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Differentiating The Integration Of The Four Skills In Multi-Level

Adult ESL Writing Classes

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Hamline University

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DEDICATION

To my parents and brother for your constant love and support. To my best friends Emna and Maryam for continuously being my cheerleaders through every step of this journey.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

As a new writing teacher, I remember walking into a large classroom where the students were speaking different native languages. To my surprise, I noticed that their needs involved improving their speaking, listening and reading skills as well. The National Council of State Directors of Adult Education (NCSDAE, 2017) further declared that 1,540,768 adult English students from different linguistic backgrounds have enrolled in ESL classes within the United States for different purposes in 2015-2016. The number of ESL writing classes are also increasing in the language institute where I taught. These adult students are frequently in multi-level classes with different learner profiles, interests and needs (Parrish, 2019). It is important to integrate the language skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing in ESL writing classes to meet the students' needs from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Hinkel, 2014). A variety of research studies were conducted on young ESL students. However, only some research has dealt with adult ESL students which is an increasing area of concern, nowadays.

In this introductory chapter, I will provide an overview of my personal journey in teaching that triggered my research question. Furthermore, I will identify the significance of my research question for teachers and students, the rationale for my research project and an overview of the project. The first chapter alongside the other chapters will address this question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills*

support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?

My Personal Journey with a Multi-Level Writing Class

As a new instructor teaching multi-level adult ESL students, I noticed several challenges that occurred in the process of adapting and modifying teaching techniques to accommodate the needs of different students in a general ESL writing class. I discovered this after I followed my dream to become an adult ESL teacher and applied for a teaching position last year. At a previous stage, the hiring manager asked me, in the interview process, a question about classroom management. I told her that I plan to use different techniques such as group work, pair work and whole group work while working on the diverse activities. She also asked about the different teaching methods or approaches that I will use. I responded by stating that I would mainly use the Communicative Approach in designing the tasks and I would employ various teaching modalities such as applying visuals, video clips, authentic texts and technological platforms as supports to my teaching practice based on the students' needs.

Little did I know that the implementation of successful differentiated instruction expands beyond these principles. I started with a large class from high beginners to advanced level adult ESL students. They all had different speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, and other differences which became apparent as I conducted a needs assessment with the multi-level students in February 2020. I also realized how teachers struggle with differentiation through conversations with my three colleague teachers.

My three co-workers were teaching students of the same level, unlike my situation with a wide range of learner levels. One of the teachers told me that I could use Read Theory to enable students to read at their own level. However, I wondered about the other three skills. The same teacher was not able to give me much advice on how to use different techniques to accommodate the needs of beginning to advanced-level adult ESL students in relation to the other skills of speaking, listening, and writing.

These instances correlate with research which shows that teachers are still struggling to differentiate instruction adequately according to the different needs of multi-level adult ESL students (Fernandez et al., 2017). In particular, the authors note that ESL teachers frequently have a reduced professional experience in teaching writing adequately to adult ESL students based on their different backgrounds and needs. For this reason, I took it as my mission to find different effective techniques and strategies to differentiate instruction properly through distinct activity forms that are adaptable to my students' different levels. When I began teaching, I thought that I would spend only three hours on lesson planning. However, I have found that I spend about 8-9 hours every day, searching the internet for creative activities that are suitable for the discrete levels of my students. This teaching experience ignited the burning question that I have had since late February 2020.

I have enthusiastically set out to find different strategies, adequate integrative techniques and innovative alternative assessment techniques that meet the different needs of low-intermediate to advanced level adult ESL students in a general ESL writing class. These beneficial teaching techniques, the integrative strategies to use according to the

students' needs and the different forms of open-ended activities are all scattered throughout the internet. However, the specific examples of how to integrate different skills and how to apply different open-ended activities according to the students' levels and needs are lacking. Accordingly, I will create an instructional guide that will gather the different integrative techniques of the four skills, open-ended activities, and the various forms of assessment. I will also develop different examples of each to align with the levels of low-intermediate to advanced-level students along with the different purposes for which adult ESL students learn English in general ESL writing classes. The development in my research interest in this topic started in late February 2020 and has continued to evolve ever since.

Significance of the Research Question

My research question is significant for both teachers and students as educators are concerned with the teaching practices and it is important to meet the different ESL students' needs.

Teachers

Based on my experience and my discussion with my classmate educators, investigating my research question will facilitate the task of adult ESL teachers in responding to the needs of multi-level adult ESL students. Adult ESL teachers need to acknowledge that every student brings distinctive language strengths across the four language domains which are highlighted mainly through interaction and self-choice of activities (Bell, 2004). Egan and Parrish (2019) further present an integrated approach of skills through how oral activities such as one question interviews and discussion activities

are used as scaffolds for writing activities such as categorizing-based activities, analyzing information, writing a report, developing a survey, writing a narrative, and writing an argumentative essay. Furthermore, adult ESL instructors need to vary their focus on content, process or product based on the students' different needs (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Understanding the different instructional techniques between skills applied with low-intermediate to advanced-level adult ESL students and other individual learner needs that I will include in my instructional guide will be helpful for adult ESL teachers as well. The different techniques of maximizing the integration between skills will also help adult ESL teachers differentiate instruction more adequately in multi-level adult ESL classes. In this respect, it is important for teachers to cognize the interconnectedness between the different skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. Atta Alla (2012) provides a few activity suggestions where different skills could be used in storytelling. However, ESL instructors need to integrate these skills wisely according to the various needs of students whom they teach.

Students

My research question, *how can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?*, is a major concern for students as well. This concern is explained by the notion that the students also aspire for an adequate differentiated instruction from their teachers to meet their different needs to help them perform better in their second language as one of my previous ESL students stated “we need to discuss real-life issues that are related to our jobs and daily lives.” Furthermore, Calvert and

Sheen (2015) advocated that the students presented a more favourable evaluation of the second task, which accommodates their different needs, than the first task. To meet these students' needs, the different authentic and collaborative tasks such as role-plays, jigsaw tasks, discussions, and summarizing tasks are open-ended activities that enhance the students' performances in the English language regardless of their learning levels (Calvert & Sheen, 2015). Furthermore, the students could practice the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in jigsaw activities (Abbasian & Chenabi, 2016; Esnawy, 2016), as an example. Project-based activities also promote collective work through a set of sub-activities (Beckett, 2002). The latter activities help ESL students to develop different skills through the creation of different artifacts and promote their learning of the target language through the effectiveness of project-based learning (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016). Therefore, Communicative tasks and project-based activities stimulate the students' higher order thinking abilities that different students of various levels would need with distinct degrees at a certain point in their life. Egan and Parrish (2019) present different writing activities such as categorizing information into graphs, analyzing data, writing a report and synthesizing information that promote critical thinking for adult ESL students. Accordingly, this ability to think critically is significantly needed in writing classes with different purposes in general ESL writing classes. These open-ended activities have several benefits. Nevertheless, the main issue for students is to use these open-ended activities adequately with different forms of scaffolding, complexity, and content based on the needs of different students which will be included in the instructional guide that I create.

The Rationale for my Project

After volunteering at a language institute in the Upper Midwest, I applied for a writing instructor position at the same organizational language institute. I believed that it was my chance to promote the different teaching principles that I learned through the Second Language Acquisition course at Hamline University. All the teachers demonstrated extreme effort in teaching adult ESL students of different levels regarding different skills. As a volunteer, I noticed that the teaching strategies that they applied could not meet the individual needs of their students because they mainly used the same instructions for different level students instead of providing them with instructions that allow for choice. The adult ESL teachers could have granted choice in terms of the modalities used, the topic of the activity or the final product to account for the students' different needs.

When I became a general ESL writing teacher, I also acknowledged that I needed to do more research on the different strategies, techniques and forms of different open-ended activities, applied in differentiated instruction, to accommodate the needs of multi-level adult ESL students. My research inquiry was sparked by the notion that every student is an intelligent individual. They just need the right form of instruction (Ritchhart et al., 2011). Since adult ESL teachers have mainly curricula as guides instead of adequate uses of different differentiation techniques (Fernandez et al., 2017), I will develop an instructional guide that the other educators could use in the future to ensure effective differentiated teaching practices in writing classes. Furthermore, adult ESL teachers and multi-level language instructors encounter difficulties in meeting their

different students' needs (Fernandez et al., 2017; Ashton, 2019). Therefore, I will design an instructional guide to include different open-ended activities and explain how they could meet multiple students' needs. In particular, my guide will present different effective integrative techniques between skills, formative and summative assessments and concrete examples of how to implement the different open-ended activities in a differentiated manner based on the needs of low-intermediate to advanced-level adult ESL students.

