



## DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES USED BY EFL SECONDARY STAGE TEACHERS: SELF-REPORTED VERSUS ACTUAL PRACTICE

Ala'a "Mohammed Sa'eed" Ibrahim Al-Omari<sup>\*1</sup>, Prof. Abdallah Baniabdelrahman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Dept. of Education, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan)

<sup>2</sup>(Professor, Curriculum and Instruction Department, Yarmouk University, Jordan)



### ABSTRACT

This study investigated EFL secondary stage teachers' perceptions of differentiated strategies used in their classrooms in Northern Al-Mazar Educational Directorate. It also aimed to explore the effect of teachers' gender and experiences on their perceptions towards differentiated strategies.

The sample of the study consisted of 23 female and 22 male English language teachers in Northern Al-Mazar Educational Directorate in the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015. The teachers were selected randomly with different years of experience and different places of teaching. A questionnaire developed by Hobson (2008) of 28 items Likert type and an observation checklist of 21 items were used to collect data for the study after establishing its validity and reliability mean scores.

The results of the study revealed positive attitudes among the English language teachers towards using differentiated strategies regardless their gender and year of experience. Furthermore, the study did not indicate any statistically significant differences between the English language teachers' gender and years of experience.

**Keywords:** *Differentiated Instructions, EFL Teacher, Perceptions, Actual practice and use, Strategies, Jordan*

### Citation:

**APA** Ibrahim Al-Omari.A.M.S and Baniabdelrahman.(2015).Differentiation Strategies used by EFL Secondary Stage Teachers: Self-Reported Versus Actual Practice.*Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 2(4), 27-41.

**MLA** Ala'a "Mohammed Sa'eed" Ibrahim Al-Omari\* and Abdallah, Baniabdelrahman. "Differentiation Strategies used by EFL Secondary Stage Teachers: Self-Reported Versus Actual Practice."*Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature-JOELL* 2.4 (2015):27-41.



## INTRODUCTION

Teaching, as a profession, requires a teacher who creates a learning atmosphere and communicates with passion for learning that can at least engage, if not stimulate, all learners. In fact, teaching achieves its effective goals when teachers interact with students, discover and motivate, feel the pulse of the classroom and finally modify or even adjust the teaching style and mode accordingly.

## DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONS: DEFINITION AND GUIDELINES

It has been proved academically that students learn differently. Students use their potentials and intelligences to acquire knowledge through learning and experience. Differentiated instruction is an approach that enables teachers to plan strategically to meet the needs of every student. It is rooted in the belief that there is variability among any group of learners. Therefore, teachers should adjust instruction accordingly (Tomlinson, 2003).

According to Parke (1989) to differentiate appropriately in a teaching program, differentiation should meet the following guidelines. First, programs should be flexible to respond to students' individual needs. Secondly, program options should correspond with the varying skills, abilities and interests of the students. Thirdly, grouping students in pattern should base on the unique needs and special space and finally, program planning and decision making should happen according to students' needs.

Tomlinson (1999) also identifies the following keys of a differentiated classroom. She believes that a teacher who is aware of and clear about the important differentiated instructions can understand, appreciate and identify students' differences. He/she can also instructionally and strategically adjust content, process and product in response to student readiness, interest and learning profile.

Tomlinson and Eidson (2003: 266) suggest that teachers must consider four key elements that can make a difference in student learning. Firstly, content is described as what students need to learn and the materials and strategies through which

learning is accomplished. Secondly, process includes the activities teacher designs to ensure that students use the skills to make sense of essential ideas and information. Thirdly, the product which consists of alternative ways that student can demonstrate mastery of concepts. And finally, the learning environment which refers to the classroom and how it is designed to meet the needs of the students.

Demos and Foshay (2009) assert that all students are unique and have different learning styles and preferences. Thus, the importance of differentiation comes from the fact that it can benefit all students regardless of their abilities, learning styles, interests, or cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Differentiation is about stimulation and response through content, process, product and learning atmosphere since students use various skills and techniques to acquire new information. So that, teachers work as discoverers who explore students' readiness, interests and learning profile inside and outside classrooms. (Tomlinson, 2000).

## THE NEED FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONS

In the past individualized student's needs and interests were almost neglected. Instruction was also teacher-centered rather than student-centered one (Hilyard 2004). Hilyard (2004:1) describes the curriculum and the instruction as "one-size-fits-all treatment" which means one teaching methods for all students. This affects learning negatively since classrooms will have some students who are physically present and others are mentally absent while learning.

