

## Differentiated Instruction and Pupil Motivation in Language Teaching

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### Abstract

A key feature of effective teaching is the ability of teachers to create a positive learning environment for the active participation of pupils. Teachers who support and seek to cultivate pupils' autonomy, tend to motivate the effective engagement of their pupils in and with the learning process and help strengthen their psychosocial adaptation in school. More specifically, curriculum design that help pupils express their values and interests is considered a basic prerequisite for creating internal motivations. At the same time, the cultivation of learning motivations, the encouragement of substantial commitment to learning process, the promotion of autonomous action and the encouragement of interaction between pupils, all are characteristics of differentiated teaching. Differentiation of teaching is considered a basic dimension of effective teaching and is an effective teaching model that responds to learners' needs through the design of multiple and qualitatively different teaching approaches. Effectiveness of teaching is often improved through differentiated teaching techniques. The purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss differentiated teaching techniques such as: jigsaw, cubing, learning stations, think-tac-toe, raft, think-pair-share and KWL and highlight how they can be effectively applied to the teaching of language in ways that motivate pupils to take an active participation in teaching and learning. The application of above-mentioned techniques to the teaching of language is illustrated with specific example from secondary education.

**Keywords:** differentiated teaching techniques, language teaching, pupil motivation

### Introduction

A key feature of effective teaching is the ability of teachers to create proper conditions in order to maximize pupil involvement in the teaching framework. This involvement refers to the pupil's degree of participation, promoting the course's aim in class and consequently leading to learning achievements (Papandreou, 2001). Research data shows that the pupil's maximum involvement in his/her learning duties and his/her minimum de-involvement time during transitional stages are elements of teaching regularly linked to high pupil performance (Brophy & Good, 1986). Thus, it seems that teaching effectiveness tends to increase along with increased pupil involvement time in activities promoting effective teaching.

The pupil's involvement in the learning process starts with the obtainment and provision of proper stimuli that will help him/her be occupied with the selected content to promote the course's aim. The behavior forms related to pupil involvement in the learning process are the following: a) achievement of desirable behavior; b) provision of opportunities for feedback in a non-judgmental context; c) use of personal and group activities as assisting incentives; d) use of verbal praise; e) control of silent tasks and pupil progress (Borich, 1988: 308); f) class organization and g) class administration.

Today, the need to replace the inflexible method of teacher-centered learning and introduce methods that will promote pupil involvement via differentiated instruction has emerged. In this framework it is considered useful to adopt teaching differentiation in disparate classrooms, taking into consideration the pupils' general skills, aptitudes and interests (Theofilidis, 2008). School - in the macro-level of school life - and teachers - in the micro-level of school class - must differentiate and personalize the organization of teaching and learning, allowing pupils to develop their inherent bodily, mental and intellectual skills in a balanced and harmonic way.

Cultivating learning incentives, offering encouragement for substantial commitment in the learning process, promoting independence, assuming initiative and personal responsibility and urging interaction among pupils are basic points of differentiated teaching (Tomlinson, 2005) and at the same time they provide the core prerequisites to create learning communities. The aim of the current thesis is to showcase the importance of differentiated teaching in Language Courses

in Secondary Education, via targeted teaching methods which promote pupil involvement and provide pupils with incentives to participate in the teaching practice.

## 1. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is considered a basic aspect of effective teaching, as it is a teaching model which corresponds to the various learning needs, through the design of multiple and quality-wise varied teaching approaches (Peterson & Hitte, 2003). New ways for class organization and differentiated instruction are applied to each pupil, to provide him/her with the proper guidance and effective means to obtain the teaching and learning aims at his/her own pace, according to his/her personal skills and interests (Kanakis, 2007: 22). Both the pupils' inherent characteristics (gender, ability) and conditions in the wider sense (personal experiences, aptitudes, interests, pre-existing knowledge) create a spectrum of cognitive levels and skills, generating the need to differentiate teaching (Theofilidis, 2008, Kassotakis & Flouris, 2013).