Overview of the Project

The aim of my research project consists in developing concrete activity examples that integrate the different language skills and align with differentiated instruction standards. I will create a user-friendly instructional guide that teachers can easily access in the future. This guide will contain recommendations for adult ESL teachers to collaborate with each other to negotiate ideas pertaining to implementing different activities (tasks and project-based activities) based on the students' various needs. Based on the theoretical foundations regarding the integration of the four skills (Corder, 1978; Calderón et al., 1998; Berninger, 2000), different types of assessment and various types of open-ended activities (Bell, 2004; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010), I will present different differentiation strategies, teaching modalities and example activity forms that teachers could develop for multi-level writing classes, particularly for low-intermediate to advanced-level ESL students. I will also include the different activities that are suitable for the students' distinct learning styles.

In addition, my instructional guide will incorporate different alternative creative assessments that address real-life topics. These topics establish a fun atmosphere for learning that promotes peer feedback and collaborative learning instead of a teacher-centered learning. These assessments will not only help multi-level adult ESL students enhance their English language proficiency, but it will also help them become active students responsible for their own learning. These formative assessments have the goal of meeting the needs of diverse adult ESL students since they are based on different activity forms for students to choose from according to their levels. In my instructional guide, summative assessments will take the form of open-ended activities and will include summative rubrics to evaluate adult ESL teachers.

I decided to develop an instructional guide as my capstone product due to lack of research pertaining to well-structured guides that adult ESL educators could use in their teaching practices. Furthermore, little research has been done on the integration of skills in general writing multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult ESL classrooms to accommodate the students' different needs. This lack triggered my quest to investigate the following research question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?*

Conclusion

The first chapter included the relevant details of my personal journey that are connected to my research question. This chapter also incorporated the professional problem that promoted my ultimate interest and motivation in my topic pertaining to how

the four skills could be integrated to meet the needs of multi-level adult ESL students. I had the ambition of wanting to become an adult ESL teacher and make an impact on the quality of adult students' learning. Afterwards, I acknowledged the urgency of accommodating the students' different needs through my first teaching experience and I sought to look for strategies that will help me differentiate my instructional practices adequately. The introductory chapter also provided the significance of my research question to teacher colleagues and adult ESL students. Furthermore, the rationale for my project is integrated in this chapter. This project started with the difficulties that I encountered to the necessity of developing concrete example activities that implement the different strategies of differentiated instruction. In addition, the first chapter incorporated an overview of the instructional guide that I will design.

The subsequent chapters will address the different particularities of my project expansion. The second chapter displays the literature regarding the integration of the four skills, differentiated instruction, open-ended activities, multi-level adult students in ESL classrooms in the United States and general ESL writing classes. The latter key elements are the foundational basis of my research project. Chapter Two also helps pinpoint the different sub-gaps in the literature pertaining to concrete examples on how to differentiate instruction adequately to meet the needs of multi-level adult ESL students. It also helps reveal the lack of research on adult students in general ESL writing classes that will lead to the development of my research project. In Chapter Three, I provide an in-depth description of my instructional guide with the different frameworks that present the essential principles for my project, the relevant standards, choice of methods and support

materials for my project. It also highlights the description of the target audience for my instructional guide and the setting where the project will occur. Chapter Four will provide a reflection on the development of my instructional guide and its effectiveness for teachers and students.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Meeting the diverse needs of adult English learners is a crucial part of planning for optimal language instruction in the adult ESL classroom (Parrish, 2019). In this case, the students, not the teachers, are the central part of learning. Different materials, models of instruction, and processes are available to English language teachers. However, instructors find difficulties in meeting the needs of adult ESL students (Fernandez et al., 2017). In this respect, the teachers' dilemma consists of using the different educational materials and processes to adequately differentiate instruction based on the multi-level students' needs. My capstone project aims to investigate a part of this dilemma through the following research question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?*

To this effect, the second chapter explores the literature that is related to my research question. The first part deals with the relationships between the four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, and the importance of maximizing the integration of these skills in lessons. Next, it presents the integration principle based on the complementarity notion between different skills. The second section of this chapter will focus on differentiated instruction, particularly, its definition, its importance for the teaching-learning process, and implications for students which includes the different

modalities that students use to enhance differentiation. This part will also enhance the teachers' and the general reader's understanding of differentiated instruction, which is at the core of my capstone. After that, this chapter will narrow down its scope to focus on open-ended activities, mainly, tasks and project-based activities. The latter two sections will highlight the necessity to accommodate diverse students' needs. Learning about these students' needs will provide the theoretical background to the applied part of learning that will be the main component of my instructional guide. Finally, the chapter will narrow down further to centralize around multi-level adult ESL classes in the United States. This part will deal with linguistically diverse students and the teaching/learning practices for low-intermediate to advanced level ESL students. Furthermore, it will address the students' different roles in adult ESL writing classes as well as writing in general adult ESL classes as a subsection.

The research studies focus mainly on the theoretical aspect of the integration between skills, differentiated instruction and open-ended activities with little research on concrete examples or lessons on how teachers could integrate the four skills across lessons and meet multi-level students' needs through open-ended activities. I will discuss the lack of research pertaining to the integrative and differentiated instruction techniques in low-intermediate to advanced level general adult ESL writing classes in different parts throughout this chapter. Finally, I will conclude by relating the different parts of the literature review to my research question: How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level(low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?

The Integration of the Four Skills in Lessons

The integration of listening, reading, speaking and writing in lessons are beneficial to enhance the students' learning. Atta Alla (2012), Calvert and Sheen (2015), Egan and Parrish (2019) and Parrish (2019) present the effectiveness of integrating different language skills.

In particular, Atta-Alla (2012) highlights the importance of integrating the four skills in storytelling and the positive impact of using the technique of storytelling as well as the integration of the four skills on enhancing the learning proficiency of adult ESL students.

Maximizing the Integration of Language Skills

Different foundational scholars such as Corder (1978), Calderón et al. (1998) and Berninger (2000) note that the four skills cannot be taught separately. On a further note, the integration between listening and speaking (Tavil, 2010) as well as the integration of reading and writing (Kim et al., 2018; Shanahan & Lomax, 1986) demonstrate the benefits of the integration of skills on students' learning. In this respect, students utilize different receptive tools, whether listening or reading, to help them in the production phase of speaking or writing. In particular, lesson activities are only effective if they incorporate a variety of skills (Parrish, 2019). Therefore, it is important to maximize the integration of skills in lessons.

According to Ya-Chen (2007), the integrated skills approach is frequently used by teachers in the EFL university classroom settings in Taiwan. In this respect, the integrated skills approach is based on the interaction between listening, speaking, reading and

writing. Therefore, instructors need to provide “opportunities and resources for students to engage in authentic speech and literacy activities” (p. 30) based on the integration of the four skills. More specifically, Atta-Alla (2012) demonstrates how the four skills could be integrated through storytelling in an adult ESL setting in the United States. The study has revealed that the adult students’ language proficiency levels improved after the treatment of the integrated instructional model of storytelling.

On another level, Nan (2018) argues for the importance of “the whole language ability” (p.421) which is based on the integration of the four skills. Furthermore, he gives examples of the different roles provided by the four skills in instruction with high school students, where a language skill is introduced first and the other skills are either supplementary tools or feedback tools to ensure a comprehensive and an effective mode of teaching. Accordingly, the integrated approach is related to the whole language principle. Language in the whole language principle is taught as a whole incorporating the intertwinement of different skills such as reading and writing (Parrish, 2019).