However, today's educational system encounters new challenges and developments that have to account for the increased diversity in the classroom. Therefore, teachers have to modify the instructions based on students' academic level (i.e. gifted versus challenging), learning style or intelligence (visual versus auditory), learning disability (dyslexia versus dyscalculia), ethical, social and economical background (Hallahan, Kauffman and Pullen, 2000).

One of the reasons that demands differentiated instructions is that classrooms are



comprised of students with many needs such as language barriers, differences in learning abilities and the existence of achievement gaps (Tomlinson, 2005).

Rodriguez (2012: 20) advises teachers who teach English language learners "to practise intentional differentiation of both instructions and assessment." Therefore, teachers have to "tailor the curriculum in order to provide learners with opportunities to learn content and develop their language skills and proficiency in the second language.

Having special needs students at school is another reason to differentiate instructions. Teaching them by the use of traditional methods of teaching is almost ineffective. Their multiple intelligences might also vary to their illness accordingly (Hallahan, Kauffman and Pullen, 2000).

#### **THE PRINCIPLES OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

Heacox (2009) affirmed that when teachers effectively differentiate instruction, a continuous flow will be in the process of teaching, learning and assessment. These components operate not as steps that we follow, but rather as a continuous cycle; each process informs the others.

Tomlinson and Allan (2000) clarified the principles that teachers have to follow to differentiate instruction. The first principle is the flexible grouping which helps ensure students access to a wide variety of learning opportunities and working arrangements.

Demonstrating the clarity of goals is the second principle of differentiated instructions that helps both teachers and students understand modes of teaching, ways of grouping and other tools that can be used to promote individual and whole-class success.

Differentiated instruction stems also from the effective ongoing assessment of learners' needs.

Lastly, every learner must have tasks that are equally interesting and engaging to help him or her access to effective understanding and skills.

#### **BENEFITS OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

Tomlinson (2001) determined characteristics that students have such as readiness, interests and

learning profiles. In fact, before the implementation of differentiated instructions, teachers have to have some personal and academic background knowledge about students which can be performed by doing special tools of assessment.

Servilio (2009) identify some of the benefits of differentiated instructions. Firstly, differentiated instruction helps teachers verify each student's learning needs. Secondly, knowing students' learning profiles allows teachers to design activities that target the goals of learning. Thirdly, it provides students with a chance to accomplish challenging tasks successfully especially when students are motivated and engaged enough during the lesson.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Rodriguez (2012:3-4) demonstrates that differentiated instruction is a new approach of carrying out and providing instruction, but there is no obvious evidence that teachers implement such instructions while teaching.

In recent years the idea of "one-size-fits-all", instruction has been criticized by authors and researchers (e.g. Tomlinson, 1999 and Heacox, 2002) and the vast majority of the studies proved the effectiveness of various strategies of differentiated instruction on students' achievement. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers in Jordan employ the traditional methods of teaching. A clear piece of evidence can be proclaimed because many classrooms still adopt the traditional row of seating or the custodial room arrangement especially in classrooms where the space is not enough to do homogenous or heterogeneous groups.

Moreover, differentiation through "content" is rarely incorporated in EFL classrooms especially in governmental schools since the English text books have limited number of activities that do not match with the diversity of learning profiles and the multiple intelligences of all students. Consequently, this affects negatively their engagements, participations, motivations and academic achievements.

#### **QUESTIONS, PURPOSES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study tries to:



1. Investigate the EFL teachers' perceptions in Northern Al-Mazar Educational Directorate and their actual use of the differentiated strategies.
2. Examine the differentiated strategies teachers use inside their classrooms and their effect on students' learning of the English language.

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the use of differentiated instructions in their classrooms?
2. What differentiation strategies do EFL teachers use to match students' needs, interests and skills in mixed-ability groups or in straight rows at secondary schools and their effect on the learning of the English language?

This study drives its importance from the fact that it tackles and deals with teachers' knowledge and their performance inside classrooms. Hopefully, the results of this study may:

1. Facilitate the process of learning and teaching on EFL in Jordan.
2. Draw teachers' attention to the importance of differentiated instructions in order to meet the diversity of student large classes
3. Help EFL curricula designers plan for a differentiated curriculum that is flexible in its content, instruction and product and responsive to learners' individual needs and interests.

#### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Barakat (2006) conducted a study to determine the role of teacher inconsideration of his pupils individual differences related with some variables: sex, school level, qualification, specialization field, experience, and in-service workshops, The researchers constructed a questionnaire and distributed it to a sample of (200) teachers (100 males, and 100 females ). The results showed that the role of teachers in consideration of the individual differences was positive and high level.