Differentiated instruction covers the requirements of effective learning, providing equal learning opportunities through various aspects, an experiential-investigative character of learning, pupil codependences and building up of knowledge (Theofilidis, 2008) maximizing cognitive and meta-cognitive development for all pupils, by offering learning opportunities in classrooms of mixed abilities (Koutselini, 2009, Tomlinson, 2005). It seems that teaching addressed to the average pupil and requiring all children to process the same educational material provided to them in a single way is unsuccessful and leads to increasingly poorer effectiveness for a large number of pupils in mixed abilities classrooms (Sapon-Shevin, 2000). On the other hand, teachers supporting their pupils' independence by creating the proper conditions in class, tend to promote substantial involvement and commitment of children in the learning process (Assor, Kaplan & Roth, 2002) and help reinforce school adequacy and their psychosocial adjustment in school (Wentzel, 2002). In particular, the teaching design of courses enabling pupils to express their opinions, values and interests seems to be a core prerequisite to create inner incentives.

Differentiated instruction is also targeted on the organizational and pedagogical levels of teaching, in order to cover the needs of all pupils (weak - charismatic) in mixed abilities classrooms (Koutselini, 2009). Differentiated instruction is flexible. This allows it to employ several teaching forms and methods, such as teaching for the entire class, group work in similar or varied pupil groups, partnering plans and personal work (Panteliadou, 2008: 9). The teacher seeks to create learning environments allowing pupils to have active participation and develop the entire spectrum of their personalities. By differentiating his/her instruction, the teacher aims to "help pupils build personal interpretation frameworks, try out ideas within class, experience relations between the whole and its parts and correlate any studying issue with their personal experiences" (Dimitriadou, 2016: 191).

In order to effectively apply differentiated instruction, teachers should (Panteliadou & Antoniou, 2008):

- realize that not all pupils acquire knowledge in the same way as them;
- explain to pupils the available different ways of learning and help them realize their personal ones;
- allow pupils to select activities and teaching approaches (e.g. peer teaching);
- initially focus on differentiation based on a few cognitive profiles and gradually increase it to more.

Teachers who decide to apply differentiated instruction should see themselves and their roles under a different light. Not as the holder and provider of knowledge, but as an orchestra maestro or team coach (Tomlinson, 2005). In both cases, teachers should lead all orchestra members or team players to their maximum possible performance, aiming to the best possible outcome for the team. In order to achieve this aim, musicians will need to practice on their own, athletes will need to strengthen their performance accordingly, with different forms of practice, and each player or musician will have his/her own different character and different approaches. After they all achieve their maximum personal performance, they will be able to work effectively as a team and provide the final outcome. As Tomlinson (2005: 19) characteristically suggests: "an orchestra maestro helps musicians perform music, but doesn't perform it himself".

## 2. Differentiated Teaching Techniques

Teaching techniques aiming to promote differentiated instruction are presented below, seeking pupil involvement in the teaching act and in particular for Language Courses in Secondary Education.

## 2.1 Learning Stations

Learning Stations are used to create areas of study and action in class, according to the pupils' interests and abilities. Contrary to learning centers, which provide independence in the issues studied, learning stations offer a thematic correlation, pupil transfer and staging-differentiation of tasks. These are different locations in the teaching class, where pupils work regularly or occasionally. Stations may allow pupils to work on different tasks over the same topic. They provide flexible team composition, as not all pupils are required to visit all stations and remain at them for the same amount of time. Learning stations provide opportunities of personal and group activities, allowing pupils to practice skills, reinforce their comprehension, expand the learning content in new areas of interest or delve in information already acquired (Theofilidis, 2008). In addition, the tasks scheduled for each station may be differentiated from day to day, according to the pupils who will visit the station.

