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# Influence of Differentiated Instruction Workshop on Taiwanese Elementary School English Teachers' Activity Design

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***Abstract*—This study discusses the influence of a differentiated instruction workshop on thirteen Taiwanese elementary school English teachers' activity designs in English lesson plans. Theoretical concepts, lesson demonstration, and hands-on activities on differentiating instruction were provided in the workshops. These English teachers demonstrated the competence and skills in differentiated instruction by designing choices for class activities or homework. However, these English teachers lacked the competence in designing activities for deeper learning objectives, designing diverse instructional strategies or activities, and using simple English to explain the choices.**

***Index Terms*—activity design, choice, competence, differentiated instruction, level, workshop**

## I. Introduction

Since 2001 and 2005 academic year, fifth and sixth graders and third through sixth graders in elementary schools in Taiwan have begun to learn English (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2005). The "two-peak phenomenon" or "bimodal distribution" in elementary school English education has been a serious problem in Taiwan. English teachers have to face learners with big English proficiency gaps between those who cannot identify twenty-six alphabet letters to those who can read novels and answer post-reading comprehension questions.

The majority of elementary school English teachers in Taiwan employ the classroom management strategy such as asking the high achievers to help the lower achievers in mixed-level English classes (Chan 2008; Chiu, 2008; Hsu, 2009; Liu, 2008). Differentiated instruction could be one of the instructional strategies to meet the needs of learners at different proficiency levels (Hall, 2009; Logan, 2011; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007). The English teacher in Chien's (2013) study differentiated her English instruction in terms of content, process, and product through choice boards and Question, Answer Relationship (QAR).

Support for teachers to meet learners with different needs must be provided through professional development (Frieberg, 2002; McNaughton, Hall, & Maccini, 2001). Professional development for elementary school English teachers should focus on differentiated instruction in Taiwan. This study discusses the influence of differentiated instruction workshops on thirteen Taiwanese elementary school English teachers' activity design in English lesson plans. Suggestions on effective design and delivery of professional development on differentiated instruction for elementary school English teachers' are provided.

## II. Literature Review

The literature review focuses on teachers' perception of differentiated instruction and professional development on differentiated instruction.

### *A. Teachers' Perceptions of Differentiated Instruction*

Meeting the needs of diverse students has been regarded as one of the challenges that most teachers face in the classroom, because teachers claim that they lack the knowledge and skills in adapting the curriculum material for learners' different learning styles and academic performance (Greenwood, Kamps, Terry, & Linebarger, 2007; Tobin & Tippett, 2013; Tomlinson, 2003). McGarvey, Marriot, Morgan, and Abbott (1997) discovered that fewer than half the teachers provided class activities to meet students' wide range of abilities. Tomlinson (1999) explained why teachers, particularly novice teachers, have challenges in designs and deliver differentiated instruction as follows:

Once in their own classrooms, the undertow for new teachers to "teach to the middle" is profound, both because of the complexity of teaching and because of peer pressure to conform to the "the way we do school here". The few novice teachers who had [master teachers who differentiated instruction] were far more likely to do this in their first teaching placement than their classmates (p. 115).

Teachers in Tomlinson's (1995) study felt reluctant to implement differentiated instruction because they considered differentiated instruction as just a top-down school policy and fad. They lacked competence in teaching with various

resources and confidence in overseeing multiple activities in class and helping students develop self-management. They had no common definitions of differentiated instruction and needed a model on differentiated instruction.

Teachers in Benjamin (2002) study felt reluctant to differentiate their instruction because of the following five top reasons: "just throwing the baby out with the bathwater," "abandoning basic skills and trying to reinvent the wheel, but that things cannot be made any better than they already are," "just another phase and the pendulum will swing the other way soon because the emphasis on testing will not last forever," and "bringing a horse to water but that one cannot make him drink."

Corley (2005) identifies three major concerns regarding ineffective implementation of differentiated instruction in the classrooms as follows:

The greatest challenge to implementing differentiated instruction relates to time: the planning time that teachers need to assess learners' needs, interests, and readiness levels; to determine key concepts and organizing questions; and to design appropriate activities for each learner. The next issue relates to classroom management and the changing role of the teacher from dispenser of knowledge to facilitator of learning. The third issue concerns the need for teachers to acquire and use strategies that may be new to them (p. 15).

With regard to the instructional strategies related to differentiated instruction, the top strategies that 103 elementary and middle school teachers in the Midwest were knowledgeable were flexible grouping, independent projects/investigations, varied instructional materials, and varying questions (Rodrigue, 2012). By contrary, the top three strategies that teachers were least familiar with were independent study, provisions for student choices, and curriculum compacting. Moreover, while knowledge and experience and availability of materials were identified by the teachers as the key to facilitate the implementation of differentiated instruction within the classroom, availability of materials and amount of planning time needed were the main factors that hinder the use of differentiated instruction.

