Highly Varied Proficiency Levels in the Same Classroom

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Hungarian Language

• There are no mutually intelligible languages with Hungarian
• Vocabulary can be unusual
• Highly complex language structures unfamiliar to most learners
• Language difficulty category III+ (ACTFL, LTI)
• Hungarian is in between Russian and Korean (DLIFLC)
• More learning hours needed for the same proficiency level
• Less Commonly Taught Language
Hungarian Courses at UC Berkeley

Introductory Hungarian 1A and 1B (1st - year Hungarian)
• Instructional hours: 3hrs/week
  ◦ 84 instructional hours/academic year. (~ 252 learning hours) Most students reach Novice High
  ◦ 480 learning hours to Novice High (ACTFL, LTI)

Readings in Hungarian (2nd - year and above Hungarian)
• Instructional hours: 2 hours/week
  ◦ 56 instructional hours / academic year (~168 learning hours) Proficiency levels vary
  ◦ 720 learning hours to Intermediate High (ACTFL, LTI)

(Readings in Hungarian Fall 2017)

Superior
2 - Advanced High
1 - Advanced Mid
Advanced Low
Intermediate High
Intermediate Mid
1 - Intermediate Low
1 - Novice High
Novice Mid

(ACTFL, 2012)
Mixed Language Levels: Some of the Challenges

**HOW CAN THE STUDENTS**

- Learn in a mixed-level course
- Collaborate with students of profoundly different abilities
- Create a language community where they support each other
- Be inspired and motivated to learn more

**HOW CAN THE INSTRUCTOR**

- Keep a tag on students’ language levels
- Create a purposeful and manageable classroom
- Develop intriguing teaching materials to catch students' interest
- Find materials applicable to different language levels
In a differentiated classroom, teaching is evolutionary. Students and teachers are learners together. While teachers may know more about the subject matter at hand, they are continuously learning about how their students learn (Tomlinson, 2001)

- Teaching allows the progress of all students
- Creating an adaptable learning environment
- Offering level-specific tasks for group or individual works
- Selecting intriguing teaching materials to engage all students in the class
Differentiated Instruction in the Hungarian Classroom

Differentiated teaching example:
• Hungarian 1B, 2018 Spring Semester
• Different language levels: NH, IL, AH
• Topic: Extreme weather in Hungary
• Hungarian social practices: Videos and juxtaposed images
• Topic → Introduced to all
• Tasks → Breaking into groups (same or different levels)
• Task → All students work together
• Teaching example> Link to bCourses Pages

(Image Source: Photo by Balazs Mohai. https://index.hu/sport/2017/01/29/minden_evben_fagyasszak_be_a_balatont/)
Level Specific Assignments for Home

• Readings in Hungarian 100, 2017 Fall Semester
• Language levels: NH, IL, AH
• Students work at their language level
• Topic: Weöres Sándor: Macskainduló

NH/IL Options

1. Read the poem in Hungarian, watch the related clip, and practice the pronunciation. Record your best reading.
2. Imagine that cats start an uprising against the dogs. Create a conversation about how they would get organized, arranging meetings, actions, etc. Record the conversation.

AM/AH Options

1. Create a meaningful translation of the poem.
2. Write an introduction for a university newspaper about Macskainduló and its social and political background.
3. Give yourself an assignment that would be useful for your Hungarian language improvement, and you would enjoy doing it.

(Student Work)
Egy átlagos, büszke magyar macska napja
Csak akkor kezdődik, ha reggelijét megkapja.
Feni a fogát, lazacra, tunára
De legtöbbször a mőkust kergeti fel a fára.

(Image source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hr4wInTjooQ)
Alternative Final: Individual Presentations

- Topics related to Hungary
- Students interested in learning more about their subjects
- They can find sources easily

- Students work at their individual level
- Follow given requirements
- All students present their findings to their peers
Conclusions

- Differentiated language instruction can be a solution to teaching mixed level courses effectively.

- Opens doors for creativity and learning opportunities both for instructors and students

- A challenging teaching and learning situation can turn into a rewarding experience for all involved.
Thank you!

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