DIFFERENTIATION IN READING TASKS: SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS IN THE CLASSROOM

D. Amiritdinova [1]

Abstract:
In today's diverse classrooms, supporting varied learning needs is critical for effective reading instruction. Differentiation in reading tasks offers a tailored approach that acknowledges each learner's unique abilities, interests, and learning profiles. This article explores strategies to create inclusive reading tasks that engage students with different reading proficiencies, backgrounds, and learning preferences. By analyzing techniques such as flexible grouping, tiered reading activities, and scaffolded supports, we discuss how educators can foster an environment that nurtures each student's growth in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and engagement. Implementing differentiated reading tasks not only meets academic goals but also supports students' confidence and enthusiasm for reading.

Key words: differentiation, reading tasks, diverse learners, inclusive education, scaffolding, flexible grouping, reading comprehension.

Differentiation is considered to be significant approach to meet the varying needs of students in a single classroom. When applied effectively, differentiation tailors learning experiences to learners' desire, interest, readiness, besides learning profiles. As for reading tasks, this approach let teachers to create an inclusive environment where each student can engage with material suited to their abilities and needs. In the today's various classrooms, where students may be divers in terms of language proficiency, cognitive abilities, and prior knowledge, differentiation is regarded as a one of the key strategy to ensure success for all learners.

Differentiation applied in Reading Classroom

Differentiation is a teaching philosophy based on the premise that learners learn in different ways. According to Tomlinson (2001), differentiated instruction involves varying the content, process, and product of learning to accommodate different learners. In reading, this may mean altering the complexity of the text, offering varying degrees of support, or adjusting the tasks associated with reading. Meaning that with the help of differentiated instruction in reading involves working with various levels that it can be adjusting some of the reading tasks either complex or easy ones. In a classroom with the students of differing abilities, a one-size-fits-all approach to reading can leave some learners overwhelmed and others unchallenged. For instance, advanced learners (C1 level according to CEFR criteria)may finish tasks quickly and disengage, while struggling readers may become frustrated. Differentiation addresses these issues by ensuring that each learner is provided with materials and tasks appropriate to their skill level, promoting engagement and growth for all students.

Differentiating Reading tasks: Strategies for Diverse Students

[1] *Amiritdinova Dilorom Umidjon qizi, Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Teacher of the department of English theory and practice*

The are a number of ways to implement differentiation in reading instruction. These strategies include adjusting the complexity of the text, offering tiered assignments, using flexible groupings and incorporating a variety of response formats.

1.Adjusting Text Complexity is considered to be one of the most common methods of differentiation in reading is providing text at varying level of difficulty. For instance, today's lesson is global warming, the teacher can offer several versions of the same article, each written at a different reading level. This allows advanced readers to engage with more complex vocabulary and concepts, while struggling readers can access simplified texts that still convey the key ideas. Leveled readers or texts available through online platforms such as Newsela or ReadWorks provide resources for this type of differentiation. By offering multiple versions of a text, teachers can ensure that all students are working toward the same learning objective, but with materials suited to their reading abilities. This practice fosters inclusion and ensures that every student can participate in class discussions or collaborative projects based on their comprehension of the material.

2.Tiered Assignments. Tiered Assignments entails creating tasks that very in terms of complexity but target the same core learning objectives. For example, after reading a text, advanced learners might be asked to write a detailed analysis of the author's argument and provide textual evidence, while learners with lower proficiency could summarize the key points of the text in simple sentences or complete a graphic organizer that highlights the main ideas. This approach helps to maintain high expectations for all learners while adjusting the level of challenge to suit their current abilities. Research suggests that tiered assignments help students stay engaged and work within their zone of proximal development, as Vygotsky (1978) mentioned.

3.Flexible Grouping. Grouping involves according to students' current reading level or skill set can help in differentiating reading tasks. Flexible grouping allows teachers to assign tasks that are appropriately challenging based on student needs. For instance, in a reading comprehension activity, students might work in small groups to discuss the text. More advanced readers could focus on analyzing themes or drawing inferences, while emerging readers might concentrate on identifying main ideas or summarizing paragraphs.

Flexible grouping is not static, and students can shift between groups as their abilities develop. This fluidity ensures that students do not feel stigmatized by their grouping and allows teachers to respond to ongoing assessments of student progress.

4.Differentiating Responses. Differentiation can also extend to how students demonstrate their understanding of a text. Instead of requiring all students to write a traditional essay or complete a multiple-choice test, teachers can provide options that cater to different strengths and interests. For example, some students might express their comprehension by creating a storyboard, acting out a scene from the text, or giving an oral presentation. This variety not only engages students but also allows them to demonstrate learning in ways that align with their skills and learning preferences.

As Armstrong (2012) included that offering students choice in how they respond to reading tasks increases motivation and self-efficacy, as students feel more control over their learning process.

Examples of Diffentiation in Reading Tasks

To illustrate how differentiation could be applied in reading tasks, some examples are given to implement in the lesson.

-Text Complexity: The teacher provides the full novel for advanced readers, while struggling readers might be given an abridged version or a chapter summary with simplified language. Alternatively, the teacher might offer an audiobook for auditory learners or English language learners (ELLs) who benefit from hearing the text read aloud.

•Tiered assignments: Advanced (C1 according to CEFR criteria) students could write a comparative essay on how different characters in the book respond to societal control, while

less proficient readers might be tasked with completing a chart that compares the protagonist's life in the community to their own experiences.

•Flexible Grouping: The class can be divided into small discussion groups, with advanced readers analyzing the book's symbolism, while emerging readers focus on the plot and character relationships.

•Differentiated Responces: learners can select to create a visual representation of the community in The Giver rather than writing an essay, develop a short video summarizing the story, or engage in a debate about the ethics of the society depicted in the novel.

The Impact of differentiation on Learning

Research supports the effectiveness of differentiation in reading instruction. According to Reis et al. (2011) that students in differentiated classrooms showed significant improvement in reading comprehension and motivation compared to those in traditional classrooms. The key to successful differentiation lies in ongoing assessment and a flexible approach to instruction. Teachers must continually assess students' needs and adjust tasks accordingly, ensuring that all students are appropriately challenged and supported.

Conclusion

Differentiation in terms of reading tasks is regarded as essential for addressing the various needs of learning in current classroom. By adjusting text complexity, offering tiered assignments, using flexible grouping, and providing varied response options, teachers can create a learning environment where all students can succeed. Through thoughtful planning and ongoing assessment, teachers can ensure that every student, regardless of their reading ability, is engaged, challenged, and supported in their literacy development. By embracing differentiation, educators can promote equity in the classroom, offering all learners the opportunity to develop their reading skills and foster a lifelong love for literature.

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