Adlam (2007) investigated through a survey teachers' knowledge and use of differentiated instruction. The participants of this study consisted of 72 employees from the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB). The study focused specifically on how often teachers differentiated instruction in specific subject areas, and factors that helped or hindered implementing differentiated instruction. Adlam's data revealed that the majority of the teachers surveyed were knowledgeable about differentiated instruction. However, the data revealed that teachers were not regularly differentiating instruction in their classrooms because of their limited knowledge about tools, the time necessary to prepare to differentiate instruction, and the lack of resources available.

Hobson (2008) examined the differentiation strategies used by middle school teachers in heterogeneously grouped classrooms. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of a questionnaire and classroom observations. That study analyzed the frequency with which middle school teachers implement differentiation in their classrooms. It also explored which contextual or educational factors, if any, influence their frequency of use of these strategies to meet the needs of their diverse learners. The setting for the study was a middle school in southeastern North Carolina. The sample of the study was 42 participants; twenty of them participated in questionnaire and thirteen participated in observation. Results of the study indicated that there were two groups of teachers: those who differentiate frequently and those who differentiate with little frequency.

In a questionnaire of 42 items Amawi (2008) considered the teachers' perception of classroom questioning and its effect on students' English learning by examining the types of questions (high-level or low level questions), the purpose of asking questions, and the questioning techniques themselves being used in the classroom. The study also inspected the effect of teachers' gender and experiences on their perception toward classroom questioning. The results declared positive perceptions among teachers toward classroom



questioning regardless of their gender and years of experience. Besides, the results did not reveal any significant interaction between the English language teachers' gender and experience.

Butt and Kausar (2010) compared the differentiated instructions of public and private schools teachers. The objectives of the study were to explore the differentiated instructions of the public and private school teachers. A self constructed questionnaire and checklist were used as research tools. The results indicated that the teachers of private schools more differentiated their instructions as compared to the teachers of public schools. The responses showed that the teachers of public schools were also aware of the importance of differentiated instructions but due to some problems like overcrowded classrooms, lack of teachers' training, lengthy syllabus and to some extent lack of teacher's interest, teachers of public schools could not differentiate their instructions.

Rodriguez (2012) through using a questionnaire investigates 99 teachers' knowledge about differentiated instruction; how often teachers differentiate instruction in specific subject areas; and factors that help or hinder the implementation of differentiated instruction. The results of the study demonstrated that the majority of the teachers surveyed were familiar with differentiated instruction; however, because of their unfamiliarity of available tools, the immense amount of preparation time involved coupled with lack of resources, many teachers did not differentiate instruction in their classrooms.

Alikabari and Haghighi (2014) conducted a study that explored the usefulness of differentiated instruction and traditional-based pedagogy in the promotion of male and female learners reading comprehension in separate gender educational system. Forty seven elementary students of a language institute in Iran were chosen and divided into experimental and control groups, including one male and one female classroom in each category. The outcomes of ANOVA from post-test results indicated that the students of the experimental group outperformed the control one. Further, the

computation of post hoc analysis revealed that female learners of the experimental group performed better in comparison to male ones in the post-test.

Al-Omari and Bataineh (2014) explored EFL teachers' awareness and incorporation of the Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT) into their pedagogical practices in light of some variables. The sample consisted of 141 male and female EFL teachers who taught the first-, fourth-, eighth- and eleventh grade Action Pack textbooks in the public schools of the First Directorate of Education (Irbid, Jordan). The findings reveal that teachers reported both awareness and incorporation of MIT in their teaching, even though more so for male teachers than their female counterparts, which could be attributed to self-study or access to other resources.

Maddox (2015) tried to find out how elementary (K-5) teachers define, familiarize, use, and perceive differentiation. Purposeful sampling identified 12 participants for individual or focus group interviews. The findings revealed that teacher participants understood the textbook definition of differentiated instruction and focused on student grouping to create differentiated classrooms. Despite that understanding of differentiation, participants perceived differentiation as time consuming and challenging due to a lack of materials and diverse populations.

## CONCLUSION

Differentiating instruction can assist students in the learning process and help students to reveal what they are learning. In fact, teachers who differentiate instruction consider their students' learning styles, readiness levels, and interests when planning for instruction. They also differentiate instruction also adjust the content, process, and product of learning to maximize the students' learning ability and minimize their roles as guiders and facilitators.

By looking into the previous studies, it's clear that there are similarities and differences between the current study and the previous ones. They generally favored differentiated instruction as a priority to students' learning. However, it differs from other studies in choosing the population, the number



of sample, the psychological social educational period of the student , the mother tongue language students speak, and technology services existed.

