LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network
ISSN: 2630-0672 (Print) | ISSN: 2672-9431 (Online)
Volume: 16, No: 2, July –December 2023

Language Institute, Thammasat University
https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/index

Exploring Students' Diversity in a Differentiated Classroom

Laily Amin Fajariyah[a,*], Heri Retnawati[b], Suwarsih Madya[c]

[a] lailyaminf@gmail.com, Educational Research and Evaluation, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia
[b] heri_retnawati@uny.ac.id, Educational Research and Evaluation, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia
[c] suwarsihm@gmail.com, Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa University, Indonesia
[*] Corresponding author, lailyaminf@gmail.com

APA Citation:
Fajariyah, L.A., Retnawati, H., & Madya, S. (2023). Exploring students' diversity in a differentiated classroom. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network, 16*(2), 205-219.

Received
08/02/2023

Received in revised form
16/04/2023

Accepted
11/05/2023

ABSTRACT

Differentiated classrooms accommodate students' diverse needs, however, tailoring learning to meet students' individual needs is challenging for teachers. This study explores students' diversity in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom setting, especially students' needs in differentiated English language tasks and assessments through a quantitative survey. The survey consists of a questionnaire investigating students' different needs in a differentiated English classroom. The data were gathered through an online survey for junior high school grade 8 students in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia. Eight hundred and eighty-five students aged between 12 to 15 years participated in this study. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Additionally, 102 students voluntarily joined a semi-structured interview session. The results of the interview were then analyzed using thematic analysis. This study revealed that students have various needs regarding their English learning goals, as well as the assessment of the four language skills activities and products, media preferences, favorite topics, task setting, and teacher's role preferences. Implications of the results for accommodating students' diverse needs in the EFL classroom are discussed.

Keywords: differentiated classroom, students' diversity, different needs

Introduction

A classroom usually has a wide range of diversity among the students with varying social and cultural backgrounds, learning preferences, and levels of academic preparedness in various areas, confidence, and interests in particular topics (Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Their academic abilities, knowledge, experiences, and pace of learning are also diverse (Chapman & King, 2005; Dixon et al., 2014). All of these aspects affect how individuals learn new information and demonstrate their learning.

Teachers frequently struggle to provide each of their students with focused learning activities that are specially tailored to them because each classroom presents a range of unique learning needs. What benefits some children will not necessarily benefit others (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). There is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching because each student is unique in their own manner. Therefore, teachers need to modify class instructions for different student groups in order to meet the needs of all pupils (Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2009).

Differentiated instruction is promoted to help teachers address their students' differences. A differentiated classroom attempts to meet the needs of all students in a mixed-ability classroom by differentiating the instructional process in terms of content, process, and product based on each student's readiness, interests and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2001).

Differentiation is not only seen in an isolated setting in a differentiated classroom but is the integration of all elements of the classroom, including the learning environment, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and classroom leadership and management (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Teachers play an important role in the integration of these five elements. Teachers need to understand the nature and differences of students to accommodate them in the instructional process (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). This is challenging for teachers who lack a comprehensive understanding of the process or who are not competent in teaching multiple groups at once (Dixon et al., 2014).

Since the primary goal of differentiation is to ensure that teachers concentrate on methods and procedures that provide effective learning for a wide range of students (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006), teachers need to know the areas in which students differ and what their different needs are. Therefore, this paper explores students' diversity in a differentiated classroom.

Literature Review

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is a responsive method implemented to effectively address students' diversity in the classroom. According to Tomlinson (2000), teachers provide differentiated instruction in response to students' individual interests, levels of readiness, and learning profiles. Teachers adapt the teaching to the needs of each student in order to maximize learning possibilities. Differentiated instruction typically does not focus on any specific group of interest (gender, social class, ethnicity, or special needs) but is a method and teaching philosophy that adapts to a wide range of student variation, including culture.

The concept of differentiation in the classroom is based on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the principles of inclusion and equity, which contend that engaging students in developmental activities that are appropriate to their social and cultural context will allow teachers to fully utilize each student's potential and students to take part and learn (Tomlinson, 1999). Students should be supported on their journey to equality by being given equitable access to knowledge, and differentiated instruction should be informed by the needs and interests of the diverse students in the class (Valiandes, 2015).

