

## **Lesson management in a class of different cultural backgrounds and levels of English**

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### **Abstract**

Progress in universities is a concern for professors, and students. The difference between teaching and learning is effective when it is concept-based, with all learners exploring and applying the key concepts of a subject, affecting knowledge and the capacity of young people to contribute to contemporary advanced societies (Bok, 2006). This paper emphasizes the role of the professor in managing a class of different cultural backgrounds and levels of English as well as the usage of the best methods to ensue in a successful comprehension. The roles of biography, culture, educational background and professional development, are essential for teachers and students. This paper discusses the best ways that professors should find to be equally effective for different students with different educational background. A student's success is also related to his or her socio-economic, educational and cultural background. Learning doesn't exclude what they already know, it comprises previous knowledge obtained everywhere.

**Keywords:** *Teaching, learning, different levels, assessment, explanation, questioning, diversity learning.*

## Introduction

This paper emphasizes the important role of the professor in the teaching environment and the teacher based methods, used to realize the main aim of university education, the students' achievement. Teaching and learning is a life experience for professors and students that are hungry for knowledge. A student's chance of success is related to his or her socio-economic, cultural and educational background. The professors must find the way to be explicit to different students, with different flairs, different cultural backgrounds, that influence their own understanding, their acquisition process, and their vision of the world. Learning doesn't exclude what they already know, it comprises previous knowledge acquired at the university, as well as what they learn from outside it. The roles of biography, culture, educational background and professional development, are essential not only for teachers, but also students. The professor's chief goals are to encourage the learner's independence, autonomy, and confidence, group work and collaboration.

Lecturers make use of different practices, operations and purposes together in the meantime. Making explicit their learning objectives, gives students a clear target to aim for and enables them to monitor their progress. During the interdependence process, professors and students share a common language.

In intercultural language teaching and learning, are essential elements that serve to develop an interactive classroom and to give shape to the lecture is questioning. They should be asked by all participants. Effective teaching and strategies to enhance learning are treated and illustrated. Effective teaching means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging students – as partners in learning. Enhanced learning is realized by means of pedagogical and methodological strategies as well as using ICT, which evolves using digital, interactive technologies (Sutherland, 2005).

Another element to be emphasized is assessment. It means a cycle of interrelated processes of conceptualizing, it means observation, interactive questioning etc. Assessment techniques have a powerful effect on the extent to

which learners are enabled to take an active role in their learning, sufficient time is always given for learners' reflection and research (Alderson, Clapham & Wall, 1995).

### **The Diversity of Learners and Their Life Worlds**

Learners differ in 'ability', a fixed, cognitive characteristic and 'capability', which focuses on each student's potential (Kauchak & Eggen, 2006). There is a distinction in what is expected from the students that have studied English in comprehensive high schools, professional high schools, and in English professional foreign language high schools and centers. The preparation takes much longer, and the students are more demanding. It is necessary to understand their biographies, as a basis for their development and further studies. Active participation, computer use and assignment, enables professors to distinguish their diversity. Communicative interactions need to incorporate learner diversity. Their opportunities to participate and learn, their motivations, their aspirations and so on, that influence how, what and why they learn. The professor needs to develop a profile of each student and incorporate this, in an ongoing way. Multi-level English classrooms include students who communicate in English at a variety of levels. They may also be considered multi-level because they include students with different types of learning backgrounds, such as those who have learned orally and those who have learned mainly from a textbook. Students may also have different levels of literacy in their own native language. A classroom that contains some students who are familiar with the English alphabet and some students who are not may also be considered multi-level. It is only by looking at the advantages of the multi-level classroom and employing strategies to overcome the challenges, that teachers can succeed.

Different students, with different flairs, different levels of English, different cultural backgrounds acquire language differently. Students, who have studied English in foreign language high schools and centers, differ to the utmost extent from students which have studied English in comprehensive high schools. The

first group is usually more prepared but not always. Individuals from the second group are more zealous and study harder in order not to fall behind. In certain cases it has been noticed that the outcome was not what was supposed to, the second group did better in the final exam. This occurred because the first group was neglected by the professor, taken their knowledge for granted, this way remaining at the starting point and because hard work got its own reward.

### **What does Teaching and Learning Convey?**

According to Kauchak et al. (2006), teaching and learning are what make a difference in the mind of the learner, affecting knowledge, skills, attitudes and the capacity of young people to contribute to contemporary advanced societies. Teaching and learning is a life experience process of various engaging parts that are eager for the unknown. They both imply a multitude of processes of different interest, expanding imaginary limits such as screening of reference books, digestion of new knowledge, synthesizing the known with the unknown, using materials that stimulate as many senses as possible to increase the student's chances of success.

