



Differentiated instruction in English classes in the universities of Ecuador: From the theory to practice

Instrucción diferenciada en clases de inglés en las universidades de Ecuador: de la teoría a la práctica

Ensino diferenciado em aulas de inglês em universidades do Equador: da teoria à prática

Silvia Elizabeth Cárdenas-Sanchez ^I
silvia.cardenas@epoch.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1760-8288>

Ivonne Lorena Ochoa-Jarrín ^{II}
ivonne.ochoa@epoch.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5348-6583>

Lina Yolanda Morales-Rodas ^{III}
lina.morales@epoch.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7779-9039>

Correspondencia: silvia.cardenas@epoch.edu.ec

Ciencias de la educación
Artículo de investigación

***Recibido:** 22 de noviembre de 2019 ***Aceptado:** 10 diciembre de 2019 * **Publicado:** 17 de enero 2020

- I. Máster-In Curriculum & Instr-English as Second Language. Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación Profesora de Idiomas Ingles. Docente en la Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Sede Orellana, Ecuador.
- II. Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa. Instituto Superior Tecnológico Juan De Velasco Docente en la Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Sede Orellana, Ecuador.
- III. Magíster en Lingüística y Didáctica de la Enseñanza de Idiomas Extranjeros. Licenciada en Ciencias de la educación Mención Ingles. Instituto Superior Tecnológico Juan de Velasco. Docente en la Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Sede Orellana, Ecuador.

Abstract

Differentiating instruction in Ecuadorian educational system is relevant since Ecuador is a diverse country. Diversity occurs in the classes when a teacher finds out that the students bring their personal, social and academic backgrounds that are going to influence in their learning process. For this reason, this paper provides relevant information about differentiated instruction techniques that can be used in classes at college. College students need to learn and find out how to internalize knowledge according to their preferences, interests, and learning styles. Cooperative learning, group formation and surveys are tools that are described in this article and they can be applied during instruction to promote differentiated instruction. Different book authors and research articles have served to provide with insightful suggestions and conclusion to help college teachers to understand better how differentiated instruction works.

Keywords: Instruction; teaching; English.

Resumen

La instrucción diferenciada en el sistema educativo ecuatoriano es relevante ya que Ecuador es un país diverso. La diversidad ocurre en las clases cuando un maestro descubre que los estudiantes aportan sus antecedentes personales, sociales y académicos que influirán en su proceso de aprendizaje. Por esta razón, este documento proporciona información relevante sobre técnicas de instrucción diferenciadas que se pueden usar en las clases de la universidad. Los estudiantes universitarios deben aprender y descubrir cómo internalizar el conocimiento de acuerdo con sus preferencias, intereses y estilos de aprendizaje. El aprendizaje cooperativo, la formación de grupos y las encuestas son herramientas que se describen en este artículo y se pueden aplicar durante la instrucción para promover la instrucción diferenciada. Diferentes autores de libros y artículos de investigación han servido para proporcionar sugerencias perspicaces y conclusiones para ayudar a los profesores universitarios a comprender mejor cómo funciona la instrucción diferenciada.

Palabras claves: Instrucción; enseñanza; inglés

Resumo

O ensino diferenciado no sistema educacional equatoriano é relevante, pois o Equador é um país diverso. A diversidade ocorre nas aulas quando um professor descobre que os alunos contribuem com seus antecedentes pessoais, sociais e acadêmicos que influenciarão seu processo de

aprendizagem. Por esse motivo, este documento fornece informações relevantes sobre técnicas instrucionais diferenciadas que podem ser usadas nas aulas da universidade. Os estudantes universitários devem aprender e descobrir como internalizar o conhecimento de acordo com suas preferências, interesses e estilos de aprendizagem. O aprendizado cooperativo, a criação de grupos e as pesquisas são ferramentas descritas neste artigo e podem ser aplicadas durante a instrução para promover a instrução diferenciada. Diferentes autores de livros e artigos de pesquisa serviram para fornecer sugestões e conclusões perspicazes para ajudar os professores universitários a entender melhor como a instrução diferenciada funciona.

Palavras chaves: Instrução, ensino; inglês.

Introduction

Today, communicating through English is common in many places since it is a universal language. People with different first languages use English as a mean of contact with people around the world for some reasons. So, English has been positioned as an official language for business, travel, education and so forth. People need to learn this language and there are some options to acquire it.

Learning a language requires students to use different strategies that will help them develop the skills and competencies to acquire it. In this sense, there are different learning methods that can contribute to the training of students in a foreign language, in particular English. To this end, Chamot and Kupper (1989) point out that: “metacognitive, cognitive, social and affective strategies can help develop the four language skills.” According to various authors, the effectiveness of each of them will depend on the individual characteristics of each apprentice to adapt and use it.

