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CELEBRATE DIVERSITY IN CLASSROOM WITH UDL APPROACH

Our English language classrooms are highly diverse in terms of student background, personality, cognitive style, linguistic ability and interest. Some students have disabilities, often invisible, that affect their abilities to see, hear, pay attention to, or participate in activities the same way as their peers. And each student has preferred ways of expressing their knowledge, learning a language. More of it, some students due to cultural differences, unknowingly plagiarize, or due to neurological differences, turn in incomplete class assignments. It forces us to confront a challenging question: are we going to teach equally, so that every student receives the same instruction and arrives at different points, or are we going to teach equitably, so that every student receives differentiated instruction to get everyone to the same point?

I strongly believe that as teachers, we should comprehend our own values system if we are to facilitate the development of values our classroom contexts and disseminate values to our students. Willingness to find out more about the many differences that exist in the classroom and a self-knowledge of how one usually responds to these differences can make one aware of hidden prejudices and stereotypes which are barriers to tolerance and mutual understanding. Seen from this perspective, classroom diversity can be a resource for our active classroom research. We can exploit the diverse context of our ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classroom to develop in both the students and among our colleagues the so much needed intercultural and inter-social competences.

So, how can we cope with cultural differences and create the inclusive English classroom for diverse learners, who could feel safe, comfortable, included, while learning in accordance with their specific difficulties but realizing their personal learning goals? In my case, it is UDL approach that helps me manage teaching and cope with diversity, to resolve conflicts and encourage mutual understanding and respect for the ‘Other’ while also promoting strong learning community. Apart from this, demonstrating that we are interested in the success of each student is the key to students feeling comfortable enough to be courageous, open up, and allow learning to happen.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach revolves around the concept that we design our learning environment to be accessible by all students. UDL stems from an agricultural term, Universal Design in which architects had to structure buildings so

that they were accessible by all people. Educators must also structure their curricula or course so that it is accessible by all students. UDL aims to provide a greater variety of options for how learners are taught information, how they express their knowledge, practice their skills and how they are engaged and motivated to learn more. It is important to follow UDL principles to ensure this approach to be effective. The UDL principles can be applied to the overall design of a course as well as to the specific instructional materials and strategies such as lectures, learning activities, learning resources, discussions, group work, handouts, on-line instruction, labs, field work, and demonstrations.

The first principle of UDL invites teachers to use ‘multiple means of representation’. Research has shown that all students benefit from multiple means of representation to create and encode meaning [Meyer et. al., 2014]. Thus, by using the flipped classroom technique, I encourage students to demonstrate what they know about business meetings from different sources (online articles, you tube videos, films), and only after that we start Business meeting teamwork project to enrich their knowledge and practice language skills and B2 professional skills (in writing and speaking).

As the second principle of UDL calls teachers to use ‘multiple means of action and expression,’ I allow students to choose a way to demonstrate their understanding and learning in various way, whether it would be a report, an essay, a mind-map or a presentation in a business-like format. To my mind, when we provide students the opportunity to demonstrate learning results through multiple means and give them an option to choose one in accordance to their specific abilities, we learn what works better for them and can often find some strong points we had not identified before.

The third principle of UDL recommends that teachers provide ‘multiple means for student participation and engagement’. With this in mind, the tasks designed in the framework of the above mentioned teamwork project help my students develop professional or employability skills as well as intercultural and inter-social competence. For example, all the students are engaged into preparing and conducting a business meeting, besides, they are involved into more than one way to interact not only in class but also beyond it. In teams the students have opportunity to develop their interpersonal skills, namely: ability to speak clearly, briefly and concisely while being in the roles of a chairperson, proposer or seconder. Besides, while preparing and discussing their proposals and agenda the students develop their ability to influence people, take decisions and handle / prevent conflicts. More of it, I am inclined to think that learning short-term and long-term goals, semester plans, assessment criteria kept in EL Portfolios give students evidence of their progress in learning, feel being included in the classroom and thus, feel safe and encouraged to study. Finally, to my mind, it is necessary to engage students to reflect regularly on their learning process, their challenges and achievements by taking notes in their ‘learning journals’.

So, to meet needs and wants of our diverse students in the modern multicultural classroom we need to be flexible, lifelong learners, facilitators. We must know our students, who are totally different from us, those who used to study in different ways and in different contexts.

To be an inclusive teacher is a challenging job. Are we always available and approachable to the students, who may need support in understanding what is required

of them? When students feel comfortable in approaching us, they are more likely to risk exposing their lack of understanding and ask for clarification of the expectations. Teachers who are available, approachable and helpful are capable of creating a safe learning environment for their students. Are we ready to be adventurous, innovative and imaginative? These are tough questions. My strong belief is that university teachers need to be trained in a formal way on modern approaches and methods of how to teach in a diverse classroom.

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РОЛЬ ВИКЛАДАЧА ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ У НАВЧАННІ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ В СУЧАСНИХ ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

***Анотація.** У статті визначається концепція міжкультурної комунікації у вивченні іноземних мов. Розглядається компетентнісний підхід і приховані труднощі у викладанні іноземної мови і міжкультурної комунікації.*

***Abstract.** The article presents the concept of intercultural communication in learning foreign language. The competence approach and hidden difficulties in teaching foreign languages and intercultural communication are considered.*

***Ключові слова:** міжкультурна комунікація, компетентнісний підхід, міжкультурна компетентність, процес адаптації.*

***Key words:** intercultural communication, competence approach, intercultural competence, the process of adaptation.*

Питання глобалізації залишається актуальним і все більше хвилює наше суспільство. Суть її полягає в тому, що це об'єктивний природний процес інтеграції людства в єдине ціле. В умовах сучасного політичного, економічного, соціального і культурного розвитку взаємозв'язки різних країн дедалі більше зростають. Це проявляється в розвитку культури особистості, готової до самостійної діяльності в новому соціо-культурному середовищі, зростанні кількості безпосередніх контактів між державами і соціальними інститутами, громадськими рухами та активній взаємодії з представниками інших культур на основі толерантних взаємовідносин.