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THESIS:

The Implementation of Differentiated Instruction with Young Learners and its Impact on English Language Learning

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Dedication

To my beloved parents: for their endless encouragement, patience and support.

Thank you for always believing in me!

Abstract

In these modern days the importance of English language learning has increased drastically, becoming a priority among parents and teachers on children's education. Differentiated instruction (DI), as an all-encompassing approach, has lately been anticipated as the most effective means to meet the diverse needs of learners. With all the prominence on the effectiveness of DI in student growth, the application of such approach with young EL learners would increase their chances of long-term success. Nevertheless, despite being widely recognized as a successful practice, DI is hardly ever fully implemented by teachers in young learner classes of English language. This study principally focuses on examining English Language teachers' understanding and attitudes towards differentiated instruction and its components, the way these factors influence the implementation of DI, the implementation of DI on EL classes of young learners aged 6-12 and, whether private or public-school teachers expose their students to DI more. The design of this research included a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to achieve a more accurate assessment of the targeted questions and prove the raised hypotheses. The instruments used in this research were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. After the data collection, SPSS has been used to calculate and present the data; various statistical methods have been applied to find relations and differences in the data. The results of this study have shown great agreeability, familiarity and understanding of DI and that the teachers have a general understanding of DI and its components. The data from student questionnaire revealed a high percentage of students who enjoyed activities with DI and felt that they were progressing each day, indicating that the impact of DI on young learners is clearly positive. Given the research results, and that teacher employed in private schools are more likely to apply DI with their young learners, a much more favorable situation could be anticipated for the young learners attending language lessons in a private institution. On the other hand, the statistics as well as the interview results did not reveal a similar favorable situation regarding thorough implementation of DI by public school teachers, pointing to other factors such as lack of resources. With the lack of previous body of research along with other limitations and inhibiting factors, the researcher considers that direct research and professional training on the best implementation practices needs to be offered to all young learner teachers of English in the country level in order for DI to serve its purpose.

Key Words: differentiated instruction, teaching, young learners, implementation

Table of Content

Abstract	3
Key Words	4
Table of Content	5
List of Figures	7
List of Tables	7
Acknowledgements	8
1. Chapter I: Introduction	9
1.1. Importance of the Thesis	10
1.2. Aims of the Research	11
1.3. Hypotheses	12
2. Chapter II: Literature Review	13
2.1. Definition of Key Terms	13
2.2. Theoretical Framework	14
2.3. Young Learners	15
2.4. A review of the historical perspective of DI	17
2.4.1. A review of the ways Differentiated Instruction has been defined	18
2.4.2. Reasons for differentiating instruction in English with young learners	20
2.4.3. Young Learner Characteristics and Differentiated Instruction	21
3. Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology	23
3.1. Introduction	23
3.2. Research Methodology	23
3.3. Participants	24
3.4. Instruments	25
3.5. An Account of the quantitative data	26
3.5.1. The administration of the questionnaires, reliability and validity	28
3.6. An Account of the Qualitative Data	29
3.6.1. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure	29
3.7. Ethical Considerations	30
4. Chapter IV: Findings	32
4.1. Introduction	32
4.2. Findings and analysis of the quantitative data from the teacher questionnaires	32
4.3. Findings and analysis of the quantitative data from the student questionnaires	45
4.4. Findings and analysis of the qualitative data from the teacher interviews	48
4.4.1. Analysis of Central Themes	50
4.4.1.1. The young learner classroom through the lens of the participants	50
4.4.1.2. Perception and impact of DI	51
4.4.1.3. Motives for implementation of DI	55
4.4.1.4. Resources	56
4.4.1.5. Skepticism for effectiveness of DI	56

5.	Chapter V: Discussion	58
5.1.	The extent of the English Language teacher’s familiarity with the components of DI and the methods of implementation	58
5.2.	The teachers approach toward DI and the effect on the implementation of this method in EL classes	58
5.3.	DI is more likely to be applied by public or private school teachers	59
5.4.	DI helps young learners achieve results on learning the English Language	59
6.	Chapter VI: Conclusions	60
6.1.	Limitations of the study	61
6.2.	Recommendations	61
7.	Bibliography	62
8.	Appendices	64
8.1.	Teacher Questionnaire	64
8.2.	Teacher Interview Questions	68
8.3.	Student Questionnaire	69

List of Figures

Figure 1.	Differentiated components based on readiness and interest	22
Figure 2.	Teachers' Gender Ratio	32
Figure 3.	Teachers' Certification Level	32
Figure 4.	Teachers' Teaching Experience	33
Figure 5.	Group Ages Taught	33
Figure 6.	Institution Employed	33
Figure 7.	(Student readiness) Teacher asks us a lot of questions before we start learning about a topic	45
Figure 8.	(Student Interest) My teacher always asks me what I like about a lesson we are going to learn	45
Figure 9.	(Student Interest) I always like the activities my teacher does with me.....	46
Figure 10.	(DI by Process) Teacher gives me enough time to finish my tasks	46
Figure 11.	(DI by Content) There is always something new and challenging in my English lessons.....	46

List of Tables

Table 1.	Research sites and participants	27
Table 2.	Average Number of Grades Teaching	33
Table 3.	Frequency and Percentage of Familiarity and Understanding DI questions	34
Table 4.	Frequency and Percentage of Implementation of DI questions	37
Table 5.	Means of Likert Scale questions	40
Table 6.	Spearman's Correlation	42
Table 7.	T test	44
Table 8.	Age Statistics for students	45
Table 9.	Learning Institution	45
Table 10.	Student Likert Scale Percentages and Frequencies	47
Table 11.	Interviewed Teachers' Statistics	49

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1. Chapter I: Introduction

In these modern days the importance of English language learning has increased drastically, becoming a priority among parents and teachers on children's education. What is particularly noticeable nowadays is the fact that the EL classrooms have doubled in size and are far more populated with young learners. The young learners are defined as students of primary school aged between 6 and 12 according to a European member state working group. Young learners have been classified into three age groups by Annamaria Pinter (2011).

The earliest being the preschoolers aged 3 and above, following by primary school children starting at 5-7 and primary school finishers aged 11,12 upon the latter application of the differentiated instruction will be perceived. Lynne Cameron (2001) in her book *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*, emphasizes the differences on teaching a foreign language to young learners compared to teenagers and grownups, stating that characteristics such as children's freedom to try answers they are not quite sure of, predisposition of losing interest quickly and finding it hard to keep motivation on difficult tasks, their inability to use language to talk about language and similar generalities might actually hide the details of different children and the required skills involved in teaching them. Insightful understanding of variations in children's learning leads to constructive lessons in class. Among the first to become aware that young learners vary among themselves were also Macintyre, Baker, Clément and Donovan (2002), who stressed that research into young learners' individual differences is necessary.

A similar idea, that children actually reveal their characteristics at an early age has been stressed also by Ellis & Ibrahim (2015) who claim that "there are vast social, emotional and cognitive differences as well as physical and psychological differences" (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015, p. 212), that show how different are students as individuals. This implies that no later than just a few days into teaching English as a foreign language to children, a teacher might notice that because of their dissimilarity, they all learn at different pace and manner.

Thus, each of them needs a different form of nurturing. It is precisely because of what research has revealed that more effort should be put on seeking for an approach that makes English language learning a reachable objective to any learner. Becoming aware of those differences among our learners is a lead to further exploration on ways to make use of them in the way we tailor our

instruction. Differentiated instruction (DI) is an all-encompassing approach which requires teachers to offer a broad perspective in teaching. Tomlinson (2001) urges teachers to widen their perception beyond boundaries of their personal world so that they can understand the luminous and diverse worlds of children. That kind of perception allows for more effective teaching and pleasurable learning. Differentiation has lately been anticipated as the most effective means to meet the diverse needs of learners. Carol Ann Tomlinson & Marcia B. Imbeau (2010) accurately describe differentiation as “a classroom practice with a balanced emphasis on individual students and course content.” (p.78). Sensing that, if a teacher chunks the course content and serves it in different portions for different learners, it will equally and effectively engage each and everyone in the class. Bearing in mind the impact of DI in student growth, the proper application of this practice with young EL learners would increase the chances of individual success in the long term. Nevertheless, despite being widely recognized as a successful practice, DI is hardly ever fully implemented by teachers in young learner classes of English language.

1.1. Importance of the Thesis

Being a highly addressed issue, the Differentiated Instruction has taken place in the studies and research of linguistic experts, educators and foreign language teachers in an increased value recently. There are numerous reasons why this method is being encouraged and acclaimed as the modern-day teaching solution.

As nowadays most of the schools are embracing the philosophy of individual and personalized teaching in a classroom full of a variety of learners, teachers are expected to apply differentiated instruction as a means of providing students with individual learning objectives and channel them into more suitable learning practice. Traditional education models with one way teaching lessen the chances to achieve desired outcomes in the classroom because only a few might benefit and chances are that the objectives have not been met at the end of a teaching session. As Levy (2008) puts it “Differentiated instruction is used to accommodate and better prepare students of all learning types and ability levels to succeed in his/her own classroom.” (p.167). maintaining that with the implementation of DI there would be significant positive results impacting learners individually.

1.2. Aims of the Research

This study principally focuses on examining English Language teachers' understanding and attitudes towards differentiated instruction and its components, the way these factors influence the implementation of DI, the implementation of DI on EL classes of young learners aged 6-12 and whether private or public-school teachers expose their students to DI more.

The following questions are to be addressed to collect data for this research:

1. To what extent are the English Language teachers familiar with the components of DI and the methods of implementation?
2. How does the teachers' approach toward DI affect the implementation of this method in EL classes?
3. Is DI with English language young learners more likely to be applied by public or private school teachers?
4. Does DI help young learners achieve results on learning the English language?

The first question of this research aims to collect data on the teachers' understanding of the key components of DI. Their level of knowledge and comprehension of methods and techniques fostering DI will also be evaluated.

Through the second question teachers will be asked about their approach towards DI, this way their thoughts and ideas on the effectiveness and downsides of using DI will be elaborated. Moreover, it will be seen if their approach towards DI is an impeding or an enhancing factor on its implementation. To understand if there is a tendency for private school teachers to apply DI instruction in their YL classes more frequently and consistently compared to public school teachers a third question will be raised throughout the research.

The last and equally important issue, addressed by the last question, tends to reveal if young learners who are exposed to DI through the process of learning a foreign language feel that they achieve results.

1.3. Hypotheses

The research will prove the validity of the following hypotheses:

- H1-** Teachers have a general understanding of DI and its components.
- H2-** Teachers who are familiar with the components of DI will most likely apply this approach in their young Learner English classes.
- H3-** Private school teachers are more likely to apply DI in their YL classes than public school teachers.
- H4-** Differentiated instruction positively affects young learners on learning English.

2. Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter is isolated into four subchapters. The first one defines some of the key terms used, the second brings out a theoretical framework of DI explaining its formative background. The third spotlights on the young learners, attributes and learning capability of this age group. Literature review will be explained on the last sub-chapter, putting emphasis on historical viewpoints and carrying on with evidence-based insights and estimations of DI's elements.

