

How to Differentiate Instruction in ESL English Listening Classes

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I. Introduction

Compared with the number of studies / activities devoted to differentiating instruction in English reading and writing, considerably less has been devoted to differentiating instruction in English listening, not to mention ESL English Listening Classes. This paper aims to explore the issue of teaching English Listening in a mixed-ability ESL classroom. Regarding my English listening teaching methods, I tried to deal with the problem by introducing strategies such as flexible grouping, collaborative learning, and by applying to classes essential concepts such as multi-intelligences and self-regulation. In the English listening classes, I took students' readiness, interest and learning profile into consideration as they are the key factors in doing differentiated instruction. Based on their differences in these qualities, I tried to differentiate instruction in listening process and product, but decided not to do the same when choosing listening content. At the end of the school year, a questionnaire was distributed to the students. According to the students' feedback, the English listening classes were challenging to most students but, at the same time, helped them improve their listening and writing skills. What's more, flexible grouping turned out to be the favorite and the most effective strategy.

In the first part of the thesis, a brief history of my teaching in previous English listening classes is provided, followed by findings and reflections about challenges of English listening both my students and I have encountered in a mixed-ability ESL classroom. In search of possible solutions, a brief review of differentiating instruction in a mixed-ability classroom is included. After that, activities used to cope with the challenges are illustrated in chronological order. At the end of the thesis, some findings and reflections are shown.

II. Teaching Procedures in Previous English Listening Classes

Before gaining awareness of the mixed abilities existing in the classroom, my English listening classes were nothing but typical.

II.1. Before-listening

Listening materials were chosen from a variety of resources of appropriate lengths. Handouts in the form of graphic organizers were distributed and background information was provided either through the teacher's lecture or group discussions. For materials that might be more sophisticated, a discussion on vocabulary and technical terms was held to remove potential obstacles.

II. 2.While-listening

Listening materials are usually played two / three times in class. After the warm up activities, students are asked to listen for the first time, without looking at the handouts. The listening focus now will be on the main idea of the whole listening text. Then, students are given some time, in most cases not more than 3 minutes, to go over the questions on the handout. The listening focus now will be the details of the listening text, such as the linking words, facts or figures. Before the last play, hints are sometimes provided when the listening text turns out to be too challenging for the students. The listening focus now will be on the meanings.

II. 3.After-listening

At the end of the listening activities, students will be given blank worksheets. After the original worksheets are collected, answers will be shown on PPT. The teacher will talk more about the listening text if necessary. In later activities, students are required to write the answers either in longer phrases, clauses or even complete sentences. Volunteers are encouraged to write on the blackboard or say their answers in the whole class discussion. The teacher and the students will go over the answers together. After the discussion, students are asked to copy down the answers on the blank worksheets and to make a copy of the listening text on the teacher's computer. Students are also encouraged to listen to the listening text and to go over the questions again after school.

III. Findings and Reflections on Previous English Listening Classes

Students appear to finish the listening tasks smoothly. However, some problems start to emerge as more listening tasks and more challenging listening tasks are given.

III. 1. Anxiety

A majority of students in the class suffer from anxiety in most listening classes. They feel stressed listening to different accents, different intonations or texts with different cultural backgrounds. Whether successfully answering the questions or not, they

have the feeling that they haven't gained anything from the whole listening process. The teacher is aware of the tense atmosphere in listening classes and of the fact that the students think the class is no fun at all.

III. 2. Frustration

It is quite curious to see that many students still feel frustrated even though they have given correct answers for the questions on the worksheets. After brief talks, an intriguing fact is revealed. Students are frustrated by the uncertainty of the listening process, and they are even more frustrated by the feeling of being helpless and isolated. Such feelings, unfortunately, cannot be appeased even by the fact that they have finished the text. The situation gets worse for slow learners. The blank expression on their faces shows that they are failing to follow the speakers. When it comes to writing down the answers in full sentences, they can only squeeze out broken sentences with single words.

III. 3. Inefficiency

Authentic listening texts poses obstacles to students in intonation, stress, accents and cultural differences. Most of the obstacles might be removed by warm-up activities or teacher help. However, this can turn out to be time-consuming and inefficient. Also, some students may need more time for teacher help, while some students start to grow impatient when the teacher tries to offer support.

After some thinking, one fact becomes clear to the teacher. There is never one single text nor one activity that will satisfy the needs of the students. To differentiate instruction in such a mixed-ability class is the answer that comes to mind.