The term differentiation in fact is not a new practice. The differentiated instruction model was introduced in the late 1990s by Tomlinson. Initially, this model was introduced and used by

teachers in inclusive classrooms. However, nowadays differentiated classrooms are not only limited to inclusive classrooms as this approach is used in regular and mixed-ability classrooms.

Despite the growing attention to differentiated instruction, there are some misconceptions regarding differentiation in the classroom. Differentiation is typically only seen in terms of different tasks or activities for different groups of students based on their pace of learning. It is also risky to see differentiation as simply decision-making of the instructional process through which a teacher creates varied learning options to address the diversity of students' readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013, p. 1)

Differentiation in the classroom must be seen as a whole package, which includes the learning environment, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and classroom leadership and management (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Therefore, differentiation in the classroom is a teacher's proactive response to students' needs, shaped by a growth mindset and guided by several differentiation principles. The principles of differentiation include: (a) an environment that encourages and supports learning; (b) quality curriculum; (c) assessment that informs teaching and learning; (d) instruction that responds to student's variance; and (e) leading students and managing routines.

The Components of Differentiation

The key components of differentiated education, according to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), are learning content (what to learn), learning processes (how to learn), and products (how to assess learning gains). Teachers may diversify the instruction in terms of content, process, and product depending on the students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Content

This is the knowledge, understanding, and skills that teachers want students to learn. It includes the materials used in the classroom. Instead of changing the content itself, there is an emphasis on differentiating methods that students use to access key content, such as independent reading, partner reading, text on tape, text with images, listening comprehension, online research, communication with experts, group demonstrations, and instruction for small groups.

Process

This refers to the activities that students undertake in the classroom to understand and make sense of or own the content. Real learning must take place within students, not on their behalf (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) to enable students to retain, apply, and transfer material.

Product

This shows the ways students perform or demonstrate what they have learned in the instructional process. It can be seen in an effectively designed authentic assessment. Students cannot produce a product in a single class or as the consequence of a single activity. Instead, it is a thorough final exam that gets students to put what they have learned into practice and go beyond it.

Aside from differentiating instructions based on the above three components, differentiation can also be based on students' differences, namely their readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2001). The first difference, readiness to learn, refers to existing knowledge and skills that a student has in relation to specific task demands. Readiness to learn is not static but shifts as the task and objective change and as an individual's knowledge and skills develop. It does not show what a student can do in a certain task, but rather defines the gap between what the student already knew, understood, and could do with the task required. An

example of this in a teaching English as a foreign language setting is if a student who has low readiness to greet someone in English, it does not mean that s/he cannot learn English.

In addition to different levels of readiness to learn, students also have various personal interests, which play a significant role in their motivation and engagement in learning. Teachers need to know their students' interests and design tasks that appeal to them and that deliberately align with their interests (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). This may be in the form of relating learning to topics that students like to discuss.

The last factor, learning profiles, refers to a range of preferences for working with information and expressing one's ideas that is shaped by culture, gender, prior learning experiences, cognitive profiles, and multiple other factors, and can change over time and across situations (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2005).

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010, p.18) provide examples of differentiating the content, process, and product in the classroom based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profile as presented in the following figure.

Figure 1

Differentiating the Classroom

	Readiness	Interest	Learning Profile
Content	• materials at varied readability levels • spelling assigned by proficiency • alternate presentation methods • targeted small group instruction • front-loading vocabulary • highlighted texts	• range of materials that apply key ideas and skills to a variety of real-world situations • teacher presentations designed to link to student interests	• varied teaching modes (e.g., verbal, visual, rhythmic, practical) • video or audio notes for students who learn better with repeated listening
Process	• tiered activities • mini-workshops • flexible use of time • learning contracts • varied homework assignments • RAFT options	• expert groups • interest centers • supplementary materials based on student interests • jigsaw • independent studies • interest-based application options • RAFT options	• choice of working conditions (e.g., alone or with a partner) • tasks designed around intelligence preferences • RAFT options • blogs and vlogs to share ideas
Product	• tiered products • personal goal-setting • varied resource options • check-in requirements based on student independence • providing samples of good student work at varied levels of complexity	• use of student interests in designing products • Design a Day options • use of contemporary technologies for student expression	• Complex Instruction • varied formats for expressing key content • varied working arrangements • varied modes of expressing learning

Research Methodology

Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted through a quantitative survey to investigate students' needs in differentiated English language instruction in grade 8 at junior high school. It also explores the actions that teachers must undertake to accommodate students' diverse needs.

