

**DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONS EMPLOYED BY SHS ENGLISH TEACHERS: BASIS FOR
MODIFYING OR CRAFTING INNOVATIVE DIFFERENTIATED STRATEGIES IN THE
CLASSROOM**



DIVINA P. MAMING, LPT
Master Teacher II
Biñan Integrated National High School

ABSTRACT

This study explored BINHS SHS English teachers' understanding of differentiated instructions, examined the various differentiated strategies utilized in the classroom, and investigated on the challenges they faced in the crafting and implementation process. It sought to use the findings to assist and help teachers gain far better grasp of differentiation and produce modified and innovative strategies for use in the classroom through a LAC or training. This study is qualitative and used content analysis as the methodology leading to thematic analysis of the data gathered. The proponent found out that most teachers have always actively used differentiation in their lessons while others depended their use on time allotment for each competency and students' need for differentiation. Teachers vary or differentiate their strategies by tiering student learning activities to various levels of complexity, giving students alternative topics on which to focus and varying their pace of work. Findings revealed too, that teachers experienced challenges in crafting their own differentiated strategies for it requires much time and effort and demands long hours of preparation considering their piles of works to be done everyday. Moreover, it is recommended that teachers must modify existing differentiated activities and contextualize their contents to suit the interest and needs of the students from different strands. Formulation of innovative strategies that adapts to the millennial personalities and qualities should be part of the consideration.

Keywords: *differentiation, differentiated instructions, strategies, curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play an essential part in curriculum and instruction. They are the backbone that support the system and are the keys towards the success of teaching-learning procedure.

Different strategies in the lesson delivery in every class is very essential for a successful learning process. Every classroom whether physical or virtual is a hall or learning space for diverse kinds of students who have different interests, preferences, struggles and strengths. There are students whose knowledge are far more advanced than the others. A lesson or topic a teacher presents may be easy for some learners but truly challenging for others. Also, some contents and activities may be fun and engaging for few but not for the rest. Moreover, the changing times have made an impact on how students acquire knowledge and skills in the classroom. Other strategies may still be found effective but some few may need modification or at times, there is a need to innovate something out of the existing. While innovation is not all about new technology, teachers should create something new out of ordinary to address a learning problem and provide solutions to improve instruction. Thus, there is a need to capacitate the teachers in the provision of differentiation in the classroom.

Inclusive education under DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, too, has been implemented nationwide. It is a process that emphasizes providing special education services to pupils with special educational needs within the regular classrooms. (Gaad, 2007)

Under the new guidelines in PPST-RPMS to gauge teachers' proficiency particularly in indicators 9 and 10, teachers have to grapple with tons of differentiated activities to be

employed in the classroom to meet the various needs of students and make them learn and achieve same objectives through activities and strategies fit for each of them. It is believed that students with learning disabilities, talented and gifted ones and those from indigenous groups are not considered to have no capacity to learn, rather, they need different ways and means of coping with the learning endeavor and challenges in the classroom.

Moreover, this era of difficulties brought about by the pandemic, economic problems and socio-political issues has caused people to wander from one place to another to search for better living condition; thus, teachers do have students who come from distinct social locations and so they vary in needs and preferences.

Under these circumstances, classrooms have become increasingly diverse. These pave a way for educational authorities, teachers, and school administrators to find avenues to cater a variety of learning profiles. Subban (2006) in an international journal writes that a paradigm that is gaining ground in many educational circles is differentiated instruction.

The growing number of enrollees in the Senior High School Department at Binan Integrated National High School and the diverse kinds of learners coming from different locations have sparked inspiration to the proponent to study and understand differentiated instructions its SHS English teachers utilize in the classroom. Also, taking into consideration the new guidelines on the implementation of Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) in the Department of Education and pursuant to Section 5 of DO 42, s.

2017 on the National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) where teachers are expected to address diversity in the classroom setting under Key Result Area (KRA) 3.