### *Indicative example of pupils working in Learning Stations in Teaching Vocabulary*

Pupils study vocabulary on an "X" topic and then approach it via five different learning stations. Each station requires a different level of readiness from pupils, with regard to communicative aims and different skills. Each station includes staged activities and different means and materials. Each pupil is provided with table of five activities and asked to select four. Each activity corresponds to one learning station. Pupils are instructed that they can advance from one activity to the next at their own pace and according to their own interests, provided they have completed the previous activity and without needing to wait for their classmates to finish as well. Learning Stations and their respective activities are the following:

- **Station 1**\_Cards with the chapter's vocabulary. Cards contain photographs and pictures. Each pupil must find the right words within the shuffled cards.
- **Station 2**\_Activity utilizing the internet and an accompanying Task Sheet. A TV show or internet video is used. Pupils watch it and then answer comprehension questions related to the "X" topic. Pupils may describe the show's or video's content in written form or orally, providing information to their classmates and using as many new words as they can.
- **Station 3**\_Pupils are asked to use various materials to depict scenes or images of the "X" topic and then write five sentences, providing a short description of the topic and orally describe to one of their classmates what they have created.
- **Station 4**\_Pupils study parallel texts of respective themes, detecting similarities and differences and reaching conclusions which they announce to their classmates.
- **Station 5**\_Pupils choose one part of the "X" topic, they seek information online and then they present their findings to their classmates on Microsoft PowerPoint.

During the planning of Learning Stations, teachers must take into consideration learning aims, expected learning outcomes, learning needs and the pupils' aptitudes and interests, providing staged activities, using a variety of teaching means and materials and offering clear instructions to pupils, before, during and after each activity.

## 2.2 Think-Tac-Toe (or Tic-Tac-Toe)

Teaching strategy Think-Tac-Toe (and/or Tic-Tac-Toe) is based on H. Gardner's theory Multiple Intelligences. Pupils select themselves the way in which they will show what they learnt, understood and are able to do. This strategy allows pupils to select how they will present the object of their knowledge, choosing out of nine different activities and based on three possible assignments (Samblis, 2006).

The first step is to determine learning aims and learning outcomes and connect them to the Studies Curriculum. Then, Think-Tac-Toe is created in the form of a nine-square table – in the form of tic-tac-toe – with each square determining a task or a learning product related to one (or several) of Gardner's intelligences. All activities relate to the same topic from a different perspective, allowing pupils to make their selection according to the intelligences they can perform best. The aim is for each pupil to select three squares and commit himself/herself to implement the project determined within a specific amount of time. Upon the completion of all activities, the pupil has scored a "tic-tac-toe".

### *Indicative example of pupils working in the Think-Tac-Toe strategy in Text Comprehension*

Pupils are provided with the text to be processed and the respective Task Sheet, which includes nine different squares. Each square contains a task, activity or learning product. Each pupil must select, based on his/her skills, interests and talents, three squares, in order to successfully complete the "tic-tac-toe".

- **Square 1**\_Draw a mask of a character in the text. Put the mask on and recite a small monologue connected to the role of this character in the text.
- **Square 2**\_Draw a chart of the text's locations, showing the gradual development of scenes. You can also use small explanatory texts.
- **Square 3**\_Create a song with a melody and lyrics related to the topic of the text.
- **Square 4**\_Work with a classmate and take notes of "what would happen if...". Give a different title to this particular text.
- **Square 5**\_Write a short text on the emotions you feel while reading the story.
- **Square 6**\_Create a poster/comic to advertise this text to your classmates.
- **Square 7**\_Teach and discuss with your classmates the text's moral.
- **Square 8**\_Write a short poem/riddle on a text character, emphasizing on certain of his/her traits.
- **Square 9**\_Find elements of the natural world within the text and then search information on them online. Finally, present them to your classmates.

During the planning of Think-Tac-Toe, teachers should assign certain activities for each pupil per square, challenge pupils to try three new activities to score extra points or allow them to pick on their own.