Research Questions

There are two research questions in this study, as follows:

1. What are students' needs in differentiated English language tasks and assessments?
2. How might students' diverse needs be accommodated in differentiated English language instructions?

Participants and Settings

The study was conducted at ten (10) state junior high schools in the in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia. The ten schools represent the five districts within the province that are situated in various geographical settings i.e., mountainous areas, rural areas, suburbs, and in the city. Eight hundred and eighty-five students aged 12 to 15 years participated in the study by completing the online questionnaire and 102 of them joined the semi-structured interview. The students were eighth graders in the 2021/2022 academic year who had to study English during the COVID-19 pandemic. They had 4 hours of English classes per week, which was generally divided into two meetings per week.

Instruments

A questionnaire to examine the students' different needs in the English language tasks was developed. The questionnaire covers the students' background, interests, and learning preferences in the differentiated English language task components (Brown & Heekyeong, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Luoma, 2004, Tomlinson and Moon, 2013). The questionnaire consists of nine items or questions for collecting data on the students' choices of tasks. The items were developed according to the components of tasks and differentiation. The questionnaire includes the students' background, goals, input, activities, settings, and roles. The organization of the students' needs assessment is presented in Table 1.

The draft questionnaire was validated by seven experts to maintain its validity. The Aiken's validity index for the questionnaire items 1 to 9 on the needs assessment instrument ranged from 0.786 to 0.893. According to the Aiken's index (Aiken, 1985), validity for seven raters and five rating categories with 5% significance is 0.75. Therefore, it was concluded that the items in this needs assessment instrument were valid and could be used in the survey. The items of the survey were transferred into an online survey using Google Forms, as it was a very familiar feature for students in Indonesia during the pandemic, and it is the easiest to administer.

Table 1

Organization of the Students' Needs Assessment Questionnaire

Part	Aspect	Issue statement	Item no.	No. of item
Part A. students' background	Age	Students' personal information (name, age)	1, 2	2
Part B. component of English language assessment tasks	Goals (product)	Goals of the English language assessment	1	1
		Products of written cycle in the English language assessment (infographics, text, comics/motion graphics)	2	1
		Products of spoken cycle in the English language assessment (audio recordings, presentations, videos/digital stories)	3	1

Input (content)	The types of input for English language assessment (texts/audios/visuals/audio-visuals)	4	1
	The topic of the assessment (friendship/love/teenage life/hobbies/etc.)	5	1
Activities (process)	Activities/performances during the reading and writing assessment	6	1
	Activities/performances during the listening and speaking assessment	7	1
Setting (process)	The setting of the activities of assessments (individual/pair/small group/large group work)	8	1
	The teachers' role during the assessment	9	1

Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed a triangulation technique to strengthen the validity of the findings by collecting data using two different research methods. First, the online questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms to 1,060 students and was completed by 885 students. The other 175 students were reminded by their teachers to fill out the questionnaire, but they did not do so, due to both personal and technical issues. In the questionnaire, students were asked nine questions regarding their needs regarding English language tasks. Their responses were then examined using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages to provide information tailored to their specific requirements in a differentiated classroom. All of the results are presented in a table.

After collecting the student questionnaires, the researcher collected more data using a semi-structured interview. There were 102 students who voluntarily joined the interview session. The interview consisted of nine questions that further explored the students' needs in a differentiated classroom. All data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and Discussion

Findings from the Questionnaire

The findings of this study are related to students' diversity and individual needs in a differentiated classroom, especially in differentiated English language tasks and assessments. The students' personal background (age), interests, and learning preferences in the language task components is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Students' Needs in Differentiated English Language Tasks and Assessments

Information	Frequency	Percentage
Students' age:		
12 years old	2	0.23%
13 years old	155	17.51%
14 years old	674	76.16%
15 years old	54	6.10%
1. Students' purpose for studying English:		
read and comprehend English texts	739	83.50%
talk and do presentations in English	440	49.72%
listen to and comprehend English audios/videos	439	49.60%
write English texts	326	36.84%
2. Products of Reading and Writing:		
English texts	436	49.27%
infographics	290	32.77%