IV. A Brief Literary Review of Differentiating Instruction (DI) in a Mixed-ability Classroom

When engaging in teaching activities, "the teacher thinks and plans in terms of 'multiple avenues to learning' for varied needs, rather than in terms of 'normal' and 'different.' The goal for each student is maximum growth from his current 'learning position.'" (Tomlinson, 2001). Tomlinson points out that if students can't learn everything, "make sure they learn the big ideas, key concepts and governing principles of the subject at hand." (p.13)

To fulfill the teaching goal, the first issue to deal with will be the fact that there is inevitably wide variance among learners. That being the case, the teacher is unlikely to

help each learner by building bridges between learners and learning with one single way of presentation in a classroom. That's why differentiated instruction is adopted in many classrooms. In a differentiated classroom, many things are going on. First, students may be assigned different tasks by readiness, by interest, or by learning profile. By readiness, we mean students' linguistic skills or learning strategies essential to completing the tasks. It also refers to students' prior knowledge of the topics. While students' readiness may facilitate their learning of the new topic, it is always interest that motivates students to be more engaged in learning. By arousing their curiosity and passion, the teacher leads the students out of their comfort zone and explore further into a new realm of learning. In the procedures, the learning may be even more effective if the students' variance in learning profile is taken into consideration, since each learner has his preferred manner of working on the assigned tasks.

Besides considering students' traits in planning differentiated teaching, the teacher will also have to decide whether the differentiated instruction will be instilled in one or all of the three key components of curriculum – content, process, and product. For example, based on their readiness, the teacher may give students who are having more difficulty in English reading a magazine for non-native beginners, while he may give students more proficient in English a magazine for native speakers. In that case, the differentiation is done in contents by students' readiness.. On the other hand, the 'jigsaw' will serve as a good example of differentiating instruction in process by students' learning interest. In the process, students work in groups to study one facet of a topic chosen by their interest. Later, students will go back to their "home-base" groups to share with the other members what they have learned and to learn from other members the other facets of the topic. As for differentiating products in response to students' learning profile, it would be advisable to offer students a choice of ways to show how much they have understood. Some students may choose to draw comic strips of the story they have read, either in groups or alone. Some may write a comment on the story, while others may choose to act it out.

In the procedure, flexible grouping seems to be one factor in facilitating differentiated instruction. While a whole-class discussion may work well at the end of a task, working in different groups may make sure that no students are neglected in the learning process. The key word to grouping choices is flexibility. Keeping students not proficient in English in the same basic groups according to their readiness, for example, is not a good idea since it deters these students from obtaining the opportunities to learn the same knowledge as students in intermediate or advanced groups do. The grouping should be dynamic in response to different teaching objectives in the flow of instruction.

V. Differentiated Instruction in English Listening Classes

After some research, it is quite surprising to find so little resources on differentiated

instruction in English listening , compared with the explorations done in the field of English reading. On second thought, the result is reasonable. For native speakers students, they have no difficulty listening in English, and thus it is not the research focus. It follows that the teacher will have to develop her own syllabus and methodology concerning the issue.

Before making a DI lesson plan for listening classes, four questions should be considered:

(1) Placement:

Is the instruction differentiated by readiness, interest, or learning profile of the students?

(2) Implementation:

Is the instruction differentiated in content, process, or product?

(3) Grouping:

How is the whole class to be grouped? Are the groups going to be homogeneous or heterogeneous?

Is there a flexible grouping or a constant grouping? Which serves the teaching purposes better?

(4) Evaluation:

How are the worksheets to be graded? How can fair grading be ensured?

At first sight, it is most convenient for the teacher to differentiate instruction in listening classes according to the readiness of the students, with grades of listening weekly quiz or monthly exam at hand. However, it turns out that the readiness in English listening refers to more than linguistic skills. Background knowledge of the listening text is also involved. Students with high English listening proficiency may still fail to obtain the meaning of the whole listening text if they have no idea about the issue being talked about. For example, they may still fail to recognize that they are listening to a joke from a different culture, even though they have grasped all the details of the text. As a result, when differentiating instruction by readiness, both students' listening skills and background knowledge has to be considered. Doing DI by interest is definitely a big challenge for both the teacher and the students. With different texts, worksheets, or activities going on in class, class management will become a heavy burden for the teacher. Furthermore, teacher help will be offered less efficiently and less quickly. Instead, division by interest can be quite an effective way of improving listening skills in after-school listening activities. Listening to texts that match their interests, students can be more highly motivated. That is also the same case with DI by learning profile.

Generally, instruction can be differentiated in content, process, or/and product, depending on the teaching purposes. However, in practice, it seems to be more disruptive when it is applied to content. First, it will be quite a task for the teacher to choose different listening texts that will correspond to the listening readiness of different levels of the students, followed by different worksheets for the corresponding listening texts. The job is overwhelming and therefore probably not sustainable. Thus, it is more advisable to start with differentiating instruction in process or/and product.

