

SEVGİ ÖZGÜLER

ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENTIATED
INSTRUCTION IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT

SEVGİ ÖZGÜLER

A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

JANUARY 2024

2024



Dedicated to IRMA, my angel cat who is watching me from above...

English Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction in the Turkish Context

The Graduate School of Education

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

Sevgi Özgüler

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Curriculum and Instruction

Ankara

January 2024

İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

English Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction in the Turkish Context

Sevgi Özgüler

January 2024

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Anita Alexander (Advisor)

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Armağan Ateşkan (Examining Committee Member)

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Müge Gündüz, Middle East Technical University (Examining Committee Member)

Approval of the Graduate School of Education

Prof. Dr. Orhan Arıkan (Director)

ABSTRACT**ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT**

Sevgi Özgüler

Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction

Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Anita Alexander

January 2024

In the contemporary landscape of education, the significance of Differentiated Instruction (DI) has become increasingly pronounced as educators encounter with the diverse and unique needs of students. As classrooms become more heterogeneous, DI has emerged as a pedagogical approach essential for fostering inclusive and effective learning environments. This study addresses an important research gap by conducting a qualitative exploration of Differentiated Instruction (DI) practices among K-12 English teachers in Türkiye. Acknowledging the scarcity of literature on this specific demographic, the study aims to uncover the perceptions of DI through in-depth interviews with 10 English teachers across diverse educational institutions. The qualitative approach employed in this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how English teachers perceive DI. Through a thematic analysis of the interview data, the researcher sought to not only capture the nuances of English teachers' perceptions and practices but also shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities within the Turkish educational context. The findings indicate that these English teachers are aware of DI and its benefits, and that they occasionally attempt to implement it in their classes but require support from other stakeholders to fully understand and implement it to achieve better results in the classroom. The study also offers insights into the cultural, institutional, and contextual factors influencing teachers' decisions, laying a foundation for future studies, and informing the development of targeted professional development programs tailored to the needs of K-12 English teachers in Türkiye.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, differentiated learning, teaching English, teacher perceptions, teacher experiences

ÖZET

İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Türkiye Bağlamında Farklılaştırılmış Öğretimi Algılayış

Biçimleri

Sevgi Özgüler

Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Yüksek Lisans Programı

Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anita Alexander

Ocak 2024

Çağdaş eğitim dünyasında, eğitimciler öğrencilerin çeşitli ihtiyaçlarıyla karşılaştıkça Farklılaştırılmış Öğretimin (DI) önemi giderek daha fazla dile getirilmektedir. Sınıfların daha heterojen hale gelmesiyle birlikte, DI kapsayıcı ve etkili öğrenme ortamlarını elde edebilmek için gerekli olan pedagojik bir yaklaşım olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki K-12 İngilizce öğretmenleri arasındaki DI uygulamalarının nitel bir incelemesini yaparak önemli bir araştırma boşluğunu ele almaktadır. Bu çalışma, çeşitli eğitim kurumlarından 10 İngilizce öğretmeniyle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmeler yoluyla DI'nın algılanış biçimlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Görüşme verilerinin tematik analizi yoluyla araştırma, yalnızca bu öğretmenlerin DI'yı algılama biçimlerini anlamayı değil, aynı zamanda Türk eğitim bağlamının kendine has zorluk ve fırsatlarına da ışık tutmayı amaçlıyor. Bulgular, bu İngilizce öğretmenlerinin DI'nın ve faydalarının farkında olduklarını ve zaman zaman bunu sınıflarında uygulamaya çalıştıklarını ancak sınıfta daha iyi sonuçlar elde etmek adına DI'yı tam olarak anlamak ve uygulamak gerektiğini ve bunun için diğer paydaşların desteğine ihtiyaç duyduklarını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bulgular öğretmenlerin tutumlarını etkileyen kültürel, kurumsal ve bağlamsal faktörlere ilişkin bilgiler sunmakta, gelecekteki çalışmalara temel oluşturmakta ve Türkiye'deki K-12 İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ihtiyaçlarına göre tasarlanmış mesleki gelişim programlarının geliştirilmesine katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: farklılaştırılmış öğretim, farklılaştırılmış öğrenme, İngilizce öğretimi, öğretmenlerin algılayış biçimleri, öğretmen deneyimleri

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all, I want to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Anita Alexander. Thank you for your endless support, guidance, and patience. Also, I am forever grateful for the impactful course you taught. It has left a lasting mark on my academic and professional endeavors. Thank you for being a source of inspiration.

A thousand thank yous to my participants for their valuable insights and valuable time. Without your contribution, this paper would not have been possible.

My mother and father deserve special thanks. I can never thank you enough my guardian angels, especially my mother Melek. My brother, despite the distance that separates us, our connection always gives me strength.

Bilge Nur Gezer and İrem Gönen, I am lucky to have been walking with you on this journey. The support and humor we shared have been my anchor in both good and challenging times.

Special thanks to Reggaeton music by keeping me sane with its upbeat energy. Finally, my cats, İrma, Pemi, and Nazo. Thank you for your furry and silly presence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iiiv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	1
Background	3
Problem	4
Purpose.....	7
Research Question.....	8
Significance.....	8
Definition of Key Terms	8
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Learning in the Classroom	9
Student's Role in DI.....	16
The Teacher's Role in DI.....	18
Misconceptions about DI	23
CHAPTER 3: METHOD	32
Introduction	32
Research Design.....	32
Context	33
Participants.....	34
Instrumentation	36
Method of Data Collection.....	40
Methods of Data Analysis	41
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	43
Introduction	43

Thematic Analysis of Participant Interviews	43
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	78
Introduction	78
Overview of the Study	78
Discussion of Major Findings	78
Implications for Practice	86
Limitations	91
REFERENCES.....	92
Appendix A	100



LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Participants' Information.....	35
2	Frequency of Reference Regarding Naming Student Differences	44
3	Frequency of Reference Regarding How Teachers View Student Engagement	45
4	Frequency of Reference Regarding How Teachers View Poor Classroom Management.....	48
5	Opinions of Teacher About Not Receiving Enough Support	72
6	Perceptions of Teachers About Professional Development...	74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	EmergEd Themes that Shaped the Interview Question Set...	36



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Every single person has a unique way of making sense of the world with different perspectives and approaches to life. These diverse ways of presence create a canvas that is full of a variety of colors and paintbrush strokes. Conversely, this variety brings about a unity since we learn from each other, complete one another, and help how we experience the world. Like it is presented in Chinese Yin-Yang theory opposites complement each other with their distinguishing features. They need and benefit from each other's differences to function in life. These opposite energies are interconnected in a beautiful way (English & Feng, 1972). Being conscious of this diversity and seeing the magnificence in the balance of the universe may be something that paves the way to live life to a better approach to education.

A classroom is a small representation of the world. Students from different backgrounds and life stories come together to spend long hours in the same environment to learn new information, interact with each other, and practice what they learn. None of the students see the world and make sense of it in the same way. All of them have unique ways of internalizing information and expressing themselves (Tomlinson, 2014). They have different strengths and weaknesses, yet they have something in common though, which is not only the chance to learn from one another but also the ability to support, help and collaborate with each other in others' learning journey (George, 2005; Trentin, 2010).

This diversity in the classroom is something to be appreciated, it is something that needs to be celebrated. In a classroom where there is not just one way of doing

things, students may experience alternatives, find their unique way of learning, and own their learning more easily (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Having the autonomy to do things in their own way, students do not feel left out because they are different. Rather, they feel honored because they are unique. When students are taught about the mindset that they do not have to walk the same path with others, spending most of a week at school can be more meaningful (Rock et al., 2008).

Standardized instruction on the other hand, is a recipe for disengagement and stagnancy. In a one-size-fits-all class, students are put in a place where they are expected to make sense of everything in the same manner at the same time. This leads to a lethargic situation for both the teacher and the students (Bondie et al., 2019). In other words, teachers do the things they are used to doing without a growth mindset and students are exposed to some content that they cannot fully engage in. It is an outdated way of teaching where students' differences are not acknowledged but mostly ignored (Cüceloğlu, 2002). As a result of this, students get disconnected from the content as they cannot relate to it. Since the teacher is the one who does most of the talking and doing, it becomes inevitable for students to start daydreaming and becoming disengaged, instead of flowing in the process and feeling the joy of learning.

As a cure for this stagnancy in the classroom, instruction needs to be differentiated. Students need to experience a variety in class in terms of the ways to reach a certain goal (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Students should be given the chance to have a say in their own learning journeys by being recognized as learners who are different from each other.

Background

As the name suggests, differentiation is a way of teaching which acknowledges the fact that every student is different from one another. It is a philosophy in which students are recognized and seen as they are. It aims to maximize the learning experience of each and makes sure every student has a challenge to achieve in the classroom (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Blaz describes Differentiated Instruction (DI) as a practice where initially the teacher gets to know the students without assumptions (2016). Then, the teacher designs lessons with the intention to help every single student grow and achieve the preset goals. The learning environment is designed for the students to both have the chance to study individually and collaboratively. These are the essential things that an effective educator always keeps in mind.

Differentiating the instruction is not a trend, rather it is an innovative reconsideration of generic teaching. It is the revolutionary act of reaching out to every single one of the students and paying them the attention they need (Rock et al., 2008). It does not only address students as different individuals from each other but also sets personal goals for them. As they are personal, a high achieving student does not have to experience a disengagement because there is not any challenge for them to achieve. Likewise, a struggling student does not give up because they think what is being taught is too hard for them anyway. According to Vygotsky (1986), teacher's supportive approach is essential for the student to relate to the content and make meaning out of it. This is the main goal of a DI approach as it aims to give the chance of being successful to every student. (Brown, 2004).

Evidently, research has shown that when teachers differentiate their instruction, they can fulfill their students' needs better. In his study, Yavuz (2020)

found that DI is beneficial for students with different learning styles. The study shows that unlike traditional instruction, DI made a difference in students' overall achievement and resulted in better test scores. Another study carried out by Magableh and Abdullah (2020) showed that DI is the optimal way of supporting the students in their learning journey. Taking diversity into account and tailoring the plans and methods accordingly paved the way toward success for the students in the classroom. Additionally, the results of the study conducted by Suson et al. (2020) indicated that students performed better in reading comprehension when they were acknowledged as different individuals and provided with different approaches of learning. Clearly, DI supports learner autonomy and give students the chance to be the owner of their learning experience and the opportunity to proceed in their own way and pace (Tomlinson, 2008).

Problem

Teachers have diverse students with a myriad of learning needs within a single classroom. DI is an effective means to help teachers meet these needs (George, 2005). Through DI the teacher keeps all students involved and engaged; this requires that teachers know their students well and be fully conscious of their potential in every aspect.

Parsons et al. (2018) say that differentiation is the basis of efficient instruction. However, obtaining this efficiency and meeting the needs of every student, providing them with personalized action and tracking their progress is not seen as simple work by teachers. This work can be especially overwhelming for a teacher working alone in a classroom with twenty to thirty students. Thus, for many teachers implementing DI in the classroom may be challenging as they are already overwhelmed with planning lessons and assessing students. This may lead them to

avoid differentiating their instruction and continue teaching to the middle. Due to this reality and other reasons which will be explored in this study, ‘one-size-fits-all’ teaching has mainly been the preferred approach for most educators.

Undoubtedly, a standardized approach to students with different backgrounds in the classroom leads to neglecting and ignoring their varied needs. Students vary in terms of their backgrounds, preparedness, inclinations, cognitive abilities, linguistic skills, cultural influences, gender, and preferred learning styles (Tomlinson, 2001). This diversity in the classroom needs to be seen as the norm and responded to accordingly. Therefore, differentiation should be an inseparable aspect of lesson plans. Among reasons why teachers cannot embrace DI and use it in their lessons are the assumptions that their awareness may be low due to limited knowledge on how to differentiate a lesson, they may not encounter enough practical examples and they may see differentiation as demanding (Geel et al., 2018).

With recent studies, it became apparent that implementing DI has many advantages for individual learners in any class regardless of the subject. One such study was conducted in Türkiye by Yavuz (2020) who worked with two groups of students in a non-profit private school. One of the groups were taught in a classroom where DI was implemented. The instruction was differentiated considering the students’ different needs and learning styles. It was achieved by adding some extensions to the lesson plans such as differentiating the process, the products, or the content itself in terms of students’ readiness, learning profile or interest. However, the other group followed one-size-fits-all education through which they were taught whatever it is in the Turkish curriculum without any changes or adaptations to the classroom. The results of the study revealed that the differentiated group showed a

notable increase in test scores in Turkish lesson compared to the other group who only followed traditional instruction.

Aligned with the results of Yavuz's (2020) study; another experimental investigation was conducted by Magableh and Abdullah (2020). The researchers wanted to observe if there would be a difference between two groups of students in terms of overall achievement in their English lesson. The study was done between two groups of eighth graders at a school in Jordan. They were separately exposed to a one-size-fits all approach and DI in their English lessons. The group who only followed the textbook without any adaptations or modifications showed no sign of improvement in contrast to the other group who were taught with differentiated materials and provided with some adaptations in assignments and grouping.

There are also studies conducted around the world that show DI is effective in English as a Foreign Language classes (Aliakbari & Haghghi, 2014; Siddiqui & Alghamdi, 2017). For non-native English-speaking students around the globe, English is important in terms of having the basis to make connections between disciplines. Not only is it a tool that gives students the chance to reach countless resources, it is also a non-negotiable when it comes to being competent participants of academic and professional life. For students to get the most out of their English classes, the instruction should show variety in terms of content, process, product, affect and learning environment.

Content covers what students need to learn or how they will reach the information or skills. Process refers to how students will grasp the knowledge thoroughly and have the learning as their own personal experience. Product is the tangible outcome that students come up with following what they have learned. Affect has to do with the relationships that lead to learning within the classroom,

either among the students or with the teacher. Finally, learning environment addresses how the classroom and its components look. Teachers can differentiate these five components according to their students' readiness, interest, and learning profile (Moon & Tomlinson, 2013).

In today's world, learner-centered approaches have gained importance in education due to benefits to students' individual development in a diverse classroom environment. One of the best ways of achieving this is by thinking about the ways of teaching while simultaneously thinking about the students' differences (Tomlinson, 2014). These prior studies provide significant findings regarding the role of DI in the classroom which highlight the benefits of DI in student's overall achievement. However, this has not been dealt with in depth in Türkiye. There are a lack of qualitative and quantitative studies on DI in the literature in Türkiye. In particular, English Teachers' perceptions on DI and the aspects related to it have not been investigated enough. This present study will attempt to shed a light on the perceptions of DI of English teachers in Türkiye with the intention to understand what insights they have about the diversity in classrooms and subtleties, challenges, importance, and implementations of DI to meet the needs of their students.

Purpose

The main goal of this study is to explore how English teachers view DI, along with how they perceive its implementation, and the challenges they encounter along the way. By delving into teachers' perceptions, it is aimed to uncover valuable insights into the ways DI is perceived along with how its implementation and the obstacles are viewed in the English language teaching context in Türkiye. This study also has the intention to raise awareness about DI and remind English teachers that even small changes in the instruction can lead to beneficial results.

Research Question

This study addresses one main research question in the following:

What are K-12 English teachers' perceptions about DI, and their perceptions of the implementation and the challenges of DI?

Significance

This study is important as it contributes to the understanding and appreciation of differentiation in the field of education. Although it is a growing trend in various contexts, differentiation has not been investigated enough regarding its implementation, challenges, and English teachers' perceptions of it in Türkiye. Through this research, English teachers who want to improve their teaching practice will benefit as it raises awareness about different needs, preferences, and backgrounds that their students have. To this end, teachers will be able to refresh their knowledge about the value of differentiation and see practical ways of differentiating instruction in the classroom. As a result, they may be more encouraged to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of their students. In addition to this, the data and analysis that this study provides may raise new questions about differentiation and pave the way for further studies in attending to the diverse needs of learners.

Definition of Key Terms

Differentiated Instruction (DI): Tomlinson (2003) defines differentiation as acknowledging the diversity in the classroom and knowing the students well and thus tailoring the instruction according to their needs, preferences, backgrounds, and learning styles by creating various learning opportunities for achieving certain educational objectives.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the literature that is relevant to DI. It begins with addressing how learning happens in the classroom, based it on the ideas of Bransford et al., in their *How People Learn* (2000) and connecting them to John Hattie's ideas in his *Visible Learning* (2012) to have a broader sense of how learning occurs in the classroom before DI comes into play. This has an important role in showing the connections of how learning happens with how it takes place in DI. After exploring how learning happens, an overview of DI is presented through the definitions of Carol Ann Tomlinson, along with some of the theoretical foundations of DI. Further, in the second half of this chapter, how DI supports students' autonomy and creates an ideal learning environment in the classroom are explored. As this is a study conducted with teachers to find out how they perceive DI, the role of the teacher in DI is also sought to be examined in the literature review along with how teachers around the world perceive DI.