The whole language philosophy deals with the general picture such as identifying the main idea and skimming the text to understand the text in general as well as focusing on the core of writing and applying the concept of ‘invented spelling’ before worrying about the writing mechanics (Parrish, 2019). The whole language theory expands to the integration of the four skills in a single activity (Ling, 2012). The whole language phenomenon is not only based on the integration of skills but it also stimulates a natural learning environment of socialization through students’ interactions during the activities (Kuball& Peck, 2013). Nan (2018) highlights the importance of the connectedness and

interactiveness between reading, listening, speaking and writing which expands beyond a mere combination of skills. Based on the transfer-theory of learning, if the correlation between skills facilitates the learning of the other skill, a positive transfer of learning occurs. A positive transfer of learning will also result in the development of the students' learning (Nan, 2018). For this reason, I present the relatedness between the four skills in the next subsection.

The Connectedness Between Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing

Two main studies report on the relationship between reading, listening, speaking and writing from different angles. In their longitudinal empirical study, Berninger and Abbot (2010) divided students into a younger cohort and an older cohort. Each student cohort took a listening comprehension test, a reading comprehension test, an oral expression test and a written expression test. The listening comprehension test included three activities. The first activity involved selecting the appropriate picture to the word or sentence provided by the examiner. In the second activity, the students need to point to the picture that best matches the meaning of the word uttered by the examiner. The third activity asks the student to provide a word that corresponds to the definition provided by the examiner.

The oral expression test also involved three tasks of constructing words according to a certain semantic category, describing a series of steps to complete an action and telling a story about a collection of cartoon pictures. Similarly, the written expression test included three activities of writing the largest number of words possible in a predetermined time frame, merging two or three sentences to construct a similar meaning

original sentence and writing a paragraph about a statement within a limited time frame. However, the reading test asked the students to read text passages according to their level and to answer the comprehension questions presented by the examiner.

Regarding the relatedness between skills, the findings of the study have demonstrated that, for the third grade and fifth grade students (cohort 1), and third-grade students (cohort 2), the three skills of listening, speaking and writing contributed to developing the reading skill. Furthermore, listening had an impact on reading for the fifth-grade learners belonging to the second cohort. Written expression also had an impact on reading comprehension for seventh-grade students in the second cohort.

Concerning the written expression test, reading comprehension had an effect on written expression for the first-grade students in the first cohort. In addition to reading, listening and speaking had an impact on written expression for the third-grade students in the first cohort. Similar to first grade students in the first cohort results, the reading skill provided a unique contribution to writing for the fifth-grade students pertaining to both cohorts. The oral skill contributed as well to the written expression for seventh grade students in the second cohort. The relationship between reading and listening skills is somewhat different as reading had an impact on listening comprehension for each level in every cohort.

On a further note, a mutual influence occurred between reading and listening. The writing skill also had an impact on listening for third grade students in both cohorts and fifth grade students in the second cohort. Reading had an influence on the oral skill for every grade level in the first cohort and third grade students in the second cohort, whereas

the writing skill had a significant impact on oral expression for third grade students in the first cohort and seventh grade students in the second cohort.

To summarize, the different skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing have an impact on one another with a varying degree of relatedness. Therefore, the four skills are connected but every skill contributed uniquely to other skills at a certain point in this study.

On the other hand, Nan (2018) presents the relationship between two language skills at a time. Listening and reading have been categorized as two receptive skills. However, they have an impact on one another as listening could lead to swift reading and reading facilitates the listening tasks through enabling the students to expand “their schematic knowledge” (p. 419). A further relationship is established between the productive skills of speaking and writing. Speaking facilitates the writing task through the learners’ linguistic competence. Since writing requires substantial logic, appropriate word choice and sentence structure, it has a notable impact on speaking as well. The act of writing helps students improve their linguistic repertoire which plays a role in refining their speaking skills.

A complementary relationship exists between listening and speaking as listening is the prerequisite of the oral skill and speaking helps in the negotiation of meaning that facilitates the listening process for the students. A similar relationship is conceived between reading and writing. The reading process fortifies the students’ vocabulary selection. On a further note, the writing process stimulates the learners’ critical thinking and entices them to return to the reading text and search for other terms (Nan, 2018).

These studies reveal that there has been little research on concrete practices of the integration between the four skills and concrete practices on how these skills are interconnected.

The integration of the four skills is an educational practice. However, integrating reading, listening, speaking and writing in lessons are not only used for the sake of teaching and learning but also used to meet the needs of diverse English language learners through differentiated instruction.

Differentiated Instruction

It is essential for teachers to take into consideration the different needs of students (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) further highlight that in a differentiated educational setting:

Students differ as learners in terms of background experience, culture, language, gender, interests, readiness to learn, modes of learning, speed of learning, support systems for learning, self-awareness as a learner, confidence as a learner, independence as a learner, and a host of other ways. (p. 14)

Further, differentiated instruction expands beyond meeting the needs of ESL students and their characteristics to focus on approaching academic diversity.

Definition of Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is a classroom practice that aims to form a balance between the diverse students' individual needs and the content of the course.

Differentiation does not only include the content but also the process of the lesson, the

scaffolding techniques used and the outcomes of learning according to students' different academic readiness levels, interests, and learner profile (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

Furthermore, differentiation is not a variety of educational strategies but a theoretical basis of thinking about the teaching and learning methods (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

In addition, differentiated instruction is based on promoting students' choice of the order of the tasks and what activities to complete (Ashton, 2019).

Differentiated instruction also entails interaction and communicative moves in the classroom setting in which students have an important part (Ashton, 2019). In this sense, students are active in their learning process and are encouraged to think and express their needs, which is in direct contrast to a classroom that is mainly teacher centered. Ashton (2019) further clarifies, through the findings and discussion parts of her exploratory study, that differentiated instruction or the philosophy of adapting teaching strategies to the needs of multi-level ESL students is a continuous process that is applied throughout the year levels instead of a process that is applied separately at each year level. She further highlights through her findings that differentiated instruction involves the teachers' efforts to meet the individual needs of students. This type of instruction, according to Ashton, also promotes the students' ability to engage in autonomous learning where they will use extra materials and resources according to their level and needs instead of relying on the teacher and adhering to the curriculum. Differentiated instruction also possesses several benefits which will be dealt with in the next subsection.

The Role and Benefits of Differentiated Instruction in Education

Differentiated instruction is an effective educational philosophy which is based on the teacher's aim to address the different students' needs on an equal basis (Ashton, 2019). Furthermore, differentiation has multiple benefits in education and the classroom setting, in particular (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). This section will start with the role of differentiation in instruction.

The Role of Differentiated Instruction in Education. Differentiated instruction has a pedagogical role through designing activities, on the part of the teacher, in which the students' degree of involvement differs from one student to another (Hertzog, 1998). Further, the role of differentiation is to improve the formulation of learning outcomes to match the needs of diverse students instead of solely applying a collection of instructional strategies (Suprayogi & Valcke, 2016). Another role of differentiated instruction is to promote the teachers' awareness concerning the interconnection between the students and the other classroom elements (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). To exemplify their points, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) state that the students' feelings and emotions have an impact on their learning. In this respect, providing visuals to students to facilitate their understanding of a difficult concept or process has a direct effect on the students' perceptions towards the activity. Therefore, providing concrete materials for students to visualize is related to their behaviors and involvement in the activity. In this case, the students will evoke less resistance towards the independent reading activity when they are given concrete examples of the difficult ideas before they read the assigned texts. Similarly, differentiated instruction has multiple benefits in the educational process.

The Benefits of Differentiated Instruction in Education. Differentiated instruction is not only beneficial because it is based on meeting students' needs but also because it allows for collaboration between students which results in a rich learning process through diversity (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). From a different angle, the results in Tomlinson et al. (1997) demonstrate that differentiated instruction is advantageous as it generates more flexibility on the part of teachers to adjust the curriculum and instructional strategies according to the students' diverse academic profiles. Therefore, instructors who opt for differentiated instruction in their teaching practices are willing to try new techniques in their instruction and to promote change. To expand on the previous benefits of differentiated instruction, this philosophy of teaching provides a diversity in assessment tools as well as promotes the students' critical thinking abilities (Yavuz, 2020). Accordingly, the differentiated role in promoting flexibility, creativity and diversity in assessment techniques appear as implications for teachers. Applying differentiated instruction as opposed to the traditional method of teaching provides students with activities that are engaging and of different levels (Ashton, 2019). In this sense, differentiated instruction enhances the motivation level of students through a myriad of activities that they have at their disposition. Furthermore, differentiation in teaching helps determine the progress of students through personal records and activity logs (Ashton, 2019). Given these innovative techniques and students' active learning, which is promoted through differentiated instruction, this teaching framework has positive implications for students.