2.1. Definition of Key Terms

The key terms that will come across on the literature review are defined below:

Differentiated Instruction (DI) - is an approach implemented by teachers in a mixed ability classroom, aimed at ensuring that each student successfully masters any given concept, regardless of their learning style. Tomlinson (2001)

Young Learners - Generally referred to children aged between 3 and 13, classified into three main groups: Preschool 3 to 5, Primary School years 6 to 12, Early adolescence 13 and onwards. Pinter (2011, p.2)

Learning styles - According to Allen, Scheve & Nieter (2011)" a learning style is a preferred way of thinking, processing, and understanding information. Each person prefers a pattern of thought and behavior that influences his or her learning process. In other words, we all learn in different ways." (p.1)

Content - "Content is what we plan to teach, what we want students to learn. It includes what we want students to know, understand, and be able to do, as well as the narratives, events, and examples that make up a unit or topic of study." (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011: p.98)

Process - "Process is how students come to own what they should know, understand, and can do. (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011: p.99)

Product - Methods for students to demonstrate what they have learned, grasped, and can accomplish as a consequence of a long period of study. Sousa & Tomlinson (2010)

Interest - "Topics or pursuits that intrigue students" (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000: p. 10)

Learning profile - alludes to desired forms of learning or methods by which children thoroughly comprehend what they need to know and understand. Tomlinson& McTighe (2006)

Readiness - "has to do with a student's proximity to or proficiency with particular knowledge, understanding, and skill." (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p.179)

Personalized Instruction - is a set of strategies to ensure involvement of all students in developing their personal learning plans, based on their needs and interests, and ensure an individual and unique experience for each one. Keefe, J. W., & Jenkins, J. M. (2008)

Assessment - is the tool that teachers should see as the most effective in pushing students forward and improving their performance. (Wiggins, 1998 & Earl, 2003) as cited by Tomlinson & Soussa (2011).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical part intends to give foundation data to the functional overview of this thesis. The main target of this research are the young learners and the implementation of DI with this selected group. Consequently, this section will look back on the conforming theories that have been developed by theorists and critics, aiming to point out the most effective approaches in associating learning with genuine applications and giving guidance that is at student's formative and age-appropriate level. Differentiated Instruction has a complexity in its structure that makes it a complete and an empowering tool for learning. There has been a blend of notions that have contributed to Differentiated Instruction to reach its full effectiveness as a teaching approach. Among innovators who have had a significant role in the establishment of DI are Howard Gardner (1983) and Robert Sternberg (1997), whom with their theories on multiple intelligence and thinking styles respectively, have endorsed the individuality of students which in DI is crucial. Gardner's theory of eight intelligences was investigated by Kelly (2008), who suggests that even though the intelligences are distinct in each child, the circumstances could cause an individual to simulate all the intelligences within self. In this light, inducing an assessment of student learning styles prior to preparing the instruction, would put the teacher and the students in a great advantage to facilitating the input of the content through DI in an understandable way for each student.

Lew Vygotsky's ZPD theory has found application in language classrooms for quite a long time and is referred to as a successful method of assessing student skills and gradually bringing students to their potential knowledge. Assessment and factors such as scaffolding curriculum, the learning process, flexible grouping, and choice were prioritized in this approach, as commented by Miller (2002), who elaborates how young learners build new knowledge relying on the assistance of more capable peers; their eagerness to absorb information keeps them interested, triggering the adults to engage in the process and offer help. Understandably, teachers with appropriate knowledge of ZPD

would easily implement DI as well because they are assumed to have previously assessed students' readiness level and "adjusted" their lessons in interest of students' achievement of potential. Hence, Vygotsky with his theory has added another brick in the compilation of DI. John Dewey (2001) emphasized that children of all ages would benefit if the curriculum was altered in alignment with student interests and real-life applications. He went on noting that: "The things that occupy [children] are held together by the unity of the personal and social interests which his life carries along." (p.5) Tomlinson, the strongest pillar that has made DI sustainable, has thoroughly studied and advanced it further. In her 2004's research she listed qualities that make individuals different in learning aspects. Some of them are: peace of learning, culture, race, economic support, preferred approach to learning and interest. All these elements have been based on Vygotsky's research findings and contributed to appropriate instructions to individually challenge each learner. Likewise, it can be summed up that it is because of the like-minded people such as Miller, Dewey, Gardner, Sternberg, Vygotsky and Tomlinson and their theories brought into line, that DI has come prevalent into the vast cast of teaching methods and strategies. As per young learners and their educational development, Shorrocks, has also stressed-out Vygotsky's idea that when a child enters the 'zone of proximal development' and is ready to learn new things, adult guidance is crucial and as the "child's cognitive structures are modifiable" (p.237). Feuerstein (1980) the impact of strategies educators use would be significant to their progress. Through all these body of evidence, it is clear that DI has been endorsed as a way of defining student preferences and learning styles by many scholars. These two elements have been used in designing instructions beneficial to student language level, ensuring proper and motivating challenges for their linguistic competence.

2.3. Young Learners

As young learners are the targeted age group of this research, it is important to first define them. As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, Pinter (2011) entitles them to three main age groups:

- *Preschoolers* (aged 3 and above)
- *Primary school children* (aged 5-7)
- *Primary school finishers* (aged 11-12); as illustrated in Pinter's book (Table 1).

Seemingly, young learners fall into a large age group which means the very young ages do not share the same learning characteristics as the older ones, making them quite dissimilar from one another. It is also important to recognize the fact that their learning abilities vary just as much as their individual characteristics, and teachers should never expect that just because all children are of the same age group, they can all correspondingly understand one particular item, and then when reaching another age, all of them will understand or do a more complicated item. Once their differences have been assessed and properly understood, we teachers can ourselves evaluate “how far up the ladder our individuals are.” (Scott.A and Ytreberg.W, 2004, p.1) Close observation of these developments, enables teachers to compile a need-based DI at an early age.

Most of the experts dealing with young learners have depicted them as individuals with a great ability to learn from their surroundings. This situation has been thoroughly elaborated by Harmer (2007) who conveys that “they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught. Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with” (p.82).

Andrea Puskas (2016) has illustrated the way Wendy A. Scott and Lisbeth H. Ytreberg presented the characteristics of young learners by stressing the following features:

- They understand situations more quickly than they understand the language used.
- Their understanding is based on the physical world – it is always connected with direct experience.
- They have a short attention and concentration span.
- Young children are enthusiastic and positive about learning. Therefore, it is especially important to praise them to keep them motivated and enthusiastic.
- They will rarely admit they do not know something (p.12).

Gaining knowledge of the latter makes the language teachers’ role massively important as children aged 6 to 12 undergo a vital period of their development throughout these years and language learning should contribute positively to this development (W.A.Scott & L.H.Ytreberg, 2004, p.194). In the endeavor of discovering young learner features, Halliwell (1992) and Harmer (2007) have found grammatical patterns difficult to grasp by the young learners due to their relatively undeveloped capacity to consciously learn these structures. Generally, young learners have a more

rounded intellectual capacity in their early years and they practically react to language perceiving it as a tool for action. Young learner's attention span is also short according to Harmer (2007), who says that only with extremely engaging activities, you can keep them enthused and on task, otherwise in more or less 10 minutes they will get bored or lose interest. Apart from these deficiencies in learning, however, they possess a huge capacity for learning indirectly and an enormous enthusiasm for games and fun. Teachers at this stage should contribute in making meaning of the words and phrases of the language as easy to grasp as possible by enforcement of their "intonation, gestures, facial expressions, actions and circumstances" (Halliwell, 1992, p.126). Our teaching practice should solely be based on practical actions or what we know as "the main emphasis from children's perspective" and as Puskas (2016) relates: "the language learning process should have a practical and meaningful aim" (p.16).

2.4. A review of the historical perspective of DI

It is true that many of today's classrooms are well equipped and today's educators are always seeking to master and apply the best and most effective methods to get the learners succeed further. One of those methods is unquestionably DI, considered as contemporary and all-encompassing approach, a modern-day teaching model. However, a retrospective of this approach reveals that efforts to find proper ways to teach based on individual needs date back on the 1908 when it first appeared in Preston's research. Once learning has been moved to a classroom the latter has been populated with different learners along with their different characteristics. In this context, teaching according to specifications of students, their skills and preferences, is a need that has emerged exactly at the moment classrooms were created. Preston Search in Colorado (1899), has long observed differences and distinctiveness in learners and thus, developed a schematic plan to adapt teaching to each level. Another clear indicator of discrepancy in student abilities were the achievement tests, first introduced in 1912. In this regard, Frederic Burk together with many other educators created self-instructive textbooks aiming to help students work and develop knowledge at their own pace. Despite the initiative, this new movement did not find application at an expected level as many schools "went back to their former programs, widely ignoring the varying readiness levels of their students" (Washburne, 1953, p.140). Those changes were considered radical by many school leaders who questioned the functionality of the self-instructive textbooks. Carleton Washburne, Helen Parkhurst and Frederic Burk, all contributed to the development of an

individualized learning system which was then named ‘Dalton Plan’. This plan was built on the principles of “freedom and cooperation” and had three main objectives as described on Linda Eisenmann’s Historical dictionary of women’s education in the United States (1998):

- to connect student’s studies with their needs and interests
- to help students develop a sense of responsibility towards others and
- to promote independence and community (p.111)

The so called ‘individualized learning’ was a tendency towards differentiated instruction. This movement in education has also been initiated in many countries worldwide. The most typical scenario, which also relates to the age group studied in this thesis, would include a classroom of students from grades one to four. These collective classrooms have served as a great opportunity for the teacher to apply DI, but in order for that to happen teacher development and necessary knowledge should have been employed. Of course, probabilities show that some differentiated instruction has already happened as teachers have been imposed by the situation to find strategies to ensure students are challenged properly. It is also worth mentioning that teachers of these kinds of classrooms were challenged by the several difficulties of having to deliver instruction to 2 or 3 different grades within a 45-minute lesson; this has, in the other hand, allowed them to recognize student interests, readiness, social and cultural backgrounds, and other elements that characterize and foster DI.

2.4.1. A review of the ways Differentiated Instruction has been defined

There are numerous descriptive definitions of Differentiated Instruction provided by theorists up to this day. Given the academic literature and studies of critics and theorists that have been perused for this thesis, a criterion has been followed by each as a basis in producing their own definition of Differentiation. That criterion involves:

- The level of student achievement;
- Students’ ability on absorbing a certain amount of knowledge;
- Varied readiness among individuals to learn new content;
- Opportunities created for students by social and educational environment

Studies conveyed from 1934 through 1999 reveal three alterations on nomenclature of Differentiated Instruction. “Individualized Learning” is a primary term used by Dotrens (1934) and Gruenlund (1970). “Differentiated Learning” came up by Sarason (1990) whereas “Differentiated Classroom” was a term by Tomlinson (1999) implying its heterogeneous organization. Stradley & Saunders in 1993 have used the terms “Differentiation” and “Differentiated Curriculum” implemented and allotted to individuals with special learning needs. They have defined Differentiation as a strategy that harmonized tasks and activities with learning patterns and necessities. Even though different theorists have taken different approaches to define DI depending on their style of analysis and research, they all lead to the essential objective of instilling learning to all diverse individuals through the strategies DI comprises. The work of many theorists and practitioners has been studied and analyzed to come to the conclusion that DI is not only a responsive teaching method but instead a great body of techniques that come as a product of their ingrained and methodical work. A classroom of young learners is also a classroom of mixed levels of readiness, interests and learning preferences, so applying DI in such a classroom engages the young learners proactively starting at their stage of learning. In order to have a complete spectrum of DI, this thesis intends to rely on both theoretical and practical application of it. In Abbati’s (2012) research is listed a retrospective of the theories that have served as building blocks for Tomlinson’s definition on DI:

- Students learn best when curriculum and instruction are delivered in a manner that builds upon students’ strengths and asks teachers to stretch students’ thinking beyond their comfort zone (Gardner 1983, 1991, 1993 X Vgotsky, 1978).
- Students are engaged in meaningful, valued, and purposeful instruction (Kapusknick & Hauselein, 2001) where supportive teachers celebrate and respect student diversity and provide high quality instruction.
- Teachers respect differences and develop a diverse knowledge base, using varied culturally responsive materials and assessments and building culturally caring environments so that instruction is paced accordingly for all students (Gay, 2002X Montgomery, 2001).
- Teachers’ goals for students must be based not only on students’ individual interests but also on broader social purposes in elementary and secondary education and therefore teachers need to (1) construct curriculum that connects to students’ lives and experiences; (2) allow for students to participate in the classroom and within the diverse community; (3) support academic, civic and personal goals for students; and (4) support equal access to curriculum (Darling-Hammond, et al 2005); (Abbati, D, 2012, p.6). (p.6)

2.4.2. Reasons for differentiating instruction in English with young learners

English learners at primary level share important characteristics that set the path to intervene by applying differentiated instruction. The characteristics which are tacked in Hallowell's book "Teaching English in the Primary Classroom" (1992) are:

- Children's ability to grasp meaning
- Children's creative use of limited language resources
- Children's capacity for indirect learning
- Children's instinct for play and fun
- Imagination
- The instinct for interaction and talk (p. 3-8)