Learning in the Classroom

Bransford et al. (2000) advocate for three big ideas about learning in *How People Learn*. One, knowledge that already exists should be well-studied before the arrival of new knowledge. The reason why is that learning is something to be built. Understanding where the learner is starting from is crucial because the meeting point will be where the learner is. Secondly, every brick of new information comes onto the one which is placed before. Therefore, there needs to be a foundation, a step-by-step procedure, for the learner to make connections and thus build his/her own

knowledge. Third, the culture in the classroom should pave the way for both teachers and students to think about how they learn, what they learn, and where they are in their learning journey. This requires reflecting on what they are doing in the classroom and becoming aware of the steps in the learning process. It also includes having the conscious awareness on how to proceed when things do not work out the desired way. Bransford et al. (2000) point out that the utmost objective of learning should be the ability to self-regulate and to think about one's own learning, in other words, having metacognitive skills. To this end, it is best when students are aware of the process of their learning because it leads them to lifelong learning which should be one of the main concerns of education.

Having put forth these ideas, Bransford et al. (2000) discuss that a classroom should not solely put the learner at the center for learning to be realized. They believe that learning occurs when the learning environment is not only learner-centered but also when it is knowledge-centered, assessment-rich, and community-centered. Considering this, firstly, classrooms should put learners at the center since it is their own learning journey, no matter where they are academically. Secondly, the classroom needs to be knowledge-centered because knowledge is a prerequisite for establishing connections and relationships. Thirdly, evaluation which takes place throughout the learning process, from the beginning until the end, is essential.

Assessing where it all starts, what happens on the way to acquiring new information and where the destination point is, is of absolute importance. Fourthly, a classroom should be community-centered in that individuals need each other to construct meaning and make sense of new information. Learners also need to benefit from one another's learning experiences, witness others' progress to reflect on their own and

find commonalities in what they are striving to learn (Bandura, 1977; Bransford et al., 2000).

Acknowledging and building upon Bransford et al.'s ideas (2000), in his *Visible Learning* (2012), John Hattie states that social connections and being actively involved with learning procedures facilitate the process of learning. Also, new knowledge requires a base to find a place in the learner's mind. Therefore, learning should take place in a manner that the learner can make connections with the new information based upon their former knowledge. Additionally, learning develops when the learner is aware of the process. It is a conscious act where the learners need to be taught how to keep a constant eye on their own learning to establish objectives and evaluate their own performance. Further, the development of learning hinges heavily upon encountering with a variety of powerful and adaptable approaches which help the learner to remember, comprehend, analyze, and solve.

Multiple Approaches to Learning

In a classroom where there is effective learning, students are approached with a variety of methods and techniques. Teaching students how to learn with multiple methods gives them the confidence to take the right action even when they get stuck in the learning process. This self-assurance helps students see where the problem is and solve using appropriate strategies. Being aware of their patterns and knowing what to do when they come across hardships, with understanding, students gain the ownership of their learning, which is the most valuable outcome of instruction (Hattie, 2012). To address educationally significant differences, teachers need to modify their teaching strategies, and make adaptations and adjustments in the content, process, product and learning environment. To put it in another way,

teachers should bear in mind student differences before they plan their lessons, set goals, interact with students, and organize groups (Westwood, 2018).

Multiple paths to learning are opened and offered by the teacher for the students to follow more than one pathway on the road to learning. This flexibility and abundance in the classroom pave the way for students to feel that they are the owners of their own experience. While having a say in their own learning, in classrooms where student differences are considered, students are aware that they are supported and guided by their teacher. When teachers know their students to help them in better ways, they help students to know themselves as well. This is because students are given the chance to express themselves in various ways in a differentiated learning environment. When students have more chances to perform and more opportunities to express themselves, they get to know themselves better. It opens them up to be independent learners even at a young age. (Hattie, 2012; Tomlinson, 2022).

Overview of DI

DI recognizes the presence of unique strengths, abilities, and preferences among learners, aiming to establish a responsive and inclusive educational environment. According to Carol Ann Tomlinson (2001), the pioneer of the approach, DI is high-quality teaching. She regarded implementing DI as ‘artistry’ in the classroom. There are multiple aspects of DI which makes the time spent in the classroom the most fruitful for the students, supporting the ideas mentioned previously on how learning develops. Therefore, DI is regarded as an exemplary of student-centered education. DI is proactive in the sense that the teacher is aware of the students’ differences and can plan in accordance with these differences. The teacher is flexible in planning and can make changes or adaptations to help the

students learn. Also, DI gives more credit to being focused on conceptual understanding than procedural fluency. In other words, students do not do things just for the sake of not being idle in the classroom. In DI activities that do not offer improvement are seen as pointless and are frowned upon.

Another nonnegotiable aspect of DI is that it is based on assessment. DI starts with evaluating the students, continues with evaluating them throughout the process, and ends with evaluating where the students are compared to their starting points. Assessment is inseparable from DI because DI depends on the assessment which is further investigated in coming sections. Finally, DI provides students with multiple approaches for learning. Students have options in different pillars of the learning process, from content to product. To this end, DI is student-aware teaching (Tomlinson, 2001).

According to Hattie (2012), DI is a way of approaching students with a lesson design that gives them multiple opportunities to reach a goal from where they are in their learning journey. Its main aim is to have students follow their unique paths to success. Accommodating the diverse needs of the students does not mean that the teacher prepares individualized plans for students, rather what differentiation offers is to be able to find a common ground for students with varying needs and have them work towards their goals while helping each other. Although the phases of learning in students differ from each other, they have a lot to learn from one another (Hattie, 2012). This resonates well with one of the main assumptions of DI that diversity is natural and valuable. From a logical standpoint, for teachers to respond to the diversity in the classroom, the primary approach would be to modify what is to be taught, the teaching strategies, the materials, and student groupings. To put it differently, the kind of instruction the teacher chooses will be determined by the

students in his/her class. The teacher takes the differences of the students into account when it comes to lesson designing, goal setting, groupings, and interaction with students (Westwood, 2018). Teachers implement DI to make sure that students reach the goals in an efficient and meaningful way (Hattie, 2012).

Theoretical Foundations of DI

One of the theories that DI draws on is constructivism as a theory of learning (Grecu, 2021; Robinson et al., 2014). Learners make meaning and learn new information based on their previous knowledge and experience. This is achieved through actively making connections with the information and experiences already stored in the brain. Rather than being passive and showing no effort, for learning to happen learners should progress to a condition in which they actively form connections between the new input and the information already present (Bruner, 1983). Similarly, Brandt (1998) states that for learning to happen learners should build new information on what they already know. Thus, educators must pave the way for learners to be active agents with the correct approaches that vitalize the inner urge to relate and construct meaning. This way, educators can invigorate the learners so that they can convert from passive receivers of information (Trentin, 2010).

According to Taber's analysis of constructivism as a theory of learning, (2006) learners have an accumulation of information in their minds when they are about to learn something new. They are the vessels for creating new meanings. The information they have is either well internalized or superficial. Teachers need to investigate where the learners are if they have the intention to open the way for the learners to learn (Sjoberg, 2010; Taber, 2006). In a similar manner, Blaz (2016) points out that making connections are essential when it comes to gaining understanding and acquiring new skills.

Bandura's social learning theory (1971) describes learning as an intellectual activity which is acquired through being among other people and watching their actions carefully. Using the means of watching individuals helps the learner predict the outcomes. In particular, people are inclined to emulate or follow someone as a role model when that person shares similarities with them. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the famous concept, of the Zone of Proximal Development, which is a cognitive state where the learning happens with the help of external support either from a teacher or somebody who is more experienced than the learner. Under this circumstance, with the scaffolding and guiding, the flame within the learner is ignited. Only then can the learner be on the way to becoming an independent learner. Therefore, for learners to become independent, being dependent is a prerequisite. Independence, then, leads to interdependence where learners are sources for each other to benefit from in their learning journey. Likewise, people learn better when they can connect with other individuals and thus students need to be with each other since they tend to pay a lot of attention to each other and thus learn a great deal from one another (Blaz, 2016; Brandt, 1998).

DI is positioned at the opposite end of traditional instruction with being student-centered in its fullest sense. In traditional instruction the teacher conveys information through lecturing, textbooks, and memorization, and delivers information to the whole class at the same time, which leads to disengagement for many students (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2015). According to Dewey (1938), learning is something that should be experienced by the learner. Instead of a traditional learning environment where students are expected to receive information, a classroom where the students are active participants of the learning process offer more benefits (Bondie et al., 2019). Rogers (1969) stated that people learn better

when they own their learning. In other words, they construct meaning when they discover things by themselves. This does not mean that they depend on others, however, it is their individual experience that makes a difference. Therefore, learners should be in a state of doing and discovering in a learning environment where they are encouraged to make decisions on how they will learn.

Student's Role in DI

While having the say in their own learning, in differentiated classrooms students are aware that they are supported and guided by their teacher. When teachers know their students to help them in better ways, they pave the way for the students to know themselves as well. This is because students are given the chance to express themselves in various ways in DI.

One of the attributes that makes DI a student-centered approach has to do with its autonomy-supportive nature. Learner autonomy is when a student has gained the ability and skills to study and learn without external support. Although learner autonomy is believed to be more important for the learners to acquire in the university level, the sooner the learner can be trained as an autonomous learner the more benefits the learner will get in their learning journey. DI forms a basis for the students to be life-long learners with its learner-centered methods and philosophy. Students' self-awareness increases as they perform a variety of tasks in class (Tomlinson, 2022).

Learner autonomy has been discussed as a trending topic over the last few years. It is viewed as an important skill to maintain in the lifelong learning journey. The basis to lifelong learning is first established during school years (Betts, 2004). To this end, it is essential for a teacher to approach students with autonomy-supportive techniques. When the instruction is autonomy-supportive, it is easier for

learners to own their learning process and walk their own paths without being dependent on the teacher. Learner autonomy can be achieved through learner-centered approaches where students have a say in the classroom (Grecu, 2023).

Upon having a solid knowledge about each student, teachers adapt their lessons accordingly for each student to get benefit from the instruction. Thus, a lesson plan of a teacher who has the intention to implement DI may look like an outline which is flexible and open to change. Although the goal is determined before, the ways to get there look different for each student. This can be likened to a labyrinth as the point of destination is the same but the paths to get there vary (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023)

Ongoing Assessment in DI

The practice of differentiation is intertwined with assessment (Moon, 2005). In a classroom where learning is visible, there must be ongoing assessment. Assessment should not be a means of labeling the student, rather, it should carry the mission to channel the instruction. With the help of assessment, the teacher reflects on their teaching and makes the necessary adjustments to meet with students in a more ideal manner.

According to Tomlinson and Murphy (2015), for skilled and competent teachers, ongoing assessment is a fundamental element of their teaching by being useful for both the teacher and the student. These teachers employ various approaches to assess their students' learning. Therefore, assessment plays a vital role in the approach of skilled and competent teachers (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2015). Formative assessment is an essential component of DI, assisting students to see where they are and further improve. It functions as a tool to mentor the students, rather than judge them. Therefore, efficient differentiation puts significant emphasis

on an ongoing assessment that aims to give feedback rather than focus on grading (Moon et al., 2020; Tomlinson, 2022). Similarly, Black and William (2009) showed that formative assessment gives the teacher the data to better understand how effective their instruction is, how the students benefit from it, and what actions should be taken for a more efficient learning experience. In other words, formative assessment becomes a tool for teachers to adapt more to their students' needs.

Another important function of formative assessment is to let students evaluate how they perform and reflect on their own learning. Black and William (2009) suggest that when students actively engage in evaluating their own learning, not only do they become proficient at recognizing and understanding key concepts, they also use new knowledge in other areas. Students who are skilled at assessing their own performance are more equipped and prone to use insights and feedback from implemented assessments. To maximize learning, teachers implement a variety of assessment methods to have their students receive feedback on their performance and tailor their instruction to make it more fruitful for the students.

The Teacher's Role in DI

Effective teachers offer a learning experience that requires students to be active, they offer feedback and take their students' different needs into account while scaffolding and supporting them (Bransford et al., 2000). Tomlinson and Murphy (2015) believe that having solid knowledge on how to differentiate instruction means being on the way to becoming an expert teacher. According to them, DI is not an addition to regular instruction in the classroom, rather it is the mindset that reflects the complete instructional process. DI assumes that diversity in the classroom is something to be expected and appreciated. Seeing the potential in every student to acquire new knowledge is important when it comes to including them in the learning

process. To this end teachers have the responsibility to provide a variety of appropriate paths for their students to boost their chance to make the most out of the learning process. It is not only teachers' duty to provide students with a rich and satisfactory experience of learning, but schools should also support the teachers in achieving a differentiated curriculum and lifestyle at school (Moon et al., 2020).

When two types of mindsets are regarded, a fixed mindset is the one that has no place in DI due to the belief that with the right approaches and practice every student can develop their intellect and abilities. Therefore, teachers who implement DI are may stay away from adopting the idea that human qualities are stagnant and cannot be cultivated. These teachers' students are more likely to adopt a growth mindset. and value the process of learning rather than focusing on how they will perform at certain tasks (Baker, 2020; Dweck,2006).

Through learning goal orientation, students believe in practice and perseverance to achieve mastery, as opposed to performance goal orientation where what matters is the reward (Moon et al., 2020). Embodying a growth mindset can be challenging but it has vital place in DI and in every other context as it pertains to the success of students. It includes acknowledging the fact that students show only a part of their overall potential when they come into a classroom and taking the responsibility to help bring out the best in them (Tomlinson, 2022). Teachers with a growth mindset do not allow labels to guide them. Instead, they utilize the information they get from assessments for the sake of helping students in a more efficient way (Smets, 2017). Successful implementation of differentiation relies heavily on the mindset of the teacher because teachers' self-belief on helping students influences how much students will have self-belief in improvement (Coubergs et al., 2017; Tomlinson 2017). DI requires teachers to be open to see their

students through new perspectives. Assumptions and familiar practices do not resonate with teachers with a growth mindset, rather they take on the responsibility to approach the students without bias and prejudgment (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023).

Adaptive and Responsive Teachers

According to Hattie (2012), adaptivity is one of the most important attributes of an expert teacher since students should not be the ones who adapt to the teacher. Teachers should have the responsibility to identify a student's preexisting knowledge and create pathways for them to reach the goals of the lesson. Instead of standardized and prebuilt strategies, expert teachers' fluid and adaptable strategies become a meaningful support mechanism for students. In this sense, expert teachers have the awareness that students are in different phases of the learning process and that learning develops in multiple ways. They know how to create opportunities for every student to achieve educational objectives (Hattie, 2012). Similarly, according to Darling-Hammond, flexible teachers act with a growth mindset acknowledging the importance of professional development to be more open-minded and prepare themselves for new challenges (2006). Likewise, Bransford et al. (2000) believe that teachers should have a high level of adaptability to be welcoming towards challenges and ready to use different strategies when the routines are not sufficient.

For a fulfilling and efficient learning experience in the classroom, Hattie (2012) suggests that teachers need to be adaptive and responsive. Teachers who have an array of teaching methods and strategies to offer in the classroom acknowledge and appreciate the differences of their students and can shift from one approach to another. This shows that the teacher does not assume that every student learns the same way and looks for the best approaches to teach a group of students. Instead of

being in search of the best method, for Hattie, effective teachers mold and shape the instruction based on the students' unique backgrounds and needs.

Hattie (2012) argues that the main goal of any lesson for students is to have the ability to regulate their learning themselves. Therefore, he suggests that teachers provide multiple ways of acquiring knowledge, multiple opportunities of interaction, and multiple methods of practice in the classroom. Following an appropriate path offered by the teacher, each student should have meaningful and challenging tasks depending on the stage of their learning.

Teacher's Mindset

One of the key principles of DI is that teachers offer students high quality teaching which is rooted in a growth mindset. According to Carol Dweck individuals mostly view life through two lenses (2006). One of them is a fixed mindset which can be described as lack of self-belief. It is a limiting way of thinking that individuals with fixed mindset do not think that they can overcome obstacles. The other lens is a growth mindset which is a perspective that allows individuals to think that intelligence and abilities can be developed.

Growth mindset is defined as having the willingness to change and grow (Donohoe et al., 2012). It is a way of thinking that challenges and difficulties are welcome in the process of learning and are seen as opportunities to make improvements in theory and practice. Therefore, it is a frame of mind where individuals believe in the potential in themselves and are open to find ways to reach a certain goal even when faced with adversities (Seaton, 2018). In classrooms where learning is visible, teachers have a growth mindset because they have strong faith in their students. They know that every student has the potential to improve and achieve goals. When teachers embrace growth, it rubs off on the student and leads them to

believe in themselves with high confidence. These students regard hardships as challenges to learn from through practice and perseverance (Dweck, 2006).

