

PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS' REFLECTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING

Nur Syafa'ah¹⁾, Issy Yuliasri²⁾, Yuliati³⁾

Students of Doctorate Program Language Education Universitas Negeri Semarang¹⁾

Lecturer of Doctorate Program Language Education Universitas Negeri Semarang²⁾

Lecturer of Doctorate Program Language Education Universitas Negeri Semarang³⁾

(Syafaahnur17@students.unnes.ac.id1), (issy.yuliasri@mail.unnes.ac.id2), (yuliati@mail.unnes.ac.id3)

Abstract

Reflection is a cognitive process that allows us to analyze and evaluate our ideas and emotions regarding a specific event or a challenging day. It provides us with an opportunity to reconcile and make sense of our thoughts and emotions related to the experience. The significance of reflective practice has been extensively examined and reexamined throughout the course of the past three decades. The primary objective of the study is to provide insight into the reflection of Pre-Service EFL teachers regarding how they implemented Differentiated Learning, as promoted by the Free Learning Curriculum. This narrative study aimed to use the theoretical and methodological assumptions obtained from Gibb's (1988) stages of reflection, based on the observed phenomenon and empirical findings mentioned earlier. This study was carried out by conducting in-depth interviews with Pre-Service EFL Teachers at a university in Semarang. The multiple data collection were gathered and analyzed by thematic analysis. The findings showed that the Pre-Service Teachers implemented differentiated learning in the content, process, and product by considering students' learning style. This study has implications for how EFL/ESL teachers teach and ideas for future researchers.

Keywords: Reflection, Teachers' Reflection, Differentiated Learning

1. Introduction

Teacher professional development strategies prioritize the enhancement of educational practices through reflection. Reflection is a method of analyzing one's thoughts and emotions regarding an incident or a challenging day, allowing one to reconcile their thoughts and emotions. Consequently, it is crucial for educators to engage in reflective practice in order to enhance the teaching-learning process.

Today, classrooms are more prominently characterized by academic diversity than ever before. In order to guarantee that students have equal access to high-quality instruction and, as a result, advance academically, socially, and

emotionally, instructors must adapt the curriculum, materials, and student support. This is a call to embrace diversity and differentiate instruction. Nevertheless, in order to overcome obstacles and exceed ignorance, it is essential to recognize that "equality of opportunity" is a tangible reality only when students are provided with instruction that is tailored to their unique learning preferences, interests, and levels of readiness, thereby allowing them to optimize their potential for growth. Therefore, educational efficacy is directly related with differentiation which teachers' and educators should consider about this.

Pre-service teachers are students enrolled in a teacher preparation program who must successfully complete degree requirements, including coursework and field experience, prior to receiving a teaching licensure. They are prepared to have a professional pedagogical competence. They acquire a comprehensive set of skills and knowledge that equip them with the necessary skills to effectively teach in the classroom. Although they encounter obstacles in the management of classroom activities and the reconciliation of student needs and teaching objectives, they possess the requisite pedagogical knowledge and skills to consistently enhance their teaching practices. As the prospective teachers, they learn the implementation of the current curriculum in which Free learning curriculum is implemented. Here, the differentiated learning is accommodated.

Previous studies about differentiated learning has been conducted by the researchers. (Dee, 2011) looked at how differentiation shows up for students in special education in sample lesson plans made by future elementary school teachers. The study looked at the nature, characteristics, and types of educational adaptations used in work samples created by a group of future teachers. It came up with six main themes and suggestions for programs that train teachers.(Abramova & Mashoshina, 2021) conducted an analysis of the responses of teachers and students to the primary interview questions regarding their experiences and perspectives on mixed-ability and same-ability classes. In an effort to foster a growth-oriented mindset and accomplish sophisticated educational outcomes, the majority of educators intentionally implement a diverse array of management tools in various sections of their lessons.(Bazer, Zaira Lyn C. & Eslit, Edgar R, 2019) found out how well teaching