Grouping facilitates collaborative learning, which is an essential and effective strategy in mixed-ability classes. In a typical DI classroom, the grouping is flexible throughout the flow of instruction, which means no single way of grouping is used in a class. For example, in the beginning, the teacher may provide background information through whole class discussion. Then, students finish the worksheets in groups. After the small group discussion, students may go to new groups to share their answers with a fresh group of people. After the class, the whole class may go over the questions or issue together as a wrap-up. Each student may be asked to do individual extension work after school. Keeping grouping flexible is essential for assuring that all students learn the teaching target instead of just the part of it which is presented in one single group.

When it comes to evaluation, teachers in Taiwan seem to be caught in a dilemma. Students ask teachers to be 'fair', but this is a very ambiguous term. What's worse, grades are also the main source of students' learning anxiety and frustration. To deal with the problem, the teacher can negotiate with the students to reach an agreement before the listening classes. Both the teacher and the students agree that the listening activities will be practices / training and thus grades will be given only in groups **if necessary**. To push potentially irresponsible group members, each student will be graded by their after school assignments, which will be closely related to the listening activities. In other words, if a student is not doing his / her work in listening class, he / she may get a grade for group work but won't be able to get a good grade in the after school assignment. In most cases, the after school assignment is a writing activity based on the notes students have taken in listening class.

VI. Activities with DI in mind

VI. 1. "The Hospital Window" Lesson Plan

The listening focuses are facts and inferences. Students are expected to grasp important details of the whole event, figure out what really happens, and appreciate the underlying lesson of the story.

VI. 1. 1. Placement:

The listening activity requires both listening skills and basic background knowledge of a narrative, as the features of a narrative have been dealt with in the previous reading classes. Differentiated instruction in this lesson plan will be carried out according to students' readiness in listening skills. The pre-assessment quiz is skipped here. Instead, the students' academic performances in the last three monthly listening exams are considered.

VI. 1. 2. Worksheets:

40 students are going to listen to / watch the same listening text. Each student is given a worksheet with eight blanks (worksheet A). Each group is given a worksheet with hints corresponding to their readiness in listening skills (worksheet B, C, and D.)

Story Line for "The Hospital Window".

Instructions: 1. Listen carefully, and recreate the whole story by writing down 8 main incidents into the boxes.
2. Write in a complete sentence what you have learned from the story in the thinking cloud.

Your reflection:

1. []

2. []

3. []

4. []

5. []

6. []

7. []

8. []

START HERE!

Team Members:

Worksheet A

VI. 1. 2. 1. Basic learners are given more clues than the other two levels, which will also help them decide what to listen for, and thus stay focused. Questions with

blanks to fill will be a little challenging for them; this also helps to prolong their group work so that they won't finish the task too early when the other two groups are still working on their task.

Story Line for "The Hospital Window"

Instructions: 1. Listen carefully, and recreate the whole story by writing down 8 main incidents into the boxes...
 2. Write in a complete sentence what you have learned from the story in the thinking cloud.

Your reflection:..

In the end, realizing what the man by the window had done, Mr. Johnson felt
 grateful
 upset.

When the nurse looked out of the window, she saw _____

What did Mr. Johnson ask the nurse to do?
 ask a favor of him
 see what's in the park.

What might have happened to the man by the window?
 He died.
 He left.

A _____ walked in, and she said it was time that _____

Mr. Johnson thanked the man by the window for
 telling him what to do
 sharing what he saw.

The man by the window told Mr. Johnson that he saw a man outside
 asking a girl to marry him
 going after a girl carrying flowers.

Who may the man be? <input type="checkbox"/> office employee <input type="checkbox"/> patient	Which man was Mr. Johnson? <input type="checkbox"/> the older man <input type="checkbox"/> the man who couldn't see
Where are they? <input type="checkbox"/> ward in a hospital <input type="checkbox"/> a cafeteria.	

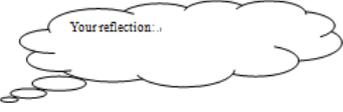


Team Members:..

VI. 1. 2. 2. Intermediate learners are provided with more challenge as they are asked to answer some questions in full sentences. They will have to take notes when listening in order to get main expressions or keywords.

Story Line for "The Hospital Window".

Instructions: 1. Listen carefully, and recreate the whole story by writing down 8 main incidents into the boxes...
 2. Write in a complete sentence what you have learned from the story in the thinking cloud.



Your reflection:..

In the end, realizing what the man by the window had done, Mr. Johnson
 felt that a boy outside in the park was _____

What was outside the window?
 ..

What did Mr. Johnson ask the nurse to do?
 ..

What might have happened to the man by the window?
 ..

A _____ walked in, and she said it was time that

Mr. Johnson was thankful to what the man had done
 because _____

Mr. Johnson and the man had a good time when the man
 told him that a boy outside in the park was _____

Where was Mr. Johnson and what was his problem? ..