In particular, what distinguishes this study from the others studied done on this topic is the following remarks: Firstly, Hobson's study (2008), for example, investigated the idea of differentiated instructions among multilingual societies where students may come from different cultural backgrounds and the English language is not their mother tongue and it is the media of instruction being used in such schools. On the contrary, students of Al-Mazar district speak the English as a foreign language being taught as schools only. That is to say, those students share the same cultural background and speak the Arabic language as their mother tongue.

Secondly, the present study tried to account for the c strategies used by EFL teachers who work in the secondary stage and their perception and actual practice of a such matter. Teachers are restricted by law to use only the given curriculum. Consequently, differentiation of content is not widely used because of the absence of given worksheets and supporting learning materials.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### INTRODUCTION

This study investigated differentiation strategies used by EFL secondary stage teachers and their perceptions. It dealt with the methods and procedures of the study. It presented the population, sample, variables of the study, validity and reliability of the instrument, data collection and data analysis, too.

### POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study consisted of 75 male and female English language teachers of the secondary stage in Northern Al-Mazar Directorate of Education. There are eight villages in Northern Al-Mazar. Each village has two secondary public schools: one for boys and another for girls.

### SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

The sample of the study consisted of 45 EFL teachers (23 females and 22 males) who were selected randomly with different years of experience

and different schools to participate in answering the questionnaire of the study.

**Table 1: Distribution of the Sample**

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	22	48.9
	Female	23	51.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Experience	1 to less than 5	6	13.3
	5 to less than 10	15	33.3
	10 to less than 15	16	35.6
	more than 15	8	17.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## INSTRUMENTS OF THE STUDY

Two instruments were used to achieve the objectives of this study:

- 1- A questionnaire consisted of two scales. The scale that reflects the teacher's knowledge and skills with respect to the differentiated instructions. The other scale examined the frequency in which the teacher uses differentiated strategies in the classroom.
- 2- An observation checklist of differentiated strategies was used to record data collected from the teacher observations. The researchers attended 45 classes and did the observation to take notes of the classroom differentiated instructions used by teachers.

It is worth mentioning that both of the questionnaire and the observation checklist were originally developed by Hobson (2008). Hobson adapted the questionnaire from Carol Tomlinson's Teacher/Peer Reflection on Differentiation Instrument (2000). Yet, the researchers adopted them and made some changes to suit the purpose and the population of the study.

## VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

The first draft of the questionnaire and the observation checklist were given to a jury of four experts in Yarmouk University. One of those experts was from the Department of English Language and Literature at Yarmouk University and the rest were from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the same university. Their recommendations were analyzed and taken into consideration. The first recommendation of the jury was to go back into the literature review and construct the items according to the topic. The questionnaire in its first form consisted of 34 items and after establishing validity,



the number was reduced to 28 five-point Likert items. The third recommendation was to restate some items to match them with teachers' perceptions.

In order to ensure the study validity, correlation coefficients between each item and

domain and between each domain and study tool were extracted. Table 2 illustrates the results.

**Table 2: Correlation Coefficients between Items, Domains and Study Tools**

N0	Correlation between item and domain	Correlation between item and study tool	N0	Correlation between item and domain	Correlation between item and study tool
1	0.687**	0.589**	6	0.573**	0.548**
2	0.449**	0.425**	7	0.413**	0.422**
3	0.566**	0.415**	8	0.638**	0.496**
4	0.602**	0.482**	9	0.725**	0.676**
5	0.575**	0.538**	10	0.800**	0.704**
<b>General</b>		<b>0.850**</b>	11	0.379**	0.172
13	0.813**	0.804**	12	0.640**	0.566**
14	0.695**	0.680**	<b>Content (curriculum)</b>		<b>0.826**</b>
15	0.762**	0.648**	25	0.693**	0.631**
16	0.704**	0.546**	26	0.726**	0.366*
17	0.755**	0.690**	27	0.828**	0.512**
18	0.809**	0.747**	28	0.689**	0.721**
<b>Process (instruction)</b>		<b>0.911**</b>	<b>Products</b>		<b>0.762**</b>
19	0.695**	0.572**			
20	0.648**	0.573**			
21	0.757**	0.792**			
22	0.830**	0.795**			
23	0.616**	0.540**			
24	0.764**	0.695**			
<b>Instructional/ management strategies</b>		<b>0.917**</b>			

\* Correlation is significant at level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

\*\* Correlation is significant at level ( $\alpha \leq 0.01$ )

#### RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers conducted a pilot study on 14 teachers who were not included in the sample of this study. A copy of the questionnaire was distributed to those teachers to answer its items and then the copies were collected. After two weeks, the questionnaire was submitted in the same way. It was found 0.961 by the use of Person correlation to calculate the responses. The reliability was also established by calculating Cronbach Alpha and it was found to be 0.928, which is considered a reasonable value to conduct this study.