Implications for Students

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) advocate that promoting group work in differentiated instruction focuses students' attention on sharing ideas in their own group instead of paying attention to the other groups' interactions. Working with the teacher on an individual basis or within small groups as part of differentiated instruction has different implications for students. For instance, the students will no longer interrupt the instructor while he or she is working with other group members. Regarding the different amounts of time spent on tasks, differentiated instruction has different implications for students such as following directions when turning in an assignment or an exercise or having it checked when the student has already completed the task to enhance students' learning. Furthermore, working with diverse materials to ensure learning has multiple implications for ESL students. For example, an implicit conclusion could be drawn regarding the students' ability to inform the teacher about which instructional materials help them better in their learning. Group work and students' choices of activities also promote the increase of ELLs' performance in reading, vocabulary, grammar and writing (Yavuz, 2020). The previous studies, related to the differentiated instruction section, reveal that little work has been done on explicit lessons and precise steps that incorporate differentiated instruction which will be exemplified in my instructional guide.

Differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy adopted by the instructor to accommodate the different students' academic readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Furthermore, differentiation has an important pedagogical

and instructional role in education as well as a variety of benefits for learning in the long term (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). While most of the work presented focuses on K-12 classrooms, the different differentiation techniques are also applicable to andragogical settings. Differentiated instruction provides several implications for adult ESL students in relation to group work, time management, and the use of diverse classroom materials. The teaching and learning practices which are based on differentiated instruction promotes learner-centered learning and student autonomy through the different interactions and materials used (Parrish, 2019). Different forms of an activity are provided for adult ESL students to choose from according to their level. For example, students could use different modalities such as presenting pictures, circling the topics that are presented in the news in a listening activity, sharing the different stories they heard in the news orally and writing the list of the stories based on their language competency to participate in a listening task (Parrish, 2019). Another example provides a wider range of modalities used by English language speakers of different levels such as describing a picture and drawing a picture in pairs (Treko, 2013) Since the pair activity includes students from different levels, the students could use one modality or the other according to their level. Treko (2013) found that an open-ended, whole-group photograph activity allowed students of different oral abilities to describe the paintings or images by collaborating with one another based on their levels.

A writing activity is also suitable for various students' levels within the same classroom. Lower-level students are only required to write within their own ability level, whereas advanced-level students have the opportunity to write several paragraphs with

grammatical complex sentences to align the task with their proficiency level (Treko, 2013). On a further note, Treko (2013) provides other activity examples where students use different modalities such as speaking or writing in line with their level after the jigsaw reading activity. The three last activities also illustrate different instances where the ESL students are given a short text or a long text, a complex task or a simple task to match their second language competency level (Treko, 2013). The instructors' differentiated practices are further demonstrated through open-ended activities.

Open-Ended Activities

One pre-service English teacher, interviewed in Kurt and Önalın's (2018) study, stated that open-ended tasks promote students' creativity. Practicing language through open-ended activities also stimulates the students' ability to develop a unique idea or artifact that is different from the ideas or products presented by their classmates (Kurt & Önalın, 2018). Furthermore, open-ended activities allow for learner choice which encourages divergent ESL students to become active students in second language acquisition and promotes diversity in task forms to accommodate the students' different levels of competence (Parrish, 2019).

Definition of Open-Ended Activities

Open-ended activities are the opposite of restricted activities that have only one outcome as a result. In contrast, an open-ended activity provides the learner with a choice in the level and nature of tasks to be completed at a certain time (Parrish, 2019). Maker (1982) asserts that open-ended activities do not only result in a variety of outcomes but a variety in the process of completing a task as well. It is further noted that open-ended

activities are used for different purposes (Hertzog, 1998). Regarding the impact of open-ended activities on learning, the pedagogical use of these multiple answer activities has a positive effect on the quality and diversity of the students' responses. Furthermore, promoting practice through open-ended activities has an individualized concept of increasing students' abilities that expands beyond the basic principles of differentiated instruction. To further reinforce this point, open-ended tasks and projects provide the students with a comfortable experience in their learning as they allow the students to use their favored learning style. These activities also provide the opportunity for students to explore their own interests (Hertzog, 1998). The latter activities are authentic and aim to engage students from different levels such as jigsaw tasks, role-plays, designing your own postcard and writing a classroom newsletter (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Other open-ended activities consist of other tasks such as discussion activities, journaling and summarizing activities.

Communicative Activities

Richards and Rodgers (2001; 2014) declare that activities that follow the Communicative Language Approach model are based on interaction, negotiation of meaning and learner centeredness. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is based on promoting effective communication between students, contextualizing instruction, integrating authentic materials in teaching and focusing on a balance of fluency and accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The different activities stated below follow the Communicative Approach.

Role Plays. The findings presented in Aliakbari and Jamlavandi (2010) demonstrate that role-play is a task which contributes to enhancing the speaking competence of the different EFL students. In specific terms, role-play is a group activity which enables students to collaborate with each other (Stevens, 2015). A role-play activity involves movement where the participants assume a particular role and act accordingly (Solem, 1960; Börner et al., 2012). There are two types of role-plays. In the first role-play type, the participants are asked to perform other individuals' roles, whereas, in the second role-play type, they perform their own roles in unique situations (Mann, 1956). Role-plays further build rapport between the students involved and enhance their motivation (Beidatsch & Broomhall, 2010). Role-plays also simulate real-life events (O'Brien & Sears, 2011) and can further help students build the two sides of an event or an argument (Duncombe & Heikkinen, 1988). More specifically, the findings presented in Stevens (2015) illustrate that role-plays promote critical thinking.

Discussions. Discussion activities are also categorized among the communicative-based activities (Oradee, 2012). They require the students to possess different pieces of knowledge regarding the topic to be discussed to ensure an effective and equal communication between the students. Discussions are either whole group activities or small group activities (Morita, 2000) and they can promote socialization between individuals. However, the nature of the discussions might vary according to context or even within similar contexts (Morita, 2000). From a different angle, discussion participation and interaction circles between students require the teacher's guidance about

the instructions of the discussion even though discussion activities are mainly learner-centered tasks (Dennen, 2005).

Jigsaw Tasks. The jigsaw technique of activities is a method used to promote collaboration between students (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997). This technique encompasses “six phases: creation of cooperative groups, preparation pairs, practice pairs, cooperative groups (action), monitoring, and evaluation” (Gallardo et al., 2003). Abbasian and Chenabi (2016) also demonstrate the different steps included in the jigsaw activity. Based on Abbasian and Chenabi’s (2016) study, the students in the jigsaw activity class were divided into two central groups. The participants in the first group received different information segments to share with the members of the second group. The jigsaw task also promotes the students’ critical thinking ability while exchanging information in pairs and presenting their viewpoints (Abbasian & Chenabi, 2016). Another important issue constitutes the notion of integrating the different language skills in jigsaw tasks such as listening and speaking (Abbasian & Chenabi, 2016), reading and writing (Esnawy, 2016). In comparison with the control group who received whole language instruction, students in the experimental group, based on the jigsaw model of activities, were provided with the necessary support in the meaning negotiation process to solve different problems (Shaaban, 2006). Regarding cooperative learning characteristics, the jigsaw technique encourages positive interconnection, collaborative work and enhances learner commitment (Shaaban, 2006).

Journal Writing. Reflective journals are utilized for different purposes such as helping students improve their writing skills and assessing the students’ level of

reflection. Journal writing has several benefits. Among these benefits, journaling promotes reflection and critical thinking skills. A writing journal is also a helpful tool for exam revision. Furthermore, this journal promotes continuous interaction between the teacher and students. It also enables the students to present their ideas without feeling afraid of cultural discrimination (Ahmed, 2020). Similarly, Chang and Lin (2014) demonstrate that the experimental group of the undergraduate students who used the online writing journals surpasses the control group in their reading, organizational and writing performances.

