

DESIGNING INCLUSIVE EFL ACTIVITIES FOR MULTI-LEVEL LEARNERS THROUGH DIFFERENTIATION

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Abstract

This article studies how inclusive EFL activities can be designed for multi-level learners through differentiation. The article analyses mixed-ability language classes, common learner differences, and practical classroom tasks that can be adapted by readiness, support level, and product. A small-scale pedagogical analysis is used together with review of recent studies on differentiated instruction and multi-level language teaching. The expected result is a clearer model for planning activities that keep all learners active, supported, and challenged in one classroom.

Keywords

differentiated instruction, EFL, inclusive classroom, multi-level learners, language skills, activity design.

DIFFERENSIATSIYA ASOSIDA KO'P DARAJALI O'RGANUVCHILAR UCHUN INKLYUZIV EFL FAOLIYATLARINI LOYIHALASH

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada differentsiatsiya orqali har xil darajali o'rganuvchilar uchun inklyuziv EFL topshiriqlarini qanday loyihalash tahlil qilinadi. Maqolada har xil bilim darajadagi til sinflari, o'quvchilar o'rtasidagi farqlar va tayyorgarlik darajasi, ko'mak miqdori hamda yakuniy mahsulotga ko'ra moslashtiriladigan amaliy topshiriqlar tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda pedagogik tahlil va zamonaviy ilmiy manbalar sharhidan foydalaniladi. Natijada bitta sinfda barcha o'quvchilarni faol, qo'llab-quvvatlangan va rag'batlantirilgan holda ushlab turuvchi rejalash modeli taklif qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar

differenziatsiya, EFL, inklyuziv sinf, ko'p darajali o'rganuvchilar, til ko'nikmalari, topshiriq loyihalash.

ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИЕ ИНКЛЮЗИВНЫХ ЗАДАНИЙ ПО EFL ДЛЯ РАЗНОУРОВНЕВЫХ ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ДИФФЕРЕНЦИАЦИЮ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается, как можно проектировать инклюзивные задания по EFL для разноуровневых обучающихся с помощью дифференциации. Анализируются смешанные по уровню языковые классы, различия между учащимися и практические задания, которые можно адаптировать по уровню готовности, степени поддержки и конечному продукту. Используются педагогический анализ и обзор современных исследований по дифференцированному обучению и разноуровневым языковым классам. Ожидаемый результат - более ясная модель планирования заданий, при которой все учащиеся остаются активными, получают поддержку и развиваются в одном классе.

Ключевые слова

дифференциация, EFL, инклюзивный класс, разноуровневые обучающиеся, языковые навыки, проектирование заданий.

Introduction. Multi-level language classes are common in many schools. One group may include learners who do not have the same vocabulary base, grammar control, speaking confidence, or learning speed. In such a classroom, one activity may be too easy for some learners and too difficult for others. Because of this, inclusion cannot be understood only as placing different learners in one room. Inclusion is achieved when each learner is given real access to classroom work and a fair chance to participate. In EFL teaching, this issue becomes even more visible because language learning depends on repeated practice, understandable input, and active use. When tasks are designed for only one average level, weaker learners often become silent, while stronger learners lose interest. For that reason, differentiated instruction is often used as a practical response. It allows the same lesson goal to be kept for the whole class, but the path toward that goal can be changed. Support, pace, text difficulty, grouping, and expected output may be adjusted in a careful way.

Literature review. The theoretical base of differentiated instruction was clearly described by Carol Ann Tomlinson. Tomlinson explains differentiation as a

proactive process in which teachers modify curriculum, methods, resources, and products in order to meet diverse learner needs⁴⁶. Recent work has shown that differentiated instruction is also strongly connected with inclusive education. Nketsia and colleagues note that inclusive classrooms require flexible curricula and teaching methods that respond to learner diversity⁴⁷. Their 2024 study in teacher education shows that differentiated instruction is seen as an important child-centered approach for mixed-ability and inclusive settings.

Research on multi-level language teaching gives a more direct picture of the problem. Huhn and Davis-Wiley report that multi-level world language classes continue to exist and that teachers often receive little formal preparation for such teaching⁴⁸.

Karen Ashton also examined multi-level language classes and showed that teachers use different approaches in order to manage mixed groups⁴⁹. One practical model described in Ashton's work is the use of common topics with differentiated materials. This point is especially useful because it suggests that one class theme can be kept while input, support, and expected outcomes are adjusted for different learners. In EFL classrooms, this helps maintain unity of the lesson and reduces social separation between stronger and weaker learners. Smale-Jacobse and co-authors, in a systematic review, conclude that differentiated instruction in secondary education is complex but shows possible benefits for student learning⁵⁰. Even though their review is broader than EFL, it helps the present article by showing that differentiation should not be understood as random simplification. It works best when it is planned, purposeful, and linked to learning goals. In language classes, such planning is especially important because every activity must still create real language use.