Hattie proposes that there is a strong correlation between teachers' beliefs towards themselves and their students with student success (2012). When teachers embody self-belief and are focused on growth, they become good role models for their students. The differences between the teachers who have a strong positive effect on their students and those who have low impact can be explained with how the teachers see their students and what decisions they make, or they do not make in the learning process. Success of high-impact teachers clearly has something to do with the self-belief they possess and the motivation they spread to their students (Hattie, 2012). Teachers who have a fixed mindset may carry assumptions about their students even before they meet them, and they expect their students to comply with these assumptions. There is a resistance in this way of thinking that the teacher cannot change his/her mind even when there is a mismatch between the assumptions and the realities of students (Bishop, 2003). On the other hand, teachers who have faith in the development of intelligence and abilities find deep fascination in the journey of acquiring knowledge, and in discovering their students (Dweck, 2006).

Tomlinson states that effectively DI is basically quality teaching. The foundation of effective teaching includes the learning environment, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and classroom management. DI is designed as an approach that is based on those elements by putting strong emphasis on being learner-centered (Tomlinson, 2022). DI requires teachers to meet students where they are in the academic sense. This is not just a meeting between teachers and students. Students also meet with one another. Students have different prior knowledge and mental downloads to share with each other when they meet in a classroom. They have

educational experiences that differ from each other in terms of responding to teaching and learning. This diversity enables students to benefit from each other's experiences (Moon et al., 2020).

Misconceptions about DI

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2023) point out the misconceptions and the realities of DI in their *Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom* as such; one, DI is not a collection of instructional tactics, rather it is a state of mind where teachers think about their own practice and their students' learning. Also, teachers may have the belief that they already differentiate their lessons by especially paying attention to the students who need a different approach; however, only a minority of teachers embody a differentiation mindset and design their lessons considering students' varying interests, needs and preferred learning methods depending on the continuous assessment outputs which include constant observation and interactions with their students. Another misunderstanding about differentiation is that it solely refers to instruction. DI cannot be considered as separate from an encouraging learning environment, a well thought out curriculum, ongoing assessment that helps both the teacher and students in how to proceed in the learning process, and partnerships of the teacher and students. If one of these elements is neglected, then it affects learning negatively (Tomlinson & Imbaeu, 2023).

Another misconception about DI pertains to its grouping aspect, that teachers group students considering only their matching abilities. According to Hattie (2012), although every student's needs, perspectives and talents are different from each other, all these varying elements help students make sense in their learning journey more. Teaching artistically means that the teacher can see common ground in a diverse classroom. The beauty in DI is having students meet in numerous ways,

finding different situations and creating various opportunities for them to benefit from their differences since all of them have different ideas to bring to the discussion. Therefore, rather than grouping students according to their level of abilities and offering them the activities that suit that level, it is essential to understand that DI has more to do with different learning phases and finding commonalities among them. Thus, when grouping or partnering up students it is important to acknowledge that every student can open new windows in each other because DI is not about special treatments, instead it is creating a learning ecosystem where every member can make the most of it (Hattie, 2012).

Regarding the matter of special treatments, DI can be viewed as implementing individualized applications for students, such as offering individualized learning programs for students, making it a more one-on-one approach. While individualized instruction can focus on the students on a personal level and aims to meet their unique learning needs, DI has the goal to differentiate the instruction within the group to accommodate varied abilities, interests and learning styles of the students, especially through a flexible grouping method. Instead of disconnecting students from each other, DI strives to establish common threads, such that with DI the entire class works on a shared set of goals unlike in individualized instruction where students have unique paths and end goals. (Tomlinson, 2017) Tomlinson refers to one-room schoolhouses to highlight that DI looks like a developed version of those, where the teacher had sometimes the function to work with the students as a class, or as groups, or sometimes with individuals. There were variations and these variations contributed to the overall goal and shared community identity of the classroom (Tomlinson, 2001).

Studies on The Effectiveness of DI

Benefits of DI have been revealed by some studies conducted around the world (Alsalmi et al., 2021; Aliakbari & Haghighi, 2014; Magableh & Abdullah, 2020; Siddique & Alghamdi, 2017; Yavuz, 2020). A quantitative study conducted in a science course study examined the benefits of DI in students' overall achievement and displayed similar benefits as the previous studies in this literature review. Alsalmi et al. (2021) worked with 483 students. They split them into two groups and exposed one of the groups to DI. The experimental group was taught with more than one teaching method. As a very important aspect of DI, the differences of students were addressed and taken into consideration before the sessions. The content was differentiated according to different ability levels of students. The assessment was ongoing as the instruction continued with more than one assessment tool. They used achievement tests and questionnaires to collect the data. The results indicated that DI helped students to experience more engagement and eventually got higher grades than the students who followed standardized instruction.

In a study conducted in Iran, Aliakbari and Haghighi (2014) aimed to find out if DI was effective in students' achievement in reading comprehension in English by conducting an experimental study. In a manner similar with the previous studies, they worked with two groups of students who were randomly selected either as experimental or a control group. Following a pre-test, the students in the experimental group followed DI which included tiered activities and varied approaches while the control group followed standardized instruction. Upon completion of the experiment, the students took a post-test. The results were notably in favor of the experimental group.

In another study that took place in Jeddah, researchers wanted to explore the effectiveness of DI on EFL learners in a preparatory college course. The researchers implemented a pre-test before differentiating the English instruction. Then, the materials and approaches were differentiated according to varied needs of the learners. Tiered activities and flexible grouping were used. Students who needed extra support were provided with different materials in different ways. The researchers implemented a post-test at the end of the process. The grades indicated that DI was helpful, especially for the students who needed extra support (Siddiqui & Alghamdi, 2017).

These studies underscore the effectiveness of tailoring teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs, fostering increased engagement, academic achievement, and overall positive learning experiences.

Studies on the Perceptions of Teachers Regarding DI

DI has positive outcomes on students' learning (Kaplan, 2022). However, how teachers perceive, and experience DI plays an important role in implementing the approach successfully. Therefore, this section includes studies from around the world on how teachers perceive DI. These studies also cover some of the setbacks and challenges teachers experience when implementing DI.

In a study carried out in Portugal, researchers investigate the question how teachers' perceptions about curriculum and designing curriculum are related to their beliefs on DI and its implementation. To this end, the researchers conducted their study by offering six participants a professional development course, along with collecting data which includes reflection pieces that are written by the teachers, observation, and interviews. Results of the study indicate that when teachers are encouraged to plan their lessons keeping differentiation in mind, they have the

chance to think more about their instruction and look for more teaching practices that can meet the needs of a variety of students (Maia & Freire, 2023).

In a similar manner, Gheysens et al. (2022) conducted research in primary and middle school contexts in Belgium investigating different teacher approaches regarding DI. The study outcomes demonstrate that a teacher's frame of mind determines how they see DI and their enthusiasm to utilize differentiated applications to attend to the needs of their students. Teachers who adopt a fixed mindset tend to see differentiated applications more as difficult rather than achievable and beneficial. This leads them to not implementing DI or doing it without not believing in it with their heart which is a recipe for failure in the classroom (2022).

In another study, Coubergs et al. (2017) draw attention to the essentiality of implementing DI and the lack of instruments to measure how teachers perceive it. Although it differs from our current study with its quantitative design, the results of research indicate that the mentality of the teacher has notable influence on their teaching practice and how they approach to their students. Teachers with a growth mindset pursue challenges and motivate their students to do so. They also foster the idea that success can be achieved through practice. On the other hand, teachers with a fixed mindset stay in a zone that is limited by hindering thoughts, and therefore do not inspire their students to think outside the box.

Likewise, Suprayogi et al., investigated how teachers' backgrounds, beliefs regarding their teaching, their confidence in imparting their knowledge on to their students using DI, and the characteristics of the classroom are related to how much DI is implemented in primary schools of Indonesia. They concluded that implementation of DI has a degree of mutual connection with teachers' backgrounds, and their level of self-efficacy and beliefs on teaching. It is also emphasized in their

study that there is a research gap in terms of how in-service teachers perceive DI since most of the studies on DI have been done with student-teachers in Indonesia (2017).

Another study conducted in Norway aimed to explore how student teachers perceive DI. It becomes apparent from the study's results that the importance of DI is within the knowledge of student teachers. However, they express a lack of faith in their abilities in terms of implementing DI in class due to not knowing enough about how to cater to the diverse needs of students. Therefore, their study leads to the conclusion that how to differentiate instruction effectively should be taught and practiced for student-teachers to adopt DI more smoothly during the teacher education stage (Brevik et al., 2018).

In summary, the studies conducted across the globe, examine teachers' perceptions on DI, indicating a spectrum of views shaped by diverse experiences and unique challenges. Educators approach DI from varying lenses and have distinct challenges especially pertaining to not having enough experience or receiving training on DI.

Studies on the Challenges of DI

While the path of differentiation may be demanding, the research underscores the potential for enriched student learning experiences and improved outcomes, making the journey unequivocally worthwhile (Tomlinson, 2022). Additional studies conducted around the world indicate that implementing DI can be difficult yet rewarding, by connecting to the importance of professional development efforts as well.

Arthurs (2007) describes an implementation of DI for nursing education as 'a juggling act' in the learning environment. It requires having the right tools to collect

information about students' learning styles and preferences. It also involves managing to tailor the instruction so that it can address learners with different needs. The study describes three different teaching approaches for nursing students, and its efficient outcomes. Therefore, DI is like juggling where the juggler does not drop the balls, yet skillfully handles them. Arthurs concludes that for educators, offering different teaching methods can be challenging, however it helps students find the most suitable way for learning for themselves.

Another study, conducted by Pozas et al., investigated the correlation of teachers' levels of job contentment and stress with their DI applications. Qualitative data shows that teachers get favorable impacts from DI applications such as higher learning outcomes, nonetheless, they see it as a bit demanding and tense to implement. The study also points out that DI is mostly tackled on from the perspective of student gains and that how teachers perceive DI has not been dealt with enough. Teachers who participated in the study express that they felt satisfaction and joy when they differentiate instruction and see good results. On the other hand, it is expressed that it can be hard to implement DI considering they have a burdensome workload, and not enough time and support (2023).

Studies on the Importance of Professional Development in Implementing DI

The successful implementation of DI depends on the ongoing growth and adaptability of teachers themselves. This section explores the essential role of professional development in achieving the effective application of DI in the classroom. The importance of continuous learning, skill enhancement, and the cultivation of a reflective teaching mindset and how educators can navigate the complexities of diverse classrooms with confidence and competence are supported with studies on professional development in this section. Professional development

serves not only as a way to acquire new strategies but also as a transformative journey that empowers educators to create inclusive and engaging learning environments (Dixon et al., 2014).

In a study carried out in Hungary, 28 English teachers were interviewed to explore their perceptions about DI and how they implement it in class. The results suggest that for teachers, implementation of DI is not an easy task however, it is regarded as an essential one. Several of the teachers do not have the belief that they possess the necessary skills to implement DI. Among the tools and strategies used to differentiate instruction, games are mentioned by the teachers for the maximization of student learning. The findings led to the conclusion that it is important to increase teachers' awareness regarding DI along with providing them the necessary training to help them gain the skillset to teach students with a number of DI methods (Zolyomi, 2022).

Another study by Geel et al., intended to find out the ways math teachers tailor their teaching to respond to learner differences, along with what the challenges are regarding DI. In their study it is pointed out that DI is a quality practice that requires certain skills and among many teachers who are at the beginning of their career find it challenging to implement. Moreover, fundamental knowledge and the elements that impact the complexity of DI are discussed in the study. The study's findings indicate that professional development pathways can be established, and all-encompassing assessment can be designed on the purpose of evaluating and improving the quality of instruction regarding DI (2019).

Likewise, an additional study conducted by Geel et al. (2022) has the objective to attain a deeper understanding about how DI is put into action with different techniques, what the difficulties are concerning the acquisition of abilities

needed to implement DI, and the essential elements that are assistive and impeding for the enhancement of these abilities. The data from the study suggests that teachers do not impeccably tailor their instruction to accommodate the varying needs of students, rather they include DI methods in different stages of teaching. It is pointed out in the study that teachers with more experience are more inclined to implementing DI than beginner teachers. In this sense, developing the skills required to implement DI is positively related with experience. Along with teaching experience, the knowledge and abilities gained throughout teacher education have important place in implementing DI. The fact that institutions offer varying training for teachers indicate different perspectives of teachers in the context of DI.

While numerous studies around the world have explored the perceptions, experiences, and implementations of teachers regarding DI, there is a clear research gap in exploring how English teachers in Türkiye perceive and implement DI. Therefore, the current study focuses on how English teachers from different K-12 institutions of Türkiye perceive DI and its aspects.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Introduction

In line with the aim of the study, the research question was framed to investigate how English teachers perceive DI and to what extent they implement it in their practices. Therefore, the study was designed to reveal English teachers' perceptions in regard to DI. The current chapter includes an explanation of the research design, context, participants, instrumentation, method of data collection and method of data analysis. The research question is presented in the following: What are K-12 English teachers' perceptions about DI, and their perceptions of the implementation and the challenges of DI?

Research Design

This study was conducted with a qualitative research method. Qualitative studies investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, and materials (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Employing qualitative research methods allows a researcher to collect insights into the varied points of view and interpretations that participants have on a specific subject or issue (Yin, 2003). Subsequently, the researcher continues with interpreting the significance of the data and puts forward the final report of a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013). Among Yin's descriptions of characteristics of a qualitative study, conveying the opinions and viewpoints of individuals who participate in a study and providing perspectives on ideas or concepts in existence or in emergence were the focus of this qualitative study (2011). Qualitative research places a significant emphasis on descriptive techniques in its

data analysis. When the data is obtained, it is typically evaluated for descriptive purposes, rather than for making inferences (Fraenkel et al., 2018). Since this study aims to explore the perceptions of English teachers working at different K-12 educational institutions in Türkiye regarding DI; a descriptive method was necessary. Therefore, for this study, online interviews were planned and conducted with 10 English teachers who work at different K-12 schools in Türkiye. The interviews were semi-structured. Approximately 30 open-ended questions (see Appendix A) were asked in the interviews in order to reveal what their perceptions are in regard to DI and its aspects such as its implementation and challenges.

Unlike structured interviews with a fixed set of predetermined questions, the researcher held semi-structured interviews to provide a framework for the discussion, but also allow the interviewer to explore relevant issues as they arise during the conversation. In these semi-structured interviews, there was a balance between having a basic set of questions that ensure key topics are covered and allowing room for the participant to express their thoughts and provide detailed responses. This approach allowed for greater flexibility and depth in understanding the participant's perspectives, experiences, and insights (Fraenkel et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study takes DI as a concept and intends to gather insight from English teachers with different backgrounds and years of experience, in regard to DI from how they perceive the approach, its implementation and its challenges.

Context

This study was conducted by gathering insights from 10 teachers who work at different K-12 schools. Among 10 teachers, eight of them work at various K-12 schools, while the remaining two were colleagues at the same school. Out of the 10 schools considered, nine are located in Ankara, while one is situated in Erzurum. The

majority of the schools represented in the study were private institutions (n=9), where English teaching held a prominent position in the curriculum. The private schools include foundation private schools (n=2) and independent private schools (n=7). Notably, the interviews revealed that private schools generally allocated more hours to English lessons compared to a state school included in the sample. The private schools that the participants work at offer at least 15 hours of English a week for primary and middle school, and at least 11 hours of English for the ninth grade. The number of English lesson hours decreases in the last years of high school as students prepare for the university entrance exam. Overall, these private schools prioritize English language learning with high weekly hours dedicated to English Instruction. The state school where one of the participants work at offers 8 hours on average depending on the grade level.

Participants

The primary purpose of the study was to gain perceptions from in-service English teachers on DI. To this end, 10 English teachers voluntarily participated in the research through online interviews. In the current study, both homogenous and convenience samplings were used. All the teachers who participated in the study are in-service English teachers (N=10). When selecting the participants, the researcher asked eight English teachers, who are colleagues, for their availability and voluntary participation in the study. Two of the participants were selected through snowball sampling. Two of the participants recommended two more English teachers to take part in the study voluntarily (Fraenkel et al., 2018).

The study includes participants with different levels of experience in the industry. Four of the participants have been teaching English for more than a decade while the rest of the participants show diverse levels of experience as English

teachers. Participants' current teaching contexts and years of experience are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Information

Participants	Current Teaching Context	Years of Experience
T1	High School (Private)	19
T2	High School (Private)	4
T3	High School (Private)	6
T4	High School (Private)	4
T5	Middle School (Private)	6
T6	Primary School (Private)	4
T7	High School (Private)	15
T8	Middle School (Private)	17
T9	High School (State)	11
T10	Primary School (Private)	6

The researcher's objective was to collect insights from English teachers that are from different educational contexts on to what extent they are aware of DI and whether they implement it in their teaching practices. As DI is a teaching approach that is being implemented more in educational settings and appears in school's mission statements in Türkiye, (Yavuz, 2020) the researcher also has the intention to find out whether schools, state or private, request English teachers to implement DI or if they offer trainings on it. Therefore, gathering data from English teachers who work at different institutions is meaningful for this research study.

