Teaching and Assessing in a Multilevel ESL Classroom

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Introduction

Agnes Farkas-Roszell

- Today’s reality in the classroom
- Rational
- Best Practices
Strategies for Multilevel Classes
1. Include a variety of activities

- Activities that accommodate different levels
- Consider different styles of learning and attention span
- Use pictures, gestures and games
2. Consider pacing

- Slow down speech, use gestures and visuals when talking to lower level students
- Use drills for quick back and forth practice
- Require full-sentence answers
- Provide more time for opinion and reflection activities with lower level students
- Give specific times for activities so you do not violate pacing and lose students' attention
- Build small groups for more effective discussions; then pull class together for a recap of ideas
3. Keep students interested

- Motivate students by picking topics they can relate to so they have a desire to express themselves even with limited vocabulary
  - Example - marriage age; love or money
- Provide discussions and debates (chance to expand vocabulary)
- Use role-plays
4. Use Collaboration

- Select members of groups and pairs with intention
  - Levels stay together (level-specific growth)
  - Levels are mixed (expand & reinforce)
- Provide peer checklists and jigsaw activities
- Use pair and group presentations where everybody can practice
5. Scaffold activities

- Have a clear focus and goal in mind when introducing an activity
- Provide a clear & basic model and build on it
  - Activate prior knowledge of topic
  - Use visual aids to make connections within each level
  - Demonstrate (higher levels add to basic model)
  - Include time for students to practice or get feedback before moving on to more difficult content
- Use different learning modalities for the same content
  - Example: vocabulary - recognizing, listening, writing, speaking)
Workshop Activity
Karen Eichhorn
Modify activities through **individualization**

- Students work at own pace
- Students are challenged at their level
- Students choose topics of interest
Individualizing activities

- Use the **same material** in **different ways**
  
  **Example:** Start with lower level students and then higher level students
  
  Focus on - different grammar, different vocabulary, extended activities for the higher level

- Use **different materials** in the **same way**
  
  **Example:** Choose two texts on a common theme. Make one on them an **unabridged text** and the other one an **abridged text**

  Website: Newsela
Individualization
Activity #1 - Multilevel Dictation (Hess, 2001)

- Leave out **one or two words** in the lowest level, like a cloze passage
- Leave **out large or small chunks of text** at the intermediate level (example: collocations)
- Use a **blank page** for the most advanced level
Individualization
Activity #2 - Sentence Completion

- Grammar or vocabulary review
- Create sentence openings
  Example: ‘excited’ -
  He was excited and.... (simple sentence)
  He was excited, so he .... (compound sentence)
  He was excited when he .... (complex sentence)
## Multilevel Skill Assessment for Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe the characters in the story</th>
<th>Use 5 new vocabulary words in sentences</th>
<th>Choose 2 sentences from the reading and paraphrase the sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write 5 questions using Who, What, Where, When, Why, or How about the reading</td>
<td>Write a summary</td>
<td>Draw a picture of the story and write a caption for the picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a response to the reading.</td>
<td>Write 5 questions using Yes/No questions</td>
<td>Record an oral summary of the reading in your own words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multilevel Skill Assessment for Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Add a new sentence with more detail to your paragraph. Write a compound sentence. Use “but,” “and” or “so.”</th>
<th>2. Add time phrases to two sentences. For example, add a date, time of day or time period. Use the correct preposition.</th>
<th>3. If you have many simple sentences, combine two sentences into one complex sentence. Use “when,” “because,” “before” or “after.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Add more details to three sentences. Explain who and what. For example, add the names of people, the names of places, or specific nouns.</td>
<td>5. Add a new sentence with more detail to your paragraph. Write a complex sentence. Explain why. Use “because.”</td>
<td>6. Add the noun phrase “before + noun” or “after + noun” to a sentence. Remember to use a comma if it begins the sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. If you have many simple sentences, combine two sentences into one compound sentence. Use “but,” “and” or “so.”</td>
<td>8. Add three adjectives to your paragraph. Give more description of the nouns: people, places &amp; objects.</td>
<td>9. Add a new sentence with more detail to your paragraph. Write a complex sentence. Explain when. Use “before“ or “after.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Faculty Activity and Share

- Individually think of your multilevel class and create activities for your students on the grid. Think about how you could use the grid in a classroom. (5 minutes)
- Share your assessment (10 minutes)
Tip #1 – Do a needs assessment

- **Questionnaire**
  - Student level
  - Student goals

- **Diagnostic**
  - Formal – written assessment; a test focused on specific skills
  - Informal – written commentary on a video; a short impromptu talk on a class topic

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6. When you hope to begin your degree at CU: Month ______ Year ______

7. Major __________________________ Minor __________________________

If your major is “Open Option,” meaning you are undecided about your major, please list your possible interests.