The study followed the paradigm in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

With the upsurge of enrolment and the implementation of inclusive education, it is vital to know whether teachers are able to cater students' individual needs or are equipped with knowledge about differentiated instruction or doing the right process.

To gain understanding of the teachers' differentiated instructions which they employed in the classroom, the researcher utilized interview, survey and classroom observation to collect data and information that are essential for this study. Learning the strategies that the teachers use, the researcher checked on their Lesson Exemplars, conduct classroom observations and post-conferences to see the appropriateness and relevance of the strategies to the lessons discussed in class. In the post-conference, the teachers were asked about the challenges they faced in the preparation of materials for differentiated instructions. A LAC session on crafting differentiated strategies and/or modifying the existing ones was held. The person knowledgeable about differentiation was invited to assist the teachers and assess their output.

METHODOLOGY

Fifteen SHS English teachers from BINHS served as the participants for this research. They are currently teaching English for Academic and Professional Purposes, 21st Century Literature, Creative Writing, Oral Communication and Media and Information Literacy.

In the conduct of the study, the proponent used purposive sampling procedure based on the inclusion characteristics of the participants.

The proponent utilized focus group interviews as a complementary instrument to collect qualitative data for the study. A purposive sample was drawn to participate in focus group discussions. Structured observation was also used where the researcher observed to verify the differentiated activities the teachers employed and integrated in their lessons using COT or classroom observation tool based on RPMS-PPST guidelines under KRA 3 – Diversity of learners. Post-conferences were also conducted to clarify procedures, relevance and appropriateness of the material to the lesson.

As the research proposal was scrutinized by the School Research Coordinator and approved by the School's Division Office of Binan City, the proponent sought approval from the principal to conduct the research and proceeded to the instrumentation procedure.

An interview was conducted to the respondents and the researcher tabulated their answers. As part of the observation, the proponent, being a Master Teacher initially requested the teachers for the copies of their lesson exemplars to check on the differentiated instruction strategies

they would integrate in their lessons. The teachers were met for a post-conference to further determine their understanding of the concept of differentiation and to learn the challenges they encountered in coming up with differentiated activities suitable to the type or nature of learners. After the collection of data, gaps found were addressed through LAC session/training which capacitated teachers in creating or modifying existing strategies or craft their own innovative materials.

RESULTS

Differentiated Instructions Utilized by the SHS English teachers

Table 3 shows 32 various differentiated activities utilized by the teachers in the classroom. Of the four macro skills, verbal or speaking activities or strategies are widely used by the teachers followed by the combination of the four macro skills and writing. Reading and listening activities have been recorded barely used by the respondents.

Specifically, among the 32 strategies, collaborative tasks which also falls under the 2C-2i-1r pedagogical approaches accounting for group works and members' concerted effort in output-based instruction was documented an all-time high strategy in differentiation. This result was proven true by Monaco and Martin (2007) who said that millennials are team oriented and they prefer to work cooperatively on projects and participate within collaborative group settings.

Looking into the table further, speaking or verbal activities used by the teachers reveals that their students are word smart considering the fact that they cater academic strands such

as ABM, HUMMS and STEM. In the study conducted by Canceran and Malenab (2018), both HumSS and ABM strand students have positive attitude towards speaking in English and that speaking in English is important to them in general. The study of Caratiquit, Caratiquit and Tamanu (2022) also unveiled that those learners enrolled in the academic strands are good at communicating.

However, the results in listening and reading indicate a low-level interest of the young ones in less active activities such as merely listening to audios and text analysis. Calalo et. al. (2019) study reveals that most students under academic track experience difficulty in listening to class discussion and resort to asking a peer to explain the topic further. It was also determined by Castillo et. al. (2019) that majority of the SHS academic strand students has a poor performance in reading academic texts relative to structure of the text, thesis statement, paraphrasing and outlining.