Concerning the reliability of the observation checklist, the researchers conducted a pilot study on the same excluded 14 teachers whose classes were being attended. Then, a Person correlation was also

used to calculate the frequencies. It was found 92.5%. Calculating the reliability was also established by the use of Cronbach Alpha and it was found to be 0.95 of their actual use of differentiated strategies.

#### VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The study has two independent Variables:

- 1- Experience: It was divided into four levels ( $>0 \leq 5$ ), ( $>5 \leq 10$ ), ( $>10 \leq 15$ ) and ( $>15$ ).
- 2- Gender: Male and Female

The dependent variable is the EFL teachers' actual use of differentiated instruction strategies.

#### DATA COLLECTION

This study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015, and after validating and establishing the reliability of the questionnaire and checklist, the researchers collected



data through visiting the schools in Northern Al-Mazar Directorate of Education and distributed the copies of the questionnaire hand to hand to EFL teachers. The researchers explained the purpose of for academic purposes.

The participants filled in the questionnaire inside their classrooms to insure unaided responses and to clarify any misconception. Then the researchers collected the copies of the questionnaire to get the data computed and analyzed.

The classroom observations were completed over a period of six weeks during the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015; the researchers attended a class for each of the teachers of the observation sample (See classroom visiting schedule appendix).

#### DATA ANALYSIS

1. Each item of the questionnaire was followed by five options (always, usually, sometimes, rarely and never). These options were given values that rank from 5 to 1 (always =5,

the study to them thoroughly. For the observation, the researchers attended classes for each teacher of the sample. He assured them that their responses would be kept confidential and would be used only usually =4, sometimes =3, rarely = 2 and never =1).

2. SPSS software was used to analyze:
  - Means , Standard deviation and Frequencies.
3. ANOVA test was also used.

#### THE RESULTS

**Results related to the first question:** *What are the EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the use of differentiated instructions in their classrooms?*

To answer this question, means, standard deviations and agreement degree of the teachers' responses on each of the item of the questionnaire were calculated. Table 3 presents the results.

**Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of the EFL teachers' Perceptions of EFL to all of the Items (n= 45)**

No	Rank	General	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Agreement Degree
1	3	I give different students the same concept/topic at the same time but in different complexity.	3.93	0.86	High
2	18	I try to use long-term investigation to solve the problems that face my students (e.g., vague content, lack of beliefs).	3.53	0.63	Moderate
3	27	I pre- test students before a unit to eliminate instructions in areas of competence.	3.16	0.93	Moderate
4	8	I use materials in which students practice a set of oral skills(e.g., listening, speaking)	3.82	0.91	High
5	24	I group students to accomplish tasks and change group according to students' needs and interests.	3.33	1.17	Moderate
<b>Average</b>			3.55	0.95	Moderate
No	Rank	Content (curriculum)	Mean	Standard.	Agreement





				<b>Deviation</b>	<b>Degree</b>
6	16	I provide supplementary materials at varied skills.	3.62	0.81	Moderate
7	21	I use small –group instruction for advanced students.	3.44	1.06	Moderate
8	6	I demonstrate ideas or skills in addition to talking about them.	3.87	0.87	High
9	13	I present materials that encourage further exploration of topics of interest.	3.71	0.84	High
10	1	I use wait time to allow students' reflection.	4.18	1.07	High
11	15	I design lessons that are based on major concepts and generalizations.	3.67	0.90	High
12	24	I present materials in visual, auditory and kinesthetic mode.	3.33	1.04	Moderate
<b>Average</b>			3.68	0.94	High
<b>No</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Process (instruction)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard. Deviation</b>	<b>Agreement Degree</b>
13	18	I teach with whole to-part and part –to-whole approaches	3.53	0.92	Moderate
14	17	I make task directions more detailed and specific for some learners and open for others.	3.56	0.97	Moderate
15	9	I use a variety of criteria for success, based on whole-class requirements as well as on individual student readiness of needs.	3.80	0.92	High
16	9	I design tasks that require multiple interests for successful completion.	3.80	0.79	High
17	2	I encourage students to work together or independently.	4.04	1.07	High
18	12	I develop activities that seek multiple perspectives on topics and issues.	3.76	1.05	High
<b>Average</b>			3.74	0.95	High