On the other hand, Kirkley (2005) first thought that applying differentiated instruction as tiring and overwhelming. After conducting an action research on implementing differentiated instruction on reading, Kirkley regarded differentiated instruction as a proactive approach to learning and classroom management. Sixty-four teachers in five primary schools in Scott and Spencer's (2006) study had a positive attitude toward the adaptive or differentiated teaching practice. In Logan's (2011) study, 94.3% of 141 surveyed teachers in southeast Georgia responded that they should take learners' commonalities and differences into consideration when they differentiate their instruction. Process (88.6%) was regarded the top area that these teachers should differentiate their instruction, followed by products/assessments (87.2%) and content and materials (85.8%).

To sum up, when being asked to implement differentiated instruction, most teachers felt reluctant, because they claimed they lacked knowledge, skills, and resources in adapting materials to meet students' diverse needs. They also doubted they could find the time to plan it. This study discusses the influence of differentiated instruction workshops on Taiwanese English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' activity design on differentiated instruction.

### *B. Professional Development on Differentiated Instruction*

Compared to novice teachers, experienced teachers in Affholder's (2003) study favored differentiated instruction, because they were familiar with the curriculum they taught and had received extensive training on differentiated instruction before implementing these instructional methods and strategies in the classroom. Teachers in Carolan and Guinn (2007) complained about a lack of professional development on differentiated instruction as one of the reasons for refusing to implement it. Therefore, professional development and training on differentiated instruction are essential for teachers (Blozowich, 2001; Corley, 2005; Haynes, 2011; Hobson, 2008; Holloway, 2000; McAdamis, 2001; Rodrigue, 2012; Subban, 2006). A variety of professional development programs or site-based collaborative learning activities (i.e. learning communities, coaching, mentoring, study groups, workshops, or consultation) are essential to create a shared culture of differentiated instruction (Cusumano & Mueller, 2007; McQuarrie & McBae's, 2010; National Reading Technical Assistance Center, NRTAC, 2010). Teachers in McQuarrie and McBae's (2010) study who effectively implemented differentiated instruction in Alberta, Canada concluded that enhanced student learning starts with purposeful and high-quality professional development on differentiated instruction.

To respond to a very culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse student body, professors from a local university provided professional development on differentiated instruction and co-teaching for elementary school teachers in Santamaria and Thousand's (2004) study in California. Through the collaboration and co-teaching, these teachers applied differentiated instruction to their classroom practice through clarifying key concepts, providing students with choices, engaging students in various learning tasks.

The professional development in Scott and Spencer's (2006) study included three segments: characteristics of differentiated instruction, strategies for differentiated instruction, and group work on specific strategies for differentiated instruction. The professional development arouse teachers' positive attitude toward the adaptive or differentiated teaching practice.

Hines (2012), a middle school practitioner, designed and provided a workshop for 72 pre-service middle school teachers in Arkansas. The content of the workshop included the following elements: (1) an explanation of the need for the teachers to develop differentiated instructional teaching skills, (2) techniques on evaluating students' learning styles, preferences, and abilities, (3) designing tiered lessons for different groups of students with the opportunity to complete different learning activities, (4) creating learning groups in accordance to students' learning styles, preferences, and

abilities, (5) strategies for evaluating the assessments' alignment with lesson objectives, and (6) observing mentor teachers' implementation of each method of differentiated instruction. Hines (2012) concluded that African-American teachers were concerned the least about differentiated instruction. Hines also suggests that continuous in-service support for developing differentiated instruction teaching skills should be given in order to meet the needs of African-American students.

Tomlinson (1999) made five suggestions for teacher-education programs and school districts for differentiated instruction: (1) have clear expectations for the novice teachers' growth in student-centered and responsive instruction, (2) provide teachers with clear models for differentiated curriculum and instruction, (3) provide teachers with mentoring and help teachers reflect on their learners' needs, (4) make sure that teachers are comfortable in implementing differentiated instruction and strategies and (5) provide novice teachers with partnerships with teachers who employ differentiated instruction (p. 115).

Effective workshops or professional development can help teachers become equipped with the competence and skills to implement differentiated instruction. The above-mentioned studies discuss the designs and delivery of professional development for general education teachers in elementary and middle schools. This study specifically focuses on the knowledge base and skill of differentiated instruction workshops for EFL teachers.

## III. Method

This study employs case study and this study analyzes a workshop and English teachers' activity design in natural settings. In this study, the case is a workshop and the unit of analysis is document designed and created in this workshop.

This paper discusses the following two issues: (1) What knowledge base and skills in differentiated instruction were delivered and missed in this workshop? and (2) What knowledge and skills did the English teacher demonstrate and lack when they designed lesson plans and did microteaching?

### *A. Setting and Participants*

The six additional credits for elementary school English teachers include two courses, "Teaching English Listening and Speaking" and "Teaching English Reading and Writing." The study was conducted during an intensive teacher training Teaching English Listening and Speaking in a consecutive nine-day period, with six hours each day during the summer of 2013.

