

# USING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONS TO ADDRESS STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL: AN ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

The study entitled, "Using Differentiated Instructions to Address Students' English Learning Difficulties at Elementary School Level: An Analysis". The specific objective of study was to analyse the use of differentiated instructions to address students English learning difficulties at elementary school level. The study was survey and descriptive in nature. The quantitative research method was adopted and the explanatory sequential techniques was used. The simple random sampling technique was adopted for data collection. The sample of study consisted 456 respondents including 24 head teachers, 72 ESTs and 360 primary school students. The questionnaire was developed for data collection. The validity of questionnaire was ensured through experts' opinion whereas reliability of the questionnaire was ensured through Cronbach Alpha by SPSS-24. Findings of study showed that 52.5% respondents strong agreed, 22.5% respondents strongly agreed and 10% agreed while 15% respondents were undecided. Collectively, 75% (52.5%+22.5%) were agreed. Mean score 3.8750 and SD 0.8825 supported. The study concluded that collectively majority of respondents agreed while some of respondents were undecided. The study recommended that English learning difficulties may be addressed through differentiated instructions at elementary level.

**Keywords:** Technology, Affective Learning, Active Participation, Higher Thinking, Motivation.

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education is rapidly changing due to such factors as technological changes, the change in student populations, and changes to pedagogical demands (Bok, 2020). At this dynamic climate, professional development (PD) of university teachers is a must to provide teaching excellence in high standards and make the institution competitive (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Good PD improves not only instructional delivery capacity of educators, but also makes their development in line with institutional strategic plans, promoting the culture of life-long learning

(Guskey, 2014). Yet, although its significance is commonly acknowledged, not all faculty employees have an opportunity to participate in well-organized needs-oriented PD interventions capable of helping them handle issues within a specific discipline (Borko et al., 2020).

According to the research, various PD models used are usually one-size-fits-all as the different needs of university teachers are not considered in such models (Hattie, 2017). Faculty members require targeted training in areas such as active learning strategies, digital literacy, inclusive pedagogy,

curriculum design, and assessment methods (Ambrose et al., 2010). Moreover, the shift toward student-centered learning and hybrid teaching models post-pandemic has further underscored the need for adaptive PD frameworks (Bates, 2019; Means et al., 2020). Without tailored PD interventions, universities risk diminishing teaching quality, faculty motivation, and student engagement (William, 2018).

This study investigates the pedagogical needs of university teachers to develop an effective, context-responsive PD mechanism. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research examines faculty perspectives across different academic ranks and disciplines, focusing on Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology (KFUEIT), Rahim Yar Khan. By identifying key gaps in current PD practices, this study aims to propose a sustainable model that bridges individual development and institutional objectives. The results will form part of the larger debate on faculty development in higher education by providing evidence-based techniques that can facilitate teaching effectiveness in the age of fast-changing education.

The Professional development (PD) is a critical driver of teaching excellence, student success, and institutional advancement in higher education (Hattie, 2017). Research confirms that faculty who engage in structured PD programs exhibit enhanced pedagogical skills, greater technological adaptability, and improved student outcomes (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2020). However, traditional PD models frequently adopt a standardized approach, neglecting discipline-specific and contextual requirements (Kennedy, 2016). Effective PD must be continuous, needs-based, and aligned with both individual career progression and institutional strategic goals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

### **Pedagogical Needs of University Teachers:**

The university educators require a multifaceted skill set to navigate evolving academic demands. Key competencies include:

1. Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2017)  
Teachers employ technology, flexible grouping, tiered tasks, and growth mindset strategies to address diverse learning needs.
2. Multisensory Approach (Birsh & Carreker, 2018)  
Educators combine visual, tactile, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities to reinforce language

concepts through multisensory materials and activities.

Task-Based Learning (Ellis, 2018)

Instruction centers on authentic, collaborative tasks that develop practical language skills and critical thinking through real-world applications.

Technology Integration (Hockly, 2022)

Digital tools including adaptive software, collaborative platforms, and interactive media enhance engagement and personalize learning experiences.

Formative Assessments (Black & William, 2018)

Ongoing evaluations inform instruction while promoting student agency through continuous feedback and incremental goal achievement.

Pronunciation Difficulties (Celce-Murcia et al., 2021)

Educators face challenges teaching phonemic distinctions, prosodic features, and fluent speech production to learners.

Vocabulary Difficulties (Nation, 2022)

Instructional barriers include limited word recognition, semantic understanding, and contextual usage of lexical items.

Grammar Difficulties (Larsen-Freeman, 2020)

Educators struggle with teaching tense systems, syntactic structures, and complex clause relationships effectively.

Reading/ Writing Difficulties (Grabe & Stoller, 2019)

Challenges encompass text comprehension, synthesis skills, and mastery of discourse-level writing conventions.

