Differentiating Instructions by Using Multiple Teaching Ways in Reading Classes

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Abstract

Learner diversity awareness in the classroom helps the teachers to adopt their instructional methods to the students' needs. Differentiated instruction approach focuses on the academic success of individual learners or small groups learners. Since not all the learners alike and needs and learning styles are different from each other, teachers can differentiate their teaching ways by taking into consideration of that learner diversity. One way of implementing differentiated instruction in the classroom is using Multiple Intelligence teaching strategies to accommodate the learning needs of all students. This study examines how Multiple Intelligence teaching strategies used as differentiated instructional methods and how it fosters the English Language Preparatory School students' improvement in reading classes. A questionnaire and an interview were used to collect date about students' perceptions of differentiated instruction, their attitudes toward reading, and motivation for reading. The results of the research show that the students from different academic level gained and improved their reading skills. All those different learners had a positive attitude toward reading, more confident and motivated. Thus, it can be concluded that implying multiple intelligence teaching ways as differentiating the instruction improves the students' self confident, motivation and success.

Keywords: Differentiated Instruction, Learner Diversity, Multiple Intelligence, Motivation, Reading Skills

Introduction

There is no doubt that in today's classrooms there is arrange of different level students this learner diversity can influence the outcomes of the instructors' teaching. 'Any observer in any classroom can quickly notice that learners vary in experience, socioeconomic status, culture and ethnicity, language and learning style'' (Borich G. D., 2011). These learner diversity influences what they learn and what and how the instructor teach (Banks J. , 1997); (Banks & Banks, 2001). After all, the teacher should teach the learners assigned them, regardless of their differences or special needs. But while trying to teach those varied learners, VanSciever (VanScver, 2005) states that teachers face challenges. Imagine an English as Foreign Language classroom made up of 24 students with different learning styles, different background information, level of education and so on. One student may be reading at a high level, while the other is just spelling the words. One can understand the spoken language at B1 level, while the other is just saying the alphabet. In this case, the teachers should find different ways of teaching that meets the students' needs.

Researches have discovered that different instructional methods, if matched to the individual strengths and needs of learners, can significantly improve their achievement (Snow & Cronbach, 1981); (McTighe & Tomlinson, 2006). For example, student-centered discussions improve the achievement of highly anxious students by providing a more informal, nurturing climate, whereas teacher-centered lectures increase the achievement of low- anxiety students by allowing for a more efficient and faster pace. Researchers have found that achievement can be increased when the instructional method favors the learners' favored modalities for learning (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2008).

One related approach to responding to learners' individual differences is called differentiated instruction. McBride (McBride, 2004) indicates that'' Differentiated instruction is vital to effecting positive change in student performance, because one –strategy-fits all approach doesn't work in a real classroom''(p.39). Differentiated instruction focuses on the academic success of individual learners or small groups of learners rather than the whole class or groups of learners in the same classroom who may differ, for example, in English proficiency, number skills, or task relevant prior knowledge. Differentiated instruction is based on the

premise that instructional approaches should also vary according to the individual whose academic success is or could be enhanced by a more targeted and individualized approach. To differentiate instruction is to recognize an individual student's learning history, background, readiness to learn, interests, and acquired skill set and then choose instructional strategies more tailored to a small group or an individual learner to speed academic success, which might be slowed if only large group instruction available. The goal of differentiated instruction, therefore, is to maximize each student's personal growth and academic success by meeting each student at his or her individual level and providing the needed instruction and resources to lift him or her to the next step on the learning ladder.

Tomlinson (Tomlinson C. , 2000) identifies three elements of the curriculum-content, process, and products- that can be differentiated to make instruction more responsive to the individual needs of learners.

In the content element differentiated can take the form of varying the modalities in which students gain access to important learning by a) listening, reading, and doing; b) presenting content in incremental steps like rungs on a ladder and c) offering learners a choice in the complexity of content with which they will begin a learning task that matches their current level of understanding and from which every learner can experience academic success.

In the process period, differentiation takes the form of grouping flexibly, for example, by a) varying from whole class, to collaborative groups, to small groups, to individuals and b) providing incentives to learn based on a student's individual interests and current level of understanding.

During the products process Tomlinson (2004) suggests varying assessment methods by a) providing teachers a menu of choices that may include oral responses, interviews, demonstrations and reenactments, portfolios, and formal tests; b) keeping each learner challenged at his or her level of understanding with content at or slightly above his or her current level of functioning; and c) allowing students to have some choices in the means in which they may express what they know- for example, writing a story, drawing a picture, or telling about a real-life experience that involves what is being taught.

