

What could have been done? Investigating missed opportunities for differentiation in EFL teaching

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ABSTRACT

Differentiated instruction has gained particular attention in English as Foreign Language (EFL) teaching trends. EFL teachers have put some effort into infusing differentiation into their classrooms; therefore, according to previous research, the implementation of differentiated instruction by EFL teachers in the classroom remains lacking. This study explored missed opportunities for differentiation, defined as instances where teachers had the chance to apply differentiation but failed or even refused to do so. Through a qualitative case study design, the data were collected from three sessions of classroom observation and semi-structured interview with one EFL teacher. After careful data analysis through data condensation, data display, and conclusion, the findings revealed that the three components of differentiated instruction in the observed classroom, such as content, process, and product, were largely absent. There was indeed little observed attempt by the teacher to process differentiation; however, it appeared limited. The differentiation is underrepresented, mainly due to time constraints and the teacher's lack of ability to tailor the content, process, and product to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Furthermore, this research identified other factors contributing to the missing opportunities, including limited resources, inadequate teaching experiences, and classroom management issues. The study suggests several strategies to address the missed opportunities for differentiation and provides other recommendations for teachers' improvement.

Keywords: *Differentiated instruction, EFL teaching, missing opportunities, teaching challenges.*

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Introduction

Students bring a mosaic of differences into the classroom, possessing diverse backgrounds as they grow, which shape their learning styles, basic knowledge, interests, and abilities, requiring thoughtful and inclusive strategies in education (D'Amico & Gallaway, 2010; Tomlinson, 2017). In order to achieve the students' maximum potential in learning, differentiated instruction provides a variety of options for students to acquire information, make sense of ideas, and express the ideas to learn effectively through the adjustment of content, process, and product of learning (Tomlinson, 2017). Differentiated instruction has gained widespread recognition as a practical approach to teaching and learning EFL (Fatmawati et al., 2023; Riyanita et al., 2024; Rosadi et al., 2024; Rosi et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2023).

Differentiated instruction is referred to as a teaching strategy that involves variety of

teaching techniques, methods, and materials, giving students multiple options for learning (Tomlinson, 2017). Differentiated instruction has three main components: content, process, and product, which could be adjusted to the students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2017). The terms of differentiated content refer to the input of learning, encompassing teachers' strategies for lesson delivery and the materials used for students learning, which vary in its delivery formats, topic, theme, and complexity (Kaur et al., 2018; Marantika et al., 2023; Moallemi, 2022). In addition, differentiated process described as the 'sense-making activity' where the students integrated information into their understanding through implementation of variety of classroom instructions using assortments of learning activities, which allows students to engage with the learning within their range of abilities, creating healthy

competition among students (Tomlinson, 2017; Ur, 2022; Valiandes et al., 2018). And lastly, the demonstration of students' proficiency and knowledge defined as differentiated product for its diversity in the presentation formats, adjusted to the students' learning characteristics (Blaz, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017).

The implementation of differentiated instruction has shown that the learning delivered helps optimize students' learning outcomes (Azis & Andanty, 2024; Dalila et al., 2022). Courses that involve differentiated instruction, including EFL, positively impact students' confidence; it makes students feel accepted, creating a sense of respect, safety, and development, training their independence, and giving students accessibility to information based on their needs and interests (Lavrijsen et al., 2021; Maryam et al., 2024; Nafiah et al., 2024; Puzio et al., 2020). Therefore, differentiated instruction is noticeably lacking in EFL learning (Ismajli & Imami-Morina, 2018; Mardhatillah & Suharyadi, 2023; Rosadi et al., 2024). The implementation of differentiated instruction in Indonesia in EFL learning remains challenging despite of the national efforts that attempted to promote student-centered through curriculum framework. Large classrooms (Ojong, 2023; Rifqi, 2024), limited access to various materials and resources (Musyarrofah et al., 2024; Zerai et al., 2023), time constraints (Maknun et al., 2024; Tzanni, 2018), insufficient training or institutional support (Rosadi et al., 2024; Tajik et al., 2024), and overreliance on the same teaching methods (Digna et al., 2023) were identified as the difficulties in the implementation of differentiated instruction.