Summarizing Activities. Summarizing is mainly a constructive activity (Chi, 2009). However, the nature of the summarizing differs according to the summarizing activity. On the one hand, summarizing could belong to the active category once the summarizing activity differs such as summarizing paragraphs using solely the deletion and substitution techniques (Brown & Day, 1983). On the other hand, summarizing is constructive when it involves selecting areas of a text to summarize, writing a sentence to reflect on the main topic of the text and then developing sentences to link the subtopics to one another using the paraphrasing technique to present your own understanding of the text (King 1992). However, it could not be concluded that an activity is better than the other with simply analyzing the task. To determine the effectiveness of an activity over another, it is essential to examine the context in which the activity was conducted, its underlying forces as well as its condition of comparison in relation to another activity (Chi, 2009). As we shall explore below, project-based activities are also a subtype of open-ended activities.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based activities are longer than tasks (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016). According to Beckett (2002), “a project is a long term (several weeks) activity that involves a variety of individual or cooperative tasks” (p. 54). To further elaborate on project-based learning research, Petersen and Nassaji (2016) conducted a study on 88 students and 30 teachers in three Canadian adult ESL schools. The results demonstrate that the teachers and students have positive attitudes towards project-based learning. They had similar high positive perceptions regarding the characteristics of project-based learning such as allowing students to experience real-life activities beyond the classroom setting and providing the opportunity for them to choose the topics of their projects. The adult ESL students and teachers also revealed an equal positive opinion towards the project-based characteristic of using materials beyond the textbooks presented.

Project-based activities include a photo album collection of pictures and written memories related to the photos, writing a formal report, conducting surveys and gathering data about a certain topic, delivering a project presentation and designing a guidebook. Other project activities involve developing a newspaper, designing a web-based project and producing a video or a radio program (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016). Based on the nature of these activities, project-based learning does not only focus on the product but on the process as well. On a different level, most teachers have provided a positive viewpoint towards the effectiveness of project-based learning (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016). The previously mentioned studies dealt with the strategies to develop open-ended activities. However, little work has been done on concrete examples regarding how to

adapt the open-ended activities based on the students' level, learning styles and interests which will be the focus of my instructional guide. Open-ended activities provide a rich learning space and a collaborative opportunity for students through different tasks and project-based activities to meet the diverse needs of English language learners.

As mentioned in the differentiated instruction and open-ended activities sections, these two teaching approaches are recommended for instructors teaching multi-level classes mainly because they enable learners to use different skills or modalities according to their level. Furthermore, the use of open-ended activities in a differentiated instruction setting are beneficial in diverse-level ESL classrooms because they are flexible in terms of process and product, enhance the students' critical thinking skills and promote collaboration between students. On a particular basis, the next subsection will deal with multi-level adult ESL classes in the United States.

Multi-Level Adult ESL Classes in the United States

Different ESL classes in the United States include students of various levels within the same classroom. It is important to meet the needs of linguistically diverse ESL students (Fernandez et al., 2017). However, teaching these multi-level adult ESL classes is often a challenge for adult ESL teachers (Parrish, 2019).

Linguistically Diverse Adult ESL Students

Linguistically diverse students often have other strategies that they use in learning that differ from monolingual speakers of English, since certain educational practices are culturally bound. Therefore, it is necessary to choose ESL instructors who have skills that enable them to teach linguistically diverse adult ESL students, familiarity

with characteristics of different languages, and cross-cultural awareness (Friedrich, 2006). As a particular example of research, Clement's (2007) study involved adult ESL students from various linguistic backgrounds. The participants had different native languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Creole, French, Japanese, Portuguese, Korean, Spanish, Turkish, Kazakh, Maraka and Vietnamese. In her study, the author used the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) instrument for solely listening tasks. The findings demonstrate that the covariance between the mean scores of Pre-SILL and Post-SILL is insignificant. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the mean scores of Pre-SILL results according to language as well as Post-SILL results. Despite these slight differences between the pre-SILL mean scores per language presented in the descriptive statistics, adult ESL instructors need to account for these variances in their educational practices. These practices involve providing central learning roles to different students in multi-level classes.

Roles of Low-Intermediate to Advanced Level Students in an ESL Classroom

The different roles that students take in the classroom can be associated with their level in a multi-level classroom. For instance, high-intermediate to advanced-level students could be scribes to report later to the whole class in group activities while the less-proficient adult ESL students perform the role of a timekeeper in each group. The timekeepers would present the cards with the remaining time on it to keep the rest of the group on track with their allotted time. Other students who are inclined to participate strongly in a discussion could be encouraged to act as facilitators (Parrish, 2019). This role would enable them to engage in a discussion and allow their group classmates to

voice their opinions in the discussion as well. Timekeepers, scribes and facilitators are examples of roles that are given to students according to their language ability. The previously mentioned role assignments were used so that every student finds the activity purposeful, and each learner has an active role in the activity. However, the roles could be divided differently between students as long as each learner is provided with a pivotal role in their education (Parrish, 2019). In a communicative task, students of different levels have the opportunity to enact the role of the expert to help another classmate on a particular topic or assignment (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010) including low-intermediate to advanced-level students. From a different dimension, low-intermediate to advanced adult ESL students have an effective role in expressing their opinions towards the strategies used during the interventions (Clement, 2007). Multi-level students' roles in a classroom environment build on Knowles' adult learning principles and Mezirow's transformational theory that categorizes the adult student's learning into learning processes. Knowles' (1984) and Mezirow's (1990; 1991; 2000) andragogical theories further provide principles that are based on accommodating the adult students' different needs along with Mezirow's (1990; 1991; 2000) different reflection types help develop the different adult ESL students' higher-order thinking. In this respect, Knowles' (1984) and Mezirow's (1990; 1991; 2000) principles are the foundational theories used to meet the needs of different-level students which is the basis of my research question. These foundational theories implicitly introduce the challenges encountered by adult ESL teachers. Teaching general ESL writing classes is another challenge for adult ESL instructors.

Writing in General ESL Classes

Instruction in a general ESL classroom usually involves teaching relevant real-life topics such as entertainment, housing utilities and shopping and the integration of skills. General ESL classes could also include pre-work teaching to educate students on some of the key soft skills namely communication skills and management skills in addition to certain hard skills such as technical skills that are helpful for acceptance in the job market (Eyring, 2014). One of the frequently used techniques in an ESL writing class is journal writing, which could be adapted to the adult ESL students' different levels (Kim, 2005). Writing a journal enables the students to use the English language in an authentic manner in writing. In this sense, the adult ESL students would write about real-life situations that interest them such as family issues, their current life in the United States, their countries of origins, their neighborhoods and other topics that are significant to them (Kim, 2005)

Kim's (2005) class included students who wanted to learn English as a second language for different purposes. Despite their diverse goals, Kim (2005) reports that the journal writing was beneficial for the students as they were able to tell their different stories through this interactive task. The researcher further advocates that the journal task is also beneficial as it allows the ESL students to share ideas about their cultures while learning about their target language's culture. Journal writing stipulates the interest areas of diverse adult ESL students (Kim, 2005). Therefore, it is presented among the activities that instructors apply to meet the different needs of adult ESL students. To further emphasize the importance of an engaging and a relevant writing activity, Fernandez et al. (2017) caution against asking ESL students to work on activities for the sake of writing.

It is essential that these activities are relevant to the students' lives which expand beyond their academic or professional experience. For example, educators need to establish a balance between asking students to write a narrative, descriptive or an expository work and a persuasive or argumentative writing. The latter type is also included in the curriculum as part of a general ESL course, and it is not recommended to leave this type of writing for only advanced-level students. In this case, the authors concerningly advocate the necessity of teacher collaborations and professional developments to provide students with the adequate tasks to help them improve their writing skills regardless of their proficiency level. To this end, the purpose of my research project is to create an instructional guide that will help teachers in developing different strategies and steps to integrate the four skills in lessons. This guide will also provide instructors with guidelines on how to use open-ended activities to meet the needs of low-intermediate to advanced level students in adult ESL general writing classrooms. Consequently, this instructional guide will promote adult ESL students' awareness of their different roles in the learning process.