Information	Frequency	Percentage
Comic strips	266	30.06%
Motion graphics/videos	231	26.10%
3. Products of Listening and Speaking:		
Audio recordings	393	44.41%
Digital stories	330	37.29%
Videos	252	28.47%
Presentation and dialogue practices	169	19.10%
4. Favourite Materials		
Animation videos	564	63.73%
Pictures and infographics	394	44.52%
Texts	337	38.08%
Audio recordings	112	12.66%
5. Favourite topics		
Hobbies and interests	525	59.32%
Daily activities at school/home	521	58.87%
Teenage life	300	33.90%
Technology and science	245	27.68%
6. Assessment Activities for reading and writing		
Multiple choice tests	712	80.45%
Create texts based on pictures	202	22.82%
Essay tests	173	19.55%
Create infographics	121	13.67%
7. Assessment Activities for reading and writing		
Voice recordings	402	45.42%
Create digital stories	282	31.86%
Present materials in English	235	26.55%
Create videos	222	25.08%
8. Setting Tasks		
Small group activities	488	55.14%
Individual work	328	37.06%
Pair work	284	32.09%
Large group activities	245	27.68%
9. Teacher's role		
Facilitator	700	79.10%
Motivator	462	52.20%
Model	455	51.41%
Listener and assessor	383	43.28%

Table 2 shows the students' diverse needs in a differentiated classroom. Before exploring the main questions regarding the students' needs, their ages were mapped. The students' ages ranged from 12 to 15 years old, with most of them (76.16%) aged 14 years old. The first question probed students' purpose to learn English. It was found that most students (83.50%) want to be able to read and comprehend English texts. Half of them (49.72%) want to be able to talk and do presentations in English. In addition to these answers and the other two presented in Table 2, some students provided their own written alternative answers in the Google Forms survey. Each of those answers is equivalent to 0.1%, for example:

To be able to study abroad (0.1 %)
To speak with foreigners (0.1 %)
To be able to speak when travelling (0.1 %)

The second question provided information related to reading and writing products. Results showed that half of the students (49.27%) want to produce English texts after reading and writing instructions. Some of the students (32.77%) want to create infographics, which combines pictures, graphics, and text to present their products in reading and writing classes. Few students wrote their own choices on the survey form, such as:

Short stories (0.1 %)
Short texts (0.1 %)

After choosing the product of the written cycle in English instructions, the students also selected a product of the spoken or oral cycle, which consists of listening and speaking. Half of the students (44.41%) prefer audio recordings and some of them (37.29%) prefer to create digital stories, which includes text, audio, and pictures or images. Some students also wrote their own choices on the survey form aside from the four choices provided, as follows:

Introducing oneself (0.1 %)
Group conversations (0.1 %)

In question 4, students demonstrated their needs regarding materials and media. Most of the students (63.73%) chose to have animation videos, followed by pictures and infographics (44.52%). Some students wrote other alternative choices, as follows:

Text with the translation in Indonesian (0.1%).
Music (0.1%).

After choosing the format of the materials as the content of the English instruction, students were given a selection of content topics. Hobbies and interests and daily activities at school/home were the two most common topics selected by students at 59.32% and 58.87% respectively. Other topics listed by students include:

Something unique as new knowledge (0.1%)
Topics about food (0.1%)
Topics about history (0.1%)

Questions 6 and 7 are focused on the process of assessment. In question 6, most students (80.45%) voted for the reading and writing assessment activities, which are dominated by multiple choice text. The students added additional activities, as follows:

Play games (0.1 %)
Do group work (0.1%)

Almost half of the students (45.42%) selected voice recording for the assessment activities of the spoken cycle, which includes listening and speaking. The students provided other alternative activities for the spoken cycle, as follows:

Group conversations (0.2 %)
Communicating through questions and answers (0.1%)

Question 8 is related to setting tasks to complete the information on the needs of the activities or process of the instruction. The results found that half of the students (55.14%) chose to have activities in small groups followed by 37.06% of students who prefer individual activities. The last question explores the roles of teachers that students most need. Most students (79.10%) prefer teachers as facilitators and half of them (52.20%) want teachers to be motivators. Students listed additional teachers' roles that they need, as follows:

Someone who likes making jokes (0.1%)
Someone who is a mood booster (0.1%)
Someone who understands students' difficulties (0.1%)

In summary, the findings based on the questionnaire data showed that students have various preferences and needs regarding what they want to learn (content), how they learn (process), how they want to be assessed (product), and what they need in their environment.