In practice, if we closely observe first English lessons with young learners, it becomes very easy to spot children who sit quietly in a classroom corner going through pages of a story book, others who cannot stop running joyfully and readily respond to the teacher, a few who stay in groups and talk about the things they see around them. A few days on teaching them, an educator can figure out those who read flawlessly, those who join language patterns easily, those who love explaining images, the great drawers who always want to show you something, the 'ready to get competitive' ones who love games and fun; but similarly, he/she will also spot those who cannot write through the lines or those who are too shy to read aloud or those who cannot work in groups or feel inferior because their buddy is just better, at everything. As this process occurs repeatedly, it helps make learners conscious of the fact that their readiness, interest and learning profiles are different. This factor affects their performance and beliefs for English learning. Another factor that is crucial in shaping this belief on each learner is how the teacher chooses to respond to these observations. Whether teachers want to see only similarities in learning abilities and preferences and teach by template for all or they get captivated by the idea that each student is an individual and differentiate the instruction to offer a supportive teaching approach that nurtures the needs of everyone; it is their choices that affect their young learners at an early age thus, creating room either for encouragement and growth or hindrance and disbelief. In this perspective, Tomlinson points out that "In a classroom with little or no differentiated instruction, only student similarities seem to take center stage. In a differentiated classroom, commonalities are acknowledged and built upon, and student differences become important elements in teaching and learning as well." (Tomlinson,

2001, p.1) Based on this statement, it is clear that once a teacher decides to apply DI it immediately creates an environment which makes use of both student similarities and differences to ensure robust learning in the classroom. By not doing so, teachers lack the opportunity to make use of children's unique traits such as: the pleasure they take in exploring the language, confidence and willingness to express themselves and communicate, ability in expressing what motivates and interests them as well as what they struggle or dislike. By differentiating instruction with young learners instead all these traits would come to use much earlier in time, guaranteeing more quality in language learning and better shaped individuals. Halliwell almost sees it as teacher responsibility to give priority to attitude goals in primary education in order to establish in students: risk-taking, confidence and goodwill towards language learning at an early stage also stating that "the learner's response to the work is central to their later progress" (Halliwell, 1992, p.10-11)

2.4.3. Young Learner Characteristics and Differentiated Instruction

There is an interrelation between the three basic elements that characterize DI and learners themselves, be them young or older ones. They are readiness, interest and learning profiles. If these characteristics are stimulated at a young age, then it is thinkable that our young learners will embark on a much more rewarding track of their English learning. "We know that students learn better if tasks are a close match for their skills and understanding of a topic (readiness), if tasks ignite curiosity or passion in a student (interest), and if the assignment encourages students to work in a preferred manner (learning profile)." (Tomlinson, 2001, p.45)

Based on Tomlinson's clarification YL teachers of English should first analytically observe their learner's readiness, interest and learning profiles in order to harmonize these characteristics with corresponding and responsive tasks. Factual findings result in a valuable body of research in terms of how young learners act and interact with the language in early years and how there are factors that affect them in approaching language in different ways. However, it seems like Tomlinson's book 'Differentiation in Practice' with its Language Unit has meticulously exemplified how "differentiating in elementary classrooms means that teachers proactively engage learners where they are, recognizing that an elementary classroom is a mixed bag of readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences" (Tomlinson, 2003 p.17) by incorporating a differentiated component based on readiness, interest and learner preferences through the eight lessons of the unit. Tomlinson maintains that DI based on student's readiness will always push the learner just enough

so that they can do something more than the work they are comfortable in doing independently with the language. Language teachers should begin this by intuition, whole class activities will often enable them to see the gaps in individuals, evaluate what activities bring them together and what sets them apart and work with those readiness levels. When it comes to using student interest in making the English lessons more fruitful and engaging, two main choices are brought to the language teacher's attention by Tomlinson. First being the teacher's efforts in discovering student interests and triggering them into the activity and second, trying to create new interest by instilling the personal excitement and motivation into the lesson. (Tomlinson. 2000, p.195) The element of interest is closely linked to the element of learning profile thus these two elements are considered as powerful and related motivators in learning. (Bess, 1997, 1998, p.68) "The goals of learning-profile differentiation are to help individual learners understand modes of learning that work best for them, and to offer those options so that each learner finds a good learning fit in the classroom" (Tomlinson, 2003. p.10). The figure below presents Tomlinson's readiness and interest component of DI in a language unit with young learners.

LESSON	WHOLE-CLASS COMPONENTS	DIFFERENTIATED COMPONENTS
LESSON 7 Lists and Alliteration <i>1 class period</i>	Letter/poem opening activity <i>5 minutes</i>	ABC list and alliterative sentences based on readiness <i>40 minutes</i>
	List and sentence sharing <i>5 minutes</i>	
LESSON 8 The ABC Book Project <i>5 class periods</i>	Review of the types of ABC books <i>10 minutes</i>	Planning and completion of individual ABC books based on interest and readiness <i>5 class periods</i>
	Individual ABC book sharing and closing discussion <i>20 minutes</i>	

Figure 1 Differentiated components based on readiness and interest (p.22)

3. Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter elaborates the process of data collecting for the following factors: English language teachers' understanding and attitudes towards differentiated instruction and its components, the way these factors influence the implementation of DI, the variance on the implementation of DI on English Language classes of young learners aged 6-12 in public and private institutions and whether private or public-school teachers expose their students to DI more. Below will be listed a more detailed account of: research design, participants, instruments, reliability of the research and ethical considerations. At first various textbooks, articles and study theses were collected and then they were differentiated into most important and relevant concepts linked to the proposed thesis.

3.2. Research Methodology

The design of this research included a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to achieve a more accurate assessment of the targeted questions and prove the raised hypotheses of this thesis. The QUAN + qual research method will be used in collecting and analyzing data. The instruments used in this research will be questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The purpose of using questionnaires is to collect a larger amount of data from teachers and students. Not only is it an easily approachable and practical method in gathering records but it is as well an efficient way of testing the hypotheses. Consequently, the use of questionnaires will facilitate the first part of the process of data collection and analysis.

Two separate questionnaires on Likert scale were handed to teachers and students to manually fill out - anonymously. Both questionnaires will have the demographic section for the purpose of collecting and analyzing demographic information. The teacher questionnaire will have two additional sections: the first will question their familiarity and beliefs regarding DI and the second, the implementation of DI in practice along with the factors affecting it. Student questionnaire will consist of questions following an age-fitting simplified structure, aiming to understand their perception of a differentiated approach towards them. The other equally important part of the research will be the semi-structured interviews which will be conducted with teachers only, to gain insights of their perceptions on the matter of DI and its implementation with the English language young learners. Jackson, Ronald & Drummond, Darlene & Camara, Sakile. (2007) in their book

‘What is qualitative research?’ have jointly stated that an advantage of using semi structured interviews is “to allow for more flexibility and responsiveness to emerging themes for both the interviewer and respondent”. (p.64)

Thus, these interviews are expected to extract responses from teachers that are genuine and point out their insights and perceptions thoroughly. Semi-structured interviews were also separately arranged with four teachers and their answers were recorded. During the interview, teachers answered open ended questions which were designed to reveal how their beliefs, knowledge have slanted towards them to apply DI with their English young learners, teachers’ methods to determine their students learning styles and language skills, the adaptation of the material on conducting individualized lesson planning, the challenges on curriculum alternation and their motivation to implement DI with their English language young learners. The three instruments framed the unified purpose of this research on the lookout for the best triangulation of the findings collected.

3.3. Participants

For the purpose of getting a more rounded view of teachers’ perceptions of DI with English young learners, the researcher decided that participants would be a blend of public and private school teachers of YL A purposeful sampling was chosen in order to meet the objective of this research. Creswell (2007) refers to purposeful sampling as when “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p.125).

In total, 10 teachers responded on the survey. Public school respondents were 5 in number. Three of them were part of “Ismajl Qemajli” primary school and two others from “Hasan Prishtina” primary school, both located in Prishtina. From the private sector, five YL teachers of English employed at “New Age School”- a private language school in Prishtina, where the researcher worked as well, took part on the questionnaire. All teachers that were the subject of this research taught English as a second language to young learners aged 6 to 12. They received the questionnaire by email and willingly filled it out and returned it to the researcher. Additionally, with their thoughts and expertise, four of the teachers contributed in the semi-structured interviews which were conducted and recorded at their workplace. Permission to conduct research with all

participants, teachers and students, was granted from principals of all three schools. For the purpose of measuring the implementation of DI and student perception of the matter, 80 lower-primary grades students aged 6-12 of the three schools were included in the survey. Specifically, the questionnaire was filled by 40 young learners on beginner, elementary and pre-intermediate levels at the private language school and 40 young learners on grades 1 to 6 from the public schools. I anticipated that this proportion of research sample represents best the target group of young learners. Student questionnaires consisted of 5 items with a simple Yes/No structure and 6 other statements to determine the frequency of the occurrence of DI. Questionnaires were handed in by their teachers 10 minutes before the lesson; instructions on completing the questionnaire were given in L2 and translated in L1 for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders, also additional explanations were offered to students when needed. For confidentiality purposes, all participants remained anonymous and their names were coded.

3.4. Instruments

Three instruments characterized this research study. First, the questionnaire intended for teachers which was organized into three sections. The first section included demographic information and intended to collect data on factors such as: teachers' educational background, work experience and group ages being taught. This part has also helped the researcher understand if there is a link between the above stated and teachers' approach towards DI being implemented with YL of English, thus corresponding with the second research question. In order to answer the first research question: To what extent are the English Language teachers familiar with the components of DI and the methods of implementation? The respondents filled out the second part of the questionnaire which contained specific questions about the elements and the methods of implementing DI and consisted of six charters: student interest, assessment, lesson planning, content, process, product, with 4 items each. Section three followed the same structure as the second one but dealt with the practical part and the responses gave the researcher an outcome of which teachers more frequently applied DI in their YL lessons of English.

The second instrument, the YL questionnaire was projected to give an account of students' perceptions of differentiated English lessons. The items were designed in a way that elements of a differentiated English lesson were included in the questionnaire and the learners would decide on the frequency of them occurring in the classroom. They would also self-assess the scale of progress

they feel they have made on such lessons. Both questionnaires were harmonized with the research questions and leaned towards evidencing the implementation of DI in English lessons in primary grades. The research study also aimed to notice the inhibiting factors and opportunities for intervention in order to make DI with English YL more effective and fruitful. As the third but equally important instrument used for this research were the semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is similar to a structured one, but the structure of the questions is more flexible. Some question may be decided beforehand, but the researcher has more freedom to alter the phrasing and the order of the questions throughout the interview process (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012, p. 79)

In addition, semi-structured interviews will help minimize the impact of the interviewer on the participants and their responses, as the participants can speak their minds, arguably ensuring that the responses of the participants are highly reliable (Bjørndal, 2012, p. 116) “Interviews can generate rich data reflecting the perspective of participants” (Tod. A,2006, p.365). Among the reasons why interviews are useful in research, Tod (2006), enlists that they verify the results from other forms of data collection, for example observation and illuminate responses from a questionnaire survey, which the researcher believed would benefit her research most.

A set of 12 open ended questions was schemed solely to find out how the experience, workplace, classroom size, and other factors have impacted their awareness, understanding and implementation of DI in their English classes of YL. During the interview’s researcher established a friendly atmosphere and stimulated a thorough conversation which allowed the respondents to express themselves without restrictions. Hence, their perspective on the issue was more comprehensive.

3.5. An Account of the quantitative data

The quantitative study served to explore current practices in the area of differentiated curriculum and instruction for English as a second language in grades 1-6 in primary schools “Ismajl Qemajli”, “Hasan Prishtina” and the private language school “New Age school”, all located in Prishtina. Data on teachers’ beliefs, understanding and implementation practices were extracted through this quantitative research study. Data gathered allowed for an analysis that would determine teachers’

level of understanding and implementation of DI with ESL young learners in both public and private institutions.

Given that young ESL learners within the same grade level vary in language competence, teachers need to teach them at their instructional learning level. This, presented a strong motive for the researcher to find out the way young learners needs were treated in terms of ESL learning. Furthermore, the approach of DI, as Tomlinson maintains, advocates active planning for student differences in classroom and as such, is a big facilitator in teaching ESL to young learners. This study, done through surveys, facilitated the gathering of data in a more rapid way. As described by Folwer (2013), “the purpose of the survey is to produce statistics, that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions about some aspect of the study population” (p.1) The instruments were two questionnaires that were filled out anonymously in endeavor of giving the teachers the commodity of answering honestly. For the researcher as well, it was a more rational way of collecting their opinions and beliefs in answering the research questions. Furthermore, teachers were comfortable to filling out questionnaires as they often had contributed on research and case studies and the whole experience made it easier for the researcher to implement the method. SPSS was used to statistically analyze data. The analysis provided a calculation of descriptive statistics showing frequencies and percentages for each response. In addition, means and correlations were calculated to prove the hypotheses. Also, an Independent Samples T-test for non-parametric data was performed to test for significant differences in the data. The data were displayed in text, graphs, and tables.

