

Teaching Mixed Ability Classes



BERMUTU

Better Education through Reformed Management
and Universal Teacher Upgrading

Ministry of National Education
Directorate General of Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel
CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF
LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND EDUCATION PERSONNEL
2009

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PREFACE

Center for Development and Empowerment of Teachers and Education Personnel (CDELTEP) or Pusat Pengembangan dan Pemberdayaan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan (PPPPTK) Bahasa is in charge of promoting the quality of language teachers and school principal, school supervisor, and so forth. Hence, the Center takes part in the project of Better Education Through Reformed Management and Universal Teacher Upgrading (BERMUTU) in order to multiply their competencies and professionalism.

As a government institution that is professionally managed, PPPPTK Bahasa provides quality education services aligned with education reform and globalisation demand projected by Education for All (EFA). Likewise the institution develops Teacher Competency Standards inclusive teaching materials as a means of achieving the required competencies.

In the framework of the Minister National of Education Decree Number 14 year 2005 on Teacher and Lecturer, the Center, in an effort to generate competent and professional teachers, organizes various training activities to fulfill specific competency standards and certification programs. Therefore, the development of these learning materials are expected to be a useful resource for teachers.

Finally, constructive criticisms for further materials improvement are welcome and can be sent to PPPPTK Bahasa, Jalan Gardu, Srengseng Sawah, Jagakarsa, Jakarta 12640; Telephone (021) 7271034, Facsimile (021) 7271032, and email: admin@pppptkbahasa.net

Jakarta, September 2009
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

All classes are heterogeneous or in the other term “mixed ability classes”, especially in secondary schools most classes have a wide range of levels and abilities. Developing a teaching approach to deal with such diversity in one class seems to be almost impossible demand. By knowing of teaching mixed ability classes teacher will have fresh point of view to look at the mixture of skills and abilities as a factor and suggesting some appropriate teaching approaches and strategies and also teachers will able to modify material to make it suitable for a range of abilities.

B. Objectives

This module is one of supplementary modules for BERMUTU program which aims to assist English teachers in teaching English for Junior High School. This module provide some discussions related to how to manage mixed ability classes

C. Indicators

After having learned this module, teachers are expected to have the following competencies:

1. To mention and explain the problems happened in mixed ability classes;
2. To understand Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in managing mixed ability classes;
3. To understand the concepts of cooperative learning strategy and apply them in mixed ability classes;
4. To apply classroom management in teaching mixed ability classes.

CHAPTER II TEACHING MIXED ABILITY CLASSES

A. Concepts and Characters of Mixed Ability Classes

It is important to make a clear distinction between mixed ability teaching and mixed ability classes. Most teachers have to teach mixed ability groups but they not be using mixed ability teaching strategies. McKeown (2004) believes that many teachers see a mixed ability class as consisting of a group of average and able children with a subset of students who has learning problems. Ireson & Hallam (2001) suggest teachers need to recognise that a class is mixed ability because students have different strengths and weakness and develop at a different rates. They have different preferences for learning and displaying their work.

A metaphor of a mixed ability class which works is to think of the class as a lift (elevator). Everyone needs to get into the lift to start with. Some students will run into the lift, some will have to dragged in. Some students will travel right 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 travelled somewhere successfully. At the end of class, every student can leave the room feeling that they been challenged and they have achieved something.

1. Teachers' Role in Mixed Ability Teaching

Harris and Snow (2004) express their concern that the drive to raise achievement may have left Modern Languages teachers feeling they should be drawing yet more colourful flashcards or making up differentiated worksheets. They also suggest that an alternative approach would focus on helping students more ownership not only in the choice of content but also *how they go about learning*.

Teaching a mixed ability class will work if all students are allowed to experience success and to learn as individuals. It is less likely to be successful if a teachers insists on whole class teaching and teaching to the average students. It is unrealistic to expect any group of students whatever the ability to work through a body of work at exactly the same pace. Two thirds of students will be working out of their learning style unless the task is varied. Fisher (2001:1) suggests that many students don't achieve their potential because they are told "to make a journey but they have no map". Teachers should act as a role models for learning and teach them how to become independent and effective learners. Students need to be taught learning techniques and how to be resourceful.