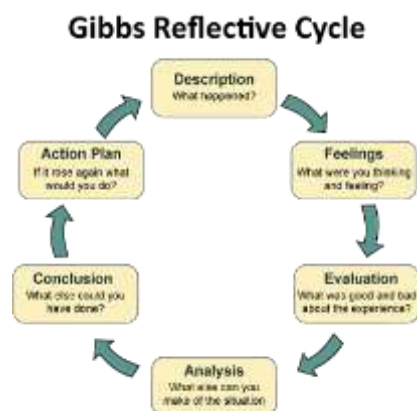
literature using differentiated learning and ICT improves the academic success of 100 students in Grade 7 at Salvador National High School. (Sofiana et al., 2024) looked into how ready teachers are to use flexible learning and what makes them less ready. The results showed that teachers weren't ready to use topic and process differentiation in ELT yet; they just needed to get better. Additionally, teachers were ready to use differentiated products and learning environments, but they still need a little help. This research aims to find how do the Preservice ELT teachers implement differentiated learning through their teaching reflection.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teaching Reflection;

In the context of teacher education, reflection is frequently described as a process of self-examination and self-evaluation that teachers should engage in on a regular basis to enhance and interpret their professional practices (Moen, 2006). Reflection offers a framework for assessing learning, enabling theories and concepts to be deeply integrated into practice and promoting ongoing thinking and innovation . Gibbs' reflective framework is a structured paradigm that facilitates reflection by deconstructing it into six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions, and action plan. This framework is intended to facilitate a systematic and comprehensive reflection on the experiences of individuals, ensuring that they take into account a variety of factors and their reactions to the situation (Gibbs, 2013).

Figure 1. Gibbs Reflective cycle



First step is *description*. This initial phase entails a comprehensive account of the situation, with an emphasis on the circumstances, timing, participants, and results. The objective of this phase is to offer a succinct and unambiguous account of the event, without the inclusion of any judgments or conclusions. The second is *feelings* which exploring the emotions and thoughts that were experienced during the circumstance is the second stage. This encompasses the consideration of one's emotions, beliefs, and values, as well as their thoughts and feelings at the time. Additionally, it necessitates contemplating the emotions of others and one's subsequent reflections on the event. In *evaluation* step, the situation is objectively assessed in the third stage, taking into account both the positive and negative aspects. This encompasses an examination of the positive and negative aspects, as well as the influence on oneself and others. This phase assists in the differentiation of subjective emotions from objective evaluations. Then, *analysis* in the fourth stage, the situation is analyzed using theory and a broader context to develop a more profound understanding. This encompasses the examination of the reasons for the success or failure of the situation, the relationship between the situation and broader theories and literature, and the potential modifications that could have been implemented. Next is *conclusions*, The fifth stage that entails the

development of conclusions based on the analysis. This encompasses the evaluation of the lessons learned, the identification of areas for improvement in the future, and the acquisition of the necessary skills to effectively manage similar situations. Lastly, *action plan* the final stage that entails the development of an action plan to enhance practice in accordance with the reflections. This encompasses the delineation of precise procedures, the implementation of modifications, and the evaluation of advancement.

2.2 Differentiated Learning

Differentiated instructions are typically instructions that are designed with a variety of variations to accommodate the unique characteristics of the students and adapt the teaching-learning process (Bazer, Zaira Lyn C. & Eslit, Edgar R, 2019). Differentiation is a "set of instructional strategies" that are a way of thinking and a set of principles that are applied during the planning and execution of a teaching and learning process. It is characterized by ongoing reflections on the most effective method to deliver the learning content to students with varying characteristics (Tomlinson et al., 2014).

Moreover Tomlinson & Imbeau (2010) added that differentiated instruction involves seven critical components that cater to the unique needs of students. The first component acknowledges that each student arrives in the classroom with distinct backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and genders. This diversity influences the learning process, making it essential for teachers to be accountable for ensuring all students comprehend the material. To achieve this, teachers must develop strategies to connect with diverse students, align learning content with student characteristics, and adapt their approach to accommodate individual differences (Valiandes & Neophytou, 2018). Additionally, teachers

must engage in ongoing reflections to determine the specific needs of each student at a particular stage of the learning process and adjust their strategies accordingly to ensure each student masters the learning content.

