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The Role of Personalized and Differentiated Instruction in Enhancing Academic Achievement.

Case Study: Second year students of English at the department of letters and English language, at the University of Abbas Lagrou Khenchela

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Didactics.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved mother, **YASMINA RECHACHI**,

There are no words strong enough, no sentence deep enough to fully carry what your absence has carved inside me. Since the day you left this world on October 17th, 2022, life has not been the same. It has been quieter, heavier, and at times, unbearably empty. I have missed you in ways that cannot be explained missing your voice, your presence, your warmth, the way you made everything feel possible. There were moments during this journey when I felt lost, when the weight of everything nearly broke me, and all I wanted was to run back to you. But you were no longer there to hold me, so I had to learn to stand on my own carrying you in my heart instead. You were more than a mother. You were my strength, my guide, my protector. You played two roles with grace and courage, you were both my mother and my father. Everything I am today carries your imprint. Every step I have taken, every achievement I have reached, is rooted in your sacrifices, your love, and your belief in me. This accomplishment is not mine alone, it is yours. I reached this place thanks to you, because you built me strong enough to continue even when life felt unfair. I hope you are proud of me. I hope, wherever you are, you can see me and feel that your efforts were never in vain. I carry you with me in everything I do. Always. With all my love, your only daughter ABIR.

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To my dearest friends, whose support, encouragement, and presence made this journey lighter and more meaningful.

Thank you for the laughter during stressful days, the motivation when I felt exhausted, and the memories that turned difficult moments into beautiful ones.

Your friendship has been one of the greatest gifts throughout this academic journey, and I will always cherish it

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To all of you, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation.

Abstract

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, the shift from traditional, one-size-fits-all instruction to learner-centered approaches has become increasingly critical for addressing the diverse needs of university students. This study investigated the role of personalized and differentiated instruction in enhancing academic achievement within Algerian higher education, specifically at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela. Despite the theoretical support for these instructional frameworks, there remained a significant gap in observational research examining their authentic implementation and impact on students' language proficiency in this specific context. The primary objective of this study was to examine the extent to which personalized and differentiated instructional strategies were utilized in EFL classrooms and to explore the relationship between these practices and students' academic achievement. The research employed an observational mixed-methods design with second-year EFL students. Data collection integrated a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design to measure academic achievement, semi-structured teacher interviews, and a structured observation checklist. The findings revealed a statistically significant impact of the instructional intervention. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that the experimental group, which received personalized instruction, showed a substantial improvement, with a very large effect size. Conversely, the experimental group, taught via traditional methods, experienced a decline in mean scores. Specifically, the experimental group outperformed the control group in writing and reading skills, attributed to differentiated materials and individualized feedback. Qualitative data further indicated that adapting content to learners' proficiency levels prevented cognitive overload and fostered learner autonomy, whereas traditional instruction failed to address individual disparities. Data analysis relies on descriptive statistics

generated through Microsoft Excel for the quantitative data and thematic coding for the qualitative insights.

Keywords: Personalized Instruction, Differentiated Instruction, Academic Achievement, EFL University Students, Mixed-Methods Research, Algerian Higher Education.

List of abbreviations:

EFL: English Foreign Language

PBL: Problem Based Learning

TBCT: Task-based Component Teaching

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

DI: Differentiated Instruction

PI: Personalized Instruction

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

UDL: Universal Design for Learning

CBL: Competency-based Learning

ILPs: Individual Learning Plans

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy emphasize learner-centered approaches that address students' diverse needs, abilities, and learning profiles. In heterogeneous university classrooms, particularly in Algerian higher education, traditional one-size-fits-all instruction often fails to ensure equitable learning opportunities. As a response, personalized instruction and differentiated instruction (DI) have emerged as effective pedagogical frameworks designed to improve engagement, autonomy, and academic achievement.

This research proposal aims to investigate how personalized and differentiated instructional practices are implemented in real EFL classrooms and how these practices relate to students' academic achievement. The study adopts an observational mixed-methods design to capture both instructional practices and learners' perceptions within their natural learning environment.

1. Research Problem

Despite the theoretical and empirical support for personalized and differentiated instruction, limited research has examined how these approaches are actually implemented in Algerian EFL university classrooms. Moreover, existing studies often rely on experimental designs or achievement tests, leaving a gap in observational research that documents authentic teaching practices and student's lived experiences. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence on the extent to which personalized and differentiated instruction contributes to academic achievement in this specific context.

2. Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. Examine the extent to which personalized and differentiated instructional strategies are used in EFL classrooms.
2. Explore students' perceptions of personalized and differentiated instruction.
3. Investigate the relationship between observed instructional practices and EFL students' academic achievement.
4. Identify challenges that teachers face when implementing personalized instruction in university EFL settings.

3. Research Questions

1. To what extent do EFL teachers implement personalized and differentiated instructional practices in university classrooms?
2. How do EFL students perceive the impact of personalized instruction on their academic achievement?
3. What aspects of academic achievement (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are most influenced by personalized and differentiated instruction?
4. What challenges hinder the effective implementation of personalized instruction in EFL contexts?

4. Hypothesis

Personalized instruction has a positive impact on learners' academic performance.

5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. Pedagogically, it provides practical insights into how personalized and differentiated instruction can be applied in real EFL classrooms. Academically, it contributes to the limited body of research on observational and mixed-methods studies in Algerian higher education. Practically, the findings may inform teacher training programs, curriculum design, and instructional planning aimed at improving EFL academic achievement.

6. Literature Review Overview

The literature review underpinning this proposal is organized around three major areas:

- **Theoretical Background:** This section draws on constructivist learning theory, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to explain the foundations of differentiated and personalized instruction.
- **Conceptual Framework:** Personalized and differentiated instruction are conceptualized as instructional strategies that positively influence academic achievement through enhanced engagement, autonomy, and instructional flexibility.
- **Empirical Studies:** Previous studies consistently demonstrate that learner-centered instructional approaches improve academic achievement, motivation, and higher-order thinking skills. However, gaps remain regarding observational mixed-methods research in Algerian EFL university settings.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-methods observational design combining quantitative, qualitative, and observational data to provide a holistic understanding of instructional practices and their impact.

7.2. Population and Sample

Sample: Second-year EFL students at the department of English, University of Abbas Laghrour Khenchela and teachers from the same department.

7.3 Data Collection Instruments

1. Quasi-Experimental Pre-test/Post-test:

A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design is used to measure students' academic achievement in the digital literacy course under the supervision of the course teacher, before and after the instructional intervention. Both experimental and control groups are tested to identify any significant improvement and evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. Academic achievement is assessed through students' test scores.

2. Teacher Interview: Semi-structured interviews exploring instructional strategies, challenges, and beliefs about personalization.

3. Observation Checklist: A structured grid used to document the presence and frequency of differentiated and personalized instructional practices.

7.4 Data Analysis

- Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means).

- Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically through coding and categorization.
- Observational data will be analyzed using frequency counts and descriptive interpretation.

7.5 Ethical Considerations

The study will adhere to ethical research standards, including voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and academic integrity.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation will be organized into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Academic Achievement in EFL Learning

This chapter provides the conceptual foundation of academic achievement in EFL contexts. It defines academic achievement, examines the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and discusses the role of 21st-century skills and teaching methods in enhancing learners' performance. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of previous studies related to EFL achievement.

Chapter Two: Personalized and Differentiated Instruction

This chapter explores the concepts, principles, and models of personalized and differentiated instruction. It clarifies the distinction between the two approaches, discusses their benefits and challenges in EFL contexts, and reviews relevant literature demonstrating their impact on learners' motivation and academic achievement.

Chapter Three:

Research Methodology:

This chapter outlines the research design and methodological procedures adopted in the study. It describes the research approach, population and sample, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations guiding the research process.

Data description, Analysis, and Findings:

It also presents and analyzes the data collected from questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. Quantitative results are presented using tables and figures, while qualitative findings are discussed thematically in relation to the research questions.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

The final chapter discusses the findings in light of the reviewed literature and theoretical framework. It highlights the pedagogical implications, acknowledges the limitations of the study, and offers recommendations for future research and EFL teaching practice.

Chapter one: Academic Achievement in EFL learning

Academic Achievement in EFL Learning.

1.1. Introduction.

1.2. Defining Academic Achievement.

1.3. Dimensions of Academic Achievement.

1.4. The Four Skills and Academic Achievement.

1.5. Twenty- First Century Skills in EFL Learning.

1.6. Teaching Approaches Supporting Academic Achievement.

1.7. Review of Previous Studies on Academic Achievement.

1.8. Synthesis and Chapter Conclusion.

Chapter one:

Academic Achievement in EFL Learning.

1.1. Introduction

Achieving good grades often serves as proof that teaching is effective at colleges. Results, such as test scores, grades, or overall records, typically indicate how students are performing (York et al., 2015). Still, newer studies suggest success is not about numbers; it includes thinking deeply, building skills, plus keeping up steady progress over time (Richardson et al., 2012). This means that doing well at university means more memorizing facts; achievement reflects not only mastery of subject content but also the ability to apply knowledge effectively in academic tasks.

In classroom where students are learning English doing well at universities is not about learning grammar or vocabulary. The language is used for multiple functions, so the students must learn a lot of elements. According to (Cummins, 2000), students who learn in another language must use words in a difficult way, not just like they do when they talk to their friends. This is why students who are learning English need to be able to do more than just speak English. They need to be able to understand texts that join in conversation in class and make good arguments when they write or speak. English is used for all these things, so students must be good at all of them to do well at university; this distinction suggests that EFL learners success depends on their abilities to engage with academic discourse, interpret complex texts, and produce structured written and oral output.

Furthermore, language development is no longer viewed as a straightforward accumulation of grammatical knowledge, but rather as a dynamic and nonlinear process (Larsen Freeman,2015). As result, academic success in EFL requires communicative competence, discourse management, and

strategic language use and cannot be reduced into linguistic accuracy. According to (Canale and Swain,1983) grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic elements are all part of communicative competence, and they all affect students' academic achievement.

In addition to linguistic competence, the role of cognitive and metacognitive elements influences academic performance. It has been demonstrated that self-regulated learning is a significant predictor of academic success because students who successfully monitor and control their learning processes typically perform better (Zimmerman 2002). Because learning a foreign language imposes additional cognitive demands, this regulation is especially important in EFL settings.

Given this perspective, academic achievement in EFL higher education must be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that integrates linguistic proficiency, communicative competence, cognitive engagement, and measurable academic performance.

1.2. Defining Academic Achievement.

Different conceptions of academic achievement have been found in various educational studies. It has historically been described as performance outcomes that are evaluated using cumulative assessment, standardized tests, or grades. Academic achievement is defined as measurable academic performance indicators like course grades (York et al,2015). However, by ignoring cognitive engagement and acquisition skill such a definition runs the risk of reducing achievement to numerical performance. Achievement in EFL context must encompass academic literacy communicative effectiveness, and language proficiency in addition to grades. (Richardson & Abraham, 2012) argue that academic achievement in higher education is affected by cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational variables not only intellectual ability.

1.2.1. Academic Achievement in EFL contexts

Academic achievement in learning English is not quite like doing well in other subjects since the language itself is both what student studies and how he learns it. (Jim Cummins 2000) pointed out that mastering academic language using words in ways that challenge thinking more than casual talk does, it is called CALP. This distinction is critical. A student may have conversational fluency, but he may still struggle academically because of limited academic proficiency. Therefore, measuring achievement in EFL must reflect how well students handle complex expressions. (Freeman, 2015) argues that language development is dynamic and nonlinear, meaning that achievement cannot be reduced to static grammar mastery. Academic achievement in EFL refers to how well students use skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Their power grows when they start using English inside classroom. Old methods relied on test scores or class marks. Today, studies watch real changes over weeks or months. Progress tracked this way reveals true growth in understanding (Al-khresheh et al, 2025).

1.3. Dimensions of Academic Achievement.

Reductive evaluation based only on grammar or vocabulary tests is avoided when achievement is viewed as numerous rather, it illustrates the complexity of language use at the university level.

1.3.1. Linguistic Achievement

Grammar, vocabulary, and syntactic accuracy have historically been the main focuses of linguistic achievement. Although these elements are still fundamental, placing too much focus on structural correctness may deprive academic and communicative development. According to (Ellis, 2008) meaning-focused practice must be combined with form-focused instruction to achieve quantifiable language gains; This indicates that academic success cannot be determined solely by linguistic accuracy. Students must use their language skills in research assignment essays, and

presentation in academic settings. As a result, performance-based evaluations are required to measure linguistic proficiency, which supports the case for pre-post academic testing.

1.3.2. Communicative Competence

The idea of communicative competence was developed by (Dell Hymes 1972, arguing that mastering a language requires being able to use it correctly in various situations. Canal and Swain (1980) extended this to include discourse, sociolinguistic, grammatical, and strategic competence. However, critics point out that models of communicative competence occasionally fail to adequately represent the demands of academic discourse in higher education. University EFL learners must acquire discipline-specific vocabulary and argumentative writing skills that extend beyond conversational competence. Therefore, academic achievement in this study incorporates communicative competence measured through structured academic tasks in the pre-posttest.

1.2.3. Cognitive and Academic Skills

Learning a language at university requires thinking critically, solving problems, and being good at reading and writing. According to Zimmerman (2002) self-regulated learning is a good predictor of academic success. In EFL settings students need to control their understanding, keep track of vocabulary gaps, and make changes to what they write. These metacognitive skills influence measurable achievement. Thus, academic achievement in this study involves cognitive engagement reflected in improved test performance between pre- and post-test; This review summarizes that in EFL learning prioritize analysis, evaluation, and creation. In EFL settings, learning these skills are developed through tasks that require interpretation, argumentation, and reflection (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

1.4. The Four Skills and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement has four fundamental language skills speaking, writing, listening, and reading. They are the foundation of academic proficiency and communicative competence and mastering them is essential to academic success in EFL learning (Alhider, 2023). Recent theoretical and empirical research has focused on how these skills interact and support one another in meaningful language use, in addition to how each skill develops independently

1.4.1 Listening Skill and Academic performance

Listening is essential for understanding lectures instructions and peer contributions. Rost (2001) noted the effective listening enables learners to process academic input and engage meaningfully in the classroom interaction thereby supporting overall academic achievement. The basis for understanding spoken language and academic discourse is a receptive skill of listening. To listen effectively one must process meaning, anticipate linguistic patterns, and interpret contextual cues in addition to simplify hearing sounds (Alhaider, 2023). Multimedia tools like podcasts, interactive audio, platforms and adaptive listening software, which let students set their own pace and repeatedly access real input have been demonstrated to improve listening practice (Llvisaca & Guaman Luna, 2025). However, in the absence of strategic instructional support, these tools also promote passive reliance on technology for comprehension, perhaps limiting deeper cognitive engagement with ecological listening tasks even as they increase exposure and engagement.