START
HERE! ..

Team Members: ..

VI. 1. 2. 3. For advanced learners, they will have to apply more sophisticated note-taking skills. To finish the task, they will have to take down not only the main expressions or keywords but also some ideas.

Story Line for "The Hospital Window".

Instructions: 1. Listen carefully, and recreate the whole story by writing down 8 main incidents into the boxes. . .
 2. Write in a complete sentence what you have learned from the story in the thinking cloud.

Your reflection: . . .

Mr. Johnson's reaction after he found out the truth
 . . .

What was outside the window?
 . . .

Mr. Johnson calling a favor
 . . .

Learn more about the marks leaving
 (suppose Mr. Johnson's reaction)

Why did the man by the window leave the chamber?
 . . .

Mr. Johnson's reaction to the marks act . . .

What did the man by the window see one day?
 . . .

Background Information:
 (suppose Mr. Johnson was what problem he had . . .)

START
 HERE! . . .

Team Members: . . .

VI. 1. 3. Grouping

The 40 students are divided into groups of four, each consisting of students who have received similar grades in the last three monthly exams. That is, students are divided into homogeneous groups.

VI. 1. 4. Evaluation

Eight groups are asked to write down on the blackboard their answers for one of the eight boxes on the worksheet. The whole class and the teacher will go over the answers. This will help the teacher assure that the class meets the teaching focus. For individual evaluation, each student is asked to hand in a narrative of the story.

VI. 1. 5. Teaching Process

VI. 1. 5. 1 Before-Listening

The teacher makes sure that all students are settled in the correct groups. Then, the teacher gives basic information about the video students are going to watch

and tell the students what to listen for.

Instructions: “Class, we have read a story in the last classes. Now, we are going to watch a video about two men. Try to find out what happened and the lesson of the story.”

VI. 1. 5. 2. While-Listening

V. 1. 5. 2. 1 When the video is played for the first time, the window of the player is minimized so that students are forced to listen to the conversation without visual support.

VI.1. 5. 2. 2. Students are given 2 minutes to read over the questions/hints in the eight boxes on worksheet B, C, or D. Then, the video is played for the second time, with visual support.

VI. 1. 5. 2. 3 Students are given 15 minutes to write down their answers in groups. When time’s up, volunteers from eight groups are asked to write down one answer for the eight boxes.

VI. 1. 5. 2. 4 In the whole class discussion, the teacher and the students go through the answers. Then, students are asked to copy down the answers on their individual worksheet A.

VI. 1. 5. 3. After-Listening

As homework, students are asked to write a short passage repeating the story, based on the plots they have copied down on their worksheets. Rubrics are differentiated, and students are free to choose the rubrics they are to meet.

VI. 1. 6. Students’ Works

VI. 2. “Biodiversity” Lesson Plan

The listening focuses are facts and figures. As it is a warm-up activity for a reading on biodiversity in the textbook, students are expected to gather basic information about biodiversity. They are to learn about the meaning of “biodiversity,” the different levels of biodiversity, and the threats it is faced with.

For an extension, students will be encouraged to provide possible solutions in their compositions as homework.

VI. 2. 1. Placement:

The listening activity requires mainly listening skills. Differentiated instruction in this lesson plan will be carried out according to students' readiness in listening skills. The pre-assessment quiz is skipped here. Instead, students' academic performances in the last three monthly listening exams are considered.

VI. 2. 2. Worksheets:

40 students are going to listen to / watch the same listening text. Unlike the previous task, students will have to answer different questions with differentiated challenges.

VI. 2. 2. 1. On worksheet A for basic level, questions deals with “right there questions”, which means the speaker in the video will say the answers.

Worksheet A

Class: No. Name:

I. What does Biodiversity mean?

Bio	Diversity

II. What are the different types of diversity?

Instructions: Pick out the types of diversity mentioned and arrange them from the smallest (1) to the largest (5).

ecosystem diversity	population diversity	tropical diversity	genetic diversity	species diversity

III. What is the acronym for the threats that are mentioned, and write down in Chinese what each letter mean?

(Cf. AIDS is the acronym for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome").

The Acronym:

Letters of the Acronym	What does each letter mean? (in Chinese)

分頁符號

VI. 2. 2. 2. On worksheet B for intermediate level, students will have to listen for more detailed information. They will have to take notes when listening in order to get main expressions or keywords.

Worksheet B.

Class No. Name

I. → What kind of species the speaker talks about as an example when she is explaining the biodiversity?.

Ans:

II. What are the different types of diversity?.

(A) When there is high genetic diversity in a species, that means there are more in the pool, which will help the species to

(B) Species diversity means that there will be many in a system.