Table 3

Utilized Differentiated Strategies in the classroom

MACRO SKILL	Differentiated Strategies Used in the Classroom	Number of Teachers Using the Strategies	Frequency of use of the strategies per Skill	Most commonly used Strategies per Skill
READING	Reading Comprehension and Analysis	2	5	2
	Texts Analysis	3		
WRITING	Reflection writing	2	13	7
	Writing (unspecified)	3		
	Essay writing	1		
	Poem writing	2		
	Journal writing	1		
	Graphic Organizer	3		
	Creating Infographics	1		
LISTENING	Listening (Congruent/active)	2	3	2
	Audio	1		
SPEAKING	Interview	2	18	12
	Reporting	1		
	Vlogging	1		
	Oral recitation	1		
	Think-Pair-Share	4		
	Role Play	2		
	Reflection	2		
	Speech Presentation	1		
	Artistic presentation	1		
	Talk Shows	1		
	Sharing of Strengths and Witnesses	1		
	Presentation with ICT Integration	1		
COMBINATION of the 4 Macro Skills	Gallery Walk	1	14	7
	Learning station	1		
	Collaborative Tasks	5		
	Illustrators, Travel Tracers, Summarizers	1		
	Creating videos, short film	1		
	Watching Videos	4		
	Task Cards	1		

Challenges Encountered by the Teachers in the Preparation and Crafting of Differentiated Instructions

Initially, the proponents asked the respondents about their understanding of differentiated instruction.

Table 4 gives an overview of the teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction. It indicates that 100% of the respondents understood the concept. Their responses correspond to the perceptions found on textbooks and educational journals. While 40% saw it as an approach designed to meet students' needs, learning styles, unique abilities and varied interests, 60% are aware that teachers themselves design, create and innovate differentiated instructional materials as part of planning to cater students' diverse needs.

Table 4

Percentage of responses on understanding differentiated instruction

Survey Item	Responses
What is your understanding of differentiated instruction?	9 or 60% of the respondents said that differentiated instruction is designing instruction and creating innovative materials as teachers plan to cater students' diverse needs.
	6 or 40% mentions that it is an approach that are designed to meet students' individual needs, learning styles, unique abilities and varied interests

When asked about how often do they use differentiated learning instructions in teaching their lessons, 47% responded ALWAYS, which is

significantly higher than the rest of the answers where teachers apply the concept only during performance tasks, depending on topic or needs of the students. Moreover, Table 5 reveals that more than half (53%) of the respondents integrate differentiation in the classroom occasionally or as the need arises only. Some of the teachers' Lesson Exemplars did not contain differentiated activities; however, teachers employed differentiation in the class as the proponent made classroom observations.

Table 5.1

Percentage of responses on the frequency of use of the differentiated strategies

Survey Item	Responses
How often do you use such differentiated learning instructions in teaching?	7 or 47% of the respondents ALWAYS use differentiation in their classes
	4 or 27% used differentiated strategies only during performance tasks or when they give activities
	1 or 7% used differentiated activities every week
	1 or 7% used differentiated activities depending on topic
	1 or 7% used differentiated activities depending on class type
	1 or 6% used differentiated activities depending on the students' needs.

Table 6 presents the various approaches on how the respondents vary their activities or set out to differentiation. 33% of them affirms that they tier student learning activities to various levels of complexity. This is because of the diverse kinds of learners in the classroom and not all of them learn in the same way. Varying activities in the classroom increases students' engagements and participation, they said. 27% gives students alternative topics on focus on; 20% varies the pace of work and 20% did not provide answer. This was clearly manifested in the classroom observation where teachers vary the approaches of differentiation to suit students' needs and abilities.

Table 6

Percentage of responses on the respondents' approaches in using differentiated strategies

Survey Item	Responses
How do teachers differentiate or vary the activities in the lesson?	5 or 33% of the respondents said they tier student learning activities to various levels of complexity
	4 or 27% gave students alternative topics on which to focus
	3 or 20% varied the pace of work
	3 or 20% did not answer

Table 7 illustrates that 80% of the respondents find it hard to craft differentiated materials mainly due to time constraints in the preparation process along with the effort required by it. Meanwhile, 20% can easily produce differentiated materials claiming that teachers must be

creative and suit their strategies and materials to the needs of the learners.