To learn means to acquire new knowledge and skills. The literary meaning of the learning process is of two connotations: one refers to the subject, and the other refers to the method of teaching (Waitzkin, 2008). The relationship between them is what counts.

All university students graduate with functional skills, understanding how to learn, think creatively, take risks and handle change. Education services are designed to fill the needs of each student who expects to achieve high standards, Waitzkin et al. (2008).

## **Effective Teaching**

Effective teaching means ranking the three components of teaching: learning objectives, teaching activities and assessments (Newstead, 2003). It means concentrating on the new knowledge and skills we are to introduce. Student learning is enriched when the professors make clear the objectives at the start. This evolves a) being interactive, providing feedback, seeking attention as well as knowing how to deal with different students' intellectual skills etc), (b) making explicit their approach and (c) defining their targets (Ediger, 1993).

Actually students are supposed to be responsible for their own learning; the professor's task is to guide the students' thinking and behavior, to synthesize, moderate and comment, thus his presence is unavoidable.

Teaching is a complex, multifaceted activity, often requiring professors to make use of different practices and operations. Teaching enthuses students and engages their interest in learning. It identifies and corrects misconceptions. Effective teaching and learning tantamount formal learning with informal one (Neeson, 2008). Effective teaching relies on professors preparing ceaselessly and finding the best way of interpretation. The professors' effectiveness varies from one year to another and in terms of different student outcomes. If professors seek for professionalism, they necessarily become more effective over time. This effectiveness seeks for commitment, time and effort. Most of the professors retain a strong sense of commitment to teaching and learning, despite workload pressures. They follow a wide range of principles to achieve their goals. Universities and departments should influence professors' effectiveness, inducing research, articles, and books.

## **High quality teaching**

Any strategy for personalizing learning must focus on improving the consistency of high quality teaching to meet learners' needs effectively. It is believed that personalizing learning and teaching must play an essential role in

transforming our education service (Gilbert, 2006). In other words, personalizing learning and teaching, means taking a structured and responsive approach to every student's learning. It means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging students – as partners in learning. This is obtained by: using data and information rigorously, as well as knowledge of factors that might influence students' progress, to shape teaching and assess its impact. Matching high quality teaching to the different and developing abilities of students focuses on breaking down barriers to learning and progress.

Their progress and rapid responses for students, who begin to fall behind, are regularly monitored. There is a relentless focus on students 'keeping up'. When teaching vocabulary, it is good not just to teach words but clusters of information and open questions. For instance: *a/an*, is used to introduce countable nouns (e.g., a theory). "to" is used to introduce verbs (e.g., to arrive) and to show that verbs are transitive by adding an indefinite object such as something (to propose something). 'to be' is used to introduce adjectives ( e.g., to be naive). Also any prepositions needed, are indicated where relevant (e.g., to be interested in something). These are techniques to develop students' appetite and attitude to lifelong learning. Securing these will benefit and help them to become better learners and try to find the learning approach that fits them best.

### **Teaching and Learning Strategies that Enhance Learning**

During the learning process we encounter various difficulties. To overcome these difficulties, exists two main types of strategies, pedagogical strategies and methodological ones (Kauchak et al. 2006).

#### *Pedagogical Strategies*

Pedagogical strategies are teacher-centered methods, and methodological strategies, tend to be learner-centered. Some pedagogical strategies allow the teacher to address the emotional, psychological, and cognitive barriers to learning. This may be obtained after an open-class

discussion, a comfortable learning environment, where students are motivated to ask questions and express their opinion without hesitation. Nation (1990:151) suggests an inductive method to draw attention. Look at the word insanity. What part of speech is it? Is it countable or uncountable? How do you know this? This way building a collaborative relationship, between professor and students.

### *Methodological Strategies*

Methodological strategies provide a series of steps to solve problems, that the students encounter, and work hand-in-hand with the pedagogical techniques discussed above. For instance to practice the difference between count and no count nouns, we usually use a grid with countable and uncountable headings and ask the students to sort the words into the proper columns as illustrated in fig. 1.

Other effective strategies evolve accepting multiple attempts of solutions for an assignment, assigning personal journals in which students describe their strategies, and allowing students to rework assignments and exams. These strategies both dissipate anxiety because they reduce the sole emphasis on “getting the right answer” and encourage reflection on the problem-solving process.

### **The Use of ICT**

Learning can be enhanced by the use of ICT, which evolves using digital, interactive technologies, which are not necessarily good or bad, but depend on the value of how they are used. In this case quality learning is accomplished, if it is paid attention to the relationship between the use of these technologies and the subject matter, the nature of the learner and the approaches to teaching and assessment (Sutherland, 2005).

