

BALANCING MULTI-LEVEL NEEDS IN AN ADULT ESOL CLASS

Alysan Croydon
[School of Teaching ESL](#) and Literacy Network of Washington

Key Principles

▶ Needs assessment

Assess learner needs, abilities, goals and interests before planning instruction.

Create no more than three proficiency levels. The membership of groups may shift depending on the proficiency focus of the lesson (some students may have high oral, but lower literacy skills, for example)

▶ Create a class community

Use interviews, mixers and surveys to help students get to know each other and practice language. Help display the strengths of all students in the group. Begin and end each lesson with a whole-group activity. Assign tasks to students such as record keeping, greeting and distribution to free the teacher to help students.

▶ Plan lessons around a single theme, then identify level-specific objectives

Adult students need to know what they are learning and how it applies to their lives. Create objectives for each level based on learner needs.

▶ Identify skills that support the lesson objectives

Select grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and literacy work to achieve the objectives. Decide how to present and practice the skills Can it be to the whole group together? Do some groups need a mini-lesson?

▶ Utilize a variety of groupings

Use same level groupings to provide guided practice. Use mixed-level group activities to provide communicative practice.

▶ Differentiate tasks for different levels

For sequential multi-levels have a series of tasks that can be worked through. For non-sequential levels, determine what the main communicative task should be for each group.

▶ Have self-access materials available

Recycle and re-use your materials. Create a system so students can access them.

▶ Have a closing activity to help assess

Use exit tickets or small assessments to assess and display progress.

Multi-level Spanish Lesson Activities

1. Chalk talk with realia/pictures to whole group
2. Use question hierarchy to place questions to whole group
3. Numbered heads together to review basic vocabulary of lesson
4. Vocabulary development/schema building in leveled groups
5. Main Task- Dictogloss
6. Cross ability communication practice
7. Lesson wrap up

Dictogloss with Variations for a Multi-level Group

Dictogloss uses a whole text to focus students on grammar and vocabulary. Students work collaboratively to recreate the text they heard. A dictogloss is usually based on an authentic text and is re-written to meet the language needs and levels of students. The teacher may include target grammar and vocabulary.

Procedure

1. Pre-teach any unknown or key vocabulary, discuss the general topic and build schema.
2. Read the text at normal speed. Students listen.
3. Tell the students how many sentences there are in the text. Tell students to take notes while they listen. The goal is not to take dictation of the whole text. Read the text a second time, pausing for five seconds at the end of each sentence.
4. Read the text through one more time at normal speed.
5. In groups, students work to recreate the text sentence by sentence from their notes. Teacher circulates and helps.
6. Groups share their recreations sentence by sentence. There will be variation. This does not matter. The goal is not to recreate the text verbatim. As long as the information and the sentences are grammatically accurate students can use any words to recreate the meaning of the text.
7. Students share their versions and also compare them to the original text read aloud by the teacher.

Adapting Dictogloss for a multi-level group including non-literate students.

Students who cannot participate in text reconstruction are given a version of the text that has some information removed. Students listen and fill in the blanks.

Non-literate beginning students are given pictures of key items in the text (Usually nouns). Students point to the picture every time they hear it. A slightly more difficult task is to have students keep tally marks for every time they hear a word that is represented by pictures. Check the tallies with students after the activity.

For students who have emergent literacy, the same procedure can be used with sight words. Students use sight word cards and tally how many times they hear the word. Words such as 'and, the, he, she,' will appear multiple times. Following this, students can circle the same words in a written copy of the text. As they know how many times the word appears they can check their own work.

Differentiating Lesson Objectives

Theme: Health

Objective: Make a medical/dental appointment in person or by phone

Instructional Levels: Examples

Beginning	Beginning+	Intermediate
Request an appointment. Describe the reason. Confirm date and time.	Change the time or date for a medical appointment and state the reason simply. Read a simple appointment card.	Change an appointment giving reason with details, and negotiate appointment time. Read a variety of authentic appointment cards.
"I need an appointment. I have a sore throat and fever. Okay today at 4:00 is fine."	"I can't come to my appointment tomorrow. I am working. Is Friday Okay? Okay Friday at 10:00 Thank you"	"I need to cancel my appointment. There's been a death in the family. Are there any appointments available next week on Thursday or Friday? No, do you have anything in the afternoon? Yes 4:45 is fine. Thank you.

Basic Vocabulary:

- Calendar terminology
- Time terminology
- Common illness/injury terminology

Extended Vocabulary

- Kinds/intensity of pain

Functional Language:

Basic

I need an appointment, I have _____(illness)

Extended

I can't come

I can't make it

I need to cancel/reschedule

Are there any appointments _____?(state day and time of day)

Grammar link

Basic

Present Simple: I need, I have_____

Extended

Present Simple 1st and 3rd person

Present Perfect for duration and experience of illness

I've had it for/since_____

I've had back problems in the past.

Simple Past to give details of injury.

I hurt my back when I stood up from a chair.

Adapted from : Northwest Educational Cooperative, Des Plaines, IL

Background Reading

MAKING MEANING, MAKING CHANGE. 1992. Auerbach, E. CAL

TEACHING MULTI-LEVEL CLASSES IN ESL 1998 Bell, Jill. Dominic Press

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION: ADJUSTING TO THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS. Corley, M in Focus on Basics 7© March 2006.

www.ncsall.net/index

TEACHING LARGE MULTILEVEL CLASSES, 2001. Hess, Natalie

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND SKILLS THROUGH MULTILEVEL CLASSES. Hofer and Larson 1997 in Focus on Basics 1(C)

TEACHING LOW-LEVEL ADULT ESL LEARNERS 1995. Holt, G. www.cal.org/caela

PROMOTING THE SUCCESS OF MULTILEVEL CLASSES: WHAT TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS CAN DO. 2006 CAELA Brief

TEACHING MULTI-LEVEL ADULT ESL CLASSES. 1995 Shank and Terrill. CAELA Digest

Books for Classroom Use

- *INPUT/OUTPUT*. 1989 Boyd and Boyd Abaca Books
- *STEP FORWARD* 2006 Oxford. Series editor Adelson-Goldstein, Jayme
- *PICTURE STORIES*, Tannenbaum, Elizabeth
- *PERSONAL STORIES*. Linmore Publishing
- *LITERACY PLUS A AND B* 2005 Longman
- *MAKING IT REAL: TEACHING ADULT PRE-LITERATE REFUGEES*. Croydon, Alysan LiteracyNow.info