The teacher should reflect on classroom practice, adopt a problem solving approach to any difficulties identified and experiment with a range of approaches. Teachers need to accept their new role first of all as a learner themselves and a facilitator of learning. The emphasis is not what teachers teach but on what students learn. Researchers (Hallam&Toutonji, 1996;

Harlen&Malcolm, 1997) are now suggesting that the key to success is not how the students are grouped but the attitude and skills of the teacher in the classroom. So how can teachers become facilitators of learning and help the students to become more effective learners?

2. Why Are Some Students ‘Worse’ than Others?

It is very easy to label a student as “good” or “bad” and then expect them to match the label ever after, but there are a number of reasons why learners may be better or worse at English. Many of the reasons are temporary and can be overcome.

They have a different starting point. Perhaps they learnt or did not learn English at Primary School or Kindergarten.

They have had a very poor teacher.

They have missed out on an important stage of learning but have good skills in a different area.

They have been labelled as ‘bad at English’ and now they believe it, so why bother? They are bored and demoralised

They are less mature than other students or lack confidence to get involved.

So, in fact, there are good reasons why a less able student may, potentially, be a good language learner. It is this realisation that has undermined the old idea of streaming where, once labelled, a student got stuck.

A mixed ability class should offer all the students in it an appropriate challenge to help them to progress in their own terms. Unfortunately, we all have to work within the bureaucracy of education – exams, tests and so on – in other words in someone else’s terms. If classes operate a dividing line of ‘pass’ and ‘fail’ in everyday activities, it can create a sense of failure and a feeling that the task of learning is too hard. As teachers, we can be much more than educational bureaucrats – we can offer the chance of real educational and linguistics progress together, and we can make it fun too.

3. What Are The Characteristics of Good Mixed Ability Classes?

The thought of having to develop a completely new approach in order to deal with mixed ability teaching is understandably frightening. In practice, what is needed most is a change of emphasis in the classroom to create the context where all the learners feel valuable and have the space and confidence to try.

All of these characteristics share a common feature aimed to make the classroom condhusive for all students:

There is a sense of discipline and shared purposed in the class. The students have learned to work together and to be self-directed for short periods.

Both linguistic and non-linguistic skills are valued and everyone can contribute even if the contributions are not linguistic.

Students' work and drawings are displayed on the wall or kept in a class folder that is regularly reviewed. All the students in the class will be involved and each student will have something appropriately challenging to work on.

To provide a range of challenges for different abilities, there will be a range of achievable objectives for many tasks. Many of these objectives will be small and immediate, like learning five new words, saying one sentence correctly or repeating an earlier exercise and getting it right.

There will be time and space for everyone to think. Students learn that they don't need to think when the teacher asks a question because the most able students will answer. They are encouraged to note down the answer. This way, all students in the class will have the chance to think about the question.

There will be opportunities for regular assessment against a personal standard. For example "I got 3 sentences right last time and 5 right this time!" is a great step forward. If students are helped to measure themselves against their own personal achievements, all students, including the stronger ones, can focus on improving their own. Students in this class will have regular opportunities to find out how they are progressing.

The syllabus will be planned to allow a different rate of progress within each lesson, so that students can work at the best speed for them. However, the general pace of the syllabus will be the same for all students – they can all feel that they are learning together. The more able students will learn more vocabulary and engage in more challenging practice.

4. Some Problems In The Mixed Ability Classes

In heterogeneous classes some problems that caused by the differences of each students individually, might be appeared. Therefore, the language teachers should be aware of the problems of mixed ability classes and find their solutions to identify the source of troubles in their classes and to cure them, if the teacher wants to ensure that all students perform to their maximum potential, the teacher must identify these problems and deal with them accordingly.

a. Effective Learning

As a teacher, our aim is to reach all of students. However, it is well known that every student has a different way of learning, and learns and progresses at different speeds. Thus, while some students may find the learning task very easy to deal with, others may find it difficult to understand. Besides, learning also depends on what students have brought with them into class. Since each comes from a different family, a different environment and/or a different nation, the multicultural population of the classroom may be an obstacle for the teachers in reaching the students, which eventually results in ineffective learning.

