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PERCEIVED IMPACT OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceived impact of differentiated instruction in teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised the 11,266 secondary school students in the 19 public secondary schools in the study area. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 secondary school students from the total population of students. A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection titled; "Perceived Impact of Differentiated Instruction in the Teaching and Learning of English Language among Students with Learning Disabilities Questionnaire" (PIDITLELSLDQ) developed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by two experts from Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations. The reliability was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the test yielded reliability coefficient of 0.80, 0.88, and 0.78 respectively, while the overall reliability coefficient tests of the instrument was 0.82. Mean was used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that differentiated instruction positively impacts the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities. Also, the findings revealed that differentiated instruction had significant impact in the teaching and learning of English Language among male and female students with learning disabilities. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers should be trained regularly on the use of differentiated instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students with learning disabilities in English Language, among others.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, teaching, learning, learning disabilities

Introduction

When teaching activity is able to affect behavior change on the learner or when the learner has gained knowledge or skill, learning is said to have occurred. According to Adefuye and Adeogun (2020), learning is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable individuals to function effectively in their environment. Iyanda and Adeyemo (2021) defined learning as a process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to function effectively in their environment through experience, study, and instruction. Learning is a process of assimilating knowledge, skills and instructions which in turns affects the cognitive, affective and sometimes the psychomotor domain. Teaching and learning of is designed for all students, including those with one disability or the other.

Disability entails having a mental or physical injury that results to not having the ability to carry out certain or sets of tasks. Disability have been defined and viewed based on same factors such as environmental factors, health factors and physical factors. Baker and Pollard (2022) defined disability as any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). Disability entails and covers several conditions/impairments such as visual impairment, learning/mental impairment, physical disability, among others. Samuel (2018) stated that there are various disabling conditions among people with special needs include visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental disability, learning disability and physical disability to mention a few. Some of these aspects of disabilities might be very common in our immediate environment, while some are not. Learning disabilities is one of the common forms of disabilities in schools.

Learning disability is one amongst the various forms of disabilities. Learning disability is a condition that affects students' ability to learn relevant skills and knowledge. Shukla and Agrawal (2015) viewed learning disability as a group of disorders that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. Gibbs, (2022) defined learning disability as a retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioural disturbance and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural or instructional factors. Learning disability is a condition that affects how students understand, processes, and uses information. It can make tasks like reading, writing, mathematics, or organizing thoughts more difficult, even though the student may be of average or above-average intelligence. Hence, the need to seek suitable and effective instructional approach to enhance teaching and learning of students experiencing learning disability.

Differentiated instructional approach is one of the teaching methods in the educational system that has been widely

discussed and considered in several educational institutions. Deringöl and Davaslıgil (2019) stated that differentiated instruction facilitates using various strategies per learner's characteristics and is considered one of the most positive and powerful methods. Safawi and Akay (2022) are also of the opinion that differentiated instruction is one of the instructional methods that bring students' potential abilities to the maximum level possible by taking their characteristics into consideration. Differentiated instruction is a learner-centered approach in the educational system. Gaitas and Alves-Martins, (2017) described differentiated instruction as a learner-centered approach to instruction to meet the diverse needs of students in a multi-ability classroom. According to Pozas and Letzel, (2020) differentiated instruction is considered to be an inclusive instructional practice that can be defined as the intentional, systematically planned and reflected practices that enable teachers to meet the needs of all learners in heterogeneous classrooms.

Differentiated instruction offers several benefits in the teaching-learning process, and achievement of instructional objectives. The use of differentiated instructions as a learner-centered approach creates a learning environment that enhance students' engagement, learning process, learning outcome, which can result to an effective teaching and learning process.

Gender as a moderating variable can affect the strength and direction of the relationship between differentiated instructional strategies and students' academic engagement and achievement. Ngussa and Mbuti (2017) reported that female students tend to perform better in cooperative and expressive learning activities, while male students are often more responsive to competitive and structured tasks. Recognizing these gender-based tendencies enables teachers to adapt their methods for balanced outcomes. Many researchers have examined and identified the differentiated instruction to be an effective instructional method for improving the teaching-learning process, learning outcome, and academic performance of students in diverse subjects; however, there is a research gap on the impact of differentiated instruction in teaching and learning of English Language among students with learning disabilities. Therefore, the researcher deemed it fit to investigate the perceived impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Differentiated instruction (DI) has been widely recognized as a pedagogical approach that tailors teaching methods, content, and assessment to meet the diverse needs of learners. In subjects such as English Language, where comprehension, critical thinking, and active participation are essential, the implementation of differentiated instruction is crucial in ensuring equitable learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities. However, there remains a limited understanding of how differentiated instruction impacts the teaching and learning of English Language among this group of students, particularly in terms of engagement, academic performance,

and retention of English comprehension. Based on this backdrop the researchers sought to investigate the perceived impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the perceived impacts of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state?
2. What are the perceived impacts of differentiated instruction in teaching and learning of English Language among male secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state?
3. What are the perceived impacts of differentiated instruction in teaching and learning of English Language among female secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state?