1.4.2. Reading Skill and Academic Performance

Academic learning, especially in higher education, depends on reading. According to Grabe (2009), academic reading involves discipline-specific literacy. Critical engagement with texts, and idea synthesis, all of which support academic success. Reading is essential for academic success in

EFL contexts, where students must interact with a lot of academic text. It includes decoding written texts and creating meanings. According to recent studies, technology-supported reading environments, like computer-assisted interactive reading platforms, can greatly enhance higher-order cognitive abilities like critical thinking and analysis in addition to reading comprehension (ScienceDirect, 2025). It has also been demonstrated that multimedia text supports digital annotation tools to improve students' engagement with text by providing scaffolded comprehension and just-in-time linguistic explanations. However, if pedagogical design does not strategically support metacognitive engagement, critics warn that technology may oversimplify reading tasks or prioritize surface comprehension over deep interpretive skills.

1.4.3. Speaking Skill and Academic Performance

Speaking skills aid students collaborate with peers, give presentations, and take part in discussion. Academic achievement is closely linked to both linguistic competence and confidence, which are reflected in oral production in academic settings (Harmer, 2007). Speaking involves the production of language in interpersonal and academic settings, virtual speaking environment, such as video conferencing, dialogues system, and applications have been associated with gains in oral fluency and confidence in contexts characterized by lack of authentic interaction opportunities (International Journal of Language and Education Research, 2024); However, technology affordances alone do not guarantee improved speaking outcomes, structural task design, meaningful communicative goals, and sociocultural engagement remain fundamental to effective oral skill development.

1.4.4. Writing Skill and Academic Performance

Writing is one of the hardest academic skills. According to Hylan (2003), academic writing encompasses three essential components, language proficiency, genre knowledge, and critical thinking. Hence, writing ability is often viewed as key indicator of academic success for EFL students. Writing is also a productive skill that academic expression, creating arguments, and formally communicating with others. Evidence shows that technology-based interventions, including AI-based writing aids, Group collaboration, and gamification of writing tools, have produced greater improvement in student writing performance than traditional methods, especially in terms of writing organization, vocabulary usage, and grammar (EJELS, 2025). However, excessive dependence on AI-generated feedback can hinder students from developing self-regulated writing processes and engaging with the competencies required to ensure text clarity and rhetorical structure. When this occurs, it may be necessary to provide additional teacher support to help students understand how to use AI technology effectively.

With the addition of digital instruments in EFL classrooms, instruction has changed the way that language skills are taught and experienced, namely all four skills have changed in different ways, and so has how educators utilize them. With the context of Algeria as advocated by Oumeddour (2023), there is evidence to support the notion that technology-based instructional practices lead to considerable improvements in targets of communicative competence, including intercultural awareness and language performance, when an appropriate pedagogical framework is developed and implemented.

1.5. Twenty- First Century Skills in EFL Learning

Today's educational discussions, especially at the university level, are increasingly centered on the role of 21st century skills in post-secondary education which involves students' ability to exhibit not only content knowledge but also those transferable skills of critical thinking,

collaboration, communication, creativity, and digital literacy. The use of these skills in EFL contexts does not represent an addition to the language, these skills are integrated into Language use itself. Language The position requires students to interpret and negotiate meaning as well as interact with one another; therefore, the EFL classroom provides a rich context in which to develop these skills. The Partnership for 21st century Learning (2019) has identified critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity as the essential 21st century skills needed for academic and career success. Integrating 21st century skills into EFL higher education will improve students' opportunities to engage with academic texts that they will encounter, produce higher quality argumentative writing, and improve their ability to deliver effective oral presentations.

1.5.1. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Critical thinking is thought to play a role in academic achievement as it allows the learner to analyze texts, evaluate arguments, synthesize information and make more coherent responses. In the second language acquisition analysis and evaluation tasks are those that stimulate linguistic as well as cognitive learning. Explicit instruction and critical thinking in the EFL classes are found to have positive effects on reading comprehension and academic writing performance as well (Li, 2023).

Likewise, Afzali and Izadpanah (2022) found out that Problem-based learning (PBL) significantly improved the quality of writing and academic success in EFL students; However, Critical thinking is culture-bound as some academic critics warn. Atkison (1997) Added that the imposition of western models of critical thinking in non-western contexts may lead to epistemological conflict.

Critics argue that uncritically embracing 21st century frameworks may lead to neglect of local educational traditions and cognitive styles. This tension is particularly relevant to EFL universities, where assessment systems often prioritize accuracy and examination performance over analytical discourse.

1.5.2. Collaboration and Communication

research proves that learning by collaborating enhances motivation and academic performance through structured interaction among learners then negotiate meaning provide feedback and improves language input this was further collaborated in 2022 study by Zhang and Rahimi, in which collaborative tasks showed great promise of improving speaking fluency and enhancing academic performance among EFL university students. Hwang C. Journal of chemical information and modeling academic performance within an EFL context of collaborative learning. Language teaching research. However, Kirschner, et al (2006) contend that Guided collaborative approaches can overload learner's cognitive resources and become less efficient in their learning particularly for lower proficiency learners. Thus, while collaborative can enhance achievement, it requires structured guidance to prevent superficial engagement.

1.5.3. Digital Literacy and Academic Success

Digital literacy became not separable from language learning when mediated by technology it is expected to provide access to authentic materials multimedia input and interactive practice.

A recent systematic review by Almari (2024) Determined that digital learning environments have positive relation with EFL students' academic achievement namely in reading and recovery acquisition. The use of technology and development intercultural knowledge and communicative competence among Algerian EFL learners have also been demonstrated by Oumeddour (2023),

The results show that technology-based instruction promotes engagement, autonomy and academic achievement when integrated pedagogically. However, critics warn against techno-optimism. According to Selwyn (2016), Digitally equipped does not guarantee better learning outcomes as it may exacerbate inequalities in context where access is limited and teachers are poorly trained. Thus, technology only aids academic performance when pedagogically relevant and contextually situated.

1.6. Teaching Approaches Supporting Academic Achievement

Teaching approaches shape how academic achievement develops.

1.6.1. Traditional Approaches in the EFL Teaching

Grammar-translation and teacher-centered instruction these methods might improve language proficiency especially in vocabulary and grammar according to Richard and Rodgers (2014), Structural mastery is given priority in traditional approaches. However, overlooking higher thinking and communication skills traditional models are criticized for producing students who do well in tests and exams but struggle in real world communication situations.

1.6.2. Modern Learner Center-Approaches

Project-based learning (PBL) task-based learning teaching (TBLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT) all placed strong emphasis on meaningful tasks and interaction. When compared to conventional approaches task-based instruction significantly boosts EFL's academic achievement Bao and Du (2023). However, according to Sweller's cognitive load theory, learning effectiveness may be limited to excessive learner autonomy in the absence of adequate scaffolding.

Therefore, the best strategy might incorporate both active participation and structured guidance.

1.7. Review of Previous Studies on Academic Achievement

Quasi-experimental design is being used more frequently in empirical research on academic achievement in EFL contexts to determine academic performance.

Recent studies indicate:

- Technology-enhanced instruction significantly improves academic writing and reading performance (Alamri,2024).
- Collaborative learning increases speaking fluency and classroom participation (Zhang & Rahimi,2022)
- Critical thinking integration enhances reading comprehension (Li,2023).

However, some studies present contradictory findings. For instance, Clark (1983) Maintain that instructional design has a greater impact on learning than media alone this implies that improvement in academic performance is dependent on both innovation and implementation quality. There is still a significant lack of quasi-experimental studies that measure academic achievement over time in North Africa contexts especially in Algerian university, although intercultural competence is covered in Oumddour 's (2023) more study is required to determine quantifiable academic performance using pre-post testing.

1.8. Synthesis and Chapter Conclusion

This chapter treated academic achievement in EFL not as a single skill but through multiple angles encompassing linguistic proficiency, communicative competence, cognitive engagement, and measurable academic performance.

The literature demonstrates that:

- 21st century skills enhance academic outcomes when pedagogically integrated.

- Technology supports achievement but is not inherently transformative.
- Learner-centered approaches outperform purely traditional methods when properly scaffolded.
- Empirical research supports quasi-experimental design as robust measures of achievement.

However, literature also reveals tensions:

- Cultural debates surrounding critical thinking
- Cognitive load concerns minimally guided learning
- Technology inequalities affecting implementation

Therefore, academic achievement in EFL learning means recognizing that success emerges not from one fixed approach, but it grows through thoughtful teaching plans shaped by real classroom conditions.

This synthesis Provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study, which adopts a quasi-experimental pre-post design to measure academic achievement within a technology-supported instructional framework in Algeria and EFL university contexts.

Chapter Two: Personalized and Differentiated instruction in EFL learning

Personalized and Differentiated Instruction in EFL.

2.1. Introduction.

2.2. Conceptualizing Personalized Instruction.

2.3. Differentiated instruction: Definition and Core Principle.

2.4. Personalized instruction vs. Differentiated instruction.

2.5 Theoretical Instruction of Personalized and Differentiated instruction.

2.6 Principles and Characteristics of Personalized Instruction.

2.7 Models of Personalized Learning in EFL Context.

2.8. Benefits of Personalized and Differentiated Instruction in EFL Contexts.

2.9. Challenges of Implementing Personalized Instruction in University Classrooms.

Chapter Two:

Personalized and Differentiated Instruction in EFL

2.1. Introduction

Today's classrooms reveal wide differences among learners in capacities, skills, motivation, and backgrounds, and how they absorb ideas, all of which stand out more clearly now. Especially at university level in EFL settings, there are mixed groups, some of them grasp quickly, and others need time, some think one way, others another. Teachers face real difficulty making sure each learner moves forward meaningfully academic progress. As a result, traditional "one-size-fits-all" teaching methods are no longer considered sufficient for addressing the needs of diverse classrooms (Tomlinson, 2017). When this challenge appeared, teachers began highlighting the importance of personalized and differentiated instruction as effective strategies for enhancing student engagement and academic achievement. Personalized instruction puts the focus on adapting learning experiences according to each student's requirements, such as needs, interests, and speed of understanding. Differentiated instruction includes modifying teaching methods, content, and assessment to fit learner diversity (Pane et al, 2018). According to Pane et al. (2018), personalized learning classrooms permit the student to move forward based on proficiency and how they understand materials, rather than time constraints. When learners advance by grasping concepts fully, results often improve motivation. This perspective suggests that instruction is designed to learners' characteristics, and their engagement deepens when lessons reflect how each learner learns best. Academic growth follows naturally from such alignment.

Likewise, differentiated instruction has been identified as a concept that has been widely accepted as a teaching strategy that aims to respond to the differences among students within the same classroom. According to Tomlinson (2017), differentiated instruction is a proactive teaching

strategy that involves varying the content, process, product, and learning environment to respond to the differences among students in terms of their levels of readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In the context of EFL teaching, differentiation can involve different reading materials for different students based on their proficiency levels, and different tasks for practicing language.

Recent research also emphasizes the effectiveness of personalized and differentiated learning outcomes. For instance, Walkington and Bernacki (2020) suggest that personalized learning experiences can help increase student's motivation and engagement by linking learning content to students' interests and goals. From the EFL context, the linking of learning content to students' interests and goals can be highly effective, as motivation is an important factor in second languages acquisition. When students feel that learning activities are meaningful and relevant, they are more likely to engage actively and persist in language learning tasks.

Despite the theoretical advantages, the application of personalized and differentiated instruction in EFL university classrooms is still difficult. This is because of large class sizes, insufficient instructional time, and a lack of training that may prevent the teacher from applying instruction on a personalized basis (Pham & Nguyen, 2021) in most developing learning environments, such as Algerian universities, teacher-centered approaches to instruction. This is because of constraints within the learning. Consequently, the practical application of personalized and differentiated instruction may not always align with its theoretical potential.

With these factors in mind, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the theoretical bases, concepts, and applications of personalized and differentiated instruction in order to enhance teaching practices in EFL settings. This chapter, therefore, will discuss the conceptual frameworks that underlie these practices, present a comparison of the similarities and differences between them, and investigate their theoretical foundations and models. Furthermore, it will review the empirical

research that has been conducted on the advantages and difficulties of implementing personalized and differentiated instruction in EFL settings, particularly in higher education.

Through a critical review of existing literature, this chapter attempts to lay theoretical groundwork for this study and reveal how personalized and differentiated teaching methods might aid in enhancing students' academic achievement in EFL learning environments.

2.2. Conceptualizing Personalized Instruction

Personalized instruction has become a very important pedagogy type to meet the diverse needs, capabilities, and interests of every learner. In current educational settings notably in English as foreign language EFL classrooms, learners are varied in terms of linguistic competence, speed of learning, motivation and cognitive styles. Due to this diversity, many scholars have claimed that traditional instruction cannot effectively support all learners. Thus, personalized instruction attempts to design its pedagogy and learning experiences according to the traits of the individual students.

A several scholars have sought to define personalized instruction and identify its key features. Shemshack and Spector (2020) describe personalized learning as an educational concept that customizes teaching strategies based on learner's requirements, interests, objectives and learning pace so that they can acquire knowledge or competencies by establishing personal learning experiences. All of these features make personalized instruction prioritize the learner as the key component that drives the learning process rather than the traditional focus on the teacher, or even classroom curriculum. This emphasizes that learning is not at a rote knowledge transmission but rather active negotiated process based on our individual experiences and interaction. Therefore, teaching practices should be adaptable and flexible to respond to these individual differences.

Similarly, Schmiedek and Brod (2021) describe personalized education as the systematic designing of instruction and assessment to learner characteristics and ongoing assessments. Their framework proposes that successful personalization includes ongoing tracking of student learning, adjusting learning assignments accordingly. This view highlights that fact that personalization cannot be reduced to just giving students different types of material; instead, it involves a systematic process by which information about learners is collected and applied in making instructional choices. This involves constructing learning activities, customizing assessment approaches, and delivering personalized feedback.