Research sites and participants		
Elementary School “Ismajl Qemajli”	Teachers	3
	Students	30
Elementary School “Hasan Prishtina”	Teachers	2
	Students	30
Private Language School “New Age School”	Teachers	6
	Students	20

Table 1. Research sites and participants

3.5.1. The administration of the questionnaires, reliability and validity

As stated in the beginning of the study, two questionnaires characterized the quantitative research. Permission was granted to the researcher from all school principals as a first step to begin the research. Teacher participants were informed about the questionnaires by email. Questionnaires were distributed to the teachers by the researcher and asked to fill them out anonymously. Participating teachers were also given instructions on how to administer the questionnaire with the students. Students and teachers filled out the questionnaire manually. Student surveys were administered by teachers in one day during their English lessons.

All questionnaires were collected by the researcher the following week. An appreciation email was sent to the principals and teacher participants for agreeing to be part of this study. As mentioned before, the main purposes the questionnaires served were to check their familiarity and understanding towards DI and to gain understanding of how much they implement DI and the factors affecting the implementation. The introductory section of the questionnaire asked for the demographic information where teachers provided data for their affiliation, grade level, education, experience in teaching and so forth. This aided the researcher to make specific statistical correlations in the study. In the other hand, the student questionnaire, which followed a much simpler structure, intended to reveal data on their perceptions of DI occurrence in their English lessons.

The sample of this research was purposeful and consisted of 12 teachers and 80 students from the above-mentioned schools. Both public schools “Hasan Prishtina” and “Ismajl Qemajli” worked under the same curriculum and timeframe to implement it. The private school worked with language level appropriate syllabuses but there were common elements found with the public schools’ curriculum in terms of grammatical structures and vocabulary topics. This and other factors contributed to the reliability of the study. The three main areas that the results of the study will aid on are: the overall level of understanding of DI among the teachers, the extent of implementation and the practices that work or need to be altered, and whether the need for future training is a more pressing issue for public or private school teachers. To ensure increased validity and clarity of the survey items, the researcher first piloted the survey with 3 of her close colleagues. After analyzing their responses and feedback no issues were indicated so the researcher was ready to implement it with the selected participants.

3.6. An Account of the Qualitative Data

As this research follows a mixed method, for the qualitative data collection the researcher chose the semi-structured interviews as an instrument. Leathan (2006) states that in qualitative analysis there exist a number of approaches and the researcher will determine the approach based on the nature of the data. While the quantitative research will reveal numerical data, the qualitative part will assist in informing all aspects and stages of the research. Being complex in nature, the qualitative approach embraces two particular general strategies: analytic induction and grounded theory. “Analytic induction is a process of analyzing data where the researcher tries to find explanations by carrying on with the data collection until no cases are found that are inconsistent with a hypothetical explanation of a phenomenon” (Leathen, 2006, p.426).

Grounded Theory “is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data” (Martin & Turner, 1986, p. 141) We know from Lichtman (2009) that the approaches in qualitative research data analysis are unspecific about what analysis should each be used. Relying on this, and the fact that the researcher is an important factor in qualitative analysis, grounded theory seems to be a more effective method to code and analyze the theoretical sampling. Grounded Theory is further supported by Ellis and Levy (2009) who stated that GT can furnish additional value when literature fails to support the theoretical evolution of phenomena. Also, Lichtman (2009) views the researcher as a filter of the data collection, organization and interpretation. “Regardless of which approach you use, you are a key tool in the analysis process, and you need to document your process” (Lichtman, 2009, p.265).

3.6.1. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

All four participants that were interviewed choose to respond in English. Interviews were previously scheduled by email and conducted at their workplace during their breaks or prep times. Participants were informed beforehand about the purpose of the research and the significant role their answers would play on the findings, so they willingly conversed with the researcher, conveying their views and understanding of DI with young learners they were teaching. The conversations were audio recorded by the researcher using her personal device and lasted around 30 minute each. Analysis of the data began right after the interviews were completed and

transcribed word for word. It was important for the researcher to gather this qualitative data, as it will be used further to find probable points of integration to the quantitative data.

In order to ensure a maximized attention to data collection procedure, the researcher relied on Litchman's six-step data analysis process:

Step 1. Initial coding: Going from responses to summary ideas of the responses,

Step 2. Revisiting initial coding,

Step 3. Developing an initial list of categories,

Step 4. Modifying initial list based on additional rereading,

Step 5. Revisiting your categories and subcategories,

Step 6. Moving from categories to concepts (Lichtman, 2009, p. 244)

After reviewing and coding the transcripts of the teachers' interviews, themes such as: teacher professional development and the implementation of DI, student response in DI components, impact in assessment and DI's effectiveness in enhancing different skills in young learners, became apparent. Litchman (2009) conceptualizes themes as central issues derived from the coding of the transcribed data.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

The importance of ethical considerations when conducting a research is as significant as the selection of the appropriate research methods. "Proper respect for human freedom generally includes two necessary conditions. First, subjects must agree voluntarily to participate—that is, without physical or psychological coercion. Second, their agreement must be based on full and open information" (Denzin, 2005 p, 144). In this regard, an informed consent was compiled explaining to the participants what kind of data will be extracted, how the data will be used and for what purpose it will serve. They needed to read and sign voluntarily before taking part in the interview. Participants were also informed on their rights to withdraw at any point. All participants signed their letter of consent and none of them confirmed withdrawal.

To ensure that the candidates' privacy is respected and anonymity is protected throughout the process, each of them was given a number e.g., Teacher 1, which was used in all the following phases of the research. Also, other revealing details such as names of the schools they worked in were excluded as well, considering that the researcher should comply with the rules and treat the given information with full discretion. Given that some of the interview questions might put the candidates in situations where they might complain for their institution and the lack of professional development opportunities, it was clarified that such information would not harm or affect the responders and their job positions in any way. Hence, the researcher offered them the certainty and commodity to freely express themselves and this resulted in openness and transparency in their responses.

4. Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter is subdivided into 3 subchapters, the first subchapter is focused on the findings and analysis of the teacher questionnaires, followed by the second subchapter which focuses on the student questionnaires and lastly, there is a discussion of the teacher interviews and their analysis.

4.1. Findings and analysis of the quantitative data from the teacher questionnaires

Since the teacher's questionnaire had been subdivided into the demographic parts and two other parts containing Likert scale data, as such we will be approaching the findings representation in this subchapter. As collected from the questionnaires the teacher gender ratio was 82% female or 9 participants and 18% male teachers or 2 participants (see Figure 2). As for the certification level, the results showed that 54.54% of the participants had a master's degree and 45.46% had a bachelor's degree (see Figure 3).

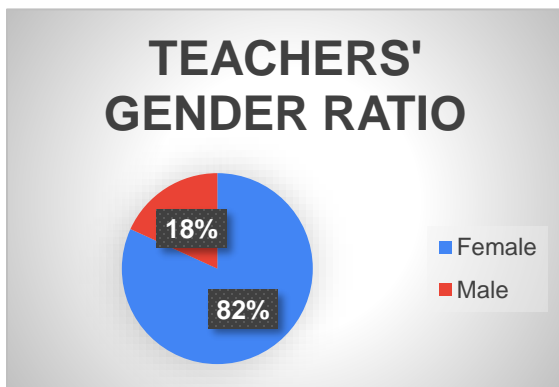


Figure 2 Teachers' Gender Ratio

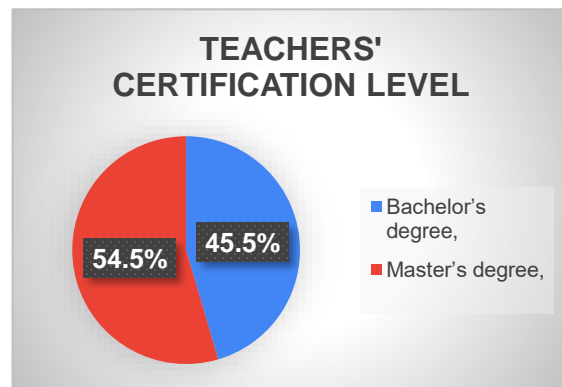


Figure 3 Teachers' Certification Level

Among the participating teachers, 6 of them had 6-10 years of experience, 4 of them had 1-5 years of experience and only one of them had less than a year of experience (see Figure 4), while all of them taught an average of 3.3 classes (see Table 2). One of the teachers taught age groups 8 through 12-year old's, 3 teachers taught age groups 6 through 12-year old's, 3 teachers taught age groups 6 through 9-year old's, 3 other teachers taught age group 6-to-7-year old's and lastly only one teacher taught age group 10-to-12-year-old (see Figure 5).

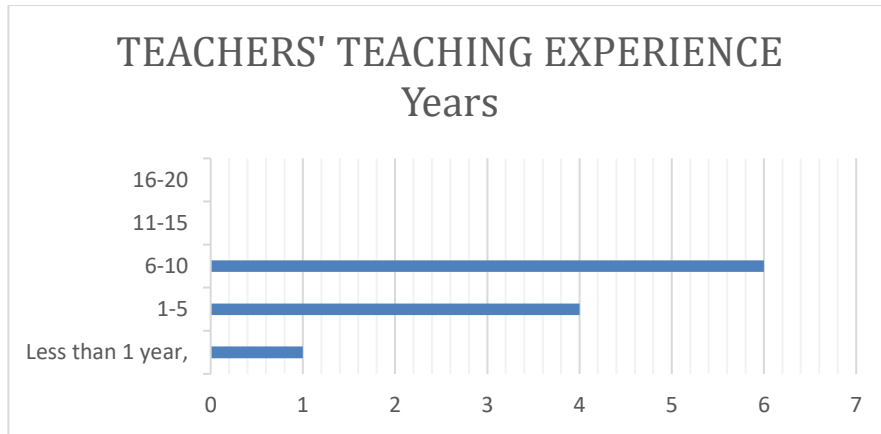


Figure 4 Teachers' Teaching Experience

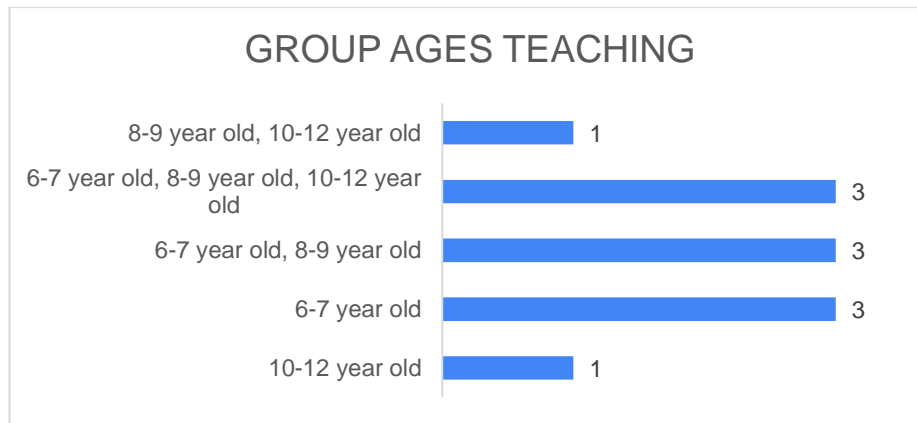


Figure 5 Group Ages Taught

	Number of Grades Teaching
Average	3.3

Table 2 Average Number of Grades Teaching

From the teachers participating 6 of them were employed by Private Language School and 5 were employed by Public Schools (Figure 6).

