

Incorporating Diverse Techniques in Teaching Speaking

Normuminova N.¹

¹ English teacher, academic lyceum of UWED

Abstract:

the primary aim of this article is to present a method for teaching English in mixed ability classes. This approach, derived from my own teaching experience, emphasizes a dual focus on both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects of language. While memorizing extensive vocabulary lists and learning grammatical rules can be tedious, they are essential for learners. Given the limited time available, students need to acquire a significant amount of knowledge efficiently. To address this, reading texts are broken down into phrasal-level syntagms. As a pre-reading activity, students receive lists of these syntagms along with their meanings in their native language. Using the native language fosters a supportive environment where students feel confident while engaging with a foreign language. The lists are reviewed and partially memorized in class, ensuring that all students are comfortable with pronunciation and grammatical relationships within the segments. It's important to recognize that the human element is central to all linguistic activities, and the teacher's personality is pivotal in this process.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, learning styles, mixed ability classes, multiple intelligences, vocabulary learning.

Although the idea that learners have diverse learning styles has become widely accepted, traditional methods such as uniform instruction based on age and grade groupings, whole-class lectures, and synchronized progress are still considered standard practices in the modern educational landscape. (Hess, 1999; Sizer, 1999). However, a quick look at a typical classroom setting shows that invisible diversities in learning characteristics and preferences are prevalent in ELT practices worldwide. Some students arrive at school with minimal support and encouragement from home, while others begin the learning process with skills and knowledge that far exceed grade-level expectations. (Tomlinson, 1999). As Caine and Caine (1990) note, "There can be as much as a five-year difference in maturation between any two "average" children (p. 2). It is crucial to distinguish between mixed ability teaching and mixed ability classes. While most teachers instruct groups of

mixed abilities, they may not necessarily employ mixed ability teaching strategies. McKeown (2004) asserts that many teachers perceive a mixed ability class as a group of average and able children, with a subset of students who have learning problems. Ireson & Hallam (2001) suggest that teachers must recognize that a class is mixed ability because students have different strengths and weaknesses and develop at varying rates. They also have distinct preferences for learning and presenting their work. A useful metaphor for a mixed ability class is to think of it as an elevator. Everyone needs to get into the elevator to start. Some students will run into it eagerly, while others will need to be coaxed. Some students will travel all the way to the top of the building, some may stop at the third floor, and some may only reach the first floor, but everyone will have made progress. By the end of the class, every student can leave feeling challenged and having achieved something. A useful metaphor for a mixed ability English class is to think of it as an elevator. Everyone needs to get into the elevator to start. Some students will eagerly rush in, while others will need to be coaxed. Some will travel all the way to the top, some may stop at the third floor, and some may only reach the first floor, but everyone will have made some progress. By the end of class, each student can leave feeling that they have been challenged and have achieved something.

At this point, it's important to issue a word of caution regarding some teachers' misconceptions about the actual practice of differentiated instruction. Sometimes, teachers claim to be implementing differentiation, but in reality, they are merely following traditional approaches. This is evident in a study by Blozowich (2001) who found that teachers used a variety of techniques but continued to prepare lessons as they would for a tracked classroom. This researcher, then, came to the conclusion that teachers implementing differentiated instruction are in dire need of incessant and consistent professional development, along with intensive discussion about how these techniques are to be put to use in the classroom. Among the other supportive claims in favor of the privileges of differentiated instruction, reference can be made to McAdams' (2001) work, which pointed to significant performance enhancement among the students in the Rockwood School District (Missouri), successive to the implementation of differentiated instruction. Planning, mentoring, professional development, conducting action research, and holding workshops are highlighted in this study as the principal measures to reduce teachers' initial resistance toward differentiation in education. In another study concerning the repercussions of adopting differentiated syllabi for teachers, Affholder (2003) found that teachers who made an intensive use of these strategies developed a better individual perception and assumed greater responsibility for student growth. Furthermore, in line with the results of this study, teachers who were characterized by a more frequent utilization of differentiated techniques in their classes came up with higher levels of self-efficacy as well as willingness to try new instructional approaches. Yet, as the results revealed, those enjoying seniority and higher experience were found to be at a more privileged position in this respect. Working with the unique community of undergraduate teachers, Johnsen (2003) concluded that the use of differentiated techniques proved to be a beneficial tool in keeping the individuals' interested and, consequently, the implemented techniques were said to have provided the undergraduate teachers with a highly gratifying experience.

In conclusion, teaching speaking in mixed ability classes presents both challenges and opportunities. The approach detailed here emphasizes the importance of addressing both syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects of language to effectively engage students of varying proficiency levels. By breaking texts into manageable phrasal units and using native language support, educators can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Despite the common practice of uniform teaching methods, recognizing and accommodating the diverse learning characteristics within a classroom is essential. As McKeown (2004) notes, mixed ability classes often include a spectrum of student abilities and needs, while Ireson & Hallam (2001) suggest that viewing the class as an elevator, where each student progresses at their own pace, can be a helpful metaphor. However, it is crucial to distinguish between true differentiated instruction and superficial adjustments to traditional methods. Effective implementation of differentiation requires careful

planning, ongoing professional development, and a commitment to understanding each student's unique learning journey. Ultimately, a well-considered approach to teaching speaking in mixed ability settings can ensure that all students leave the classroom feeling challenged and accomplished.

Used literature:

1. Affholder, L. P. (2003). Differentiated instruction in inclusive elementary classrooms. University of Kansas, Kansas
2. Hallam, S., & Toutounji, I (1996). What Do We Know about The Grouping of Pupils by Ability? London: Institute of Education.
3. Johnsen, S. (2003). Adapting instruction with heterogeneous groups. *Gifted Child Today*, 26 (3), 5-6.
4. McKeown, S. (2004). Meeting SEN in the Curriculum: Modern Foreign Languages. London: David Fulton Publishers
5. Yunusova, Z. (2023). THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE IN THE ESP CONTEXT. *Oriental renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences*, 3(22), 72-74.
6. Yunusova, Z. (2022). Teaching English for specific purposes and its types. *Oriental renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences*, 2(Special Issue 27), 106-109.