Research on differentiated instruction has primarily focused on two main areas: examining the implementation of differentiated instruction in various classroom contexts and investigating the difficulties teachers face in its application. Several studies have investigated the advantages of implementing differentiated instruction in EFL classrooms (Abdelmoula et

al., 2019; Mahdi & Abbas, 2024). On the other hand, research on difficulties in implementing differentiated instruction has emphasized that lack of resources, poor time management, and other academic and non-academic responsibilities are factors that hinder the effective implementation of differentiated instruction (Ahmed, 2022; Kótay-Nagy, 2023; Rifqi, 2024; Yuniawati, 2024). However, while the previous studies presented fruitful insights regarding teachers' efforts and challenges in implementing differentiated instruction, they overlook an equally important aspect: what teachers failed to do, which is commonly referred to as missed opportunities for differentiation.

These missed opportunities represent potential areas for instructional improvement yet remain underexplored in existing literature. The researcher identified the gap regarding missed opportunities for differentiation through literature review and preliminary classroom observations, which vividly presented the lack of differentiation in teaching and learning. Furthermore, this study applied Tomlinson (2017) framework of differentiated instruction to investigate the EFL teacher's teaching practice and the missed opportunities for differentiation. In this case, missed opportunities were identified through classroom observations, where differentiation, based on students' varied readiness, interests, and learning profiles, could have been applied but was not utilized during the teaching and learning process. Additionally, this research aimed to investigate how missed opportunities for differentiation manifest in an EFL classroom, particularly in the differentiated content, process, and product. Moreover, this research is expected to contribute new perspectives regarding overlooked possibilities for responsive teaching and inform future teacher training within the differentiated instruction strategy in the EFL context.

Method

This study adopted qualitative case study to investigate the missing opportunities for differentiation in the EFL classroom using Tomlinson (2017) framework of content, process, and product of learning as the

analytical lens. Because of that, two research questions are proposed for this research: (1) What missed opportunities for differentiation are evident in an EFL classroom?; and (2) In what ways are missed opportunities presented

in differentiated content, process, and product of learning?.

Five classroom observations were conducted in an 8th-grade Islamic junior high school as part of this research, which was purposively chosen due to the existence of three students who referred to as 'struggling learners'. The presence of struggling learners was explained through preliminary informal insights from the teachers of the respective school and was later then substantiated by observational data, which identified the three students as having significant difficulties in following the lesson compared to their peers. The first two observations were preliminary in nature for the researcher to gain familiarity with the classroom context, routines, interactions; however, these preliminary observations were not included as the research data. The subsequent three classroom observations served as the primary empirical data and were analyzed to investigate the missed opportunities for differentiation in EFL classroom, focusing on the differentiated content, process, and product, including the teacher's lesson delivery and instructional strategies. In this case, the researcher of this study acted as 'observer as participant' for the researcher is an outsider who watched and took field notes without direct involvement with the participants and the observed teaching and learning activities (Creswell, 2013).

Results and Discussion

This research attempts to uncover the missed opportunities for differentiated instruction strategies in the EFL classroom. Therefore, it found that differentiation strategies were mostly unavailable. The findings on teacher's experiences in teaching an EFL classroom showed several evidences of the reasons behind the absence of differentiation. This section explained the findings of this research into four: content differentiation, process differentiation, product differentiation, and teacher's challenges in implementing differentiated instruction.

Content Differentiation

Based on the observation results, the implementation of content differentiation

Additionally, the observed teacher was a 25-years-old female EFL teacher with bachelor's degree in English Education from a university in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The teacher has been teaching EFL for one semester at the school. After the observations, the teacher was invited to a semi-structured interview to explore her experiences and strategies in teaching EFL, which also related to the implementation of differentiated instruction. All interview data were originally conducted in Bahasa Banjar (the indigenous language of South Kalimantan), audio-recorded upon the teacher's consent, and translated into English by the researcher.

The three steps of data analysis by Miles et al. (2014) would be used to identify emerging patterns that appeared from the observations and supplementary data from the interview, categorizing the findings based on the content, process, and product differentiation (Tomlinson, 2017), including the suggestions for the missed opportunities and teacher's challenges in adapting differentiated instruction in EFL classroom. The data would be in the form of field notes and interview transcripts that are collected from one EFL teacher. The gleaned data is then coded and compared to enhance the validity. Furthermore, the data would be displayed as a narrative from which conclusions were drawn.

found to be absent from the EFL learning process.