Another crucial aspect of personalized instruction is the integration of digital technology which allows to create personalized learning environments. Technological innovations in education and artificial intelligence have enabled to analyze learner performance in real time, leading to personalized feedback and learning progressions. AI-driven learning platforms can assess their weaknesses and give students exercises that target areas such as grammar, collocation of vocabulary, or pronunciation. Such tools could improve language acquisition by providing real-time feedback and designed assistance. Recent studies in EFL contexts indicate that adaptive digital systems can lead to substantial progress in learners' language proficiency and retention by facilitating individualized learning paths (Dekhakhena, 2025).

Despite its theoretical advantages, personalized instruction is complex and often ambiguous construct in the realm of education research. Scholars interchangeably use associated terms including individualized instruction, adaptive learning, and differentiated instruction creating conceptual confusion. Individualized instruction is considered as a more targeted approach where the pace of learning, for example, would be adapted to each student, whereas personalized learning represents a larger action which allows students' interests, goals and pathways to be taken into

consideration. According to recent systematic reviews, individualized instruction refers to adjusting the pace of learning for each student, while personalized learning encompasses a broader framework that includes learners' interests, goals, and learning pathways. This distinction suggests that personalized instruction involves not only adjusting instructional methods but also empowering learners to participate actively in shaping their own learning process.

However, not all the researchers completely back a widespread embrace of personalized instruction. One else argued that the concept might be unrealistic or impractical in classroom setting. Large class sizes, diminished resources and strict curricula can restrict teachers' abilities and capacities to design instruction effectively. This may not be feasible with many educational settings, especially in developing country contexts where teachers work under severe institutional constraints that do not afford them the opportunity to individualize instruction. That leaves personalization more of an ideal in theory than a practice in the classroom.

Moreover, critics warn that excessive emphasis on personalized learning may prevent collaborative and peer-interaction learning opportunities. Language learning, especially in EFL context is dependent on social interaction, communication and cooperative activities. On the one hand, if we make instruction so individualized that students are not given opportunities to practice language through group discussion, negotiation of meaning and collaborative tasks, they will falter. Thus, some researchers highlight the importance of not losing sight of instructional approaches that are communicative and collaborative in nature and stress that personalized learning must be at least balanced with them.

In addition, the effectiveness of personalized instruction may rely heavily on teachers' pedagogical knowledge and professional training. The teacher has to analyze the needs of the learners, design flexible learning activities, and manage different learning paths at the same time.

Without sufficient training and institutional support, implementing personalized instruction can lead to overburdened teachers, added challenges in classroom management.

In the context of EFL instruction, therefore, personalization would need to be integrated with other methodologies. This is because personalization would not replace existing methodologies but would be seen more as a complementary tool that would improve student interest and addresses learner diversity. This would be achieved through the integration of personalization with other methodologies, such as communicative language teaching.

Overall, the concept of personalized instruction requires a recognition of the intricacy of learner diversity of learner diversity and the need for flexible approaches to teaching. Although the approach promises positive prospects for enhancing learner motivation and achievement, there are contextual factors that need to be taken into consideration for the successful implementation of personalized instruction. Therefore, there is a need for further studies to explore how personalized instruction can be effectively implemented in university EFL contexts, especially in Algerian universities.

2.3. Differentiated instruction: Definition and Core Principle

Differentiated instruction (DI) is one of the main ideas in current educational research, especially in diverse learning environments such as the English as foreign language classroom. As the university setting is becoming more inclusive to learners with different linguistic proficiency levels, cognitive capacities, and learning styles, the demand for adaptive teaching strategies is escalating. Differentiated instruction is seen as one of the solutions to the weaknesses of homogeneous teaching approaches.

One of the most important researchers in the field, and one of the most influential ones, is Tomlinson (2017), who describes differentiated instruction as a proactive teaching approach in

which the teacher modifies the content, process, product, or learning environment to meet the readiness levels, interest, and learning profiles of the learners. As can be seen, teachers are expected to anticipate learner differences and design lessons accordingly, rather than reacting to difficulties after they arise. This proactive nature makes differentiated instruction more pedagogically structured than many traditional teaching approaches.

One of the bases of this definition, Hall et al. (2012) highlight the significance of continuous assessment and flexible grouping. The teachers have emphasized that differentiation involves continuous assessment and differentiation of the students into groups. For instance, in EFL classes, students who are weak in proficiency may be provided with simple reading materials, while those who are strong in proficiency may be provided with complex activities such as argumentative writing and critical discussions.

From a practical perspective, differentiated instruction is commonly implemented through four main dimensions:

- Content differentiation: adjusting what student learn (e. g, simplified texts, varied vocabulary input).
- Process differentiation: varying how students learn (e. g, groupwork, individual tasks, guided practice)
- Product differentiation: offering different ways for students to demonstrates learning (e. g, presentation, essays, projects)
- Learning environment differentiation: modifying classrooms conditions (e. g, collaborative vs. independent learning spaces).

These dimensions demonstrate that differentiation is not limited to instructional materials but extends to the entire learning experience.

In EFL context, differentiated instruction has a more significant impact because the acquisition of EFL is affected by several factors, such as a prior knowledge, exposure to the target language, motivation, and cognitive abilities. Studies have shown that there can be significant differences among students in a classroom in terms of understanding grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills (Pozas et al, 2020). Thus, it can be argued that applying a single instructional method to EFL students can lead to different learning outcomes.

Empirical studies support the efficacy of the application of the differentiated instruction strategy to enhance academic achievement. For example, Pozas et al (2020) established that the application of differentiated teaching strategies enhances the academic performance of learners. From this perspective, it is evident that the application of the differentiated instruction strategy is not only beneficial to low-performing learners but also to high-performing learners.

However, despite its theoretical advantages, differentiated instruction is also open to considerable criticism. One of the main criticisms is its practicality and applicability, especially in large classes. In a systematic review by Smale Jacobse et al. (2019), they note that differentiation is only possible if the teacher is sufficiently skilled and possesses considerable time and resource allocation to provide the different needs. The requirements may be overwhelming for the teacher in an EFL university classroom.

Another crucial concern centers on the absence of consistent empirical support for the long-term results of differentiated instruction. Some studies have shown positive results, but other studies have shown that the results of differentiation in terms of academic achievement were only

moderate. This implies that differentiation alone may not guarantee improved learning outcomes unless it is supported by effective teaching practices and institutional conditions.

Furthermore, some experts have also argued that differentiation may actually reinforce inequalities among students. For instance, if students are grouped according to their ability levels, those who are less able may be labeled or may not reach their full potential. In EFL settings, less able students may be provided with less challenging work that does not allow them access to complex language forms and may actually hinder their progress. So, the following is a significant concern: does differentiation for equity actually work, or it risks maintaining existing gaps in achievement?

In addition, the application of differentiated instruction necessitates teachers to change their role from being mere transmitters of knowledge to being facilitators. Such change requires teachers to possess pedagogical competence, management expertise, and to be prepared to continually develop themselves. Without such preparation, teachers might find it hard to design differentiated activities effectively, or they might end up using it superficially.

In the Algerian university context, these challenges become more significant in a large class setting, as large class sizes and limited time can limit a teacher's flexibility in adapting their instruction to meet individual needs. As a result, differentiation may simply become a superficial level rather than a fully developed approach to instruction. This would indicate that while differentiated instruction is a worthwhile theory in practice, it must be adapted appropriately in given educational context.

Overall, differentiated instruction is a method of teaching that is structured and flexible and takes into account the diversity of learners and attempts to improve student achievement. However,

it is pivotal to note that its effectiveness is also dependent on a number of other factors. Therefore, instead of regarding differentiated instruction as a general solution, it is vital to regard it as context dependent solution that needs to be carefully implemented and critically evaluated.

2.4. Personalized instruction vs. Differentiated instruction

Understanding the relationship between personalized instruction and differentiated instruction is crucial to comprehend the role of both in EFL contexts. While both approaches have been developed to address issues of learner diversity and enhance academic achievement, they differ in terms of assumptions, approaches, and learners' autonomy. In this section, some of the similarities and differences between personalized instruction and differentiated instruction will be critically discussed in relation to EFL contexts in universities.

2.4.1. Points of Convergence

There are a number of underlying similarities that exist between personalized instruction and differentiated instruction. First, both approaches are based on a learner-centered approach to teaching, which highlights the need for teaching approaches to be designed to meet the different needs of learners. Both approaches are also against the traditional "one size fits all" approach to teaching and they are based on the need for flexibility in the teaching and learning process. According to Bray and McClaskey (2015), both approaches seek to develop environment for learning where all the students can achieve success based on differences in readiness, interests, and learning profile. In another study, Pane et al (2018), stated that "teaching to individual can be an effective approach to increase engagement and academic outcomes". These approaches show that differentiated and personalized instruction have a common goal of maximizing learning based on individual learners.

Another important similarity exists in the use of formative assessment. For instance, in both approaches, teachers seek information concerning the progress of students and use such information to make appropriate adjustments to teaching practices. This aids teachers to fill gaps in the learning process. For instance, in EFL classrooms, formative assessment may involve assessing students' speaking, writing, and reading abilities.

Furthermore, both approaches are influenced by the constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the active and individualized nature of the learning process. According to the theory, the learner constructs knowledge through interaction, reflection, and experience. As a result, the learning process must be flexible rather than standardized. Although these similarities indicate that differentiated and personalized instruction are related, it is vital not to make the two concepts synonymous. There are numerous studies that have adopted the two concepts interchangeably, and this has led to conceptual ambiguity. The ambiguity might lead to ineffective implementation, as the teacher might think they are implementing personalized instruction while, in essence, they are only using differentiated instruction.

2.4.2. Points of Divergence

Although both approaches are similar, there are significant differences between personalized and differentiated instruction, especially with regard to the scope and focus of these approaches.

One major difference is that, while differentiated instruction is teacher centered approach, even though it is meant to promote diversity among learners, the teacher determines how to adapt content, process, and product based on learners' needs (Tomlinson, 2017). Personalized instruction, on the other hand, is more focused on learners' autonomy, giving learners a chance to have a level

of control over the learning process (Walkington & Bernacki, 2020). This implies that, unlike differentiated instruction, personalized instruction transfers the burden of learners' responsibility from the teacher to the learners.

Another significant difference is the degree of individualization. In differentiated instruction, the students are usually grouped according to certain similarities, and the instruction is differentiated to the extent that the groups may receive different instructional materials. However, the instruction is still conducted within the classroom settings. Personalized instruction, on the other hand, focuses on the creation of individual learning paths, where each learner may have their own path based on their needs and progress.

In addition, the role of technology is emphasized, especially in the case of personalized instruction. The modern concept of personalized instruction is often associated with the use of technology. Pane et al. (2018) emphasize that technology is an important factor in the implementation of large-scale personalization. The main idea is the use of technology to automate the assessment and content delivery. However, differentiated instruction is not associated with the use of technology because it can be implemented through traditional classroom practices. While personalized instruction looks more innovative, it can be argued that it might be more difficult to apply it in practice. The assumption of learners' ability to manage their own learning might not always be justified, especially for EFL learners who might not have developed self-regulation strategies. There is a question of whether it is possible at all to personalize learning or whether it is more beneficial for highly motivated learners.

Moreover, the focus on the different paths that individuals may take to learn, as is the case with personalized instruction, may also minimize the potential for collaborative learning. As a matter of fact, language acquisition, especially for EFL learners, is highly dependent on interaction,

communication, and engagement with other people. As such, if learners are too focused on individualized learning, they may be denied the chance to practice speaking and improve their communicative skills. This is a limitation to the potential for personalization, and therefore, this form of learning is best used to supplement collaborative learning. Also, personalized instructions are sometimes based on the availability of technology and the internet. In developing educational settings and countries like Algeria, the availability of these facilities might be low in educational system and universities. This would make it difficult to implement personalized instruction on a large scale.

2.5 Theoretical Instruction of Personalized and Differentiated instruction

Personalized and differentiated instruction approaches are not isolated teaching methods but they have been developed on the basis of well-established theories of learning. These theories provide a clear understanding of the process by which individual learn and develop skills. These theories also provide a clear understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of the approaches in the context of EFL teaching. This section will explore three theories of learning: the constructive learning theory, the multiple intelligence theory and the zone of proximal development theory (ZPD). Each theory provides insights into learner diversity while also presenting certain limitations that must be critically considered.

2.5.1 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory is one of the most popular theories in the implementation of personalized and differentiated instruction. The theory is based on the work of Piaget and was advanced later by Bruner. It is based on the idea that the learner is not passive in the learning process,

instead, the learner is able to construct his own knowledge through interaction with the environment (Frosnot, 2013). The process of learning is thus dynamic and individualized.

In the terms of personalized and differentiated instruction, constructivism affirms the concept that all learners have distinct ways of understanding and interpreting information. This means that instruction can be adapted to for individual learning process. For instance, in EFL instruction, learners can have distinct ways of constructing meaning based on their past experience with the language, cultural background, and cognitive skills. Personalized instruction is consistent with this perspective as it allows learners to learn at their own pace, while differentiated instruction adapts tasks to suit different levels of understanding.

Recent studies also support the applicability of constructivism in contemporary educational system. As Schunk (2020) states, “constructivist views of learning can support deeper levels of learning by promoting active engagement with the material to be learned and reflection on one’s own experience with learning.” This supports the idea of personalized and differentiated contributing to more successful language acquisition through active engagement with linguistic input. However, constructivism has been criticized for underestimating the importance of explicit instruction, especially in language acquisition. Kirchner, et al (2006), argue that minimally guided instruction may be ineffective for beginners, as it can place excessive cognitive demands on them. In EFL classrooms, for instance, beginners need to be told about grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structures. Therefore, relying only on constructivist principles may not be sufficient. But a balanced approach that combines guided instruction with learner-centered practices might be more effective.

2.5.2. Multiple Intelligences Theory

Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) asserts that there are different types of intelligence in human beings, including linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and spatial intelligence, among others (Gardner, 1983). This theory has widely been used in the advocacy for differentiated instruction. In EFL classrooms, MI theory aids teachers design activities for learners. For instance, linguistic learners may be engaged in reading and writing activities. Interpersonal learners may be engaged in group discussion activities. Differentiated instruction involves the use of varied learning activities in accordance with the students' capabilities.