In-Depth Interview Findings

Similar to the questionnaire, the interview also comprises nine (9) questions investigating the diverse needs of students in English instructional processes. The interview was used to gain more in-depth information on what students want to learn (content), how they want to learn (process), how they want to be assessed (product), and what they want in their learning environment. After the materials were transcribed, they were coded and examined to identify the following important themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Students' Purposes to Learn English

Some students identified their own personal purposes, such as being able to talk to his/her foreign friends, to study abroad, to be able to speak about traveling, etc. This information aligns with the students' responses during the interview, as follows:

S1: "*Saya bisa bicara bahasa Inggris sama orang luar.*"
(I can speak English with foreigners.)
S2: *"Agar bisa bicara bahasa Inggris dan kalau nonton film paham."*
(To be able to speak English and understand English movies*).*
S3: *"Iya bisa memahami film."*
(Yes, to be able to understand English films*)*
S4: "I want to speak English to my international friends."
S5: "*Kalau bisa dua kenapa satu? Bisa berbicara dan menulis Bahasa Inggris"*
(If I can do both, why not? I want to speak and write English)
S6: "*berbicara"*
(I want to be able to speak English)

The responses of the in-depth interview can be summarized that the students' goals for learning English included to: (1) speak or communicate with friends or people from other countries; (2) present something and tell stories in English; (3) gain more knowledge through understanding English; (4) prepare for the future for studying or working abroad.

Teachers need to accommodate these goals in instructional processes by considering their students' purpose of learning and creating a learning atmosphere that fits those purposes. Learning purposes also affect students' learning preferences in the classroom. Information on students' goals is important for teachers in designing and tailoring their instructional processes. It enables teachers to provide activities that proportionally address the needs of their students in the four language skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

Diverse Content of English Instructions

The students chose diverse content for English instructional processes, which covers materials/media and learning topics. Their material and media choices showed their learning preferences. In the online survey, animation videos were the most popular material/media preferred by the students. The same result was found in the interview, as follows:

S1: "*Film animasi."* (Animation movies)
S2: *"Film animasi, lagu"* (Animation movies, songs*).*
S3: *"Ada cerita, ada audio, kayak content youtube itu lho."* (Stories with audio recordings like the YouTube content).

S4: "Listening to music."
S5: "*Buku aja lah"* (Just books)
S6: "*Video"* (Videos)

In general, the students' responses in the in-depth interview show the various needs of students that can be grouped into: (1) animation; (2) pictures; (3) videos; and (4) audio recordings.

Information on students' learning preferences must be accommodated in designing input texts for students. Teachers can use this information to provide tailored input texts and select texts relevant to students' preferences in teaching and learning processes.

The topic of the materials is equally important in learning processes. In the interview, the students identified their preferred topics, as follows:

S1: "*Hobby. Menulis bercerita kejadian-kejadian, menulis diary.*" (Hobbies and writing about experiences in a diary)
S2: "Hobbies and music"
S3: "*Kehidupan remaja kayak bertemu teman baru.*" (Teenage life like meeting new friends.)
S4: "I like teenagers' stories and music like hip hop."

These topics can be grouped into: (1) hobbies; (2) daily activities; (3) friendship; and (4) dreams.

Diverse Processes in English Instructions

Diverse instructional processes were explored in the interview including the assessment activities for reading and writing and listening and speaking. The results showed that for the written cycle, reading and writing, students want to: (1) have multiple choice tests; (2) write texts based on pictures; (3) do matching activities; and (4) write short stories.

In assessing oral English skills during the interview, the students selected audio recordings, videos, and presentations, as follows:

S1: "*berbicara sendiri di depan kelas."* (Speaking or presenting alone in front of the class)
S2: "*berbicara sendiri*" (speaking or presenting).
S3: "*Membuat video."* (Creating videos)
S4: "I like it when I speak with my friends (partners)."
S6: "*rekaman audio*" (creating audio recordings.)

