

大人数クラスにおける双方向授業のあり方

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Interactive Lessons with Large Classes

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要 旨

大学でよく見られる大人数クラスは、語学教師にとって特別な難題である。語学の授業は学生が上達するために、できるだけ双方向的であるべきである。学生は学習において言語を産出する訓練をする必要がある。さらに、教師は学生が適正な進歩をとげているかどうかを確認するために、彼らの進捗状況を常に評価できることが必要である。20名以上のクラスはこのような目的を達成するのを困難にする。大人数クラスによって学生の個性が失われてしまうことは、教師が学生を評価する時に特に問題を生じさせる。しかしながら、大人数クラスが教授という点でもたらす諸問題を克服するための特別な方法がいくつか存在する。

大人数の語学授業を双方向的なものにするための異なる方法に見られる共通の基盤は、その大人数クラスの中に少人数クラス環境を再現することである。学生を種々のタスクが義務づけられている自立したペアまたはグループに分割することで、このことが達成される。違った方法ごとの相違点としては、どのようにしてグループ活動が編成され、どのようにして学生の作業が評価されるのかということがある。教室の物理的な配列の重要性と配列方法のいくつか、本論文のはじめで議論される。次いで、ペアおよびグループを編成し評価

するための3つの方法が説明される。第1の方法は、出席カードを評価および成績の道具として使用するというものである。このやり方は、学生に口答試験を行ったり、あるいは言語タスクを課したりして、ただちに自分の成績を出席カードに記載するというを必然的に伴う。第2の方法は、毎日のレベル別の活動としてグループ活動ワークシートを使用するというものである。学生には、授業中にワークシートを記入するために、実践すべき双方向的グループ活動が与えられる。最後の3つめの方法は、大人数のディスカッション授業でグループを評価するためにペーパーテープレコーダーと呼ばれる方法を使用するというものである。この方法は、後で教師が批評を加えることができるように質疑応答の時間内に言われた事柄を学生が正確に言葉どおりに書きとめるという作業を伴う。

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I. Introduction

University English classes need to be interactive and give the students as many chances as possible to use and practice the target language. A good class has a low amount of time spent on the teacher talking and a high amount on the students talking or performing some language-based

activity. The teacher should give the students personal attention to ensure that they have understood the lesson and should assess their performance each class. While the question of how many students constitutes a large class is one of culture and the teacher's individual experience (Zhao and Gibson, 1989), from my experience I have found that the ideal size for a language class is somewhere between eight to twelve students. This gives enough students to form a variety of groups and pairs and allows them to support each other, yet is few enough that the teacher can give each student individual attention and quickly learn all their names. The small class makes it possible for the teacher to monitor and assess the students and make sure that they are progressing.

Unfortunately, the reality in university language classes is large sizes—too large for much personal attention from the teacher and too large for the teacher to learn their names easily. It is natural when faced with a large class to use a more lecture-based style of teaching in which the teacher stands at the front of the class and teaches and the students listen (or not) and take notes and then take a written test or hand in a project at the end of the year for assessment. Large language classes involve many compromises between what the teacher would like to do and what he or she can do.

Some techniques do exist, however, which allow the teacher of a large language class to provide the students with a useful and interactive class. The techniques that will be presented here were born out of necessity and were developed over a fourteen-year period of trial and error and discussions with other language teachers. Whichever technique is used, the basic ideas for teaching the large class remain the same. First of all,

the class must be interactive. The students must produce as much language as possible each class. This is in keeping with the Communicative Language Theory (CLT), in which students learn language by experimenting with it using activities aimed at being as realistic as possible (Reed, 2002). Second, each student must receive a grade every class, no matter how many students are in the class, and that grade should be based on some work or activity that the student did in the class. These daily grades add up to become the class participation portion of the students' final grades, and they also serve the purpose of providing daily feedback to the students. In her essay on teaching large classes, Denise Chalmers talks about the importance of prompt feedback for learning (2003). Giving a daily grade with comments can provide feedback to allow the students to improve their class work. Finally, the grading system and class management system should be as simple and easy to implement as possible while still allowing an objective evaluation of the students' progress.

