

PhD Cand. Ervin Balla
University of Tirana, Albania
Email: Ervin_balla@yahoo.com

The division of the students according to their knowledge of English

Abstract

In this article I have tried to state the importance of the division of the students in the class according to their level of the knowledge of the language. This division according to their levels may help their focusing in the target and improvement of their level of English. This can also help their motivation if all the group is more or less at the same level they will not feel neglected, but opened to new knowledge, because everything is new as a group and not only to some individuals.

Key words: Level of students, beginners, intermediate, advanced

1-Introduction

We know that the process of learning English is not an easy process, and has to go through some stages. One of these stages is the division of students in groups according to their level of knowledge of English (Harmer J. 1998). We know that the adult students are sometimes fragile, and they sometimes are not influenced by the curiosity, and the teacher is not of a special importance. The teacher should not forget that the adults are seen with respect by their friends, and may get offended if the teacher is not careful with critics, but on the other side they can be very intelligent if they are stimulated and very dedicated if they are involved in the process. In this age if we succeed to reach the level of the challenge in the proper way is vital. More than anything they should be involved in this assignment and seek to accomplish it.

The grown up beginners are in some way the easiest students to be taught. First they can come to class with a high level of outer motivation. Secondly very frequently they succeed. Their purposes in the class (learning of a part of language or ending a chapter) are easy to be obtained and relatively easy to be achieved.

It is still difficult to start learning a foreign language, and a non-realistic challenge combined with a negative behaviour of the teacher, can have a negative impact to the motivation of the students.

Even the students of the average level can be motivated from the outside. They can have positive feelings for the way how they are treated in the class in the way that they are studying. The success can be motivating, and the perception that they are gaining more “Advanced English” should be a main goal. The beginners as we said percept the success easily, since everything is new to them, but the average students have more extended knowledge and may not percept any

knowledge yet (Westwood P. 1995). In an alternative way they may be influenced by the complexity of the language.

Our job as English teachers is to show to the students that there is still a lot to be learned (not to demoralise them) and then we should place realistic aims to be achieved. Once again a key factor is the accomplishment of the challenge in the proper way.

The advanced students are very frequently highly motivated. If they would not be motivated, they would not have continued to study the language, when they think that they have gone so far. Like the average students they find it difficult to percept the progress. Most of the time they do not learn anything new, but simply they learn to use better what they already know.

However there is not an accurate study for the level of the English language to the students that start for the first time the university. From a poll made with the students in the first year of University “Aleksander Mosiu” of Durres was seen that:

1. 253 students were elementary level
2. 123 students were pre-elementary level
3. 65 were in the intermediate level
4. 33 were upper intermediate
5. 12 were in the advanced level

So as we can see the number of the students in the elementary level was much higher than the number of students of any other level

2-The beginner and false beginner level of students

The first level of beginner students is that stage when the student has no knowledge for the language. This level is not only for children. Many people discover the need to study English language later in their life. The students belonging to this level cannot speak or write in accurate way even in the present tense (Broughton 2003). When the students know some words in English language (very limited) and they cannot join these words to form sentences are called false beginners. When there is no distinction between classrooms, the level of beginners is absorbed within 20 or 25 classes in elementary courses

This is a difficult level to work with because we have a very limited amount of words that we can use to describe things, and students risk abandoning their studies, but at the same time is very profitable because every new word scores a progress for the class. The grammar in this level is very simple and involves the key things such as: personal pronouns, nouns in plural and singular, the verb to be, in positive and negative, the alphabet and numbers, some names of professions, names of countries etc.

For the majority of the students that belong to this level the English language is a novelty and the learning of many words and new expressions gives a feeling of exploring a new territory not used before. They start to feel a great pleasure and generally are very attentive to listen and participate during the classes. (Richard J. and Rodgers Th. 2001) With the help of this level of students is important to determine the goals and the results of learning in this level of learning the language, where the grown students will know exactly what will learn in this course and they will be more aware for the assigned tasks.

By being adults they decide realistic goals, the accomplishment of

which creates spaces. If they don't know exactly what they get from this course, they have settled very high expectation and not fulfilling them may lead to disappointment and take to the abandoning of the course.