Moreover, although it is quite difficult for the teachers to know about each student and to follow what each one does during the lessons even in small classes, it is important for teachers to monitor each and every student and to reach their needs in a variety of ways to achieve effective teaching.

b. *Participation*

Since the classroom is the first and only environment for many foreign language learners, they should use this chance as much as possible. However, some of the students find it difficult to speak in the target language for many reasons ranging from interest to confidence, from age to knowledge. Other students, however would like to express everything they think or feel by using the new language. As a result, some students may take many turns, while others do not speak for the entire lesson.

c. *Materials*

Since most language textbooks are designed for an ideal homogenous classroom environment, teachers always have to deal with the problem that students react to the textbook differently due their individual differences. First of all, some students may find the textbook boring and very hard, whereas some find it interesting or very easy. In addition, as language teaching course materials are currently based on content-based or theme-based syllabi, some students may find the topics dull, strange, or meaningless; whereas others find it enjoyable, familiar or interesting. Therefore, it is usually necessary for the teacher to evaluate and adapt the materials according to his/her class.

d. *Interests*

Interest problems may arise due to the differences among students in terms of their attitude towards the subject matter and/or the teacher; their knowledge of language; and their personality. For instance, some students may find lesson boring, as the topic has no familiarity with their own life or their interests. Furthermore, some of the students may not be interested in the lesson, unless they do get the chance to express their own ideas since the teacher talks too much during the lesson or the other students take many turns. Hence, teachers should be aware of the different interests of the students to organize and to arrange activities accordingly.

e. *Discipline*

Often the quicker students finish the tasks given before the other students. As a result, they may misbehave while waiting for the others to finish. The weaker students, on the the hand, cannot finish the tasks as quickly as the strong ones and may loose their confidence and/or show ill-disciplined behaviour for a variety of reason related to that. Consequently, mixed abilities may result in classroom management problems.

5. Ideas for Mixed Ability Classes

Below are some ideas of you can support your weaker students and offer extension activities for your stronger students whilst using the same materials as the starting point for the class. This way the preparation time involved for the teacher isn't drastically higher, and the group can still work together for the most of the class.

	Extension activities for stronger students	Support for weaker students
Reading	<p>Ask early finishers to write new vocab up the board with definitions.</p> <p>Rewrite a part of the text of in different tense/person.</p> <p>Write their personal opinion/ a short summary of the text. Write questions about about the text.</p>	<p>Pre-teach difficult vocabulary and leave it written on the board for students to refer to. Use visuals if possible.</p> <p>If there are gaps, give students the answers in jumbled order, with a few extras</p> <p>Break the text into chunks and give the option of only reading some of the text.</p>
Listening	<p>Give out the tape script and nominate a 'vocabulary master' to look up tricky words or expressions in dictionary to then explain to the group.</p> <p>Focus on the accents or intonation of the speakers and get students to copy chunks.</p>	<p>Pre teach vocabulary, use visual prompts when appropriate.</p> <p>Give students time to discuss answers before feeding back to the class.</p> <p>Give students the tape script on the second listening.</p>
Writing	<p>Give creative tasks that students can do at their own level.</p> <p>Indicate mistakes using correction code to give students a chance to self-correct.</p> <p>Increase the word limit.</p>	<p>Correct the draft together before students copy up in neat.</p> <p>Reduce the word limit.</p> <p>Encourage use of dictionaries/vocab books.</p> <p>Pair or group weaker students with strongest students.</p>
Speaking	<p>Ask students to justify/defend their opinions.</p> <p>Ban easy word like 'nice' to</p>	<p>Give students time rehearse and gather their ideas before a role play or discussion.</p>

	<p>push their vocab to higher level.</p> <p>Pair students of higher level together so they really go for it.</p>	<p>Pair weak and strong together.</p> <p>Let students make notes before the speaking activity begins. Allow for 'thinking time'.</p> <p>Grade students on the effort they make rather than ability.</p>
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6. Advantages of Large Heterogeneous Class

Large heterogenous classes are seen mostly as problematical; but they have their advantages as well, and some these can be used to help solve the problems.