Instrumentation

The data collected through interviews with the participants. Interviewing allows participants, whether interviewers or interviewees, to discuss their interpretations of the world they live in and express how they see situations from their own perspective (Cohen et al., 2007). The main goal behind choosing interviewing in this study was to provide an environment where participants can respond transparently and express themselves without feeling rushed. In this way, it is aimed to better understand teachers' perceptions regarding DI. The data collection tool in this study was a question set prepared by the researcher (see Appendix A). The question set was carefully created based on the insights gathered from the literature review on DI. Through a thorough exploration of existing research and studies related to the subject matter, key themes, trends, and gaps in the current knowledge landscape in DI were identified. Therefore, the question set had certain categories which were in alignment with the preliminary study for this research. The themes that were emerged as a result of the literature review can be viewed in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Emergед Themes that Shaped the Interview Question Set

Diversity in the classroom	Student engagement	What DI is
Implementation of DI	Assessment	Teacher mindset
Interactions in the classroom	Challenges of DI	The importance of professional development

Following the literature review, several key themes were identified. These encompassed diversity in the classroom, focusing on the varied backgrounds and learning styles of students. The concept of student engagement emerged as a crucial aspect, exploring how to captivate and involve students in the learning process effectively. The review also shed light on the true nature of DI and its implementation in the classroom, highlighting the importance of tailoring teaching methods to meet individual student needs. Additionally, insights were gathered on the implementation of DI, the significance of various assessment methods, and the role of teacher mindset in fostering a positive learning environment. The dynamics of interactions within the classroom were also explored, along with the challenges related with implementing DI and the crucial role of ongoing professional development for teachers to better understand and implement DI (Blaz, 2016; Geel et al., 2018; Gheyssens et al., 2022; Maia & Freire, 2023; Moon et al., 2020; Tomlinson, 2015). Under these categories, related questions were formed to get a holistic perception of DI from the participants. To enhance the reliability of the interview questions, feedback from an expert was sought and incorporated to improve the clarity and relevance of the questions (Fraenkel et al., 2018). The categories that shaped the interview question set are as follows.

Diversity in the Classroom and Student Engagement

The interview began with some questions to find out how English teachers view the student differences in a classroom. The researcher asked the participants to name some of the differences they encounter in a classroom and whether they consider the diverse nature of a classroom as a positive or negative contribution to the teaching and the learning environment. This part of the interview had the aim to reveal if participants acknowledge and appreciate student differences.

Participants were also asked about the engagement and disengagement of the students during teaching. The researcher hoped to understand how participants view a classroom where students are engaged with the content for the majority of the lesson. Also, it was intended to discover what the factors are to disturb the learning environment according to participants. Apart from disruptions that stem from behavioral problems or momentary disconnections of students, it was aimed to collect opinions about the reasons why students cannot find a lesson worthy during instruction. Likewise, participants were asked about the elements that lead to poor classroom management to reveal their viewpoints regarding the problems that happen in the classroom.

Meaning and Implementation of DI

These sections of the interviews were organized to find out what DI means to participants. They covered how DI differs from standardized instruction according to participants. It also included how DI can benefit students and what some of the important principles of DI might be for participants.

Participants were asked whether they implement DI in their practice, and if so, to what extent. The researcher strived to gather different examples, implementations and applications of DI. Therefore, participants were asked to share one or more of their practices considering student differences. Participants' strategies and tools were also requested to discover practical applications. Here, the researcher sought to find out whether or how participants accommodate their instruction considering there are students with different levels of ability, preferences, and styles of learning in their classroom.

Preparations, Assessment, and Teacher Mindset

Since assessment has a crucial role in DI, the researcher aimed to gather perspectives from participants pertaining to how they view assessment and where they place it in their teaching. These sections also had the intention to investigate how they collect evidence for learning. Likewise, it included their perspectives and strategies in regard to formative assessment. It was sought to reveal what kind of approaches and tools they use to assess their students' needs and levels of learning.

The questions in the lesson plans section were framed to learn whether participants prepare their lesson plans according to different needs of their students. It included the aim to reveal how flexible they are in their teaching and whether they shape their instruction in the face of changing conditions and as different needs arise.

The researcher also sought to gather viewpoints from participants about their mindsets to have a more holistic data regarding the participants. They were asked questions to have them reflect on how they view student differences, student labels and student improvement. They were also asked whether they consider themselves as a teacher who is open to innovations and trying new methods. In a similar manner, this part of the question set was meaningful in terms of revealing whether participants adopt a growth mindset or a fixed mindset which can be regarded as a determinant in implementing DI (Tomlinson, 2022).

Interactions, Challenges, and Professional Development

A high level of student interaction is essential in DI (Tomlinson, 2001). To this end, participants were asked to what extent they create opportunities for their students to collaborate with each other, interact for learning purposes, help, and evaluate one another in the classroom. This part also included items to find out how

much importance is given to student voice and choice in the decisions taken during instruction.

Participants were asked if they regard DI as a difficult approach. Depending on their answers, they were further asked if they find any practical solutions to make differentiation or managing the classroom while differentiating the instruction easier. Additionally, they were asked about the rationale for teachers favoring standardized teaching methods over DI.

The last part of the interview included questions about whether teachers received any training on DI either offered by the institutions they work for or by voluntary attempts. It was also sought to be acknowledged if DI is something that is built into their schools' culture. Moreover, participants were also posed the question if they would like to see more examples of DI or implement it more in their practices. If that was the case, the researcher inquired about what kind of support they need in order to implement DI into their classroom. Overall, these concepts were created in the light of the insights gathered in the literature review, to obtain a more holistic and complete understanding of how the participants perceive DI.

Method of Data Collection

Prior to starting the interviews, to conduct the study, permission from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and approval from the Bilkent Ethics committee were received. Data collection in the research was done in one part, which was holding online interviews with 10 English teachers. The interviews lasted approximately fifty minutes. Every participant was informed about their voluntary and anonymous involvement in the study before the interviews. After participants affirmed their readiness to participate in the study, the researcher conducted the interviews and recorded them. The interviews had a duration of approximately 50

minutes. In the introduction part of the interviews, participants were asked about their years of experience in teaching and the contexts that they have taught in. Throughout the interviews, participants had the liberty to express any viewpoint. They were encouraged to share their insights without being led to a particular standpoint regarding DI.

Methods of Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, a thematic analysis method was applied to analyze the data. Before the analysis, to increase the validity of the data, participants were involved in validating the findings through member checking. The procedure took place after the interviews where researcher shared a summary of the insights that the participants provided and sought their validation. Further, the thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns and themes, affirmed the consistency of responses. Overall, the application of these reliability-checking strategies were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the interview question set in gathering meaningful qualitative data (Fraenkel et al., 2018).

A commonly research design in social sciences, thematic analysis, helps the researcher with identifying patterns, creating themes, and analyzing them in the light of research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher used Word Dictate to convert the interviews into texts. As Braun and Clarke (2006) propose, the first step when conducting thematic analysis was to have a good grasp of the data, which includes transcribing the data, reading, and rereading it and comprehending the content thoroughly. Then, the researcher created codes through noteworthy points and details that may be related to responding to the research question.

Upon coding the data and sorting the patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2013), the researcher proceeded with discovering themes. As the current study has a question

set which is divided into ten themes that are in line with the insights gathered in the process of literature review. The researcher worked on the responses of the participants under each theme. Due to the need to identify patterns of each theme, the researcher looked for frequencies of expressions. This is the step where the researcher identified and named the themes to analyze the data in detail through the means of discussing each theme's focus and scope. To enhance the reliability of the coding process, support from another researcher with extensive experience in differentiation was obtained. The rater coded 20% of the interview data, resulting in 91.7% interrater reliability. Finally, when writing the report, the researcher followed the order of the categories and presented the results through combining the themes and subthemes into a narrative that includes insights along with their interpretations

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The results of this study are presented in this chapter. As the interview transcripts were organized by categories of the aspects of DI, this chapter will present the findings of the interviews according to the categories and emerging themes from the thematic data analysis. The purpose of this study was to find out how English teachers in Türkiye perceive DI and the aspects related to it. Therefore, the research question that guided this study was as follows:

What are K-12 English teachers' perceptions about DI, and their perceptions of the implementation and the challenges of DI?

Thematic Analysis of Participant Interviews

The transcripts of the participant interviews were analyzed through a thematic analysis, which is a type of analysis conducted in qualitative studies, that aims to look for central ideas in qualitative data, and analyze and report them, upon reading and re-reading the transcripts. Thematic analysis offers a beneficial approach to grasping behaviors, thoughts, or experiences throughout a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The interview question set was prepared categorically which was in accordance with the concepts that arose throughout the literature review. This also helped to obtain a holistic understanding on how participants view and implement DI. In the light of research question, the categories presented in this chapter to understand how participants perceive DI are diversity in the classroom, student

engagement, meaning of DI, principles and benefits of DI, implementation of DI, and challenges of DI, along with the subthemes that arose under the categories.

Diversity in the Classroom

As diversity in the classroom was among the highlights of the literature review, how English teachers perceive diversity, student differences and student engagement in a classroom were sought to be understood. Among the student differences, the most frequently mentioned were learning style and level of ability. Students with special needs were among the themes that were mentioned relatively more than others. The participants described differences similar to the literature reviewed, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency of Reference Regarding Naming Student Differences

Differences	Number of Teachers
Learning Style	5
Level of Ability	5
Background	4
Special Needs	4
Nationality	3
Interest	3
Uniqueness	2
Talents	1

Overall, among the 10 participants interviewed, the perspectives on the contribution of diversity in the classroom are not diverse. One participant holds a completely positive view, believing that diversity has positive contribution to the

learning environment. Another participant maintains a negative viewpoint, thinking that student differences bring about mostly negative outcomes to the classroom. However, the majority of participants ($n=8$), think that instruction can be affected both positively and negatively with diverse differences of the students depending on the situation.

Student Engagement

All the participants expressed that in order for students to be engaged with the content, they need to be active learners, rather than being passive recipients. Specifically, half of the participants emphasized the importance of students enjoying the learning experience as an indicator of their engagement with the content during instruction. For them, having fun is closely tied to being actively engaged. Additionally, four of the participants highlighted the significance of students working on projects as an obvious sign of their active participation. Beyond these perspectives, other indicators of student engagement according to the participants included playing educational games, maintaining consistent eye contact with the teacher or peers, and being motivated and genuinely interested in the subject matter. The frequencies of how the teachers in this study viewed student engagement are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency of Reference Regarding How Teachers View Student Engagement

Student's Role	Number of teachers
Being active	10
Having fun	5
Doing projects	4
Playing games	3

Student's Role	Number of teachers
Eye contact	2
Motivated/interested	2

Another focus was on understanding the role of a teacher in a classroom where students are highly engaged with the content and active throughout the majority of the lesson. The participants' responses revealed varying points of view on the teacher's role in such an environment. The majority of the participants ($n = 7$) expressed the view that the teacher primarily has the function of being a facilitator in such a classroom. They emphasized the importance of the teacher guiding and supporting students, meanwhile the students actively engage with the content. Two of the participants offered a different angle where they describe the teacher as a concerned and interested person who is invested in the students' well-being and learning progress. They highlighted that the teacher's role is to build a strong student-teacher relationship. Lastly, one participant put emphasis on the teacher's role in providing useful and meaningful activities. They underlined the importance of good instructional design and content delivery. Overall, in a learning environment where students are having a fruitful learning experience, the participants put the teacher in a place where she/he fosters engagement and active learning and provides students with activities that contribute to their improvement.

In terms of classroom management, which is strongly tied to student engagement (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023), participants shared diverse opinions. Half of the teachers shared the viewpoint that if students find the content presented in the learning environment unrelatable, or either lower or higher than their level of ability, their engagement decreases or completely breaks off. In a similar manner, four of the

participants expressed the point of view that issues related to classroom management often originate from a lack of interest. They believe that when the content does not catch their attention, students find it boring and give up on engaging with the lesson. Three of the participants mentioned that students having low motivation is a noteworthy factor in disengagement with the content and that can unfortunately result in classroom management issues for the teacher.

Three participants have the same opinion about classroom management that when the overall classroom atmosphere is positive, they do not have a hard time managing the procedures in the classroom. They shared that every group has a different dynamic which makes it hard for them to follow the same procedures for each class. Another three participants expressed the view that delivering lectures can lead to student disengagement, consequently contributing to challenges in classroom management. In their opinion, when students are put in a place where they are supposed to listen for long periods of time, it becomes inevitable for them to disconnect and easier to cause problems in class. Two participants highlighted another critical aspect that effective classroom management hinges on the quality of the teacher-student relationship. Further, a positive and constructive rapport between the teacher and the students is an important factor in achieving good classroom management. Lastly, one of the teachers conveyed the importance of well thought out arrangements when it comes to pair and cooperative group learning. In her opinion, when the teacher does not consider planning regarding the arrangements of interactions within the class carefully, it may lead to problems related to classroom management. She emphasized the value of having an attentive approach when organizing peer interactions to have meaningful learning experiences.

Overall, the insights of the participants show that poor classroom management often stems from students not being able to relate to the content as shown in Table 4. When the content is too easy or too difficult, then it becomes inevitable for them to withdraw from the lesson and disrupt the order of the classroom. Further, when students are approached in a monotonous and uninteresting manner, they may prefer to not contribute to the lesson, but to be more interested in things that are off-topic.

Table 4

Frequency of Reference Regarding How Teachers View Poor Classroom

Management

Disruptions	Number of teachers
Mismatch of levels	5
Not interesting / No interest	4
Lecturing / Teacher talk	3
Classroom Dynamic	3
Low motivation	3
Poor teacher-students relationship	2
Poor arrangements of pairs/teams (planning)	1

Meaning of DI

The second part of the research question focused on how English teachers perceive DI, and what it means to them. Pertaining to the meaning and principles of DI, the emerging themes according to how participants perceive DI are as follows; considering student differences, providing a variety of materials, involvement of all

students, embracing the diversity of students, knowing students well, adjusting the teaching, flexibility, supporting autonomy, ongoing assessment of learning, giving students responsibilities and thinking about teaching.

Overall, for most of the participants DI means embodying the idea that students are different from one another and staying away from standardized practices, such as lecturing or doing the same thing for all the students at the same time. For several of them, DI means treating students differently during the lessons, and preparing different materials for them, such as bringing challenging materials for the students who may find the content of the lesson easy, and more scaffolded worksheets for those who need more support. Apart from these, there were individual responses such that DI means flexibility or to think about teaching, which show some deep understandings of what DI is.

What DI Means to English Teachers

This section presents participants' direct quotes regarding what DI is, what principles it might have and how it can benefit students in their opinions. Although they have diverse opinions and knowledge about DI, all of the participants expressed that DI is an educational approach that acknowledges student differences, rather than ignoring them and applying a one-size-fits-all method. They shared a common view that DI stands at the opposite of standardized instruction in terms of how DI puts the students in the center and aims to benefit them by considering their diverse needs, learning styles and preferences.

T1 who is an experienced teacher who has worked in different K-12 schools view DI as an approach that is flexible and requires solid knowledge of the student, which suggests that she has a strong awareness about DI.

It comes to my mind that when teaching is differentiated, everyone can find something that suits their needs, and can even change their environment

accordingly, and sometimes even go astray. Because it is flexible. Humans are flexible creatures that may not last a day or a moment at a time. That's why what comes to my mind is flexibility and knowledge, that is, knowledge about the student. (T1)

For T2, DI means to be aware of the differences of the students and tailor the instruction considering different needs of the students through applying various methods that cater these differences on the way to reach a goal. T2 expressed that in differentiated education, the primary aim is to revisit objectives, considering the diverse learning levels and profiles of students. For instance, support for visual learners may involve visuals, while auditory learners may benefit from more audio elements. By acknowledging these student differences, DI is achieved.

In differentiated education, our main goal is to teach the objectives again, but here we can take into account the learning levels of the students, they have different learning profiles, we can take these learning profiles into consideration. For example, while we support a visually learning student group with visuals, we can help the auditory student with a little more audio. (T2)

T3 responded to the question in a concise manner, highlighting DI as an acknowledgement of the students as different individuals and designing the lessons through minding these differences. *What comes to my mind is accepting that every child is different, presenting course material that will attract their attention, and evaluating them in this way.* T4's response was also an indication of a satisfactory awareness of the approach. *What comes to my mind is that students from different backgrounds are brought together and the teacher diversifies the materials and activities in the classroom according to everyone's learning style.*

As a teacher who is experienced with DI, due to the requirements of the school he works for, T5 described DI as an approach that offers multiple methods, activities, and paths to reach educational objectives.