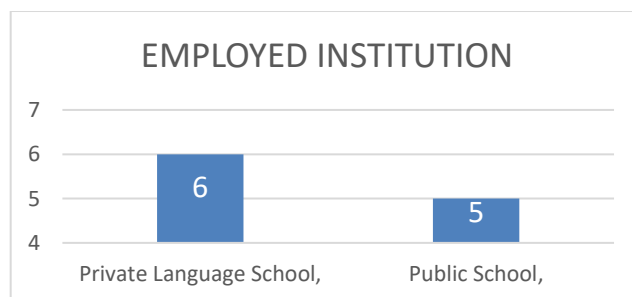


Figure 6 Institution Employed

Familiarity and understanding of DI				
Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
F1	0(0)	1(9.1)	7(63.6)	3(27.3)
F2	0(0)	1(9.1)	5(45.5)	5(45.5)
F3	0(0)	0(0)	1(9.1)	10(90.9)
F4	0(0)	1(9.1)	4(36.4)	6(54.5)
F5	0(0)	0(0)	3(27.3)	8(72.7)
F6	0(0)	1(9.1)	4(36.4)	6(54.5)
F7	0(0)	1(9.1)	2(18.2)	8(72.7)
F8	0(0)	4(36.4)	3(27.3)	4(36.4)
F9	0(0)	1(9.1)	5(45.5)	5(45.5)
F10	0(0)	0(0)	2(18.2)	9(81.8)
F11	0(0)	0(0)	4(36.4)	7(63.6)
F12	0(0)	1(9.1)	3(27.3)	7(63.6)
F13	0(0)	0(0)	3(27.3)	8(72.7)
F14	0(0)	0(0)	1(9.1)	10(90.9)
F15	0(0)	1(9.1)	3(27.3)	7(63.6)
F16	0(0)	1(9.1)	2(18.2)	8(72.7)
F17	0(0)	1(9.1)	6(54.5)	4(36.4)

F18	0(0)	0(0)	5(45.5)	6(54.5)
F19	0(0)	1(9.1)	6(54.5)	4(36.4)
F20	1(9.1)	2(18.2)	5(45.5)	3(27.3)
F21	0(0)	0(0)	4(36.4)	7(63.6)
F22	1(9.1)	3(27.3)	2(18.2)	5(45.5)
F23	0(0)	1(9.1)	5(45.5)	5(45.5)
F24	0(0)	2(18.2)	6(54.5)	3(27.3)
F25	0(0)	0(0)	8(72.7)	3(27.3)
F26	0(0)	2(18.2)	4(36.4)	5(45.5)

*Table 3 Frequency and Percentage of Familiarity and Understanding DI questions**

The table above shows that on the statement “I recognize individual student interest and I adjust instruction to it” 63.6% of the teachers agreed and 27.3% of the teachers strongly agreed, on the next statement on whether it was important to know individual student culture and expectations and adjusting instructions to it 45.5% of the teachers agreed and the same amount also strongly agreed, and 90.9% of the teachers strongly agreed that they should be informed of individual student life situations and how it may impact their learning (see Table 3).

72.7% of the teachers strongly agree that it is important to pre-assess students before instructing and 36.4% of the participating teachers agree as well as 54.5% that do strongly agree that it is important to pre-assess readiness of students in order to adjust the lesson. In the statement “It is important to assess formatively during the unit to gauge understanding.” 72.7% of the teachers strongly agreed on whether it should be assessed at the end of the lesson to determine language acquisition. Teachers were split where 36.4% disagreed, 27.3% agreed and only 36.4% strongly agreed (see Table 3).

*Statement codes correspond with question numbers please see the Appendix

81.8% of the participants strongly agreed that it is important to alter teaching to assure each student works towards their highest potential, while only 63.6% strongly agreed that it is important to adapt content and materials. In the statement “It is important to provide tasks that require students to apply and extend understanding.” A majority of 90.9% strongly agreed, while 63.6% strongly agreed and 27.3% agreed that their curriculum was based on major concepts and generalizations, also 54.5% agreed and 36.4% strongly agreed that they use a variety of materials other than the standard texts and 54.5% strongly agreed that a variety of support strategies should be used. On the statement “I group students for learning activities based on readiness, interests, and/or learning preferences.”, 54.5% of the teachers agreed and 36.4% strongly agreed, on whether learner preference groups and/or learning preference centers should be used, participating teachers were more split 9.1% strongly disagreed, 18.2% disagreed, 45.5% agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed, as well as if the classroom environment should be structured to support a variety of activities 9.1% strongly disagreed, 27.3% disagreed, 18.2% agreed, and 45.5% strongly agreed (see Table 3).

On the statement “I provide students with opportunities to complete their individual assignments at their own pace” 45.5% of teachers agreed and 45.5% strongly agreed, whilst on the statement “I provide multiple modes of expression in the final product” 54.5% agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed, on whether to provide students with the choice to work alone, in pairs or small groups, 72.7% of the teachers agreed and 27.3% strongly agreed. And on whether a variety of assessment tasks should be provided 18.2% of the participating teachers disagreed, 36.4% of them agreed and 45.5% strongly agreed with that statement (see Table 3).

Implementation of DI				
Statement	Usually and Intentionally (4-5 times per week)	Frequently (1 time per week)	Sometimes (1 time per month)	Hardly ever/Rarely (once in a while)
I1	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I2	4(36.4)	5(45.5)	2(18.2)	0(0)
I3	4(36.4)	6(54.5)	0(0)	1(9.1)
I4	4(36.4)	6(54.5)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I5	7(63.6)	3(27.3)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I6	7(63.6)	3(27.3)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I7	5(45.5)	5(45.5)	0(0)	1(9.1)
I8	5(45.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	1(9.1)
I9	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I10	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I11	5(45.5)	5(45.5)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I12	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I13	5(45.5)	4(36.4)	2(18.2)	0(0)
I14	9(81.8)	1(9.1)	1(9.1)	0(0)

I15	7(63.6)	1(9.1)	2(18.2)	1(9.1)
I16	7(63.6)	2(18.2)	1(9.1)	1(9.1)
I17	5(45.5)	4(36.4)	2(18.2)	0(0)
I18	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I19	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I20	5(45.5)	4(36.4)	2(18.2)	0(0)
I21	6(54.5)	4(36.4)	1(9.1)	0(0)
I22	6(54.5)	3(27.3)	1(9.1)	1(9.1)
I23	6(54.5)	5(45.5)	0(0)	0(0)
I24	6(54.5)	3(27.3)	2(18.2)	0(0)
I25	6(54.5)	5(45.5)	0(0)	0(0)
I26	6(54.5)	5(45.5)	0(0)	0(0)

*Table 4 Frequency and Percentage of Implementation of DI questions**

Table No. 4 shows that the recognition of individual student interest and adjusting instruction to those interest is done usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and frequently by 36.4% of them, knowing individual student culture and expectation while adjusting instructions is done usually and intentionally by 36.4% of the teachers and frequently by 45.5%, on the statement “I am aware of student's learning disabilities and handicaps and how to address them in lessons so as not to impair their learning.”

*Statement codes correspond with question numbers please see the Appendix

Teachers answered usually and intentionally 36.4% and frequently 54.5% (see Table 4). For pre-assessing students before instructions 63.6% of the teachers do it usually and intentionally and 27.3% do it frequently, as for the frequency of pre assessing readiness to adjust the lesson 63.6% of the teachers do it usually and intentionally and 27.3% do it frequently, formative assessment during the unit to gauge understanding is done usually and intentionally by 45.5% and frequently by 45.5% of the participating teachers.

Distinguishing student learning styles is done by 54.5% of the teachers usually and intentionally and 36.4% frequently, while alteration of teaching to assure each student works towards their highest potential is done usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and 36.4% do it frequently. On the statement “I adjust for diverse learner needs with scaffolding, tiering instruction & provide student choice in learning activities” 54.5% answered with usually and intentionally, 36.4% with frequently and 9.1% with sometimes. Providing alternative activities to accommodate the range of student knowledge is done usually and intentionally by 45.5% of the teachers and frequently by 36.4% of them, tasks that require students to apply and extend their understanding is provided usually and intentionally by 81.8% of the teachers (see Table 4).

On the statement “The curriculum I follow is based on major concepts and generalizations” 63.6% of the teachers answered usually and intentionally, 9.1% with frequently and 18.2% with sometimes, materials other than the standard text is used usually and intentionally by 45.5% and frequently used by 36.4%, while a variety of support strategies is provided usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and frequently by 36.4%. Grouping students for learning activities based on readiness, interests, and/or learning preferences, is done usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and 36.4% do it frequently (see Table 4).

The answer to the statement “The pace of instruction varies based on individual learner needs” were usually and intentionally by 54.5% and frequently by 36.4%, classroom environment is structured to support a variety of activities including group and/or individual work is done usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and frequently by 27.3% of them, on the statement “I provide students with opportunities to complete their individual assignments at their own pace.” 54.5% answered with usually and intentionally, 45.5% with frequently, the choice to work alone, in pairs or small groups was provided usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and

frequently by 45.5%, whilst a variety of assessment tasks was provided usually and intentionally by 54.5% of the teachers and frequently by 45.5% of the participating teachers (see Table 4).

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mini mu m	Maxi mu m	Mean	Std. Devi atio n
Familiarity and understanding of DI					
F1	11	2	4	3.18	0.603
F2	11	2	4	3.36	0.674
F3	11	3	4	3.91	0.302
F4	11	2	4	3.45	0.688
F5	11	3	4	3.73	0.467
F6	11	2	4	3.45	0.688
F7	11	2	4	3.64	0.674
F8	11	2	4	3	0.894
F9	11	2	4	3.36	0.674
F10	11	3	4	3.82	0.405
F11	11	3	4	3.64	0.505
F12	11	2	4	3.55	0.688
F13	11	3	4	3.73	0.467
F14	11	3	4	3.91	0.302
F15	11	2	4	3.55	0.688
F16	11	2	4	3.64	0.674
F17	11	2	4	3.27	0.647
F18	11	3	4	3.55	0.522

F19	1 1	2	4	3.27	0.64 7
F20	1 1	1	4	2.91	0.94 4
F21	1 1	3	4	3.64	0.50 5
F22	1 1	1	4	3	1.09 5
F23	1 1	2	4	3.36	0.67 4
F24	1 1	2	4	3.09	0.70 1
F25	1 1	3	4	3.27	0.46 7
F26	1 1	2	4	3.27	0.78 6
Implementation of DI					
I1	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I2	1 1	1	3	1.82	0.75 1
I3	1 1	1	4	1.82	0.87 4
I4	1 1	1	3	1.73	0.64 7
I5	1 1	1	3	1.45	0.68 8
I6	1 1	1	3	1.45	0.68 8
I7	1 1	1	4	1.73	0.90 5
I8	1 1	1	4	1.82	0.98 2
I9	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I10	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I11	1 1	1	3	1.64	0.67 4
I12	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I13	1 1	1	3	1.73	0.78 6
I14	1 1	1	3	1.27	0.64 7
I15	1 1	1	4	1.73	1.10 4

I16	1 1	1	4	1.64	1.02 7
I17	1 1	1	3	1.73	0.78 6
I18	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I19	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I20	1 1	1	3	1.73	0.78 6
I21	1 1	1	3	1.55	0.68 8
I22	1 1	1	4	1.73	1.00 9
I23	1 1	1	2	1.45	0.52 2
I24	1 1	1	3	1.64	0.80 9
I25	1 1	1	2	1.45	0.52 2
I26	1 1	1	2	1.45	0.52 2

*Table 5 Means of Likert Scale questions (*Statement codes correspond with question numbers please see the Appendix)*

Calculation of the means of the provided answers shows a mean of greater than 3 on the statements of the Familiarity and understanding of DI part and a mean less than 2 on the Implementation of DI part (see Table 5).

Correlation				
Spearman's Correlations				
Familiarity and understanding of DI		Implementation of DI		Spearman's rho
				p
F1	-	I1	-0.269	0.424
F2	-	I2	-0.493	0.123
F3	-	I3	-0.561	0.073
F4	-	I4	-0.486	0.13
F5	-	I5	-0.454	0.161
F6	-	I6	-0.269	0.424
F7	-	I7	-0.674*	0.023
F8	-	I8	-0.780**	0.005
F9	-	I9	-0.592	0.055
F10	-	I10	-0.627*	0.039

F11	-	I11	-0.727*	0.011
F12	-	I12	-0.359	0.279
F13	-	I13	-0.731*	0.011
F14	-	I14	-0.742**	0.009
F15	-	I15	-0.272	0.418
F16	-	I16	-0.253	0.453
F17	-	I17	-0.883**	0.001
F18	-	I18	-0.324	0.332
F19	-	I19	-0.671*	0.024
F20	-	I20	-0.25	0.458
F21	-	I21	-0.335	0.314
F22	-	I22	-0.471	0.144
F23	-	I23	-0.511	0.108
F24	-	I24	-0.353	0.287
F25	-	I25	-0.559	0.074
F26	-	I26	-0.374	0.258

*Table 6 Spearman's Correlation**

To get a deeper understanding of the relation between the familiarity and understanding of DI and the implementation of DI, a correlation matrix has been calculated using Spearman's correlation for non-parametric data, and some significant correlations have been found:

- Those teachers who agreed on formative assessment to gauge understanding more likely assessed formatively ($r=-0.674$, $p<0.023$) (see Table 6).
- Those teachers who found it important to assess at the end of the lesson to determine language acquisition were more likely to do so ($r=-0.780$, $p<0.005$) (see Table 6).
- The teachers who agreed on the importance of tasks that require students to apply and extend knowledge, provided those tasks more often ($r=-0.742$, $p<0.009$) (see Table 6).
- The teachers that agreed on the usage of a variety of materials used different materials other than the standard text more often ($r=-0.883$, $p>0.001$) (see Table 6).