8. **Current level at the IEC**

9. IEC Instructors:
   - Writing __________________________
   - Reading __________________________
   - Listening/Speaking __________________________
   - Elective __________________________

9. What are your education goals for studying in University Prep and taking core English classes at the IEC this session?
Tip #2 – Be Explicit

- Multi-level class
- Course expectations
- SLOs

Mixed Level Writing Class

This Spring 2, 2019 session:
- Basic 1 students (Level 2) – 5 students
- Basic 2 students (Level 3) – 5 students

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- **Basic 1/Level 2** student paragraphs are **75-100 words**.
  - Use simple and compound sentence.
- **Basic 2/Level 3** student paragraphs are **100-150 words**.
  - Write a variety of simple, compound & complex sentences.
Tip #3 – Make assessment transparent

- Different rubrics for different levels
- Differences in point reduction
  - ex. a 3-point question on a test or rubric

Basic 1/Level 2 example writing rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences: subject &amp; verb</th>
<th>Your Points</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>correct sentence structure (simple and compound sentences)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Content: topic is developed and on-topic; the reader can understand the topic | 5           |                 |

| Format: heading, title, "Tab" indented paragraph, margins, double-spaced, size 12, Times New Roman font | 3           |                 |

| Mechanics: capitalization, periods, commas | 3           |                 |

| Spelling: correct spelling | 3           |                 |

Total points: 20 points

Basic 2/Level 3 example writing rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content &amp; Organization</th>
<th>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</th>
<th>Vocabulary &amp; Spelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 90–100</td>
<td>Uses correct grammar, punctuation and sentence structure for the level most of the time</td>
<td>Uses many target vocabulary words for the task; spells, and capitalizes words correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 80–89</td>
<td>Uses correct grammar and sentence structure for the level some of the time</td>
<td>Uses some target vocabulary for the task; frequently spells and capitalizes words correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 70–79</td>
<td>Uses correct grammar and sentence structure for the level about half of the time</td>
<td>Uses minimal target vocabulary for the task; sometimes spells and/or capitalizes words incorrectly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tip #3 – Make assessment transparent

- Same rubrics - grade according to student's level

Tip for Grading Assessments
- Grade same level tests together
- Grade lower level first
Tip #4 – Provide models for students

Examples from
● Past students
● Textbooks
● Websites
● Faculty

Introduction Example Paragraph
Lower Level Writing

Below are two example paragraphs. I introduce myself in each paragraph. One paragraph is shorter with simple sentences. The other paragraph is longer with more compound and complex sentences.

Self-Introduction

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Barbara Flocke. I was born in Anchorage, Alaska. I grew up in Grand Junction, Colorado. I have two brothers Michael and Scott. They live in Los Angeles and Grand Junction. I studied French and Political Science in the university. Then I studied to be an English teacher. I like to read and make art. I also like to swim and ski. I want to travel more.

(75 words)

Self-Introduction

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Barbara Flocke. I was born in Anchorage, Alaska. My family moved to Grand Junction, Colorado when I was a baby. I have two brothers Michael and Scott. They live in Los Angeles and Grand Junction. Mike is a graphic designer and Scott is an electrician. My father was a dentist and my
Tip #4 – Provide models for students

- Models with guided questions for different levels

**Instructions:** After reading the paragraph for your level, follow the directions below.

1. Underline the topic sentence.

2. What is the topic?

3. What is the controlling idea?

8. **Basic 2/Level 3 example paragraph** = Underline all of the “command” verbs.

   Besides commands, what other types of verbs are used? (ex. “You should…”)
Tip #5 – Use varied grouping

● Consider level, interests & motivation (Jenkins, 2012)

● Give roles: reporter, scribe, question master, vocabulary expert, etc.

● Plan grouping in different ways
  ○ Random: Use student index cards
  ○ Planned out: Write grouping into lesson plans
  ○ Changing: Do line-ups
  ○ Student choice: Let students pick
Tip #6 – Stay calm!

Wise words from Laurel Pollard at TESOL 2011: "Effective Multi-Level Reading/Speaking Activities"

- You and your class are a team
- Students have many resources:
  - Instructors – teach students
  - Materials and activities – help students learn
  - Classmates – learn from each other
  - Each student – studies and checks own progress; is responsible for own learning

https://www.pexels.com
References


Questions, Comments, Ideas?

https://www.pexels.com