For the oral cycle, listening and speaking, the students identified various activities they need, such as: (1) listening and creating audio recordings; (2) creating videos; (3) presenting materials in English; and (4) listening to songs and watching movies.

The next component covers setting tasks and the role of the teachers. Similar to the choices selected in the questionnaire, students want to have individual work, pair work, and small group activities for their tasks, as follows:

S1: "*Berpasangan."* (Doing activities in pairs)
S2: *"Kalau saya pengen sendiri"* (I want to have individual tasks*).*
S3: "*Berpasangan."* (In pair activities)
S4: "*Individu*." (Individual tasks)
S5: "I*ndividu*." (Individual tasks)
S6: "*Berkelompok, empat orang"* (In group of four)

The interview results showed that students like to do tasks in: (1) groups of 3-4; (2) pairs; and (3) individual work. Next, in terms of teachers' roles, they want their teachers to be: (1) facilitators; (2) motivators; and (3) fun teachers.

Various Products in English Instructions

The various products of reading and writing activities were discussed during the interview. The results showed that students like to: (1) create English texts; (2) create comics or stories with pictures; and (3) videos. For listening and speaking, students identified products like: (1) videos; (2) dialogue; (3) audio recordings; and (4) presentations.

Accommodating Diverse Needs in Differentiated English Language Instructions

The information gathered in the survey can be used by teachers to design the differentiated instruction. The survey focuses on the two components of differentiation (interest and learning profile), Table 3 presents the ways to accommodate the students' diverse needs in the differentiated English language instruction:

Table 3

Accommodating Students' Diverse Needs in Differentiated English Language Instruction

	Interest	Learning profile
Content	• Provide texts that students like (about hobbies and interests, daily activities at school, etc.)	• Varied teaching media/materials (audios, videos, etc.) • Video or audio notes for students who learn better with repeated listening (videos with English subtitles)
Process	Interest-based application options (WhatsApp, YouTube, Google Classroom)	A choice of working conditions (individual, in pairs, in small groups, etc.) Tasks that are based on students' preferences
Product	Products that align with the students' interests Various technologies/apps/platforms to present the product	• Varied formats for written products (texts/ infographics/ etc.) • Varied formats for spoken products (videos/ audios/ presentations)

Discussion

Based on the questionnaire and the in-depth interview results, students have various differences and needs. Data related to the students' demography shows that they are teenagers and, therefore, have different characteristics from children and adults. Teenagers are referred to as the most difficult learners (Ur, 1996). They seem to have low motivation and are not easily encouraged or supervised. They need a lot of time to gain trust and respect from teachers and their peers. However, teenagers in fact have greater potential than young children when they are treated in the right way. They like participating in decision making regarding lesson materials and learning programs. Ur (1996) also suggests that teenagers are able to be the best language learners (Harmer, 2001). Focusing on their potential as good language learners, the needs assessment conducted in this survey is one way of engaging teenage students in determining appropriate materials and learning processes.

Besides teenagers' potential to learn English, they are also proficient in technology as they are digital natives who grew up with technology and feel comfortable and confident with it

(Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, pp. 5-9). There are several benefits of utilizing technology in learning, which includes: (1) getting students' attention; (2) strengthening students interest to study; (3) integrating the use of digital media; (4) strengthening discussions and consultations in learning processes; (5) saving time; (6) allowing feedback; (7) integrating an element of fun; and (8) accommodating a wide range of available resources and student learning styles (Robyler & Doering, 2013, p. 25; Towndrow & Vallace, 2004, p. 105). It is important to choose appropriate technology to support their learning.

In exploring students' choices regarding the components of tasks in the survey, the first component examined was the goal or purpose of learning. It is evident in the results that teachers must consider their students' goals and integrate them in the learning process to motivate students to learn. The goal itself in the learning process is aims of action that need to be gained and achieved by students (Locke & Latham, 2006). When students identify specific goals in learning, they can energize, direct, and affect their particular behavior in the classroom.

The components modified in differentiated instruction include: (a) content; (b) process; (c) product; and (d) environment. In the task component, content is included in the input component. This component is explored in items 5 and 6 in the questionnaire. Item 5 examines students' choice of materials and item 6 is related to students' preference of topics.