2.3 Differentiated Learning in Indonesia;

The differentiated learning model is thought to be a successful way to teach and learn by the Merdeka Curriculum. It's a way of teaching and learning that was created by Carol An Tomlinson in 1999 (Astuti & Afendi, 2022). It focuses on meeting the different needs, preferences, and skills of students while they are learning. Teachers ought to adapt their teaching methods and approaches to the preferences, individualities, and capabilities of their students. It is crucial for them to be cognizant of the distinctive characteristics and preferences of each pupil, and to offer educational opportunities that are tailored to their individual needs and interests.

Differentiated learning can be used in Indonesian senior high school classrooms in a number of different ways to meet the needs of all students (Komang Arie Suwastini, 2021). Among them are: 1) Making learning goals that are unique for each student based on their own hobbies, strengths, and weaknesses; 2) using a range of teaching methods, such as direct guidance, group work, problem-based learning, and inquiry-based learning, to accommodate different ways of learning; 3) Giving students materials that are flexible enough to fit their level of ability and complexity; 4) putting students into flexible groups based on their needs, like ability level, interest, or learning style, to make sure they get the right help; 5) using quizzes, projects, and speeches, among other types of tests, to check on students' progress and give them feedback; 6) Giving students who need it extra help, like extra practice, one-on-one coaching, or working

with other students; 7) promoting student-centered learning by letting them pick their own topics, make their own goals, and think about how they're doing; 8) encouraging students to work together to learn by making a space where they can assist and learn from one another; 9) Giving each student specific, helpful feedback that is based on their needs, letting them work at their own pace, and providing extra help or additional activities as needed (Dianti, 2017).

Differentiation in the learning process enables students to participate in learning in the most suitable manner for their individual requirements, as it enables specific instruction to be tailored to the unique characteristics, skills, and preparedness of each student. The process of differentiation in education encompasses a variety of methods, including student activities in response to teachers instructions, textbooks, learning media, and student-centered assignments such as group discussions and presentations. The teacher delivers the same conceptual material or skills to all students when implementing differentiation, but they are permitted to participate in a variety of learning activities that are tailored to their individual requirements. Individualization in the educational process is tailored to the student's preferences, characteristics, or level of preparedness. The goal is to facilitate students' ability to achieve learning outcomes in the most suitable and preferred manner. There are numerous methods that can be employed to differentiate the learning process, such as the use of interactive journals, the implementation of tiered activities, the use of graphic organizers, the use of manipulatives, and the establishment of learning centers.

Learning products are the methods by which students demonstrate or articulate their learning outcomes, including their knowledge, comprehension, and abilities. In order to ensure that the assessment of

learning outcomes accurately reflects the students' genuine capabilities, differentiation in learning products is implemented (Dee, 2011). Consequently, differentiation in learning products can serve as an evaluation that quantifies and offers data regarding the extent to which students have mastered or have yet to master certain learning outcomes. It is also necessary to implement a multi-tier model for differentiation in learning products. This implies that the teacher develops content gradations and testing methods that are tailored to the students' skill levels or preparation. Assignments that are more difficult will be assigned to students who are at a higher level, and furthermore.

Table 1. Strategies for Differentiated Learning

Differentiation in content	Differentiation in process	Differentiation in product
Implementing tiered content	Implementing tiered activities	Implementing tiered assessment
Providing varied materials	Designing learning centers	
Using various methods to deliver the material	Interactive journals	
	Collaborative-cooperative activities	
Providing scaffolding	Manipulative	
Implementing learning contracts	Graphic organizers	
Content compaction		

3. Method

The focus of this research is to conduct a small narrative investigation that tries to collect data from Pre-service English

teachers' reflection in a university in Semarang on the implementation of Differentiated Learning. Following its objectives, the approach in narrative inquiry determines the most suitable for this research, because this approach emphasizes the human experience and captures the detailed story of the life experience of the individual. In general, narrative inquiry is a qualitative approach that captures the personal and human dimensions of lived experiences and presents them narratively, as its name suggests. It is the study of how humans experience the world. Conversely, the narrative approach focuses on the meanings and values that individuals attach to their experiences through the stories they tell and share (D. Jean Clandinin, 2007).

