ISSN: 2181-1385
Scientific Journal Impact Factor (SJIF) 2021: 5.723
DOI: 10.24411/2181-1385-2021-00494

TEACHING HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

In fact there is no the same people in the world. Humans are different from other due to their sense, character, wish, interest, habits and in the community they show this diversity. In particular, when setting up a classroom exercise or activity arranging the class into groups is really challenging according to their level in the curriculum. Is it better to put them into heterogeneous groups, which comprise students of differing ability, or homogeneous groups, which contain students of similar ability? This article purposes to explore a brief introduction to the importance of them and focus more attention on some strategies to teach in heterogeneous classroom.

Keywords: Classroom, teacher, homogeneous, heterogeneous, ability, activity, level.

INTRODUCTION

Obviously, the main purpose of teaching is sharing and gaining knowledge. AS every educator has own teaching methods and pupils has learning style. It has already admitted group learning is the most effective way to learn and teach by sharing ideas, comparing thoughts and discussion by analysing data or solve problems in challenging tasks. Also, according to scholars Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, effective learning in groups must have at least the following elements:

- The work must involve every member of the group.
- Each person has a valid job to perform with a known standard of completion.
- Each member is invested in completing the task or learning goal.
- Each member is accountable individually and collectively.

METHODOLOGY

As well as for conducting the lesson, it is important to arrange learners. However it is difficult to select learners according to their knowledge and abilities to learn. Therefore, modern teachers should clarify their way to select learners. Actually there types of learner classes: homogeneous and heterogeneous. Both of them are

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really important and have benefits. Prior to discuss, both term should be defined. A heterogeneous class could be defined as “one that has different kinds of learners in it”. Since students of EFL classrooms more than often have various levels of language proficiency, every class can be considered multilevel to some degree. By contrast, “Homogeneous grouping is the placement of students of similar abilities into one classroom. All gifted children within the same grade level will be in the same classroom. The term more often refers to students with disabilities rather than students who are gifted or advanced. “In reality, in any class all learners are unique since language learners move at different rates, some of them are at ease with receptive skills, such as, listening and understanding written material, the others are good at productive skills, interpersonal communication or so on. According to P. Ur, several aspects contribute to the formation of a heterogeneous class, namely, “language knowledge, cultural background, attitude to the language, mother tongue, intelligence, world knowledge, learning experiences, knowledge of other languages…”.The other name of heterogeneous is mixed –ability class. In a group that has a mixed ability, these students have the opportunity to follow the lead of their more capable peers, picking up things that they may not study from teachers. They could also feel more confident speaking up about their confusion with a smaller group of their peers than they would in teachers’ presence in front of the whole class. According to M. Rogers, there are three categories of learners: high-level, at-level, and low-level learners. Above-level students attempt to explain the instructions or the grammar rule to a below-level student. Two at-level students can mutually help each other to work out a solution posed by the instructor. Finally, from the position of a teacher, large, heterogeneous classes are demanding to train, require extra time and preparation; however, they foster teacher's creativity, flexibility, tolerance and resistance to stress. At-grade students also benefit from being grouped with their more capable peers. Working closely with others can help land small kernels of knowledge that may further their understanding and progress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since, in heterogeneous class is full of various abilities to learn, teachers should accommodate them. The most essential thing is to find out who high level is or who can learn slowly. By the help of questionnaires and observation it will be apparent in preliminary lessons. The trainers should prepare some sheets of questionnaires in advance with some questions their habits, interests and wishes. After the results, teachers can know how to teach and give materials to them. After

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clarifying abilities of learners the next alternative is to form students from heterogeneous classes into small temporary groups within the classroom. Here, the educator present the lesson, then split the class into prearranged groups based on ability, prior knowledge, and interests (Renzulli, 1994, as cited in Tieso, 2003). The teacher would have to differentiate the lessons and activities for the various groups to optimize the lesson. This would require the teachers to learn and master a new teaching technique, and to concentrate on lessons that stress higher order cognitive learning rather than drill and practice (Tieso, 2003). For these techniques to be effective, the instruction must be varied in content, speed, presentation method and style (Tieso, 2005). The curriculum revision must involve "the critical analysis and remodelling of existing curriculum in order to improve the quality or rigour of the content, the assessment, the teaching and learning activities, the resources, the assignments, or the overall alignment among these components" (Tieso, 2005).In theoretical pedagogy it is easy to give some solutions for managing mixed-ability classes or for teaching them ,nevertheless teaching heterogeneous pupils is really difficult because of many reasons. Firstly, there are some pupils that have unreasonable intelligence and more energetic than other. They can do the tasks earlier than teachers expect and as a result they may feel bored or begin to interrupt the lesson. In this time teachers should be ready for this kind of situation that is preparing extra –materials based on the subject or non-based such as puzzles or riddles which to make the energetic student busy until other pupils finish their task. Of course , the given further task should be checked during the lesson or after the lesson lest the pupil will not even pay attention to the extra material and feel disappointed that effects disliking the subject and the teacher as well. On the other hand ,there are some students are really slow to learn or do the exercise due to his/her ability to learn. The main action of teachers is encouragement. Motivating and praise low- level learners helps to move ahead and feel themselves they are not just bad learner, their habit is just low speed to learn. For these kind of learners also can be given extra- materials by consideration their level of knowledge and interest. It might be colouring or painting, singing songs or making something by hand related to the subject or the theme. Moreover ,when it is asked the question how to handle mixed ability students teachers of An-Najah National University Ahmed Awad Amin Mahmoud Raba answered:" Among the different pedagogies I actually use in my lectures are the Socratic questioning or the generative questioning out of which you can get different questions from different students each according to his ability. Another approach is map concepts via which each one can participate according to her/his ability; open-

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ended questions encourage no fixed answers can be functioning in the non-homogeneous classes. Adding to the above-mentioned teaching strategies that I personally apply in my lectures, I continually provide students with warmth and friendship that can give self-reliance and willingness to work regardless of the level each student represents". Socratic questioning is a form of disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and for many purposes, including: to explore complex ideas, to get to the truth of things, to open up issues and problems, to uncover assumptions, to analyse concepts, to distinguish what we know from what we do not know, to follow out logical consequences of thought or to control discussions.

CONCLUSION

Socratic questioning is based on the foundation that thinking has structured logic, and allows underlying thoughts to be questioned. This style assists to be independent learner and thinker for students and allow them be out of the box. Also it can develop their critical thinking and analysing data carefully. Concept maps are visual representations of information. They can take the form of charts, graphic organizers, tables, flowcharts, Venn Diagrams, timelines, or T-charts. Concept maps are especially useful for students who learn better visually, although they can benefit any type of learner. They are a powerful study strategy because they help you see the big picture: by starting with higher-level concepts, concept maps help you chunk information based on meaningful connections. In other words, knowing the big picture makes details more significant and easier to remember. Concept maps work very useful for classes or content that have visual elements or in times when it is important to see and understand relationships between different things. They can also be used to analyse information and compare and contrast.

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