Listening/ Speaking Difficulties (Goh & Burns, 2021)

Instructional hurdles include developing aural comprehension, oral fluency, and conversational interaction competencies.

Cultural/ Motivational Difficulties (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015)

Educators navigate intercultural adaptation, intrinsic motivation, and strategic learning approach barriers in ELL contexts.

### **Challenges in English Language Learning**

**Elementary ELs encounter multifaceted challenges, including:**

Reading and Vocabulary Gaps:

Struggles with phonemic awareness, decoding, and academic vocabulary hinder comprehension. Explicit instruction in phonics and vocabulary development is critical for bridging these gaps.

2. Writing Complexity:  
Students often lack syntactic knowledge and organizational skills, leading to difficulties in constructing coherent sentences and paragraphs.
3. Oral Language Barriers:  
Pronunciation issues and limited conversational practice reduce confidence in speaking and listening.
4. Cultural and Linguistic  
Disconnects: Mismatches between home and school languages exacerbate learning disparities, particularly in multilingual contexts.

The study was survey and descriptive in nature. The quantitative research method was adopted and the explanatory sequential techniques was used. The simple random sampling technique was adopted for data collection. The sample of study consisted 456 respondents including 24 head teachers, 72 ESTs and 360 primary school students. The questionnaire was developed for data collection. The validity of questionnaire was ensured through experts' opinion whereas reliability of the questionnaire was ensured through Cronbach Alpha by SPSS-24.

## Research Methodology

### Data Analysis

**Table.1: Differentiated Instruction**

| Themes                 | Stat. | Responses |      |      |      |      |       | SD     | Mean   |
|------------------------|-------|-----------|------|------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|
|                        |       | SDA       | DA   | UD   | A    | SA   | Total |        |        |
| Tech Integration       | F     | 10        | 130  | 70   | 120  | 70   | 400   | 1.1764 | 3.2750 |
|                        | %     | 2.5       | 32.5 | 17.5 | 30.0 | 17.5 | 100   |        |        |
| Flexible Grouping      | F     | 10        | 2    | 15   | 11   | 11   | 400   | 1.0124 | 3.7250 |
|                        | %     | 2.5       | 5.0  | 37.5 | 27.5 | 27.5 | 100   |        |        |
| Collaborative Learning | F     | 2         | 6    | 7    | 13   | 12   | 40    | 1.2065 | 3.6750 |
|                        | %     | 5.0       | 15.0 | 17.5 | 32.5 | 30.0 | 100   |        |        |
| Tiered Tasks           | F     | 0         | 4    | 6    | 21   | 9    | 40    | .88252 | 3.8750 |
|                        | %     | 0         | 10.0 | 15.0 | 52.5 | 22.5 | 100   |        |        |

Item.1 presents the Tech Integration and showed that the data using digital tools (apps, software) to enhance English lessons, 32.5% of the survey participants disagreed, 2.5% strongly disagreed, 30% agreed, 17.5% strongly agreed and 17.5% were not certain about the statement. Most of those who responded (30%+17.5%) supported the statement. The S.D. is 1.1764 and mean score is 3.2750 supported.

Item.2 presents the Flexible Grouping and showed that student groups are organized based on their strengths, organizing students dynamically by skill or interest. By reviewing the data, I noticed that 23% strongly agreed, another 23% agreed, 5% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed and 37% said they had no opinion. Almost two thirds (55%) of the group (27.5% and 27.5%) stated that they agreed with the point. Based on the data, SD 1.0124 and mean 3.7250 have been supported.

Item.3 presents the Collaborative Learning and showed that the small-group teaching, teamwork among students and SOLO activities depending on what is required. Statistical analysis indicates that

32.5% of participants agreed, 030% agreed strongly, 15% disagreed, 5% disagreed strongly, while 17.5% remained undecided regarding the statement. The majority of respondents, amounting to 62.5%, agreed with the statement. SD 1.2065 and mean 3.6750 supported.

Item.4 presents the Tiered Tasks and showed that plan tasks that challenge students appropriately, depending on their level of preparation. The data analysis shows that 52.5% of the respondents were in agreement, 22.5% were strongly in agreement, 10% agreed and 0% strongly agreed with the statement. Also, 15% of respondents were undecided about the statement. More than 75 percent of those polled agreed with the statement. SD 0.88252 and mean 3.8750 supported.

### Findings

32.5% disagreed with the statement, 2.5% entered the "strongly disagree" category, 30% said they agreed, 17.5% said they strongly agreed and the final 17.5% were undecided. Many (30%+17.5%) respondents were of the same opinion and

supported the statement. SD 1.1764 and mean 3.2750 have been validated.