However, MI theory has come under serious criticism owing to the lack of sufficient empirical evidence to support it. According to Waterhouse (2006), who has presented one of the most influential critiques of Gardner's theory, which has greatly impacted contemporary studies, there is limited scientific evidence to support the theory's claim to existence of separated intelligence. Recent studies show that, although the theory is highly attractive from an educational point of view, it is unlikely to be an effective tool for teaching. In addition, the over reliance on MI theory might also lead to the tendency to label students, which contradicts the dynamic nature of learning process. EFL teaching might be affected in negative manner because the process of language learning involves the integration of more than a single skill and a single dominant cognitive ability. While the idea presented by the MI theory might be inspiring in the development of diverse teaching methods, it is necessary to avoid considering it a scientifically proven theory.

2.5.3. Zone of Proximal Development

Zone of Proximal development (ZPD) is another important theory that forms the basis for differentiated and personalized learning. ZPD is defined by Vygotsky as the difference between what learners can do independently and what learners can do with assistance (Poehner, 2014).

The theory emphasizes the value of scaffolding, where the teacher offers support to the students to enable them to move to higher cognitive level. Scaffolding in differentiated instruction involves using the concept to adapt the tasks to the readiness level of the students. For instance, in EFL teaching, the teacher might offer vocabulary and sentence structure to the less proficient students while allowing the more proficient ones to work on independent tasks.

Personalized instruction is also in line with ZPD, as it helps learners to progress at their own pace, based on what they are currently able to do. Adaptive technologies can be helpful in this regard, as they can identify what learners need and provide appropriate challenges.

Current studies focus on the importance of ZPD in language acquisition. Sociocultural theory, according to Lantolf & Thorne (2019), also focuses on the importance of interaction and collaboration in language acquisition. This implies that language acquisition is not only a cognitive process but also a social one in which learners benefit from interacting with teachers and peers. Although the ZPD is a powerful theoretical for both personalized and differentiated instruction, it can be difficult to implement in large classrooms. The time and effort required to offer individualized scaffolding can be discouraging in overcrowded EFL classrooms. Moreover, the effectiveness of scaffolding is heavily dependent upon teachers' capacity to assess learners' levels, which requires professional expertise. Another limitation is that ZPD focuses on guided learning. This may clash with the high degree of learner autonomy that is promoted in a personalized instruction approach. If learners are expected to take responsibility for their own learning independently, then there may be less scope for teacher guidance.

2.5.4. Synthesis and Critical Evaluation

The above three theoretical are crucial in providing insights into the principles of differentiated instruction. Constructivism focuses on learning as an active and individual process, while multiple intelligence theory highlights learner diversity. On the other hand, ZPD highlights the importance of support in learning.

However, it is vital to note that none of these theories is adequate on its own to explain and justify the implementation of personalized and differentiated instruction, each theory has its own limitation, which must be acknowledged. For instance, constructivism theory might not recognize the importance of explicit instruction, MI theory lacks empirical evidence, and ZPD might not be easy to apply in large classroom. In terms of EFL learning and teaching, especially in Algerian universities, a combined theoretical approach seems to be the most effective. This means incorporating aspects of constructivist theory, scaffolding theory, and learner diversity theory while still providing structure and guidance for teaching and learning objectives.

At last, the success of personalized learning and differentiated instruction is based not only on theory but on how these theories are adapted to learning and teaching. Thus, learning and understanding these theories is important for designing practical and context-appropriate effective learning and teaching strategies.

2.6 Principles and Characteristics of Personalized Instruction

Personalized instruction is not just a collection of teaching strategies but a pedagogical approach with its own principle and characteristics. Being familiar with these principles is important if one is to distinguish personalized instruction from other learner-centered approach of instruction and measure its efficacy in an EFL context.

2.6.1. Learner- centered approach

One of the most important features of personalized instruction is its learner-centered nature. In this approach, the learner is placed at the center of the educational process, and instruction is designed according to the learner's needs, preferences, and goals. Unlike the traditional teacher-centered approach, personalized instruction emphasizes the active role of learners in shaping their own learning experiences. According to Walkington et al. (2020), personalized learning environments promote learner autonomy and engagement. Learners are encouraged to make decisions about what, how, and when they learn, which enhances motivation and academic development. This could involve making a choice on the learning resources, the task, or the learner's own goals. In EFL contexts, for example, learners could make a choice on the topics for the writing task or the reading resource. Although, learner centered can lead to motivation and engagement, it relies on the assumption that students have an adequate level of self-regulation. Use of engagement as a principle would work better with the learners who are used to take responsibility for own learning, which can limit the effectiveness of this principle. Therefore, learner autonomy must be gradually developed rather than assumed.

2.6.2 Flexible Learning Pathways

A major aspect of personalized instruction is the presentation of flexible learning pathways. In personalization learning, students work through content based on their pacing and level of understanding rather than a prescribed order of instruction. Pane & al. (2018) stress that in personalized learning, the students advance after they master each concept instead of by set amount of time. This method facilitates domain mastery since students must comprehend concepts before moving to more complex material. In EFL classrooms, this can mean giving the students the opportunity to reach a specific stage of proficiency in one language skill before moving to the next activity. However, flexible pacing may be challenging to implement in formal education system

that depends on set schedules and standardized curricula, even though it can support individual leaning needs. The possibility of fully customized pacing is limited in university settings, including Algerian institution, where courses are frequently organized around semesters.

2.6.3. Continuous Formative Assessment

In order to track student progress and guide instructional decisions, personalized instruction mainly depends on ongoing formative assessment. Teachers gather performance data from their students and use it to modify lessons and give specific feedback. According to Panadero (2017), assisting students in recognizing their strengths and shortcomings, formative assessment is essential for encouraging self-regulated leaning. This could involve providing frequent feedback on speaking, writing, listening, and reading assignments in EFL settings. However, formative assessment can significantly add to the workload of the teachers. In crowded classrooms, it might not be possible to provide designed feedback to large number of students. This raises concerns about the sustainability of personalized instruction in real educational settings.

2.6.4. Data-Driven Instruction

The use of data to direct the teaching and learning process is a distinguishing characteristic of personalized instruction. Teachers can now gather and evaluate student performance data in real time thanks to developments in educational technology. According to Shemshack & Spector (2020), data-driven instruction enables teachers to identify learning gaps and offer focused assistance. Adaptive system in digital learning environments can create personalized learning experience by automatically modifying content based on student responses. Despite its advantages to adopting this approach, it has several disadvantages, including a high level of dependence on technology. Many EFL environments do not have sufficient technology that can be utilized in

teaching English. Besides, placing emphasis on data can undermine the significance of human interaction in the learning process.

2.6.5. Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulated

Personalized learning helps learners become responsible for their learning by fostering autonomy and self-regulatory skills. Learners are required to set goals for themselves, assess their progress, and engage in reflection about their learning. According to Zimmerman (2002), whose theoretical framework is still relevant in current studies, individuals who regulate themselves in learning tend to be more successful academically since they take charge of their own learning processes. Autonomous learners in EFL settings may practice their language skills further, ask for feedback, and employ various strategies. However, not all the learners can be cooperative with independent learning. Those students who have been brought up in an environment where learning process has been teacher-centered will face difficulties with adopting such an approach because, without proper help, independent might confuse them or lead to lack of direction rather than improved performance.

2.6.6. Adaptability and Responsiveness

Personalized teaching involves the flexibility required to accommodate shifting learner requirements. Teaching is frequently modified depending on the progress, challenges, and feedback provided by learners. According to Walkington & Bernacki (2020), the flexibility is necessary to ensure learners remain engaged and have successful leaning experience. In an EFL classroom setting, this could include adapting tasks or providing extra assistance when needed. While adaptability is one of the advantages of personalized learning, it requires very high proficiency and adaptability on the part of the teachers. The teachers should have the ability to make instant

decisions while conducting lessons. Such a practice might prove difficult particularly for inexperienced teachers or in resource-limited contexts.

2.6.7 Synthesis and Implications

These concepts highlight the fact that personalized instruction is a complex and multifaceted process that needs to be implemented carefully. Learner-centered, flexibility, continuous assessment, and autonomy, all of which aim to improve learning outcomes. However, there are also several obstacles involved in applying these principles. Personalized instruction is rather time consuming, demanding resources, technological support, and intensive teacher training. In EFL university contexts, particularly in Algeria, these requirements may limit the extent to which personalization can be fully achieved. Instead of fully introducing the method of personalized instruction, it could be more reasonable to adopt its major principle. A balanced approach that combines personalization with structured instruction and collaborative learning may provide a more realistic and effective solution for addressing learner diversity.

2.7 Models of Personalized Learning in EFL Context

Personalized instruction is not a unified system of teaching but a wide educational concept that can be realized using different models. Models help to put theory into practice in personalized learning. Personalized instruction requires the choice of models that will make the process more efficient and achievable for learners. This section analyzes three popular models: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Competency-based learning, and Individual learning plans (ILPs), and evaluates their use in higher education settings.

2.7.1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is educational model that seeks to create learning opportunities for all the students by considering the diversity among learners from the very beginning. This framework was conceptualized by CAST (2018), UDL is based on three main principles:

- Multiple means of representation (how information is presented).
- Multiple means of engagement (how learners are motivated).
- Multiple means of expression (how learners demonstrate learning).

The use of UDL in the context of English as a Foreign Language EFL classes involves the presentation of information in various ways (texts, audio, videos), engaging the learner in a variety of activities (discussions, role plays, writing tasks), and allowing them to express their acquired knowledge in multiple forms. The approach is similar to the principle of personalized learning since it allows one to take into account individual preferences. Current research findings highlight the positive effects of UDL in higher education. According to Rao et al. (2021), the adoption of UDL-based practices helps to improve accessibility. These results indicate the potential of UDL as an instructional approach that can be used in personalized instruction in inclusive classrooms. Despite its strengths, UDL requires significant curriculum planning and teacher training. The creation of various forms of assessments could pose a burden to teachers. For instance, in countries like Algeria, where training is not always available, full implementation of UDL may not be realistic but a partial application of UDL would make sense.

2.7.2. Competency-Based Learning

Another form of instructional strategy that can be closely linked to personalized learning is competency-based learning (CBL). This type of learning enables learners to advance in their learning material based on their ability to develop certain competence rather than the amount of

time they have been attending classes. As mentioned by Sturgis and Casey (2018), the principles underlying competence-based learning include setting clear learning objectives, assessing students regularly, and pacing the learning process according to the needs of each student. As such, learners cannot advance until they have acquired a sufficiently good understanding of the material. In EFL contexts, competency-based learning aligns well with framework such as the common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which defines language proficiency levels. For example, students may progress from one level to another only after mastering specific language skills such as speaking fluently or writing coherent texts. However, competency-based learning may conflict with traditional university system where scheduling and standard exams are essential. In many cases, universities like those in Algeria force students are required to complete courses within a set timeframe, regardless of their level of mastery. This limitation reduces the flexibility that competency-based models require. Additionally, focusing heavily on measurable competencies may lead to a narrow view of learning. Language acquisition involves complex skills such as creativity, cultural understanding, and communication, which are not always easily measurable. Therefore, competency-based learning should be complemented with broader educational approaches.

2.7.3. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

The individual learning plan (ILP) is a very individualized approach that involves the formulation of individualized learning programs for each learner according to his objectives, capabilities, and requirements. The ILP is usually planned and formulated jointly by the teacher and the learner. (ILP) have proven to be especially useful in promoting learner autonomy and self-regulation. When the students set their own goals, they participate more actively in the learning process. For EFL learners, ILP might involve personalizing vocabulary acquisition, writing, or

speaking exercises. Studies show that ILP have the potential to increase motivation and engagement among learners, making the learning process more personally meaningful (Walkington & Bernacki, 2020). This implies that ILP could be used as an important instrument of personalized instruction. However, ILP is very challenging in respect of both time and effort. Teachers have to develop, supervise, and assess individualized learning programs for every learner, and doing so may be impossible within huge groups of students. In universities settings with high student-to-teacher ratios, implementing ILP for all learners may be unrealistic. Furthermore, an individualized learning program requires students' skills in managing their own education process. Lacking guidance from teachers, some students might find it difficult to set up realistic goals and work towards achieving them properly.

2.7.4. Synthesis and Contextual Implications

As seen from the above models, there are several approaches to conducting personalized teaching, each of which has certain advantages and disadvantages. For instance, while UDL seeks inclusively, CBL stresses mastery and progression, and ILP highlight personalized goal setting and independence. However, none of the models mentioned above is able to provide a complete solution to the problem of diverse learners in EFL classes. Each model requires specific conditions, such as teacher training, institutional support, and technological resource, which may not always be available. A balanced approach is likely to work best for university students in Algeria. Rather than choosing one particular approach, teachers can combine some aspects of various models. For instance, teachers could adopt UDL to plan their lessons and assess students based on competencies, among other elements of ILP approaches. The advantages of a blended approach are that teachers will be able to utilize personalized learning approaches but adapt them to their teaching

environment. It can be concluded that personalized learning models will be successful as long as they suit the conditions of the learning context.

2.8. Benefits of Personalized and Differentiated Instruction in EFL Contexts

Personalized and differentiated instruction in teaching have attracted much interest in EFL learning because of the opportunities they offer in dealing with learner differences to enhance performance. The university level is characterized by many learner differences such as differences in language ability, motivation, and learning strategies. In this case, there are some benefits associated with personalized and differentiated teaching. These should be critically analyzed.

2.8.1. Enhancement of Student Engagement and Motivation

One of the advantages that are commonly stated in relation to personalization and differentiation is the enhancement of student engagement and motivation. This occurs because the learning process is made meaningful for students by connecting with their interests, level of proficiency, and learning style. According to Walkington & Bernacki (2020), personalized learning promotes intrinsic motivation by making instructional materials relevant to the goals and interests of learners. For instance, in EFL classes, it could mean giving the learners the freedom to pick up topics for speaking and writing activities. This in turn, might motivate them to participate more actively. Differentiated learning also guarantees the activities that are not too hard or too simple. Although, increased participation is certainly an important benefit, however, it cannot be taken for granted that personalization will necessarily motivate people. Indeed, some learners might fail to develop the necessary self-discipline or enthusiasm to participate, despite having several options. Hence, it is also important to understand that motivation depends on both internal and external factors.