The focus of large class management techniques is to recreate a small group environment in a large class through the use of pair and group work. A large number of researchers in ELT recommend group work for large language classes because of the increased chances for student participation (Brown, 1994; MacKinnon, 1998; McDonough and Shaw, 1993; Ur, 1981). Group work has many advantages in the language classroom. It helps make a student-centered learning environment, and it also frees up the teacher to wander around the classroom to monitor and help students (Ur, 1981). Also, many students in a language class are more comfortable speaking in a group setting as opposed to speaking in front of the class (MacKinnon, 1998). Group activities are more dynamic than a teacher-

centered class because students have more people they can react to. It breaks the teacher-student-teacher-student 'lockstep' pattern of exchange found in many language classes (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). In his book *Teaching by Principles* (1994), Brown claims that using groups for large classes increases not just the quantity of language that students are able to produce but the quality as well. My own experience in using groups in large classes supports this last point.

In large classes, group work has many problems, though, that need to be overcome. Two big problems are that students in groups might revert to their own language when the teacher is not nearby, and that students do not provide each other as good a "language model" as a native speaker (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). Other problems include monitoring and feedback, the high noise level of the classroom, and weaker students getting left behind (MacKinnon, 1998). Jackson and Kipp confronted many of the problems with teaching large classes in their article *Making Large Classes Communicative* (1999). Their three steps of classroom management and instructions, student training, and contact and monitoring provide a helpful guideline for controlling large classes. A further useful warning about teaching large classes is given by Gerry Gibson when he advises that teachers should be careful not to spend too much time when speaking with any one student (2004). While group work might have some structural problems in the large classroom, many of these problems can be overcome, and the advantages of using groups far outweigh the disadvantages.

After putting the students into groups, the next question becomes what to have these groups do. The techniques I have found useful for using these

groups vary depending on the size and style of the class, with the key elements being how the groups are organized and how their work is assessed. The differences between these elements depend on whether the class focuses on English grammar and functions skills, content, or discussion. The specific techniques that I have found to be the most useful for managing large classes are strict control of the classroom layout, creative use of attendance cards, filling out worksheets in groups, and recording group discussions with the "paper tape recorder."

II. Classroom Layout

The physical environment is an important element in creating a large interactive classroom. The important points in arranging a large class are the amount of space, the type of seating, and the teacher's control of the space. The first factor that the teacher has to deal with is the physical size of the room. Occasionally a teacher will go into a class on the first day and find students standing against the wall because there are not enough seats. One option is to cut the number of students through a placement test to get the class down to a manageable size. Another option is to ask the university for a bigger classroom. A useful rule is to try to have a classroom with a seating capacity of at least one and a half times the actual number of students in the class. This allows groups of students to spread out and get some distance from each other so that they can operate in some degree of isolation. This is an important factor in recreating a small group environment in a big class. Also, it is very important for the teacher to have room to move among the students. Each group of students must be physically accessible by the teacher so that the teacher can give each group personal help or attention and make sure that each group of students is actually doing what it is supposed to be doing.

Many years ago I found myself with a class of 106 students in a classroom built to hold 75. I asked the university to put me in the biggest classroom available, and they gave me a room that had been converted from the gymnasium. It had a capacity of 300 students and used narrow tables and park benches for seating. It was great because there was enough space that no group of students had to be right next to another group and allowed for good flexibility.

Another important factor is the type of seats in the classroom. The ideal seating style for the interactive classroom is individual desks so that the students can create group islands in which they can face each other for good communication. Individual desk units, however, are rare in university classrooms, but large tables at which students can sit on both sides and face each other are almost as good. At the bottom of the list of desirable seating arrangements is fixed seating where the students sit at tables or desk rows that are bolted to the floor. Bolted seats make it difficult for students to face any direction except forward. This is okay if the students only do pair work, but forming groups is difficult since the students cannot easily turn around to face those in back of them. Unfortunately, this is often the seating arrangement in the large lecture classrooms that many large classes are assigned to. Even this situation can be overcome, though. If the number of students is not too many for the number of rows, students can form groups by sitting at the inner ends of the seating rows and turning in to face each other with their legs in the aisles. This only works, though, if there are no more students than there are inside aisle seats.

The last important factor in the classroom layout is that the teacher must

maintain control of the classroom environment. Jackson and Kipp said it much better than I could when they wrote, "Control your space to control your class" (1999). Students may not be used to forming pairs or groups and often need to be helped or coaxed into position. They need to get used to the idea that every class they will have to move their chairs or desks into group islands or sit in pairs. This sometimes takes a few weeks. Also, as mentioned earlier, enough free space must be maintained around each pair or group for the teacher to be able to get near enough to assess the students' work. Since the interactive classroom can get very loud, it is important for the teacher to be able to get close enough to the students to listen to their conversation and answer their questions. Students should not be allowed to box themselves in so as to be inaccessible. For this, they should not be allowed to sit against the back or side walls. Also, the aisles and the back of the class should be kept free of any bags or other obstructions. I like to be able to get behind each student as I find that's the best for looking at their work or helping him or her. I sometimes also like to watch the class from the back of the room. Maintaining control of the classroom can sometimes take a lot of effort, especially as the students may not always want to cooperate, but it is essential for the large interactive class.