Such classes provide a much richer pool of human resources than do smaller or less mixed classes. The individuals have between them far more life experience and knowledge, more varied opinions, more interest and ideas – all of which can be used in classroom interaction.

There is educational value in the actual contact between very different kinds of people: co-students get to know to each other's values, personalities and perhaps cultures, thereby increase their own knowledge and awareness of others, as well as tolerance and understanding.

The fact that the teacher is very much less able to attend to every individual in the class means that in order for the class to function well the students themselves must help by teaching each other and working together: peer teaching and collaboration are likely to be fairly common, fostering an atmosphere of cooperation.

These classes can be seen as very much more challenging and interesting to teach, provide greater opportunity for creativity, innovation and general professional development.

TASK 1

1. In your own situation: how big is 'large' class?
2. Why are large classes often mixed ability?
3. Are mixed ability classes typical in your teaching context?
4. Suggest any strategies for dealing with mixed ability classes.

B. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)



The change of educational realities in Europe has led to different approaches to foreign language teaching. The development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was a significant impact of the book written by Wilkins (1976) entitled *Notional Syllabuses*.

The work of the council of Europe; the writing of Wilkins, Widdowson, Candlin, Christopher Brumfit, Keith Johnson, and other British applied linguist on the theoretical basis for a communicative or functional approach to language teaching came to what is referred as Communicative Approach or simply Communicative Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2003).

The aim of Communicative Language Teaching is broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication.

The Communicative Approach in Language teaching begins with a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as “communicative competence”

According to Hymes (1972), a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails

Finocchiaro and Brumfit in Richards and Rodgers (2003) contrast the major distinctive features of the Audio-lingual method and the Communicative Approach, according to their interpretation:

No.	Audio-lingual	Communicative Language Teaching
1.	Attends to structure and form than meaning.	Meaning is paramount.
2.	Demands memorization of structure-based dialogues.	Dialogues, if used, center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized.
3.	Language items are not necessarily contextualized.	Contextualization is a basic premise
4.	Language learning is learning structures, sounds, or words.	Language learning is learning to communicate.
5.	Mastery, or “over learning,” is sought.	Effective communication is sought.
6.	Drilling is a central technique.	Drilling may occur, but peripherally.
7.	Native-speaker-like pronunciation is sought.	Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.
8.	Grammatical explanation is avoided.	Any device that helps the learners is accepted-varying according to their age, interest, etc.
9.	Communicative activities only come after a long process of rigid drills and exercise.	Attempts to communicate may encourage from the very beginning.
10.	The use of the students' native language is forbidden.	Judicious use of the native language is accepted where feasible.
11.	Translation is forbidden at early levels.	Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.
12.	Reading and writing are deferred till speech is mastered.	Reading and writing can start from the first day, if desired.
13.	The target linguistic system will be learned through the overt teaching of the patterns of the system.	The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.
14.	Linguistic competence is the	Communicative competence is the

	desired goal.	desired goal (i.e., the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately).
15.	Varieties of language are recognized but not emphasized.	Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and methodology.
16.	The sequence of units is determined solely by principles of linguistic complexity.	Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content, function, or meaning that maintains interest.
17.	Teacher controls the learners and prevents them from doing anything that conflicts with the theory.	Teacher s help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
18.	“Language is habit: so errors must be prevented at costs.	Language is created by the individual, often through trial and error.
19.	Accuracy, in terms of formal correctness, is a primary goal.	Fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: Accuracy is not judged not in the abstract but in context.
20.	Students are expected to interact with the language system, embodied in machines or controlled materials.	Students are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writings.
21.	The teacher is expected to specify the language that students are to use.	The teacher cannot know exactly what language students will use.
22.	Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in the structure of the language.	Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.

