

# Teaching Mixed Ability Classes

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**Juguang Elementary School**

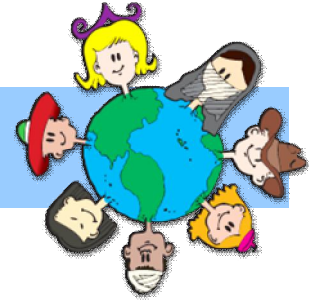


# Why listen to this topic?



- It corresponds to the current situation in Taiwan
- All classes are mixed ability to a certain extent
- Students' English proficiency vary greatly
- It's a big challenge for teachers to meet students' different needs

# Difficulties in mixed ability classes





















- For teachers
  - Learners are at different learning speeds and have different starting levels
  - It's hard to decide where to start
  - Most textbooks are designed for an ideal homogeneous classroom environment
- For students
  - Both advanced and lower level students may feel bored

# Strategies applied in mixed ability classes

- **Strategy 1: Know your students well**



Once you know your students better, it will be easier to find ways or design suitable activities to help them

	High Energy Learners	Low Energy Learners
Activities	1. Run and touch 	1. Wordsearch 
	2. Run and write 	2. Memory games 
	3. Pictionary 	3. A story with mistakes  
	4. Music Chair 	4. Odd-one-out 
	5. Simon says 	5. Spelling test 
	6. Running dictation 	6. Dictation 
	7. Charades 	7. Board games 
Tactile and Kinesthetic Learners  Visual Learners  Auditory Learners 		

# Strategies applied in mixed ability classes

- **Strategy 2: Grading tasks**



Teachers adapt tasks for more challenging or less challenging versions and students choose which version they would like to do.

## Strategy 2: Grading tasks



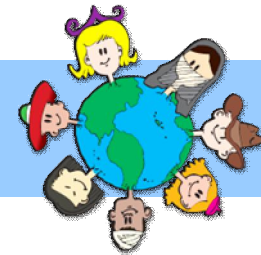
- Examples:

- Wordsearch :

- Usually it only requires students to recognize words in the square. We can make it more challenging.

- -Have students fill in the blank,  
e.g. l\_\_\_ \_e, w\_\_\_ \_c\_\_\_.
- -Have students finish anagrams and find the words.
- -Give them pictures of the words.

## Strategy 2: Grading tasks



- -Tell them there are 20 words in the word square that they can find in the classroom.
- - Have them find their classmates' names in the word square.
- -Tell them to find as many “things in the classroom” as they can.
- -Tell them a topic and they have to brainstorm as many words as they can.



## Strategy 2: Grading tasks



- -Tell them definitions of the words, they have to come up with the words and find them out.
- -Tell them to find as many “things in the classroom” as they can.
- -Tell them a topic and they have to brainstorm as many words as they can.
- -Tell them definitions of the words, they have to come up with the words and find them out.

## Strategy 2: Grading tasks



- The advantage:
  - Students are challenged at an appropriate level of difficulty and can get involved.
- The problem:
  - Teachers may spend a lot of preparation time
  - Students may feel labeled as either strong or weak.

## Strategy 3: Extension activities



- Use the same materials as a starting point for the whole class and then give strong students extension activities and weak students more support.
- Example / Reading:  
  
Ask early finishers to write down a summary or look up words in the text that they don't know. We can give weak students the option of only reading part of the text.

## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



- Some ideas for using cooperative learning:
  1. Think-Pair-Share
  2. Jigsaw Method
  3. Numbered Heads Together

## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



- The procedures: Think-Pair-Share
- (1) Teachers raise a question to the entire class.
- (2) Give students appropriate think time and have students come up with their own ideas individually.
- (3) Then students are paired with a classmate and share their thinking with each other.
- (4) Teachers have a few students share their ideas with the rest of the class.

## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



### Think-Pair-Share

- Examples:
  - - Brainstorm as much vocabulary that relates to a topic as they can
  - - What do you know about?
  - - What have you learned today?

## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



- Examples:

Think-Pair-Share

- -Vocabulary review
- - Prediction before story telling
- -Brainstorm as many compound words as you can
- -Note check / Reading check
- -List as many short “a” words as you can



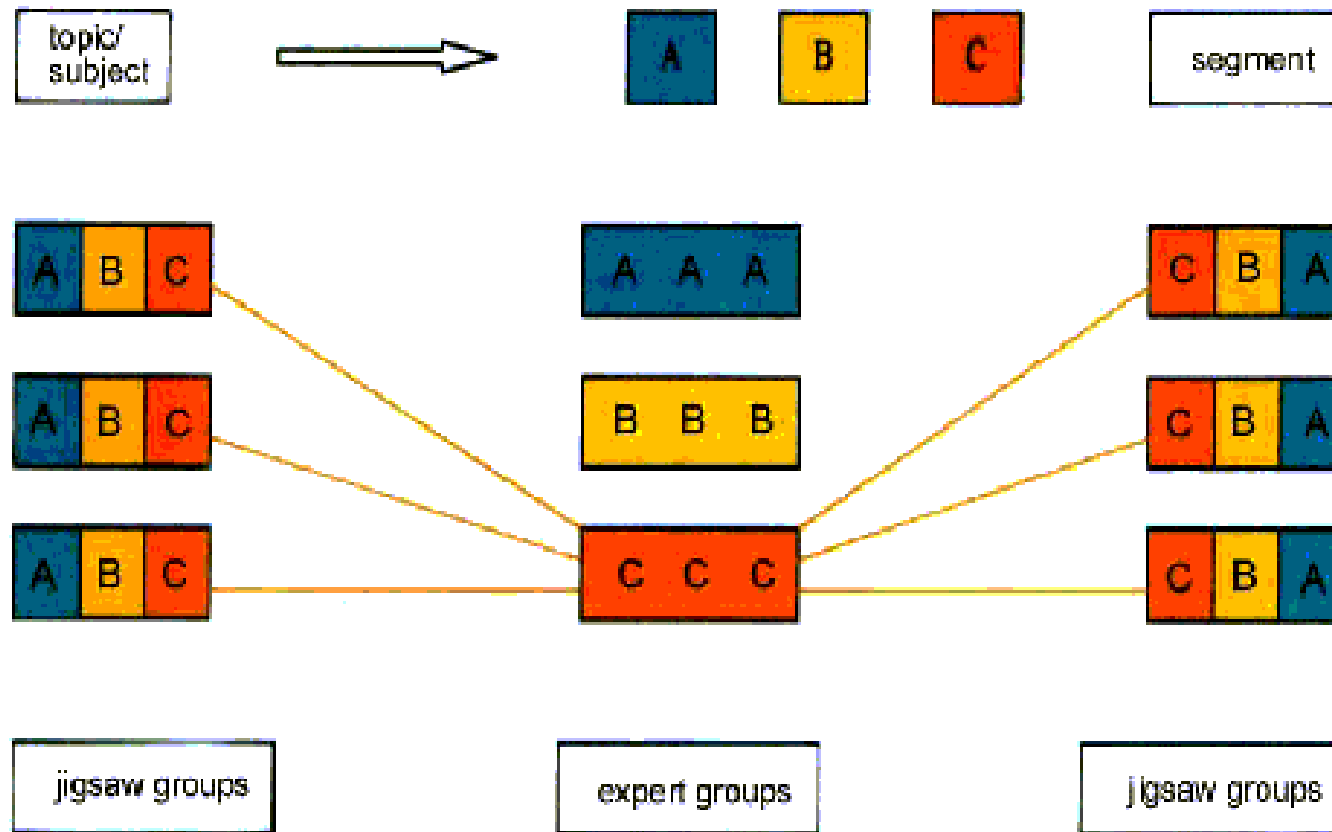


# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



## Jigsaw method

Each student's part is essential for final result.







# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



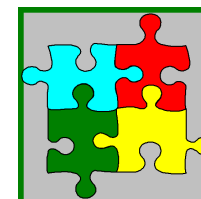
## A reading and listening jigsaw example:

### Family match

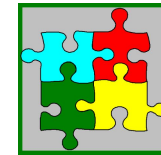
Read four descriptions of different families. Can you match the descriptions with the right pictures?