I think it means to have lots of methods, offering a variety, it's like doing everything. Differentiation is like you have lots of methods, lots of things you know, you are flexible you do that and then be sure everybody gets

something. I like using different ways to present content. you can watch a video sometimes you can do reading, mixing up different things. (T5)

T6's answer also indicated that he has an awareness regarding DI, that it is a method that takes the students at the center, does not make assumptions, and does adapt to respond to student differences. T6 expressed difficulty when recalling the concept, he believes standardized instruction assumes everyone should know and behave the same way, with equal capacities. In contrast, DI, as T6 sees it, involves adjusting teaching based on students' individual levels. This includes giving more, less, or different material according to their specific needs, rather than assuming sameness among all students.

I remember it but I forgot. If there's such thing as standardized instruction it probably views things as everyone should know the same things, should behave the same way, should have the same capacity, capability, as well. so differentiated instruction; it would probably mean to adjust what you're teaching according to the level of the students. Like give them more give them less or give them different things based on what they actually need, rather than assume they're all the same. So that's what differentiation instruction is to me. (T6)

The way T7 defined DI showed a high level of awareness of the approach as well, highlighting the value of varied qualities each student brings to the classroom, and that there should be a common destination that has different routes to take in differentiation, along with an emphasis on the importance of assessment.

It's an educational approach that embraces the diversity of the students. Their learning abilities, their interests and their readiness levels vary within a single classroom. I think differentiated instruction, like, comes when we consider all these factors, and it's like, tailoring the teaching methods, assessment. I think this is very important, the assessment, and also the materials, to every need of the students and to make sure that each and every learner is having the same outcome of the lesson, the learning outcome is going to be the same, but the methods the assignments the tasks the projects might be different. (T7)

T8 was the one teacher who wanted to give many insights on what DI means to her. She is an experienced teacher and in her past experiences she implemented DI. She

expressed that she loves using DI in their classes because it makes teaching easier and enhances classroom management. She believes that traditional teaching can be monotonous, while differentiated teaching engages students and caters to various learning styles, making lessons more enjoyable. T8 highlighted that incorporating activities like creating posters not only supports learning but also adds a fun element, contributing to increased motivation compared to traditional teaching methods.

Differentiated instruction makes things easier and makes classroom management easier for the teacher. Teacher talk is less in here, and differentiated teaching is a method in which the student is more active. We can say that it is more monotonous in traditional teaching. Differentiation both contributes to learning and, in my opinion, increases motivation. (T8)

T8 touches on very important aspects of DI, expressing that it is an approach that makes the teacher's job easier in the classroom due to less teacher talking time and more engagement of student with the content. She also highlights that differentiation leads students see the classes as fun because their engagement with the activities is higher. Therefore, for T8, the teacher reaches her goal in engaging their students with the content while students enjoy the learning process and view it as a lesson worth waiting for. T9 gave a response which is quite similar with others. She views DI as providing different pathways for students to acknowledge and meet the students' needs. For T10, DI is seeing the differences of the students in an embracive manner. She describes DI as honoring and polishing student differences, instead of ignoring them. She expressed that differentiated teaching emphasizes individual aspects of each student, moving away from the didactic approach seen in traditional teaching. She believes traditional methods offer no benefits, lacking in both student engagement and teacher enjoyment. T10 emphasized the importance of the teacher's enjoyment, stating that when the teacher enjoys the lesson, it positively impacts student enjoyment as well.

In a similar manner with T8, T10 highlighted the fun aspect. She believes that when teachers enjoy their instruction, this then rubs off on students, creating a positive and stimulating learning environment in the classroom. In her opinion, the mindset and energy that the teacher is in affect students' and match with their overall attitude towards the lesson.

Overall, when participants were first asked about what DI means to them, many of them ($n = 6$) paused and thought for a while or were a little unsure of what they were saying. It seemed not quite easy to put their opinions into words. However, the question regarding the differences of standardized and DI helped some participants stating their responses. Many of them shaped their answers about DI, starting from what standardized instruction means. Overall, each participant showed different levels of knowledge and awareness about DI, and they expressed their unique understanding of DI through presenting their perspectives from different angles. The following section further explores how the participants perceive principles and benefits of DI.

Principles and Benefits of DI

Participants' responses indicate that they are aware of how DI is an approach which paves the way for students to be in a learning environment where they can be engaged, active, collaborative, and autonomous learners. With the aim to discover their knowledge and perceptions about DI more, participants were asked about what principles DI might have and how DI can benefit students. Their responses showed variety. Among the principles that they came up with was having a solid knowledge about students. They expressed that in DI it is highly important to observe the students in a careful and attentive manner to provide the students with better support. T1 says *Of course, it is important to obtain information about the student. It is*

important to evaluate well who needs what. Careful observation, watching students carefully, there needs to be an intention set in the beginning. Likewise, T6 emphasizes the significance of having a thorough knowledge of the students.

I think it will be observation being able to spot which student and like what problem they have. Yeah because you can't help someone you don't know needs help, so that's one thing and knowing your students well, is also another thing. So you know what they struggle with. (T6)

Another theme emerged which showed similarities with the literature review, was that some participants conveyed how they acknowledged that every student comes to the class with their different personalities, needs, learning styles and preferences. T3 expressed that recognizing diverse learning styles is essential since each student has different understanding and perceiving abilities. For instance, visual learners like preparing visually, while those who dislike writing can create videos or presentations. T3 emphasized the importance of tailoring assignments to students' preferences, such as conducting interviews for those who enjoy talking rather than writing.

T3 touches on an important aspect of DI that teachers need to accommodate different learners' needs, considering the differences when preparing the lessons and the assessments, however, the focus could also be on how each student needs to develop a variety of skills along with their preferred ones. For example, a student who prefers creating an oral project may need the writing skill that is probably going to be useful for them during their whole education life.

T4 acknowledges the uniqueness of each student and mentions how each student learn in a different way. Thus, for her it is important to provide suitable approaches for the students in the classroom. *Just as each person is different from each other, their hobbies, interests, personality differences, etc., we see this as valuable in differentiated teaching. If a student learns by seeing, then visuality should be used in*

teaching. Likewise, T7 expresses that every student is an individual with distinct characteristics, and that they are at different phases of learning and a broad spectrum of interests is evident among students.

Every student is unique, so here it comes to differentiated instruction, so not every student is going to be at the same level, this is one thing. Second not every student is going to be interested in the same topic. These should be considered. (T7)

It was also pointed out that DI requires students to carry the main role in the classroom, that is, for them a high level of student activity should be visible and meaningful in a differentiated classroom which was another point that was in alignment with the literature review.

In fact, it is absolutely necessary to make the student the leading role in the lesson. If the student is not active, if the student does not feel involved in the lesson, we cannot be useful to many students. Therefore, to actively involve as many students as possible in the lesson and even to include them in the lesson according to the student's interests could be differentiation. (T10)

Some participants highlighted the value of offering a variety of instructional approaches as a response to diverse student needs. Their expressions were in line with the idea that providing students with a variety in terms of content, product, process or learning environment paves the way for supporting them from multiple ways. T3 says *the more we offer students different teaching techniques and evaluation techniques, the more we add something to them*. T4 believes that students need educational approaches that suit their own learning styles, *If a student learns by seeing, then visuality should be used in teaching. To support students' autonomy through approaching them with techniques that suit their learning styles*. T5, a teacher who regularly implements DI, following the school's directive, gives a detailed response. T5 expressed that differentiation can be achieved in three ways: by altering the content, such as providing texts at various English proficiency levels; by adjusting the process, offering support in different forms like hints and extra time;

and by varying the product, allowing students to create different things with options of varying difficulty. T5 highlighted a preference for focusing on the process, supporting students in understanding questions effectively. The flexibility in choosing tasks engages students by allowing them to select the most exciting option for them.

T5 gives a response that indicates a certain level of knowledge on DI, highlighting the elements that could be differentiated during instruction, along with his personal preference. He also mentions the materials that they could be designed to accommodate different learner needs. T8, another teacher who regularly implements DI, highlights a noteworthy point.

The most important principles, for example, I think about differentiated learning as follows: It is not something that actually appeals to different learning styles. Even though I am a visual learner, I also get a special pleasure from doing something auditory because it takes me away from that monotony. Suddenly, when the teacher comes, I take the students out of their monotonous intensity and routine, where they will do this, then do that, and then do that. Therefore, offering diversity to the student not only offers something that suits his or her learning style, but also is motivating.

What T8 said was especially in line with the review of literature that DI is not just finding what suits each student in terms of learning styles and preferences, rather it aims to provide multiple paths for students, so that they can benefit from as many of them as possible and improve themselves in different ways. This is also meaningful because students' learning styles, preferences, and their overall experience with the content may not be fixed, they can be fluid, open to change and evolve. Further, for her, a dynamic classroom includes many opportunities and a fun flow.

Two of the participants touched on another important aspect of DI, that students being prepared to receive new information is a prerequisite for the new learning experience to happen. They mentioned that it is essential to determine where

the student is and consider his/her existing knowledge before designing the instruction.

For example in private teaching you adjust your teachings according to that one student and that's why private teaching is so efficient, and so if you were to apply this to a school, a normal class it could benefit them because it is adjusted to their level. If they are behind, you try to teach them the concept. If they don't know a previous concept the right thing to do is not just assume they will catch up, but to help them catch up. So, it kind of plugs in all the deficiencies. It goes to their level and their needs. You address them instead of ignoring them. (T6)

T6 makes his point by comparing DI with private teaching that in the latter, teachers spot where the individual student is and create a learning plan for them accordingly.

However, the situation that a group of students experience in a classroom as opposed to a single student in private teaching is regarded as a pity for T6. He believes that when students' different needs are attended just as it is considered in private teaching, then it can be more effective for them, making learning in the classroom more meaningful.

T9 mentioned the importance of the preparedness of the student for learning, and that without proper readiness, the student may resist to the efforts of the teacher. Therefore, she believes that students' diverse readiness levels should be considered during instruction.

The readiness of the student is very important. As for the principles, content is very important and managing the process well is important. Because you cannot motivate a student who is not ready, it takes a lot of time, and as it takes time, you may be distracted from the content and it will cause you not to manage the process well. (T9)

Two of the participants pointed out that DI is an approach to teaching that recognizes and accommodates diverse learning needs within the classroom, as it aims to adjust the instruction according to a variety of learners. Therefore, autonomy-support has a crucial place in DI since it leads students to self-directed learning and independence which was another highlight that was in line with the literature review. T4 says, *to*

support students' autonomy through approaching them with techniques that suit their learning styles. I think differentiated instruction is very good for this because I think it helps children become autonomous individuals and find their own learning styles.

Likewise, T7 says *Differentiated instruction helps students to be autonomous learners. (T7)*

Overall, all the participants' statements show that they are aware of the value and benefits of DI. Although their responses varied, and they each touched upon different aspects of DI, the common theme emerged from the answers is that English teachers believe that DI is an effective approach that provides various forms of support to students.

Implementation of DI

English teachers revealed their positive standpoints regarding DI. However, due to a variety of reasons, sometimes teachers' philosophies regarding instruction and the implementations within the classroom may not match. With the aim to discover whether English teachers implement DI, and if so, they were asked further questions about how often they attend to differentiation in their lessons. Also, in order to gather examples of DI applications, English teachers were asked to share what they do to differentiate their classes.

Six of the participants expressed that they try to implement DI more than traditional instruction in the classroom. The majority of them shared a common viewpoint that implementing standardized instruction in this era is very outdated and ineffective. Among these teachers, T5 expressed that, in accordance with the institution's request, they are supposed to implement DI in every lesson, however he added that in reality they cannot implement it in every lesson. Another three participants stated that they implement traditional instruction more than DI. One of

them stated that due to the expectations of the school and the intensive curriculum load, they could mostly only follow traditional teaching methods. Another participant shared that it is not by his choice, rather it is due to the culture of the institution that he is working for. Another participant who also implements a traditional approach more often shared that it is difficult to differentiate instruction in every lesson, yet she shows efforts in differentiating parts of her lessons from time to time. One participant stated that both traditional and DI have equal place in her teaching depending on the situation, however she also conveyed the hardship of covering all the topics in the curriculum when DI comes into play which will be discussed further.

Emerging Themes on Implementation of DI

The next section is organized according to the subthemes that arose from the participants' expressions regarding the implementation of DI. The participants differentiate their lessons through implementations that address students' preferences, diverse needs, and that include flexible groupings and a variety of activities.

Preferences

Three of the participants mainly shared their applications which accommodate different learning styles and preferences of their students. T1 expressed that opening different pathways for the students to pursue whatever suits for them on the way to reach a certain learning goal might be a way to implement DI. T1 expressed that in traditional teaching, reading activities typically involve students reading and answering questions. However, in DI, students can approach the same activity in various ways. For instance, a student might prefer understanding with pictures, reading theatrically, or drawing a picture related to the reading. T1

suggested tailoring tasks based on individual needs and interests, like asking a student to draw instead of answering questions or challenging a high-level student to create additional questions for their peers.

T3 considered this with a focus on assessment and mentioned that in project assignments she offers multiple options to choose from for her students. However, she added that it is not always effective for her to differentiate due to a lack of student motivation in her classes.

In one of my classes, I had students do a project in which I offered different options. The students chose the one that suited them. Some wanted to work as a group, some preferred to work individually. I tried to get ideas from them, too. But I regret to say that apart from a few groups, nothing very creative like this has come out. Students don't care much. Of course, there are different factors.

According to T3, although she has efforts to include elements in her instruction that can appeal to different learner profiles, their lack of motivation can stand as a setback, which may indicate a lack of thorough differentiation in the classroom. As it was revealed in the literature review, student engagement and thus motivation hinge on how instruction is held in the classroom.

T10 articulated that giving suitable responsibilities to her students is among the ways to differentiate and support her students' autonomy and authenticity. T10 expressed that each student is unique, with different qualities. For instance, a natural leader might be encouraged to teach the class, while a quieter student is given tasks like expressing themselves through writing. T10 aims to engage students in various ways, such as presenting topics to their families. The goal is to involve each student based on their preferences, believing that utilizing different aspects of individuals enhances their interest in the lesson.

What T10 shared is an important point that encouraging students to show their potentials in certain areas and play to their strengths could be a good example of how

to structure a classroom. Overall, some of the participants varied preferences and characteristics of students are seen as qualities that should be addressed during instruction. The participants' common belief was that instead of treating them with standardized approaches, it is essential to see the students as they are and give them opportunities that can appeal to them.

Diverse Needs

One more theme that stood out in the implementation part of the interviews was that implementing DI considering the diverse needs of the students. T2 mentioned about her endeavors in providing extra resources to support the students who may find the content in class easier.

I don't know if this counts, but for example, in some of our classes, I have native level students who speak English very well. For example, I bring additional materials to them so that they do not get bored during classes. They read articles or something. I do this every week. (T2)

What T2 does is not simply bringing extra materials to the students who need more challenge, rather she provides them with meaningful alternative sources that is connected to the main objective of the lesson. T9 pointed out that she values preparing the lessons with an awareness of the diverse needs of her students.

Of course, there are students with different needs in the classroom. The teacher can prepare appropriate activities for them during the teaching process. Sometimes it may not be individual, but I try to do a similar activity with different approaches. For example, if I have a word production, some of them use the presentation technique, in another class, I try to make it more kinesthetic. I don't know, throwing balls to each other and saying names, for example, if there are students in that class who have a hyperactivity problem, for example, I try to make it more kinesthetic. (T9)

Overall, it is emerged as a theme from the responses that trying to incorporate methods that are suitable to different needs of their students is one of the ways for some of the participants to differentiate their lessons.

Flexible Grouping

All the participants expressed that they include projects and activities in their classes for their students to work in pairs or as a team. The participants believe that interactions in the classroom are necessary and valuable. They had a common point of view that students should help and benefit from each other. In connection with that, another notable theme that surfaced during the interviews was flexible grouping which plays a significant role in the implementation of DI with its lively contribution.

Three of the participants brought up how flexible grouping holds a key position in their practice. According to them, incorporating flexible grouping helps them in differentiating their lessons by creating a dynamic and responsive learning environment. Although one of the first things that comes to mind when talking about grouping in DI is putting students with different levels of ability may be the ideal way; however, what T5 pointed out was relevant to the philosophy of differentiation that grouping of the students should not only mean creating an opportunity for the students to help each other, rather creating a variety of learning experiences that everyone can benefit from. T5 expressed that in his teaching approach, he tailors questions to students' abilities, challenging stronger students and offering more support to those who may struggle. They prefer mixed groups for collaborative learning, ensuring there's at least one strong student per table for mutual support. Occasionally, he appreciates having groups with either all strong or all weak students for variety in groupings.

I usually like to mix the groups so that there's at least one strong student at table so that if there's a problem they can kind of support each other a little bit as well I do usually, but then I think it's also nice to have like a table that's all stronger table that's all weak sometimes that's nice occasionally, you also have different groupings. (T5)

Similarly, T6 also pointed out how he tries not to do ability grouping and groups students in a way that they can benefit from each other's differences.