The participants were thirteen elementary school English teachers in a city in northern Taiwan and they simultaneously enrolled in the Teaching English Listening and Speaking. These English teachers fell into three age groups, below 30 (6 teachers), 40-50 (5 teachers), and over 50 years old (2 teachers). Only one teacher had a master's degree in TESOL and the rest of them had their bachelor's degree in education. With regard to years of English-teaching experience, the minimum and maximum teaching years were 3 and 10, with an average of 4.4 years. With regard to their English teachers' qualification, only one teacher was an English major and the rest of the teachers had taken an elementary school English teacher 20-credit course.

### *B. Data Collection*

The major data in this study included: (1) PowerPoint slides on differentiated instruction, (2) forty-minute lesson plans, (3) ten-minute microteaching on the lesson plan, and (4) teachers' reflections.

The instructor uploaded the PowerPoint slides and teaching materials on Edmodo. The thirteen participants were invited to join this class space and they were able to upload their assignments to Edmodo and download all the class materials. The thirteen English teachers' ten-minute microteaching was videotaped and transcribed.

On the last day, they were asked to reflect on their own practice on differentiated instruction and answer the following questions: (1) What challenges did you face when you designed and demonstrated this differentiated instruction lesson? (2) How would you revise your lesson to meet students' diverse needs and proficiency levels? and (3) What new insights have you learned about differentiated instruction from the design and delivery of this lesson plan?

### *C. Data Analysis*

After all the data were collected, typed, and transcribed, the data were analyzed and coded in the following three stages First, the data were marked with codes (e.g., QAR, choices etc.). Secondly, based on these codes, the data were sorted and labeled with tentative categories (e.g., theories, activities,). Finally, the data were grouped into different themes that were related to the research questions, as in Figure 1. The researcher shared the findings with these thirteen English teachers for member checking and a colleague who is in the field of language teacher education for the validity.

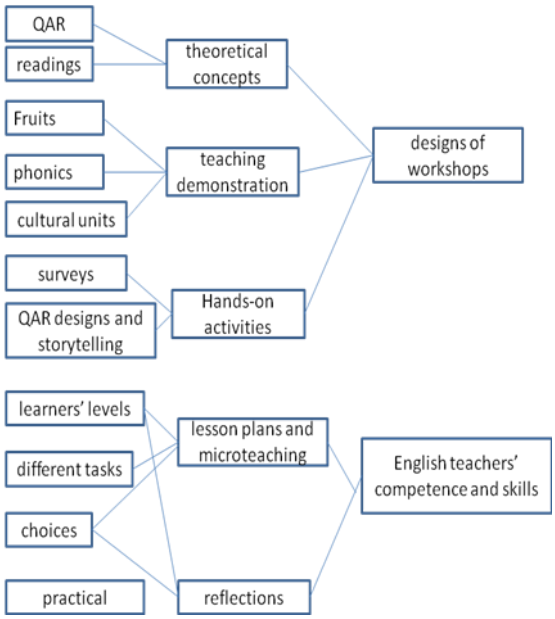


Figure 1. Coding and Data Analysis

## IV. Results

The analysis focused on the contents of the differentiated instruction presented in the intensive workshop and thirteen English teachers' lesson plans, microteaching and their reflection on differentiated instruction.

### *A. Contents of Differentiated Instruction in the Workshop*

The contents of differentiated instruction in the workshop included theoretical concepts, teaching demonstration, and hands-on activities.

Theoretical concepts on differentiated instruction and Taffy E. Raphael's (1986) Question, Answer Relationship (QAR) were introduced as in Figure 2 and 3.

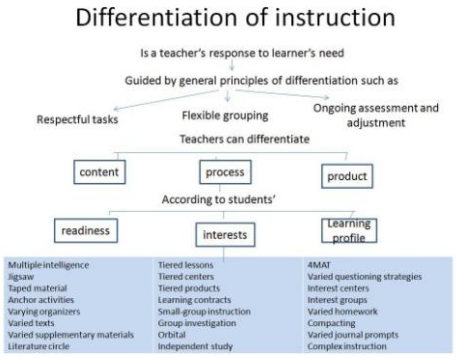


Figure 2. Differentiated Instruction


Figure 3. Taffy E. Raphael's (1986) Question, Answer Relationship (QAR)

Moreover, the thirteen participants acquired theoretical concepts on differentiated instructions and QAR through jigsaw readings of the following articles and book summaries, as in Table I.