Results of the learning in this level are as follows:

1. Students learn to use the main verbs in simple present in English
2. Students enrich their vocabulary with different words
3. Students learn the basic vocabulary to form simple sentences

2-Elementary level

From my experience in the profession of the teacher and from different conversations with my colleagues I have noted that the majority of the students belong to this level. It is the most usual level because the majority of them after the opening of Albania with the Europe have been in contact with this language, and since the English is an international language in a way or another they have the basic knowledge for every day words or situations. This is the level in which the students see their improvement of their knowledge in English language.

Elementary level is the level where the students learn to use other words besides the verb to be in all its forms (Broughton G. 2003). This is mainly because you have to use the auxiliary word "do", that is a little bit strange for them since it is not normal for the Albanian language. In this level they learn to talk about daily issues and situations. They also refer to simple past tense, and future forms.

The grammar of this level involves: main verbs of the English language in the present in all its forms, simple adverbs of frequency, some verbs in simple past and their division in regular and irregular verbs, simple adjectives, simple expressions for the weather, the comparative degree of adjective, some expressions for physical appearance, (Heargraves A. 1992). Even in this level it is good to make an explanatory work with students and their expectation and the possible improvement in this language. The results of learning of students in this level are as follows

1. Students can form and use simple dialogues in daily situations
2. Students learn to use other tenses besides simple present, such as past tense
3. Students learn to enrich the vocabulary with many new words

3-Pre-intermediate level

In this level are identified mostly the students that come from the high school. In this level the students learn to discuss their experiences and plans in the future (Broughton G. 2003)

They learn about the vocabulary that has to do with travelling, what they want to do when they finish the school, summer vacation, their activities in their free time and explain their preferences. It is a level in which they learn many new words and they start to enrich the vocabulary (Corder N. 2008). The sentences formed are accurate grammatically, and everything is considered as a success. They are very focused on the explanation of the teacher.

They are focussed mostly in the reading of the texts and the gained information. The grammar of this level involves: the modal verbs, the possessive pronouns, forms of future tense, going to, will past tense of irregular verbs, various adverbs, and vocabulary that has to do with the description of various parts of human body, vocabulary that has to do with different views, superlatives of adjectives etc. As I stressed above this is the level where they enrich mostly their vocabulary. The students that belong to this level want to learn fast and pass into the next level quickly, for more their gained vocabulary of this level and other former levels allows the passing and using of daily situations that are easily identifiable as parts of upcoming level (Howatt, A. P. R., 1984). In this level the students are;

1. The students in this level use without any difficulty the verbs in different tenses
2. The students in this level learn about the modal verbs and their use
3. The students in this level form regular sentences with very few mistakes

4-Intermediate level

In this level the students in general start to lose their enthusiasm for learning the English language (Coleman A. 2012). The students in general in this level know how to make sentences to refer to the past, present and future, and generally have a good vocabulary for the everyday situations. However in this level the language that we teach add fluency and becomes more sophisticated than the general communication.

In this stage becomes more difficult for the students to measure their progress so in general the teacher should work much more with the

students especially for the selection of the topics to preserve and to keep up the interest of the students for learning the language. The topics should be chosen carefully and they should be topics appropriate to their age, (Broughton G. 1980).

From many students, for different topics I have heard “teacher we liked very much this topics because it had actual things about young and our age” and the contrary were the boring and out of date topics. They lose interest and they say “teacher may we drop this topic, because we don’t like it”. So I think that the selection of the topics plays a key and decisive role that the students of this level may keep up their interest to continue further.

A peculiarity of the students of this level is that all the students that want to further depth their knowledge in the learning the English language (but I am sure that of any other language) are motivated to pass other levels of language, if they pass important exams such as TOEFL or ISAT that make possible the testing of English language for other purposes such as study abroad or finding a better place of work. In these cases students are very interested and they keep up studying with the same intensity as before (Harmer J. 1998). The grammar of this level includes: the first conditional with if, when, as soon as, the second conditional, the gerund and infinitive, past perfect continuous, comparing and contrasting, description of different stages of life, childhood etc (Farrell Th. and Jacobs G. 2010). The results of the students in this level are far greater than other former levels that we have discussed. They are:

1. At this level the students have a considerable vocabulary
2. At this level we should work very hard, so the students do not lose interest for the English (the idea that they know everything)
3. At this level they start to become fluent in speaking

4-The upper intermediate level

The students belonging to this level in our universities are somehow rarer than other levels. This is mainly because to be in this level in the majority of the cases they should have worked very much with the English language and in this context the students should have had more contacts with native speaking of English language, and their vocabulary could be used very effectively from them. At this level the students speak with a reasonable fluency, using a multitude of tenses and different expressions to express their ideas (Gauntlett J. O.1957). At this point they have defeated their emotions to talk and express their ideas in English language during the classes.