Based on the review of studies that are connected to my research problem, different research works deal with integration of skills, differentiated instruction, open-ended activities, multi-level students and their needs. However, little research has involved all the elements and adult ESL general writing classes. For this reason, my research project will investigate the research question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?*

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the different research studies pertaining to the integration of the four skills, differentiated instruction, tasks and project-based activities, and multi-level adult ESL classes in the United States. These scholarly works provide a well-grounded background for the design of my instructional guide. The goal of the literature review was to present the different techniques, types and forms of open-ended activities, the students' different learning styles and needs, and theoretical foundations for teachers to manage multi-level classrooms. These research studies revealed several general techniques and strategies to help teachers differentiate instruction for adult ESL students. The multiple strategies of integrating between language skills, other instructional strategies and open-ended activities will facilitate teachers' tasks in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of multi-level distinct adult ESL students if they evolve on the practical level. A more concrete description of these strategies and activities with practical examples based on different students' needs will enhance their engagement in different activities as they are tailor-made to the students' different levels, especially in writing classes.

The third chapter will present an outline of the instructional guide built on the theoretical foundations of the literature review. It will incorporate the setting, framework and rationale for designing an instructional guide to be utilized by adult ESL teachers on the primary level and benefit the students on the secondary level. This instructional guide will provide multi-level adult ESL teachers with exemplified integrative and assessment techniques to meet the individualized needs of their diverse students.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

Throughout my teaching experience, I encountered several difficulties teaching a multi-level adult ESL class due to the lack of adequate supporting written guides. This experience is one of the main factors that led to my decision of designing an instructional guide for multi-level adult ESL classes. My research project is intended to provide information on the specific integrative techniques between the four skills, their designed example activities, the open-ended activities, modalities and assessment used to differentiate instruction in multi-level adult ESL classrooms. The elements mentioned above constitute the core foundations of my instructional guide. The different information from the literature review concerning the integration of the four skills and differentiated instruction, open-ended activities and adult ESL multi-level classes are used with the designed activity examples to answer this project's research question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?* This chapter addresses the rationale for designing my product through the gap in literature and the relevant theoretical framework alongside the description of the audience, setting, assessments, support materials and the procedure of my research project.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks for my project mainly involve the design frameworks, the relevant standards and the aspired outcomes.

Gap/Niche

As outlined above, the research pertaining to the integration of language skills, open-ended activities, differentiated instruction and students' needs lack the concrete practical examples that will facilitate instructors' task in teaching multi-level adult ESL students, especially in writing classes. To address this gap in research, my instructional guide provides various collaborative, assessment and integrative examples to teach low-intermediate to advanced-level adult ESL students in general ESL writing classes.

Framework for Design

The different frameworks that were used to design my capstone project constitute Knowles' and Mezirow's adult learning theories along with Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) framework of differentiation.

Adult Learning Theories. The adult learning principles of Knowles (1984) are the foundational theoretical framework for my capstone project. Knowles forwards six principles of learning consisting in the adult students' need to know, the role of experience, readiness to learn, self-directed learning among adult students, learner orientation and the adult students' intrinsic motivation to learn. The first principle is based on the notion that it is necessary for adult students to know the reasons behind learning a language. For this reason, it is important as a teacher to relate what you ask adult students to how they would apply what they are learning to their personal lives. The

second principle involves the conception that adults base and connect their learning to previous experiences and knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to modify curricula based on the actual needs of these adult students.

The third principle is based on the idea that adult students also follow some developmental stages in learning. The adult learner's readiness to learn could also be social and affected by peers. Therefore, it is necessary as an ESL instructor to teach adult students according to their stage of readiness. The fourth principle resides in the notion that adult students are conscious of their learning. Consequently, they want to have the ability to make choices in their learning. As a result, it is essential for teachers to promote the notion of self-independent learning through having students choose between the open-ended activities provided and providing additional websites for students to work on without much reliance on the teacher. The fifth principle involves the concept that adult learning needs to be problem-centered instead of content centered because adult students tend to relate their learning to the problems they encounter in their daily lives. Therefore, it is important for teachers to integrate problem-solving activities in their lessons. Finally, the sixth principal centralizes around the notion that internal motivation, generated from within the student, is more important to the adult learner than extrinsic motivation. As a result, it is vital for teachers to construct activities that keep students engaged and motivated and address their different interests and learning profiles as well.

Mezirow's transformational theory aligns with Knowles (1984) adult learning principles with a more critical perspective. According to Mezirow (2000), transformational learning theory is a specific classification of adult learning. He further

presents this learning theory as a process of adult students altering or adjusting different types of assumptions and strong beliefs within themselves. Correspondingly, constructing assumptions and beliefs is part of “meaning perspective[s]” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16) that helps adult students develop meaning by selecting the manner and the type of perceptual experience to construct (Mezirow, 1990; 2000). Three main key elements of transformative learning are advocated by Mezirow (1990; 2000). The first frame is “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). It is a dilemma that occurs due to a hindrance that happened in the adult learner’s life. These disturbances which are the core of a disorienting dilemma lead the adult students to reorient their thinking (Mezirow, 2000).

The second frame is critical reflection which constitutes individual actions to construct novel meanings through critically scrutinizing their own or their surroundings’ assumptions and beliefs (Mezirow, 1990; 2000). Critical reflection is categorized into three main related subcategories which consist in content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection (Mezirow, 1991).

The first sub-type of reflection, content reflection, concerns an examination of the events that happen, the manner in which they happen, and the data collected about the area(s) of focus. Furthermore, the second sub-type of reflection, process reflection, inspects the sufficiency of the data collected, the adequacy of interpreting the data and the technique(s) used to collect and evaluate the data as well. On a further note, the third sub-type, premise reflection, focuses on the elemental premises, inferences and beliefs and to reflect on the reasons why the area of interest is chosen (Mezirow, 1991).

Rational discourse, the third type of reflection, builds on critical reflection and promotes the adult students' ability to discuss the personal and socially held beliefs with other people (Mezirow, 1990). I developed the different open-ended activities in my product while considering the adult students' disorienting dilemma in their design. I also included activities that promote the three subtypes of critical reflection and collaboration between the different adult students, the basis of rational discourse, as well.

Differentiation Framework. Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) differentiation framework is also applied in the design of the differentiation part of my instructional guide. According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), instruction and activities could be differentiated in terms of content, process or product. Content involves the knowledge, comprehension of issues and the different skills that the teacher aspires for the students to learn. To differentiate the content of instruction, it is possible to use different materials such as different level texts, vocabulary banks and spelling activities that could differ according to the students' proficiency levels (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) further declare that the process presents how students decipher the content. Process differentiation includes providing a variety of homework assignments according to the students' levels and parallel activities to different small groups based on their readiness levels. Process also involves using RAFT (Role, Audience, Format, Topic) strategies to complete a task. A product is a demonstration of what students know or could create after several lessons. Differentiation in terms of product includes allowing the students to design different products, providing students with different resources according to their level, allowing students to

set their own timelines and diversifying the checking techniques in agreement with their independence levels.

Relevant Standards

In addition to the frameworks outlined above, my guide is also informed by the TESOL Standards for Adult ESL Students (TESOL, 2018). These standards are included in eight domains; planning, instructing, assessing, identity and context, language proficiency, learning, content, commitment and professionalism. The TESOL standards are also based on principles to differentiate instruction and promote the centrality of students in their learning process and formative assessments (TESOL, 2008). Another set of standards to account for is the Transitions Integration Framework (TIF). It promotes a constructive integration of transition skills in ESL programs. On a further note, TIF is based on several fundamental skills that adult ESL instructors are advised to incorporate in their teaching practices to help students attain their ultimate goals, namely “Effective Communication (EC), Learning Strategies (LS), Critical Thinking (CT), Self-Management (CM), Developing a Future Pathway (DFP) and Navigating Systems (CM)” (ATLAS, 2016, p. 6).