Methodology. This article uses a qualitative and practice-oriented methodology. First, a focused review of existing literature on differentiated instruction, inclusive education, and multi-level language classrooms was carried out. Preference was given to recent peer-reviewed studies and widely used

⁴⁶ Tomlinson, Carol Ann, et al. "Differentiating Instruction in Response to Student Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile in Academically Diverse Classrooms: A Review of Literature." *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, vol. 27, no. 2-3, 2003, pp. 119-145.

⁴⁷ Nketsia, Wisdom, et al. "Exploring the Perceived Knowledge of Teacher Educators and Pre-Service Teachers on the Differentiated Instruction Practices of Teacher Educators." *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 9, 2024, article 1356675. doi:10.3389/educ.2024.1356675.

⁴⁸ Huhn, Christina, and Patricia Davis-Wiley. "Multi-Level World Language Classes: Teacher Perspectives and Practical Solutions." *Dimensions*, vol. 58, 2023, pp. 89-105.

⁴⁹ Ashton, Karen. "Approaches to Teaching in the Multi-Level Language Classroom." *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2019, pp. 162-177. doi:10.1080/17501229.2017.1397158.

⁵⁰ Smale-Jacobse, Annemieke E., et al. "Differentiated Instruction in Secondary Education: A Systematic Review of Research Evidence." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 10, 2019, article 2366. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02366.

foundational works. The literature was read in order to identify repeated classroom problems, effective principles, and practical teaching moves that can be transferred to EFL contexts.

Second, a pedagogical analysis was conducted. In this part, common EFL classroom activities were examined and then redesigned for multi-level learners. The analysis was organized around three variables: readiness level, amount of support, and type of final product. This made it possible to show how one activity can stay inclusive while learner access changes. The method is suitable for this article because the goal is not to test one fixed program statistically, but to build a clear and usable model for classroom planning.

Analysis and discussion. Activity 1 - Shared reading with tiered support. In a usual reading lesson, all learners may receive the same text and the same questions. In a multi-level class, this often creates unequal participation. A differentiated version keeps one common topic but changes the support level. Beginner learners receive a shorter version of the text with a glossary and picture clues. Intermediate learners receive the full text with guiding questions. Advanced learners receive the same full text plus an extension task such as inference or viewpoint analysis. This activity is inclusive because all learners discuss one topic together, but each learner enters the task through a reachable level. The class remains one community, and success becomes more visible for weaker learners.

Activity 2 - Speaking task with different output choices. A common EFL speaking task may ask all learners to speak for two minutes on the same topic. In a differentiated classroom, the topic can stay the same, but the product can change. One group may use sentence starters and speak in pairs. Another group may complete a role play with key expressions. Advanced learners may give a short opinion talk with follow-up questions. The main value of this activity is that language practice is preserved for everyone. At the same time, anxiety is reduced because speaking demands are adjusted. This is especially important in inclusive classrooms, where silence is often a sign of exclusion rather than lack of interest.

Activity 3 - Vocabulary task through flexible grouping. Vocabulary work is often taught through one whole-class list. In a multi-level class, the same lexical field can be taught through flexible group roles. For example, in a unit on travel, some learners match words and pictures, others build short sentences, and stronger learners produce mini-dialogues or compare meanings. After that, mixed groups can be formed so that learners share what they prepared. This design supports peer learning and helps weaker learners hear target language from classmates, not only

from the teacher. Stronger learners also benefit because explaining language deepens control and accuracy.

Activity 4 - Inclusive writing through common goals and varied scaffolds. Writing tasks often reveal the widest level gap. One common writing topic, such as “My ideal school day,” can still be used with differentiated frames. Some learners complete a guided paragraph with word banks and sentence prompts. Others write freely but follow a checklist. Advanced learners may add reasons, comparisons, or reflective comments. Here, inclusion is achieved not by lowering standards, but by changing the amount of support. The same communicative aim is kept, yet the route toward that aim becomes fairer.

These examples show that differentiation does not mean creating a different lesson for every learner. The same content theme, communicative goal, and classroom identity can be maintained. What changes is access. This idea is strongly supported by recent studies on inclusive and multi-level teaching. It also answers a practical teacher need: how to include diverse learners without losing lesson coherence. For EFL classrooms, the most effective activities appear to be those that combine common themes, flexible grouping, clear scaffolds, and varied products.

Conclusion. Designing inclusive EFL activities for multi-level learners requires planning that is flexible but still focused on shared goals. Differentiation helps teachers respond to real differences in readiness, confidence, pace, and language control. When tasks are adapted by support level, grouping, or output type, more learners can participate meaningfully in the same lesson.

The reviewed studies show that multi-level classes remain a reality and that teacher support in this area is still limited. For that reason, simple and workable models are needed. The analysis in this article suggests that inclusive EFL activity design works best when one topic is kept for the whole class while materials and expected products are adjusted. Such planning reduces exclusion, supports language growth, and makes the classroom more balanced for both weaker and stronger learners.

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