- 27.5% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while another 27.5% agreed strongly. On the other hand, 5% respondents disagreed and 2.5% disagreed strongly. The statement was undecided for 37.5% of the respondents. Total agreement on the statement included 55% of the respondents. SD 1.0124 and mean 3.7250 were the results supported by the data.
- 32.5% were in agreement with the statement, 030% strongly agreed, 15% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed; 17.5% respondents were unsure about their answer. Most people, at least 62.5%, voted in agreement with the statement. SD 1.2065 and mean 3.6750 are being supported.
- 52.5% were in strong agreement, 22.5% strongly agreed, 10% agreed, 0% strongly agreed with the statement while 15% could not decide. The majority of people in the survey (52.5% plus 22.5%) concurred with the statement. SD 88252 is compatible with a mean of 3.8750.

### Discussion

The study focused the differential instruction. The study showed that majority of participants disagreed, some participants agreed and a few were unsure about the statement. The results showed that the statement was strongly agreed by many respondents, strongly disagreed by some and was neutral for a few. The report found that most of the respondents strongly agreed, while some of the respondents strongly disagreed and only a few of them were unsure about the statement. Most respondents strongly believe the statement, while some of them are also strongly positive and only a small number are undecided about it. It was showed that thought positively while some respondents disagreed strongly and a few were undecided with the statement.

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concluded that a majority of respondents thought positively while some respondents disagreed strongly and a few were undecided with the statement.

Third item focus of the study was on differential instruction. It was found that the majority of participants disagreed, some participants agreed and a few were unsure about the statement. The results showed that the statement was strongly agreed by many respondents, strongly disagreed by some and was neutral for a few. The report found that most of the respondents strongly agreed, while some of the respondents strongly disagreed and only a few of them were unsure about the statement. Most respondents strongly believe the statement, while some of them are also strongly positive and only a small number are undecided about it. It was concluded that a majority of respondents thought positively while some respondents disagreed strongly and a few were undecided with the statement.

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### Conclusions

According to the research, the elementary level students encounter different problems on learning English, which include small vocabulary which reduces their ability to learn English, they have wrong pronunciation and lack motivation to learn the English language. Such challenges usually entail different linguistic backgrounds and the non-existence of individual strategies of teaching. The study concluded that the varied methods of instructions like use of visual aids, instruction through phonics, interactive storytelling, scaffolding and group work are very effective in

breaking such barriers. Instructors who model individual students learning needs and styles promote an understanding level, greater participation and acquisition of language skills. In addition, using learner-centered practices and abandoning regular, uniform training and teaching practices become the key change that will help provide a friendly and inclusive English training environment.

- English is a challenge to elementary students as the vocabulary is still small, and pronunciation is a weakness together with the lack of motivation.
- Such challenges are associated with varied linguistic backgrounds and poor homogeneous teacher approaches.
- Differentiation of instruction is effective to handle an individual requirement.
- Methods such as visual aids, phonics, scaffolding, story reading and working with groups encourage better learning.
- The individualized instruction enhances the perception and self-assurance of students and participation.
- The traditional methods are not as successful as the learner-centered approaches.
- The most important thing is to develop a flexible and inclusive teaching atmosphere which could help to surmount the challenges of learning English.

### Recommendations

In order to tackle the issue of English learning difficulties at the elementary level in Pakistan successfully, various methods should be used to introduce differentiated instructions in accordance with Single National Curriculum (SNC). Teachers ought to modify their teaching approach to students' backgrounds because many of them grow up in families that speak Urdu or local language with little exposure to English. Comprehension can be greatly enhanced by use of bilingual support (Urdu

+ English), use of visual aids, phonics, and use of stories that is related to local culture. Making group activities and pair work will allow gaining confidence in the English. CPD (Continuous Professional Development) programs on low-resource settings should be used to train teachers. The administrations of schools should also engage parents in the learning process through awareness sessions carried out and easy language materials at home. By ensuring a print-rich and a language-rich classroom environment (wall displays, labeling and class libraries), English can be taught culturally relevant.

Restructure the teaching and learning of English in direct relation to the Single National Curriculum (SNC) and local reality in the classroom.

2. Apply bilingual instructional methods (English + Urdu or provincial languages) in aid of understanding. Add visual experience, real life applications, and the culturally distinct narration to lessons.
  3. Encourage group and pair work to boost the performance of oral practice and confidence. Pay attention to the teaching which is phonics-based to improve skills in reading and pronunciation.
  4. Offer CPD (Continuous Professional Development) to the teachers particularly in low resource schools.
  5. Involve parents in language awareness and easy to use home supports in English.
  6. Construct a rich language classroom through the use of wall charts, flash cards, mini libraries and both in English and Urdu.
  7. Services such as encouraging the use of interactive low cost teaching aids that would be applicable to government schools of the rural as well as urban areas.
- Provide teachers with a resources guide and lesson plan in support of SNC and local assessment requirements.

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