TABLE I.
ARTICLES ON DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND QAR

| Topics | Readings |
|---|---|
| Differentiated instruction | Blaz, D. (2006). *Differentiated instruction: A guide for foreign language teachers*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.<br>Chapman, C. & King, R. (2005). *Differentiated assessment strategies: One tool doesn't fit it all*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.<br>Chapman, C. & King, R. (2008). *Differentiated instructional management: Work smarter, not harder*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.<br>Gregory, G. H. (2007). *Differentiated instructional strategies: One size doesn't fit it all*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.<br>Heacox, D. (2002). *Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: How to reach and teach all learners, grades 3-12*. Minneapolis, MN : Free Spirit Publication.<br>Kaplan, P., Rogers, V., Webster, R. (2008). *Differentiated instruction made easy*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.<br>Kryza, K., Duncan, A., & Stephens, S. J. (2010). *Differentiation for real classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.<br>Tomlinson, C. (1999). *Differentiated classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.<br>Turville, J. (2008). *Differentiation by student learning preferences: Strategies and lesson plans*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. |
| QAR | 1. Kinniburgh, L. H., & Shaw, E. L. (2009). Using question-answer relationships to build: Reading comprehension in science. Science Activities, *45*(4), 19-28<br>2. Lawrence, K. M. (2002). Red light, green light, 1-2-3: Tasks to prepare for standardized tests. *Reading Teacher*, *55*(6), 525-528.<br>3. Mesmer, H. A., & Hutchins, E. J. (2002). Using QARs with charts and graphs. *Reading Teacher*, *56*(1), 21-27.<br>4. Raphael, T. (1986). Teaching question answer relationships, revisited. *Reading Teacher*, *39*(6), 516-522.<br>5. Raphael, T. E., & Au, K. H. (2005). QAR: Enhancing comprehension and test taking across grades and content areas. *Reading Teacher*, *59*(3), 206-221. |

The teacher trainer of this workshop also gave teaching demonstrations on the integration of differentiated instruction in vocabulary instruction on fruits, phonics and riddle books, sports day, Halloween, culture issues (pottery). Table II is the example of Halloween instruction.

TABLE II.
INTEGRATION OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION ON HALLOWEEN

| | Objectives | Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Whole class instruction | Compare and contrast between Halloween and Ghost Festival | Venn Diagram |
| Beginners | Name customs on Halloween and Ghost Festival | Listen and Choose "H" or "G"<br>i.e. jack-on-lantern → H |
| intermediate | Name customs on Halloween and Ghost Festival | Listen and Choose "H" or "G"<br>i.e. We have jack-on-lantern. →H |
| advanced | Use complete sentences to compare and contrast between Halloween and Ghost Festival | A short paragraph<br>(1) We ___ on Halloween but we ___on Ghost Festival.<br>(2) We ___ both on Halloween and Ghost Festival. |

The teacher trainer also shared the integration of QAR into three picture books David Goes to School, Click Clack Moo Cows That Type, and The Carrot Seed. Table III is an example of David Goes to School.

TABLE III.
QAR QUESTIONS ON DAVID GOES TO SCHOOL U

| | |
|---|---|
| Right There<br>1. Who is the boy?<br>2. Where is he?<br>3. What does the teacher ask the boy to do? | Think and Search<br>1. Is the boy good or bad? Why?<br>2. What did the boy do in the class? |
| Author and Me<br>1. Do you think David Shannon was like that boy in the story? Why or why not?<br>2. Do you think David's teacher likes David or not? | On my Own<br>1. Do you like the story?<br>2. Do you like the boy? |

The teacher trainer demonstrated different topics to the thirteen participants in the training center, but not among real elementary school students. One English teacher in this study responded, "It is good to see the teacher trainer's demonstration. However, it would be better if the teacher trainer could demonstrate the lesson among elementary school students." Another teacher said, "It's summer vacation, so the teacher trainer cannot demonstrate the lesson among elementary school students. But perhaps the teacher trainer could show us a video of the real differentiated instruction."

The field-based evidence of implementation of differentiated instruction should be included in professional development or workshops held by language teacher education programs or school districts (Nazzal, 2011; Whipple, 2012). Nazzal (2011) claims, "Teacher education programs should include 'real world' examples of how to implement

differentiation. Examples include how to develop a learning/interest center when there is little room in the classroom" (p. 24). Moreover, mentors or expert teachers can be invited to model differentiation in real language classrooms.

Different hands-on activities were designed to help the thirteen English teachers learn differentiated instruction and QAR. Before the concepts of differentiated instruction were introduced, they were asked to write down their answers to the following question "What comes to your mind when you hear differentiated instruction?" Nine teachers wrote, "I've heard about it, but I am not sure" or "I don't know what differentiated instruction is." One teacher wrote, "Teach differently? I guess." Another two teachers wrote, "Differentiated instruction means teaching differently based on learners' needs." Therefore, the majority of English teachers did not have a clear idea about differentiated instruction, not to mention the instructional strategies.

English teachers were asked to answer a self-evaluation form adopted from Chapman and King (2005), as in Figure 4, and shared one or two things they always did in their class. Eighty percent of the teachers said that they always treat students with respect and give them specific praise.