Freeman (2000) states that the aim of Communicative Language Teaching is broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach by making the communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication.

In reviewing the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, Freeman (2000) also provides the answers to *ten questions that will give a better understanding of CLT*.

1. What are the goals of teachers who use CLT?

The goal is to enable students to communicate in target language. To do this students need knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings and function. They need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. They must be able to choose from among these the most appropriate form, given the social context and the roles of the interlocutors. They must also be able to manage the process of negotiating meaning with their interlocutors.

They must be able to manage the process of negotiating meaning with their interlocutors. Communication is a process; knowledge of the forms of language is insufficient.

2. What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?

The teacher facilitates communication in the classroom. One of the teacher's responsibilities is to establish situation like to promote communication. He acts as an adviser, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. Students are, above all, communicators. They are actively engage in negotiating meaning-in trying to make themselves understood and in understanding others-even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning.

3. What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

The most obvious characteristics of CLT is that almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role plays, and problem solving task.

Activities are truly communicative, according to Morrow (in Johnson and Morrow, 1981), have three features in common: information gap, choice, and feedback.

Information gaps exist when one person in an exchange knows something the other person does not. If we both know today is Tuesday and I ask you, "What is today?" and you answer, "Tuesday," our exchange is not really communicative.

4. What is the nature of student-teacher interaction? What is the nature of student-students interaction?

The teacher may present some part of the lesson, such as when working with linguistic accuracy. At other times, he is the facilitator of the activities. But he does not always himself interact with the students. Sometimes he is a co-

communicator, but more often he establishes situations that prompt communication between and among the students.

Students interact a great deal with one another. They do this in various configurations: pairs, triads, small groups, and whole group.

5. How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

One of the basic assumptions of CLT is that by learning to communicate students will be more motivated to study a foreign language since they will feel they are learning to do something useful with the language. Also, teachers give students an opportunity to express their individuality by having them share their ideas and opinions on a regular basis. Finally, student security with their fellow students and the teacher.

6. How is language viewed? How is culture viewed?

Language is for communication. Linguistic competence, the knowledge of forms and their meanings, is just one part of communicative competence. Another aspect of communicative competence is knowledge of the functions language is used for.

Learners need knowledge of forms and meanings and functions. However, they may also use this knowledge and take into consideration the social situation in order to convey their intendeds meaning appropriately.

Culture is the everyday lifestyle of people who use the language. There are certain aspects of it that are especially important to communication-the use of non-verbal behavior, for example, which might receive greater attention in CLT.

7. What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

Students work with language at the suprasentential or discourse level. They learn about cohesion and coherence. For example, in our lesson the students recognized that the second sentence of the scrambled order was the last sentence of the original sports column because of its introductory adverbial phrase.

Students work on all four skills from the beginning. Just as oral communication is seen to take place through negotiation between speaker and listener, so too is meaning thought to be derived from the written word through an interaction between the reader and the writer.

8. What is the role of the students' native language?

Judicious use of the students' native language is permitted in CLT. However, whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied.

9. How is evaluation accomplished?

A teacher evaluates not only the students' accuracy, but also their fluency. The student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator.

A teacher can informally evaluate his students' performance in his role as an adviser or co-communicator. For more formal evaluation, a teacher is likely to use an integrative test which has a real communicative function. In order to assess students' writing skill, for instance, a teacher might ask them to write a letter to a friend.

10. How does the teacher respond to students errors?

Errors of form are tolerated during fluency-based activities and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators. The teacher may note the errors during fluency activities and return to them later with an accuracy-based activity.

11. Techniques or materials in CLT Approach

Below are the techniques or materials associated with CLT as proposed by Freeman (2000):

a. Authentic materials

The use of language materials authentic to native speakers of the target language is advocated to overcome the physical problem that students cannot transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world and to expose students to natural language in a variety of situations. In this lesson we see that teacher uses a real newspaper article. He also assigns the students home work, requiring that they listen to a live radio or television broadcast.