Methods

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. This study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study consists of 10,173-year two senior secondary school (SSS2) students in the 268 public secondary schools in Anambra state (Post Primary School Service Commission, Awka. 2025). Anambra state has six (6) education zones. The sample for the study consist of 1,028 students, (546 males & 482 females) obtained through non-proportionate stratified random sampling technique from 18 secondary schools in Onitsha, and Awka education zones (nine schools from each education zone). The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled "Perceived Impact of Differentiated Instruction in the Teaching and Learning of English Language among Students with Learning Disabilities Questionnaire" (PIDITLELSLDQ) developed by the researcher based on the information gotten from the review of related literature. The questionnaire was designed to cover respondents with prior knowledge of the study under consideration. It has parts which sought information that has required answering the research questions. The questionnaire was constructed in a way that the respondents had to choose of the response options of four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was face validated by three experts, from the department of Educational Foundations Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, which yielded coefficient values of 0.80 with average coefficient index of 0.79. This value shows that the instrument is sufficiently reliable. The questionnaires were administered and collected immediately with the help of two research assistants through direct delivery method and the retrieved questionnaires were used for the data analysis. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using Mean

scores. The decision point is 2.50. Therefore, any item with a mean of 2.50 and above is deemed agreed, while any item below a mean of 2.50 was disagreed.

Results

Research Question One: What are the perceived impacts of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state?

Table 1: Mean Rating of Respondents on the Perceived Impacts of Differentiated Instruction in the Teaching and Learning of English Language among Secondary School Students with Learning Disabilities

S/N	ITEMS	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Remark
1.	Differentiated instruction enhance students' learning outcome in English Language	3.32	Agree
2.	It increases students' engagement and participation during instructional process in English Language	3.36	Agree
3.	It promotes students' assimilation of concepts in civic education	3.25	Agree
4.	Differentiated instruction enhance the learning process of students with learning disabilities	3.20	Agree
5.	Differentiated instruction promotes students' critical thinking skills in English Language studies	3.16	Agree
6.	Differentiated instruction impacts students' academic performance in English Language	2.89	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.19**	**Agreed**

The analysis in table 1 revealed that items 1-6 have mean scores of 2.50 and above with an overall mean score of 3.19. This indicates that the respondents agreed that items 1-6 are the impacts of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state.

Research Question Two: What is the perceived impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among male secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state?

Table 2: Mean Rating of Respondents on the Perceived Impact of Differentiated Instruction in the Teaching and Learning of English Language among Male Secondary School Students with Learning Disabilities.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Remark
7.	Differentiated instruction enhance male students' learning outcome in English Language	3.06	Agree
8.	It increases male students' engagement and participation during instructional process in English Language	2.88	Agree
9.	It promotes male students' assimilation of concepts in English Language	2.93	Agree
10.	Differentiated instruction enhance the learning process of male students with learning disabilities	3.26	Agree
11.	Differentiated instruction promotes male students' critical thinking skills in English Language studies	3.28	Agree
12.	Differentiated instruction impacts male students' academic performance in English Language	3.07	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.08**	**Agreed**

The analysis in table 2 shows that item 7-12 has mean scores of 2.50 and above with an overall grand mean of 3.08. This implies that the respondents agreed that items 7-12 are the impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among male secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state.

Research Question Three: What is the perceived impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among female secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state?

Table 3: Mean Rating of Respondents on the Perceived Impact of Differentiated Instruction in the Teaching and Learning of English Language among Female Secondary School Students

S/N	ITEMS	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Remark
13.	Differentiated instruction enhance female students' learning outcome in English Language	3.34	Agree
14.	It increases female students' engagement and participation during instructional process in English Language	3.21	Agree
15.	It promotes female students' assimilation of concepts in English Language	3.17	Agree
16.	Differentiated instruction enhance the learning process of female students with learning disabilities	3.10	Agree
17.	Differentiated instruction promotes female students' critical thinking skills in English Language studies	3.09	Agree
18.	Differentiated instruction impacts female students' academic performance in English Language	3.29	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.20**	Agreed

Table 3 analysis indicates that item 13-18 has mean scores of 2.50 and above with an overall grand mean of 3.20. This reveals that the respondents agreed that item 13-18 are the impact of differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning of English Language among female secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra state.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Findings revealed that differentiated instruction positively impacts the teaching and learning of English Language among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra State. The finding of this study is in harmony with the findings of Stingo, (2024) which revealed that differentiated and individualized instruction is beneficial in promoting inclusivity, increasing desired behaviors, developing self-awareness, cultivating relationships, increasing engagement, and supporting self-advocacy. The findings also revealed that differentiated instruction impacts the teaching and learning of English Language among male secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra State. Furthermore, the findings revealed that differentiated instruction impacts the teaching and learning of English Language among female secondary school students with learning disabilities in Anambra State. The finding of this study is in consonance

with Oyelere, et.al (2020) who highlighted that differentiated instruction enhances the active participation of both male and female students by offering them diverse entry points into the curriculum. The study therefore concluded that differentiated instruction serves as an inclusive teaching approach that promotes active participation, understanding, and improved learning outcomes in English Language studies for students with diverse learning needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. Teachers should be trained regularly on the use of differentiated instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students with learning disabilities.
2. School administrators should provide instructional resources and create an enabling environment that supports the implementation of differentiated teaching strategies.
3. Curriculum planners should integrate flexible teaching methods that allow for differentiation to ensure inclusiveness in English Language for both male and female students with learning disabilities.
4. Government and education policymakers should formulate policies that mandate and support the use of differentiated instruction in schools to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students.

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