The project’s purpose is to facilitate applying these transition skills to teach the different ABE students in Minnesota including adult ESL students. TIF is also aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). College and Career Readiness Standards incorporate the four literacy domains of reading, speaking, listening and writing which are complemented by three categories related to communication, learning strategies and critical thinking provided by TIF (ATLAS, 2016). Although CCRS and TIF

were not specifically designed for general ESL classes, the principles could be adapted and successfully applied to general ESL classes as these standards are designed for several ESL programs such as community-based programs (ATLAS, 2016). The CRRS standards for English Language Arts and Literacy will be addressed in gathering the different materials and designing the different activities for my research project.

These standards were applied because they are categorized according to different level descriptors. These descriptors would help teachers know what activities to use and what to expect from students of different levels which will facilitate their roles as educators if they teach multi-level classes. The activities and the instructional guide will be aligned with these standards as the language organizations that my teacher and student audience are affiliated to follow these standards. These standards are also chosen because they promote activities that are related to the ESL students' real-life context and critical thinking skills as well. The materials, activities and the instructional guide will further take account of English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards for Adult Education (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, 2016) as they are designed for a more general ESL audience with the integration of different skills and the design of activities that are appropriate for different adult ESL students' levels. On this basis, the ELP Standards align with differentiated instruction. As the literature presents, this differentiation is highly needed in multi-level general ESL settings. Various standards were presented in this section because I want to address the relevant standards for adult ESL students who learn English for multiple purposes.

Goals/Outcomes

My research project ultimately aims to help mainly adult ESL teachers find different constructive strategies to adequately differentiate instruction through open-ended activities. This is the first of the five long-term goals for the project. The second long-term goal of designing an instructional guide resides in providing the ESL teachers with different strategies and concrete examples to meet the various needs of students through the different modalities of teaching and activity types in general ESL writing classes. The third long-term goal is that the instructional guide enables the students indirectly through open-ended activities to improve their writing performances. The fourth long-term goal of my research project constitutes the students' ability to use the skills acquired through open-ended activities to promote autonomous learning. The fifth long-term goal pertains to the students' understanding and the instructors' awareness that a learner-centered classroom is essential to improve the quality of learning.

The short term-goals to be accomplished through the instructional guide are more specific. The short-term goals mainly consist of providing different effective differentiation-based techniques and applying the integration of the four skills in lessons through examples to ensure a learner-centered environment where the students are in control of their learning. The category of students mainly consists of low-intermediate to advanced-level adult ESL students. The main outcome of my research project is to design an instructional guide to facilitate different ESL educators' tasks who teach multi-level adult ESL students, especially writing classes (a more detailed description of the desired

results is presented in Appendix A). The different methods used for differentiation and assessment are described in the following section.

Project Overview

This section provides a description of the intended audience and setting for my project. Different formative and summative methods of assessment are incorporated into my instructional guide. It also includes various support materials and the learning plan that provides an overview of the implementation of the activities incorporated in my instructional guide. The support materials and learning plan are encompassed within the description part of the instructional guide's content. I will also describe how the instructional guide would be assessed by students and teachers.

Intended Audience and Setting

The main audience of the capstone project are general ESL writing teachers as well as other adult ESL instructors. This category of teachers was chosen because of the ESL students, especially if they learn English for general purposes. Adult ESL students are another target audience for the capstone project, particularly, low-intermediate to advanced level adult students in general ESL writing classes. The latter students were chosen because they have a larger number of diverse needs than academic readiness classes or career- focused programs. However, the project is also intended for other ESL teachers and students. Teachers from other skill areas could modify and adapt the different techniques and activities' examples as well as the different steps to integrate the different skills in lessons, and to differentiate their instruction accordingly.

The project is designed for use in programs like the ones where I taught located in the Upper Midwest area of the United States which help immigrants learn English as their second language and include multi-level classes of low-intermediate to advanced level adult ESL students.

Instructional guide content overview

My instructional guide starts by promoting teacher collaboration about the appropriate instructional strategies for the students in its first content page. In the following pages, I include a detailed description of different examples of how to implement the different integrative techniques with the open-ended activities suitable for multi-level students in a differentiated manner. I also explain how to provide different forms of the same activity for low-intermediate to advanced-level adult ESL students in writing classes to accommodate their different needs in the subsequent pages of my instructional guide. Furthermore, I provide ample active, cooperative, and independent teaching and learning strategies along with the different open-ended activities. I also provide different formative and summative assessments, and example lessons in the last pages of the instructional guide.

The support materials are also important for different activities and assessments. Accordingly, a large part of the instructional guide content would be recommendations for a learning plan.

Support Materials. The support materials consist of visuals pertaining to shopping, volunteer work, emergency situations, protecting the environment and

entertainment that will be presented in the instructional guide, students will also watch videos based on their levels to set the basis of the discussion activities. The videos are authentic language at a regular speed to enable students from low-intermediate levels to advanced-level students to understand the different videos. Charts and diagrams that are used to scaffold the writing activities, as it is recommended in the instructional guide, are used to facilitate students' writing tasks. On a further note, providing students with links to meaningful tasks to further practice their writing will allow adult ESL students to practice their English outside the classroom and promote autonomous learning where the integration of different skills enhances the students' writing skills. These links are included in my instructional guide as well. The NRS Educational Functioning level descriptors would be at the disposal of adult ESL teachers to learn more about their students' levels and capabilities. Through the open-ended activities and the visual, auditory and text materials provided to students that are suggested in the instructional guide, the teachers will learn better about the level of their students and adjust the activities accordingly. Teachers and students could also use support materials in assessments.

Formative and Summative assessments. The formative and summative assessments incorporated in the instructional guide are two-fold. The first part involves formative and summative assessments for students and the second part consists of summative assessments for students and teachers.

To assess students, the writing adult ESL teachers would administer a series of activities that they would configure as formative assessments for students. These activities will take the form of discussions about a real-life picture or about a contemporary debatable topic such as the different measures to take to preserve the environment and what educational system has the potential to be the best educational system across states. These tasks could also take the form of role-plays such as a teacher and a volunteer, volunteering in a fair, performing different volunteer work to help others and emergency situations such as how to behave in a fire emergency. Furthermore, the instructional guide would have some adult ESL teachers include journal writing and summarizing activities during the interventions as well. In addition, two instructors would use project-based activities that are related to scientific research, writing about real life experiences and developing a website about a topic of interest. The different tasks that students tackle during a project-based activity are devised as a formative assessment. However, the final product created at the end by the students constitutes a summative assessment. Another formative assessments comprises the weekly student feedback survey to assess their learning, or the items noticed regarding the impact of speaking on writing, the tenses used, the topic addressed, the vocabulary terms used and the usefulness of integrating speaking and writing in activities in real life as well the different skills that the discussion activity and writing activity helped them improve.

Based on these interventions, the teachers would use a rubric developed by adult ESL teachers with the integration of their students' feedback to evaluate the effectiveness

of the formative assessments constructed through the open-ended tasks that are presented in the instructional guide. A general rubric would also be used by teachers to assess the quality of the project-based activities as well as the strategies they used in these activities which are addressed in the instructional guide. The rubric criteria would be based on the comments provided by the students on the teachers' performances in conducting these activities and the degree in which these project-based activities meet their needs. The adult ESL students' comments would be elicited indirectly through surveys to ensure confidentiality. The students' general feedback will also evaluate instructors' performances in teaching through the other open-ended tasks in a summative manner.

Assessments are part of learning. However, a learning plan provides the teacher and students with a detailed description of the learning process.

Learning Plan. Based on my instructional guide, the first collaborative session includes the teachers' negotiation and collaboration on the different integrative strategies and the open-ended activities as well depending on the common needs and the particular needs of their low-intermediate to advanced-level adult ESL students.

The major recommended learning activities addressed in my instructional guide are the following (see Appendix A for a full list of activities):

- Performing a role-play about volunteering in your community (the students could use different helping modalities)
- Learning about the different ways to preserve the environment through jigsaw reading/writing
- Writing short stories, articles about how to help homeless people.

- Listening to a guest speaker (a firefighter, a repairer)
- Learning to write articles
- Discussing the topics of philanthropy, global warming and study groups to practice presenting arguments in favor of and against.
- Reading more about topics of interest and summarizing the information.
- Discussing what a real-life picture reveals.