The teacher relied solely on one teaching material, a student worksheet book (*LKS* or *Lembar Kerja Siswa*), without incorporating any supplementary sources. Throughout all three sessions of classroom observations, the teacher began the lesson by referring to the *LKS*, guided students through the exercise contained in the *LKS*, and no additional learning aids nor differentiated resources used. The material was uniform without any consideration regarding students' readiness, interests, or learning profiles, indicating lack of content differentiation.

Additionally, the material of learning was delivered exclusively through lecturing, which categorized as audio delivery mode,

without any variation in instructional strategies to support different students' needs. The teacher stood in front of the class, read the instruction from the *LKS* aloud, and explained the exercises or tasks. Students were passive recipients of the information, and there was no differentiation in instructional delivery tailored to variety of students' needs. This pattern was consistent throughout the three observations, indicating teacher's lack of ability to fulfill the students' needs and reliance on lecturing to deliver the material.

There was no content differentiation in the EFL lessons observed, as the teacher only relied to one material (*LKS*) and delivered the material through uniform lecturing, and the content provided did not consider the students' different readiness, interests, or learning profiles. Previously, studies found that teachers struggled to differentiate their teaching content due to a lack of training and awareness (Kovtuh, 2017; Tajik et al., 2024). Moreover, limited resources also resulted in the absence of content differentiation (Azis et al., 2024). The teacher admitted in the interview that she "only use whatever is available" when selecting material for the students (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025).

The interview confirmed the scarcity of teaching content and the lack of differentiation in the component of content differentiation in EFL lessons conducted during observation. The teacher confirmed that she only used the available resources without considering students' different readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Evidence from the classroom observations and the teacher's statement in the interview are in line with research conducted by Yuniawati (2024), where lack of resources to differentiate teaching and learning content challenged the teacher to differentiate the teaching, for she needs to cater to her students' different characteristics, especially that the classroom she teaches have three students who categorized as 'struggling learners'.

In this case, to fill the missing opportunities in differentiating content and instead of using only 'whatever is available', the teacher could utilize a variety of teaching modes and different teaching materials that cater to students' learning characteristics.

Paskevicius (2021) stated that the content provided should have manageable level of difficulty that appropriately challenges the students based on their levels, as modifying learning content is essential for supporting students' developmental progress. Tomlinson (2017) listed several teaching contents that could be differentiated: the utilization of (1) choice of books and materials in form of games or apps in first language, graded reading with different complexity, varied interests, and varied Lexile levels, (2) mini-lessons, (3) varied note-taking and organizing formats, (4) reading buddies, (5) learning contracts, (6) personal agenda, (7) whole-to-part or part-to-whole explanations. Kassim and Nordin (2024) added that teachers could apply different teaching modes, such as audio, visual, and kinesthetic, to present the teaching content by deploying teaching media. The more available and accessible content for teachers to teach and for students to learn, the intention to apply differentiated instruction would be improved (Ouyang & Ye, 2023).

Graded reading, video, pictures, charts, and audio recordings, are recommended for content differentiation (Fajariyah et al., 2023; Kusumoriny & Aziz, 2025; Riyanita et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2024). For example, the teacher could deploy graded reading for students that is differentiated in the aspect of its total words, themes (but still in the same topic of learning), and word or vocabulary choices; furthermore, the materials could be presented in form of handout paper, audio recording, displayed through LCD projector, or educational website such as Padlet, Mentimeter, Google Sites, and Quizizz. Another example is using pictures, which could be implemented by considering students' interests. As an illustration, the teacher might be teaching about descriptive text. The students in the classroom have a variety of interests: there is a group of students who love animals, some love flowers, the boys love sports, and the girls love trinkets; based on this survey of students' interests, the teacher could give them several pictures that show their likings. This strategy could also be implemented when the teacher wants to use videos or audio recordings instead of pictures as teaching content.