(C) Ecosystems diversity means that there will be different on Earth so that

III. What is the acronym for the threats that are mentioned, and write down what each letter means?.

(Cf AIDS is the acronym for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome").

The Acronym:

Letters of the Acronym:	What does each letter mean? .
A	
A	
A	
A	
A	
A	

分頁符號

VI. 2. 2. 3. On worksheet C for advanced levels, students will have to display sophisticated note-taking skills as that they will have to figure out the answers through context. To finish the task, they will have to take down not only the main expressions or keywords but also some ideas.

Worksheet C.

Class No. Name

I. What does biodiversity mean and why high biodiversity is a good thing? You can answer the questions in your own words.

II. What are the different types of diversity? You can answer the questions in your own words.

(A) Why is genetic diversity important to a species?.

(B) What would the species diversity look like in a rainforest and in a desert?.

(C) What would happen if the Earth suffer from low ecosystem diversity?.

III. Write down both the acronym for the threats that are mentioned and find out what has brought about such threats? (Cf AIDS is the acronym for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome").

→ The Acronym:

Words for Each letter.	Possible reasons that bring out the threats.

分頁符號

VI. 2. 2. 4. At the back of worksheets A, B, and C, there are boxes for each student to write down answers they later obtain in group discussion.

The image shows a worksheet titled "Task B: An Introduction to Biodiversity". It contains three numbered notes for students to take notes on:

- Notes for I. What does "Biodiversity" mean?.
- Notes for II. What are the types of biodiversity mentioned?.
- Notes for III. What are the threats that biodiversity is faced with?.

Below these notes is a large empty box labeled "Biodiversity." with horizontal lines for writing.

VI. 2. 2. 5. Each group will be given 2 copies of worksheets A, B, and C. Each group member is free to decide which worksheet he / she is to work on. When more than two of the members want the same worksheet, they will have to negotiate so that in each group there will be at least student working on worksheet A, at least one on worksheet B, and at least one on worksheet C.

VI. 2. 3. Grouping

The 40 students are divided into groups of 5-6, with 2 basic learners, 2 intermediate learners, and two advanced learners. The activity is basically run in heterogeneous groups, and they will be given the chance to meet with students from other groups while working on the same worksheets.

VI. 2. 4. Evaluation

Each student will have to hand in their worksheet for evaluation at the end of the class. Later, the worksheet will be given back to them and they will have to write an exposition on biodiversity. Rubrics for different level of requirements are given, and students are free to choose which one to use for their writing.

VI. 2. 5. Teaching Process

VI. 2. 5. 1 Before-Listening

The teacher makes sure that all students are settled in the correct groups. Two copies of worksheet A, B, and C respectively are given to the groups. Then, the teacher gives some basic information about the video students are going to watch and tells the students what to listen for. After that, students are given 3 minutes to go over the worksheets and allot the tasks to the group members. After making sure that each group member has a copy of the worksheet he / she has to work on, the teacher leads the class over some words in the listening text that may confuse students.

VI. 2. 5. 2. While-Listening

V. 2. 5. 2. 1 Students are given 30 seconds to go over the questions in the first part of the worksheet. Then, the video for the first part of worksheet is played, with the window of the player minimized, which means students will have to listen carefully for the answers. After the video is played, students will be given 1 minute to write down their answers on their worksheet and memorize their answers.

VI. 2. 5. 2. 2. Students are asked to go to the assigned corners of the classroom so that they can check their answers with students from other groups who are working on the same worksheet. Students are forbidden to bring with them their worksheets lest they simply copy others' answers. Students who have failed to get the answers now get another chance to listen for the answers from other students.

VI. 2. 5. 2. 3 After a short discussion, students are asked to go back to their seats and revise their answers. Then, students are given 5 minutes to share what they have got. After this, each student will have to make a summary of the group reports and write it down in the first box at the back of his / her worksheet.

VI. 2. 5. 2. 4 The same steps (**VI. 2. 5. 2. 1** through **VI. 2. 5. 2. 3**) will be carried out another two times, so that students will get answer three parts of the questions on the worksheet. Then, students will have to hand in their worksheet for grading.

VI. 2. 5. 2. 5 The video will be played again; during pauses, the whole class will go over the answers on the worksheets. This serves as immediate feedback.

VI. 2. 5. 3. After-Listening

As homework, students are asked to write a short exposition on biodiversity. They can choose to write simply a summary of the listening text, to provide more details to the problem, or to come up with possible solutions. Rubrics are differentiated, and students are free to choose the rubrics they are to meet.