**Teacher Assessment of the Classroom Environment**

| | Categories | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students are... | given time to think | | | | |
| | encouraged to take risks | | | | |
| | becoming self-directed learners | | | | |
| | comfortable when asking and answering questions | | | | |
| | learning from mistakes and accomplishments | | | | |
| | aware that learning is acquired by building prior experiences and background knowledge | | | | |
| | giving opportunities to learn from others and to work alone | | | | |
| | helped to see mistakes as learning experiences | | | | |
| | treated with respect | | | | |
| | given specific praise | | | | |
| | honored for their efforts, strengths, and talents | | | | |
| | valued as members of the learning community | | | | |
| The physical arrangement of the classroom | promote learning | | | | |
| | permits flexible grouping for assessment | | | | |
| | is customized to meet the learners' assessment needs | | | | |
| | is conducive to productive experiences | | | | |
| | is inviting and comfortable | | | | |
| | accommodates personal needs | | | | |
| | honors diversity | | | | |

Source: Chapman, C.& King, R. (2005). Differentiated assessment strategies: One tool doesn't fit it all. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Figure 4. Self-Evaluation

In order to put what English teachers learned about differentiated instruction and QAR into practice, three tasks were designed. For the first task, English teachers had to read differentiated instructions on choices provided by different scholars. They shared their ideas in the following ways: (1) Write 1-3 sentences to summarize the idea. (2) Complete the simile "Choices are like_____." (3) Drawing a picture to show what choices are. (4) Act out what choices are or mean. (5) Compose a song on choice and differentiated instruction and sing it out loud. For the second task, English teachers had to brainstorm ways that they would like to implement choice boards into their classroom.

In groups of three they first chose one picture book and read the picture book. They worked as a team and wrote down QAR questions. When they finished writing the questions, they told the story to the whole class and asked the rest of the teachers for questions.

### *B. Lesson Plans and Microteaching*

Four of the thirteen English teachers did not clearly describe the integration of differentiated instruction into their lesson plan. Two assigned the homework in three choices, as in Examples 1 and 2.

Example 1: Choice 1 "Read the story and revise the ending." Choice 2 "Work in pairs. Read the story aloud." Choice 3 "Work in pairs. Practice the sentence patterns."

Example 2: Level 1 "Read and write new words four times in the exercise book." Level 2 "Read and write sentence patterns. They are filled in with new words in the exercise book." Level 3 "Describe 5 partners' feelings in the exercise book."

The English teacher in Example 1 designed three levels of homework for reviewing the story I Want My Hat Back. Choice 1 was the most challenging one and learners with better English proficiency were required to revise the ending of the story. Choices 2 and 3 were for intermediate and lower proficiency levels respectively. On the other hand, the teacher in Example 2 designed three different assignments after teaching vocabulary words on emotions and feelings. Beginners did a mechanical task, "Level 1: Write new words four times in the exercise book." Levels 2 and 3 were for intermediate and higher proficiency levels respectively, and learners who choose Levels 2 and 3 had more autonomy over their learning and performance.

After telling the story I Want My Hat Back, the teacher adopted QAR and designed four types of questions, as in Table IV. However, "Do you like the bear? Why?" should be categorized under "On My Own," rather than "Author and Me." The question under "On My Own" was not well-designed. "What did you lose and then got back later? Tell us about your experience" can be revised into "Have you lost anything before? What is it? Did you get it back?"

TABLE IV.
QAR QUESTIONS ON I WANT MY HAT BACK

| | |
|---|---|
| Right There<br>1. Who lost hat?<br>2. Who stole the hat?<br>3. What does the hat look like? | Think and Search<br>1. How many animals are there in the story? Say their names.<br>2. How did the animals feel when they were asked by the bear? |
| Author and Me<br>1. Why did the rabbit give so many answers to the bear's question about his missing hat?<br>2. Do you like the bear? Why?<br>3. Which animal characters do you like the most? Why? | On my Own<br>What did you lose and then you get it back later? Tell us about your experience. |

Seven teachers designed in-class activities for learners based on the topics as in Table V. While #1 and # 3 focus on numbers, #5 and #7 focus on weather. The topic for #2 is Christmas, #4 action, and 6 animals. Level 1 was for beginners and learners did drill or repeated the same activity practiced in the class, such as "Sing the song One Little Two Little Indians". Levels 2 and 3 were for intermediate and advanced learners, so learners could have more autonomy or control over their presentations, such as composing a sentence, adopting and revising a song, or writing to Santa.