In this sense, the teacher as a facilitator of learning must be trained to meet the needs of their students and accordingly plan the teaching with appropriate methods that allow the achievement of the required learning by the student for the English language proficiency. In this context, differentiated instruction constitutes one of strategies considered effective for this purpose, since it considers the diversity of students, not only in their learning styles, but also in their socio-emotional and cultural aspects.

In differentiated classrooms, a teacher has to be prepared to use a wide range of activities, know the students' interests and needs, and give more options to comprehend the topic. The instructional strategies will vary and the time that students use in each task will be different. For this reason, the

teacher has to be flexible and be part of the students' learning pathway. A teacher is not called to cover all the curriculum, but a teacher is the one who will help students feel motivated and encourage them to keep working hard until they reach their goals and the standards in each setting (Tomlinson, 2014).

In Ecuador, English has become the mostly taught language in all the levels of education. English is taught in public and private schools. Public schools follow the National Curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education. Students who attend elementary school from level 2 until level 7 must take 3 hours of English classes during the week. While, students who are in grade 8th, 9th, and 10th and those who attend 1st and 2nd baccalaureate take 5 periods of English classes during the week.

In relation to the schedule established in the curriculum, "third year students only receive three hours of English." (Ministry of Education, 2028) Once the baccalaureate is finished, students have the opportunity to continue their academic training in education higher entering public or private universities in the country, where the English course is mandatory, particularly in public education. When starting university education students must take an English test, which allows to determine the level of proficiency in this language. However, the results obtained indicate that: "only 14% of the students who took the exam achieved a good level of performance. This demonstrates that English language learning in Ecuadorian schools is still poor." (El Comercio, 2018).

One of the requirements of Ecuadorian universities in relation to English is that it must reach level B1 or B2, in accordance with the provisions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). To demonstrate the required level, students must have mastery in reading and listening comprehension of the language. According to the CEFR (2019), an independent English user at level B1:

You can understand the main points of a clear standard entry on family matters that are regularly found at work, school, leisure, etc. It can deal with most situations that may arise while traveling. An area where the language is spoken. Likewise, it can produce simple texts about family or personal interest topics, describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

In other words, university students need to continue improving their English skills, not only because it constitutes an established requirement in higher education in Ecuador, but also because it will have a competitive advantage at work level once they have graduated from university.

Due to the importance of mastering English as one of the most spoken foreign languages in the world, a constant effort by teachers and students is necessary to achieve the learning of this language, which in the future requires more advantages for The professional in the workplace, since many companies or institutions prefer to hire professionals with English proficiency.

In this line, Ecuadorian students graduated from universities with good English proficiency may have the opportunity to opt for a scholarship to continue their studies abroad, which will facilitate communication, adaptation and success in any country of the English speaking world.

It should be noted that Ecuador is a country with a rich cultural diversity which enriches the classrooms of university classes, and each student will contribute their different learning styles, this is a challenge for university teachers who must use methodologies and strategies aimed at learning English of all students taking into account the individual differences of each of them.

Considering this diversity, differentiated instruction is a tool that can help teachers meet students' need through the implementation of competencies and having a deep knowledge of the process. According to Hoover and Patton (2004), the instructor can implement differentiated instruction considering the curriculum. The curriculum implementation can be in a different way if the teacher understand the great benefits of differentiated instruction. Based on the curricular elements and the standards, differentiation can be conducted through content by adapting specific levels and using the correct materials to support learning. Moreover, differentiation instruction occurs in instructional strategies when the instructor reviews the learning styles and the setting where the learning takes place. Finally, students' behavior is essential to mention since self-management and class managements have to be considered to differentiate instruction.

Differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy to encourage teachers to make adaptations so they can address all students' needs during the learning process (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007). Differentiated instruction can be used in settings where students learn English as foreign language (EFL) or as a Second Language (ESL). Differentiated instruction (DI) refers to the use of different strategies and techniques to teach English inside and outside the classroom. Santamaria (2009)

states that DI is a practice in which, students' background is important to make decisions in the learning process. Students' previous knowledge and language is important.

In addition, their learning style, interests, and readiness occupy an important role in instruction. Thousand, Villa and Nevin, (2007) state that it is essential to think about legal mandates, myths about students and teacher effectiveness to put into practice differentiated teaching in classes.