For students with lower proficiency in the target language, we can use more accessible materials (for example, the use of a weather forecast when working on predictions), or at least ones that are realistic. With a lower class it is possible to use realia that do not contain a lot of language, but about which a lot of

discussion could be generated. Menus in the target language are an example; timetables are another.

b. Scrambled sentences

The students are given a passage (a text) in which the sentences are in a scrambled order. This may be a passage they have worked with or one they have not seen before. They are told to unscramble the sentences so that the sentences are restored in their original order.

c. Language games

Games are used frequently in CLT. The students find them enjoyable, and if they are properly designed, they give students valuable communicative practice. The three features of communicative activities proposed by Morrow were manifested in the card game we observed in the following way: An information gap existed because the speaker did not know what her classmate was going to do in the following weekend. The speaker had a choice as to what she would predict (which sport) and how she would predict it (which form her prediction would take). The speaker received feedback from the members of the group. If her prediction was incomprehensible, then none of the members of her group would respond. If she got a meaningful response, she could presume her prediction was understood.

d. Picture strip story

Many activities can be done with picture strip stories. We suggested one in our discussion of scrambled sentences. For example, one student in a small group was given a strip story. She showed the first picture of the story to the other members of her group and asked them to predict what the second picture would look like. An information gap existed-the students in the groups did not know what the picture contained. They had a choice as to what their prediction would be and how they would word it. They received feedback, not on the form but on the content of the prediction.

The activity just described is an example of using a problem solving task as a communicative technique. Problem-solving tasks work well in CLT because they usually include the three features of communication. What's more, they can be structured so that students share information or work together to arrive at solution. This gives students practice in negotiating meaning.

e. Role play

Role plays are very important in CLT because they give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. Role plays can be set up so that they are very structured (for example, the teacher tell the students who they are and what they should say) or in a less structured way (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are, what the situation is, and what they are talking about, but the students determine

what they will say). Students also receive feedback on whether or not they have effectively communicated.

Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. It refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures.

These principles include:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error

TASK 2

1. If you wanted to introduce your friend Paula to Roger, you might say:

Roger, this is (my friend) Paula

I would like you to meet Paula.

Let me present Paula to you.

Roger, meet Paula.

Allow me to introduce Paula.

In other words, there are a variety of forms for this one function. Which would you teach to a beginning class, an intermediate class, an advanced class? Why?

2. Imagine that you are working with your students on the function of requesting information. The authentic materials you have selected is a railroad timetable. Design a communicative game or problem solving task in which the timetable is used to give your student practice in requesting information. Plan a role play to work in the same function.

C. Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning or collaborative learning essentially involves students learning from each other in groups. But it is not the group configuration that makes cooperative learning distinctive; it is the way that students and teachers work together that is important. In cooperative learning, teachers teach students collaborative or social skills so that they can work together more effectively. Indeed, cooperation is not only a way of learning, but also a theme to be communicated about and studied.

Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes. (Sources: Beckman, 1990; Chickering and Gamson, 1991; Collier, 1980; Cooper and Associates, 1990; Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, and Associates, 1992; Johnson and Johnson, and Smith, 1991; Kohn, 1986; McKeachie, Pintrich, Lin, and Smith, 1986; Slavin, 1980, 1983; Whitman, 1988).

1. The advantages of cooperative learning:

- increased frequency and variety of second language practice through different types of interaction;
- possibility for development or use of language in ways that support cognitive development and increased language skills;
- opportunities to integrate language with content-based instruction;
- opportunities to include a greater variety of curricular materials to stimulate language as well as concept learning;
- freedom for teachers to master new professional skills, particularly those emphasizing communication;
- opportunities for students to act as resources for each other, thus assuming a more active role in their learning.

