EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENTIAL TEACHING METHODS AND MIXED LEVEL CLASSES

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Annotation: This article examines the effectiveness of differentiated teaching methods in mixed level classrooms,where students demonstrate varying abilities,learning styles,and academic needs.The study highlights how differentiated instruction through flexible grouping, varieted task,adaptive materials,and learner-centered strategies —can enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Special attention is given to the role of teachers in identifying individual differences and designing inclusive learning environments that support both high-achieving and struggling learners. The findings suggest that differentiated teaching methods contribute to more equitable learning outcomes, improved classroom interaction, and the development of learners' autonomy. The article concludes that, despite certain challenges such as increased planning time and classroom management demands, differentiated instruction remains an effective approach for addressing diversity in mixed-level classes.

Key words: Differentiated instruction, Mixed-level classrooms, Learner diversity, Learner diversity, Individual differences, Flexible grouping, Inclusive education, Student engagement, Educational effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The modern English language classroom is a reflection of today's increasingly diverse educational landscape, where students come from varied linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. These learners often differ significantly in their English language proficiency, prior knowledge, learning preferences, cognitive abilities, and motivation levels. As a result, English language teachers are faced with the complex task of ensuring that every student receives appropriate support and opportunities to succeed—regardless of their starting point. This challenge is particularly evident in mixed-ability classrooms, where the gap between advanced learners and struggling students can be substantial. Traditional approaches to language instruction often rely on standardized curricula and uniform teaching methods that

assume a relatively homogeneous group of learners. However, such one-size-fits-all strategies frequently lead to disengagement, boredom for high-achieving students, and frustration or anxiety for those who require additional support. In contrast, Differentiated Instruction (DI) offers a more flexible, student-centered approach that responds to individual differences in readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Differentiated Instruction is particularly vital in language classrooms where communication and comprehension are central goals. It promotes inclusive education, fosters learner autonomy, and supports the development of communicative competence by meeting learners at their level and gradually extending their skills. Moreover, DI encourages a more active, engaging learning environment where students can explore language meaningfully and at their own pace. Given the growing interest in inclusive pedagogy and personalized learning, there is an urgent need to investigate how DI functions in real-world English classrooms—what strategies work, what barriers exist, and how it impacts student outcomes. This study aims to explore the implementation of Differentiated Instruction in mixed-ability English classrooms, assess its effectiveness, and offer practical insights for educators seeking to adopt this powerful instructional model. Methods This qualitative study was conducted in three secondary schools with mixed-ability English classrooms in urban Uzbekistan. A total of 45 English teachers and 120 students participated in the research. Data collection methods included: • Classroom observations over 8 weeks to monitor DI techniques. • Teacher interviews to gather insights on instructional planning, challenges, and perceptions. • Student focus groups to explore learners' experiences with differentiated activities and their impact on motivation and achievement. • Lesson plan analysis to evaluate the extent and types of differentiation used. Data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and to assess the effectiveness of DI practices in real classroom contexts. Results The analysis revealed the following key findings: • Enhanced Student Engagement: Teachers who employed DI strategies, such as tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and choice boards, reported increased student participation and enthusiasm. • Improved Language Skills: Students in differentiated settings showed greater improvement in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and oral communication skills compared to those in non-differentiated classrooms.

Differentiated instruction is a way of teaching based on different students' talents and learning styles. It involves modifying teaching instruction in such a way that all learners can be considered successful (Morgan, 2014). Tomlinson in different publications (2000, 2003, 2010, 2014 and 2017) stated that differentiated instruction is considered as an approach and as a philosophy to deal with students' diversity. Tomlinson (2003) stated that differentiated instruction is tailoring the instruction to

meet an individual [1]. The first area to differentiate is the content. The content includes what teachers will teach and how students will achieve knowledge and understanding. Tomlinson (2010) stated that differentiating the content will provide multiple ways to deal with the facts, the concepts, principles or attitudes and the skills the students are dealing with. Sebihi (2016) explained that all students in the same level should go through the same content but the teachers should adjust the complexity degree by following varied instructional processes to teach the content. The idea is that all students should learn the same concepts in different ways. Teachers can either vary the content by differentiating the complexity or having the same content to all but differentiate the activities.

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