They understand without much difficulty what you tell them in English, and they know how to express their thoughts, without thinking too much to find the corresponding words in English language. Very frequently they could use an appropriate language in different situations demonstrating that they could use the formal and non-formal language (Diller K. C. 1971). Very frequently in this level it is possible that the students have better knowledge in spoken than written. (Broughton G. 2003). At this point their vocabulary is reach to express actions that they perform themselves, they can make periphrases of the texts ask questions and give answers, making the task of the teacher much more challenging. They always ask for more, and the topics of the lessons should be much more diverse. They can make independent research in the internet and they can bring various information in the class about different topics. The students in this level can make beautiful essays including a reach vocabulary (Harmer J. 1998).

Their grammar involves: expressions in third conditional involving if I have known, they can use sentences and situations in direct speech and indirect speech, modal verbs in the past tenses, medical words

such as bruises, sprains etc. Words that have to do with the crime, arrest, fraud etc. They can express their feelings with words such as hurt, fascinated, relieved etc. They can use words that have to do with technology and science. (Lynch T. 1996) The students in this level ask for more materials and topics closer to their professions. They seek more words that have to do with their profession, so they can be more prepared when they finish their school cycle and have profound professional knowledge in English language. The results of the knowledge of the students in this level are as follows:

1. The students are much more fluent in speaking and understanding of the thoughts;
2. The students start to gather much more professional vocabulary even from other professional fields and plan to recognise English from licensed institutions;
3. Their grammatical knowledge are much more profound than their previous levels.

5-Advanced level

The students at this level are fewer in number than the students in other levels that we have mentioned so far. The students in this level are able to communicate freely native speakers of English language without having any difficulty (this is mainly because they have been in touch with native speakers of English or they have lived or moved or have studied into the places where the language of communication is English such as England, USA, Canada, Australia etc). One of the things that proves that is the question tags, prefixes and suffixes that are highly used in this point, and the compound nouns that may take an important place in their vocabulary (Hutchinson T. 1987). Even the ellipse and the replacement of the words are used too. However even for this level exist some difficulties such as the phrasal verbs and id-

ioms that are normal for the native speakers of English. (Thorne K. 2003). The work with advanced students is complicated because at this point the students that master a good part of the vocabulary of English language have not the same interest of the students of the above mentioned levels. The students at this point want to finalise their studies in exams for the recognition of the English language. Normally students of this level undergo exams such as the recognition of the English language with exams such as TOEFL, IELTS etc.

6-Conclusions

As we saw from my work, the division of the students into groups according to their level of recognition of English language is really important for the improvement and advancing of students at the same level and passing to the next level. The sooner we recognise the level of the students and make the division into groups according to their level the sooner we will feel the results of our work for the consolidation of groups and beyond.

References:

eargraves A. (1992) *“Teacher development and educational change”* Routledge USA

Corder N., (2008) *“ Learning to teach adults”* Routledge

Harmer J., (1998) *“How to teach English”* Pearson Longman

Hutchinson T., (1987), *“English for specific purposes”*, Cambridge University Press

Lynch T., (1996)” *Communication in the language classroom”*, Oxford

Farrell Th. and Jacobs G. (2010) *“Essentials for Successful English Language Teaching”* Continuum

Diller, K. C., (1971). *“Generative Grammar, Structural Linguistics, and Language Teaching.”*: Newbury House Publishers

Coleman, A., (2012) *“The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the United States”*. Literary Licensing, LLC

Howatt, A. P. R., (198 4) *“A History of English Language Teaching”*. Oxford University Press

Gauntlett J. O., (1957) *“Teaching English as a Foreign Language”*. London: Macmillan

Palmer, H. E., (1968), *“The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages”*. London: Oxford University Press,

Thorne. K., (2003) *“Blended Learning: How to Integrate Online and Traditional Learning”* Great Britain Clays

Richard J and Rodgers Th., (2001) *“Approaches and methods in language teaching”* Cambridge University Press

Broughton G.(2003) *“Teaching English as a foreign language”* New York Routledge

Westwood P. (1995) *“Reading and learning difficulties”* British library