For example, if there's a pair work, I pair people if I can I pair them with like, for example weak students and the strong students. So, they can help each other out that's one way, another is umm as I said, explaining things twice, or explaining things in a simpler way, to make sure that weaker students understand what I said as well, so I scaffold, them. (T6)

T7 shared one of her flexible grouping applications which takes the class away from monotony and brings in a dynamic aspect in a slightly different way from what T5 does. This kind of application contributes to a more self-driven learning environment for the students which may make it easier for the students to adopt the idea that they are the owners of their learning.

I like to uh have students work with each other like in pairs or in groups. I have some grouping strategies. For example, I would not ask all the class to work in pairs or groups. Instead, I can just divide one side to work in pairs, the other side could be in groups or the other side can choose whoever they want to work with. Or they can choose to work individually, that is totally fine. (T7)

T4 also shared her flexible grouping strategies. She believes that students should derive advantages from their peers, therefore she finds creative ways to have her students meet with each other to study together, such as spontaneously having them stop what they are doing and pair up with the closest peer.

A Variety of Activities to Avoid Monotony

Another key theme that came across during the interview analysis was integrating different activities to diversify the teaching approach. Three of the participants had a common stand on the belief that offering a wide array of activities within the instructional framework facilitates reaching the students from different angles and aids students in a more effective and fun manner. Speaking of fun, T4 highlighted the role that games play in fostering student engagement and shared that games were considered a valuable tool. She says, *for example, videos, games like*

bamboozle, or incorporating different strategies into classroom activities. This is just one of the strategies I use. I think that such activities that require a lot of conversational interaction are also very important, especially for language learning.

Learner stations were mentioned by two of the participants, where T5 expressed his unsatisfactory experience with learner stations. Since the school he works for requires teachers to implement DI in every lesson, he mentioned about a need to find new implementations in the scope of DI for the lesson observations done for professional development purposes. However, due to a lack of familiarity with learner stations, it was challenging for T5 to manage the application and for the students to make sense of the learner stations.

Last year I did stations in my classroom for the first time, it was very complicated, it was a lesson observation there was a lot to think about and it was a bit complicated but I'm glad I did it but I'm not sure if I'm going to do it again too soon. because we haven't done it before and not many teachers use it so it was a little bit difficult to explain it and get everything working (T5)

Further, T7 who is a more experienced teacher, stated that learner stations hold a position in her practice. She expressed that they enjoy incorporating learner stations in their lessons. In this approach, each student engages in an activity or task in different corners of the classroom, and they rotate at the end. While everyone participates in the overall task, they complete it through varied methods.

Insights from T8 were also in alignment with the idea that DI offers variety as a response to a variety of learners and contributes to the classroom's dynamism by creating opportunities for students to communicate and collaborate with each other. T8 expressed a fondness for poster work in her classes, where students collaborate in small groups to create posters. This activity involves talking, writing, and drawing, and T8 noted that every lesson involving posters has been positive. Even students who are typically less engaged become active during poster sessions. T8 appreciates the dynamism brought to the classroom through the preparation process, including

drawing, talking, and presenting. Additionally, activities involving students walking around the classroom, asking questions, and engaging in dialogue are also favored by T8. She believes that frequent implementations of procedures in the same way leads to monotony and makes it easier for students to disconnect from the lesson.

Monotony is an additional theme that emerged from especially T8's insights, but also was asked about during the interviews. Except for T4, all of the participants expressed that they often find their lessons monotonous due to lack of time to cover the subjects of the curriculum. T8 and T4 shared that it is very important for them to enjoy the lesson no matter how heavy the curriculum is, so that they can expect their students to be engaged with the lesson as well. Therefore, holding different activities and changing the tone from time to time are important in keeping themselves content and satisfied, and keeping students engaged and learning.

Insights About Assessment

Participants' responses show some variety when asked about how they assess the learning of their students. The majority of the participants stated that their major tool to identify the needs of their students is observation. Most of them said that they do not use any supplementary tool to determine who needs what and that the procedure is mostly done by the guidance unit of the school. Two of the participants expressed that asking the parents about their children helps a great deal in knowing the students better. This way they can approach the student with a more holistic manner.

Most of the participants also shared that various forms of formative assessment assist them in diagnosing students' needs. All of them agreed that not every assessment should be graded, rather projects, quizzes, and in-class activities can be used to help the teacher to modify and tailor the lessons in a more meaningful

way. Further, participants mentioned that formative assessment is also beneficial for students to see how much they progressed and where they are. Overall, almost all of the participants use formative assessment for feedback purposes.

Challenges of DI

The last part of the research question focused on the challenges of DI.

According to the themes that arose from the interviews, for the participants there are certain challenges with regard to DI such as lack of time, large class sizes, chaotic learning environments, generating ideas, individualized applications, neglecting of high-ability students, and a lack of support from other stakeholders.

Time Demanding

According to four of the participants, one of the most frequent responses about the challenges of DI is that it is an approach that demands a lot of time and preliminary preparation. T1 says *If I do not have a good preparation before the lesson, it is difficult for me to teach the lesson according to student differences. It is also necessary to prepare materials.* Likewise, T7 points out the importance of preliminary planning that should take place before instruction and that it could demand a lot of time.

It is something that also requires preliminary preparation. I mean, this differentiated instruction was not something that existed much 5 years ago or 2-3 years ago. Recently, it has become much more popular and a term that everyone knows in our lives. So, if you ask, "What am I doing with these difficulties?" So, frankly, I'm getting ready. This is, in the simplest terms, I try to plan that day's lesson in advance according to the student profile. (T7)

For T9, time is a challenge as well. She conveys the difficulty she experiences with always being in a hurry due to the need to cover the topics in the curriculum.

Time can be a problem. Unfortunately, the pressure to cover the curriculum sometimes causes us not to do things the way we want. Well, rather than the difficulties caused by the students, the overlapping of the content and the process given at that time causes us difficulties in this regard. (T9)

On the challenges of DI, along with the importance of planning, T8 mentions thinking about teaching which makes it harder than it is as in standardized instruction. She highlights the importance of doing well thought-out applications that are meaningful for the development of the students, and that that can be challenging for the teacher to allocate time to really think about their instruction.

A lesson plan just for the sake of differentiation may be meaningless. That's why, rather than bringing an activity, it is necessary to think about what would go well with this group. So thinking and planning is important. I think that's what makes it difficult. You are not very fixed, like in standardized approaches where there is no need to think too much about.

T8 highlights that thinking and reflecting on the professional practice regularly as important aspects of effective instruction.

Large Class Sizes

Another hardship that emerged from the interviews is crowded classrooms. Two of the participants mentioned the difficulties they experience with implementing DI when they have too many students in one classroom. Although they have the willingness to implement differentiated applications, a large number of students interfere with their motivation to differentiate their lessons. T2 says, *Class size is a huge factor. For example, I think it would be much easier to apply DI when you have between 10 and 12 students in a classroom. But I mean, the number of students in the classes is too high.* Similarly, for T3, among the factors that make DI a challenging approach is having an overcrowded classroom where it becomes difficult for the teacher to handle the instructional processes.

If there are too many students, it makes my job difficult. For example, if there were not many students in a classroom, everything would be much easier. As the class size increases, my job becomes more difficult. Factors that make differentiated instruction difficult include: class size, student motivation, lack of time. (T3)

Overall, large class sizes negatively affect some of the participants' perceptions regarding DI, due to the adversity of not being able to attend to a variety of procedures in the classroom.

Additional Themes

Three of the participants pointed out how DI leads to a chaotic learning environment which they have hard time managing. T1 expressed that when lacking special preparation, attempting activities in class can be unproductive and lead to chaos due to diverse student needs. While trying to create enjoyable learning situations for everyone, it falls short of meeting teaching goals. T1 highlighted the challenges in managing diverse needs without proper preparation.

T4 expressed that implementing differentiated practices in the classroom can occasionally lead to chaos, posing a challenge to manage. Despite enjoying innovation, the demands of teaching, especially with long daily hours, can be exhausting. T4 copes by discussing challenges with fellow teachers, finding relief in shared experiences. To manage chaos during differentiation, T4 assigns specific responsibilities to students, such as regulating noise levels during group work.

T10 expressed that challenges arise in implementing DI, particularly in fostering mutual respect among students, which may require time. They emphasized the need for a collective approach among teachers, stressing the importance of a consistent approach. T10 also noted that some teachers may feel uneasy when students are more active, considering it an unhealthy perspective on classroom management.

Overall, for T1, T4 and T10, the implementation of DI can become challenging since it can create a disorder in the learning environment due to a lack of

planning, feeling a burnout caused by having too many lesson hours or students not being cooperative enough.

Another subtheme that became evident when analyzing the interviews was, generating new ideas, or being stuck in the process of creating innovative concepts while implementing DI. T5 says, *I mean constantly trying to find new ways to do it because you feel like you're doing the same thing again and again that's one problem.* In a similar manner with T5, for T8 coming up with different ideas to differentiate lessons could be a challenge due to a desire to find new approaches to learning. She believes that differentiated applications should show variety.

Although DI does not mean individualized treatment for each student, according to T1, it is quite challenging to reach to each student on the individual level. Therefore, for some of the participants DI is difficult to implement because it has personalized applications.

You need to deal with each student differently. It is difficult. They tell us: make this student do this, make the other student do something else. You will basically cover the same subject, but they tell us that we need to go about it differently. But it is not an easy job (T1).

T5 touches upon the hardship he experiences when there are printed materials. Since he has the aim, in accordance with his school's policy, to scaffold those students who need more support, or challenge those students who are already ahead in the class, he deals with adversity in maintaining the flow of the differentiated implementations.

One of the really big problems I find is I give differentiated worksheets, yes and then the children pick up they understand that they've got different worksheets. and it can upset the weaker students, also the strong students can look at the weaker students worksheet and use it to find the answers quicker. so this is another problem. Handing out the worksheets can be a bit problematic sometimes because you have to kind of try to do it without them understanding who's getting the different worksheets (T5).

T5 points out that utilizing differentiated handouts in the classroom may unintentionally lead to a sense of labeling among students. When certain students

receive materials tailored to their needs, others might perceive it as a form of categorization, potentially causing feelings of exclusion or inadequacy.

The Challenge with Students with High-Ability

Participants were asked whether every single student in their classroom is challenged or not, including the ‘gifted’. Four participants’ responses showed that students who demonstrate a high level of capability, talent or proficiency may become the ones who are deprived of the support that they need in the classroom. While some of the participants shared that they bring extra materials to those students who are ahead of the others in the academic sense, most of the participants expressed the difficulty they experience when attending to ‘gifted students’. T1 shared that the students who need more scaffolding when learning are given more attention in her classes and her endeavors to challenge gifted students more are not enough. T1 expressed that in their teaching, she focuses more on weaker and intermediate students, offering additional materials like recommending extra books to outstanding students. However, she finds it challenging to provide special attention in the classroom to gifted students, as it may be perceived negatively by other students. T1 prefers to communicate differently with gifted students outside the classroom, giving additional recommendations or assignments, but feels it's not sufficient. They admit to having difficulty in catering to the needs of gifted children. She says *But I think it's not enough. I really have a hard time with gifted children.* (T1)

With a similar perspective, T5 commented on how it can be challenging to include some students with higher ability into the lesson since they find the content being taught easier. While some of these students go along with the classroom, some

of them rightfully ask for more challenges. Therefore, for T5 it is not easy to meet the needs of these students.

It's quite a difficult balance to keep the strong students happy, some of the strong students, you know, they've got a very good attitude and they are patient and they realise that the other students are learning and they're not too demanding however some of them are incredibly demanding, that they want to be learning more and more and more things, that are not in our syllabus for this year. Those are difficult ones to keep motivated. (T5)

T6 also considers students with high ability a challenge when implementing DI due to the risk of not being able to adequately accommodate them. Thus, he conveyed a sense of pressure of not attending to the needs of these students.

Gifted students were actually the major problem, umm recently I even watched you know a documentary about how they're the ones who need a lot of help because we're wasting their potential by not addressing their specific needs. We definitely should see which ones are gifted, and for them I think we should uh like add something to the you know course. like extra responsibility, extra sources materials maybe something a bit harder to make them more interested, to make them think, because otherwise they're just not using their brain fully.

T8 also regards this issue as an important one and expresses how she tries to make the lesson a productive one for students with high ability. *I try to challenge them in the areas of analysis, idea generation and critical thinking. But this means that they are practicing their presence in the lesson, being a part of that class and that group, using their already good language, so I'm not sure if I can teach much.* Overall, addressing the unique educational requirements of gifted students poses a challenge for some of the participants as they face difficulties in providing stimulating and challenging content that aligns with the students' advanced abilities.

Not Enough Support from Other Stakeholders

Two of the participants stated that when teachers are left alone in incorporating DI into their teaching, that becomes a challenge. The participants attribute this to a lack of established culture in the school and not having a common stance towards DI. Therefore, it was pointed out by some that, practices such as DI,

are mostly implemented by English departments, but emphasized that there should be a common culture in schools, a culture where all the departments embody DI. The participants' opinions on this lack of support are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Opinions of Teachers About not Receiving Enough Support

How Support is Lacking	Participant Excerpts
Lack of a Culture Within the School	If there is no differentiation within the teaching policies at school, doing this all the time is something that really takes a lot of time and energy. Something that can create chaos in the classroom. T1
Lack of a Culture Within the School	When I look at other departments, very few teachers try to reach students with different methods. (T4)
Lack of a Culture Within the School	Students should be introduced to differentiation from an early age. There must be consistency. If one teacher does it and the other doesn't, it won't be very good. Every discipline should practice this. (T3)
A Need of Support	There are many points where I wish an assistant teacher or classroom teacher could support me. Because sometimes some classes do not go with only one teacher. (T10)
Lack of Feedback	It's hard without you know feedback and all that. It's a very big effort to establish the rules and the culture in the classroom for differentiated learning. (T6)

Overall, some of the participants' challenges in implementing DI stem from the absence of a differentiated culture within the school environment. The lack of a supportive atmosphere that encourages tailored teaching methods hinders the effective implementation of DI. Additionally, insufficient feedback is one of the

reasons why one of the participants have hard time differentiating his lessons.

Further, a lack support within the classroom lead to difficulties associated with implementing DI.

Professional Development

Professional development was already a category where the researcher had the desire to find out more about the practices of schools regarding DI as its importance was also revealed in the literature review. It also arose from participants' insights that for them the support they receive from their schools is highly valuable. Out of 10 participants, two of them stated that they had received some training on DI either in university or the institution they worked for. The rest of the participants did not have any training on DI. Among 10 teachers, only T5 shared that differentiation is built into their school's culture and that they do professional development trainings for improvement. T7, the English department head of her school, talked about her endeavors to establish a system where DI is of top priority. The rest of the participants ($n = 8$), expressed that DI is not really a practice that is discussed and encouraged to be implemented by the school, although some of them are asked to tailor their lessons according to diverse needs of their student at times. Some participants mentioned the mismatch of the workload and the expectations of the schools. They expressed that they need to be given the chance to allocate more time for professional development in order not to experience difficulties in achieving good quality practices in class. T2 pointed out how she realized that she had little knowledge on DI and expressed that more training on DI would be needed and appreciated. T2 expressed a desire for increased implementation of differentiated teaching practices but highlighted challenges related to class sizes, teacher workload, and the curriculum. They believe that for successful implementation, the curriculum

should be lighter, teacher workload reduced, and class sizes more balanced.

Additionally, T2 emphasized the importance of providing training to teachers to enhance their knowledge in implementing DI effectively.

T3 also stated that if she had more time, she would take differentiation into consideration more. The rest of the participants expressed their eagerness to see more examples of DI and undergo a training on DI to learn more about differentiation.

Their opinions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Perceptions of Teachers About Professional Development

Participants	Participant Excerpts
T5	My boss is great at giving tips and identifying what does not work. She is quite good at giving tips for improving things. I learn a lot from her about DI and anything. My co-teachers also share their ideas, sometimes I ask their advice for things, and they tell me what they think. So, I am lucky in that sense.
T6	Yes I do, I need support from peers who know this and not just like sending me books PDF piles. Give me feedback and instructions, help me out you know. If I don't know what to do take over you know solve that solution, give me an example. It should be a very active process it can't be reading stuff.
T7	Of course, I would. For example, I would like to participate in a program where we record a lesson in which each teacher tries a differentiated application, and then we all watch and comment on it together. I think this will be useful.
T8	Of course, I would like to receive training on differentiation, so this should be a part of professional development. It is something very meaningful and nourishing professionally. If I work somewhere in the future, I would like to implement this, that is, into the corporate culture.
T9	I would be very happy if there was a training in which I could apply differentiated instruction in a healthy way and carry it to the classroom in a better way. Before, differentiated education was not known that much. It has increased recently. We learned

Participants	Participant Excerpts
	this by doing it in the profession and by reading some articles.

T1 expressed frustration with the constant demand for additional training in schools. Despite having a heavy workload of 35 weekly teaching hours, schools expect teachers to come prepared. T1 argued that differentiation should not solely rely on teachers. They emphasized that schools need to incorporate differentiation into their policies, missions, and visions, rather than expecting teachers to implement it without adequate support. T1 sees the current approach as flawed. She advocates for a more institutionally-driven and supported differentiation strategy.

I don't want to study anymore. Because schools constantly give us this training or want us to receive it. But at the end of the day, we have 35 hours of classes a week. Despite this, they expect us to come to class prepared in advance. Differentiation needs to be done by the school. It is a wrong approach to expect individual differentiation from teachers without providing the necessary support. (T1)

Whereas T8 who has been supported by the professional development units in some of the institutions she worked for before and benefited from them, emphasized the value of professional development and how it should be of utmost importance in educational settings. T8 expressed that, regardless of the institution, teachers are always busy with various tasks, many of which feel like burdensome chores. T8 emphasized the importance of prioritizing professional development amidst this busyness. They suggested delegating chores to one person, allowing the majority of teachers to focus on courses and professional growth. T8 strongly believes in the importance of professional development, disagreeing with the idea that it should be minimized. They emphasized the value of training sessions and workshops, considering institutions with active professional development units to be more advanced. T8 highlighted that quality professional support played a crucial role in

shaping their teaching career and expressed openness to further training opportunities.

In my opinion, institutions with good professional development units are always one step ahead. It also increases a person's motivation for the profession. I shaped my teaching career with what I learned at an institution where I worked before. Because there was very good professional support. I am open to this type of training from now on.

In general, participants' insights indicate that support from the institutions they work for, and professional development practices have a huge value in achieving good standards in their teaching. Overall, they held the common viewpoint that with sufficient and meaningful support from their schools, they believe they can be more supportive to their students. As all of them expressed that they have a growth mindset when it comes to believing in their students' potentials and believing in themselves that they have the potential to help their students, and that the support coming from other stakeholders holds a crucial prerequisite.

Summary of the Findings

Overall, findings show that the participants have varying levels of awareness regarding what DI means. It is understood from their expressions that DI is seen as one of the ideal approaches that should be used more in English classes. How they perceive the implementation of DI also show differences from one teacher to another. Their statements indicate that DI is within their practice, but mostly on a small scale due to factors beyond their authority. A minority of the participants seem to embody DI and make it a habit. Their responses show that they embody DI in a very natural and effortless way. For the majority of the participants DI is challenging for a number of reasons.

One of the difficulties according to the participants is the curriculum load, where, as per their statements, flexibility is not really appreciated. Participants

convey a displeasure about how they are always in a state of rushing, trying to cover the elements of curriculum. Further, although participants' beliefs and perceptions regarding DI are mostly positive, and they have a desire to improve their practice, without their schools' support they have difficulty in achieving quality and effective teaching.



CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter includes a brief overview of the study, followed by a discussion of the main findings and how they relate to the literature reviewed. Then implications for practice and for research are provided, along with the limitations of this research study. Overall, the data suggests that the majority of educators have different working definitions of DI and that they have several strategies for attending to students' varying needs.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how English teachers who work at various K-12 schools perceive and implement DI. The research question which guided this study was:

What are K-12 English teachers' perceptions about DI, and their perceptions of the implementation and the challenges of DI?

In the data collection process, to gather insights from the participants, interviews were arranged and conducted online. The question set was prepared by the researcher to obtain a holistic understanding from the participants regarding how they view and implement DI, covering a set of core questions and welcoming emerging concepts. To this end, the participants were posed questions from different aspects of DI.

Discussion of Major Findings

The present study sought to explore how 10 English teachers who work at different K-12 schools perceive DI and implement it in their classes. Certain themes

and subthemes emerged while analyzing the data. The current section is organized to be discussed according to those themes.

Student Diversity and DI

Asking the participants about the individual needs and differences in each of their classrooms provided the researcher with a baseline in trying to understand how they perceive student differences in classrooms in general. Their responses showed that they acknowledge student differences and believe that these differences should not be left unattended. Questions about student engagement and classroom management were also asked to the participants to get more insight about how they view the teacher's and the student's role in a classroom. Their responses were in line with the literature review that when the student is in the active role and the teacher is in the position to guide and facilitate, then the learning can be the most efficient and visible (Hattie, 2012). Further, on classroom management issues, the responses indicated that teachers have problems in managing the classroom due to the reasons such as students' inability to relate to the content in the classroom, the classroom dynamic, too much teacher talk and lecturing, and a poor teacher-student relationship.

Overall, for the participants, students disengage from the lesson because they find the content either too easy or too difficult, and consequently give up on engaging with the lesson which indicates an awareness on the need to implement differentiation in the classroom. As opposed to the one-size-fits-all approach, DI paves the way for students to start learning from where they are through following a variety of ways to reach certain goals in the classroom, thus keeping them from disengaging with the content since they are in a very active role (Tomlinson, 2017). When asked about DI, all the participants came up with different definitions of the

approach, indicating that a minority of these teachers had a solid understanding of DI, and that a majority of them had their own interpretations. However, they had a common viewpoint on DI that it is a practice that is highly supportive for students. Therefore, even though not every participant put forward it with the same words, their expressions were in line with the literature review that DI fosters student autonomy by honoring students' various learning styles and preferences considering their diverse needs (Tomlinson, 2008). Overall, English teachers' levels of awareness about the advantages of DI appeared to be sufficient according to what they have pointed out.

Implementation of DI

The second part of the research question focused on whether English teachers differentiate their classes and their perceptions regarding the implementation of DI. All the participants shared that DI is within their practice, but how much they include it in their practice depends on different factors such as classroom dynamic and curriculum load. A particularly interesting result obtained in this part of the interviews was that even though DI seems not to be a mindset or a philosophy embodied by the majority of the participants, English teachers do have a lot of different methods and tactics in approaching to their students, which is aligned with the review of literature regarding how there should be multiple ways of learning in the classroom, and DI provides students with a multiplicity of approaches to learning (Hattie, 2012).

This finding was also meaningful in learning about some out-of-the ordinary strategies that embody flexibility, implemented by English teachers. Flexibility is an essential aspect of DI (Bondie & Zusho, 2018), and all the participants mentioned some of their strategies including flexible timing, activities, and groupings in their

classrooms, which also resonates with the preliminary research of this study. Overall, the majority of the teachers' responses indicate that DI exists in their teaching in different forms, and that they implement it from time to time through some unstandardized approaches, multiple methods and flexible groupings. However, it is revealed with this study that DI is not a practice, rather that it is made a philosophy or mindset and implemented proactively and consistently for all of the participants, except for one. Therefore, an embodiment of DI is rarely observed according to the participants' expressions.

Challenges of DI

Another aspect aimed to be explored was the challenges of DI. As revealed in the literature review, DI is viewed as a challenging teaching approach by teachers around the world due to reasons such as curricular constraints, large class sizes, lack of time, assessment complexity, resource constraints and lack of teacher training on DI. The findings of this study were also in alignment with other research conducted in different parts of the world (Geel et al., 2019; Pozas et al., 2023, Stollman et al., 2021). The current study showed that a heavy curriculum load does not allow participants to be more flexible in meeting the needs of their students. Also, the findings from the interviews indicated a lack of office hours for teachers to allocate time for planning to tailor their lessons, as considering different student needs was another highlight from the study. Further, large class sizes were also pointed out as they can be inhibiting for the teacher to be attentive and responsive to all students. Therefore, English teachers view teaching in an overcrowded classroom less favorably, especially regarding the implementation of DI.

Misconceptions

Here, I would also like to touch on some of the misconceptions that English teachers have about DI. Certain responses of some of the participants indicated that DI can be viewed as an approach where the teacher attends to students on the individual level with special treatments, only pertaining to the single students. This is a misunderstanding of DI because in DI the teacher does not intend to separate students from each other to work on their own, rather, they create opportunities to the class where students pursue a common goal, having the chance to work in a variety of ways, including working individually or as a group. The variations in the classroom, students working on different things at different paces and in different ways serve as a contribution to the common good of the group. In that respect, DI differs from individualized applications as it is more like developing as a forest rather than growing solo as a tree (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023)

Another point that emerged from the answers of the participants was the misconception that students have certain learning styles and preferences, and they need activities that only suit their own learning styles and preferences. As opposed to this frequent response, a minority of the participants' insights were in alignment with the review of literature that although DI considers students' different learning styles and preferences, it is a more extensive and all-encompassing approach where the teacher considers a variety of factors, from students' readiness to their learning profile to create an effective and inclusive classroom for all students. This can include taking into account their learning styles and preferences, but also the awareness that students can benefit from a variety of instructional strategies as Hattie (2012) suggested in *Visible Learning*.

An additional misconception was that about the challenges regarding attending to the needs of the students with high ability. According to some of the participants students with high ability are often neglected due to a need to attend to those who need more support in the classroom. The participants mentioned how they have trouble in attending to the needs of students with high ability. However, in DI, what is suggested is to teach up, that is, to plan for advanced students and scaffold the rest of the students. Therefore, DI is more about keeping the expectations high and supporting the students who need scaffolding to reach the goals (Moon et al., 2020).

Another misconception that arose from the participant interviews is that DI causes the learning environment to be chaotic, hard to manage. Due to this belief, teachers may find themselves avoiding implementing DI and choose to have more control over the class through more standardized approaches. However, a dynamic classroom where there is a high level of student interaction does not necessarily indicate a chaotic learning environment. When there are clear expectations and instructions, accompanying with a strong teacher-student bond within the classroom, DI can turn the classroom into a learning ecosystem where students are self-driven and aware of the fact that they are contributors of this ecosystem (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2023).

Yet, it should not be denied that every classroom has a different collection of energies, causing every class to be different from one another, due to diverse student differences. Therefore, it can take more time for some classes to establish a differentiated culture, while it just flows perfectly for some others. To share an insight from my own experience, when I was working as an English teacher in a school where DI was regarded as an important aspect of the school's education

philosophy, I was teaching three different classes of the same grade level. In one of them, 6E, somehow, I could connect with the students faster than the other groups. That turned into a loving and respectful relationship, which I will always hold a dear memory of in my heart. Implementing DI was a delight in that classroom that I remember certain moments where I was looking at them and feeling so satisfied and content with how they turned into a class where they take places in their friends' learning yet improve themselves at the same time. Giving instructions, observing, and getting involved where necessary were just enough because the class was doing what needed to be done. In that sense, it was so much easier than being a teacher in a one-size-fits-all classroom.

Maybe 6E was the group that made me see the value of DI even more, through invaluable practice. These kinds of groups exist, but it is also possible for every class that students sometimes need repetitive guidance to get used to certain routines (Bondie & Zusho, 2018). Considering that, communication within the classroom, especially how the teacher conveys her expectations and motivates the students hold a crucial role in establishing a differentiated culture within the classroom (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2015). Setting aside the chaotic learning environment, when routines are established, DI gives the kind of pleasure that every teacher should experience, in fact. To summarize, individualized applications and chaotic learning environments arose during the interviews as the misconceptions about DI. These misconceptions led English teachers to view DI more challenging and to go for more standardized applications. In addition, the misconceptions may stem from a lack of knowledge and experience, which is highly connected to another difficulty the participants experience about DI, and that is further discussed in the following section.

Professional Development

Another difficulty that participants experience indicates a very important point that implementing DI on the individual teacher level, rather than as a school, is a huge setback in having effective differentiated applications in the classroom. This resonates quite well with the idea that stood out in the literature review that professional development endeavors to achieve good standards in effective teaching approaches like DI are essential (Dixon et al., 2014; Geel et al., 2019; Zolyomi, 2022). Teachers feeling unsupported by other stakeholders and not given enough opportunities to improve their practices see DI as challenging and demanding. The mismatch of the expectations of schools and what professional development services schools offer teachers cause demotivation. In addition, heavy workload, in particular having too many lesson hours negatively affect English teachers' performance. While this is the collective representation of English teachers' perspectives, a noteworthy and stimulating insight regarding the importance of teacher's mindsets was in strong accordance with the highlights of the literature review.

The connection between DI and teacher's mindset was another output of the literature review (Coubergs et al., 2017; Gheysens et al., 2017; Tomlinson & Murphy 2015). Teachers with a growth mindset are inclined to implement DI more with their belief in helping all their students and continuous endeavors in finding ways to support the class they teach, even in the face of adversity. Some of the participants responses showed that no matter how difficult the conditions are, there can always be room for meaningful discussions on how to improve their profession. Meaningful gatherings to talk about new ideas and approaches can be a good contribution to their practice and make their job easier in the classroom.

Connected to that, a meaningful and interesting highlight I caught personally was seeing the facial expressions of the participants throughout the interviews. As thinking about teaching is what mainly DI is about at its core (Tomlinson et al., 2008), seeing that the participants were thinking about their own practice was valuable. Some teachers even put this into words gratefully that having the interview with me on this subject helped them think about their teaching and reflect on it. This further emphasizes the idea that meaningful professional development efforts, where teachers come together to reflect on their practices may pave the way for improvement in the classroom (Roose et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings from the study indicate that, English teachers acknowledge student diversity and how DI can benefit students in their learning journeys. Although the majority of the participants do not embody DI as a philosophy and proactively plan their lessons considering the differences of their students, they all try to include it in their practice through some unstandardized methods and flexible approaches. The fact that there are misconceptions regarding DI may be due to DI being not an approach that is built into many schools' cultures, as it was also revealed by participant responses. Many of them expressed that DI is sometimes discussed and expected to be implemented but the efforts to present it in its fullest sense seem not to be sufficient.

Implications for Practice

In light of the findings, some implications for practice are showcased here. The data shows that the collective representation of how these English teachers perceive DI is positive and English teachers are willing to implement more DI to meet the diverse needs of their students. Also, it was revealed that they are familiar with the approach except for some misconceptions. However, implementation of DI

does not really match with how they perceive DI due to a variety of reasons.

Therefore, this study can be summarized as there are varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of DI among the participants, but the implementation of DI is not at the level that they would like it to be.

The main theme arose from their responses indicates a need for a less demanding work schedule and more professional development efforts in the institutions they work at. Teachers having too many lesson hours and too many students to be responsible for affects their performances negatively and lead to a demotivation in trying to implement different tools. Schools' unrealistic expectations do not comply with what they offer for teachers in terms of professional development. To obtain the necessary skills and qualities, English teachers need to be given opportunities like in-service trainings, workshops and seminars, conferences, peer-observation, and professional learning communities. However, to achieve a culture that prioritizes professional development in schools, the excessive workload that English teachers have should be lessened through more recruitment and more teacher-friendly applications. These kinds of efforts do not only motivate teachers but also create chances for them to think about their teaching, which ultimately leads a higher job satisfaction and more effective results in the classroom (Roose et al., 2022).

Collaboration was another highlight of the study where English teachers expect some standardization when it comes to implementing innovative and student-friendly approaches. It is stated that often times it is the English departments that apply approaches like DI, but the other departments mostly follow later, if at all. There needs to be a common language and culture in schools to make it easier for

students to get used to beneficial routines and to lighten the excessive burden on the shoulders of English teachers.

An additional implication to alleviate the pressure on the English teachers is a highlight that deserves mention. One of the participants pointed out the important role that coursebooks play in teaching, that some coursebooks are quite teacher-friendly, that they include sections for DI and offers suggestions and ideas for English teachers to make their jobs easier in the classroom. It is quite teacher-supportive that some coursebooks also provide English teachers with differentiated materials which can be a great contribution to their efforts while differentiating their lessons. Therefore, material units of the schools could go for coursebooks that offer more support for English teachers in implementing DI.

As knowing the English language well is regarded as a must in Türkiye, especially private schools offer intensive programs for teaching English. It is revealed with this study that DI is viewed as an approach that is ideal but there is a mismatch between the perceptions and implementations of DI due to certain misconceptions and a lack of support received from the schools. Understanding and implementing DI correctly can enhance the efforts to teach English in a more effective way (Dixon et al., 2014; Geel et al., 2020; Zolyomi, 2022). Although English teachers who participated in this study were willing to learn more about DI to incorporate it in their practice, the intensity of the English teaching programs that schools offer can become a burden on the English teachers and keep them from approaching to their students with higher motivation and with more effective teaching methods.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study add to qualitative research endeavors on DI in Türkiye. As there are K-12 schools in Türkiye, where DI is an important component of the teaching philosophy, perhaps more case studies can be conducted in those schools to learn about the experiences of English teachers and to see more examples of the implementation of DI. A longitudinal study where lesson observations are conducted in English lessons to see how DI is implemented and how students take part in those lessons could be recommended for further research, and such a study could also provide data on the effects of DI.

As DI is viewed as a challenging approach, practical applications can be further investigated. To this end a research study where English teachers can find a compilation of practical differentiated applications could be a valuable contribution to implementation of DI in English classes.

Another implication for further research could be a need for more studies conducted on how to attend to gifted students in Türkiye. Several participants of the study expressed that their focus can be more on the students who need more scaffolding in differentiated implementations. They conveyed the difficulty that they experience when they do not know what else to do besides bringing gifted students extra materials in English lessons, which indicates a misunderstanding of DI that it is actually an approach where teachers have high expectations about students' potentials and aim to teach up, rather than teaching to the middle and providing the rest with materials and activities suitable to their levels (Moon et al., 2020). Therefore, teaching up and providing more advanced content that require high cognitive skills could be a goal in English teaching at all levels.

As assessment plays a crucial role in DI with being an integral component of the processes in the classroom, efforts to make teachers' jobs easier to track and evaluate their students' learning could be further looked into. Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom for assessment and feedback purposes could immensely reduce the burden on the teachers as they can allocate more time for thinking, designing, and shaping their instruction.

In that respect, how AI can be an assistant in helping teachers differentiate their classes can be further investigated. We are in an era where approaches like individualization or personalization of education are discussed (Jia, 2021; Sharadagh & Sa'adi, 2022). There are many applications that adapt to a certain individual's level of ability and interests to improve the individual's skills. As the idea of not going to schools to learn seems like an unrealistic future possibility for now, how AI can play a role in helping teachers address student differences and tailor their instruction in the classroom could be a question that deserves investigation.

In a generation where cognitive learning takes the main the role, the role of social and emotional learning should never be underestimated (Huang & Lajoie, 2023). Instead of using technological tools in the classroom to individualize or personalize the learning for each student, in DI creating a variety of common grounds for students to have a high level of interaction in the classroom is valued (Tomlinson, 2022). These important aspects of learning can be met in DI through lessons that are designed in a way that the students are given a variety of opportunities to benefit from each other, have shared experiences, and also grow as autonomous learners. This is what makes DI a special approach with its desire to provide students with a social environment where they can meet in commonalities, instead of being in the same classroom to work individually on separate tasks

(Tomlinson, 2022). For teachers to create such opportunities in the classroom, automated grading and feedback could be used to assist them. Therefore, as AI is and will be an important element of today and of the future, how it can be meaningfully integrated into differentiated classrooms could be explored more.

Limitations

There are some limitations of the current research. This study was conducted with 10 English teachers working in different K-12 schools of Türkiye. Before conducting the interviews with the participants, a pilot study could not be conducted to identify potential issues during the interviews. Also, the number of English teachers working at different institutions could have been more to get a wider perspective. Also, the participants of this study shared their unique understandings of what DI is and their individual experiences of implementing DI. These may not be the same for other English teachers. Therefore, there is a limit to the generalizability of the results from this study.

REFERENCES

- Aliakbari, M., & Haghighi, J. K. (2014). On the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in the enhancement of Iranian learners reading comprehension in separate gender education. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 182-189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.405>
- Alsalmi, N., Abdelrahman, R., & Abdelkader, A. (2021) Impact of using the differentiated instruction (DI) strategy on student achievement in an intermediate stage science course. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 16(11), 25-45.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v16i11.22303>
- Arthurs, J. B. (2007) A juggling act in the classroom: Managing different learning styles. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 2(1), 2-7.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teln.2006.10.002>
- Bandura, A. (1971) *Social learning theory*. General Learning Press.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Betts, G. (2004) Fostering autonomous learners through levels of differentiation. *Roeper Review*, 26(4), 190-191.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/02783190409554269>
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5-31.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9068-5>
- Blaz, D. (2006). *Differentiated instruction: A guide for foreign language teachers*. Routledge.
- Blaz, D. (2016). *Differentiated Instruction: A guide for foreign language teachers*. (2nd ed.). Routledge.

- Bondie, R. & Zusho, A. (2018). *Differentiated instruction made practical*. Routledge.
- Bondie, R. S., Dahnke, C., & Zusho, A. (2019). How does changing “One-Size-Fits-All” to differentiated instruction affect teaching? *Review of Research in Education*, 43(1), 336-362. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18821130>
- Brandt, R. S., (1998). *Powerful learning*. ASCD.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. National Academies Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013) *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE Publication.
- Brevik, L. M., Gunnulfsen, A. E., & Renzulli, J., S. (2018) Student teachers’ practice and experience with differentiated instruction for students with higher learning potential. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 71, 34-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.12.003>
- Bruner, J. (1983). *Child’s talk: Learning to use language*. Norton.
- Coubergs, C., Struyven, K., Vanthournout, G., & Engels, N. (2017). Measuring teachers’ perceptions about differentiated instruction: The DI-Quest instrument and model. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 53, 41–54. <https://doi:10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.02.004>
- Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (4th ed.). SAGE Publication.
- Cüceloğlu, D. (2002) *İletişim donanımları*. Remzi Kitabevi.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Securing the right to learn: Policy and practice for powerful teaching and learning. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 13-

24. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035007013>

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Simon and Schuster.

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(2), 111-127.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0162353214529042>

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House Publishing Group.

George, P. S. (2005). A rationale for differentiating instruction in the regular classroom. *Theory Into Practice*, 44(3), 185–193.

https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_2

Gheysens, E., Consuegra, E., & Struyven, K (2020). Good things come to those who wait: the importance of professional development for the implementation of differentiated instruction. *Frontiers in Education*, 5(96).

<https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.00096>

Gheysens, E., Consuegra, E., Vanslambrouck, S., Engels, N., & Struyven, K.

(2020). Differentiated instruction in practice: Do teachers walk the talk?

Pedagogische Studiën, 97(3), 163–186.

<http://www.scopus.com/inward/record.url?scp=85129284097&partnerID=8Y>

[FLogxK](#)

Gheysens, E., Coubergs, C., Griful-Freixenet, J., Engels, N., & Struyven, K. (2022) Differentiated instruction: The diversity of teachers' philosophy and praxis to

adapt teaching to students' interests, readiness and learning profiles. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(14), 1383-1400.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1812739>

Grecu, Y. V. (2023). Differentiated instruction: Curriculum and resources provide a roadmap to help English teachers meet students' needs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 125, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104064>

Hattie, J (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Taylor and Francis.

Jia, Y. (2021). Research on the practice of college English classroom teaching based on Internet and artificial intelligence. *Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems*.
<https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/7133654>

Kaplan, S. N. (2022) *Differentiated curriculum and instruction for advanced and gifted learners*. Routledge.

Laozi (4th Century BC). *Tao Te Ching* (Feng, G. E., & English, J., Trans.). Vintage Books.

Magableh, I. S. I., & Abdullah, A. (2020). On the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in the enhancement of Jordanian students' overall achievement. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(2), 533-548.
<https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13237a>

Moon, T., R. (2005). The role of assessment in differentiation. *Theory into Practice*, 44(3), 226-233.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_7

Rock, M. L., Gregg, M., Ellis, E., & Gable, R.A. (2008). REACH: A framework for differentiating classroom instruction. *Preventing School Failure*, 52(2), 31-47.

<https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.52.2.31-47>

Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become*.

Charles E. Merrill.

Roose, I., Vantieghem, W., Vanderlinde, R., & Van Avermaet, P. (2022)

Professional vision as a mediator for inclusive education? Unravelling the interplay between teachers' beliefs, professional vision and reported practice of differentiated instruction. *Educational Review*, 1-23.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2022.2054957>

Seaton F., S. (2018) Empowering teachers to implement a growth mindset.

Educational Psychology in Practice, 34(1), 41-57.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2017.1382333>

Sharadgah, T. A., & Sa'di, R. A. (2022) A systematic review of research on the use of artificial intelligence in English language teaching and learning (2015-2021): What are the current effects? *Journal of Information Technology*

Education: Research. 21, 337-377. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4999>

Siddiqui, O., & Alghamdi, F. M. A. (2017). Implementing differentiated instruction in EFL remedial classes: An action research. *Education and Linguistics Research*, 3(2), 89-101.

<https://doi.org/10.5296/elr.v3i2.11726>

Sjøberg, S. (2010) Constructivism and learning. *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 485-490.

Smets, W. (2017). High quality differentiated instruction – a checklist for teacher professional development on handling differences in the general education classroom. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(11), 2074-2080.

<https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2017.051124>

Smets, W., & Struyven, K. (2020). A teachers' professional development programme to implement differentiated instruction in secondary education: How far do teachers reach? *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 1-17.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1742273>

Stollman, A., Meirink, J., Westenberg, M., & Van Driel, J. (2021) Teachers' interactive cognitions of differentiated instruction: An exploration in regular and talent development lessons. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 44(2), 201-222.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/01623532211001440>

Suprayogi, M. N., Valcke, M., & Godwin, R. (2017). Teachers and their implementation of differentiated instruction in the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 67, 291-301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.020>

Taber, K. S. (2006). Beyond constructivism: The progressive research programme into learning science. *Studies in Science Education*, 42, 125-184.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057260608560222>

Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). Differentiated instruction in the regular classroom: What does it mean? How does it look? *Understanding Our Gifted*, 14(1), 3-6.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2008). The goals of differentiation. *Educational Leadership*, 26-30.

Tomlinson, C. A., Brimijoin, K. & Narvaez, L. (2008). *The differentiated school: Making revolutionary changes in teaching and learning*. ASCD.

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

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

- Tomlinson, C. A., (2014). *The differentiated classroom responding to the needs of all learners* (2nd ed.). ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C. A (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in an academically diverse classroom* (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- Tomlinson, C., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C., Moon, T., BrimiJoin, K., Conover, L. A., & Reynolds, T. (2003). Differentiating instruction in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profiles in academically diverse classrooms: A review of literature. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 27(2-3), 119–145. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ787917>
- Trentin, G., (2010). *Networked collaborative learning: Social interaction and active learning*. Woodhead.
- Van Geel, M., Keuning, T., Frèrejean, J., Van Merriënboer, J., Dolmans, D., & Visscher, A. J. (2019). Capturing the complexity of differentiated instruction. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2018.1539013>
- Van Geel, M., Keuning, T., & Safar, I. (2022) How teachers develop skills for implementing differentiated instruction: Helpful and hindering factors. *Teaching and Teacher Education Leadership and Professional Development*, 1(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tatelp.2022.100007>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language* (Rev. ed.). MIT Press.
- Westwood, P. 2018. *Inclusive and adaptive teaching – Meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom*. (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Yavuz, A. C. (2020). The effects of differentiated instruction on Turkish students' L2 achievement, and student and teacher perceptions. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 313-335.

<https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.776002>

Zolyomi, A. (2022). Exploring Hungarian secondary school English teachers' beliefs about differentiated instruction. *Language Teaching Research*, 1-23.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221114780>



Appendix A

Interview Questions

- 1) How long have you been teaching and in which contexts?

Diversity in the classroom

- 2) What do you think about your students' differences in your classrooms? Can you name the differences you encountered? Do you think diversity in the classroom contributes positively or negatively to teaching?

Student engagement

- 3) How would you define a class where students are engaged for the majority of a lesson? What are the roles of teacher and student in this classroom?
- 4) What do you think are some of the disruptions that occur during students' learning? What is it that distracts them from the content in class?
- 5) What do you think are some factors that contribute to poor classroom management during teaching?

What Differentiated Instruction means

- 6) What does differentiated instruction mean to you? How would you describe the difference between traditional/standardized instruction and differentiated instruction?
- 7) How do you believe differentiated instruction can benefit students?
- 8) In your opinion, what are the most important principles of differentiated instruction that every teacher should know?

Implementation

- 9) Which one do you use more in your classroom? Traditional/standardized instruction or differentiated instruction? From where?
- 10) How often do you differentiate your lessons?
- 11) Can you tell me about the practices you use considering student differences? (during classroom teaching)
- 12) What strategies or tools do you use to differentiate instruction for different students?

Assessment

- 13) What types of assessments do you use to determine your students' individual needs?

- 14) How do you collect information about your students' learning styles and preferences?
- 15) What role does measurement and evaluation play in your teaching?
- 16) What is the place of formative assessment in your teaching? Do you believe that every assessment should be graded?
- 17) Do you proactively plan your lessons taking student differences into consideration?
- 18) Are your lesson plans prepared in advance or are they shaped according to student differences?

Teacher's mindset

- 19) Do you adopt a growth mindset or a fixed mindset regarding the differences of your students?
- 20) Do you think every student is open to improvement?
- 21) Would you say that each student is challenged while learning in your classroom? To what extent are the gifted students challenged?
- 22) How often do you find your lessons monotonous? Can you see yourself as a teacher who is open to innovations in your own classroom? How often do you use multiple methods or approaches in your classroom?

Interactions in the classroom

- 23) Can students benefit from each other's differences in your classroom? To what extent do they communicate with each other for learning purposes? In what ways?
- 24) How much say and choice do you think students have in your classroom?

Challenges of DI

- 25) What are the challenges you experience when creating differentiated applications?
- 26) How do you deal with these challenges? Do you implement any practical methods that will make it easier for you to differentiate your teaching?
- 27) Can you tell us about one of the tips you use when you have difficulty maintaining classroom management? What are you doing to reconnect your students with the content?
- 28) What difficulties might a teacher experience in implementing differentiated instruction? What are the reasons why standard education is preferred more?

Professional Development

- 29) Have you received training on differentiation at your school? Is differentiation built into your school's culture?
- 30) Would you like to receive training on differentiation? Also, would you like to see some examples of differentiated instruction?
- 31) Are you willing to implement more differentiated instruction? If so, what kind of support do you need to do this?





T.C.
ANKARA VALİLİĞİ
Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-14588481-605.99-80379486
Konu : Araştırma İzni

25.07.2023

BİLKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi: a) MEB Yenilik ve Eğitim Teknolojileri Genel Müdürlüğünün 2020/2 sayılı Genelgesi.
b) 23.06.2023 tarihli ve 9667 sayılı yazınız.

Üniversiteniz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Sevgi Özgüler'in "**Türkiye'de İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Farklılaştırılmış Öğretim İle İlgili Görüşleri ve Uygulamaları**" adlı konulu çalışması kapsamında İlimiz Çankaya, Gölbaşı, Etimesgut ilçelerine bağlı ortaokullarda ve liselerde uygulama talebi ilgi (a) Genelge çerçevesinde komisyonumuzca incelenmiştir.

Yapılan inceleme sonucunda, söz konusu araştırmanın Müdürlüğümüzde muhafaza edilen ölçme araçlarının; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu ile Türk Milli Eğitiminin genel amaçlarına uygun olarak, ilgili yasal düzenlemelerde belirtilen ilke, esas ve amaçlara aykırılık teşkil etmeyecek, eğitim-öğretim faaliyetlerini aksatmayacak şekilde okul ve kurum yöneticilerinin sorumluluğunda, gönüllülük esasına göre uygulanması Müdürlüğümüzce uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Harun FATSA
Vali a.
Milli Eğitim Müdürü

Ek:
Uygulama Araçları

Dağıtım:
Gereği:
Bilkent Üniversitesi

Bilgi:
Çankaya, Gölbaşı, Etimesgut İlçe MEM

Bu belge güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Adres : Emniyet Mah. Alparslan Türkeş Cad. 4/A Yenimahalle/ANKARA

Belge Doğrulama Adresi : <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/meb-ebys>

Telefon No : 0 (312) 306 89 07

E-Posta: istatistik06@meb.gov.tr

Kep Adresi : meb@hs01.kep.tr

Bilgi için: D. KARAGÜZEL BİLGİN

Unvan : Memur

İnternet Adresi: www.meb.gov.tr

Faks: _____

Bu evrak güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır. <https://evraksorgu.meb.gov.tr> adresinden **b506-b9ad-3658-9688-38ac** kodu ile teyit edilebilir.



Bilkent Üniversitesi

Sayı : E-66319886-605.01-9667
Konu : Araştırma İzin Talebi-Sevgi Özgüler

23/06/2023

ANKARA VALİLİĞİNE İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Sevgi Özgüler'in Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yönetim Kurulunca kabul edilen ve Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anita Nicole Alexander danışmanlığında yürütülen, "Türkiye'de İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Farklılaştırılmış Öğretim İle İlgili Görüşleri ve Uygulamaları" konulu araştırma önerisi ve ekleri, ilgili genelgede belirtilen belgeler ile beraber uygulama izni verilmesi talebiyle ekte sunulmuştur.

Araştırma faaliyetinin uygulanması için gerekli iznin verilmesini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Prof. Dr. A. Kürşat AYDOĞAN
Rektör

Ek:

- 1-Araştırma Sahibinin Dilekçesi
- 2-Araştırma Uygulama İzni Ön Başvurusu
- 3-Araştırma Önerisi ve Ekleri

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Evrak doğrulama <http://ebys-dogrulama.bilkent.edu.tr/> adresinden 456673b4 kodu ile yapılabilir.

Bilkent Üniversitesi, 06800 Bilkent Ankara
Tel: (0 312)290 40 00 Faks: (0 312)266 41 27 www.bilkent.edu.tr
ebys@bilkent.edu.tr - bilkentuni@hs01.kep.tr

Bilgi için: Burcu YÜCEL
İdari Sekreter
Telefon No: 0 312 2901134