The participants in this research are 5 pre-service EFL teachers in a university in Semarang. The data taken in this research were pre-service EFL teachers' reflection on the implementation of differentiated learning and continued by field text of informal conversation to get the information from participants by convincing them telling their personal experience. Direct and online-mediated interview were also done with the participants to find their experience in the implementation of differentiated learning.

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis based on Gibb's reflection model. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique that enables the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns within the data, presenting them in a comprehensive and detailed manner. In addition to its ability to present comprehensive and intricate information, theme analysis is also capable of interpreting a wide range of diverse issues.

4. Finding and Discussion

The finding of the research was reported according to Gibbs Model of reflection as the following:

4.1 Description

The pre-service teachers exhibited differentiated learning through content, process, and product. Students were typically provided with a variety of materials in order to differentiate their learning in terms of content in T1, T2, T3, and T5. T1 instructed students on descriptive texts and provided them with four distinct descriptive texts that were based on their idols. Text 1 was described Chef Renata, text 2. Maudy Ayunda, text 3. Pratama Arhan, and text 4. Jerome Polin. Through the use of media, T2 and T5 implement differentiated content. They employ videos that serve to auditory and visual learning styles (audio-visual) and texts that accommodate visual learners. In their differentiated instruction, T3 employs tiered content:

"...I also employ online flashcards and a scramble word game. I differentiate it in the scrambled word section. The divisions are divided according to their capabilities. Scrambled words consisting of 5-6 words are assigned to students with high-level thinking skills, while those with low-level thinking skills are assigned scrambled words consisting of 3-4 words..."

4.2 Feeling

In the process of adopting differentiated learning, the feelings of practicum teachers can be divided into three distinct phases: before, during, and after the implementation of differentiated learning. Prior to the implementation of it, T1, T2, and T4 feel excited, but they also experience confusion and worry. T3 experiences nervousness, while T5 has uncertainty. All three teachers (T1, T4, and T5) are feeling enthused about the introduction of differentiated learning, and the kids are responding positively to it. However, there is an occurrence that occurs in T3 in which some students have feelings of

envy toward their classmates as a result of the many learning activities that are provided. Despite this, the practicum teacher is able to successfully manage the difficult circumstance. Following the implementation of differentiated learning, the teachers experience feelings of contentment and happiness, and the students have a good reaction to the differentiated instruction.

"...before beginning the lesson, I consider whether my methods and media for differentiation can accommodate each student's learning style." On the other hand, I am content both during and after the class because the students are able to comprehend and take pleasure in the strategies and materials that I employ..." (T5)

4.3 Evaluation

The preservice teachers have identified numerous advantages and disadvantages of employing differentiated learning strategies. The benefits for students include the ability to learn using media that is compatible with their learning styles, a more comprehensive understanding of the material, a boost in their confidence, and the ability to accommodate the diverse learning requirements of a classroom. The advantages for educators include the opportunity to investigate a variety of strategies and approaches. Nevertheless, this poses obstacles to its implementation. Teachers are required to allocate additional time to the preparation of diverse lessons, as they may experience feelings of overwhelm if they are implemented in every session. Additionally, they must effectively communicate the objectives of differentiated learning to prevent conflicts, and they must take into account the resources available at the school when planning diverse activities, as not all schools have the necessary resources.

In accordance with the experiences of practicum instructors in the implementation of differentiated learning. T1, T3, T4, and T5 have been able to enhance student confidence by increasing their engagement in more meaningful and relevant learning activities. T2 employs a variety of media, including PowerPoint, music, and flashcards. Nevertheless, T2 is confronted with obstacles because they have not yet differentiated assessments according to the abilities of the students. T5 experiences difficulty with time management as a result of her excessive emphasis on the learning styles of each student. T2 specifically emphasizes their weakness:

"I have not differentiated assessments according to students' abilities, such as customizing questions to their proficiency level." (T2)