TABLE V.
IN-CLASS ACTIVITY DESIGNS ON DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

| # | Differentiated Instruction |
|---|---|
| 1 | Level 1: Sing the song One Little Two Little Indians<br>Level 2: I see one dot (make sentences)<br>Level 3: 1+1=2 (make sentences) |
| 2 | Level 1: Listen & Color<br>Level 2: Match the sentences<br>Level 3: Write a letter to Santa |
| 3 | Low: Write the numbers 6-12<br>Intermediate: Memorize 6-12<br>High: Use numbers 6-12 to make sentences |
| 4 | Level 1: Students listen and do the actions<br>Level 2: Students sing along and do the actions<br>Level 3: Students adapt lyrics. Then they sing along and do actions. |
| 5 | Level1: say it out and point out<br>Level2: share information the fill out the form<br>Level3: weather report |
| 6 | Level 1: Read all the animal words<br>Level 2: Read aloud the small book<br>Level 3: Practice the sentence patterns and role play |
| 7 | Level 1: Say & Take the picture card<br>Level 2: Matching Game: Match word and picture cards<br>Level 3: Small book on weather and emotions |

Seven English teachers in this study provided their pupils with choices as a way of differentiating instruction in the language. According to Pettig (1995):

Choice is a highly motivated feature implicit in differentiated designs. Choice validates a student's opinion and promote self-efficiency. Consequently, in at least one of the key aspects of each lesson-content, activity, or product - we try to give the student a choice (pp. 16-17).

However, some of the choices these English teachers designed were limited to basic skills such as "Say it out loud and point to the word," "Read all the animal words," or "Say the word and take the picture card." Pettig (1995) suggests that teachers should use broader and deeper domain concepts. He gives the following example. Instead of "The students will be able to name the members of the community," he recommends another objective "The students will demonstrate an understanding of why community members have different roles" (p. 17). By doing so, differentiated activities can access the students' real-life experience.

### *C. Teachers' Reflection*

The English teachers faced two big challenges when integrating differentiated instruction into lesson plans and activity designs. First, it was difficult for teachers to take learners' different levels into consideration and design appropriate activities for three levels, as in Examples 3 and 4. Second, they had difficulty in using simple English to explain to their students how to carry out the tasks for different levels of learners, as in Example 5.

Example 3: It's difficult to take learners' different levels into consideration when I design class activities.

Example 4: At first, I didn't know how to put three levels into my lesson plan. It's hard to imagine what differentiated instruction looks like. It would be better if I could teach my lesson, not to fellow English teachers, but to the elementary school EFL learners.

Example 5: I do not know how to use classroom English to explain different types of tasks. Students will get confused about different tasks.

These concerns about differentiated instruction is in accord with Corley's (2005) claim that "The greatest challenge to implement differentiated instruction….[is to] design appropriate activities for each levels…" (p.15). Instead of giving microteaching in the college campus, delivering a lesson to elementary school learners is highly recommended (Bequary, 2012). Teachers in Bequary's (2012) study claimed that implementing a social curriculum helped them understand their students as learners and their knowledge of their students enhanced the ability to use differentiated instruction.

When asked "How will you revise your lesson plan?" most teachers responded, "I will design various activities to meet different learners' needs." One teacher particularly pointed out as follows:

Activities for beginners must be interesting and include competition, so they are willing to give it a try. Activities for intermediate learners can be activities that I usually do in the class. Activities for advanced learners can be designed for them to use the language in daily life, such as watching a weather report and making a weather report chart, interviewing family and friends, etc.

In addition to design activities for three levels alone, Gibson (2013) suggests the idea of cubing. Cubing is a technique that helps learners to look at the concept from six different perspectives or levels of knowledge (Chapman & King, 2005, 2008; Gibson, 2013). Based on the text "President Kennedy's and President Johnson's response to North Vietnam's and China's growing influence in the nation of South Vietnam," Gibson (2013) designed six sides of the activities for learners as in Table VI:

TABLE VI
CUBING (GINBSON, 2013, P 5)

| Cubing | Tasks | Answers |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | Describe the response | Buildup of U.S. troops in Vietnam |
| #2 | Compare the response | To French buildup of troops fifteen years earlier |
| #3 | Associate the response | To other presents' attempts to limit power of other nations in other regions |
| #4 | Analyze the response | Discuss the reasoning of President Kennedy and Johnson |
| #5 | Apply alternatives | Suggest how other presidents choose to limit the influence at other times |
| #6 | Arrange the response | Debate the wisdom of Kennedy's and Johnson's response |

The thirteen participants had two important insights into differentiated instruction. First, most of them had not paid attention to the problems regarding their class with mixed-level students before. They often neglected learners with higher English proficiency level, as in Example 6. Second, they thought integration of differentiated instruction into elementary school English instruction would be practical, because the instructor demonstrated several lessons and they designed and did microteaching by themselves, as in Example 7.

Example 6: I spent extra time in providing remedial education to those who fell behind. I learned that even high-level students need Krashen i+1.

Example 7: Differentiated instruction should not just be a slogan. Every kid should achieve in class. Teachers should customize the lesson, so every student is able to learn.

