. The other groups of students come from Europe, Africa, or Asia (Poland, Turkey, Scandinavia, Kenya, Iran, and The Philippines). Additionally, they come from different groups of ability, gathering in a class. These challenges of student profiles and diversity make me acknowledge what an ESL teacher might face while applying her methodological teaching. To address and reflect on my teaching experience in mixed-ability classes at schools in a city in Sweden, this chapter aims for two goals:

- **Problems formulating:** As the author, I demonstrate my personal experiences in a recent year teaching EMTL in Sweden. The challenges and difficulties are showcased through my classroom management problems: unexpected lesson period changes, mixed-ability student profiles, and students' motivation.
- **Proposed solutions:** I reflect on my ESL teaching experience in Vietnam and consider Swedish contextual constraints to adapt my lesson plan. The strategies to overcome those hardships mentioned in the first goal ultimately shed

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