

# ICRI-HASS CONFERENCE 2021

## ELT in a Multilingual Country: Is Differentiated Instruction the Way forward?

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### *Structure of Presentation*

- What is differentiated instruction?
- Why do ESL/EFL teachers need to differentiate?
- Previous study
- Ongoing project



Image source: <https://populationeducation.org/differentiation-three-population-ed-lessons-for-all-learners/>

*Suggestion for  
teaching  
differentiation  
is not new*

Washburne (1953: 139): the assessment system treats learners as if "all children could learn the same things at the same chronological age if they tried hard enough"

"It is generally and not unreasonably regarded as the sign of a good teacher that he should be able to differentiate between the abilities of his respective pupils and to know their natural bent. The gifts of nature are infinite in their variety, and mind differs from mind almost as much as body from body" (Quintilian, 95 CE, trans. Butler, 1922: 265)

## *Recurring general principles to be adopted for teaching differentiation in a single classroom*

1. focus on important ideas and skills in the respective content area (Rock, Gregg, Ellis & Gable, 2008; Tieso, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999)
2. modify learning content, process, and products to match students' needs (Ernst, 2012; Piggot, 2002; Subban, 2006; Tomlinson, 1999)
3. ensure space to respond to individual students' differences to help all students experience success (Chick & Hong, 2012; Pham, 2012; Rock, Gregg, Ellis & Gable, 2008; Tieso, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999)
4. allow flexible groupings (Ernst & Ernst, 2005)
5. provide a student-oriented environment where students are meaningfully challenged (Ernst & Ernst, 2005; Subban, 2006)
6. employ formative assessment by integrating assessment and instruction to allow for adjustments in instruction (Ernst & Ernst, 2005)
7. cater for students' prior knowledge, critical thinking, and preferred styles of expression (Rock, Gregg, Ellis & Gable, 2008; Tieso, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999)

## *Definition*

*Tomlinson (1999): a set of instructional modifications at three levels: content, process, and product*

### **CONTENT**

Modifying curriculum or materials to be taught in class

### **PROCESS**

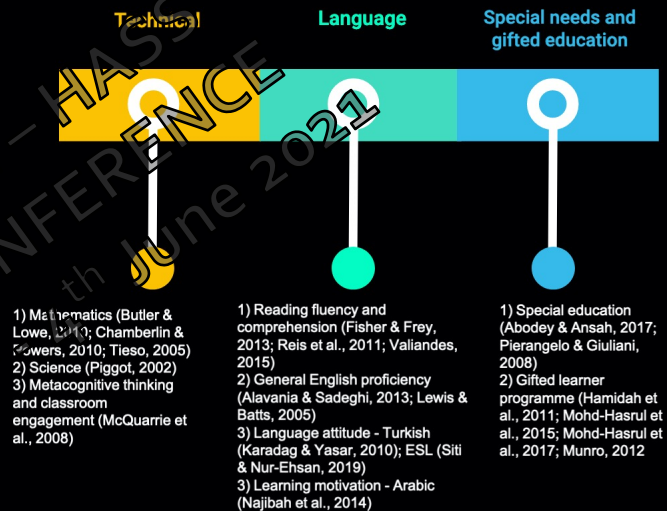
Modifying learning activities to meet a specific criteria (e.g. learning style, cognitive style, etc.

### **PRODUCT**

Modifying type of learning output expected from students (end of lesson or as homework)

## Selected Literature

### Fields of Study



## Problems with teaching to the middle

Teachers attempt to find a middle point and focus on learners with middle academic ability mainly through whole-class instruction (Bondie, Dahnke, & Zusho, 2017).

Some challenges to differentiate teaching:

- Time-consuming
- Lack of training



# Why differentiate in ESL classrooms?

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# Preparation, Data Collection and Data Analysis

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## Results

### QUAN DATA

- Student-participants scored significantly higher in the post-test ( $M=114.62$ ,  $SD=10.00$ ) than the pre-test ( $M=108.38$ ,  $SD=10.62$ )
- Null hypothesis that there was no difference is rejected,  $t(57)=4.581$ ,  $p<.05$ .
- Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.89$

### QUAL DATA

- (+) reaction in classroom
- Increase in learner autonomy
- acknowledgment of differing learning tasks

## Textbook Analysis: Malaysian Curriculum

### Comparative Analysis of English Textbooks

#### PULSE 2 - Current Textbook

55% target culture  
20% other culture  
25% source culture  
(Hajar & Ali, 2020)

#### Previous Textbook (pre-2017)

12% target culture  
21% other culture  
67% source culture  
(Hajar & Ali, 2020)

Mohd-Said et al., (2021): PULSE 2 - difficulty in mapping content to students' proficiency; inaccessible multimedia components; difficult foreign content

Balanced cultural content (Deswila, 2021)

#### Advantages

- Good students' engagement (Nurul-Ain & Azlina, 2019)
- Various ELT strategies possible especially speaking activities
- Adequately challenging vocabulary lesson (Abdul-Hakim et al., 2018)

#### Disadvantages

- Limited cultural relevance (Nurul-Ain & Azlina, 2019)
- Negative effect on reading comprehension and recall (Indhira & Raja, 2021)
- Little synchronisation between textbook content and national curriculum (Abdul-Hakim et al., 2018)

# Ongoing Project



Thank you

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