### 2.3 Cubing

Cubing is a flexible and practical strategy of differentiated instructing, asking pupils to consider an idea, a vocabulary or a theme from different perspectives. A cube is either provided to the pupils or they construct it themselves. Its six sides represent different questions or activities. Cubes may be used for group or personal tasks. Each pupil rolls the cube once and then performs the activity shown. If the pupil dislikes a particular activity, he/she can roll the cube one more time (Iskandar, 2017).

*Indicative example of pupils working with the Cubing in Teaching Literature strategy*

In the beginning of the teaching session, teachers hand out task sheets with the poem or literature text to be taught in this particular lesson. The teacher reads out the text and following an initial conceptual processing, he/she presents the cube, which includes the following questions:

- **Side 1**\_Describe the main character's characteristics, motivation and feelings.
- **Side 2**\_Pick out important words or phrases in the text and explain why you consider them important.
- **Side 3**\_Correlate elements of the text with other stories you know or have been taught.
- **Side 4**\_Express your own view with regard to the text's topic.
- **Side 5**\_Describe a different ending for this story.
- **Side 6**\_Place yourself at the character's shoes and describe your feelings (if you were in his/her place).

During the Cubing strategy, pupils work alone, in pairs or in small groups with the appropriate cube. Each pupil/pair/team will roll the cube 2 to 4 times, according to the number of activities that the teacher has determined will be completed.

### 2.4 RAFT (Role Audience Format Topic)

RAFT (Santa, 1988) is a differentiation strategy reinforcing the generation of written text. Raft strategy help pupils to understand and focus on four critical aspects of writing, comprehending their part as authors and assuming roles (Writer's Role), taking into consideration their audience (Audience), the format of the text to be generated (Formats) and the topic they will approach from a certain perspective (Topic).

In particular, RAFT means:

**R:** the writer's Role (Are you a poet? A journalist? An anthropologist? A witness? A storyteller? etc.)

**A:** the Audience to whom the writer is speaking (Are you writing to a teacher? To a classmate? To a friend? To an editor? To a president? To people in the community? etc.)

**F:** the Format for writing (Is it a poem? A speech? An article? A conversation? An advertisement? An essay? A song? An email? A debate? etc.)

**T:** the Topic of the writing (Is it an object? An idea? A concept? A character of a novel? A place? A meaning? A scientist? etc.)

This particular teaching strategy introduces pupils to topic processing in a fun way. At first, the teacher determines what he/she wants pupils to comprehend and process while reading a text, watching a video, listening to a narration or a lecture. He/she then chooses the roles the pupils can assume as writers and the audience they will address. Then, the format of text requested is announced, as well as the writing topic.

#### *Indicative example of pupils working with the Raft strategy in Language Teaching*

The teacher hands out task sheets to the pupils, containing the four basic points (R-A-F-T) of this strategy. During the method's application, the following steps may be followed (Table 1):

- **Step 1** Explain to all pupils-writers that they should consider the four basic points, providing more information for each point.
- **Step 2** Use the "think aloud" technique, thinking aloud with another sample of RAFT, accurately showing your way of thinking to help pupils apply a similar thinking process. Then, brainstorm on a topic.
- **Step 3** Split pupils into groups or pair and pick a topic out of the brainstormed list. Then, offer pupils time to process and present their thoughts.
- **Step 4** Once pupils comprehend the RAFT technique, they should create their own text, from the list provided to them, individually or as a group.

During the Raft planning, teachers may assign the same roles to all pupils or pupils may pick out of different roles the one that matches them, always in relation to the processing of the same topic.

### **2.5 Jigsaw method (Puzzle)**

In this method, pupils are split into groups of mixed abilities. The steps followed are similar to the completion of a jigsaw puzzle. At first, pupils are split into groups (initial groups) studying a common topic. Then, each pupil is asked to work on a different aspect of the common topic, creating new groups (expert groups). In each specialization group, pupils work together on the same aspect of the common topic. Then, they return to their initial groups and try to explain and teach their classmates on the aspect of the topic they studied (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Koutselini & Pyrgiotakis, 2015) (Table 2).

