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SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS IN THE NIGERIA ENGLISH CLASSROOM: UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING AND (UDL) AND DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION (DI)

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated Instruction (DI) in supporting diverse learners in English Language. The study explores the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students towards (UDL) and (DI) as well as the impact of these approaches on students learning outcomes. It also sets out to identify specific challenges teachers face while implementing UDL and DI. This study is anchored by Jean Piaget's Constructivist learning theory of (1896) which posits that learners construct knowledge through experience and interaction with the environment while socio-cultural theory by Lev Vygotsky (1978) stipulates the role of social interaction and learning context. These two theories become our working theories. To perform this task, qualitative research design was implored. Excisestion phonetics and results show that English pronouns were given. UDL and DI improve students engagement, motivation, ability to work both independently and in groups, language proficiency particularly for students with diverse learning needs. They study highlights the importance of teacher training, inclusive curriculum design and culturally responsive teaching practices in supporting diverse learners. The findings have good implications for English language teaching practices teacher education, and language education policy. Further research can be made in other LGAs in other aspects of language learning.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), Support, Diverse Learning Needs, English Language.

INTRODUCTION

English as the official language plays a crucial role in education. It serves as the channel of instruction from the early years of primary school down to higher education. The English language classroom is a dynamic and diverse learning environment.

However, the linguistic diversity presents unique challenge in the English language classroom as students come in with varying degrees of proficiency and exposure to English.

UDL and DI are complementary approaches that, when used together, can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. While UDL focuses on the overall learning environment, to be flexible and accessible to all students Di involves making specific adjustments to instruction based on individual students needs. In the Nigerian classroom factor integrating UDL and DI will help teacher's better support students from different backgrounds. The use of UDL in designing lessons that are accessible to all students and DI to bring learning instruction to individual needs will help teachers to invent a more inclusive classroom that upgrade equity and support the success of all students.

Nova (2022) provided an updated guide on applying UDL and Di principles in contemporary classrooms by emphasizing on how DI complements UDL. He averts that UDL and DI allows educator to tailor instructions to meet diverse students needs.

The system of education in Nigeria like other developing countries grapples with issues like overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and undertrained teachers. The above negates the ability of teachers to address effective the diverse learning needs of their students. Move offer than not approaches like one-size-fits-all classroom predominates which leads to students marginalization and struggle to keep up with their needs and more advanced materials to stay engaged.

To address this challenge, two approaches have gained prominence in recent years that is universal design for learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction (DI). UDL involves designing learning strategies that are accessible and engaging for all students regardless of their abilities and learning styles. While D involves tailoring instruction to meet the unique needs of individual students or some groups.

Statement of Problem

Despite the growing diversity of English language learners, many classrooms still struggle to provide adequate support for students with varying learning heeds, abilities and learning styles. Traditional teaching methods often fail to engage students who require additional support, resulting in.

- Limited access to language learning opportunities
- Increased frustration and disengagement
- Widering achievement gaps
- Inadequate preparation for academic and professional success.

Furthermore, teachers often lack the training resources and support to effectively implement inclusive practices such as universal design for learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction (DI) which can help address these challenges.

This problem necessitates an exploration of effective strategies and approaches to support diverse learning needs in the English language classroom, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed and reach their full potential.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to explore on how UDI and DI can be effectively implemented in Nigerian English language classroom in order to address the diverse learning needs of students. Hence the study seeks to:

1. To identify specific challenges teachers face when implementing UDL and DI in the Nigerian context.
2. To examine how UDL and DI can be used in promoting inclusive education.
3. Identify the benefits and challenges of implementing UDL and Di in English language teaching.

Literature Review

Willms, Friesen and Milton (2009) posit that the framework of UDL requires that educators design learning that is intentional and leads to a deep understanding of topic through genuine enquiries by students, in order to build an authentic understanding of the content covered and to reach academic goals. This is in line with the research notion of the UDL.

Dalton and Brand (2012) stipulate that by designing UDL educators creates true experiences of inclusion for children whereby they can showcase their knowledge in a way that is as unique as they are, and to celebrate their achievements with fellow classmates. This is because their learning is based on where they are developmentally regardless of age or grade level.

In his own rite Katz (2012) states that UDL provides flexibility in product, process, demonstration of learning and means by which students engage with content. the above stipulation is that if a student has strength in home economics and fine Arts leering for example, he/she will have the opportunity to use the skill set to showcase his/her learning. Through this process alone, the final products of students become diverse creating a variety of ways for such students to reach their learning goals.

Also, through this process and connection with others students are exposed to other ways in which study have demonstrated learning such leads them to possibilities in their own academic potentials.

In the views of Samuel (2007) a one-size-fit-all classroom does not favour students who have unique learning needs, including the students who are gifted learners and those who simply learn differently.