No	Rank	Instructional/ management strategies	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Agreement Degree
19	23	I use various ways to rearrange the furniture to allow for individual, small group and whole group work.	3.38	1.13	Moderate
20	20	I deal with materials when students move from one place to another.	3.47	0.99	Moderate
21	4	I teach available materials and supplies.	3.91	0.92	High
22	4	I try to make appropriate care for materials and supplies.	3.91	1.02	High
23	11	I inform students that these materials and supplies are appropriate in given time.	3.78	0.97	High
24	7	I differentiate questions in discussions, homework /or test.	3.84	1.07	High
<b>Average</b>			3.71	1.01	High
No	Rank	Products	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Agreement Degree
25	14	I give product assignments that are different and based on individual readiness , learning profile and interest	3.69	0.92	High
26	28	I provide access to use internet sites at different levels of complexity.	3.07	1.05	Moderate
27	26	I allow students to use a range of media or formats to express their understanding and oral /academic skills.	3.29	1.06	Moderate
28	21	I provide opportunities for student products to be based upon solving real problems. (e.g., educational ,social)	3.44	1.16	Moderate
<b>Average</b>			3.37	1.04	Moderate
<b>The whole scale</b>			3.63	0.97	Moderate

The questionnaire used to collect the data is divided into five main headings with subheading called "items" for each namely: General 1 to 5, Content (Curriculum) 6-12, Process (Instruction) 13-16, Instructional/Management strategies 19-24 and Product 25-28.

The findings for the first question show that English language teachers have varied perceptions of the use of differentiation in their classrooms. EFL Teachers are completely aware of the questionnaire items to be mostly used to differentiate strategies in their classrooms. To state it differently, Table 3 demonstrates that differentiation of "Process"



prescribed by EFL teaches with an average mean of 3.74 ranked first. Differentiation of "instructional/management strategies" is the second rank with an average mean of 3.71. The overall mean of all of the items was high.

Subsequently, the third ranked strategy in the questionnaire was differentiation of "Content" with an average mean of 3.68. The next highest means were seen in "General" differentiation and differentiation of "Product" with means of 3.55 and 3.37 respectively.

It is important to mention that the agreement degree of the questionnaire can be divided into three categories: the "low" agreement

degree ranges from 1-2.33, the "moderate" agreement degree starts from 2.34 and ends at 3.66, and the "high" agreement degree reaches from 3.67 to 5. According to this classification, the teachers' perceptions are positive. There were 14 "moderate" agreement degrees and 14 "high" agreements of degrees.

**Results related to the second question:**

*What differentiation strategies do teachers use to match students' needs, interests and skills in mixed-ability groups or in straight rows at secondary schools?*

**Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations For Differentiation Strategies**

No	Content (curriculum)	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Rank	Agreement Degree
6	I provide supplementary materials at varied skills.	3.62	0.81	14	Moderate
7	I use small –group instruction for advanced students.	3.44	1.06	18	Moderate
8	I demonstrate ideas or skills in addition to talking about them.	3.87	0.87	5	High
9	I present materials that encourage further exploration of topics of interest.	3.71	0.84	11	High
10	I use wait time to allow students' reflection.	4.18	1.07	1	High
11	I design lessons that are based on major concepts and generalizations.	3.67	0.90	13	High
12	I present materials in visual, auditory and kinesthetic mode.	3.33	1.04	21	Moderate
	<b>Average</b>	3.68	0.94		High
No	Process (instruction)	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Rank	Agreement Degree
13	I teach with whole to-part and part –to-whole approaches	3.53	0.92	16	Moderate
14	I make task directions more detailed and	3.56	0.97	15	Moderate



	specific for some learners and open for others.				
15	I use a variety of criteria for success, based on whole-class requirements as well as on individual student readiness of needs.	3.80	0.92	7	High
16	I design tasks that require multiple interests for successful completion.	3.80	0.79	7	High
17	I encourage students to work together or independently.	4.04	1.07	2	High
18	I develop activities that seek multiple perspectives on topics and issues.	3.76	1.05	10	High
	<b>Average</b>	3.74	0.95		High
<b>No</b>	<b>Instructional/ management strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard. Deviation</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Agreement Degree</b>
19	I use various ways to rearrange the furniture to allow for individual, small group and whole group work.	3.38	1.13	20	Moderate
20	I deal with materials when students move from one place to another.	3.47	0.99	17	Moderate
21	I teach available materials and supplies.	3.91	0.92	3	High
22	I try to make appropriate care for materials and supplies.	3.91	1.02	3	High
23	I inform students that these materials and supplies are appropriate in given time.	3.78	0.97	9	High
24	I differentiate questions in discussions, homework /or test.	3.84	1.07	6	High
	<b>Average</b>	3.71	1.01		High
<b>No</b>	<b>Products</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard. Deviation</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Agreement Degree</b>
25	I give product assignments that are different and based on individual readiness , learning	3.69	0.92	12	High