Process Differentiation

Process differentiation helps students with different readiness, interests, and learning profiles to engage with learning. This research identified that the teaching and learning process only conducted a small extent of process differentiation. During the observations, the teacher employed repetition, reading aloud, and group work; however, these strategies did not adequately consider the students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. The researcher then discovered that the teacher mostly grouped the students through random selection, and there was one time she grouped her students based on their ability level; the teacher explained this matter in the interview:

"I assigned my students to work in pairs. Then, I grouped them randomly, I also allowed them to choose their own member, so they could make a group with their friends. The last time I grouped them; I decided to group them based on their ability level." (Teacher's Interview, February 10th 2025)

During the process of teaching and learning, both results from observations and interview showed that the teacher recognized the differences among students. In this case, the teacher attempted to group the students based on their abilities, which, while potentially strategic, showed limitation in the practice and need several adjustments. For example, in students' grouping, the teacher could conduct a diagnostic test first to assess their level of readiness, skill, or ability. After that, the teacher forms the group based on the diagnostic test's results and adjusts or chooses the learning activity that suits the students. The diagnostic test result could also help the teacher design the teaching content (Ortega et al., 2018). In addition, the chosen activity is expected to appropriately challenge students based on their characteristics, enabling them to gain fruitful knowledge and exciting learning experiences.

However, the teacher still did not translate the awareness to implement differentiated instruction due to unidentified reasons. Additionally, the teacher was unaware of the range of differentiation

strategies available. Teacher's awareness of students' differences and differentiation strategies was explored in Mardhatillah and Suharyadi (2023), where teachers rarely considered students' differences when applying differentiation strategies. This could be due to teacher's limited ability to differentiate, confusion about the concept of differentiation, lack of planning skills, and insufficient support (Jufrianto et al., 2025; Shareefa, 2023).

Furthermore, after grouping the students, the learning activities that students worked on were all the same. For learning activities, the students first performed a reading aloud, following their teacher's reading, and then they were asked to create a short conversation based on the topic they had learned from the book. In the interview, the teacher stated that:

"I give them an example first, showing them how to pronounce certain words, so they will repeat after me, following my words. After that, they learn to pronounce the words, then they practice it by themselves by doing reading aloud, there was also present in pairs, so it needs to be previously exemplified by me first." (Teacher's Interview, February 10th 2025)

However, in her interview, the teacher did not mention about the students' task of creating short conversations despite of being asked. This mismatch indicates that specific classroom practices were not thoroughly expressed during the interview, while being evident during the observation.

Based on the observation, the activities given during the learning process were mainly not differentiated. All the students did the same activities and were asked to create a short conversation in group. Therefore, the activity where the students created a short conversation is unsuitable for their current readiness. The 'creating' activity is categorized as HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skill), which holds the highest rank in Bloom's taxonomy (Brown, 2001). As a result, struggling learners could not follow the learning effectively, and advanced students became more successful

than those who were not yet ready for this level of activity (Tomlinson, 2017).

In addition, the teacher did not deploy scaffolding during learning. The observations revealed that the teacher provided detailed, repetitive instruction and written instructions for struggling learners. However, the teacher did not implement proper scaffolding to help these students process the ideas delivered by the teacher and repetitive explanation would trigger teacher's time management issue (Suryanto, 2025). The 'scaffolding' given during the teaching and learning process was not personalized nor varied across groups of students; it only consisted of verbal explanations that were repetitive and directed to the whole class. The teacher added in the interview that she scaffolded the students through "instruction in written form and direct commands" (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025).

The teacher, in the interview, added that she gave the struggling learners different instructions at different times; she first instructed the whole class, then she re-explained bit by bit to the struggling learners right after the first instruction:

"For the student who has not understand my instruction, I will guide them at slow pace at different time than other students. For example, I explained it first to the whole class and then I repeat my explanation to the struggling students." (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025)

The teacher attempted to apply differentiated instruction in teaching and learning, particularly in instructing and scaffolding students who struggled. Therefore, the differentiation was not implemented as it was supposed to be. These findings align with Azis et al. (2024) research regarding teachers difficulties while trying to pay attention to each student in the classroom. Several studies have found that teachers, especially young teachers, often misinterpret differentiated instruction, perceiving it as 'complex and difficult' and utilize it without considering its importance in facilitating every student with different characteristics (Papanthymou & Darra, 2022; Taylor, 2017).

This research found that there are some missed opportunities for differentiation in the process differentiation. The results from observations and interview showed that there was no flexible grouping nor scaffolding implemented that was supposed to aid students who struggle to understand the teacher's instruction and the lesson. There was no evidence found regarding differentiation strategies such as tiered assignments, learning stations, or task choices that could support students' different readiness or learning styles.

