

## HOW TO TEACH STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT LEARNING ABILITIES

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### Abstract

The main aim of education is not just to give students beneficial information but to teach them thinking skills, to make decisions and choices, to develop their mental abilities. Educators should stir pupils' curiosity, creativity and imagination; broaden their horizons; deepen their way of thinking, enrich their outlook and scope of knowledge. However, every pupil has own potential. They learn or figure out something according to their character, learning style or even gender. This type of class is called mixed-ability class. The purpose of this paper is to explore teaching mixed-ability students in educational establishments.

**Keywords:** different, reasons, class, levels, decisions, cooperation, mother tongue.

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Mixed levels is always a problem. Teaching students on different learning levels can be difficult. However, learning to differentiate learning abilities can help teachers present materials in a way that will engage all students on all levels at the same time. They may have different starting levels of English or this happens for a number of reasons, but mainly because of different learning styles, different learning speeds, variations in motivation and, very frequently, as a result of logistic decisions. Very often the teacher is faced with a class with two or more distinct levels of ability and has to tackle the problem of how to meet the needs of everyone in the class. Naturally, this is not an easy problem to solve and it would be wrong to suggest that there are any simple solutions. A fundamental step, however, is to talk to the class about the situation and to present it to them as a normal situation and one that the class as a whole has to deal with. This is probably best done in the mother tongue of the students. As most of the solutions to the problem depend on cooperation between the members of the class, it is essential to stress the need for teamwork and for the class to use English whenever possible in classroom communication. Here are some strategies of how teachers can teach a class of students made up of different learning abilities. These are several strategies that a teacher can use to deal with this situation.

1. Supportive Learning Environment. It is important to create a supportive learning environment in the classroom, where learners feel confident and able to perform to the best of their ability. The learning environment simply refers to the classroom environment and how it works or feels to students. It's important that teachers create a classroom that will serve all students, no matter their learning abilities. For instance, if in-class assignments are given, develop a general list of requirements, and then give students additional instructions on an individual basis so that it addresses their learning abilities. Make sure there are quiet places in the classroom where students can concentrate and focus. Or give them the option to work with partners. Make sure the class understands that the options are provided because each student works best in a different setting.

2. Needs Analysis. Use a needs analysis to prompt the students to reflect upon their learning style, learning strategies, language needs, learning enjoyment, motivation, language strengths and weaknesses. Questions that might be included are...

What kinds of class activities do you enjoy / benefit from? Which language skill do you most wish to develop? Do you prefer working individually or with a partner? Would you rather sit and listen to the

teacher all lesson or participate in group work? Students compare their answers in pairs or small groups. You should collect the information and prepare a statistical representation of the key questions and answers. This will help to develop the sense of shared community in the class.

3.Group work. Use a range of interaction patterns in class. Learners should work in groups, pairs and individually. Groupings should be changed often, thereby giving learners an opportunity to work with different learners. Varying the way students work in the class will help meet the variety of levels in the class.

These groups could be of mixed levels or similar ones. The hope is that in a smaller group, the weaker student will feel more able to contribute. Also, if the group is working with a set of information, divide the information between the students, forcing them to work together. You may consider dividing your class into groups by level for the whole lesson, enabling you to give a different level or number of tasks to each group. Discussion of this strategy with the class should help prevent stigmatization. 4.Pair work. You can pair strong with strong, weak with weak, or strong with weak. Perhaps in a very controlled activity, the strong with weak will work well. In a freer activity, perhaps strong with strong will be of benefit. Variety in the pairings is the key here – and you should also be sensitive to the general relationships between different. 5.Whole class – mingles. This is a favored strategy of mine. A mingle activity involves students talking or interacting with many different members of the class in a short period of time in order to achieve a task. This means that any one student will work with students at different levels –experiencing stronger and weaker levels of communication. This supports the weaker students and provides opportunities for the stronger ones.6.Using Differentiated Instruction with Different Students. The lower performing and average students are motivated to try and increase their knowledge because of the input of the stronger students. Using differentiated instruction, teachers cater to a wide variety of varied interests, cultural backgrounds and world knowledge which results in more dynamic classroom interaction. The teacher’s attitude is central in setting the scene for the acceptance of differences. 7.Process. Process involves the way in which students engage with and learn content. This is key as it allows students to take the time to let newly obtained knowledge sink in. Process also gives students the opportunity to figure out what they may or may not understand. The process can also be used as a way for teachers to monitor and assess a student’s progress. For instance, educational consultant John McCarthy recommends that teachers design ‘one or two processing experiences for every 30 minutes of instruction. These experiences give students a break and teachers time to find out who needs additional instruction and who does not.8.Products. Products are the projects or assignments that encourage students to apply content in situations inside and outside of the classroom. For example, once content is presented and processing time has been given, ask students to develop a project of their own that best exemplifies what was learned. For instance, younger students may create a poster board with pictures and labels, while older students develop a short skit or make drawings. Teachers may want to give students a set of options to choose from and even allow them to work in groups. From my experiences, the above strategies gained over the years. In my conclusion, be diplomatic in your questioning techniques. Try to avoid putting weaker students “on the spot” by nominating them to be the first to answer a question in open class. Instead, try to encourage a culture of attentive listening in the classroom so that you ask a stronger student first and then ask a weaker student to repeat the answer. In conclusion, Teaching mixed ability students is a big responsibility for the teachers as teachers are the builders of the future generation and students are the future of any nation. Keeping this point of view in mind we should know how to deal and tackle the students of mixed ability so that all of them get, gain, grasp and acquire the knowledge according to their requirements. Hence, above mentioned methods and strategies may bring profits for both teachers and heterogeneous students in curriculum.

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