The survey and the interview showed that students like animation videos most. Animation videos are defined as a form of dynamic representation that shows a process which is changing over time. (Heinich et al., 2002). Animation is a video media, which has become increasingly popular in the English learning context where movies, videos, and cartoons are used in listening activities in EFL classrooms. Animation videos provide settings, action, emotions, gestures, etc. that cannot be expressed in other types of media. Teachers and students can benefit from the integration of animation's fun and educational content in the classroom (Birbaumer & Schmidt, 2006, p. 567).

Aside from the form of the materials or media used to provide input that is relevant and fitting for students, topics or themes that are of interest to the students must be explored to ensure learning is enjoyable. Topics that students are interested in will help them to comprehend texts and perform language tasks during the instructional process. One study on selecting topics and reading comprehension conducted by Ebrahimi and Javanbakht (2015) examined the impact of being interested in topics on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. They conducted an experimental study by giving the three most popular topics to the control group and the three least popular topics to the experimental group. The results showed that the experimental group with more interesting topics performed better than the control group. Similar results were found by Lee and Polido (2016) who conducted a study on the relationship between topic interest and second language proficiency among 135 Korean EFL learners. The study examined the role of interest in the topic in developing motivational factors and increasing students' involvement in EFL learning. Data on students' interest in topics and materials can be used to differentiate class instructions, especially in the content component.

Another component of classroom instruction, process, refers to teaching methods. The questionnaire items 7, 8, and 9 explore students' thoughts pertaining to process. Item 7 is focused on different types of written language activities and item 8 is related to oral language skills, namely listening, and speaking. In the task component, these are categorized as activity/procedure elements (Nunan, 2004). The last item, item 9, is related to setting activities.

After exploring students' different needs in the survey, the implementation of a differentiated classroom can be started. To do so, one way is to provide students with choices. Students can choose how they work, who they work with, the resources they use, and how they demonstrate their learning (Algozzine & Anderson, 2007; Brennan, 2021; Carver & Bailey, 2010; Dotger & Causton-Theoharis, 2010). By doing this, the students' intrinsic motivation can be developed (Brennan, 2021). Some studies have also found that engagement and motivation increased when choices were given to students in a differentiated classroom (Brennan, 2021; Carver & Bailey, 2010; Dotger & Causton-Theoharis, 2010). On the other hand, Dotger &

Causton-Theoharis (2010) believe that finding a balance between teacher and students making choices and providing students with the opportunity to negotiate or propose an option is needed. Many studies report that when teachers are supposed to address the diverse needs of students, it is very challenging to implement a differentiated classroom (Aldossari, 2018; Nicolae, 2014; Wan, 2017). Therefore, listening to students' perspectives of differentiation may influence teachers' adoption of differentiation and address some of their concerns, particularly regarding concerns of equity and fairness.

Conclusion and Implications

This study's findings and discussion lead to the conclusion that diversity in the classroom is real. This diversity is evident in the students' various needs regarding their purpose for learning English as well as activities and products of the assessment of the four language skills, media preferences, favorite topics, setting tasks, and teachers' role preferences.

These differences must be considered in the preparation and process of instructions and assessments in a differentiated classroom. Teachers can provide various forms and topics of input texts, various media, activities, and assessment products in a differentiated classroom. Additionally, teachers can give students the flexibility to choose the tasks they most want to perform.

Acknowledgements

This paper is sponsored by the Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) and the Republic of Indonesia Ministry of Finance.

About the Authors

Laily Amin Fajariyah: An English teacher at SMPN 5 Panggang, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2010-present). Currently, she is a doctoral student in Educational Research and Evaluation, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia. Her research interests are differentiated assessments, ICT in ELT, oral English teachings, digital storytelling, and materials and media development.

Heri Retnawati: A professor at the Department of Educational Research and Evaluation, Post Graduate Study, Yogyakarta State University. She is an expert in statistics, assessment, and teacher professional development.

Suwarsih Madya: A professor in EFL teaching at the Department of English Education, Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa University. She is an expert in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), classroom action research, English instructional technology, and qualitative research.

