DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONS IN LANGUAGE CLASSES: “ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL”

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Cover Page Footnote
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Erratum
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Abstract: This paper defines what differentiation is and why it is relevant to the classroom. The importance of defining differentiated instruction (DI) strategy were identified on the basis of experiment with 100 participants from 10 schools in Namangan city taking part in semi structured interview and analyzing all answers. The results show that teachers have different ideas about DI.

Key words: differentiated instruction, language diversity, benefits, different learners, different background, interests.

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There is a big diversity in language classes, which can be noticed in mastering language skill, students’ different interests and needs, different readiness, and even...
different personal characters. It is not an easy process for teachers just in one classroom to
deal with so many issues related to teaching and learning. Increasingly language teachers
refer to differentiated instruction, which is considered by Tomlinson as a proactive
teaching strategy [6].

The results of the data concerning identifying believes and opinions of English
language teachers of secondary schools of Namangan city inform us that English teachers
understand and define differentiated strategy differently. Some of them have proper ideas
about the method while some teachers even have not heard completely. Table 1 describes
that 86 participants were female and 14 were male teachers total 100 participants took part
in the data collection experiment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Frequencies for Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of age there was a big diversity from 20 years till 65 years (Table 2).

| Table 2 | Age density |

Data shows that years of teaching experience noticeably influence teachers’ perceptions it
terms of what DI is actually and applying of it to the classroom. There were not so many
participants with more than 25 years of teaching experience while a majority number of
teachers had 5-10 years of experience (Table 3).

| Table 3 | Years of Teaching Experience |
All these statistics and results inform us that teachers have different ideas and perceptions about differentiated instructions so that some teachers said:

“….. is learning styles….“ (T12) or “differentiated instructions are methods in teaching English” (T8) or “I have never heard about it and do not know how to implement, because …….”(T16).

On the basis of data results it is crucially important to provide more information about DI strategy and its benefits in the classroom. DI is one method that is designed to enable teachers to reach and engage all students in their classroom. According to the Tomlinson, students are more motivated to learn when they feel a connection to what is being taught and when they believe they can be successful. When students are motivated, more learning occurs and therefore students become more successful. Additionally, there exists a reason to learn what is being taught as well as an appropriate way to learn what is being taught. As Vygotsky discovered there is a zone in which students can be challenged and therefore learn and grow [1]. However, if the tasks are too easy, then students are bored. On the other end, if tasks are too difficult, then students become frustrated. Scigliano and Hipsky (2010) argue that with differentiated instruction, ideally, each student is given the appropriate level of challenge based on his or her current understanding of the concept [5]. Furthermore, differentiated instruction allows students multiple options for learning and understanding information, an asset Pham (2012) discussed [4]. One student might learn visually whereas another student learns by manipulatives. Because students have a variety of methods to grasp a concept, they are more likely to achieve a higher level of understanding. Differentiated instruction is an example of teaching in which the teacher identifies student's needs and then designs his or her instruction to ensure students maximize their academic achievement (Pham). Some students might need remediation before they are ready for the learning target, whereas other students do not. In a differentiated lesson, the teacher provides remediation for the students who need it.

Differentiation also provides students multiple options for learning content and demonstrating their knowledge. It is student driven, so content being taught is made relevant to all students, according to Tomlinson (2001). Each student should have a personal connection to the content in order to engage with the learning and to remember it for the future. Little, Hauser and Corbishley (2009) defined differentiated instruction as varied instruction that appeals to students’ interests, responds to their personal learning
styles, and appropriately challenges the students based on what they know and understand.

According to Tomlinson (2001), every student has different ways of learning and different background knowledge [6]. A teacher who differentiates his or her instruction recognizes this and uses a variety of strategies to reach and engage all learners. Differentiated instruction takes a variety of forms in the classroom. Tomlinson also noted instruction can be differentiated according to what is learned (content), how it is learned (process), how learning is demonstrated (product), or what environment it is learned in. One differentiation strategy is varying content. Using different levels of difficulty for the same activity is one example of differentiating content. For example, if the learning goal is to predict events in a story, then each student is reading a book that matched their current reading level. Students may be reading different stories, but they all learn how to predict events in a story based on the book they are reading at their appropriate level.

Open-ended tasks, as described by Kobelin (2009), are one method of differentiating process [3]. Kobelin wrote, “Open-ended tasks are those that have no single answer and/or no single method to determine an answer” [3, p. 13]. This allows students to use approaches that make sense to them, while still challenging all students to answer the question. Additionally, students can see a variety of answers and/or methods from their peers and use other methods when appropriate. It is assumed that students will remember more efficient methods their peers used and use those methods in the future.

Scaffolding is another way of differentiating instruction based on process [5]. When a teacher scaffolds an activity, it means that he or she designs it with multiple entry points for students. This ensures that all students can access the lesson so that they may learn the desired content for the lesson. Students can be paired to help scaffold a task, the teacher can model the correct process, or challenging tasks can be split into smaller tasks.

Portfolios are an example of differentiated product [6]. Portfolios can contain successful completion of each learning target or more in-depth studies about the applications of content in the real world. Students can demonstrate their knowledge and academic achievement through the portfolio.

Small grouping of students is a strategy in which the environment is differentiated [2]. In order to be most effective, these groupings must be constantly changing based on student understanding. One teacher described by Tomlinson (2001) uses groups of five or six for a Civil War project in which students investigate a topic. The teacher must continually assess student knowledge in order to make the most effective groups. Tomlinson writes that grouping size is also flexible, as some students work best in pairs and other students learn best in groups of three or more.

Allowing students to choose their environment is another way to differentiate instruction. Kobelin (2009) discusses how she taught a mini-lesson to the entire group and then allowed students to stay, meaning they wanted more practice with the teacher in a small group, or go, meaning that they felt ready to practice independently [3]. Once all students felt comfortable working independently, then the teacher could give advanced students more challenging work. According to Kobelin, this guarantees that students are mastering the learning target and being appropriately challenged [3]. Additionally, because students are appropriately challenged based on their mastery of the learning
target, students are able to reach their highest potential and maximize their academic achievement.

By differentiating instruction, teachers expect to increase student understanding and academic achievement. Additionally, studies suggest that differentiated instruction requires student take responsibility. While the teacher is working with a group of students, the other students are working independently, with a partner, or with a small group [2; 5]. These researchers point out that students are expected to work without a teacher directly telling them what to do.

In summary, the literature reviewed here noticed significant improvements in academic achievement of students when differentiated instruction was implemented. While differentiation requires increased time to prepare lessons, increased student responsibility, and more district resources, the literature argued that academic improvements made by students can outweigh the drawbacks. Teachers can differentiation instruction by varying what is learned, how it is learned, or how the learning is demonstrated, as well as by readiness, interests, and/or learning profile. The literature appears to argue that when instruction is differentiated, teachers report that students were more engaged and performed better in the classroom and on standardized tests. With careful planning of the lesson, lesson materials; with sufficient time for support and training this approach could be beneficial.

References: