



Differentiated Instruction: Meeting the Students' Diverse Needs and Uniqueness

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Abstract. Differentiated Instruction is one of choices in order to bridge the issues of students' diversity that exist in English teaching which focuses on three main points, namely: content, process and products. The uniqueness of the students is always challenging to be involved in English classroom. The aim of this study is to explore on how the exclusive differentiate instructions applied in one of Junior High School in Eastern Taiwan. The method of the research is qualitative research involving detail class observation towards 22 pupils. The research findings provided deeper information on some points: (1) how the teacher recognizes students' competency levels; (2) how to make students being aware and usual with the teacher's instructions; (3) How to prepare different methods and assessments in same period of teaching.

Keywords: Classroom Observation · Differentiated Instruction · English Teaching · Educational Reform

1 Introduction

English is assumed as one of difficult subject in school. Some methods, approaches, and strategies are enough on having implementation in the classroom processes. The focus are always playing around the products only. The importance of skills understood as the only concern of all the implementation of methods, strategies and approaches. Based on the saturation point, the English researcher and teacher need to have wider focus of teaching method implementation. The observation in differentiate instruction implementation classroom has been conducted as one step ahead in the educational innovation and reform. The differentiate instruction that has been applied in this English classroom focused on the teaching vocabulary and the using of the vocabulary in real life context. Teaching vocabulary seems as something basic and essential for EFL learners. As Stahl [1998] puts it, "Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world." Understanding the world of English in complete, both knowledge and implementation is truly based on the understandings of vocabulary. Moreover, vocabulary should be mastered by EFL students in order on preparing the incidental situation that language itself needed. Since it is understood that poor vocabulary is a serious issue for these

students [Calderon et al., 2005]. Differentiate instruction that has been applied in this English classroom observation focused on not only the product of student competences towards the vocabulary, it also focused on the process of engaging learning vocabulary and content of the implementable vocabulary in accordance to portray a real world and real life situation. It is understood in detail that the vocabulary that are mastered by the EFL students will be applicable in daily activities.

1.1 Differentiated Instructions

Educational reform and innovation are always needed in the new era of English teaching and learning process as a part of foreign language in certain country. Teachers and instructors never stop on finding the ideal method on teaching English especially. Moreover, the diverse characteristics of students, come over more and more challenges for the teacher itself. Homogenize the classroom based on certain criteria will not be able to work. Applying various methods which is focus towards the process, product and content are highly needed. Differentiate instruction is understood as a method which covers the diverse and unique characteristics towards the students. The strength of Differentiate Instructions in teaching English can be seen from the various methods, media and assessment implemented and joined together in one meeting. This study was conducted through Classroom Observation by Ph.D. students in Innovation and Educational Reform Subject of one of universities in eastern Taiwan.

There is some ineffectiveness toward the implementation of method, approaches and strategies in English learning activities including in one of the eastern Taiwan Junior High School related to the students' needs (in any aspects such as the various backgrounds of multiculturalism) which is understood as the educational innovation and reform needed.

In the name of students' equity in the teaching learning process in current educational world has raised the importance issues of mixed ability classroom as stated by MacLaughlin & Talbert [1993] that where is believed that equity of educational opportunities can be achieved by teaching students corresponding to their level of readiness, their interests and their learning style, maximizing their opportunities for learning and growth. The other English classroom traditional methods and strategies cannot facilitate the ideas of mix ability classroom. One of the best solutions towards this situation is by implementing certain teaching method called Differentiate Instruction. Differentiate instruction is understood as one of the methods in teaching which is developed by Tomlinson as a response of technocratic and positivist tradition towards educational processes. Tomlinson [2001b] notes that at the broadest level, differentiation refers to providing students with a variety of methods to understand content, to process idea, and to develop product.

Differentiate Instructions focus on the uniqueness of the students that can be seen from their multicultural backgrounds that cannot be deniable and neglect by the teacher in the learning process that in this current situation is understood as the strength and power of every single student. The ideas are fully support by Hall [2002] that the learning style, the interests, the talents, the skills, the competences and the cultural background of students that will be previously studied by the teacher will guide his final decision concerning the kind of differentiated teaching to be chosen.

The importance implementation of Differentiate Instructions in this classroom is related to the process, content and product that are understood as an essential part of the learning process. The teacher will give wider space to the students in enhancing their individual capability towards certain topic in the certain subject. Differentiation of teaching in a metamodern curriculum is not actually a teaching process but must be seen more as a “learning process”, where emphasis is placed on the interaction of student, knowledge and teacher in an open and flexible learning process. Teachers in the case of a metamodern curriculum act as professionals, diagnosing the educational needs of students and plan the learning process accordingly [Koutselini 2001, 2006]. Differentiate Instruction facilitate students with wider space towards the understandings of uniqueness and diversity of profiles, needs and learning difficulties. It is in line with the metamodern curriculum that conveyed by Koutselini.

1.2 Classroom Observation

In this educational innovation and reform classroom, the process was taken through observation. Observation is understood as one of the ways on understanding people’s behaviour, actions, and roles. Observation is widely used in the qualitative research process as a part of data collection. As stated by Walshe, Ewing & Griffiths [2011] that observational research techniques have advantages over other qualitative data collection methods when the focus of research is on understanding actions, roles and behaviour. Moreover, qualitative observational data collection methods have great potential to contribute to evidence and understanding in the field of palliative care. Observational methods contribute to theoretical and conceptual development in the field, and help to explain social processes and phenomena.

Furthermore Walshe, Ewing & Griffiths [2011] gave a detail practical considerations in observational practices, namely: (1) planning an observational study; (2) choosing sampling issues, related to crucial sampling decisions include which sites, events, and persons are to be observed; (3) planning and implementing consent issues; (4) conducting an observational studies; (5) after observational data have been collected. Those considerations led the observer on preparing detail preparation of the observational process in order to get complete data needed through the observation.

In Differentiated Instructions, direct observation is needed as a method which focusing on different purposes such as the assessment process, raising teacher’s consciousness towards students’ differentiation that exists in the teaching and learning process and it is also beneficial for the teacher and observer to the deepest understanding on how giving feedback in teaching and learning processes. The classroom observation show detail processes of differentiate instruction implementation that is conducted by the teacher.

2 Method

This study conducted as a qualitative descriptive research. It was focusing on conducting classroom observation towards English as a foreign language senior teacher and trainer in one of Senior High School in Eastern Taiwan. This study was conducted by Ph.D.

students in Innovation and Educational Reform Subject of one of universities in eastern Taiwan.

This study involved one English teacher and 22 English classroom active students of ninth grader of Junior High School in eastern Taiwan. The observation duration is taken 40×2 min in classroom.

3 Findings

The differentiate instruction in educational reforms here understood as the process of implementing certain approach to the classroom. One way to understand the implementing processes is through the observational process. The observation processes are divided into some considerations which are described as follows:

1. Conducting classroom activities toward “The Understanding of Educational Reform”
The first phase was conducting classroom activities toward “The Understanding of Educational Reform”. In this process the observers was taking 5–6 meetings in order to prepare their philosophical understandings towards the Educational reform and Differentiate Instructions in special meeting. The Differentiate Instructions were also covering the assessment material and the practical teaching of the Differentiate Instruction.
2. Writing Small Paper related to Educational Reform.
The second phase covered the individual activities which focused on writing Small Paper with very specific topic on Personal Teaching Reflection, Educational Reform and Differentiate Instruction. The length of the small article should be around 3.000 English words (6–8 pages) in total. The products of the activities were the Small Paper Relevant and Observation Scale Adoption.
3. Doing Field/Classroom Observation
The main process is in the Classroom Observation as the third phase in the learning activities. The classroom observation involved 22 active students in English class and one of English senior teacher and English teacher trainer in one of Senior High school in eastern Taiwan. Briefly, the observation processes were divided into three stages, namely: Planning, Implementing and Reflecting.

Planning covers the process done by the teacher and observers. The beginning process done by professors in the department to decide the school which is relevant to the application of Differentiate Instruction as one methods in educational reform and reach the agreement. The process start from early morning on doing registration to the Senior High School. After that the next process was conducting pre-discussion between the observers and the teacher who teach in the classroom, covering the Planning process explanation done by the teacher, the goals delivering of teaching-learning process, the lesson plan explanation done by the teacher, the learning method details explained by the teacher, the observation scale discussion, etc.

Implementing. In this process the teacher was implementing the Differentiate Instruction structurally. Covering detail activities in pre-activities, whilst-activities and post-activities. The use of various sub-methods, media and assessments was the

strong power of Differentiate Instruction. Teacher applied the pairing and grouping method once collaborated with task-based approach. Teacher also used Video-related topic, engaging PowerPoints, Attractive and Brief Mind-Mapping and the online visual dictionary. Furthermore, the application of various assessments covering Series Questions, Short Answer Questions and Essay Questions made the class more vivid. All the activities can meet the teacher materials with the diverse and unique characteristics of the students. The overall students are actively and individually involved in teaching and learning process. While, in the other side, the observers focused on the detail observation activities which are relevant with the observation detail scales. The observation process used detail scaled designed by Cassady, et al. [2004] which was focused on providing the instructions and questions for the pre-observation interview, observation period, and post-observation debriefing and reflection.

The last stage was covering the Reflecting process. In this stage, the teacher and observers are sitting together and discussing the detail process that had already happened in the classroom. The considerations which are essentials in the Differentiate Instruction application is covering some points, namely: (1) Students' learning difficulty reduction. In this moment, the various media used by the teacher, unconsciously reduce the students' worries about the perspective that learning English is difficult; (2) Cooperation and Collaboration. Various methods used by the teacher helped the students on having an ideal cooperation and collaboration among the students. Working together made the students more understood that they are created to be unique and different one and another. They can learn from others in all aspect of the personal characteristics. Moreover, here the teacher built a personal bonding to each of the students by having closer interaction and personal question related to learning difficulties that they were faced up during the teaching process; (3) applying various kinds of teaching assessments. The assessment that was implemented are varied based on the students' needs and characteristics. In this differentiate instruction implementation, the teacher applied and used many questions forms, such as series questions in the terms of mind mapping questions which are provided in some pictures questions, short answer questions was also provided for the students, and essay questions in order to measure the deeper understandings of the students towards the topic that they have already learned in learning processes.; (4) From book topics to the vivid topics exist in real life. One of the strength of differentiate instruction which is implemented in this teaching learning process was about the applied topic which are related to the real life situation. In this class, the teacher delivered the topic of the journey from London to Amsterdam. In real situation, the teacher believed that the students can implement and provide some relevant vocabulary if someday they are facing up the real trip situation from one place to another place.

4. Submitting the Article

In this step, the observers have writing assignments towards the observation reports and the writing of observation report-based article, which can give detail portray of an overall processes in the classroom towards the application of The Differentiate Instructions as a part of teaching innovation and educational reform method.

5. Disseminating the Article.

The last step is the disseminating process in order to publish the result of the observation to other academic scholars. This one is optional, can be done through journals or proceedings. The dissemination will let the spread of information and knowledge wider and does not limited in the classroom understandings and implementation.

4 Conclusion

Educational innovation and reform is understood as an over lasting process which will be done by the researcher and teacher in order to fulfil the ideal teaching and learning process which can be optimizing students performances and ability. Moreover, in the current situation, classroom equality towards students performances and characteristics is forced more to be vital. In this condition, one of the methods which can facilitate the mix ability classrooms. The mix ability classrooms can be facilitated with the approach called differentiate instruction. Students' needs, students' profiles, students' interests and students' readiness seems to be essentials in this methods to be unneglected by the teacher. Differentiate instruction helps the teacher on getting closer to the phenomena. Seeing the phenomena, observation was conducted in English classroom as the process on getting deeper understanding for Ph.D. students in the ideas of innovation and reform in educational practices. The direct observation seems as a process which is time consuming, challenging, and providing detail preparation. However, the following benefits are always exist.

Acknowledgments. Thanks a lot to Department of Education and Human Potential Development, National Dong Hwa University (with the complete professors in Educational Reform subject) on setting useful classroom observation in order to feel the real atmosphere of The Differentiate Observation application. Moreover, big thank is also delivered to the senior teacher and active students in one of Senior High School in Eastern Taiwan, R.O.C.

Authors' Contributions. The author played the role as one of the classroom observer who are directly observe the process in detail in one of Senior High School in Easter Taiwan.

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