Rubrics for Writing on Biodiversity					
分節符號 (接續本頁)					
Rubric A (段落寫作)		Rubric B (二段式段落寫作)		提供 Biodiversity 的背景知識 0-5	
提供 Biodiversity 的背景知識 0-5		提供 Biodiversity 的背景知識 0-5		提供例證說明 Biodiversity 目前面臨的威脅 0-5	
簡單說明 Biodiversity 目前面臨的威脅 0-4		提供例證說明 Biodiversity 目前面臨的威脅 0-5		提出解決辦法 0-5	
用字遣詞 (得部分使用演說者用字) 0-2		用字遣詞 (使用演說者用字不得超過 3 句) 0-3		用字遣詞 (不得使用演說者用字) 0-5	
				分節符號 (接續本頁)	

VI. 2. 5. 4. Students Works

Notes for III. What are the threats that biodiversity is faced with?

- Habitat loss
- Invasive species
- population
- pollution
- over exploitation

Exposition (I)

Definition	下定义
Analysis	← 摘要
Solution	

Biodiversity

Biodiversity (Background)

- genetic
- species
- ecosystem

why? what?

threat

- H
- I
- P
- P
- O

Solution

Van

Task B: An Introduction to Biodiversity

Notes for I. What does "Biodiversity" mean?

life differences
kind of species: Human beings

Notes for II. What are the types of biodiversity mentioned?

遗传 = 增加提升生存能力
desert
genetic → 同物种
species → 同环境, 不同物种 → 竞争
ecosystem → 全球
good!

Notes for III. What are the threats that biodiversity is faced with?

H → habitat loss I → invasive species P → Population ↑
P → Pollution O → over exploitation

V. Findings

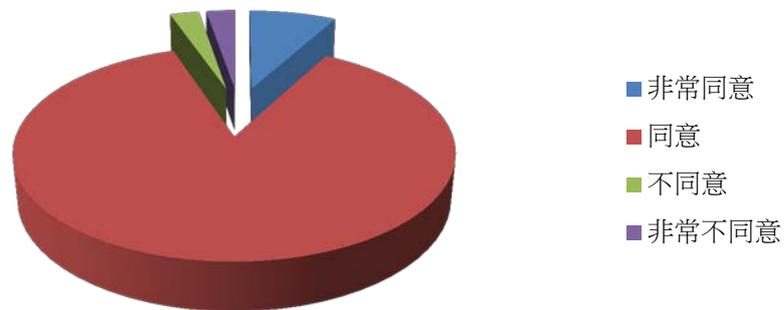
A questionnaire was conducted at the end of the school year after differentiated instruction and flexible grouping were adopted in English listening classes. Questions 1–5 are related to the lesson plan VI. 2, whose focus is on handing over the choices to students and in which students are given the chances to pick out the worksheet they want to work on and the writing tasks they want to hand in.

1. 這份學習單的問題對我太難了



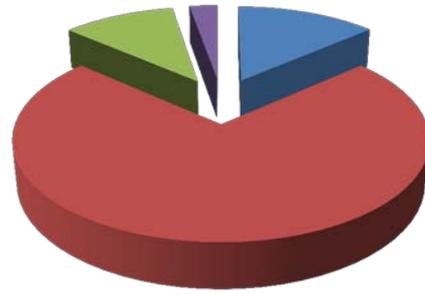
It's quite inspiring to learn that most students don't think they failed to choose the worksheets that matched their readiness. It has been a confusing issue to the teacher as to the allocation of each student to the group that best corresponds to his / her readiness in listening skills. As is shown here, sometimes it's the students that know best about their readiness.

2. 這個活動幫助我學會抓住聽力內容的重點



One student strongly disagrees that he has learned to listen for the main points of the listening text. He insists that, without understanding the listening text fully, he won't be able to grasp the main ideas and thus comprehend the listening text. Another student says that he is still confused about how the whole activity works.

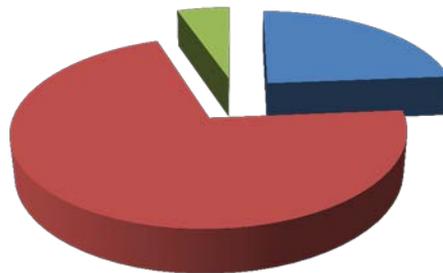
3. 這個活動幫助我學會根據聽力內容記筆記



- 非常同意
- 同意
- 不同意
- 非常不同意

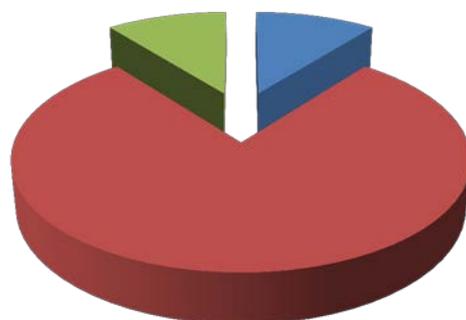
The same student who strongly disagrees with the last question thinks it overwhelming to take notes of the listening task he can't fully understand. More students say that they still have difficulty taking notes, which will be one of the issues to deal with in the future.