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>My family is quite big. I've got two brothers and one sister. My brother Euan is older than me. He's 14. My other brother Dan is younger than me. He's 8. My sister is younger than me too. She's called Stella and she's 5. We live with our mum and dad and our grandma. My grandma is 66.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>I live with my mum and dad. I've got an older brother – he's called Malik – but he is at university and he doesn't live with us now. My aunt and uncle live near us and we visit them a lot. I've got three cousins. I play with my cousins after school and at the weekends. We have great fun!</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>I live with my mum, and we do lots of things together. Some weekends I stay with my dad and my stepmum, Lisa. Lisa has got a son – he's my stepbrother. He's younger than me. Jane and my dad have had a new baby so I've got a new baby brother. I love playing with him!</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Hi, I'm Calice. I live with my mum and my twin sisters. They're only six years old but they're very noisy. I've got three grandparents. One grandmother lives in our street and she visits us all the time. My other grandparents visit us in the holidays.</p>
<p><b>A</b></p> 	<p><b>B</b></p> 	<p><b>C</b></p> 	<p><b>D</b></p> 

From British Council, contributed by Sue Clarke



## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning

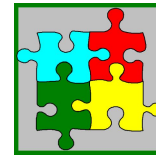


### **Jigsaw method**

#### **Steps:**

1. Assign students to home groups of 4 in a heterogeneous way.
2. Tell students that there are four different texts here where each of them corresponds to a certain picture. Each student from the home group is going to choose and be responsible for one text to help their team find the final correct family match.

## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



### Jigsaw method

- The four different tasks are filling in the blank, filling in the blank with hints, anagrams and circling the right answers.

**Text 1 / fill in the blank:** My \_\_\_\_\_ is quite big. I've got two \_\_\_\_\_ and one \_\_\_\_\_. My \_\_\_\_\_ Euan is older than me. He's 14. My other \_\_\_\_\_ .....

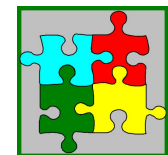
## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



### **Jigsaw method**

**Text 2 / fill in the blank with hints:** I live with my m\_\_\_\_\_ and d\_\_\_\_\_. I've got an \_\_\_\_\_er \_\_\_\_\_er – he's called Malik – but he is at university.....

**Text 3 / anagrams:** I live with my \_\_\_\_\_ (umm), and we do lots of things together. Some weekends I stay with my \_\_\_\_\_ (add) and my \_\_\_\_\_ (petsumm), Lisa. Lisa has got a \_\_\_\_\_ (ons)



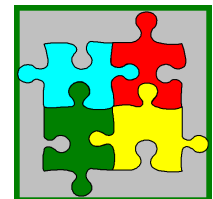
## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



### Jigsaw method

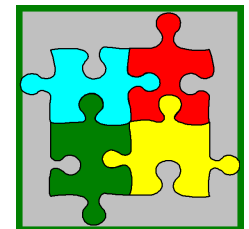
**Text 4 / Circle the right answers:** Hi, I'm Calice. I (live / like) with my (mum / dad) and my (twin / two) sisters. They're only (six / ten) years old but they're very (noisy / busy).....

- Each student from the home groups has to listen carefully and finish the tasks when teachers read the texts.





Students chose their own tasks in a home group

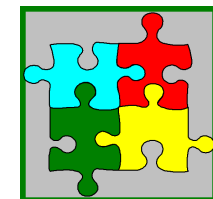


## Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



### **Jigsaw method**

Step 3: Students move to expert groups where everyone in the group has the same task.



Students discussed what they have heard and exchanged information.



# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



Step 4:

**Jigsaw method**

Students go back to home groups and everyone makes their own contribution to find the correct family match.



Students tried to find the correct family match

# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning







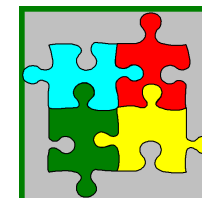
## Jigsaw method

- After each home group found the correct answers, I gave out the worksheet, had them check their own answers, read the four texts again and made sure they all understand each text.

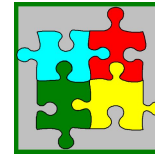
### Family match

Read four descriptions of different families. Can you match the descriptions with the right pictures?