To resolve this instructional gap, Ur (2022) recommended beginner and advanced level students be given different classroom activities. She mentioned that fun and gamey activities would enhance their motivation to study and evoke a sense of success. She recommended chants or rhymed sentences, short dialogues, readers' theatre, scaffolding, reverse guessing, conjecturing, and picture dictation for beginner students. On the other hand, advanced students could work on complex tasks such as brainstorming through questioning, problem-solving activities, assembling information, and presentations. The activities mentioned for both levels of students could be implemented for process differentiation by combining two or more activities. The activities give freedom to students to express themselves and are suitable to students' ability levels, stimulating students within their ability to learn (Fatmawati et al., 2023; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). In addition, Tomlinson (2017) mentioned several classroom activities: tiered assignments, learning logs, journals, blogs, learning stations, role-playing, graphic organizers, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and specialty or expert groups are activities that could be differentiated and personalized by the teacher to address the students' needs of learning, readiness, interests, and learning profiles, and allow students to engage with learning materials vigorously.

Furthermore, tiered instruction is also recommended to scaffold the students during the lesson. The benefits of applying tiered instruction as scaffolding help struggling students to stay on track for its different levels of complexity (basic, intermediate, and advanced) that suit students' skill and ability,

which results in students' mastery of a particular subject, enhances their learning achievements, greater autonomy in language learning, and increased their self-confidence

Product Differentiation

Students' learning product did not appear to be differentiated either. All of the students were commanded to present their product by oral presentation in front of the class during the observation phase; there was no variation in terms of the students' learning products, which made product differentiation to be missing. However, the teacher declared in the interview that she "allowed her students to present their product through different methods", yet the teacher did not offer this option to the students (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025).

Tomlinson (2017) claimed that offering choices for presenting learning products promotes students' engagement and confidence to demonstrate their understanding in a way that aligns with their strengths. In this case, Tomlinson mentioned several choices of learning products; there are show-and-tell options, story frames, sentence frames, or paragraph frames, that students in

Teacher's Challenges

While teaching EFL, the teacher claimed she struggled to differentiate content, process, and product in her classroom. In the interview, the teacher declared that the main problem she experienced when trying to infuse the concept of differentiation into her lessons was time constraints, as she mentioned in her interview:

"... because of the limited time I have, my teaching time is quite tight and the classroom was not conducive that day ... And there were my time constraints, because I also have other personal matters, I have something going on somewhere else..." (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025)

Numerous studies have identified time constraints as the primary challenge teachers face when attempting to implement differentiation. First, the problem related to

(Kokkinos & Gakis, 2021). The process differentiation would yield similar products of learning but in different manners (Watts-Taffe et al., 2012).

the form of a written report, spoken presentation or performance, or audio or video recorded product present. In addition, Yuniawati (2024) noted that teachers need to arrange a variety of assessments to evaluate different types of students; the assessments given and the chosen product must reflect students' comprehension of the learning material.

Teachers could ask students to produce a product of their learning on different topics or themes based on their interests. The students might express their learning through drawing, storytelling, or creating something as a group or individual project (Musyarrofah et al., 2024). Moreover, Santangelo and Tomlinson (2012) declared that the product of learning should be related to real-world relevance and application; it must foster students' critical thinking skills, promote creativity, and provide meaningful opportunities for cooperative learning.

time constraints was in the lesson planning (Papanthymou & Darra, 2022). This research participant experienced problems during the teaching time process, which is in line with previous studies that discussed this concern (Azis et al., 2024; Papadakis & Ziskos, 2015). Additionally, implementing differentiated instruction is often described as 'time-consuming', as modifying instruction, including working individually with students, requires more effort and attention.

Another challenge the teacher experienced was inadequate learning materials and instructional resources and her lacking in preparation as she "was not quite ready with her teaching material that day" (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025). Furthermore, the teacher added that her lack of experience in differentiating her lessons became one of her challenges in implementing differentiated instruction. However, she is "willing to learn more about implementing differentiated instruction" for her classroom in

the future (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025).

This finding is in line with several previous studies, which found that differentiation in the classroom is absent mainly caused of a lack of deep understanding of the concept, principles, and practice of differentiation among educators (Dack, 2019; Fordyce, 2021; van Geel et al., 2018), resulting in limited or no implementation of differentiation in the classroom, despite their actual intention and wish to apply differentiated instruction (Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). Without sufficient understanding of why and how differentiation works, teachers might struggle to implement differentiated instruction, which is insurmountable.