This article presents diverse ideas and suggestions to grasp the learning goals based on research studies conducted in this field. According to Tomlinson (1999) the teacher can differentiated instruction through content, process and product. This differentiation can be possible if the educator considers students' readiness, interest and learning profile. Teacher provides the students with easy ways of learning and helping them to understand that there are different ways of achieve the learning goals.

As stated before, to differentiate instruction the trainer needs to consider learners' interests, multiple intelligences and readiness. According to Thousand, Villa and Nevin, (2007:p.4), "differentiated instruction can help teachers meet the needs of children with diverse characteristics." Students need motivation to learn a new language and it can be reached with diverse activities, strategies and techniques that can help students to learn according to their individual differences.

On the other hand, teacher's flexibility is also a key point in differentiated instruction. This flexibility can work only if the teacher diagnoses, plans, and changes when possible the curriculum plan during the lessons.

According to Santamaria (2009), differentiated instruction is a way that educators have used to teach children with special needs immersed in mainstreamed classes. However, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners are considered as students with special needs and their treat during instruction is different; but, sometimes teachers do not consider their language background and are labeled as students with special needs rather than students with linguistics needs.

Thousand, Villa and Nevin, (2007) "mention that sometimes teachers and collaborators make wrong assumptions about students' difficulties. The believes and perceptions about abilities and disabilities label students without a deepen understanding of their strengths."

At the university level, differentiated instruction is possible since students in any educational context have their particularities, expectations, points of view, criteria and experiences that make them unique beings, everything that must be taken into account by the English teacher in its educational practice for the achievement of the proposed objectives in the field of student training in a foreign language.

To apply differentiated instruction in any kind of setting, the instructor has to gather data to be informed about students' needs. Thousand, Villa and Nevin, (2007) suggest the use of records that are cumulative in most cases. However, in a university it is not common to have students' records about behavioral reports, level of language proficiency, or any other relevant information to provide an education according to students needs. For this reason, there will be a number of certain strategies that can be adapted in the university during English language instruction through this section.

First, Carr (2009) states that students need to be informed about differentiation since they are going to have different things to do during instruction. In addition, the teacher will have to mention how important each student is and the reason to treat them by their individual differences.

Second, Breaux and Boutte (2010) state that it is important to find out who the students are. To complete with this requirement, the teacher can use some resources that should be applied at the beginning on a course. The authors mentions that interest inventory, multiple intelligences, and learning styles surveys are good tools to begin knowing students. A teacher can find online surveys that are useful in classes to know students. For instance, literacynet offers a good resource to meet our students. Moreover, this website help the students to discover their strengthens as it provides the results of the survey. Similarly, there are learning styles inventories available online that can help teachers to identify students' learning styles to plan classes.

Then not only information collected at the beginning of instruction is necessary, but also the classroom management is also important. A well-organized classroom and having a good management during instruction is mandatory to differentiate instruction. Breaux and Boutte (2010) suggest using cooperative learning. To work through cooperative tasks, students need to get into groups. Getting in groups requires that the teacher consider different aspects that are relevant to reach the lesson goals. Barkley, Cross and Major (2005) mention that the group rules facilitates the

class productivity. The authors state, “Involving students in determining group work policies allows them to assume ownership and responsibility for observing and enforcing them” (p. 36).

In addition, it is essential to understand that students can get in groups according to the goal, task, and time. They can work together and there should not be more than six participants. The ideal in an English class is a group of four students. However, the class management will depend on the class size and teacher’s decision. Additionally, there are strategies that can support group formation. For instance, students can get in groups using different techniques. Barkley, Cross and Major (2005) suggest the use of random techniques, but this method cannot result in heterogeneity since students tend to select the same partners mostly. The instructor can also determine who the students are going to work on. This technique requires that the teacher organize the groups according to their interest, learning styles, or characteristics.

However, students may not feel comfortable and could lose motivation. This stratification helps to create heterogeneous and homogeneous groups. The group formation must be different in many occasions and the teacher should not be limited to ask only students to form groups. The teacher must manage the class and the teacher according to the lesson planning must guide group selection.

Heacox (2012) state that research has provided with a great deal of information to identify all students’ differences. These differences can be about students’ learning profiles, cognitive abilities, socioeconomic and family situation, learning pace, gender, cultural and ethnic influence. This variety of elements support differentiated instruction, which can be done through content, process and product. Content can be taught according to students needs if the facilitator concentrates on the most relevant of the topic. The differentiation is produce when students receive instruction according to their readiness, explore deeply a topic, and the available resources are from the easiest to the hardest. Additionally, process can be differentiated using critical thinking techniques. For instance, a specific topic the students can develop different tasks according to their learning profile. Some students will design and draw pictures that means they have visual intelligence. Other students can discuss advantages or disadvantages since they are auditory learners and so forth. Finally, product that is referred as the result of learning can be presented in different ways like reports, brochures, debates, or role-plays. The final product must challenge students to complete and demonstrate their understanding in the way they prefer with the same difficulty and mastering all the skills planned in each topic or lesson.