Teacher steps during the Jigsaw method

- Separate pupils in groups of 4-6 individuals.
- Pick a coordinator for each group.
- Separate the course into sub-sections (as many as the expert groups).
- Assign one sub-section to each pupil. Provide pupils with time to read it at least twice and become familiar with it.
- Create expert groups, including one pupil from each initial group (e.g. 1-1-1-1-1, 2-2-2-2-2 etc.) who will study the same topic.
- The teacher helps groups and offers feedback.
- Pupils return to their initial groups.
- Ask each pupil-expert to present-teach his/her part to the remaining members of the initial group.
- Complete a quiz as a completion requirement, to make sure all pupils understood.

#### *Indicative example of pupils working with the Jigsaw Method in Teaching Grammar*

The teacher presents to the pupils the grammar subject to be studied. The cognitive object-issue is presented to the pupils using the school textbook (notes, interactive board etc.) and each pupil is asked to investigate one part (sub-section).

Members from different groups with the same topic (Expert Groups) meet to study and then help each other on their topic. Then, they return to their initial groups and try to teach their part to the other groups.

**Stage 1**\_The teacher splits pupils into 4 initial groups (with colored tags - red, yellow, blue, green) so that each pupil knows the group (initial group) he/she belongs in when the teaching process starts. The pupils' previous knowledge is retrieved and pupils are asked to exchange views on the grammar subject studied.

**Stage 2**\_Expert groups are created, with one pupil out of each (initial) group becoming an expert for a specific part (sub-section). At this stage, each pupil consolidates and processes the part (sub-section) of his/her group and the teacher provides the necessary feedback.

**Stage 3**\_Pupils return to their initial groups (being experts now) and are asked to present/teach their part to other members of the group and complete the activity assigned together.

In order for the teacher to make sure that all pupils comprehended the grammar subject, he/she may design a completion activity, whereby at the end of teaching pupils will use the "Numbered Heads Together" technique (Kagan & Kagan, 2009) to raise a board and announce their responses.

## 2.6 Think-Pair-Share

The Think-Pair-Share strategy (Lyman, 1981) offers pupils the time and framework to comprehend and attach themselves to a text or activity, to develop previously acquired knowledge, to ponder on the concepts presented, to form their own personal ideas, to discuss them with a classmate and thus to broaden them and then share them with the rest of the class. In this particular teaching strategy, the teacher decides on the teaching aims and goals of the lesson, e.g. teaching new text, vocabulary, grammar/syntax etc. Then, pupils process the teaching subject on their own, in pairs or all together. Throughout this process, pupils may ask questions to receive the necessary clarifications (Ledlow, 2001; Robertson, 2006).

### *Indicative example of pupils working with the Think-Pair-Share strategy in Language Teaching*

The teacher presents the subject to be studied to the pupils (e.g. vocabulary, text, grammar or syntax etc.) and offers the necessary instructions. Pupils: a) think individually over the topic or answer a question; b) form pairs with a classmate and discuss the topic or question; and c) share their ideas with the rest of the class. [To facilitate the above process, the "think aloud" strategy may be used.]

**Step 1**\_Think (before...): The teacher poses a specific question related to the lesson subject. Pupils "think" individually what they know of this topic, retrieving previous knowledge for 1-2 minutes and keeping notes. Two things are important at this stage: clarity and time!

**Step 2**\_Pair (during...): Each pupil creates a pair with a classmate (the teacher will decide whether pupils or himself/herself will pick out the pairs). The pairs discuss their thoughts and exchange views. Then they process the text or complete a related activity, helping each other. During this stage, the teacher supervises the pairs' discussions and asks questions. Pairs are then asked either to find answers in specific questions asked by the teacher or create questions they will then ask the rest of the class.

**Step 3**\_Share (after...): When pairs complete their task, the teacher asks them to share their ideas with the rest of the class. Each pair selects the individual who will present the results of their discussion and the one who will ask questions to the rest of the class.