2. Types of learning and teaching activities

Johnson et al., (1994, p. 4-5) describe three types of group work.

a. **Formal learning groups**

These last from one class period to several weeks. These are established for a specific task and involve students working together to achieve shared learning goals. These groups may complete their work in a single class session or over several weeks. Typically, students work together until the task is finished, and their project is graded.

b. **Informal learning groups.**

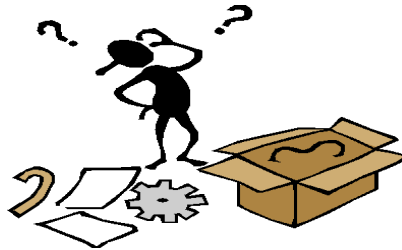
These are ad-hoc groups that last from view minutes to class period and are used to focus student attention or to facilitate learning during direct teaching. You can organise informal groups at any time in a class of any size to check on students' understanding of the material, to give students an opportunity to apply what they are learning, or to provide a change of pace.

c. **Cooperative base groups (study teams).**

These are long term, lasting for at least a year and consist of heterogenous learning groups with stable membership whose primary purpose is to allow members to give each other the support, help, encouragement, assistance they need to succeed academically.

3. **Class activities that use Cooperative Learning**

a. **Jigsaw**



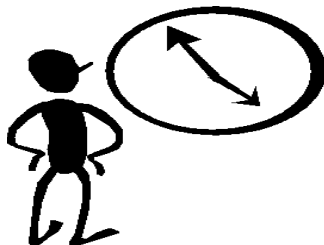
Groups with five students are set up. Each group member is assigned some unique material to learn and then to teach to his group members.

To help in the learning students across the class working on the same subsection get together to decide what is important and how to teach it. After practice in these "expert" groups the original groups reform and students teach each other. (Wood, p.17).

b. **Think – Pair – Share**

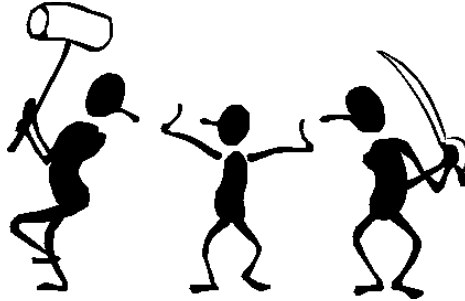
Involves a three step cooperative structure. During the first step individuals think silently about a question posed by the instructor. Individuals pair up during the second step and exchange thoughts. In the third step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire group.

c. **Three –Steps Interview**



Each member of a team chooses another member to be a partner. During the first step individuals interview their partners by asking clarifying questions. During the second step partners reverse the roles. For the final step, members share their partner's response with the team.

d. Round Robin Brainstorming



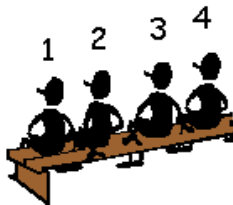
Class is divided into small groups (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder. A question is posed with many answers and students are given time to think about answers.

After the "think time", members of the team share responses with one another round robin style. The recorder writes down the answers of the group members. The person next to recorder starts and each person in the group in order gives an answer until time is called.

e. Three minute review

Teachers stop any time during a lecture or discussion and give teams three minutes to review what has been said, ask clarifying questions or answers questions.

f. Numbered Heads



A team of four is established. Each member is given numbers of 1, 2, 3, 4. Questions are asked of the group. Groupwork together to answer the question so that all can verbally answer the question. Teacher calls out a number (two) and each two is asked to give the answer.

g. Team Pair Solo

Students do problems first as a team, then with a partner, finally on their own. It is designed to motivate students to tackle and succeed at problems which initially are beyond their ability. It is based on a simple notion of mediated learning. Students can do more things with help (mediation) than they can do alone. By allowing them to work on problems they could not do alone, first as a team and

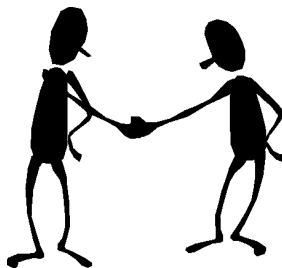
then with a partner, they progress to a point they can do alone that which at first they could do only with help.