III. Attendance Cards

When teaching larger than optimal language or grammar classes, creative use of attendance cards in combination with pair and group work can help the teacher manage not just the attendance but also the grading of the class. When the class begins, the students each get an attendance card, with the cards being a different color each week to reduce the chances of late students bringing their own. Any students who arrive in class fifteen

minutes after the start of the class (or at whatever time the teacher deems is late) receive a pink attendance card to mark them as being late. If any students come into the class too late to receive any credit for attendance, that can be written on their cards when they receive them or, alternatively, the students can not be given attendance cards after a certain time limit. This is easier than taking roll the traditional way and also helps keep more accurate count of which students are late and is very useful in classes which are too big for the teacher to keep track of the students otherwise.

While attendance cards can save teachers of large classes a lot of time by eliminating calling the roll, their real usefulness is in helping teachers keep daily assessment grades for the students. After introducing and demonstrating the language point for the class, the teacher puts the students into pairs or groups to practice. During the practice exercise the teacher circulates through the room to see that the students are doing the exercise properly. Towards the end of class, when satisfied that the students understand the point sufficiently, the teacher then has the class perform a pair or group interactive exercise that will be graded. Student interviews or making and asking their partners questions using a certain language pattern are good exercises for this. As the students do the activity, the teacher goes to each pair or group and listens to them do the exercise. This is where the classroom layout is important. It's hard to assess the students and get their cards if the teacher cannot access them easily. If the class is very large, then some pairs may finish before the teacher can get to them and they will have to demonstrate it again. After listening to their exercise, the teacher takes each student's attendance card and writes a grade of one, two, or three on the back.

The three point grading system is designed to record the student's basic ability to perform the activity as quickly and easily as possible. A grade of one is given for below average performance—the student tried but could not do the exercise at more than a marginal level. A grade of two is for average performance. The student understood the exercise but needs to practice some more. A grade of three is for good performance. The student was able to do the exercise well. For very rare and exceptional performance the teacher can award a grade of four or make a note on the card. Teachers can also use attendance cards in a similar fashion to give bonus grades or make notes, such as when a student was sleeping in class. While this system may seem overly simplistic, it works well for large classes and adding too much complexity only slows it down. When giving a daily grade to each student in a large class, this simple grading system allows the teacher to evaluate everyone within the time period of a single exercise.

IV. Group Worksheets

While the attendance card system is very helpful and easy to use, it is not appropriate for every class situation. Some classes are simply too large for the attendance card system (I have successfully used the cards for grading with a class of sixty students, but that is about the maximum size.), and in some classes, such as content classes, it is not easy to develop activities that can be graded quickly. In either of these cases, a group activity worksheet can perform the same function as attendance cards in the previous section. The class pattern is the same as before. The teacher explains the teaching point for the class and demonstrates it if necessary. Brown mentions the necessity of giving adequate introduction and explanation to ensure the success of any group activity (1994). The class

then breaks up into groups of four. Here again, a classroom environment in which it is easy to make groups is essential. The teacher then gives each group a worksheet to fill out. The students write their names and student numbers on the worksheets, so they also function as the students' attendance records.

A variety of worksheet styles have proven useful for this style of class work, some requiring less preparation than others. The ordinary style is to give the students a new worksheet every class with different questions or tasks depending on the lesson. The students might have to interview each other or ask questions in order to get the information needed to complete the worksheet. This works well for a language skills class. The teacher needs to circulate among the students during the worksheet period to make sure that they are completing the exercise by talking to each other and not by simply writing their own answers on the sheet.

Another style, which I developed for a content-based class that I teach, combines the worksheet with weekly homework. The students must read a portion of the text every week and write answers about the reading from a list of weekly homework questions that they are given at the beginning of the year. The students discuss in their groups the homework questions in class and write down what they found was different or the same about their answers. The class worksheet has the same four generic questions about the reading each week. It is the homework questions that change. At the end of the class, the teacher collects the students' homework and group worksheets and later gives the students a group grade based on their worksheets. Group assessments have some problems, such as the question of how valid and reliable they are. These considerations must be

balanced against the limitations of assessing a large class (MacKinnon, 1998). To address this concern, I have added my own twist to the group grade. Each member of the group gets the same grade at first, but these group grades can then be individually altered up or down based on the student's homework.