Tomlinson (2004) argues that the most important element in the differentiated instruction is that it provides the opportunity for the teacher to consider multiple characteristics of the learner simultaneously in choosing an instructional strategy for a particular learner and learning objective. Therefore differentiated instruction is ideally suited for a heterogonous classroom, in which learning histories, learning styles, learner interests, and skills as well as disabilities representing special populations may impair learning. Overall, the goal of differentiated instruction is to give learners alternate paths with which to learn. By varying teaching strategies, teacher makes sure that each student has the opportunity to learn in a manner compatible with his or her own learning strengths and preferences (Borich, 2011).

Since not all the learners alike to each other, it can be argued that there are as many methods of differentiated instruction as the number of learners in the classroom. 'There is no one – size- fits- all model'' says Huebnar ((Huebnar, 2010). As a way of differentiated instruction, Multiple Intelligence Theory can be implemented in the classrooms.

Multiple Intelligence Theory was proposed by Howard Gardner ((Gardner, 1983)a distinguished psychologist in Harvard University. In his theory of multiple intelligence, Gardner broadened the conceptions of intelligence to include not only the results of paper-and pencil tests but also knowledge of the human brain and sensitivity to the diverse of the human cultures. He also introduced the concept of an individual-centered school that takes this multifaceted view of intelligence seriously. In his point of view the intelligence is a pluralistic view rather than the unitary concept.

Multiple Intelligence Theory suggests that there is not just one concrete measure of intelligence and by implication a single way of teaching. Hence, Gardner suggests that

learning and teaching can be understood and practiced through many avenues. According to his theory there are eight types of intelligences namely Linguistic Verbal, Mathematical-Logical, Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Musical, Kinesthetic and Naturalistic intelligence. And students with all these types of intelligences learn better in different ways from each other.

Since all intelligences are needed in the teaching and learning process, teachers should think of all intelligences as potentially equally important across the group of students they are teaching. Within a group, some students will have a preference for using some intelligence, while others will wish to use different ones. This approach is in contrast to traditional teacher-centered education, which emphasizes the development of Verbal and Mathematical intelligences. Therefore, the Theory of Multiple Intelligence implies that educators should recognize and teach according to a broader range of talents and skills that depend on the variety of intelligences.

In the classroom, Gardner recommended that integrated education would use students' natural talents successfully. Integrated education is the system that uses different educational approaches such as games, music, stories, images, etc. If materials are taught and assessed in only one way, we will benefit only a certain type of students, while others will have problems. Armstrong (Armstrong, 2009) recommended allowing students to help design and choose the learning strategies that will work best for them. In other words, differentiated instruction is needed in the classroom to reach the desired goals.

2. Method

Participants: The participants were 45 English Language Preparatory School students. Those students were grouped as intermediate experimental group and control group. The size of the classroom in control group was 23 and in experimental group was 22. The mean age of the subjects in the study was 19.6. There were 13 female and 10 male students in the control group whereas, 12 female and 10 male students in the experimental group.

Design: The participants were placed randomly to the control and experimental group from the population because it was supposed to provide a maximum assurance that a systematic bias did not exist in the selection process and that the selected participants were representative of the population.

Instruments Procedure:

At the very beginning of the study a Multiple Intelligence Inventory test was conducted to decide the students' dominant intelligence and it was decided that there were four different types of dominant intelligence in both experimental and control group.

Table 1. Distribution of dominant intelligence types among students of Experimental and control groups

Dominant Intelligence	Intermediate level experimental group	Intermediate level control group
Logical-Mathematical intelligence	8 students	7 students
Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence	5 students	5 students
Intrapersonal intelligence	6 students	8 students
Spatial-Visual intelligence	3 students	3 students
Total	22	23

One of the most important parts of the experiment was arranging the classroom environment to accommodate the needs of different kinds of learners. The classroom ecology was rearranged based on the learners' interests and dominant intelligence to see if the same differentiated activities are useful for the members of each group.

After forming the groups of different intelligence, a questionnaire was utilized to understand the students' perceptions towards reading and different activities and learning ways regarding their interests and way of learning. The same questionnaire was conducted at the end of the study to see if there was a change during the teaching and learning process where many types of differentiated instructions had been used. The questionnaire consists of 13 items that taps students' sense of reading in English Language. (I can tell that my teachers like to listen to me read, When I read I don't have to try as hard as I used to Reading makes me feel happy inside, My teachers think I am a good reader, etc). Each item was measured on a 5-point scale anchored with the notations: Strongly agree, agree, Undecided, Disagree Strongly disagree

After having decided the students' dominant intelligence and their perceptions about reading, I created eight different Learning Centers in the classroom that represent one type of intelligence. This kind of classroom arrangement still permitted the students to take part in all kinds of activities, but created a special 'climate' for holding the different types of tasks according to their type of intelligence. The students were aware of their dominant intelligence. Although there were four groups of learners, the researcher created eight learning centers because all the individuals have eight types of intelligence with different level. In those learning centers different types of learning and teaching processes that corresponded to their intelligence type took place in the study. At the beginning of the experiment the groups stayed in their learning center relevant to their dominant intelligence. Each group stayed in their centers for one week and continued their learning with center-related activities which means that they usually were exposed different types of teaching process. As a result the teacher rotated the groups center by center in a clockwise manner until every group gained some experience differentiated instructions.