*Statement codes correspond with question numbers please see the Appendix

Group Statistics											
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	S.E. Mean						
Mans	Public School	26	1,82	,23	,04						
	Private School	26	1,42	,18	,04						
Independent Samples Test											
			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	T-Test for Equality of Means							
			F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower	Upper
Means	Equal variances assumed	,86	,35	6,95	50,00	,000	,40	,06	,28	,52	
	Equal variances not assumed			6,95	47,82	,000	,40	,06	,28	,52	

Table 7 T-test

To assess whether there is a difference between the implementation data gathered from the teachers of the public and private schools, an Independent Samples T-test for non-parametric data has been performed with the means of the implementation data. Public school teachers had a mean of 1.82 while Private school 1.42 showing higher implementation of DI by private school with high significance ($t=6.95$, $df=50$, $p<0.0001$) (see Table 7).

4.2. Findings and analysis of the quantitative data from the student questionnaires

In this study participated 80 students, who were equally distributed, 50% from a Public School and 50% from a Private Language School, the participants were on average 8.88 years old (std. dev=1.731) (see Table 8 and 9).

Statistics			Age				
Age			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
N	Valid	80					
	Missing	0					
Mean		8.88	Valid	6	3	3.8	3.8
Median		9.00		7	19	23.8	27.5
Mode		7		8	17	21.3	48.8
Std. Deviation		1.731		9	11	13.8	62.5
Minimum		6		10	14	17.5	80.0
Maximum		12		11	8	10.0	90.0
				12	8	10.0	100.0
			Total	80	80	100.0	100.0

Table 8 Age Statistics for students

I learn English at:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Private School	40	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Public School	40	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 Learning Institution

Analysis of the answers to the questionnaires that were distributed to the students showed that when asked whether Teachers ask them a lot of questions before we start learning about a topic 76% answered yes and 24% answered with no (see Figure 7), and on the question of whether the teacher asks the student about what they like about the lesson they are going to learn.

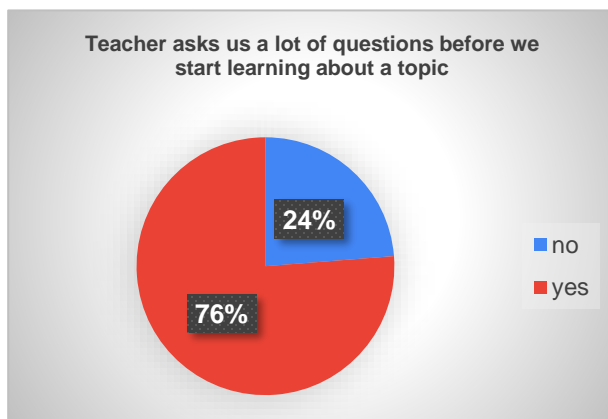


Figure 7 Teacher asks us a lot of questions before we start learning about a topic



Figure 8 My teacher always asks me what I like about a lesson we are going to learn

On the question “I always like the activities my teacher does with me” 78% of the students answered yes and 22% answered no (see Figure 9).



Figure 9 I always like the activities my teacher does with me

On the question “There is always something new and challenging in my English lessons” 80% answered yes and 20% answered no (see Figure 10), and on whether the teacher gave enough time to finish tasks 81% of the participating students answered yes and only 19% answered with no (see Figure 11).



Figure 10 Teacher gives me enough time to finish my tasks

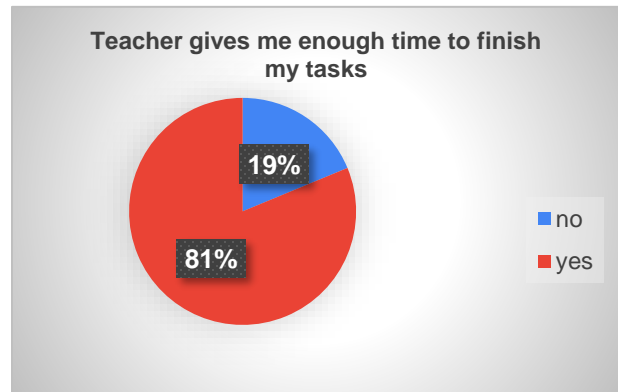


Figure 11 Teacher gives me enough time to finish my tasks

Frequency				
Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
I work with different classmates	33	7	37	3
I work in different groups and complete different exercises	31	5	39	5
We all learn the same things	59	2	19	0
Teacher gives me different tasks	25	5	39	11
Teacher lets me show what I know in different ways	41	4	33	2
Teacher checks if I understand the information in different ways	41	0	37	2
I am progressing in my English classes each day	66	13	1	0
Percentage				
Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
I work with different classmates	41.3	8.8	46.3	3.8
I work in different groups and complete different exercises	38.8	6.3	48.8	6.3
We all learn the same things	73.8	2.5	23.8	0
Teacher gives me different tasks	31.3	6.3	48.8	13.8
Teacher lets me show what I know in different ways	51.2	5	41.3	2.5
Teacher checks if I understand the information in different ways	51.2	0	46.3	2.5
I am progressing in my English classes each day	82.5	16.3	1.3	0

Table 10 Student Likert Scale Percentages and Frequencies

During the survey, on the statement “I work with different classmates” 41.3% answered yes, 8.8% no, 46.3 answered sometimes and only 3.8% answered rarely, working in different groups and completing different exercises 38.8% of the participants answered yes, 48.8% sometimes and the answers no and rarely were equally divided with each 6.3% (see Table 10). On the statement on whether they learned the same thing 73.8% answered yes, 2.5% no and 23.8% answered sometimes, when asked if the teacher gives different tasks 31.3% answered yes, 6.3% no, 48.8% answered sometimes and only 13.8% answered rarely (see Table 10). On the statement “Teacher lets me show what I know in different ways” 51.2% answered yes, 5% no, 41.3% answered sometimes and only 2.5% answered rarely, and whether the teacher checks if I understand the information in different ways 51.2% answered yes, 46.3% answered sometimes and only 2.5% answered rarely. And when the students were asked whether they were progressing in their English

Classes each day 82.5% answered yes, 16.3% no, 1.3% answered sometimes and none answered rarely (see Table 10).

4.3. Findings and analysis of the qualitative data from the teacher interviews

This chapter describes and explicates the themes which have emerged from the interviews. After a purposeful reading of all the participants' answers, the researcher began to employ open coding in order to find patterns of common interest in the transcribed answers, which would emerge into categories. Once the core categories were shaped, the researcher used constant comparison and memoing to channel the data into them. Memoing and constant comparison turned out to be a very useful process for the researcher. It not only enabled her to reflect on the implications found on answers from different respondents but also question their answers and tackle their interest and willingness on overcoming barriers in the implementation of the differentiated instruction with young learners of English. Codes related to their perception of DI in an ideal young learner classroom were extracted and revealed a couple of reasons like: DI would involve and actively engage each student, it would address certain needs of a group or an individual in classroom, growth would be possible for the slow learners of language and classroom management would be more promising. Codes related to the course of implementation revealed motives such as: taking into account students readiness levels, interests, using a variety of strategies to help them in language learning and reaching desirable results by the end of the term/course, challenges in terms of having a clear understanding of the method, preparation and curriculum framework restrictions, resources, time management, assessment and skepticism on its effectiveness with young learners. A subsequent process of selective and theoretical coding led to the central themes of this research. Accordingly, the themes that will be elaborated in this chapter include perception and impact of DI, motives for implementation, resources, and skepticism in effectiveness. The chart below provides information about the participating teachers. The first four interview questions revealed data regarding their teaching experience, group ages, class size they teach, whether they are employed in a public or private institution and the professional development opportunities they have had for DI. The data analysis concerning these questions are reported on the following page.

Code	Teaching Experience in years	Grades/group ages currently teaching	Class Size	Institution Employed	Professional Development for DI
Teacher 1	6	6 -10 year olds	8 to 15 students	Private Language School	2 Trainings 2 Workshops, educational articles read
Teacher 2	3	8-12 year olds	10 to 12 students	Private Language School	1 Training, 1 workshop, articles read
Teacher 3	4	8-11 year olds (Grades 3-6)	34 students	Public School	1 Workshop and some articles read
Teacher 4	7	8-10 year olds (Grades 3-5)	30 students	Public School	Webinars, articles and 1 Training

Table 11 Interviewed Teachers' Statistics

Of all 4 participants, the least experienced teacher had already been teaching for at least 3 years and the most experienced one for at least 7. Except one, all the other participants had worked at the same school throughout their teaching career. All participants were familiarized with the concept of DI through different means such as webinars, training or workshops they had attended and articles they had read. However, professional development opportunities were not offered equally to the public and private school employers. Further, their responses indicated that private school teachers were given more opportunities to learn about DI and experience workshops for practical use of the method whereas public school teachers received less of this and most of their understanding for DI was from self-initiated PD-s. One of the private school teachers also mentioned that after one of the trainings for DI, he and other school teachers were requested to plan DI lessons and implement them with young learners of English. They recorded their lessons and sent them to the trainer for further feedback. The teacher considered this as a very valuable experience and mentioned that it inspired her to differentiate instruction more often and keep a

journal of the implementation to find out what works and what does not. Other teachers mentioned implementing DI after being familiarized with it but not in such a supervised manner. One common factor for all 4 participants was the group age taught.

4.3.1. Analysis of Central Themes

In the following subchapters the teacher interviews have been analyzed using grounded theory and some clear themes have emerged, those themes are used as titles for the following subchapters and are analyzed further in the text below.

4.3.1.1. The young learner classroom through the lens of the participants

All the teachers that were a subject of this research had already gained some experience in teaching English to young learner classrooms. Therefore, primarily they were asked to describe an ideal classroom of young learners of English and then explain if the environment they are working in meets their epitomes of such a classroom. By asking this question the researcher was able to understand the expectations of each Esl teacher for their young learners and how they make their way to meet them. This question revealed the methods they knew, found practical, and used more often, the external inhibiting factors to apply those methods and the internal inhibiting factors such as their personal lack of knowledge or information.

Teacher 1 and 2 both describe their young learners as individuals with a lot of potential to develop their language skills. What they both dream of achieving with their young learners is a uniform language competence in all the four main skills of English. Ideally, they would like to have the autonomy of prioritizing, planning and developing differentiated instruction over the curriculum framework to achieve that competence with their learners. This, for them, presents an ideal learning environment for the ESL young learners to fully develop as individuals. Teacher 1 claims that young learners constantly send signals for the teacher to understand their struggles, stagnations or interests, or things they come strongly about, this way keeping the teacher alert to act and find the most proper way to approach those signals.

“When a young learner finds the text too long to read or wants to only read a short paragraph or picks a sentence, they feel confident about writing, they are simply sending signals to you that they are not ready or find themselves struggling in that area. The sooner you catch that signal from one or more individuals the more opportunities you will have to differentiate instruction, pace and

level for them. I think that as an approach, it is the most reliable for the teacher and the young learner. Teachers can boost students' self-esteem and confidence by attracting their interests and reinforcing their strengths and challenging the more skilled, keeping them busy and feeding their brains with new information about the language."

Teacher 3 feels that in all the times her learners have been commonly involved and engaged in the lesson, for her it has been an ideal moment of teaching. She adds "*asking a question to the class knowing that each and every one is capable of answering makes me feel wonderful*" she goes on to explain that those questions are sometimes the same ones that have been unanswered at the very beginning of the unit and the miracle lies in the process of getting every young learner process, understand and express themselves in an ESL class. The process on the other hand is not an easy one for her, time remains the most difficult to manage in her class populated by nearly 36 students.