4. 在聽力練習的過程中，與同組成員討論給我很大的幫助



- 非常同意
- 同意
- 不同意
- 非常不同意

5. 在聽力練習的過程中，與持同樣學習單的他組成員討論給我很大的幫助

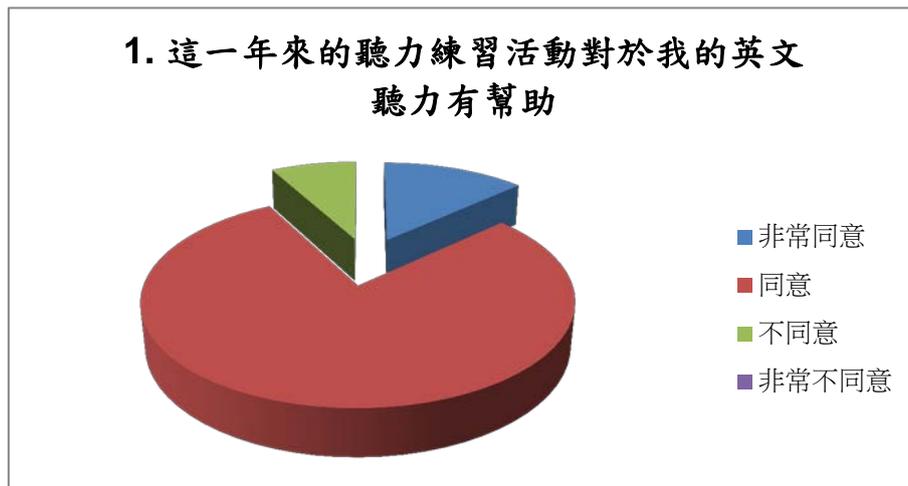


- 非常同意
- 同意
- 不同意
- 非常不同意

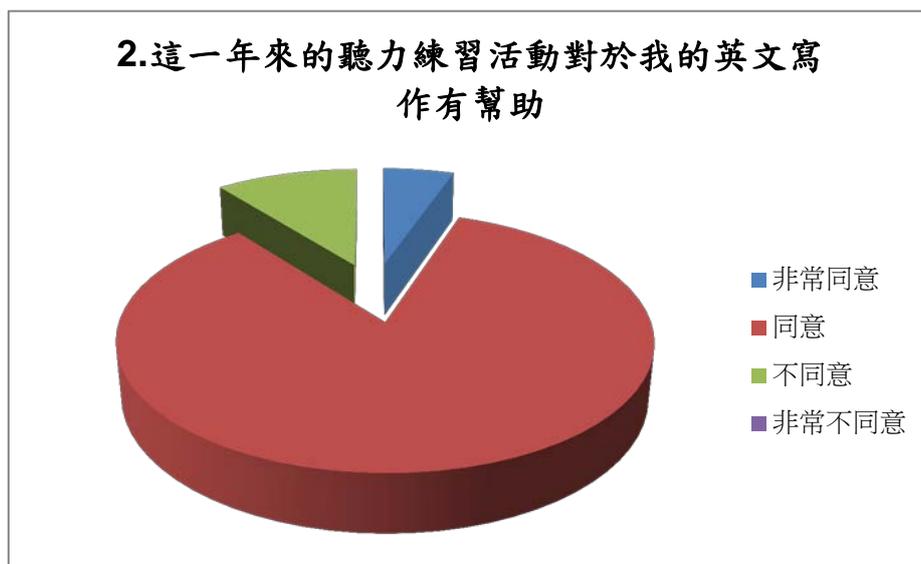
In question 4, students are asked if they find discussions with members in the same group but working on different worksheets helpful, while in question 5, they are asked if they

think it helpful when discussing with students from other groups but working on same worksheet. It's quite interesting to find that most students think they learn more in heterogeneous grouping (question 4) than in homogeneous grouping (question 5). This is probably because students get more clues about the questions they are working on when they talk with students working on different questions.

Then, there are questions about the English listening classes in the whole year.