2.8.2. Improvement of Academic Achievement

Another significant advantage involves the expected improvement in academic performance of learners through the use of these instructional strategies. Personalized and differentiated learning can enable teachers to serve the needs of their learners, thus making it easier for learners to learn. Pozas et al. (2020), argue that differentiated instruction positively impacts the learning achievements of learners. When properly and effectively used, learners become competent in understanding complex ideas and even improving their language abilities. In terms of learning English as a second language, the strategy would enable students to perform better in such an area as comprehension, writing, and speaking. Pane et al. (2018) also confirm the positive influence that personalized instruction can have on academic achievement, especially when there are continuous assessment and feedback. This suggests that personalization can enhance learning outcomes by ensuring that instruction is aligned with individual progress. However, even after considering these studies, the effects may not be similar across the board, and other studies have shown that there are just some slight differences. This suggests that although personalization and differentiation are very important but they are not sufficient on their own. Their effectiveness depends on factors such as teaching quality, curriculum design, and institutional support.

2.8.3 Support for Learner Diversity

The first advantage of personalized instruction and differentiated instruction is their capacity to serve various kinds of learners in one class, in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. For instance, there could be a huge gap among learners based on their language skills, previous knowledge, and learning rate. According, to Tomlinson (2017), differentiated instruction gives teachers the chance to cope with such disparities through adjusting their teaching style, material, and evaluation processes. This means that low-level learners will receive more help and simpler learning resources compared to advanced learners who are challenged to do more difficult

tasks. Personalized instruction also serves the unique needs of each learner since their learning path depends on their level of understanding. However, differentiation and diversity alone will not necessarily guarantee equity. Unless carefully managed, such practices might result in setting different expectations and limited access to advanced language for underachieving students. Thus, teachers should ensure that all the students face proper challenges.

2.8.4 Development of Learner Autonomy

Individualized instruction specially, helps learners become autonomous learners and develop self-regulation. It encourages learners to be responsible for their learning by settings objectives evaluating their progress, and reviewing their performance. According to Panadero (2017), self-regulated learning is one of the predictors of learners' success at university. In language classes, an autonomous learner will be able to learn independently, obtain feedback, and use different approaches to improve his language skills. Learning a language involves consistent practicing of it even outside the class. Moreover, differentiated instruction may facilitate that process of developing autonomy by allowing students to make their own choice about how they acquire knowledge and show what they know. However, learner autonomy should not be overestimated. Not all the students are prepared to take control of their learning, particularly in educational systems where teacher-centered instruction is dominant. Without proper guidance, autonomy may lead to confusion or lack of direction.

2.8.5. Increased Inclusivity and Equity

The goal of personalized and differentiated instruction is to ensure that the educational process is more inclusive by taking into account the existence of individual differences between the learners. It becomes especially vital when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language

due to linguistic and cultural barriers that students have. As noted by Rao et al. (2021), an inclusive pedagogical practice based on UDL, can enhance the availability of education for students with special needs. These strategies help to ensure inclusivity; however, they also consume substantial time and resources. In an environment where such support is minimal, it might prove challenging to attain inclusivity. Thus, inclusivity should be considered more of a target than a natural result of personalization.

2.8.6. Enhancement of Language Skill Development

Personalized and differentiated learning strategies may help learners develop particular language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Teachers can create suitable reading assignments for learners based on their proficiency level, which would allow them to develop proper reading comprehension abilities. Likewise, personalized speaking assignments can be helpful in facilitating more substantial communication. The effectiveness of such a teaching approach is evident from the study conducted by Walkington and Bernacki (2020), who found that learners were able to enhance their language proficiency with differentiated instruction because they received instruction that matched their level and needs. This indicates that both approaches can support more effective language acquisition. However, language learning also depends on instruction and communication. If personalization leads to excessive individual work, students may have fewer opportunities to practice speaking and develop communication competence. Therefore, a balance between individualization and interaction is essential.

2.8.7. Synthesis

The advantages of personalized and differentiated instruction in EFL settings are numerous. They include increased motivation, improve academic achievement, support learner diversity,

promote autonomy, and foster inclusive learning environments. However, these benefits are not guaranteed. Their effectiveness depends on how they are implemented and the context in which they are applied. Personalized and differentiated instruction should not be viewed as universal solutions but as context dependent strategies. When applied thoughtfully and supported by appropriate resources and training, they can contribute to more effective and inclusive EFL education. But without such conditions, their impact may remain limited.

2.9. Challenges of Implementing Personalized Instruction in University Classrooms

While there are many theoretical benefits of personalization in education, there are many problems associated with the practical application of personalization in the university setting. Such difficulties are even more apparent when considering English as a foreign language teaching. This section critically examines the major barriers to implementing personalized instruction in higher education.

2.9.1. Large Class Sizes and Classroom Management

One of the greatest obstacles faced in the implementation of personalized teaching at the university level is the of large class sizes. Classes in university may be characterized by relatively large number of learners with varying degrees of competence. Large classes pose many challenges to teachers regarding the monitoring of progress and giving personalized feedback according to Pham and Nguyen (2021), personalized learning requires the interaction of the teacher and learners on an ongoing basis, which is made difficult by the growing number of the students in such classes. This is even more problematic when it comes to language learning classes. In EFL classrooms, where students require frequent practice and feedback in speaking and writing, this challenge is even more pronounced. Since personalized instruction assumes close teacher-student interaction,

however, the reality of overcrowded classrooms limits this possibility. As a result, personalization may be reduced to superficial adjustments rather than meaningful individualization.

2.9.2. Increased Teacher Workload

Personalized instructions demand substantial time and effort from the teacher in designing different learning materials and evaluating the progress of each learner. According to Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019), differentiated and personalized teaching require considerable planning and constant adjustments. The teachers have to develop different assignments for learners and evaluate their performance regularly. For instance, in higher education, the teacher has many lessons, which make personalized instructions challenging, this workload can become overwhelming. Thus, without institutional support, personalized instruction may lead to teacher burnout rather than improved teaching quality. Therefore, its implementation must consider teachers' capacity and working conditions.

2.9.3. Limited Teacher Training and Expertise

Another major challenge is the lack of adequate teacher training in personalized instructional strategies. Effective personalization requires specific pedagogical skills, including needs analysis, formative assessment, and flexible lesson design. According to Xie et al. (2024), many teachers lack the professional development necessary to implement personalized learning effectively. In EFL context, teachers may be familiar with traditional teaching methods but not with approaches that require continuous adaptation and learner-centered practices. The gap between theory and practice suggests that promoting personalized instruction without providing proper training may result in ineffective or inconsistent implementation. Teachers may apply personalization superficially, without fully understanding its principle.

2.9.4. Technological Limitation

Personalized usually goes hand-in-hand with the employment of technology like adaptive software and online system. These tools can facilitate data collection, feedback, and individualized learning pathways. Nonetheless, not all the institutions have equal access to the necessary technology. According to Pane et al. (2018) explain, the adoption of personalized learning implementation often depends on technological robust framework. Lack of digital devices, poor internet connection, and lack of technical expertise can be major hindrances to employing technology with such personalized education initiatives in most universities, especially those in developing nations. Thus, overreliance on technology may create inequalities between students who have access to digital resource and those who do not. Therefore, personalized instruction should not depend exclusively on technological solutions.

2.9.5. Curriculum Rigidity and Institutional Constraints

The curriculum at universities is often quite rigid, organized according to schedules, assessments, and desired outcomes. In a such setting, flexibility becomes difficult, which is essential for personalized learning. According to Casy et al. (2018), personalized learning requires flexible pacing and competence-based progression. However, within traditional university environments, learners must learn with a certain period, independent of their levels of competence. However, the implementation of personalized instruction may ne be compatible with existing educational structure. As result, personalization may need to be adapted rather than adopted.

2.6.6. Challenges Related to Learner Readiness

Personalized instruction assumes that the leaner has the capacity to tale personal accountability for his learning processes. This encompasses the ability to set learning objectives,

manage time, and measure one's progress. Nevertheless, there are some learners who lack such personal accountability skills. According to Panadero (2017), self-regulated learning takes time to develop. Learners in an EFL environment find it hard when transitioning from traditional to personalized learning. Without proper scaffolding, personalized instruction may lead to confusion, disengagement, or ineffective learning strategies. This highlights the importance of balancing autonomy with structured guidance.

2.9.7. Reduced Opportunities for Social Interaction

Acquiring a new language is inherently a social process that involves communication, collaboration, and interaction. Individualized instruction, especially where the attention is geared towards personal learning pathways, can limit the amount of interaction time with peers. According to Thorne et al. (2019), acquiring language depends on social interaction and collaboration. If students work primarily on individualized tasks, they may have fewer opportunities to practice speaking and develop communication competence. This limitation suggests that excessive personalization may negatively affect language development. Therefore, EFL instruction must maintain a balance between individualization and collaboration learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature suggests that personalized and differentiated instruction should not be viewed as universal or standalone solutions. Instead, they are best understood as complementary approaches that must be adapted to specific educational contexts. In university EFL classrooms, particularly in settings with limited resources, a hybrid model that combines structured differentiation with selective elements of personalization appears to be the most realistic and effective strategy.

Overall, this chapter has established a strong theoretical and conceptual foundation for understanding personalized and differentiated instruction in EFL education. It has highlighted both the potential and the limitations of these approaches, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive implementation. This critical review of the literature provides a basis for the present study, which seeks to investigate how personalized and differentiated instructional strategies can influence students' academic achievement in university EFL classrooms. By identifying gaps between theoretical frameworks and practical application, this chapter justifies the need for empirical research in this area. The following chapter will therefore present the research methodology adopted to examine the effectiveness of these instructional approaches in a specific educational context.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology: Data description, Analysis, and Findings

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3.1.1. Population and Sample.

3.1.2. Data Collection Instruments.

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Chapter Three:

Research Methodology: Data description, Analysis, and Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework adopted to investigate the effectiveness of personalized and differentiated instruction in improving students' academic achievement in university EFL classrooms. It outlines the research design, participants, data collection instruments, and procedure used in the study. In addition, it explains the methods of data analysis and addresses ethical consideration. Moreover, the chapter presents the analysis and the interpretation of the data collected to investigate the effectiveness of personalized and differentiated instruction on students' academic achievement in EFL classrooms. The analysis is based on a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from the quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test with qualitative data obtained through the observational checklist and teacher interview. The purpose of this chapter is to examine whether the instructional intervention led to measurable improvement in students' academic performance, and to provide deeper insights into classroom practices and challenges associated with the implementation of personalized and differentiated instruction. The current chapter ensures transparency by clearly describing how the research was conducted. A well-defined methodology is essential for validating the findings and ensuring that the study can be replicated in similar context.

3.1. Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component is based on a quasi-experimental design, while the qualitative component relies on teacher interviews and classroom observations.

The quasi-experimental design follows a pre-test/post-test structure, that was conducted under the teacher's supervision aiming to measure the effect of personalized instruction on students'

performance in the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Due to institutional constraints, classes were used instead of randomly assigning students. These classes were grouped into two conditions:

- An experimental group, which received personalized instruction
- A control group, which followed traditional teaching methods

This design allows for a comparison of students' performance before and after the intervention, as well as between the two groups

3.1.1. Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of EFL students and teachers at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela. The sample includes 107 second-year Bachelor's students majoring in EFL belonging to three classes at the same academic level, distributed as follows:

- Class 1: 41 students
- Class 2: 34 students
- Class 3: 32 students

For the purpose of the quasi-experimental design, these classes were assigned to two groups:

- The experimental group, which received personalized instruction
- The control group, which received traditional instruction

In addition, 10 EFL teachers from the same department participated in the semi-structured interviews, to accommodate participants' preferences and ensure convenience, interview data were collected both audio-recorded and written formats with recordings transcribed verbatim, leaving participants' free to select their preferred mode of response.

3.1.2. Data Collection Instruments

To ensure data triangulation and enhance the validity of the findings, three instruments were used:

3.1.2.1. Quasi-Experimental Design (Pre-test/Post-test)

A quasi-experimental design was implemented to assess the impact of personalized instruction on students' academic achievement in digital literacy course under the supervision of the course teacher.

- A pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to determine their initial level.
- The experimental group was exposed to personalized instruction, while the control group followed traditional teaching methods.
- A post-test was administered after the intervention to measure students' progress.

The comparison of pre-test and post-test results allows for evaluating the effectiveness of personalized instruction.

3.1.2.2. Teacher interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 EFL teachers to explore their:

- Instructional strategies
- Perceptions of personalized instruction
- Challenges in implementing personalized instruction

These interviews provide qualitative insights that complement the quantitative findings.

3.1.2.3. Observation Checklist

A structured observation checklist was used during 10 classroom observation sessions to document:

- The implementation of personalized and differentiated instruction

- Student engagement
- Teacher-student interaction

These observations help verify whether personalized instruction is effectively applied in the classroom.

3.2. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

➤ Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using:

- Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means)
- Comparative analysis to examine differences between the experimental and control groups through paired-sample t-test.

This analysis aims to determine whether personalized instruction leads to measurable improvement in students' academic achievement.

➤ Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from teacher interviews and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves:

- Coding the data
- Identifying recurring themes
- Interpreting patterns

This analysis provides deeper insights into the teaching practices and supports the interpretation of quantitative results.

3.2.1. Quasi-experimental Study description and Analysis

The purpose of this section is to describe, analyze, and interpret the data collected from both the experimental and control groups in order to determine the impact of personalized instruction on learners' academic performance in an EFL context. The analysis is based on the comparison between pre-test and post-test results, as well as a descriptive and inferential examination of learners' progress across the treatment period.

3.2.1.1. Pre-test

The pre-test took place on Tuesday, October 28th, 2025 and the students from both control and experimental group have been given one hour to complete it. The students were asked to work on the test individually. The pre-test was content-based with more focus on developing the language skills along with the students' critical thinking and deep analysis (Appendix A).

3.2.1.2. Treatment Phase

The treatment phase represents the central stage of the quasi-experimental design, during which the independent variable, personalized instruction, was systematically implemented in order to examine its effect on learners' academic performance in an EFL university context. This phase has been carefully structured to ensure that any observable differences between the experimental and control groups could be attributed to the instructional approach rather than external variables. While both groups were exposed to the same syllabus content, learning objectives, and instructional time, the nature of pedagogical delivery differed significantly.

The experimental group was taught through a personalized instructional framework grounded in learner-centered principles, whereas the control group received traditional teacher-centered instruction, which typically applies uniform teaching strategies to all learners regardless of their individual differences. This contrast reflects the critique presented in the literature that

“One-size-fits-all” approaches are insufficient in addressing learner diversity in modern EFL Classrooms.