Teachers report that their young learners act differently in different areas they teach them, that's why they all claim to be using differentiation in the way that is more effective for each. Teachers claim to be differentiating instruction mainly by differentiation of curriculum elements and content, process or product and differentiating based on young learners' characteristics, readiness and profile.

It becomes obvious from the conversations that all teachers of ESL young learners involved in the study share the same goal, that is to succeed in developing a uniform language competence in their students. But in achieving this aim, not all of them follow the same line and use the same disposals. Both teachers employed in the private school stated that opportunities to address each young learner individually are present and the variety of pre-assessment activities they provide helps them identify the strengths and weaknesses of their young learners. Teachers 3 and 4, who work in public schools and with bigger populated classes, are aware of the need to address individual needs but mention the factor of time as disfavoring for them.

4.3.1.2. Perception and impact of DI

The fifth interview question was asked with the purpose of gaining an understanding of participant's perceptions of differentiated instruction and its impact in a young learner classroom of English. Participants were asked "How does differentiated instruction fit into a young learner

classroom of English Language? Themes derived from this question are discussed in the order they appear.

-DI involves and actively engages each student; as the researcher was trying to find out how teachers treat DI in their teaching endeavors a very important theme such as student engagement became visible. Student engagement is hard to achieve especially with young learners who are known to have a shorter attention span and respond to different triggers, switching focus easily. “Only when a student is learning can he or she become educated, and the prerequisite is engagement in the learning process as an active participant” (Collins, 2014, p. xiii). Relying on Collins, it must be said that learning without engagement is hard to happen. Collins suggests that teachers collect information by observing the way students engage cognitively, behaviorally and emotionally. The data will allow them to tailor their instruction in an engaging way for each individual. That would enable young learners to comprehend and achieve more. All teachers reported that they felt most successful when they were able to offer engaging input and when asked to explain such occasions, they mentioned DI frequently. Teachers who managed to find appropriately challenging materials and interest-based activities noticed that their students were more engaged, their participation was higher and their work was more accurate. The researcher could conclude from the conversations that DI had served its purpose in engaging all learners accurately.

-DI addresses individual and collective needs of young learners in the classroom; Variances in ESL students’ skills, interests and learning styles become very apparent at a young age and as such produce mixed student needs that each teacher is expected to meet. Teachers affirmed that their classrooms have continuously been populated with mixed ability learners. They highlighted the differences between the skills, interests and learning styles of their young learners. Teacher 4 admits that it is challenging to deliver lessons that are comprehensive for all parties, yet she would like to believe that all learners are helped in a way or at some time as teachers do try their best to meet the needs they have. Teacher 1 and 2 explained that in their workplace two criteria are respected for grouping learners: their language level- tested orally, and age. This is done in order to create a more homogenous classroom but despite that fact, the spectrum of the core language skills among the learners differs. Teacher 2 declared “*my Esl classes are nowadays commonly populated with young learners with volatility in core skills of English, being B1 in speaking and*

A2 in writing. Such individuals participate in excellent discussions but when it comes to writing they struggle and I immediately seek to offer them an alternate way to balance the gap. This is an issue which I have to address individually with the student. The range of the general language level also varies, making my classes heterogeneous in individual skills and group skills.” The range of student skills within the same age group or class was a common factor derived from all conversations with private and public-school young learners. Going back to the main question, they categorize DI as the most effective means in helping each learner progress further. Describing a common class scenario Teacher 1 claims that students are always in need of something “*when a student is bored and complains loudly or is off task and teases others, he is either in need of a challenge or in need of help. That’s why DI needs to happen consistently, and for me as a teacher would be very uplifting knowing that I have them all engaged, and that they feel supported and are motivated to rise further.*” It became apparent that all teachers face the challenge of having young learners of mixed abilities and interests. What also was clearly understood is that participants really wanted and made an effort to meet their students’ needs. When it comes to the use of DI for this purpose, it is apparent that they have administered it in different forms; some give more convincing examples and claim it is part of their daily teaching methods; others seem to need more reinforcement in using it effectively. They all conclude that DI is needed in order to fulfill the diverse needs of the young learners of English as a second language.

-DI and the growth of the slow learners of language; the interviewed ESL teachers who work with young learners mentioned their slow learners as more challenging to work with. Most learners acquire knowledge in different ways and contexts, increasing the demand for the teacher to provide much more fluctuating content. DI is one of the especially-designed strategies to meet the learning needs of special learners, providing students with varying abilities the opportunity to learn the same curriculum. Levy (2008) claims that with the tools of differentiated instruction, the child can be taken towards further success. Teachers of both private and public institutions have slow learners in their classes. (p.164) It was clear from their answers that only a few managed to approach them more effectively when using DI. Both private school teachers were able to identify slow learners at the beginning of the year with observations and frequent formative assessment; they implemented DI accordingly based on the data they received.

For the public-school teachers dealing with slow learners, challenges such as lack of time to plan and limited resources made application of DI much more problematic. *“With a class of 36 students everything new requires strategic planning about management of time, resources and content and failing to implement DI properly has turned my class into a chaotic and frantic environment” Personally I haven’t seen much benefit from it*”, says teacher 3 who has found DI quite difficult to implement. When asked what alterations would make it more effective with her individual slow learner, she mentioned that if she had a smaller class size and more time to plan, she would do it repetitively and expect better results. The researcher could conclude that private school teacher was given the benefit of time in assessing, planning and implementing DI and they had a better understanding of the strategy itself. They found the right means to identify their slow learners and had the possibility to differentiate their instruction if what they were teaching was not working for them.

-Classroom management becomes more probable; Defined as the ability of teachers to establish and maintain order in a classroom within an education system that aims to foster learning as well as social and emotional growth, classroom management encompasses all of the teacher’s practices related to developing mode of instruction (e.g., lecturing, group work) and dealing with learner behavior (Elias and Schwab 2006, Emmer and Sabornie 2015). When talking about classroom management approaches, all teachers agreed that DI would minimize the issues if implemented effectively. Teachers have linked DI based on readiness and interest with a more effective classroom management. Teacher 1 explains how he differentiates instructions by readiness *“I teach a new topic and put 3 questions on the board, each of a different level and ask my students to answer the one they find easy. I see them all on task writing their answers, some have one-word answers but can explain more orally, others write one or two sentences. What makes me feel good is seeing them all engaged and not making noise or complaining”* Teacher 2 gives her students a variety of choices and her activities offer a lot of scaffolding, this way she is able to conduct the lesson smoothly and effectively. She also says that students can choose how to show what they learned and choices include singing a song, role-playing a dialogue, reading out loud, drawing and presenting in front of class, allowing them this way to respond according to their learning style. She highlights that doing this maintains a balance of academic and social achievement in her class. Teachers 3 and 4 experience many more levels of readiness in their oversized classes which immediately requires them to use a broad range of teaching methods and materials. To teacher 4,

having a lot of diversity in her teaching presents success and more chances for her students to grow, however this is hard to implement in an oversized classroom and predetermined curriculum. This way, she says that more often than engaged and productive, students in her class who are disengaged are the ones to complain, seek attention and cause noise. She states that she feels bad for failing to achieve solid classroom management but she attributes this to the lack of time and freedom to plan diversely.

4.3.1.3. Motives for implementation of DI

Teachers are aware of their students' individual differences and interests and they all seem enthused by the idea of being able to offer flexibility and choice for their young learners to succeed. They want to run smooth lessons and create autonomous young learners of English. They understand that the response to achieving that is designing differentiated lessons for their young learners and implementing DI in their English lessons. The fact that maximum outcomes and continuous progress are the two main attributes of DI presents a strong motive for the teachers to implement it, as it is also aligned to their teaching aims. Teachers are concerned with the fact that their current teaching practices often enforce the same outcome for all students and they do not feel comfortable about that. This is another drive that leads them to DI. Knowing that by applying the techniques of DI, teachers are able to apply differentiated assessment as well. Proven results of student engagement and effective classroom management with DI push private school teachers of Esl young learners further to keep using the strategy effectively. Student motivation and participation, especially of those who are slow learners or of low ability is another indicator for using DI among the interviewed teachers. Teacher 1 likes to implement DI through flexible grouping: *"I often group them based on interest and see how productive they get and how quickly they work together. They cannot wait to show their work as they all felt productive and eager to participate"* Teacher 2 says to have been driven to use DI to differentiate content as *"there were three students who kept finishing assignments earlier than others and asking me –What now ?, so I started preparing a more challenging content within the same theme for them and giving them the role of the helpers in class, then they would go around and explain what they know to other students and slowly bring everybody on a same page. My stronger students are more responsible and my slower learners have a sense of support and space to improve slowly"* she says she will probably keep doing this as it gives her students more responsibility and avoids boredom.

Otherwise, the overwhelming work of planning for DI was mentioned as a demotivating factor. This was particularly noticed in conversations with teachers 3 and 4 who have to plan for big class size and under time constraints. Both teachers who work in public school acknowledge the challenges of meeting each learner need in their overpopulated classes. They state that motivation to plan and implement DI exists but the circumstances make them feel uncomfortable in doing so.

4.3.1.4. Resources

When discussing with teachers about the easiest and the hardest part of implementing DI, they mentioned resources as part of the hardships. Teachers 1 and 2 had a printer at school and they were allowed to print and copy worksheets and other materials for their students, however they had to request permission for printing in colors. As for online platforms and leveled reading books, they did not have subscriptions nor had the school offered them to buy any. Public school teachers were much more limited in this aspect; they mentioned that for worksheets or other printable they had to do them privately outside school as at school they are expected to print tests only. Their classes are equipped with projectors but they had to bring their own lap tops to incorporate technology based differentiated activities. It was notable that essential resources to successfully implement DI were not easily accessible to the teachers. *“I have about 8 to 15 students on each class but the space is small and they sit around a round table that fills most of the classroom’s space, I take my students out in the hall whenever it is quiet so that I can place them into working stations.”* - says teacher 1 who describes classrooms at the private school as not very spacious. Space in class is also a problem for teacher 3 and 4 but this is because their large classrooms are filled with 30 + students. They say that there is enough space to play with the seat arrangement in class and they apply group work sometimes but as they get in class just five minutes before the lesson, they describe doing this as very time consuming as they probably would have re-arrange them for the homeroom teacher again.

4.3.1.5. Skepticism for effectiveness of DI

A theme that became apparent while analyzing data from the interviews is a slight skepticism about the effectiveness of DI with young learners of English. Teachers agree that DI is a facilitating approach for the teacher and the earlier they begin to apply it the better results are expected theoretically. However, the general idea that prevails among them is that they do not feel that they

are implementing DI successfully enough to be effective with their young learners of English. A more optimistic attitude towards effective results is observed in responses of teachers 1 and 2 who have been more exposed to DI in professional development collaborations and have monitored differentiated lessons with their young learners. Being part of a private institution, they have been much more encouraged to use DI than the two others, as the main reasons students enroll on language courses is to improve their English skills. Teachers 1 and 2 have applied several approaches of DI and consider it part of their teaching routine, providing evidence such as: flexible grouping of students, working in stations, tiered instructions and giving them choices to show their knowledge. Nonetheless, when it comes to differentiated assessment, they admit that they haven't always leveled the demands according to student progress. Public school teachers admit that they use the same assessment scale for all learners especially in written tests and they differentiate instruction to offer students an easier trail of understanding what they will later assess for all similarly. They say that differentiated assessments are only part of their formative assessments at times and they cannot translate a differentiated activity of low demand into a grade similar to a much more challenging activity given to whole class. The most prevailing feeling from these interviews was that they do not know how to properly assess and grade differentiated activities.

5. Chapter V: Discussion

In this part we will discuss the relation between the main findings and analysis from the questionnaires and interviews to the research questions posed earlier in this study. To simplify the approach, this chapter is divided into four parts corresponding to the four research questions. Meaning, the first part will discuss the extent of the English Language teachers familiarity with the components of DI and the methods of implementation, the second part will discuss teachers' approach toward DI and the effect on the implementation of this method in EL classes, the third part will discuss if DI is more likely to be applied by public or private school teachers and lastly DI helps young learners achieve results on learning the English Language.

5.1. The extent of the English Language teacher's familiarity with the components of DI and the methods of implementation

The first research question asked about the extent of the English Language teachers familiarity with the components and the methods of implementation, which clearly was addressed by second part of the teachers questionnaire, the results of which showed a mean of greater than 3 and represents a great agreeability and understanding of DI components and the methods of implementation, equally the teachers interviews showed a clear understanding of DI components but their implementation was halted by different factors.