	profile and interest				
26	I provide access to use internet sites at different levels of complexity.	3.07	1.05	23	Moderate
27	I allow students to use a range of media or formats to express their understanding and oral /academic skills.	3.29	1.06	22	Moderate
28	I provide opportunities for student products to be based upon solving real problems. (e.g., educational ,social)	3.44	1.16	18	Moderate
	<b>Average</b>	3.37	1.04		Moderate
	<b>The whole scale</b>	3.47	0.97		Moderate

Table 4 shows that teachers use the most following items to match students' needs, interests and skills in mixed-ability groups or in straight rows at It has been notified earlier that the questionnaire is outlined where there are five main headings through which teacher may knowledge differentiation strategy. Differentiation strategy via "Product" items 25-28 ranked as the fifth/ the lowest level of perception by teacher with a "Moderate" degree of agreement. In fact, this gives an important clue that they believe that it is not that important to provide access to use internet sites at different levels of complexity because they may think accessing the internet is only supplementary or it is limited in use in schools. This fact is proven with item number 26 "I allow students to use a range of media or formats to express their understanding and oral /academic skills" in the questionnaire where teachers' degree of agreement was "Medium", too.

By contrast, teachers totally agree that when they encourage their students to work together or independently, differentiation by "Process (instruction) which ranked first in terms of "Agreement Degree" can highly be accomplished.

Although there were no significant statistical differences between the teachers' perceptions of all five main heading of differentiation strategy since their average mean ranges from (3.37 of the lowest to 3.74 of the highest), teachers' understanding of

such strategies is in question. They viewed some of them as challenging or even a waste of time due to the lack of supporting learning environments. This finding is in agreement with Maddox (2015) who confirmed that teachers perceived differentiation as "time consuming and challenging due to a lack of materials."

*Discussion of the result of the second question: What differentiated strategies do teachers use to match students' needs, interests and skills in mixed-ability groups or in straight rows at secondary schools?*

The second question inspected the differentiated strategies do teachers actually use in Al-Mazar Directorate of Education. To answer this question, teachers were asked to indicate the frequency in which they used specific differentiation strategy in their classrooms namely: (a) differentiated content, (b) differentiated process, (c) differentiated instructional/ management strategies and (d) differentiated products.

The teachers' responses to the 28 items that appeared in the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of frequency. Data revealed that the actual use of differentiation strategies was achieved as a whole (i.e. the heading with its items) through the use of "Process", "Instructional/ Management Strategies", "Content" and "Product" in order of the most frequent used to the least one as shown by the



use of average mean in Table 4 before in chapter four.

After determining the "Agreement Degree" of differentiation, teachers were divided into two groups: "High Frequent Users" and "Moderate Frequent Users of differentiation". In the light of these percentages, the researchers also discovered that there is a slight gap between the two groups, some teachers implement Content, Product, Process and Instructional / Management strategies while others do not vary these implementations

The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents were knowledgeable about most of used strategies they were presented. Of the 28 differentiated strategies, 83% of the teacher respondents were most familiar with using wait time to allow students' reflection, 80% of the teacher respondents were most familiar with encouraging students to work together or independently 78% of the teacher respondents were most familiar with teaching available materials and supplies, 78% of the teacher respondents were most familiar with trying to make appropriate care of materials and supplies, 77% of the teacher respondents were most familiar with demonstrating ideas or skills in addition to talking about them.

Teachers tended to use differentiation strategies of "Content" remarkably if the curriculum is built based on themes, topic and concepts. This was used intensively by teachers because the lesson objectives of the textbook can be specified for both high and low achievers.

Differentiation strategy of "Process" was mostly used when teachers teach whole to part and part to whole, from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. Teachers wanted to make sure that low achievers are not excluded and they participate while delivering the differentiated instructions.

Engaging in independent learning with a diverse learning needs was performed while mastering differentiation through "Learning Environment". In fact, this indicates that teachers prefer to prepare a leaning environment where students are seated in straight rows to work

independently. The last form of differentiation strategy of "Students' Products" was seen greatly when teachers allow oral, visual, auditory and practical product alternatives. Again, this asserts that teachers have sufficient knowledge of students' types of learners. Teachers allowed their students to choose their products according to their preferences, interest and needs (See Parke, 1989 and Tomlinson, 1999).

### CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Differentiated instruction is a method of designing and delivering instruction so that every student can learn in a way that matches his interest and satisfies his need. Educationalists assert that every student is unique in his learning style and views things differently. (Bataineh, 2013) believes that "students have similar styles but that, like fingerprints, no two are identical."

The study revealed positive perceptions towards differentiated strategies and the effect of using them in classrooms regardless of the EFL teachers' gender and level of experience. However, observations showed that the positive perceptions did not match the effective or adequate use of the differentiated strategies in classes.

Data obtained by this study revealed that the actual use of differentiation strategies was mastered as a whole (i.e. the heading with its items) through the use of "Process", "Instructional/ Management Strategies", "Content" and "Product" in order of the most frequent used to the least one.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

It is the recommended that EFL teachers should be enrolled in workshops of differentiation instruction strategies.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A more detailed study might be done to teachers who were enrolled in professional development session and educational conferences to determine exactly what kind of effect has on teachers will have on their actual use of differentiation inside classrooms.

### REFERENCES



- [1]. Adlam, E. (2007). Differentiated instruction in the Elementary School: Investigating the knowledge Elementary teachers Possess When Implementing Differentiated Instruction in their Classrooms. (Master's Thesis). Retrieved from *ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis database*. (UMI No. 340033055)
- [2]. Aliakbari , M and Haghghi, 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 Journal*, (98), 182 – 189. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article>
- [3]. Amawi, Amal . (2008). *English Language Teachers' Classroom Questioning: Self-Reported versus Actual Practice*. Unpublished Master Thesis, Yarmouk University
- [4]. Barakat, Zeiad.(2006). "The Role of Teacher In Consideration of his Pupils Individual Differences and Relation to Some Variables." *Educational Sciences Journal*, 7 (4). ISN 371565 . pages 158-288. Al- Quds Open University.
- [5]. Bataineh, R. (2013). "About This Community: Meet Ruba Bataineh". *The Newsletter of the Applied Linguists Interest Section*.  
<http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolalis/issues/2013-07-23/7.html>
- [6]. Butt, M & Kausar, S. (2010). "A Comparative Study of Using Differentiated Instructions of Public and Private School Teachers." *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education* 12(1),
- [7]. Demos, E. S., & Foshay, J. (2009). "Differentiated Instruction: Using a Case study." *New England Reading Association Journal*, 44(2), 26-30.
- [8]. Hallahan, D. P., Kauffman, J. M & Pullen, P.C . (2000). *Exceptional Learners: Introduction to Special Education*. Toronto, Ontario: Allyn & Bacon.
- [9]. Heacox, D. (2002). *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom: How to Reach and Teach all Learners, Grades 3-12*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.
- [10]. Heacox, D. (2009). *Making differentiation a habit*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Inc
- [11]. Hilyard, V. M. (2004). *Teachers' Understanding and Use of Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database*. (UMI No. 3134972).
- [12]. Hobson, Meredith. L. (2008). *An Analysis of Differentiation Strategies Used by Middle School Teachers In Heterogeneously Grouped Classroom*.  
<http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncw/listing.aspx?id=515>
- [13]. Maddox, C (2015) *Elementary (K-5) Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University.
- [14]. Parke, B. (1989). *Gifted Students in Regular Classrooms*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- [15]. Rodriguez, Alixa (2012). *An analysis of Elementary School Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Differentiated Instructions* (Doctoral Dissertation).<http://digitalcommons.olivet.edu>
- [16]. Servilio, K. (2009). "You Get to Choose! Motivating Students to Read Through Differentiated Instruction." [Electronic version]. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, 5(5), 2-11.
- [17]. Tomlinson .C.A. (1999). *The differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of all Learners*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED401274)
- [18]. Tomlinson .C.A & Allan .S.D. (2000). *Leadership for Differentiating Schools and Classroom*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development1703N.Beauregard St. Alexandria, VA22311-1714 USA.
- [19]. Tomlinson. C.A. (2000). *Differentiation of Instruction in the Elementary grades*. Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED443572)
- [20]. Tomlinson. C.A. (2001). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*. (2nd ed). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Understanding the Keys to Motivation to Learn University of Chicago Press.
- [21]. Tomlinson ,C.A.,& Eidson ,C.C. ( 2003). *Differentiation in Practice ;A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 5-9*. Alexandria ,VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- [22]. Tomlinson .C.A., & Strickland,C .A (2005). *Differentiation in Practice :A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum* . Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development