h. *Circle the Sage*



First the teacher polls the class to see which students have a special knowledge to share. For example the teacher may ask who in the class was able to solve a difficult math homework question, who had visited Mexico, who knows the chemical reactions involved in how salting the streets help dissipate snow. Those students (the sages) stand and spread out in the room. The teacher then has the rest of the classmates each surround a sage, with no two members of the same team going to the same sage. The sage explains what they know while the classmates listen, ask questions, and take notes. All students then return to their teams. Each in turn, explains what they learned. Because each one has gone to a different sage, they compare notes. If there is disagreement, they stand up as a team. Finally, the disagreements are aired and resolved.

i. *Partners*



The class is divided into teams of four. Partners move to one side of the room. Half of each team is given an assignment to master to be able to teach the other half. Partners work to learn and consult with other partners working on the same material.

To go back together with each set of partner teaching the other set. Partners quiz and tutor teammates. Team reviews how well they learned and taught and how they might improve the process.

5. The key elements of successful group – based learning in cooperative learning

- a. *Positive interdependence*, occurs when group members feel that what help one member helps all and what hurts one member hurts all. It is created by the structure of cooperative learning tasks and by building a spirit of mutual support within the group. For example, a group may produce a single product such as an essay or the scores for members of a group may be averaged.
- b. *Group formation* is an important factor in creating positive interdependence. Factors involved in setting up groups include:
 - Deciding on the size of the group: This will depend on the tasks they have to carry out, the age of the learners, and time limits for the lesson. Typical group size is from two to four.
 - Assigning students to groups: Groups can be teacher-selected, random, or student-selected, although teacher-selected is recommended as the usual mode so as to create groups that are heterogeneous on such variables as past achievement ethnicity, or sex.
 - Students roles in groups: Each group member has a specific role to play in a group, such as noise monitor, turn-taker monitor, recorder, or summarizer
- c. *Individual accountability* involves both group and individual performance, for example, by assigning each student a grade on his or her with the whole class, with group members, or with another group.
- d. *Social skills* determine the way students interact with each other as teammates. Usually some explicit instruction in social skills is needed to ensure successful interaction.
- e. *Structuring and Structures* refer to ways of organizing student interaction and different ways students are to interact such as Three-step interview or Round Robin.

TASK 3

1. Make a list of your most commonly used language teaching activities. Try to determine which intelligences they work on.
2. What are the key elements of successful group based learning in cooperative learning?



CHAPTER III CLOSING REMARKS

This supplementary module has highlighted how to deal with the fact that in a class teachers should handle a wide range of level and abilities of students. Two approaches, Communicative Language Teaching and Cooperative, have been discussed to give more ideas in dealing with mixed ability classes.

There is a simple ideas behind all of this, just as learners need achievable objectives and plenty of small succes to stay motivated, so do teachers. The key strategies for teaching mixed level classes are probably developing a positive and cooperative or collaborative working atmsosphere and providing a variety of work which is suitable for different levels. It probably doesn't work to stick your head in the sand and pretend the class is all of homogenous level, a situation which doesn't exist anywhere.

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ATTACHMENT

Worksheet 1

After reading the material above, please re-group into 5. Everyone takes notes in the other parts of the grid.

	Notes (possible answers)
Discussion and need analysis	
Student self-awareness	
Work groupings	
Range of tasks	
Extra work/homework	
Student nomination	
Error correction	

Worksheet 2

<i>Find someone who...</i>	
...likes pair work.	
...enjoys drills.	
...doesn't like creating a dialogue and acting it out.	
...doesn't like speaking in front of the whole class.	
... likes it when one student reads aloud to the whole class from a text.	
... likes speaking classes when one	

learner gives a talk.	
...dislikes role-plays.	
...likes discussion classes where the whole class discusses a topic together.	
...likes activities using visuals.	
...enjoys group work.	
...likes guessing games.	
...enjoys using questionnaires.	
...likes drama activities.	



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