<p><b>1</b> My family is quite big. I've got two brothers and one sister. My brother Euan is older than me. He's 14. My other brother Dan is younger than me. He's 8. My sister is younger than me too. She's called Stella and she's 5. We live with our mum and dad and our grandma. My grandma is 66.</p>	<p><b>2</b> I live with my mum and dad. I've got an older brother - he's called Malik - but he is at university and he doesn't live with us now. My aunt and uncle live near us and we visit them a lot. I've got three cousins. I play with my cousins after school and at the weekends. We have great fun!</p>	<p><b>3</b> I live with my mum, and we do lots of things together. Some weekends I stay with my dad and my stepmum, Lisa. Lisa has got a son - he's my stepbrother. He's younger than me. Jane and my dad have had a new baby so I've got a new baby brother. I love playing with him!</p>	<p><b>4</b> Hi, I'm Calice. I live with my mum and my twin sisters. They're only six years old but they're very noisy. I've got three grandparents. One grandmother lives in our street and she visits us all the time. My other grandparents visit us in the holidays.</p>
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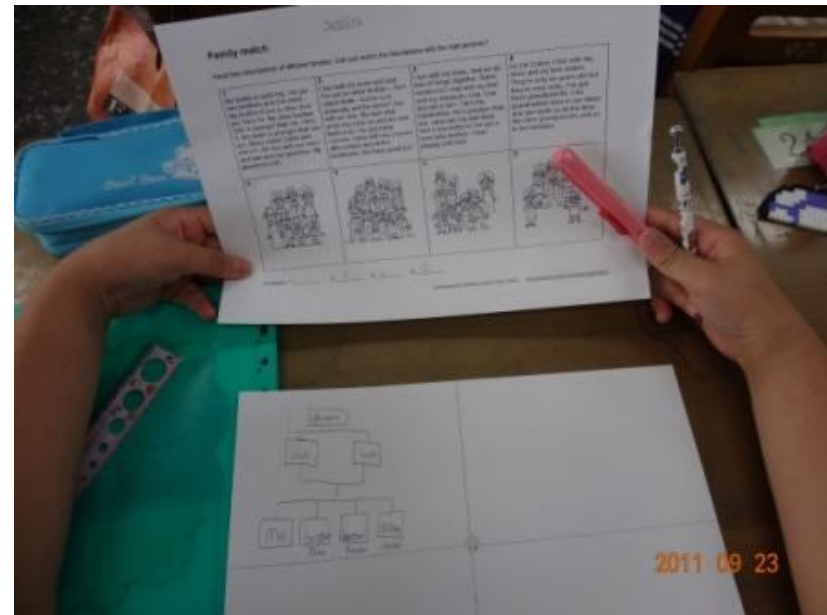
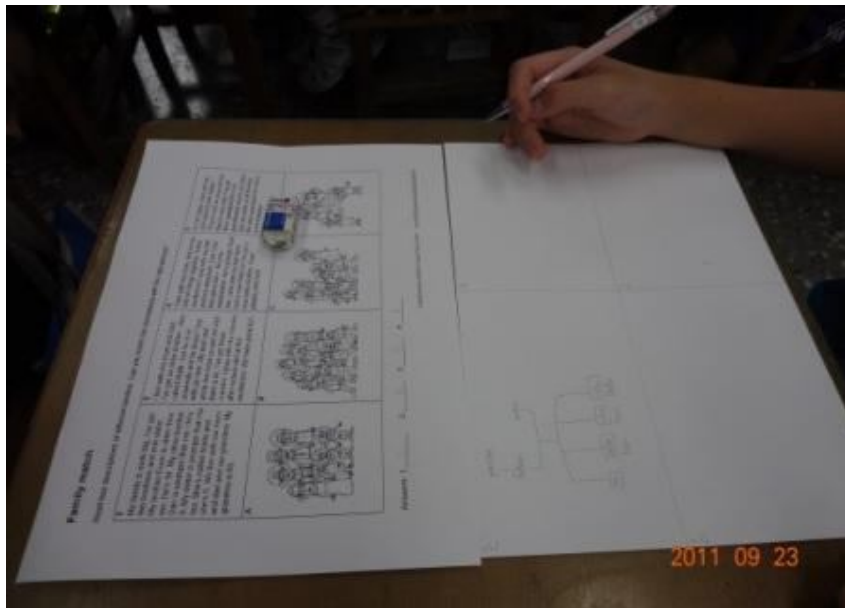


# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



## Jigsaw method

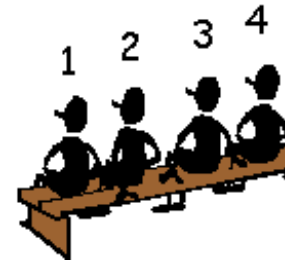
- Finally, I had students try to draw a family tree of each picture.



# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



## Numbered Heads Together



- Students are organized into groups and every student in each group is given a number. (e.g. from one to five in each group)
- The teacher raises a question to the whole class and students in each group “put their heads together” to work out the answers to the question.
- Then the teacher calls a specific number to answer the question.

# Strategy 4: Cooperative Learning



## **Numbered Heads Together**

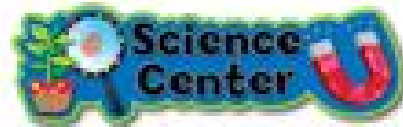
- This strategy makes sure that every student knows the answers by working in a group and every student should be prepared anytime because no one knows which number will be called.



## Other ideas in cooperative learning



# Learning Centers



## Other ideas in cooperative learning



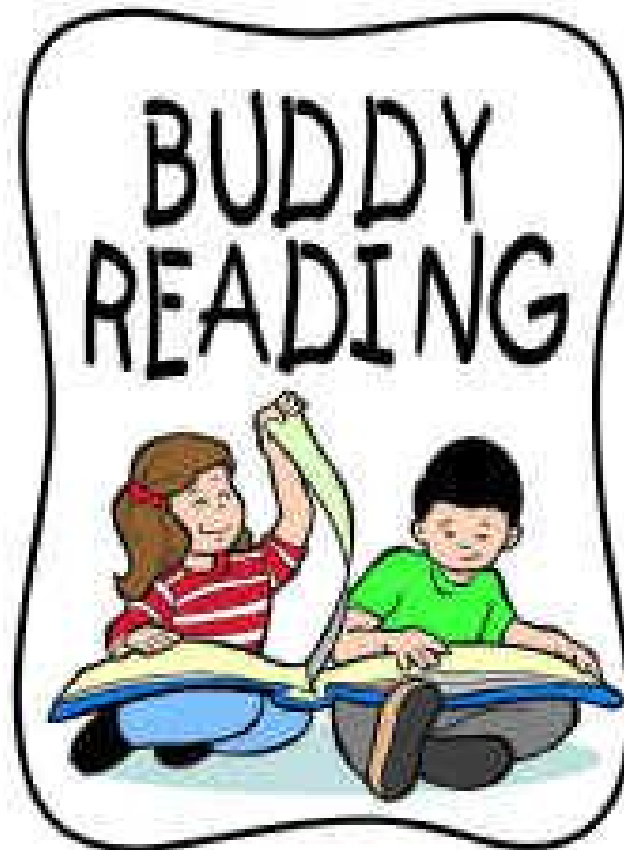
# Literature Circle



## Other ideas in cooperative learning



# Buddy Reading



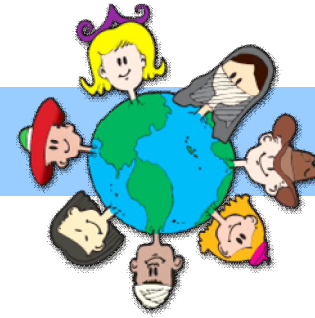


## Conclusion



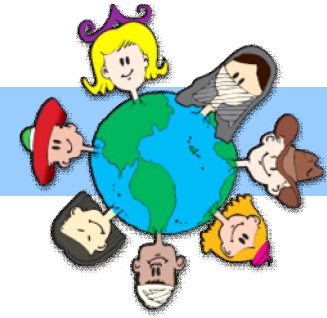
It's common that in most of EFL primary school classrooms, some learners learn English well beyond current grade-level expectations, some still struggle with English, and maybe another portion of the class falls somewhere in between.

## Conclusion



Teachers need to know their students well and find ways to involve all the students either by grading tasks, giving extension activities or using cooperative learning.

## Conclusion



For me, I would suggest cooperative learning because it creates a win-win situation for both advanced and lower level students. The advanced level students can act as a bridge to help lower level students and through that process both can facilitate each other's learning.