5.2. The teachers' approach toward DI and the effect on the implementation of this method in EL classes

The second research question asked about the teachers' approach toward DI and the effect on the implementation of this method in EL classes, this was the focus of the second and third part of the teachers' questionnaires as well as the interviews. The questionnaire results were analyzed and didn't show a great correlation between the teachers approach and implementation except in four cases where the more agreeable the teacher were the more likely they were to implement DI. Also the interviews revealed the lack of resources which complements the low correlation between familiarity and implementation of DI.

5.3. The likelihood of DI application by public and private school teachers

The third research question asked whether DI is more likely to be applied by public or private school teachers, this question was clearly addressed in third part of the teachers' questionnaires as well as the interviews. The results of the Likert scale means showed greater implementation of DI by private school teachers compared to public school teachers; this difference was then tested with a T – test showing that that difference was of statistical significance.

5.4. DI helps young learners achieve results on learning the English Language

The fourth and last question asked if DI helps young learners achieve results on learning the English Language, which was analyzed by the student questionnaires, two questions in particular addressed this research questions, the first “There is always something new and challenging in my English lessons” where the majority answered positively and the last question on the “I am progressing in my English classes each day” in which more than 80 percent answered positively clearly showing that DI helps young learners achieve results.

6. Chapter VI: Conclusion

This study was conducted in both private and public schools, and included questionnaires with 7 teacher participants and 80 student participants, as well as 4 teacher interviews. Firstly we will try to address the research questions starting with the extent that English Language Teachers are familiar with the components and methods of DI and their implementation, this part was addressed by the questions in the second part of the teachers survey, in which almost every teacher showed a great familiarity as well high rates of implementation of DI(Q1), the second research question was to look into effect of the approach towards DI and their implementation, in this case we found no correlation between the approach and attitude towards DI and their implementation, similarly this was supported by the interviews which pointed at different factors affecting the implementation of DI such as lack resources(Q2). The third research question was to see if there is difference in the application of DI between Private and Public school teachers, by comparing the means of the answers and then testing them, a significant difference was found that private school teachers do implement DI more than public school teachers(Q3). The fourth research question was about if DI help young learners achieve results on learning the English, to which 80 percent of the students answered positively when asked if they felt they were progressing(Q4). The results of this study showed us a great agreeability, familiarity and understanding of DI on the Likert Scale Questions thus confirming our first Hypothesis 1 (H1) that the teachers have a general understanding of DI and its components. A correlation matrix has been calculated using Spearman's correlation for non-parametric data, and 4 out of 26 significant correlations have been found between the familiarity with DI and the application in classes, thus we must reject our second hypothesis 2 (H2) and assume the invalidity of the statement "Teachers who are familiar with the components of DI will most likely apply this approach in their young Learner English classes." A mean difference in the implementation of DI has been found 1.82 and 1.42 for Public School Teachers and Private School Teachers respectively, showing that DI are more likely to be applied by Private School Teachers and testing that difference with an Independent Samples T-test for non-parametric data showing a great statistical significance in that difference $t=6.95$, $df=50$, $p<0.0001$, and thus confirming our third Hypothesis (H3) – and validating the statement that Private school teachers are more likely to apply DI in their YL classes than public school teachers.

Lastly, the student questionnaire asked students “ I always like the activities my teacher does with me” to which 78% answered Yes, and ”There is always something new and challenging in my English lessons” to which 80% answered with Yes and lastly they were asked if they were progressing in their English classes each day and 82.5% of the participation students answered with Yes thus also confirming our last hypothesis (H4) and validating the statement Differentiated instruction affects positively young learners on learning English.

6.1. Limitations of the study

As it commonly occurs, several limitations also characterized this research study. Initially, it was assumed by the researcher that a heterogeneous structure would be found in public school classes and expected that a more uniform composition would be found in private school classes. This, considering the fact that young learners of English as a foreign language in Private institutions are more likely to be grouped by age and ability, whereas in public schools, age is a common factor of placement in grade level. The sample size of this study was 10 teachers and 80 students. While it was assumed that all respondents would show clear understanding of the questions and respond openly, first and second grade students showed sizable need for clarification by their teachers. The difference in class size was significant. Private school classes were populated with less than 18 students, whereas the average public school class size consisted of 30 students. The size factor along with the curriculum presented an influence in the methodologies used within the schools. Last but not least, a limited body of previous research in differentiated instructions with young learners of English made it difficult for the researcher to compare and rely on prior data for a more thorough analysis of how this theory has developed. Among other concerns, confusion whether or not there is a clear term for differentiated instruction in Albanian was detected while conversing with participants too.

6.2. Recommendations

The impact of DI on young learners is clearly positive, meaning more research should be done to support its implementation as well as more detailed studies dealing with more direct results on the performance impact in young learners.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

This questionnaire intends to investigate how Differentiated Instruction is perceived and implemented by English Language Young Learner Teachers. The results will be compiled in a research paper to fulfill requirements to complete my MA degree in teaching. Your assistance in this endeavor is greatly appreciated. The responses are anonymous. It should not take more than 10 minutes of your time. Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

I. Demographic Information

1. Circle your gender:

Male or Female

2. Circle your current certification level:

Bachelor's degree,

Master's degree,

Doctoral studies,

3. Teaching experience in years:

Less than 1 year,

1-5,

6-10,

11-15,

16-20,

4. Grade(s) currently teaching: (mark all that apply)

3rd

4th

5th

5. Group ages currently teaching (mark all that apply)

6-7 year old

8-9 year old

10-12 year old

6. Institution currently employed:

Public School,

Private Language School,

II. Familiarity and Understanding

Part 2: Familiarity and understanding of DI		
Please indicate your belief using the following scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree)		
Student Interest		
F1.	I recognize individual student interest and I adjust instruction to it	1 2 3 4
F2.	It is important to know individual student culture and expectations and I adjust instruction to it	1 2 3 4
F3.	I should be informed of individual student life situations and how it may impact their learning.	1 2 3 4
F4.	Student learning disabilities and handicaps are an issue and I know how to address them in lessons so as not to impair their learning.	1 2 3 4
Assessment		
F5.	It is important to pre-assess students before instructing.	1 2 3 4
F6.	It is important to pre-assess readiness of students in order to adjust the lesson.	1 2 3 4
F7.	It is important to assess formatively during the unit to gauge understanding.	1 2 3 4
F8.	I should assess at the end of the lesson to determine language acquisition.	9 2 3 4
F9.	I should distinguish student's learning styles	1 2 3 4
Lesson Planning		
F10.	It is important to alter teaching to assure each student works towards their highest potential.	1 2 3 4
F11.	It is important to adapt both content and materials to meet individual students' learning needs and interest.	1 2 3 4
F12.	It is important to adjust for diverse learner needs with scaffolding, tiering instruction & provide student choice in learning activities	1 2 3 4
F13.	It is necessary to provide alternative activities to accommodate the range of student knowledge in my classroom.	1 2 3 4
F14.	It is important to provide tasks that require students to apply and extend understanding.	1 2 3 4
Content		
F15.	The curriculum I follow is based on major concepts and generalizations	1 2 3 4

F16.	I clearly articulate what I want students to know, understand and be able to do.	1 2 3 4
F17.	I use variety of materials other than the standard text.	1 2 3 4
F18.	I provide a variety of support strategies (organizers, study guides, study buddies).	1 2 3 4
Process		
F19.	I group students for learning activities based on readiness, interests, and/or learning preferences.	1 2 3 4
F20.	I use learner preference groups and/or learning preference centers	1 2 3 4
F21.	The pace of instruction varies based on individual learner needs.	1 2 3 4
F22.	The classroom environment is structured to support a variety of activities including group and/or individual work.	1 2 3 4
Product		
F23.	I provide students with opportunities to complete their individual assignments at their own pace.	1 2 3 4
F24.	I provide multiple modes of expression in the final product	1 2 3 4
F25.	I provide students with the choice to work alone, in pairs or small group.	1 2 3 4
F26.	I provide variety of assessment tasks.	1 2 3 4

III. Implementation

Part 3: Implementation of DI		
Please indicate your application using the following scale:		
1. Usually and Intentionally (4-5 times per week)		
2. Frequently (1 time per week)		
3. Sometimes (1 time per month)		
4. Hardly ever/Rarely (once in a while)		
Student Interest		
I1.	I recognize individual student interest and I adjust instruction to it	1 2 3 4
I2.	I know individual student culture and expectations and I adjust instruction to it	1 2 3 4
I3.	I know individual student life situations and how it may impact their learning.	1 2 3 4
I4.	I am aware of student's learning disabilities and handicaps and how to address them in lessons so as not to impair their learning.	1 2 3 4
Assessment		
I5.	I pre-assess students before instructing.	1 2 3 4
I6.	I pre-assess readiness of students in order to adjust the lesson.	1 2 3 4
I7.	I assess formatively during the unit to gauge understanding.	1 2 3 4
I8.	I assess at the end of the lesson to determine language acquisition.	1 2 3 4
I9.	I distinguish student's learning styles	1 2 3 4
Lesson Planning		
I10.	I alter my teaching to assure each student works towards their highest potential.	1 2 3 4

I11.	I adapt both content and materials to meet individual students' learning needs and interest.	1 2 3 4
I12.	I adjust for diverse learner needs with scaffolding, tiering instruction & provide student choice in learning activities	1 2 3 4
I13.	I consider it necessary to provide alternative activities to accommodate the range of student knowledge in my classroom.	1 2 3 4
I14.	I provide tasks that require students to apply and extend understanding.	1 2 3 4
Content		
I15.	The curriculum I follow is based on major concepts and generalizations	1 2 3 4
I16.	I clearly articulate what I want students to know, understand and be able to do.	1 2 3 4
I17.	I use variety of materials other than the standard text.	1 2 3 4
I18.	I provide a variety of support strategies (organizers, study guides, study buddies).	1 2 3 4
Process		
I19.	I group students for learning activities based on readiness, interests, and/or learning preferences.	1 2 3 4
I20.	I use learner preference groups and/or learning preference centers	1 2 3 4
I21.	The pace of instruction varies based on individual learner needs.	1 2 3 4
I22.	The classroom environment is structured to support a variety of activities including group and/or individual work.	1 2 3 4
Product		
I23.	I provide students with opportunities to complete their individual assignments at their own pace.	1 2 3 4
I24.	I provide multiple modes of expression in the final product	1 2 3 4
I25.	I provide students with the choice to work alone, in pairs or small group.	1 2 3 4
I26.	I provide variety of assessment tasks.	1 2 3 4

8.2. Teachers' Interview Questions

IV. Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Tell me about your teaching experience.
3. What grades/age groups do you currently teach?
4. What is your current classroom size?
5. Describe an ideal young learner classroom.
6. How does differentiated instruction fit into a young learner classroom?
7. Did your institution offer any training to prepare you for implementing this teaching method into your classroom?
8. How did you go about implementing differentiated instruction in your young learner classroom? What was easiest about implementing differentiated instruction? What was the hardest part of the implementation?
9. What barriers have you experienced in implementing differentiated instruction?
10. How did your students respond to your implementation of differentiated instruction?
11. What forms of assessment have you used after implementing differentiated instruction?
12. Do you think DI is more effective when used with young learners? If yes, how does it contribute to their language skills? If no, why do you think it isn't effective with this age group?

8.3. Student Questionnaire

Student Survey

These questions will check the application of Differentiated Instruction in English lessons. Please listen to the directions from your teacher and CIRCLE the option you think is true for you. It will only take you 5 minutes to complete. Thank you 😊

Age: _____ Grade: _____

A. I learn English at :

Private School Public School

1. Teacher asks us a lot of questions before we start learning about a topic

Yes No

2. My teacher always asks me what I like about a lesson we are going to learn

Yes No

3. I always like the activities my teacher does with me

Yes No

4. There is always something new and challenging in my English lessons

Yes No

5. Teacher gives me enough time to finish my tasks

Yes No

6. **Tick** what is true for you.

During the lesson	Yes	No	Sometime s	Rarely
1. I work with different classmates				
2. I work in different groups and complete different exercises				
3. We all learn the same things				
4. Teacher gives me different tasks				

5. Teacher lets me show what I know in different ways				
6. Teacher checks if I understand the information in different ways				
7. I am progressing in my English classes each day				