Participants in this study thought that integration of differentiated instruction in English classes is practical, because instruction can be designed to cater to students' different needs. Pettig (2000) also supports this statement as follows:

Fortunately, differentiated instruction is a reasonable alternative to making do. It is not a trendy quick fix, a new set of blackline masters, or a ready-to-go kit. Differentiated instruction represents a proactive approach to improving classroom learning for all students. (p. 14)

The teacher trainer's modeling on differentiated instruction made the participants feel that differentiated instruction is possible. Therefore, effective modeling of teaching skills and differentiated instruction should be integrated into professional development, so teachers can gain the practical experience needed to implement differentiated instruction and diversify the instructional strategies in their classrooms (Hines, 2012).

## V. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Two major issues are discussed below in terms of the knowledge base of professional development of differentiated instruction and English teachers' competence in differentiated instruction.

### *A. Knowledge Base of Professional Development*

In this workshop, theoretical concepts of differentiated instruction and QAR were introduced through jigsaw reading and figures. Moreover, the teacher trainer demonstrated the differentiated lessons on different topics. Hands-on activities were provided for the thirteen English teachers to put what they had learned about differentiated instruction into practice. However, this workshop lacked the provision of teaching demonstrations on differentiated instruction to elementary school students. The workshop did not introduce all types of instructional strategies (i.e. compacting, flexible grouping), but focused only on one instructional strategy, "choice."

Richards (2011) proposed ten core dimensions for competence in language teacher education comprising developing appropriate linguistic competence, acquiring relevant content knowledge, developing a repertoire of teaching skills, acquiring contextual knowledge, developing a sense of identity as a language teacher, developing learner-focused

teaching, acquiring specialized cognitive skills, learning how to theorize from practice, developing a community of practice, and becoming a language teaching teacher professional.

Content knowledge of the subject matters, pedagogical skills, theories about second language acquisition should be included in professional development for language teachers, so they can be equipped with pedagogical content knowledge (Eun, 2006; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Therefore, training or professional development should focus on all aspects and domains of differentiation, including instructional management and how to differentiate content, process, products, and assessments.

Teachers as practitioners want to apply what they have learned to their classroom practice immediately. Therefore, the materials designed and delivered in teachers' professional development must be practical, but not too theoretical (Olivia & Pawlas, 2001). Moreover, teachers can learn new knowledge through observing other teachers' teaching demonstration and practicing the instructional strategies in protected environment (Joyce, Wei, & Wei, 2000). Collaboration and dialogue among teachers are strongly encouraged in teachers' professional development.

### *B. English Teachers' Competence in Differentiated Instruction*

Nine English teachers in this study demonstrated their competence in differentiated instruction through designing homework or class activities on three levels as choices for their learners in their lesson plans and microteaching. However, the choices these English teachers designed were limited to a drill such as "Low: Write the numbers 6-12," "Intermediate: Memorize 6-12," or "High: Use the numbers 6-12 to compose sentences." English teachers should design activities with deeper learning objectives. Moreover, these teachers did not demonstrate their competence in differentiating the lesson in product, nor in content and process. These English teachers also had difficulties in devising various activities to meet the learners' diverse needs and using simple English to explain the choices.

English teachers' sound knowledge base of English instruction is crucial to effective differentiated instruction in English classrooms, because such sound knowledge base provides English teachers with a roadmap to the key concepts, organizing principles, and fundamental skills. English teachers can adopt Rock, Gregg, Ellis, and Gable's (2008) framework for differentiated instruction entitled REACH (reflect on will and skill, evaluate the curriculum, analyze the learners, craft research-based lessons, hone in on the data) and put it into classroom practice. First, English teachers have to evaluate their knowledge base, teaching preferences, and skills in elementary school English instruction. Second, English teachers should evaluate the curriculum by reviewing national, city or country, district, or school-level standards and identify and select critical content to teach. Third, analyze the group and individual students to determine readiness, interests, preferences, strengths, and needs. Fourth, design a lesson plan with supporting learning activities. Adjust the lesson to offer differing levels of difficulty and match students to it. Finally, evaluate learners' interests, thinking styles, and readiness by diagnostic assessments, evaluate learners' understanding of the instruction through formative assessments, and finally, measure learners' performance against a predetermined standard through summative assessments.

Blozowich (2001) and McAdamis (2001) suggest that teachers who implement differentiated instruction require continuous and consistent professional development. Based on the findings of this study and the theoretical foundation of professional development, the framework for professional development for language teachers on differentiated instruction is constructed as Figure 5.