4.4 Analysis

Preservice teachers encounter numerous challenges when undertaking to implement differentiated learning. T1 finds the management of a class with a variety of assignments and skills to be a highly challenging effort. They must guarantee that each student receives the necessary attention and support without sacrificing the well-being of others. Meanwhile, T2 struggles to identify suitable strategies, methods, and learning resources that are tailored to the requirements and abilities of students, thereby guaranteeing the effective delivery of the learning material. T3 posits that differentiated learning necessitates a high level of creativity and an adequate amount of time to create appropriate materials, media, and methods for students of varying abilities, all while ensuring that the classroom environment is conducive and that all students feel appreciated. The identification of each student's learning style-based requirements presents a challenge for T4 and T5, as they are aware that inaccurate

identification could result in unequal learning opportunities.

There are some factors that influence the success or failure of student instructors in implementing differentiated learning. The design of appropriate tasks and materials is significantly influenced by the ability of instructors to comprehend students' interests, learning styles, and abilities, which is a critical factor. Furthermore, the incorporation of technology into the teaching process significantly facilitates the development of a diverse array of educational activities and materials. Nevertheless, the most critical aspect of the successful implementation of differentiated learning is the effective planning of lessons. Conversely, student instructors' inadequate comprehension of differentiated learning is among the factors that undermine its efficacy. Furthermore, the management of students' perceptions and reactions to ability-based classification, in addition to the intricate preparation and implementation process, present additional challenges. Additionally, pre-service teachers frequently encounter difficulties in effectively integrating a single lesson with a variety of learning styles.

"...When I was practicing teaching, my understanding of this matter was limited, so I felt less than optimal in implementing differentiated learning. Therefore, the more I understand differentiated learning, the easier it becomes for me to apply it...." (T4)

4.5 Conclusion

The pre-service teachers got the conclusion that there are several skills as educators that require development in order to effectively implement differentiated learning. Initially, the ability to comprehend the learning styles and interests of students, as well as to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. This can be accomplished by mapping students' learning

style tendencies, including auditory, visual, audio-visual, and kinesthetic learners, during diagnostic assessments. Secondly, the ability to create lesson plans that are both structured and adaptable to the varying abilities of students. Teachers can not only design and process teaching materials by identifying students' skill levels during diagnostic assessments, but also map students' learning styles to ensure that their ability to design learning activities is on target. Thirdly, classroom management skills, which encompass the capacity to convey information through a variety of methods and media, as well as strong communication skills to clarify the purpose of differentiation to students, are necessary. This includes time management to ensure effective learning and minimize wasted time. Lastly, the capacity to develop various kinds of assessments that enable students to generate a variety of products.

"...I feel there's still much I need to improve on, such as assessment skills to determine students' levels and learning needs, creativity in designing diverse activities, effective classroom management, good communication to explain differentiation goals to students, and flexibility in responding to ever-changing student needs..."(T3)

4.6 Action Plan

Pre-service teachers' strategic plan for the implementation of effective differentiated learning involves the following: a comprehensive analysis of students' needs and skills, the formation of small groups based on their learning styles, and the attempt of an in-depth understanding of students' interests and learning styles. Secondly, improving the capacity to design lessons that accommodate to a wide range of student abilities, developing a diverse selection of activity banks and learning resources, ensuring smooth transitions between

activities, and involving students in the process of providing feedback. Additionally, They are going to make sure that classroom management is effective in order to adapt the implementation of differentiated learning to the needs and abilities of students, create a classroom atmosphere that is appealing and aligns with students' preferences to promote a comfortable learning environment, and more effectively manage learning time. Finally, they are doing continuous self-evaluation and reflection.

"...Looking ahead, I really want to conduct more thorough initial assessments. Then, create a bank of diverse activities and learning resources, plan smooth transitions between activities, involve students in providing feedback, and regularly engage in self-evaluation. Hopefully, by doing so, the differentiated learning I implement can become more effective and meaningful for all students..."