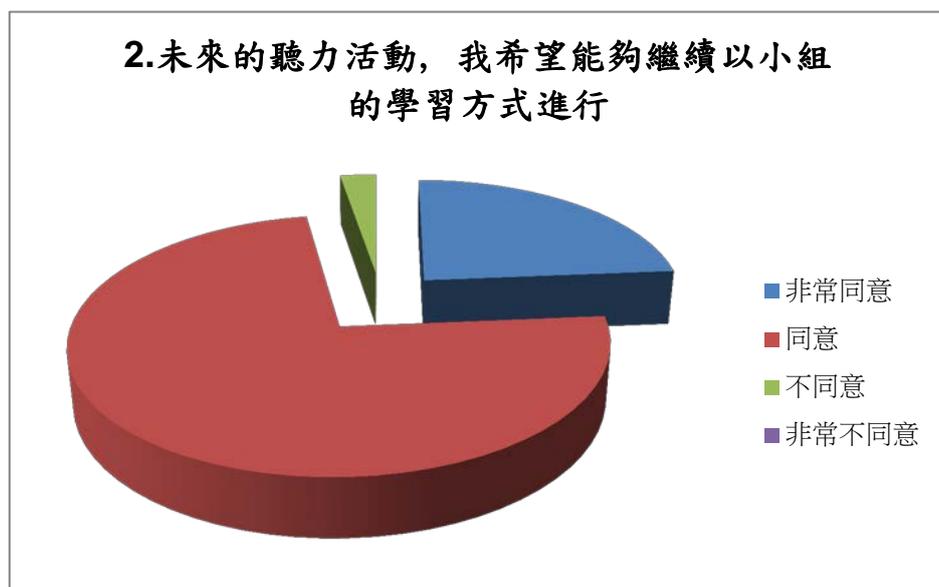
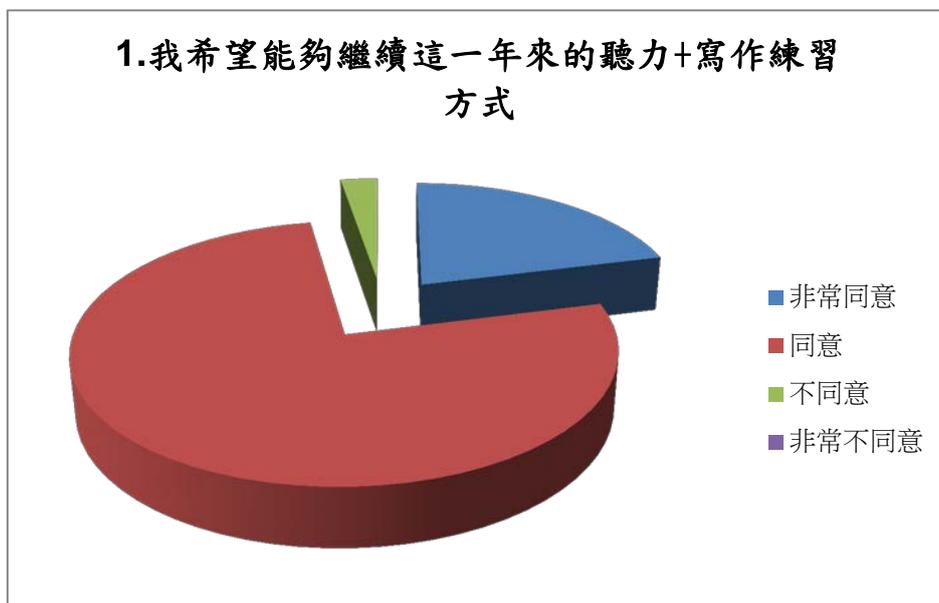
Two students disagree with the statement. One expresses his strong frustration with English listening. The other thinks it distracting when asked to work with other members. Further exploration will be done in the future regarding the affective respect of English listening learning. The latter student reminds me of the necessity to take learning profiles into consideration when making lesson plans.



Some students think writing tasks are far too difficult to the extent that, even with listening activities as warm-up and worksheets as writing materials, they are overwhelmed by the

writing assignments.

Then, students are asked about their opinions of lesson activities in the future.



VI. Reflections

The very first step in doing differentiated instruction is to for the teacher to know his / her students. The teacher should have at hand data concerning students' readiness, interest or learning profile when making a lesson plan. Only when the teacher has a clear picture of the "present position" of the students can the teacher proceed further. The pre-assessment can be done, for example, by referring to their previous performances, by the questionnaires students have filled, or by negotiating face-to-face in class.

Knowing your students well may also extend to the requirement that the teacher has a good management of the class in the learning process. Students should be given clear instructions on what they should do, the responsibilities they have to take, and the ways they should be doing the tasks. Then, the teacher has to make sure that students keep this in mind, and to remind them when some students go off track.

While differentiated instruction seems an effective teaching approach, it may be quite overwhelming for a teacher to make the lesson plans on one's own. Teamwork among coworkers will help not only relieve the burden but also make further revisions more effective and efficient.

As is shown in the teaching process and the questionnaires, differentiated instruction accompanied by flexible grouping facilitates both learning and teaching. With the prospect that the variance in ability of students in one single classroom is inevitably making English listening teaching even more challenging due to the new admission policies, differentiated instruction offers insight into the issue.

For More Information

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