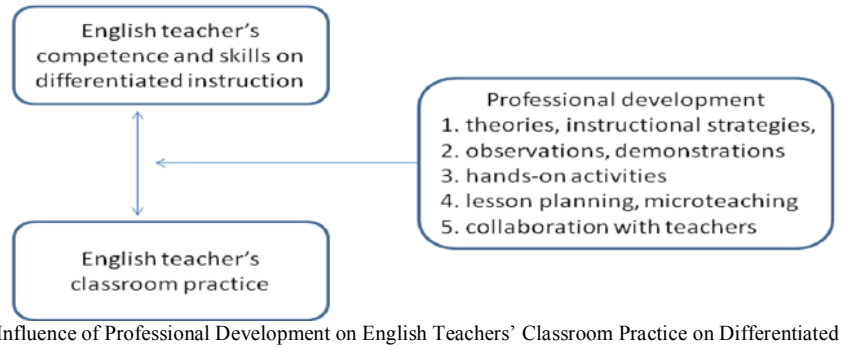


Figure 5. Influence of Professional Development on English Teachers' Classroom Practice on Differentiated Instruction

English teachers have their own competence and skills in differentiated instruction. According to Strickland (2009), high-quality professional development leads teachers to gain and refine knowledge of both content and pedagogy. Therefore, the content of the professional development should include theories and instructional strategies on differentiated instruction. Moreover, high-quality professional development reflects best practices in teaching and learning (Strickland, 2009), so English teachers should be provided with opportunities to observe English teachers' classroom practice or demonstration on differentiated instruction among elementary school students (Nazzal, 2011; Whipple, 2012). They also should have hands-on experience in putting the theories they have learned about differentiated instruction into practice through lesson planning or microteaching.

Next, after the workshop, they should collaborate with other teachers and continue to gain professional learning in differentiated instruction, because Strickland (2009) claims that high-quality professional development should help

teachers work together and feel part of a community of learners. Through peer coaching, action research, study groups, or workshops, they can have intensive dialogue and consultation about how techniques are implemented in the classroom to meet learners' needs (Blozowich & McAdamis, 2001; Cusumano & Mueller, 2007). Finally, the professional development influences the teacher's classroom practice in terms of both teacher effectiveness and student learning (Strickland, 2009).

English teachers can differentiate their instruction in terms of content, process, and product, so English teachers can vary the materials, pacing, flexible grouping, and activities to address learners' different needs (Tomlinson, Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Moon, Brimijoin, Conover, & Reynolds, 2003). Rather than using the same materials and giving the same assignments to all learners, English teachers in differentiated English classrooms should match materials to the specific instructional needs of the groups. When setting the level of instruction to intermediate or advanced learners, rather than low-achieving learners, many students felt frustrated (Ben, Ari, & Shafir, 1988). Tomlinson et al (2003) claim, "Classrooms in which time is used as a flexible resource would likely better serve the full range of learners" (p. 133). It is important to group students in a variety of ways in the English classrooms because of variability in students' English proficiency levels, interests, intelligence, or learning styles (Thousand et al, 2007; Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson et al, 2003).

## VI. Conclusion

This study discusses the influence of differentiated instruction workshop on thirteen Taiwanese elementary school English teachers' activity design in English activities. It has the following two findings. First of all, theoretical concepts, lesson demonstration, and hands-on activities on differentiating instruction were provided in the workshops. A demonstration among elementary school students and introduction of different types of instruction strategies were neglected in this workshop. Second, these English teachers demonstrated their competence in differentiated instruction by designing choices for class activities or homework. However, these English teachers lacked the competence in designing activities for deeper learning objectives, designing diverse instructional strategies or activities, and using simple English to explain the choices.

In order to effectively influence differentiated instruction workshop on elementary school English teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction in the classroom, four suggestions are recommended, including the provision of different differentiated instructional strategies, inviting expert or mentor teachers' demonstration of differentiated instruction in real classroom settings, establishing a teachers' learning community or support group on differentiated instruction, and adopting Rock et al's (2008) REACH model.

Differentiated instruction has been accepted as an important pedagogical skill for teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners (Nazzal, 2011; Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998). The case study approach allows for a detailed description of the influence of a differentiated instruction workshop on thirteen Taiwanese elementary school EFL teachers, particularly on designing classroom activities at three levels. It gives practitioners and elementary school English teachers valuable insight drawn from what the thirteen English teachers did to meet the diverse needs of their students. Moreover, the findings of this study also provide language teacher education programs and school districts with a framework for the design and delivery of effective professional development on differentiated instruction.

This limitation of this case study is the small number of participants. Although the results of the thirteen participants may not be able to be generalized to all English teacher population, the results can be used to explain the influence of a differentiated instruction workshop on elementary school English teachers' perspectives and their activity design.

This study focused only on the influence of a differentiated instruction workshop on thirteen elementary school EFL teachers' activity design and microteaching. These thirteen participants gave microteaching on the lessons in the training center instead of teaching their lesson to elementary school students in a real classroom setting. A further study could focus on the effectiveness of these teachers' integration of differentiated instruction into their English classrooms, and elementary school learners' responses and attitude toward such differentiated instruction. Also, the thirteen English teachers could post their questions or concerns regarding differentiated instruction on Edmodo. A further study could discuss these English teachers' professional learning of the differentiated instruction through the follow-up support on Edmodo.

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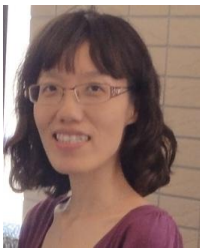

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