According to him tradition education has failed to engage them while UDL Offers the promise of an engaging learning experience/strategy. Gritful-Freixenel et al (2021) explore on the intersection of DUL and DI in education. This study focused on how this two frameworks influence teachers practices. their study highlighted the significance of UDL in promoting inclusive education by ensuring that teaching methods are accessible to all students regardless of their learning needs. their research emphasized the importance of teacher beliefs and practices in effectively implementing UDL strategies in classrooms.

Gbeyssens et al (2023) investigate on how UDL and DI frameworks are related and the role of teachers practices in facilitating inclusive education. Their study underscores the importance of combining UDL and DI to create flexible learning environment that cater for the diverse needs of students.

Theoretical Framework

To carry out this research, the researchers employed two theories: constructivist learning theory and sociocultural theory.

Constructivist Learning Theory: Was propounded by Jean Piaget in the year (1896). This theory posits that learners construct knowledge through experiences and interactions with their environment. In the context of the Nigerian English Language classroom, Constructivist Learning Theory supports both UDL and DI by emphasizing the importance of creating learning experiences that are adaptable to the diverse needs of students. UDL applies this by offering multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to accommodate various learning styles and abilities. Differentiated Instruction aligns with constructivism by allowing educators to tailor their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each student, ensuring that all learners can actively engage and construct understanding at their own pace and level.

Sociocultural Theory: This theory was propounded by the Lev Vygotsky's in the year (1978). This theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning. This theory is highly relevant to the Nigerian English Language classroom, where diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence how students learn. UDL and DI both draw on this theory by recognizing the importance of scaffolding learning experiences based on students' cultural and linguistic contexts. In practice, UDL encourages the incorporation of culturally relevant materials and multiple forms of communication to ensure inclusivity. DI further applies Vygotsky's ideas by providing varying levels of support and using peer collaboration to help students reach their potential within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

These theories stressed on the need to consider learning diversity and inclusive instructional approaches thereby supporting diverse learning needs in the Nigerian English language classroom.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research design where the researchers used Ikenegbu Girls secondary school in owerri (during this holidays lesson). Because the schools has a wild range of students to collect the required data JSS two students were used for this study. There were two class sessions.

(a) A one-set-size-fit-all classroom
(b) Students were divided into 4 strata/units where the two groups were through pronoun – definition, deification, types, and functions of pronouns.

It is an activity class whereby the teachers and students were involved. The first group is teacher centered class where the students were thought as a group and were evaluated.
The second class/group was student centered class whereby the students were divided into strata, thought and evaluated in their different strata. the following questions were given to the two groups.

1. What is a pronoun?
2. Name two types of pronouns
3. Identify the pronouns in the following sentences.

a. She went to her auntie's house
b. It was difficult for us to locate their area
c. I give him the book that he forget in his uncle's car.

In Akwakuma secondary school we taught JSS 2 students the English vowel sounds. We had two classes as we did in Ikenegbu Girl's secondary school. The two classes, one was grouped while the other one was a one-set-fit-all class. After the teaching, the following questions were administered:

1) What is a vowel sound?
2) name two types of vowel sounds
3) name the part of the tongue responsible for the realization of the following vowel sounds;

(a) /i:/, (b) /a:/, (c) /ɥ/, (d) /Ə/, (e) /Λ/

4) Draw and label the English vowel chart.
5) identify the vowels in the follw transcribed words

(a) /tɥ:tƏ/ (b) /ðƏ/ (c) /tʃʒ:tʃ/ (d) /kΛt// (e) /bɔtɻ/

Findings

The result showed that the students from A group a one – set – all – classroom) performed poorly whereas those from the B group that where divided into strata performed better and almost all of them were eager to give one example or the other unlike the A group where some of the students hide under some other students for their answers.

There were lack of space for actual learning to take place because of poor/inadequate classroom for learning.

The one-set-fit-all grouped classroom provided opportunity for the slow learners to take active participation in class because some of them were assigned group heads.

It was discovered that the one-set-fit-all consumed more time that the grouped class.

Summary

This study has looked into the introduction of the concepts (UDL & DI). The purpose of the study was stated some literature were reviewed the theories that anchored the study were explained, the methodology was given and findings stated. Finally suggestions for further studies were given.

Conclusion

The researchers explored into this study "Supporting diverse leaning needs in the Nigeria English language classroom. Employing various strategies in going about the topic.
Finding and suggestions were made regarding the study.

Recommendation

1. UDL & DI should be incorporated into the Nigerian classroom to enhance diverse learning.
2. UDL & DI should be implemented to take care of fast & slow learners and even students with learning disabilities.

The government should provide more space/classroom to accommodate the number of students per class or reduce the number per class by employing more teachers.
We recommend that teachers should group their class no matter what topic to be taught in order to foster active participation and effective learning.

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