Table 7

Percentage of responses on the facility of crafting differentiated materials

Survey Item	Responses
Do you find it easy to craft differentiated materials to be used in the classroom? Why? Why not?	12 or 80% of the respondents said NO, it is not easy to craft differentiated materials. It is difficult, laborious, challenging; it requires much time and effort and demands long hours of preparation to finish.
	3 or 20% said YES, it is easy for them to craft differentiated materials. They try to categorize the materials/ instructions according to the needs of the learners; claimed that teacher must be creative in preparing for instruction to guide every student.

Based on the responses reflected in Table 8, period of preparation is the topmost concern of the teachers in preparing or crafting differentiated strategies for use in the classroom. It reflects teachers' overwhelming workload that serve as one of the hindrances in the process. Next to it is the funding since some activities need financial subsidy. Least among the concerns is the feasibility of the materials to practical application.

Table 8

Percentages of response to survey on the challenges encountered by the teachers in the Preparation and Crafting of differentiated strategies

Survey Item	Percentage
What are the challenges that you face in the preparation and crafting of differentiated strategies	4 or 27% Insufficient Resources/funding
	10 or 67% Preparation Time
	1 or 6% Feasibility to Practical Application

Differentiated Instructional Strategies that can be Crafted by the Teachers

Taking into consideration the learners and learners' abilities and the new normal in education, the SHS English Teachers must create differentiated instructional activities suitable to the interest of the ABM, HUMSS, STEM and even ICT students which the school caters. Contextualization of the materials according to these strands is highly recommended. What may work for one strand may not work for others. Also, the data in Table 1 shows that teachers must add more activities for reading and listening to achieve the wholistic approach for the development of the 4 macro skills.

DISCUSSION

The respondents showed understanding of the differentiated instruction. The teachers are well-equipped with the knowledge that governs differentiated instructions and they have been utilizing a number of strategies in the classroom to enliven teaching delivery, engage students in the learning process while having fun and achieve mastery of the lesson.

Their knowledge of the concepts mirrored those which are found on textbooks and educational journals and perhaps from the seminars and trainings they attended. There are multiple differentiated activities that they employ and implement in the classroom most of them are collaborative in nature. Speaking and verbal differentiated activities are widely used by the respondents. The least strategies that account for the development of the four macro skills are listening and reading.

Based on the data, most teachers have always actively used differentiation in their lessons while others depend their use on specific reasons such as time allotment for each competency and students' need for differentiation.

Teachers vary or differentiate their strategies by tiering student learning activities to various levels of complexity, giving students alternative topics on which to focus and varying their pace of work. These are done to ensure that all learners will be all given the space and opportunity to learn same topic in different approaches.

However, teachers find it hard to craft their own differentiated strategies. For them, it is difficult, laborious and challenging; it requires much time and effort and demands long hours of preparation to finish. These responses reflect their reluctance to craft differentiated strategies which commensurate to the high percentage of challenges they face or will face in the process. The survey reflected that teachers are faced with loads of work everyday and these impede them from crafting own differentiated materials for use in the classroom.

Understanding of the concept alone may not indicate reaching the optimal use of the differentiated instruction and realizing its positive effect on students' performance. Collaborative learning for example cannot be viewed as differentiation if the teacher herself/himself was the one who assigned members of each group not considering individual interest or preference.

There is a need to modify existing differentiated activities and contextualize their contents to suit the interest and needs of the students from different strands. Formulation of innovative strategies that adapts to the millennial personalities and qualities is highly encouraged.

For the teachers, merely understanding the concept of differentiation may be theoretical at some point. It may be best to understand the four ways to differentiate instructions: through content, process, product and environment.

For other researchers, it is recommended that this study may be instrumental for further study and exploration of the benefits and disadvantages of differentiated instructions among students and teachers.

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