References

Aiken, L. R. (1985). Three coefficients for analyzing the reliability and validity of ratings. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *45*, 131-142.

Aldossari, T. (2018). The challenges of using the differentiated instruction strategy: A case study in general education stages in Saudi Arabia. *International Education Studies*, *11*(4), 74–83. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v11n4p74

Algozzine, B., & Anderson, K. M. (2007). Tips for teaching: Differentiating instruction to include all students. *Preventing School Failure*, *51*(3), 49–54. https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.51.3.49-54

Berliner, D. C., & Biddle, B. J. (1995). *The manufactured crisis*. AddisonWesley

Birbaumer, N., & Schmidt, R. F. (2006). *Biologische Psychologie* (7th ed.). Springer.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/ 1478088706qp063oa

Brennan, A. (2021). Differentiation through choice as an approach to enhance inclusive practice. *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland,* 32(1), 11–20. https://www.reachjournal.ie/index.php/reach/ article/view/13.

Brown, H. D. & Heekyeong, L. (2015). *Teaching by principle: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Pearson Education.

Carver, A., & Bailey, J. (2010). Unit pages: Differentiation for 200 students. *Science Scope, 33*(6), 12–17.

Chapman, C. & King, R. (2005). *Differentiated assessment strategies: One tool doesn't fit all.* Corwin Press.

Dixon, F. A., Yssel, N., McConnell, J. M., & Hardin, T. (2014). Differentiated instruction, professional development, and teacher efficacy. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *37*, 111-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0162353214529042

Dotger, S., & Causton-Theoharis, J. (2010). Differentiation through choice: Using a think-Tac-Toe for science content. *Science Scope*, *33*(6), 18–23.

Dudeney, G. & Hockly, N. (2008). *How to teach English with technology*. Pearson Education.

Ebrahimi, S., & Javanbakht, Z. (2015). The effect of topic interest on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 2*(6), 80-86.

Harmer, J. (2001). *How to teach English*. Longman.

Heinich, R., Molenda, M., & Russell, J. D., (2002). *Instructional media and technologies learning.* Prentice Hall.

Lee, S., & Pulido, D. (2016). The impact of topic interest, L2 proficiency, and gender on EFL incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading. *Language Teaching Research. 22*(1), 118–135.

Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2006). New directions in goal-setting theory. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15(5), 265-268.

Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing speaking*. Cambridge University Press.

Nicolae, M. (2014). Teachers' beliefs as the differentiated starting point: Research basis. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, *128*, 426–431. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.182

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1017/CBO9780511667336

Roblyer, M.D. & Doering, A.H. (2013*). Integrating educational technology into teaching* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Sousa, D. A., and C. A. Tomlinson. (2011). *Differentiation and the brain: How neuroscience supports the learner–friendly classroom*. Solution Tree Press.

Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2005). Intelligence and culture: how culture shapes what intelligence means, and the implications for a science of well-being. In F. A. Huppert, N. Baylis, & B. Keverne (Eds.), *The science of well-being* (pp. 361–377). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198567523.003.0014

Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2000). Reconcilable differences: Standards-based teaching and differentiation. *Educational Leadership, 58*(1), 6-11.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *Differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. A., & Jarvis, J. (2009). Differentiation: Making curriculum work for all students through responsive planning and instruction. In J. S. Renzulli, E. J. Gubbins, K. S. McMillen, R. D. Eckert, & C. A. Little (Eds.), *Systems and models for developing programs for the gifted and talented* (pp. 599-628). Creative Learning Press.

Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design*. ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. A., & Moon, T. R. (2013). *Assessment and student success in a differentiated classroom.* ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. A., & Imbeau, M. B. (2010). *Leading and managing a differentiated classroom.* ASCD.

Towndrow, P.A., &Vallace, M. (2004). *Using IT in the language classroom*. Pearson Education Southeast Asia Pte Ltd.

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Valiandes, S. (2015). Evaluating the impact of differentiated instruction on literacy and reading in mixed ability classrooms: Quality and equity dimensions of education effectiveness. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 45*, 17–26.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press.

Wan, S. W.-Y. (2017). Differentiated instruction: Are Hong Kong in-service teachers ready? *Teachers and Teaching*, *23*(3), 284–311. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1204289

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005) *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.). ASCD.