The treatment administered to the experimental group was informed by the theoretical and conceptual foundations discussed previously, particularly the principles of learner-centeredness, flexible learning pathways, continuous formative assessment, and learner autonomy. At the initial stage of the treatment, a needs analysis was conducted to establish detailed learner profiles. This process involved identifying students’ proficiency levels, strengths and weaknesses in language skills, and, where possible, their learning preferences. Such diagnostic procedures are essential in personalized instruction, as they allow teaching strategies to be aligned with learners’ individual characteristics rather than applying generalized assumptions. As emphasized in the literature, personalization is not merely about providing different materials, but rather about systematically designing instruction based on continuous information about learners’ progress and needs. Consequently, the data collected at this stage served as the basis for adapting instructional content and activities throughout the treatment period.

Following the diagnostic phase, instructional practices in the experimental group were adapted through differentiated content and tasks. Students were provided with learning materials, such as simplified reading passages, and support activities that corresponded to their level of proficiency, thereby ensuring that tasks were neither too difficult nor too simplistic. For instance, lower-performing learners were supported through simplified texts, guided exercises, and structured scaffolding, whereas more advanced learners engaged in higher-order tasks such as analytical writing, extended reading, and critical discussion. This approach reflects the core principle of differentiated instruction, which involves modifying content and process in response to learners’ readiness levels. At the same time, personalization extended beyond grouping learners

by ability, as efforts were made to address individual learning trajectories whenever possible within the classroom constraints.

The teacher also implemented several personalized instructional strategies derived from the theoretical framework discussed in chapter two. First, differentiated questioning was used during classroom interaction, where students with higher proficiency levels were encouraged to provide extended explanations, opinions, and critical responses, while lower-proficiency learners received simpler and more guided questions. Second, scaffolding strategies based on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory were applied through vocabulary support, sentence starters, and guided practice activities to assist learners during speaking and writing tasks. In addition, the teacher incorporated learner-centered activities by allowing students to select topics related to their personal interests and experiences for oral presentations and classroom discussions, which aimed to increase motivation and engagement. Continuous formative assessment through quizzes, was also integrated through regular monitoring of students' classroom participation, quizzes, short written tasks, and oral performance. Feedback was individualized according to each learner's strengths and weaknesses in language use. Furthermore, flexible grouping strategies were employed during pair and group activities, allowing learners to collaborate according to their proficiency levels and learning needs. These strategies reflected the principles of differentiated and personalized instruction discussed in the theoretical chapter, particularly learner autonomy, adaptability, scaffolding, and responsiveness to learner diversity.

A key feature of the treatment phase was the implementation of flexible learning pathways, which allowed learners to progress at their own pace based on their level of understanding. Unlike traditional instruction, where all students are expected to move through the curriculum simultaneously, the personalized approach enabled learners to revisit challenging concepts or

advance more rapidly when mastery was achieved. This flexibility is consistent with the view that learning should be based on mastery rather than time constraints, thereby promoting deeper comprehension and reducing gaps in understanding. However, it is important to note that full flexibility was moderated by institutional constraints such as fixed schedules and course requirements, which necessitated a balanced approach between personalization and structured instruction.

Another fundamental component of the treatment involved continuous formative assessment and individualized feedback. Throughout the intervention, students' performance was regularly monitored through short tasks, classroom activities, and informal assessments focusing on key language skills such as writing, reading, and speaking. Feedback was provided in a timely and personalized manner, highlighting specific areas of improvement and offering guidance for further development. This process aligns with the principle that formative assessment plays a crucial role in personalized learning by enabling teachers to identify learning gaps and adjust instruction accordingly. Moreover, such continuous assessment contributes to the development of self-regulated learning, as students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to adaptive instruction and assessment, the treatment emphasized the development of learner autonomy. Students in the experimental group were encouraged to take a more active role in their learning process by setting personal goals, selecting topics for certain tasks, and reflecting on their progress. This approach is consistent with the view that personalized instruction fosters autonomy by shifting responsibility from the teacher to the learner. In the context of EFL learning, such autonomy is particularly valuable, as language acquisition requires sustained practice beyond the classroom. However, the implementation of this principle was gradual and guided, acknowledging that not all learners are immediately prepared to assume full responsibility

for their learning, especially in educational contexts traditionally characterized by teacher-centered practices.

The role of the teacher during the treatment phase also underwent a significant transformation. Rather than acting as the sole transmitter of knowledge, the teacher functioned as a facilitator, guide, and provider of scaffolding. Instructional decisions were continuously adapted based on learners' progress, and support was offered to help students operate within their zone of proximal development. This dynamic role required the teacher to manage multiple learning paths simultaneously, which reflects both the potential and the challenges of personalized instruction highlighted in the literature. It also underscores the importance of pedagogical expertise in successfully implementing such approaches.

In contrast, the control group was taught using conventional instructional methods that reflect traditional practices in many EFL university classrooms. Instruction in this group was characterized by uniformity in content delivery, fixed pacing, and limited responsiveness to individual learner differences. All students were required to complete the same tasks at the same time, regardless of their proficiency levels or learning needs. Feedback was generally provided at a collective level rather than being tailored to individual learners. While this approach ensures ease of classroom management and alignment with institutional structures, it does not adequately address the diversity of learners, which may lead to disparities in engagement and academic performance.

To ensure the internal validity of the study, several control measures were implemented throughout the treatment phase. Both groups were taught by the same instructor, followed the same curriculum, and were assessed using identical tools. The duration and instructional time were also kept constant. Therefore, the only variable that differed between the two groups was the

instructional approach; personalized versus traditional. This design strengthens the reliability of the findings by minimizing the influence of extraneous variables. It is also important to acknowledge the contextual constraints that influenced the implementation of the treatment. As highlighted in Chapter Two, factors such as large class sizes, limited time, and insufficient technological resources can restrict the extent to which personalized instruction can be fully applied.

In this study, personalization was implemented in a realistic and context-sensitive manner, combining elements of differentiation, formative assessment, and learner-centered practices rather than attempting full individualization. This approach reflects the argument that personalized instruction should be adapted to the specific conditions of the educational context rather than applied as an idealized model.

In summary, the treatment phase operationalized personalized instruction through a combination of adaptive teaching strategies, flexible pacing, continuous assessment, and the promotion of learner autonomy. By creating a learning environment that responds to individual differences, and encouraging students to reflect on their progress and identify personal learning goals, the experimental group experienced a more dynamic and engaging instructional process compared to the control group.

This systematic contrast provided a solid basis for evaluating the impact of personalized instruction on learners' academic performance in the subsequent phases of data analysis.

3.3 Quantitative Data Analysis (Pre-test and Post-test)

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the effect of personalized instruction on the academic achievement of students. The analysis followed a systematic procedure, beginning with data screening and cleaning to ensure the validity of the dataset, followed by the computation

of descriptive statistics to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of the scores. Subsequently, inferential statistics were employed to determine the significance of the differences observed between the pre-test and post-test conditions. The results are presented in the following sections, starting with the descriptive analysis and followed by the findings of the paired-samples t-test.

3.2.1.2. Post-test

The post-test was similar to the pre-test in terms of the structure and the nature of the tasks given. It was run after the intervention through applying personalized instruction strategies to explore its effectiveness on the experimental group academic achievement. The test was given to the group on April 28th, 2026 in the form of a written assignment.

3.2.2. Pre-test and Post-test Analysis

➤ Control group analysis

Preliminary data screening was performed to ensure the integrity of dataset. Of the 34 original participants, four cases were excluded due to missing value in either the pre-test or post-test phase, resulting in a final sample size of $N=30$. Descriptive statistics were computed

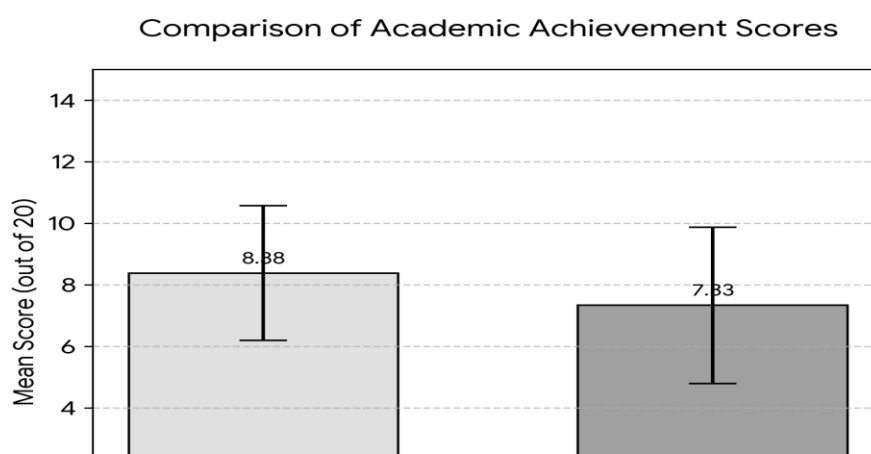


Figure 1: Mean scores for Pre-test and Post-test with Standard Deviation error bars ($N=30$).

to summarize academic achievement scores, as illustrated in figure 1. The mean score for the pre-test was $M = 8.38$ ($SD = 2.19$), while the mean score for the post-test decreased to $M = 7.33$ ($SD = 2.54$). A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of this difference between the two testing conditions, $t(29) = 2.432$, $p = .021$. the effect size, calculated

using Cohen's d , was 0.44, indicating a small to medium practical significance. Although the statistical difference was unexpected; the decline in mean scores from pre-test to post-test suggests that the instructional intervention was not effective in improving academic achievement for this cohort. Instead, the findings indicate a significant reduction in performance following.

➤ **Experimental Group Analysis**

Preliminary data screening was performed to ensure the integrity of the dataset. Of the 32 participants originally listed, four cases were excluded from the analysis due to missing values in either the pre-test or post-test phase, resulting in a final sample size of $N = 28$. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize academic achievement scores, as illustrated in Figure 2. The mean score for the pre-test was $M = 8.39$ ($SD = 2.14$), while the mean score for the post-test was $M = 17.04$ ($SD = 1.24$). A paired-sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of this difference. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the two testing conditions, $t(27) = -20.22$, $p < .001$. the effect size, calculated using Cohen's d , was 4.85, indicating a very large practical significance. The substantial increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test indicates that the personalized instruction intervention was highly effective in improving the academic achievement of students in the experimental group.

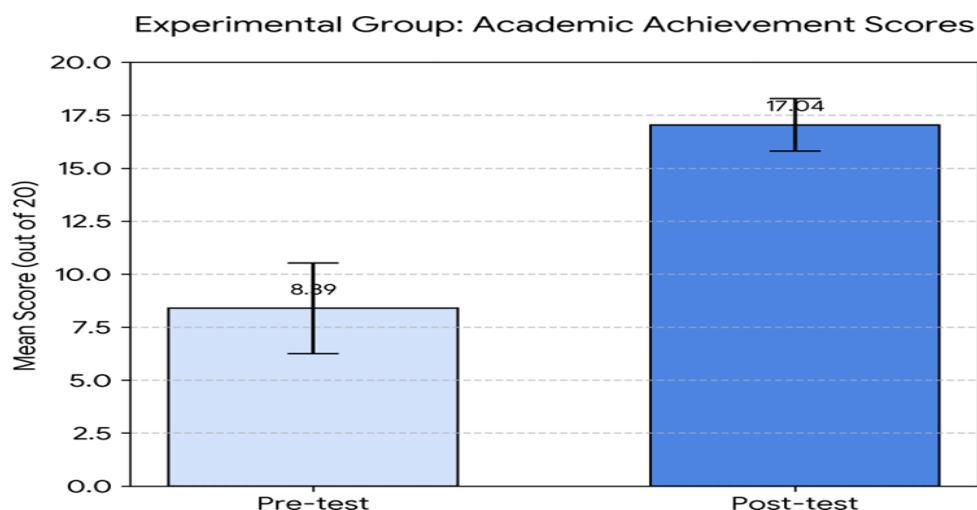


Figure 2 Pre-test and Post-test Mean Comparison for the Experimental Group (N=30). Error bars represent Standard Deviation (SD).

➤ **Comparative Analysis Between Groups**

A comparison between the post-test results of the experimental and control groups further highlights the effectiveness of the treatment. The experimental group outperformed the control group in overall scores, as well as in specific language skills. One of the most notable differences was observed in writing tasks, where students in the experimental group demonstrated greater coherence, improved vocabulary use, and more accurate grammatical structures. This can be explained by the individualized feedback and targeted practice they received during the treatment phase. Similarly, in reading comprehension, the experimental group showed better ability to interpret texts and answer analytical questions, likely due to the use of differentiated materials aligned with their proficiency levels. In contrast, the control group's performance remained relatively uniform, with limited variation among learners. This may indicate that traditional instruction did not sufficiently address individual learning needs, resulting in slower progress for some students, particularly those with lower proficiency levels.

3.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study suggest that personalized instruction plays a significant role in enhancing learners' academic performance in EFL settings. The improvement observed in the experimental group can be attributed to several key factors associated with personalized learning.

First, the adaptation of instructional content to learners' proficiency levels allowed students to engage with materials that were appropriate to their abilities. This prevented cognitive overload among lower-level learners while providing sufficient challenge for higher-level students. As discussed in Chapter Two, such alignment between instruction and learner readiness is essential for effective learning.

Second, the use of continuous formative assessment enabled the teacher to monitor progress and provide timely, individualized feedback. This helped students identify their weaknesses and work on them more effectively. The importance of formative assessment in supporting personalized learning has been widely emphasized in the literature, particularly in promoting self-regulated learning and academic improvement.

Third, the promotion of learner autonomy contributed to increased engagement and responsibility among students in the experimental group. By allowing learners to make choices and reflect on their learning, the treatment fostered a sense of ownership, which is known to positively influence motivation and performance.

However, it is important to note that the results, although positive, should be interpreted with caution. The effectiveness of personalized instruction may be influenced by contextual factors such as class size, time constraints, and teacher expertise. As highlighted in Chapter Two, the implementation of personalization in real classroom settings is often limited by practical

challenges. Therefore, the success observed in this study reflects not only the instructional approach itself but also the way it was adapted to the specific context.