At the end of the study an interview was done with the volunteer students. By applying this interview I tried to explore the reasons behind the significant gain in the reading courses within the whole year. There were about 15 volunteer students from experimental group. Most of the students who were interviewed expressed an enjoyment for active participation, change, variety of different activities, self-correction and self-reflection which were all integrated into reading lessons through the use of very wide range activities that incorporated different intelligences in the experimental classes.

3. Results

The first and foremost job of reading teachers is to teach participants to be fluent and strategic readers by using differentiated instruction to various types of learners. Thus, an experiment was done and it was seen that implying differentiated instruction techniques were useful and beneficial for the learners. First of all a questionnaire was administrated as a pre-survey to all participants to figure out their assumptions towards reading. Later on at the end of the study the same questionnaire was conducted and the findings were analyzed by SPSS 19.0.

In the pre-survey of the intermediate level control group the students were not very competent readers. 35 % of the students thought that they were good at reading and 41% of the participants agreed that their teachers think those students were good readers. Less than 40% of the participants answered that they liked reading - that is a low percentage. When students compared themselves to their classmates, half of the participants had the confidence to view themselves as adequate readers who know vocabulary as well as their peers. 59% of the students believed that they could understand well what they read. In general this pre-survey of the intermediate control group reveals that students' attitudes toward reading were not very

positive. On the other hand, at the end of the academic year all the students had some changes in their attitudes toward reading such as: while in the pre-survey 32% of the students were thinking that they were good readers, in the post-survey this ratio increased to 59%. Students believed that their reading pace increased: in the pre-survey it was 18%, while in the post-survey - 50%. Also their assumptions about what the teachers think about the students had changed in a very high ratio. In the pre-survey 50 % of the students thought that the teachers consider that they were good readers but in the post survey this idea shifted to 72%. When we compare pre and post-survey of the participants it is easy to see that there is a positive change in students' assumptions toward reading that has been expected.

Another tool to measure the impact of differentiated instruction was interview with the students. By applying interview I tried to explore the reasons behind the significant gain in the reading courses within the whole year. There were about 15 volunteer students from experimental group. Most of the students who were interviewed expressed an enjoyment for active participation, change, variety of different activities, self-correction and self-reflection which were all integrated into reading lessons through the use of very wide range activities that incorporated different intelligences in the experimental classes.

4. Discussion

Since all the learners are different from each other in gender, interest, socio economic status and so on, their learning abilities and prior knowledge is different too. To those unique learners one way of teaching does not fit. Reflective teachers always look for a new way of teaching or usually differentiate their teaching according to students needs and interest. One way of the differentiate the instructional strategies that intended to help students to achieve the learning objective is to use Multiple Intelligence teaching methods to different learners. Using Multiple Intelligence teaching activities as differentiated instruction range from being very explicit and teacher directed to being less explicit and student centered. A wide range of possible strategies exists. Some strategies are teacher directed, such as lectures, recitations, questions, and practice. Others are more interactive, such as various group and discussion methods. Still other strategies are more students directed; these often emphasize inquiry and discovery. Some of the Multiple Intelligence teachings are those in which teachers tell the students the concept or skill to be learned and then lead students through most of the instructional activities designed to lead to student learning. Those approaches include direct instruction, presentations, demonstrations, questions, recitations, practice and drills, reviews, and guided practice and homework. Some other Multiple Intelligence Instructional approaches are those that involve some type of exploratory activity helping to lead students to discover a concept or generalization. Teachers employ several strategies to help students to attain the concepts. Those kinds of approaches include concept attainment strategies, inquiry lessons, and projects, reports, and problems. Some of the instructional approaches are social approaches in which students working together in various ways to gather, process, and learn the information or skills. Teachers act as a facilitator rather than the information provider. Discussions, cooperative learning, panels and debates, role-playing, simulations, and games are some examples of different types of Multiple Intelligence activities. One of the most important and effective Multiple Intelligence approach is independent instructional method where students are allowed to pursue content independently with less teacher direction than other lessons. Students sometimes are permitted to pursue their own interests. Independent approaches include learning centers, contracts, and independent work.

By doing these kinds of different tasks and approaches it was aimed to achieve the planned end result. Teaching a subject by just one way of instruction generally is not enough to achieve the goals of the course. All individuals are unique and teachers should find to arouse their interest towards the lesson. One of the ways to meet the students' needs and interest is

using Multiple Intelligence teaching ways as differentiated instruction. It has been applied in the university preparatory level and observed that it was successful.

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