

Teaching Multilevel Classes:



Glass Half Empty? Half Full?



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How many single-level classes have you taught?

"Because learners in all adult ESL classes have varying levels of competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, every class can be considered multilevel to some degree."

(Bell, 2004)

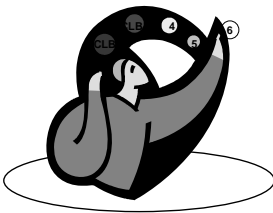
Objectives & Agenda

By the end of this workshop you will be familiar with:

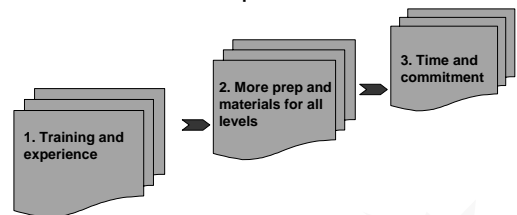
- 1. Challenges**
- 2. Strategies for multilevel classes**
 - Activities
- 3. Other variables**

1. CHALLENGES

"...Teaching the multilevel class is ... a juggling act, one that requires finely honed teaching and classroom management skills." L. Balliro



1.1. Teaching a multilevel class requires...



It can be stressful!

1.2. Why a juggling act?

You need to ...

- Work with a variety of ages, literacy levels, and different cultural backgrounds
- Find appropriate materials for each of the levels
- Organize groupings
- Ensure that all students are busy and challenged all the time

You can't be everywhere at the same time.



1.3. Problems?

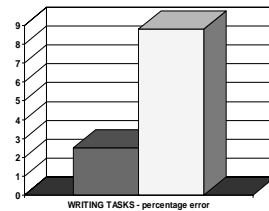
1. Lack of hard research
2. Very few practical resources for multilevel classes
3. Multitasking

1.4. Multitasking – does it work?

- "Multitasking, when it comes to paying attention, is a myth. The brain naturally focuses on concepts sequentially, one at a time."

John Medina. *Brain Rules*

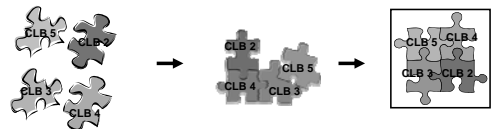
1.5. Do we make mistakes while multitasking?



Rogers RD & Monsell, in
Medina's Brain Rules

2. STRATEGIES

2.1. Create a community of learners



"A group can never become a community unless it develops the habit of deep, respectful listening to one another."

Training for Transformation




2.2. What works best?

It depends.

Options related to three variables:

- A. Class organization / Grouping
- B. Text / material
- C. Task



	A. Class organization 	B. Material 	C. Task 
Option 1.	Whole class	Different material – same topic	Different complexity task
Option 2.		Same	
Option 3.	Like-level grouping (e.g., all CLB 3's together)	-Different handouts for different levels -Learning Centres	Same task per level - Collections of activities
Option 4.		Cross-ability grouping	Same or different material for each level Same tasks (students help each other)

2.3. Whole class options

How do they work?

Strategy 1. Different material – same topic

- Rosa Parks
- Weather forecast activities
- Olympic Heroes

Strategy 2. Same material – different task

- Questions
- Bring your dreams to Canada
- Pictures
- Buying a used vehicle

2.4. Different grouping options

How do they work?

Strategy 3. Like-level grouping

- PowerPoint Jeopardy
- Irregular verbs
- Learning Centres
- Stories

Strategy 4. Cross ability grouping

- Class Newsletter
- Buying a used vehicle

2.5. A few more tips

Create a Advanced Learning Centre with extra materials for higher level students

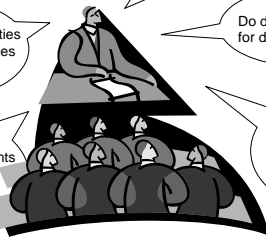
Start compiling binders with materials for different levels

Use info gap activities in which A or B takes an easier role

Do different follow-ups for different levels

Create a simple schedule that students can follow without your involvement

Search for book series that cover same topics at different levels



2.6. Accommodations for lower level students

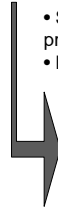
- Reduced workload
- Mixed-ability seating plan
- Independent work for high level students
- Labeled classroom objects
- Word wall
- Frequent questions on the walls

3. OTHER VARIABLES

3.1. What about pronunciation?

Two variables:

- Speakers of different languages face different pronunciation problems
- Different levels of proficiency



Additional challenge

3.2. Vocabulary?

Some words are more frequent than others ...

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 1. the | 15. are |
| 2. of | 16. as |
| 3. and | 17. with |
| 4. a | 18. his |
| 5. to | 19. they |
| 6. in | 20. I |
| 7. is | 21. at |
| 8. you | 22. be |
| 9. that | 23. this |
| 10. It | 24. have |
| 11. he | 25. from |
| 12. was | 26. or |
| 13. for | 27. one |
| 14. on | 28. had |
| | 29. by |
| | 30. word |

3.2.1. The impact?

predictability of English vocabulary			
Top 10 words	account for	• 25%	... of the running words in a text
Top 100 words		• 50%	
Top 1,000 words		• 70-80%	

- 1,500-2,000 high frequency words: the most important learning goal
 - they need to be learned well as quickly as possible
- (I.S.P. Nation, 2005)

3.2.2. How many words at which level?

Elementary graded readers - 6 levels:

1. 300 words
2. 700 words
3. 1,000 words
4. 1,500 words
5. 2,000 words
6. 2,500 words

"...the unknown vocabulary should appear at a density not more than 1 unknown word in every 50 running words..."

To conclude...

- No magic formulas
- A combination approach may be a solution
- Experiment until you reach a promising mix



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