The experience of implementing differentiated learning may be different for each teacher. (Ježková, 2023) did a research implementing differentiated instruction for young learners. In terms of the connection between the individual needs of the students in the classroom and their learning process, the various levels of English, diverse patterns of interaction, preferred workspaces, preferred types of activities, and varying previous experiences and attitudes toward English learning. Boys favored movement activities and watching videos, while females preferred singing songs and crafting. Differentiated instruction also has a beneficial effect on the students. Learners were actively involved in individual activities and paid attention due to the fact that the activities were diverse and occasionally learners were permitted to select their preferable activity. Another advantage was the enhancement of learners' self-assurance. The opportunity was provided to advanced

learners to assume the character of a mentor and attempt to impart their knowledge to the less capable students. (Sofiana et al., 2024) found that teachers were not prepared to implement content and process differentiation in ELT; however, they required some enhancements. Furthermore, teachers were prepared to implement product and learning environment differentiation; however, they require minor improvement. The factors that influenced their readiness included the large number of students in each class, the lack of sufficient training opportunities, the limited time available for the planning and design of learning activities, and the varying levels of English proficiency among the students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research article's findings and discussions demonstrate that differentiated learning has the potential to significantly improve educational practices, particularly in diverse classroom settings. The challenges and successes of accommodating individual student requirements and learning styles were demonstrated by pre-service teachers through the implementation of a variety of strategies in content, process, and product. Reflection became an indispensable instrument for these educators, enabling them to assess and enhance their differentiated instruction strategies. It is imperative that teacher preparation programs prioritize the acquisition of skills in the following areas: the development of adaptable lesson plans, the formulation of a comprehensive comprehension of student diversity, and the promotion of effective classroom management moving forward. Educators can cultivate a more inclusive and effective learning environment that caters to the requirements of all students by adopting these principles and consistently evaluating their teaching practices.

References

- Abramova, G. S., & Mashoshina, V. S. (2021). On Differentiation Strategies in the EFL Mixed-Ability Classroom: Towards Promoting the Synergistic Learning Environment. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 10(3), 558–573. <https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2021.3.558>
- Astuti, I., & Afendi, A. R. (2022). Implementation of Differentiated Learning Through Play Activities in Early Childhood. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 2(3), 358–365. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454ri.eduline1264>
- Bazer, Zaira Lyn C., M.-E., & Eslit, Edgar R., P. D. (2019). *Differentiated Learning Instruction Using ICT: Basis for Teaching Module in English*. April. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31721.34401>
- D. Jean Clandinin. (2007). *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*.
- Dee, A. L. (2011). Preservice teacher application of differentiated instruction. *Teacher Educator*, 46(1), 53–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2010.529987>
- Dianti, Y. (2017). Diferensiasi Pembelajaran. In *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, 6(11), 951–952. [http://repo.iain-tulungagung.ac.id/5510/5/BAB 2.pdf](http://repo.iain-tulungagung.ac.id/5510/5/BAB%202.pdf)
- Gibbs, G. (2013). Learning By Doing. In *Interdisciplinary Design Thinking in Architecture Education*. OCSLD. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003296355-30>
- Ježková, T. (2023). *Differentiation in a Heterogeneous ELT Class of Young Learners*.
- Komang Arie Suwastini, N. (2021). Differentiated Instruction for Efl

- Classroom. *TELL-US Journal*, 7(1), 14–41.
<https://doi.org/10.22202/tus.2021.v7i1.4719>
- Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the Narrative Research Approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(4), 56–69.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500405>
- Sofiana, N., Andriyani, S., Shofiyuddin, M., Mubarak, H., & Candraloka, O. R. (2024). The implementation of differentiated learning in ELT: Indonesian teachers' readiness. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 6(2), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.59400/fls.v6i2.1178>
- Tomlinson, Singapore, S., & Tokyo, T. (2014). *The Differentiated Classroom* Curriculum Development.
- Responding the Needs of All Learners*.
www.ascd.org/epubs.
- Valiandes, S., & Neophytou, L. (2018). Teachers' professional development for differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms: investigating the impact of a development program on teachers' professional learning and on students' achievement. *Teacher Development*, 22(1), 123–138.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2017.1338196>
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann, & Imbeau, M. B. (2010). Leading and managing a differentiated instruction. In *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and