The teacher also talked about the classroom conditions in the interview. She mentioned that the classroom she taught in was not conducive, which was proven during the observation phase, as "the students often laughed, joked around, and they were rowdy" during the lesson (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025).

A variety of students' behaviors in the classroom made the teacher struggle to maintain control over them due to a wide range of academic abilities and personal traits (Bautista & Aranas, 2023; Tajik et al., 2024). In this case, to allure students' attention, teachers must adopt different engaging teaching methods that are flexible and fulfill students' learning needs (Fatmawati et al., 2023). Interactive and entertaining teaching methods would make exciting-fun learning and student-centered (Nurlatifah & Munandar, 2024; Tzenios, 2020), which results in effective behavior management (Hajis & Othman, 2024).

Additionally, the teacher mentioned that she had only been teaching for six months, which makes her categorized as a novice teacher, and she was a newly hired English teacher at her school.

"... I have only been here for six months, so I am still doing the trial and error to conduct differentiation ... I am a newly hired teacher in this school,

and have been here for 6 months. I am still feeling perplexed myself." (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025)

Villegas-Reimers (2003) described novice teachers as being in the 'beginning stage' of their teaching experiences. This category of teacher rarely pictures the educational events and needs. This finding aligns with Felisilda et al. (2024), who suggest that novice teachers' ability in classroom management is relatively lacking in creating a conducive learning environment. This type of teacher would learn to adapt to their social roles, which is also chained to their identity as a teacher; however, novice teachers still need their seniors' guidance, such as working in a team with experienced teachers.

The teacher admitted that she was puzzled about implementing differentiated instruction, as she declared in the interview; therefore, she received assistance from fellow English teachers and other teachers.

"Talking about the consideration, I am still bewildered with everything, but my friend, who is also an EFL teacher, gave me ideas and references, such as "ooh, if I do this, it will work". I also asked the other teachers at school about this matter ..." (Teacher's Interview, February 10th, 2025)

Collaboration among teachers fosters a spirit of unity. It empowers the growth of collaborative knowledge, especially for novice teachers who still need support from mentors, peers, or experienced teachers who are capable of guiding them to conduct differentiation (Awang & Shaari, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2017). It was found that teacher collaboration positively impacted teachers' performances and their understanding on the differentiation concept, which was developed to mitigate this challenge (Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023; Rosadi et al., 2024).

Strategies for teachers' improvement need to be deployed to address teachers' inability to differentiate instruction. In this case, the school is leading in helping and facilitating the teachers. Schools could provide resources and continuous improvement for the teachers through workshops and

mentoring sessions, seminars, and collaborative learning communities (Azis et al., 2024; Kasim & Abdurajak, 2018). Collaboration and co-teaching support teachers' improvement, which raises teachers' opportunities to grow by allowing them to

collaborate in planning lessons together, enhance classroom management skills and teaching effectiveness, and reflect on their practices (Felisilda et al., 2024; Hatmanto & Rahmawati, 2023).

Conclusion

This research revealed the missed opportunities for differentiated instruction in an EFL classroom taught by a female EFL teacher. Differentiated content, process, and product tends to be absent. There was no evidence of differentiated instruction or treatment for struggling learners. The teacher relied solely on the source of teaching materials and lecture-based delivery, without considering students' readiness, interest, or learning profiles. Moreover, the students' grouping was random, and all the instructions and assignments given to them were uniform. Furthermore, the scaffolding was not personalized. Lastly, students produced the same product at the end of the learning, despite the teacher's claim that she had allowed them to express their understanding in different forms.

Time constraints, a lack of preparation and understanding of the differentiation concept, classroom management issues, and a lack of teaching experience are the challenges the teacher encounter. The teacher showed her willingness to learn and seek peer support,

showing potential for future growth. Therefore, schools could provide abundant resources for teachers' improvement in their teaching performance and professional development by deploying professional development programs that include workshops, seminars, mentoring, and collaborative teaching practices.

This research is limited in its scope, as it focuses on a single EFL classroom and only one teacher was observed, which did not include comparison across different teachers, schools, grade levels, or teaching styles. Moreover, the application of Tomlinson (2017) framework of differentiated instruction did not fully unveil all possible variations of differentiation strategies that might occur in the classroom. Future research is recommended to conduct a broader study involving multiple teachers from different educational settings. In addition, longitudinal research could explore teachers' awareness of missed opportunities for differentiation over time, especially after receiving training or feedback related to differentiated instruction.

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