The instructional choices may vary according to the students' characteristics. Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) recommend implementing differentiating instruction frequently. It should not be learning individualization. Differentiated instruction can be conducted in different steps and moments while using tools to support the activities like projects, materials and technology.

Kara-Soteriou (2009) mentions that email communication is one way of differentiating instruction. As technology use is increasing in classrooms, web pages are good resources to provide students information and support for their learning. Wikis can support group work and online collaboration. Literature circles can also be developed through technology. This strategy facilitates reading comprehension and at the same time can promote group interaction and technology use.

Methodology

The study is limited to a descriptive documentary investigation, supported by the review of bibliographic sources related to the differentiated instruction of teaching English in higher education, from which a qualitative analysis of the information is carried out in order to identify the contributions that different authors have made as a product of their research in the area; In addition to carrying out a critical analysis in relation to each of the strategies that make up this teaching method in such a way that it can contribute to the scope of the objectives set in the differentiated teaching of the Church as one of the most important foreign languages to world level

Results and discussion

Because of the information found in different resources, differentiated instruction in the college stage is possible only if the teacher has a deep understanding of the concepts, process and aims of this method. It is not acceptable to think that students are different only when they are in elementary or high school. Students' culture and linguistic knowledge will remain and the teacher has to understand the differences that exist in each class to select material, topics, classroom management, assessment and activities.

In English classes, teachers need to put in practice these suggestions to engage students in the learning of a foreign language. Probably, this differentiation can encourage and motivate students

to improve their English skills. Moreover, class time and management can be better if the strategies presented in this paper can be adapted to each situation and according to the needs in each setting.

Referencias

1. Baecher, L., Artigliere, M., Patterson, D. K y Spatzer, A. (2012). Differentiated instruction for English language learners as “variations on a theme” teachers can differentiate instruction to support English language learners. *Middle School Journal*, 43(3), 14-21.
2. Barkley, E., Cross, P y Major, C. (2005). *Collaborative learning techniques*. United States of America: Jossey-Bass.
3. Breaux, E., & Boutte, M. (2010). *How the best teachers differentiate instruction*. New York: Eye on Education.
4. Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>.
5. Carr, M. A. (2009). *Differentiation Made Simple: Timesaving Tools for Teachers*. United States of America: Profrock Press Inn.
6. Chamot, A. y Kupper, L. (1989). Learning strategies in foreign language instruction. *Foreign language annals*, 22(1), 13-22.
7. Heacox, D. (2012). *Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: How to reach and teach all learners*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.
8. Heredia, V. (2018, Diciembre 26). El Comercio. Retrieved from El Comercio: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/suficiencia-ingles-basica-seguir-estudios.html>
9. Hoover, J. y Patton, J. (2004). Differentiating standards-based education for students with diverse needs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25(2), 74-78.
10. Kara-Soteriou, J. (2009). Using technology to differentiate instruction across grade levels. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 44(2), 86-90.
11. Ministerio de Educacion. (2018). Retrieved 5 January 2020, from <https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/09/MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2018-00089-A.pdf>(n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.literacynet.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html>.

12. Santamaria, L. (2009). Culturally responsive differentiated instruction: Narrowing gaps between best pedagogical practices benefiting all learners. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 214-247.
13. Thousand, J., Villa, R., & Nevin, A. (2007). *Diffetentiating Instruction: Collaborative planning adn teaching for unviersally designed learning*. California: Corwin Press.
14. Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria: ASCD.
15. Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria: ASCD.

References

- 1 Baecher, L., Artigliere, M., Patterson, D.K. e Spatzer, A. (2012). Ensino diferenciado para alunos de inglês como professores de “variações de um tema” podem diferenciar o ensino para apoiar os alunos de inglês. *Jornal da escola secundária*, 43 (3), 14-21.
2. Barkley, E., Cross, P e Major, C. (2005). *Técnicas de aprendizagem colaborativa*. Estados Unidos da América: Jossey-Bass.
3. Breaux, E., & Boutte, M. (2010). *Como os melhores professores diferenciam a instrução*. Nova York: Olho na Educação.
4. Quadro Europeu de Comunicação de Referência para as Línguas. (n.d.). Recuperado em <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>.
5. Carr, M. A. (2009). *Diferenciação simplificada: ferramentas que economizam tempo para os professores*. Estados Unidos da América: Profrock Press Inn.
6. Chamot, A. e Kupper, L. (1989). Estratégias de aprendizagem no ensino de línguas estrangeiras. *Anais em línguas estrangeiras*, 22 (1), 13-22.
7. Heacox, D. (2012). *Instruções diferenciadas na sala de aula regular: Como alcançar e ensinar todos os alunos*. Minneapolis: Espírito Livre Publishing Inc.
8. Heredia, V. (2018, 26 de dezembro). O comércio. Recuperado de El Comercio: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/suficiencia-ingles-basica-seguir-estudios.html>

9. Hoover, J. e Patton, J. (2004). Diferenciar a educação baseada em padrões para alunos com necessidades diversas. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25 (2), 74-78.
10. Kara-Soteriou, J. (2009). Usando a tecnologia para diferenciar as instruções nos níveis de ensino. *Jornal da Associação de Leitura da Nova Inglaterra*, 44 (2), 86-90.
11. Ministry of Education. (2018). Retrieved 5 January 2020, from <https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/09/MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2018-00089-A.pdf>(n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.literacynet.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html>.
12. Santamaria, L. (2009). Culturally responsive differentiated instruction: Narrowing gaps between best pedagogical practices benefiting all learners. *Teachers College Record*, 111 (1), 214-247.
13. Thousand, J., Villa, R., & Nevin, A. (2007). *Diffetentiating Instruction: Collaborative planning adn teaching for unviersally designed learning*. California: Corwin Press.
14. Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria: ASCD.
15. Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria: ASCD .

Referências

1. Baecher, L., Artigliere, M., Patterson, D.K. e Spatzer, A. (2012). Ensino diferenciado para alunos de inglês como professores de “variações de um tema” podem diferenciar o ensino para apoiar os alunos de inglês. *Jornal da escola secundária*, 43 (3), 14-21.
2. Barkley, E., Cross, P e Major, C. (2005). *Técnicas de aprendizagem colaborativa*. Estados Unidos da América: Jossey-Bass.
3. Breaux, E., & Boutte, M. (2010). *Como os melhores professores diferenciam a instrução*. Nova York: Olho na Educação.

4. Quadro Europeu de Comunicação de Referência para as Línguas. (n.d.). Recuperado em <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>.
5. Carr, M. A. (2009). *Diferenciação simplificada: ferramentas que economizam tempo para os professores*. Estados Unidos da América: Profrack Press Inn.
6. Chamot, A. e Kupper, L. (1989). Estratégias de aprendizagem no ensino de línguas estrangeiras. *Anais em línguas estrangeiras*, 22 (1), 13-22.
7. Heacox, D. (2012). *Instruções diferenciadas na sala de aula regular: Como alcançar e ensinar todos os alunos*. Minneapolis: Espírito Livre Publishing Inc.
8. Heredia, V. (2018, 26 de dezembro). O comércio. Recuperado de El Comercio: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/suficiencia-ingles-basica-seguir-estudios.html>
9. Hoover, J. e Patton, J. (2004). Diferenciar a educação baseada em padrões para alunos com necessidades diversas. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25 (2), 74-78.
10. Kara-Soteriou, J. (2009). Usando a tecnologia para diferenciar as instruções nos níveis de ensino. *Jornal da Associação de Leitura da Nova Inglaterra*, 44 (2), 86-90.
11. Ministério da Educação. (2018). Recuperado em 5 de janeiro de 2020, em [https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/09/MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2018-00089-A.pdf\(n.d.\)](https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/09/MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2018-00089-A.pdf(n.d.)). Recuperado em <https://www.literacynet.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html>.
12. Santamaria, L. (2009). Instrução diferenciada culturalmente responsiva: Diminuir as lacunas entre as melhores práticas pedagógicas, beneficiando todos os alunos. *Professores College Record*, 111 (1), 214-247.
13. Mil, J., Villa, R., & Nevin, A. (2007). *Instrução de diferenciação: Planejamento colaborativo e ensino para aprendizagem projetada de maneira não-competitiva*. Califórnia: Corwin Press.
14. Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *A sala de aula diferenciada: Respondendo às necessidades de todos os alunos*. Alexandria: ASCD.
15. Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *A sala de aula diferenciada: Respondendo às necessidades de todos os alunos*. Alexandria: ASCD .

©2019 por el autor. Este artículo es de acceso abierto y distribuido según los términos y condiciones de la licencia Creative Commons Atribución-NoComercial-CompartirIgual 4.0 Internacional (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>).