V. The "Paper Tape Recorder"

In those cases in which neither attendance cards nor group worksheets are appropriate, group discussions assessed using the "paper tape recorder" might work the best. Sometimes a teacher is faced with an unusually difficult class situation such as a large class without textbooks or a discussion class with too many students for a unified class discussion. In these situations the "paper tape recorder" (my name for it) is a technique that can be used as either a temporary measure or as the basis for the entire class. The paper tape recorder technique is similar to the worksheet technique in the sense that the students must engage in a group interactive activity to be handed in for a grade at the end of class and it also functions as their attendance. The main difference is that the students must make the questions as well as the answers, and they are graded on both.

Classes using this style are very easy to teach but need a lot of time afterwards to grade. The basic structure of this technique is that the students are assigned to write a short speech as homework the week before. The speech is allowed a maximum of fifty words. The topics for the homework speeches can be given by the teacher or suggested by the students. For the first couple of classes it is best if the teacher gives the topics. I usually put the topic in question form and start with a very

simple topic such as, "Who influenced you the most in your family?" Later on the teacher can ask the students to suggest their own topics and then choose from the best ones. For grading, it is often easiest if all the groups use the same topic on any given week, but it is not necessary.

In class, the students gather into groups of four and the first student reads his or her speech. A fifty-word speech is very general, so the other three students must ask questions to get more specific information. One of the students in the group writes down all the questions and answers verbatim like a tape recorder, hence the name. The recording student should also indicate which student asks each question and gives each answer. When each student in the group has asked at least two questions of the speech-giver and are satisfied that they have gotten enough detailed information about the topic, then the next student gives his or her speech and another student becomes the tape recorder. This continues around the group until all the students have given their speeches and answered the other students' questions. This takes almost the whole class period when the students do a thorough job. At the end of the class the teacher collects all the questions and answers and gives each group a collective grade for that class.

This speech and question class style is very useful for developing students' ability to speak and have discussions. The first time they do it the students usually ask each other very basic or easy questions. Many of the questions will be off topic. The next class the teacher goes over representative questions with the whole class and discusses why they were good or bad questions. Generally, yes/no questions are not good enough. The teacher emphasizes that the questions and answers are graded, not the

speeches, and goes over which kinds of questions will receive a good grade. In succeeding classes, the teacher can add more and more requirements, such as each answer being required to have over seven words. Students are encouraged to help each other with their English and only ask the teacher for help when they cannot find the answer themselves. Gibson, writing about Long's Interaction Hypothesis, wrote that students in this kind of setting develop their language skills through "negotiated interaction" (2004). When they try to communicate in English they may have some trouble understanding each other and must try various approaches until they agree on the meaning. This also fits in with Reed's ideas about students becoming responsible for their own learning (2002) and Ur's ideas about the value of "peer teaching" (1981). The validity of this is born out in my own experience because I have often found that over the course of the school year the students' questions and answers with their groups get much better merely through practice and direction.

While this method is easy on the teacher during the class, it can be hard on the students. Gibson's suggestion that the teacher assign students leaders when doing group work (2004) could be very useful in helping to keep the students on track. Writing down the questions and answers in a discussion is very tiring, and asking questions for the whole period can also exhaust the students. It is important for the teacher to keep each group to four students or they will not be able to finish in one class. It is also sometimes better to stretch one topic over two weeks and spend half the period on lecture or another activity. Still, this method is good for getting as many students speaking as possible, and it does not matter how large the class is. I used this method with the largest class I have ever taught, which was a discussion class with 106 students enrolled (the class in the

converted classroom in the gym mentioned earlier), and was astonished with how much progress the students made over the course of the year. To this day it remains one of my favorite classes ever.

VI. Conclusion

Large language classes are always less than ideal, but with the proper methods they can still be valuable for the students. Proper classroom layout and the use of a group management system such as attendance cards, worksheets, and the paper tape recorder can enable the teacher to provide the students with an interactive class experience in which they can get a lot of language practice. These methods also allow the teacher to assess the students' classroom participation even when the class is too big to keep track of everyone. Naturally, these methods involve a degree of compromise. In a large class it is impossible for the teacher to give each student much personal attention, and this is a problem that can never really be overcome. Nonetheless, these techniques help the teacher overcome many of the problems inherent in a large language class.

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