ICT can be used to help learning but it cannot do so on its own. Students can't guide themselves from informal to structured knowledge. Instead, a professor is necessary to help to guide this process and make the connections. When it does not succeed, the reason is often that the professor overestimated the scope of the computer to organize knowledge. In successful cases, the

professor has created a 'community of learning' where students could place their individual knowledge in context.

### **Explanation**

Explanations are means of professor's talk, by means of which they introduce new concepts, ideas and information for the students to assimilate. Explanations are mostly monologues and may occupy an extensive period of class time (Pitt, 1988). During an explanation, students are often expected to be passive receivers of the information, although we encourage our students to seek clarification, and give them feedback. As a part of any instructional approach, explanations need to be interactive to promote active forms of engagement with the material

### **Questioning**

Questioning is a central element in intercultural language teaching and learning (Dantonio & Beisenherz, 2000). It is essential for developing an interactive classroom. After the explanation, asking questions, gives shape to the lecture. The students' questions are frequent and seek for clarification or confirmation. In an interactive classroom, questions should be asked by all participants. It is easy to make up activities in which they answer yes/ no questions, for example the game twenty questions game, provides an engaging way. Information gap activities are ideal for working with the meaning of a variety of wh-questions. Two classes of information sheet with the names of categories on horizontal axis and the names of students on the vertical axis, are prepared. Some of the cells of the grid are completed, but not all of them. The information on the first sheet is missing and is found on the second one and vice-versa. One half of the class is given the first sheet and the second half the second one. Questions are asked and answered.

Two question types are often asked, display questions in which the answer is known by the teacher and used to elicit what students have understood, and referential questions in which the answer is not known and is used to elicit a meaningful communication from the student and encourage research (Dantonio et al., 2000). Display questions are mostly used, while referential questions are found during social interaction, out of the classroom environment. Referential questions are usually addressed at the end of the lecture.

### **Tasks**

One important step in teaching and learning is the assignment of tasks. They hold a central place in teaching a foreign language, because they undergo the process of thought till the outcome. These highlight not only the student's need to learn the new but also develop the ability to use it. The goal of the task is to activate the learners' competencies. They require the learner to comprehend, negotiate and express meaning in order to achieve a communicative goal. Tasks are considered pedagogical spaces, within which learners and teachers can move about, and within which opportunities for multi-level language processing can be created in the context of accomplishing task goals (Samuda & Branden, 2007). Tasks are pedagogical tools: mediated by teachers in different ways for a range of pedagogical purposes within a sequence of instruction (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Tasks are dynamic entities: subject to re-interpretation and re-shaping by those engaging with them through use (Berben, Van den Branden & Van Gorp, 2007) (Samuda et al., 2007).

### **Assessment and Its Purpose**

Assessment is an integral part of learning and is used for diverse purposes. It can be understood as a cycle of interrelated processes of conceptualizing, and eliciting. It comprises processes, including observation, self-

assessment, peer-assessment, judging, interpreting performance and understanding evidence) (ensuring that the inferences made about students' performance are fair and justifiable) (Charles, 1995). Assessment integrates to student learning. It means judgment about students' learning and understanding how and what they learn. There is a relationship between assessment and learning as well as a distinction among. The concept of purpose is important in assessment. Assessment participates in the process of learning and supports learning: By means of assessments, learners monitor their progress and, with their professors, identify their next steps.

Whether individually or in pairs, they review what they have learnt and how they have learnt it. Their evaluations contribute to their understanding. They know their levels of achievement and make progress towards their goals.

### **Advantages of Multi-Level Classrooms**

Teaching English in a class of different cultural backgrounds and levels of English does not only have disadvantages but also advantages such as:

- Students are able to learn at their own pace
- Students learn to work well in a group
- Students become independent learners
- Students develop strong relationships with their peers

### **Challenges of Multi-level classrooms**

Knowing something about students previous knowledge of English and knowing where English is inherently difficult, is very helpful in defining the students' learning challenges. These challenges will depend on what they already know about English language

- Finding appropriate teaching resources and material
- Organizing appropriate groupings within the class
- Building an effective self-access centre in the classroom
- Determining the individual needs of each student

- Ensuring that all students are challenged and interested
- Enforcing English only policies when teacher is occupied and students are working in small groups or pairs

## **Conclusion**

Teaching and learning connect ideas and disciplines to each other and to the personal experiences, environments, and communities of students. Consequently, the process of teaching must be dynamic and reciprocal, responding to the many contexts within which students learn. Such teaching demands that teachers integrate their knowledge of subjects, students, community, and curriculum to create a bridge between learning goals and students' lives. There is a distinction in what is expected from the students that have studied English in comprehensive high schools, in professional high schools with those that have studied English in English professional foreign language high schools and centers. Usually, students' expectations may not match the professor's. Active participation, computer use and assignment enables professors to distinguish their diversity and to find the best method in order to produce a more productive learning generation.

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