3.4. Discussion in Relation to the Research Hypothesis

The findings of this study support the research hypothesis that personalized instruction has a positive impact on learners' academic performance. The experimental group's significant improvement compared to the control group confirms that adapting instruction to learners' needs, providing continuous feedback, and promoting autonomy can lead to better learning outcomes.

These results are consistent with theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter Two, particularly constructivist learning theory and the concept of learner-centered instruction. They also align with empirical studies that highlight the benefits of personalized and differentiated teaching in improving student achievement.

At the same time, the study also confirms that personalized instruction should not be viewed as a universal solution. Its effectiveness depends on careful implementation, teacher preparedness, and contextual adaptation. A balanced approach that combines personalization with structured teaching practices appears to be the most effective strategy in EFL university settings.

In conclusion, the data analysis demonstrates that while both groups improved over time, the experimental group showed significantly greater progress as a result of the personalized instructional treatment. The findings provide empirical support for the effectiveness of personalized instruction in enhancing academic performance, while also highlighting the importance of contextual factors in its implementation.

3.5. Teacher Interview description and Analysis

The aim of this interview questions was to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of personalized instruction, identifying the definition the attribute to it, the strategies they employ to implement it, the challenges they face in the classroom, and its perceived impact on students' academic achievement and engagement.

Section 1: Background Information

Table 1 demographic profiles of teacher participants

participants	Years of teaching experience	Years of teaching at university	Modules/courses currently taught
Participant 1	8 years (counting this years) or 12 years including temporary work	8 years	discourse analysis, grammar, oral expression, written expression.
Participant 2	9 years	Started during 1 st year of Master (part-time) then worked at the department of English since 2018	Digital literacy, grammar
Participant 3	12 years (total) 8 years as a permanent teacher	12 years total (8 years as a permanent)	ICTs information Managing across cultures.
Participant 4	Approximately 14 years	About 10 years	Oral expression, ESP course design, assessment methods, classroom management.
Participant 5	8 years	8 years (first experience was at university)	Written expression, academic writing
Participant 6	14 years	8 years	Civilization, grammar
Participant 7	11 years	About 6 years	TTU, teaching reading, writing skills
Participant 8	15 years	10 years	Literary text
Participant 9	16 years	7 years	TFEL, reading and Text analysis
Participant 10	12 years	12years	M R U

Section 2: students' Academic Performance and Classroom Challenges

Question 4: Challenges Faced when Teaching English

The analysis of the teachers' responses reveals that the primary challenges in the EFL classroom are related to student heterogeneity and motivation. Teachers highlighted that dealing with mixed-ability classes is a significant hurdle, as students possess varying levels of proficiency. Additionally, a lack of active participation and motivation was frequently cited as a major obstacle to effective teaching. For instance, Participant 2 pointed out, *"the most issue that I hate and I face and I always try to tackle is the lack of participation."* Similarly, participant 4 noted the difficulty of mixed levels, stating, *"the biggest problem, I have faced while teaching English, is often being in one class with students, who have different levels of proficiency"*. Participant 1 also added a modern challenge, observing that *"issues linked to motivation because learners are no longer motivated because they think that they can do it all at home using some artificial intelligence related platforms"*.

Question 5: Difficulties Students Usually Have During Lessons

Regarding the specific difficulties students encounter, the themes that emerged are language barriers and psychological factors such as anxiety and lack of confidence. Teachers explained that students often struggle with the basics of the language and are afraid to make mistakes in front of their peers. Participant 2 emphasized this psychological aspect, saying, *"the problem according to me is the lack of confidence, the fear of making grammatical mistakes, spelling mistakes and they are afraid that their friends are going to judge them"*. Participant 5 supported this, adding *"most of them have some kind of anxiety about the usage of English especially in front of their peers."*

Furthermore, participant 3 noted issues with focus, stating, *“at more advanced level students have some sort of like lack of concentration”*.

Question 6: How These Challenges Affect Students Learning

The teachers agreed that these challenges have a detrimental effect on the learning process, primarily leading to demotivation and knowledge gaps. When students face difficulties understanding or participating, their progress is hindered, and they may disengage entirely. Participant 1 described this effect, noting that challenges act as a *“demotivator for learners especially, let me say, 1st year, and 2nd year of Master students because they are exhausted enough”*. Participant 6 elaborated on the academic consequences, stating, *“if they do not clearly understand the main ideas, they may miss important information, which creates gaps in their knowledge”*. Participant 4 also observed that these issues *“deter students from participating in an activity or discussion altogether”*.

Question 7: Perception of Students' Academic Performance

Teachers perceive academic performance as variable and often link it directly to the level of students' participation and specific linguistic skills. They noted that while some students perform well, particularly in oral expression, many struggle with writing and academic conventions. Participant 2 observed a clear correlation, stating, *“I can tell you, I noticed that students who usually participate in the classroom, they have more or better academic performance than the other students”*. Participant 1 provided a specific critique of writing skills, giving 2nd year Master students *“6 out of 10 because they have problem with academic writing, they write the way the speak”*. Similarly participant 4 described the performance as a *“blend where a handful of poles perform extremely effectively.... However, many others grapple with gaps in the earlier understanding”*.

Section 3: Personalized Instruction

Question 8: Meaning of Personalized Instruction

When defining personalized instruction, the recurring theme is the adaptation of teaching methods to individual learner needs and characteristics. Teachers view it as a student-centered approach that requires adjusting content to fit different profiles. Participant 4 defined it clearly as *“adjusting the methods, materials and activities of teaching to address and meet the diverse needs, interests and learning styles of the students”*. Participant 8 echoed this sentiment, describing it as *“adapting teaching methods and materials to meet students’ different needs and abilities”*. Participant 5 added that it means *“customizing and adapting my teaching methods and courses according to each learner’s needs”*, while participant 1 described it as *“designing instruction or adjusting instruction... to the different qualities of the students”*.

Question 9: Importance of Adapting Lessons to Students’ Needs

All teachers affirmed that adapting lessons is crucial for enhancing learning effectiveness and student engagement. The thematic analysis suggests that personalization is seen as a tool to ensure no student is left behind and to make teaching more relevant. Participant 2 argued strongly for this, stating, *“teaching useless if you cannot cover the needs of the students”*. Participant 6 emphasized the outcome, noting that adapting lessons is important *“so that every learner can progress effectively”*. Participant 5 also linked it to enhance their skills, stimulate their motivation, and provide support for an effective learning outcome.

Question 10: Strategies to Personalize Teaching

To implement personalization, teachers reported using strategies such as conducting needs analysis, varying tasks, and building personal relationships with students. A key strategy mentioned

was making students feel valued as individuals. Participant 1 suggested technical approaches like conducting a *“needs analysis” at the beginning of the course or using “diagnostic test”*. Participant 2 focused on the human element, stating, *“calling the students by their names, is very important to the student... you are valuing him”*. Participant 4 described instructional strategies, saying *“I can also differentiate my teaching through a variety of tasks, I always try to give different task levels where needed”*.

Question 11: Limits and Difficulties in Personalizing Learning

Despite the perceived benefits, teachers identified significant logistical and institutional barriers, with large class sizes being the most prominent theme. Time constraints and curriculum demands were also frequently mentioned as limiting factors. Participant 3 highlighted the difficulty of number, stating, *“we have about forty students per class. It can be done with that magnitude is not really manageable”*. Participant 2 pointed out the pressure of the curriculum saying, *“sometimes maybe the syllabus which is somehow long...it is time intensive”*. Participant 5 summarized these constraints, listing *“Diverse students’ needs, limited time, large number of students” as the main limits*.

Section 4: Reflection

Question 12: Effect of Personalization on Engagement and Achievement

The teachers unanimously agreed that personalization has a positive effect on students. The themes indicate that it boosts self-confidence, increases motivation, and leads to better academic results by making students feel cared for and involved. Participant 2 stated, *“this will automatically improve their self-confidence and they get motivated”*. Participant 5 listed the benefits clearly, *“increase their motivation, better understanding, better results, encourage their confidence*.

Participant 8 concluded that it is *“so fruitful when applied it because it increases students’ motivation, participation, and helps them achieve better academic results”*.

Question 13: Additional Comments on Teaching Experience

In their final reflection, teachers emphasized the need for continuous adaptation and collaboration among educators. They suggested that improving the learning environment requires systematic changes and flexibility from the teacher. Participant 1 advocated for collaboration, stating *“teachers, all teachers should collaborate...to discuss learner’s needs”*. Participant 6 highlighted the dynamic nature of the teaching saying, *“teaching is continuous learning process...teaching strategies must be flexible”*. Finally, participant 3 suggested structural improvements, recommending *“recruiting more teachers and expanding and having more classrooms so that the members that is per class would be lower”*.

3.6. Observational Checklists Analysis

the following section presents the findings gathered through the structural classroom observation conducted over 10 sessions. As outlined in the research methodology, the primary objective of these observations was to address research question one: “to what extent do EFL teachers implement personalized and differentiated instructional practices in the classroom?” by utilizing a standardized and operationalized observation checklist, this stage of the study aimed to capture naturally occurring academic behaviors and instructional strategies in their authentic environment. Data serves as a vital component of the study’s methodological triangulation, providing an objective counterpoint to the subjective data gathered via teacher interviews and quasi-experimental pre/post-test.

The analysis is divided into two primary dimensions:

- 1. Quantitative Analysis:** this involves the use of descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts and mean scores (\bar{x}), to determine the regularity and intensity of differentiated practices across the four core categories of the observation grid (student engagement, clarity of the objectives, social interaction, and academic responsibility).
- 2. Qualitative Interpretation:** this provides a descriptive discussion of the nuance observed during the sessions, supported by field notes and specific examples of classroom interaction.

To ensure a systematic analysis, the 5-point Likert scale (ranging from Not Observed to Consistently Observed) has been converted into numerical values to allow for the calculation of implementation averages. The following tables and discussions summarize the extent to which personalized and differentiated instruction is currently integrated into the sampled EFL modules.

3.6.1 The Data Sheet

Based on observation grid's 5-point scale (1= not observed, 5=consistently observed). This is the aggregated data for 10 sessions:

Table 2: observation grid's data

Observation criteria	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	Mean (\bar{x})
Section A: Student Engagement											
A1. On task behavior	4	3	4	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	4.0
A2. Active participation	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.2
Section B: Clarity & Objective											
B1. Objectives clearly stated	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.8
B2. Explicit instruction	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4.4
Section C: Social Interaction											
C1. Constructive Peer Feedback	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	2.8
C2. Effective Collaboration	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4.5
Section D: Responsibility											
D1. Self-monitoring progress	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2.1
D2. Seeking clarification	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4.3

The data allows to categorize the extent of implementation as mentioned in the proposal.

- **High implementation ($\bar{x} \geq 4.0$):**

Teachers consistently excel at clarity of objectives (4.8) and providing explicit instruction (4.4).

this suggests a strong foundation in traditional instructional clarity.

- **Moderate implementation ($3.0 \leq \bar{x} < 4.0$):**

students on-task behavior and active participation fluctuate, indicating that while engagement is high, it may not be uniformly sustained across all session types.

- **Low implementation** ($\bar{x} < 3.0$): there is a significant gap in self-monitoring (2.1) and constructive peer feedback (2.8). This indicates a challenge in enhancing student autonomy, which is a core component of personalized instruction.

3.6.2. Qualitative interpretation

The quantitative analysis reveals that while teachers are highly effective at setting clear academic goals (Mean = 4.8), there is a noticeable deficiency in promoting learner autonomy. For example, session 08 showed the lowest levels of student self-monitoring (Rating: 1), whereas session 01 and session 09 demonstrated peak levels of collaborative engagement (Rating: 5). This suggests that personalized instruction in this context is currently teacher-led rather than student-driven.

Conclusion

The chapter was dedicated to the presentation and analysis of the data collected through classroom observation, academic achievement tests, and teacher interviews, aiming to address the study's research questions regarding the role of personalized and differentiated instruction in EFL university settings.

The analysis of the observation data provided critical insights into the extent of instructional implementation (Research Question 1). The descriptive statistics revealed a distinct pattern: while teachers demonstrated high proficiency in instructional clarity and goal-settings, there was a noticeable deficiency in fostering learner autonomy and self-monitoring skills. This suggests that

current instructional practices are largely teacher-centered, potentially limiting the full potential of personalized learning.

Regarding academic achievement (Research Question 3), the quantitative results from the pre-test/post-test design indicated varying degree of improvement across language skills.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of the teacher interviews (Research Question 4) contextualized these findings by highlighting systemic challenges, including large class sizes and time constraints, which instructors cited as barriers to effective personalization.

Collectively, these findings paint a picture of an EFL instructional environment that is transitioning towards learner-centeredness but remains constrained by structural challenges. The discrepancy between high instructional clarity and low student autonomy underscores a gap between the theoretical principles of personalized instruction and its practical application in the Algerian university context. These empirical findings serve as the foundation for the discussion, pedagogical implications, and recommendations that will be detailed in the final chapter.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Discussion of Findings.

4.2 Extent of Implementation of Personalized Instruction.

4.3 Impact on Academic Achievement.

4.4 Aspects of Achievement Most Influenced.

4.5 Challenge to Implementation.

4.6 Pedagogical Implications.

4.7 Limitation of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research.

Conclusion.

General Conclusion.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings detailed in chapter four. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the role of personalized and differentiated instruction in enhancing academic achievement among EFL university students at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela. By employing a mixed-methods design, the study captured both the statistical impact of an instructional intervention and the nuanced realities of classroom implementation.

The discussion that follows interprets the results of the quasi-experimental design, observational checklists, and teacher interviews in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework (Constructivism and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development).

The chapter concludes with pedagogical implications, and recommendations for future research.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings are discussed below in relation to the four research questions posed in the introduction.

4.2 Extent of Implementation of Personalized Instruction

The first research question sought to determine the extent to which EFL teachers implement personalized and differentiated instructional practices. Data from the observational checklists revealed a practice. While teachers demonstrated high proficiency in traditional instructional clarity evidenced by a high mean score (4.8) for stating clear objectives, they struggled to implement the core tenets of personalized instruction that foster learner autonomy.

Specially, the low implementation score for “self-monitoring progress” (Mean = 2.1) and “constructive peer feedback” (Mean = 2.8) suggest that current instruction remains largely teacher-

centered. This aligns with the interview findings where teachers defined personalized instruction conceptually as “adapting methods to needs” but noted practical barriers. As participant 3 noted, with “about forty students per class”, it is difficult to manage the individualized pathways that true personalization requires. Consequently, while the intent for personalization exists, the extent of implementation is currently moderate, often limited by structural constraints rather than a lack of pedagogical knowledge.