The Think-Pair-Share strategy may be applied to differentiate any cognitive object. Particularly in Language Courses, it can be utilized for pupils to detect words in a text, expand a story, discover the meaning of a poem, make a temporal replacement etc. In addition, the Think-Pair-Share strategy may be used as an evaluation tool, as it allows teachers to supervise the pairs' discussions and make the necessary interventions.

## 2.7 KWL (Know– Want to know- Learned)

Another teaching technique is the KWL (Know - Want to know - Learned), a reading strategy utilized to guide pupils via a text. Pupils begin by brainstorming on what they know about the text topic. This information is then added to column K (Know) of a table. Next, pupils create a list of questions related to what they want to know about this particular topic, adding

them to column W (Want to know). During the last stage of teaching, pupils study a text (or other related information) and add to column L (Learned) what they finally learned (Carr & Ogle, 1987).

#### *Indicative example of pupils working in the KWL strategy in Text Comprehension*

Before reading the text, the teacher poses questions (Table 3) to the pupils, related to the text topic and a discussion is held. Pupils are encouraged to brainstorm, adding as much information as they can in a task sheet (K). Then, pupils add what they would like to know about the topic (W). Finally, pupils read the text and note down any information received (L).

There is also the option to continue with the KWL Plus Strategy, asking pupils to categorize information in column L, according to questions they will pose themselves and posed by the teacher.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, in today's society, teachers should be able to acknowledge and accept each pupil as an individual with different needs, abilities and skills, with the value of his/her own individuality and diversity. Under this light, teachers should create opportunities of expression and comprehension with regard to learning for all pupils, applying differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach connecting learning and daily teaching. It is a way to include in teaching research data related to how people learn.

The introduction of differentiated instruction is a necessity and requires daily effort by teachers, in order for them to respond to the latest trends and the educational needs of future citizens. Teachers should assume initiative and apply proper teaching techniques, maximizing pupil involvement. Undoubtedly, the differentiated instruction techniques are merely a small stepping stone in an integrated procedure of change and modification that should be provided by society, school and teachers to future citizens. As Sadler (1900) said: "What's happening outside the school affects pupils much more than what's happening within it". However, teachers should continuously struggle for the best possible outcome, offering support and assistance to their pupils.

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## Tables

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Plato	His students	Email	The concept of the soul
Oprah	TV audience	Talk show	Populations in Africa
Aristotle	His students	Speech	Love
Nikos Kazantzakis	Grandchildren	Dairy	Human
Polar bear	Human	Critical letter	On the changes in life caused by climate change
Marco Polo	Fellow citizens	Presentation	Places visited
Pablo Picasso	Client	Praising comments in essay form	Guernica
Self	Students from abroad	Travel Guide	For the city you live in
The Little Prince	Fox	Conversation	True friendship



Jules Verne	Readers	A chapter of new book	New adventures of Phileas Fogg
Chef	To their trainees	Recipe	Best chocolate cake

Table 1: Example of Raft Strategy in Language Teaching

1st Stage: Assignment of Responsibilities	2nd Stage: Expert Study	3rd Stage: Expert Teaching
Site organization Group composition Announcement of group aim Retrieval of required pre-existing knowledge Supply of new content Assumption of responsibilities and work allocation	Creation of expert groups Supply of materials Encouragement of partnering behavior Consolidation of new content Offer of feedback	Return of pupils to initial group Material presentation Evaluation of cognitive result Evaluation of group work

Table 2: Presentation of instruction stages according to the Jigsaw method

Know	Want to know	Learned
Before reading the text What do you know about this particular topic? What time does it refer to? Who are the basic characters? How is this linked to modern life? What are the similarities and differences? What is your view?	Pupils write down questions related to what they would like to know about the text. "I want to know..."	After reading the text Pupils write down what they have learned with regard to the questions posed in the previous stage (Want to know) and discuss the text content. "I didn't know that... But I learned that..."

Table 3: Instruction stages using the KWL method