4.3 Impact on Academic Achievement

the second research question inquired about the impact of personalized instruction on academic achievement. The quantitative results provided compelling evidence of its effectiveness. The experimental group, which received the personalized intervention, showed a statistically significant improvement in post-test scores ($M=17.04$) compared to their pre-test scores ($M= 8.39$), with a very large effect size (Cohen’s $d= 4.85$).

In contrast, the control group, which received traditional “one-size-fits-all” instruction, experienced a statistically significant decline in performance (pre-test $M= 8.38$, post-test $M= 7.33$).

The divergence underscores a critical finding: traditional uniform instruction may not only fail to improve student outcomes but may actually contribute to a regression in performance, likely due to decreased motivation and unaddressed learning gaps.

These findings support the theoretical framework of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The success of the experimental group can be attributed to the “differentiated content and tasks” described in the treatment phase, where students received materials aligned with their proficiency levels. By keeping learners within their ZPD, the personalized approach prevented the cognitive overload seen in the control group, where lower-level learners struggled with uniform, unadopted materials.

4.4 Aspects of Achievement Most Influenced

The third research question focused on which language skills were most influenced by the intervention. The analysis of post-test results highlighted significant improvements in “writing” and “reading comprehension”.

The improvement in writing was particularly notable, characterized by greater coherence and improved grammatical structures. This success directly correlates with the treatment phase’s emphases on “continuous formative assessment and individualized feedback”. As noted in the findings, students in the experimental group received timely, specific feedback on their writing, whereas the control group received collective feedback. This supports the view that writing, as a productive skill, requires the individualized scaffolding that personalized instruction provides.

Furthermore, the improvement in reading comprehension confirms the effectiveness of the “differentiated materials” used in the treatment. By providing texts that matched students’ readiness levels, the intervention allowed lower-performing students to build confidence and advanced students to engage in critical analysis, thereby addressing the “mixed-ability” challenge identified by teachers in the interviews.

4.5 Challenge to Implementation

The fourth research question addressed the obstacles hindering personalized instruction. The qualitative data identified “large class sizes” and “time constraints” as the primary barriers.

Teachers unanimously agreed that the institutional context specially class sizes of up to 40 students makes it difficult to sustain personalized interactions. Participant 2 highlighted that the “*syllabus is somehow long*”, creating a tension between covering curriculum content and addressing individual needs. Additionally, the interview data revealed psychological barriers among students, such as a “lack of confidence” and “fear of making mistakes” (participant 2, participant 5). These

challenges necessitate a supportive environment that traditional instruction often fails to provide. The observational data corroborated this, showing that while collaboration was moderately successful (Mean= 4.5), students lacked the autonomy to self-monitor, indicating that the shift from teacher-dependency to learner-autonomy remains a significant hurdle in the Algerian EFL context

4.6 Pedagogical Implications

Based on these findings, several pedagogical implications emerge for EFL university instructors and curriculum designers:

1. **Shift from Uniformity to Flexibility:** the decline in the control group's performance serves as a warning against rigid, teacher-centered approaches. Teachers should adopt flexible pacing and tiered assignments to ensure that instruction remains within the student's ZPD
2. **Formative Assessment as a Tool for Personalized:** the study demonstrated that continuous feedback is a driver of academic success. Teachers training programs should emphasize formative assessment techniques that allow for timely intervention rather than relying solely on summative evaluation.
3. **Addressing Heterogeneity:** since large class sizes are an institutional reality, teachers can employ "low-prep" differentiation strategies, such as flexible grouping and varying the complexity of questions, rather than attempting to create individual plans for every student.

4.7 Limitation of the study: while the findings are significant, the study has limitation:

1. **Sample Size:** the study was limited to 58 participants (N=28 experimental, N=30 control) in one university department. Therefore, the generalizability of the results to other universities may be limited.
2. **Duration:** the treatment phase, while structured, was limited in duration. Long-term retention of the language skills improved by personalized instruction was not measured.

3. **Observation Effect:** the presence of an observer during classroom sessions may have influenced teacher and student behavior (the Hawthorne Effect), potentially inflating the “on-task behavior” scores observed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should:

1. **Conduct Longitudinal studies:** investigate whether the academic gains observed in the experimental group are sustained over subsequent semesters.
2. **Expand the Context:** Replicate the study across multiple Algerian university to determine if the challenges of large class size are systemic and to validate the generalizability of the findings.
3. **Focus on Technology:** explore how digital tools and AI-assisted learning platforms can help overcome the time constraints identified by teachers, potentially making personalized feedback more manageable in large classes.

Conclusion

The study set out to examine the effectiveness of personalized and differentiated instruction in an EFL university settings. The findings conclusively instruction, grounded in learner-centered principle, significantly enhances academic achievement, particularly in writing and reading. The statistical analysis revealed contrast between the substantial gains of the experimental group and the decline of the control group, validating the hypothesis that addressing individual learner needs leads to superior academic outcomes. However, the research also highlights a gap between theory and practice. While teachers recognize the value of personalization, they remain constrained by large classes and rigid curricula. Therefore, the successful implementation of personalized instruction requires not only pedagogical shifts but also structural support to reduce class sizes and

allow for the flexibility that diverse learners require. Ultimately, this study affirms that in heterogenous EFL classrooms, personalization is not merely a pedagogical preference, but a necessity for academic success.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this dissertation was to investigate the role of personalized and differentiated instruction in enhancing academic achievement among EFL university students. Motivated by the limitations of traditional “one-size-fits-all” pedagogies in Algerian higher education, the study sought to bridge the gap between theoretical recommendations and actual classroom practice. By adopting an observational mixed-methods design, the research provided a comprehensive analysis of instructional strategies, student perceptions, and the subsequent impact on language proficiency at Abbas Laghrour University of Kenchela.

The findings of this study addressed four primary research questions posed at the outset. Regarding the extent of implementation, the research revealed that (teachers demonstrate a theoretical awareness of differentiated instruction, actual implementation remains inconsistent due to systematic constraints). Furthermore, the analysis of academic achievement indicated a significant relationship between personalized instructional practices instructional practices and students’ proficiency in (speaking and writing), suggesting that learner-centered approaches foster greater engagement and autonomy compared to traditional methods. Consequently, the research hypothesis (H1) is confirmed, and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. However, the study also highlighted the practical challenges inherent in shifting pedagogical paradigms. Teachers interviewed in this this study identified (large classes size, time constraints, lack of motivation, low self-esteem and rigid curricula), as primary obstacles to effective implementation. Despite these barriers, the students’ positive perception of personalized instruction underscores its potential to transform the EFL learning experience into one that is more equitable and responsive to individual needs.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the body of knowledge regarding EFL pedagogy in Algeria. By utilizing a quasi-experimental design alongside classroom observations and interviews, the study moved beyond theoretical speculation to provide empirical evidence on the efficacy of differentiation. The findings suggest that for academic achievement to improve holistically, institutional support ranging from curriculum redesign to specialized teacher training is essential to equip educators with the tools necessary for personalization.

In conclusion, while personalized and differentiated instruction presents a viable pathway to enhancing academic achievement, its success is contingent upon a supportive educational ecosystem. Future research should expand on these findings by exploring longitudinal studies or examining specific training interventions that can help teachers overcome the identified challenges. Ultimately, this dissertation reaffirms the necessity of viewing the learner not as passive recipient of knowledge, but as an active participant whose diverse needs must be at the center of the educational process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-test

Task:

In paragraph form, answer the following questions:

Questions :

1. What is digital literacy, and why has it become essential in modern education?
2. How does digital literacy contribute to the development of critical thinking skills?
3. In what ways can social media negatively influence digitally literate individuals?
4. Should digital literacy be considered a fundamental life skill? Explain.

Appendix B: Post-test

Task:

Write an analytical essay discussing how digital literacy simultaneously empowers and threatens modern societies. In your response, You should :

- Examine the benefits of digital literacy in education, communication, and professional development.
- Analyze the risks associated with misinformation, digital dependency, and algorithmic influence.
- Evaluate whether digital literacy alone is sufficient to prepare individuals for the digital age.
- Present your own critical perspective supported by examples.

Appendix C. Teachers' interview (semi-structured)

Focus: instructional strategies, challenges, and beliefs about personalization

Introduction

This interview is part of my research. It aims at investigating The Role of Personalized and Differentiated Instruction in Enhancing Academic Achievement among EFL University Students
Your answers will be used only for academic purposes and will remain confidential

Section 1: General Information

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. How long have you been teaching at the university level?
3. What modules or courses do you currently teach?

Section 2: students' Academic performance and classroom challenges

4. What challenges do you face when teaching English?
5. What difficulties do students usually have during lessons?
6. How do these challenges affect students' learning?
7. How can you perceive your students' academic performance?

Section 3: Personalized instructions

8. What does personalized instructions mean to you as a teacher?
9. Do you think adapting lessons to students' needs is important? Why?
10. How do you try to personalize your teaching in class?
11. What limits or difficulties do you face when trying to personalize learning?

Section 4: Reflection

12. In your opinion, how does personalization affect students' engagement and achievement?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add about your teaching experience?

Appendix D. Observation Grid

Classroom Observation Checklist

Rating Scale (Standardized and Operationalized)

Scale	Descriptor	Operational definition
1	Not observed	The behavior did not occur during the lesson
2	Rarely observed	The behavior occurred once or twice.
3	Sometimes observed	The behavior occurred intermittently
4	Frequently observed	The behavior occurred regularly throughout the lesson.
5	Consistently observed	The behavior was evident during most of the lesson.

Section A: Student Engagement and Learning Behaviors

Observation item	Not observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Frequently observed	Consistently observed
Students pay attention to the teacher during instruction (e.g., eye contact, reduced off-task behavior).					
Students take notes or write responses during lesson activities.					
Students ask questions or seek clarification when tasks are unclear.					
Students attempt tasks independently before asking for help.					

Section B: Understanding of Lesson Objectives.

Observation item	Not observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Frequently observed	Consistently observed
Students accurately explain task requirements when prompted					
Students complete activities in line with stated lesson objectives.					
Students respond appropriately to comprehension-check questions.					

Section C: Classroom Participation.

Observation item	Not observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Frequently observed	Consistently observed
Students participate orally during whole-class activities.					
Students collaborate effectively during pair or group work (e.g., sharing ideas, staying on task)					
Students complete assigned activities within the given time.					

Section D: Academic Responsibility

Given the significant impact of instructional practices on learner achievement, this section examines the teacher's role in facilitating academic success through differentiation, feedback, and learner support.

Hattie (2009) and Tomlinson (2014) in the justification.

Observation item	Not observed	Rarely observed	Sometimes observed	Frequently observed	Consistently observed
Students bring required materials (e.g., textbook, notebook)					
Students follow classroom instructions without repeated prompting.					
Students remain engaged during transitions between activities					

Methodological Justification

The observation checklist was used to systematically record students' academic behaviors and instructional practices related to academic achievement. Structured classroom observation allows for the collection of objective data on learning engagement, interaction, and instructional differentiation, thereby strengthening the validity of findings through methodological triangulation. Classroom observation was selected to capture naturally occurring academic behaviors within the EFL classroom, thereby enhancing ecological validity. The observation checklist was designed using theory-based constructs related to student engagement and academic achievement. Abstract constructs were operationalized into observable indicators to reduce subjectivity. Furthermore, classroom observation complemented questionnaire and interviews data through methodological triangulation, strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings.

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الملخص

في سياق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، أصبح التحول من أساليب التدريس التقليدية الموحدة إلى المقاربات المتمحورة حول المتعلم أمراً بالغ الأهمية من أجل تلبية الاحتياجات المتنوعة لطلبة الجامعة. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء دور التعليم الشخصي والتعليم المتميز في تحسين التحصيل الأكاديمي داخل مؤسسات التعليم العالي الجزائرية، وتحديدًا في جامعة عباس لغرور خنشلة.

وعلى الرغم من الدعم النظري الذي تحظى به هذه المقاربات التعليمية، لا تزال هناك فجوة واضحة في الدراسات الميدانية التي تتناول تطبيقها الفعلي وتأثيرها على الكفاءة اللغوية للطلبة في هذا السياق تحديدًا.

تمثل الهدف الرئيسي للدراسة في فحص مدى استخدام استراتيجيات التعليم الشخصي والتعليم المتميز داخل أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، واستكشاف العلاقة بين هذه الممارسات والتحصيل الأكاديمي للطلبة. واعتمدت الدراسة على تصميم بحثي بالمناهج المختلطة قائم على الملاحظة، وشملت عينة من طلبة السنة الثانية تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وقد دمج جمع البيانات بين تصميم شبه تجريبي قائم على الاختبار القبلي والاختبار البعدي لقياس التحصيل الأكاديمي، ومقابلات شبه موجهة مع الأساتذة، بالإضافة إلى قائمة ملاحظة منظمة. وكشفت النتائج عن وجود تأثير ذي دلالة إحصائية للتدخل التعليمي. وأظهر التحليل الكمي أن المجموعة التجريبية، التي تلقت تعليمًا شخصيًا، حققت تحسنًا ملحوظًا مصحوبًا بحجم أثر كبير جدًا. في المقابل، شهدت المجموعة الضابطة، التي درّست باستخدام الطرق التقليدية، انخفاضًا في متوسط الدرجات وعلى وجه التحديد، تفوقت المجموعة التجريبية على المجموعة الضابطة في مهارتي الكتابة والقراءة، ويُعزى ذلك إلى استخدام مواد تعليمية متميزة وتقديم تغذية راجعة فردية. كما أشارت البيانات النوعية إلى أن تكييف المحتوى وفق مستويات كفاءة المتعلمين ساهم في منع العبء المعرفي المفرط وتعزيز استقلالية المتعلم، في حين أخفقت أساليب التدريس التقليدية في مراعاة الفروق الفردية بين الطلبة.

بالنسبة للبيانات الكمية، وعلى الترميز Microsoft Excel واعتمد تحليل البيانات على الإحصاءات الوصفية المؤددة بواسطة الموضوعات لتحليل المعطيات النوعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم الشخصي، التعليم المتميز، التحصيل الأكاديمي، طلبة الجامعة في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، البحث بالمناهج المختلطة، التعليم العالي الجزائري.