Then, the teachers would complete a survey regarding the effectiveness of the different activities above that are presented in the instructional guide and the different strategies included in the instructional guide to address what the students need to focus on in their learning. The completion of the survey on the part of the teachers would be done before they use the activities from the instructional guide.

In the first teaching session, the instructors would apply the first open-ended activity that they see relevant to their students' needs and the first set of integrative techniques as well. In the second teaching session, the teachers would use the second open-ended activity that they see beneficial to the adult ESL students' learning along with the second set of integrative techniques. In the third session, the ESL educators would administer the third best open-ended activity that is perceived to be suitable for their students as well as the third set of integrative techniques between skills. In the fourth session, the instructors would implement an open-ended activity, a topic, a set of integrative skills and teaching modalities of their choice. Afterwards, the students would complete a feedback form survey based on what they learned regarding the impact of speaking on writing, the tenses used, the topic addressed, the vocabulary terms used and

the usefulness of integrating speaking and writing in activities in real life as well the different skills that the particular open-ended activity and writing activity helped them improve. In this form, the students would also answer a multiple-choice question about how the different activities met their needs and what activity or activities helped them best meet their purposes in learning English.

In the fifth teaching session, the students would evaluate the teachers' use of the instructional strategies, modalities and activities to meet their needs through a rubric that is based on the different elements in the instructional guide which function as the criteria of the rubric used. The adult ESL teachers would, at first, demonstrate how a rubric is used. Then, the adult ESL students would work in groups to include the different activities, in the rubric, that the teachers used and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities, the teaching strategies and modalities used through an effectiveness scale. The adult ESL students would also use the rubric to assess the adequacy of the different strategies and activities, mentioned in the instructional guide, that they perceived through the teachers' instructional practices in meeting their needs. Therefore, the students would assess the instructional guide in an indirect manner.

The instructional strategies are a mixture of active learning strategies and cooperative learning strategies which promote learner-centered learning. On the one hand, active learning involves reciprocal questioning, the pause procedure, the devil's advocate approach, peer teaching activities, rotating chair group discussions and game-based learning platforms (Raudys, 2018). On the other hand, cooperative learning strategies engage students to work in small groups where each student has a role such as

four corners, snowball, forced debate (a type of debate), write-around and the carousel technique (California Casualty, 2019). The instructional strategies have also incorporated independent learning strategies where students would work on activities depending on their level autonomously with a key answer at the end (Parrish, 2019). These different strategies are included in my instructional guide with example activities to meet the needs of low-intermediate to advanced level ESL students. The different steps for the development of my instructional guide and its proposed implementation are presented in the next sub-section.

Project Time Frame

The time frame for developing the instructional guide is between early September and early December. The integrative techniques and their corresponding possible activities were arranged and outlined between early September and mid-September. From mid-September to early October, I used several active learning, cooperative learning and independent learning strategies to design activities that could take three to four forms based on the level of students and would be used in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult ESL students. From October 6th until November 1st, I designed the rest of the open-ended activities, the different formative and summative assessments and other recommendations for adult ESL instructors to use whether in the integration of different skills or the use of the distinct open-ended activities based on whether their adult ESL students are low-intermediate to intermediate, intermediate to advanced or low-intermediate to advanced-levels. I edited and reviewed the different parts of my instructional guide as needed between early November and early December. The

instructional guide will be ready for adult ESL instructors to implement its different activities and assessments by the first week of February 2022. The next section will provide a preview of the assessment tools planned for teachers and students to assess my instructional guide.

Assessment of the Instructional Guide

My research project included dependent/independent variables and will follow a mixed method of research in its design. The rationale for choosing quantitative and qualitative methods is based on the fact that the use of the two methods of research ensures stronger validity and they both complement one another (Bryman, 2006). First, a teacher's survey that is quantitative and qualitative would be distributed to different adult ESL teachers to elicit their opinions towards my instructional guide. Afterwards, five interventions per teacher would be administered by adult ESL teachers using the integrative techniques, the different teaching modalities to use according to the students' levels and the open-ended activities (independent variables) displayed in the designed instructional guide, a qualitative method of research. The open-ended activities are used to measure students' performances (dependent variable) and the effectiveness of my instructional guide through their performances. Then, the students would provide feedback towards what they learned, and the effectiveness of the different instructional strategies (dependent variable) used by the teacher to meet their needs using a Google form survey which is a quantitative and qualitative assessment tool. The students would also use rubrics to assess the successfulness of the ESL teachers' instruction and indirectly assess the instructional guide because the teachers would use the different

instructional strategies, materials and activities which are incorporated in my instructional guide.

Conclusion

This chapter explicated the audience and setting for my instructional guide project. It further highlighted how the frameworks of Knowles (1984), Mezirow (1990; 1991;2000) helped me construct the activities presented in my instructional guide. Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) differentiation framework also helped me differentiate the different activities presented in my project. The third chapter also discussed the different state standards that the activities aligned with and the reasons for choosing these standards. Furthermore, the chapter provided an overview of the methods and assessment techniques that are included in the instructional guide for teachers and students, the learning plan addressed by the instructional guide and the timeline to complete my project. In this chapter, an in-depth description of the support materials suggested in the instructional guide and the long-term and short-term outcomes from my research project was presented as well. The third chapter also included several formative and summative assessments that will be used to assess the effectiveness of my instructional guide. The following chapter will provide a deliberation on my instructional guide. It will also answer the research question, pertaining to the integration of the four skills and how it supports differentiation to meet the needs of multi-level adult ESL students, through the conclusions reached, implications for teachers and students, and the different plans for using the guide.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions and Critical Reflection

Introduction

The main aim of this project was to provide an answer to the following research question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate-to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?* After revealing the need for differentiated instruction through open-ended activities in multi-level settings, I started to search for materials that are adequate for low-intermediate, intermediate and advanced-level students to use in different communicative and project-based learning activities. I adapted the different materials and designed multiple open-ended activities, with the integration of the four language skills, and some worksheets in my guide to meet the needs of low-intermediate to advanced-level students in adult general ESL writing classes.

Through Chapter Four, I first explain the major learnings as they reflect my different learning instances and the new connections made to the literature review through developing my instructional guide. Second, I revisit the main literature review studies to cover the foundational ideas that framed my project which introduce its multifaceted implications, at a later stage. Next, I specify the possible limitations and future research ideas for other researchers in the field. Then, I conclude this chapter by communicating future implementation plans of my instructional guide and the benefits of my project to other adult ESL teachers in the profession.

Major Learnings

As a researcher and a writer, I learned that several studies related to differentiation, open-ended activities, and skills integration were conducted with K-12 ESL students. However, very few studies focused on working with adult ESL students. Even though research was mainly administered with young learners, the ideas presented regarding the integration of skills, open-ended activities and differentiated instruction are applicable to multiple contexts. I also learned that developing the open-ended activities, differentiating instruction according to low-intermediate, intermediate and advanced-level adult ESL students requires patience even though I taught a multi-level adult ESL general writing class. I frequently had an inner debate on the adequacy of the open-ended activities and their accompanying materials to the different levels presented in my instructional guide. As a result, I learned to be patient with myself and to take a step back and learn further about the criteria or factors used in differentiated instruction, the nature of the activities and the teaching modalities used with different student levels.

As a learner, I also learned that task-based activities are communicative activities. However, communicative activities are not necessarily task-based activities. At first, it was an unexpected learning because research mainly focused on the activities instead of the distinction between communicative-based activities and task-based activities. After consulting with my capstone facilitator, I remembered the distinction between the two terms. Regarding the content of my instructional guide, I learned that some activities could cause trauma for students through my content expert's feedback. This learning was not unexpected. Nevertheless, her comment was something that I forgot to initially take

account of in the design of the open-ended activities. Furthermore, I learned that it is essential to use Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) differentiation principles as part of my theoretical frameworks since differentiating the various designed open-ended activities according to the different student levels (low-intermediate, intermediate and advanced) to promote equity is the focus of my instructional guide.

In the process of developing my instructional guide, I learned that having very long tables will render the handbook difficult for the reader to read and to grasp the information presented. I further acknowledged the necessity to develop signposts to guide the reader and reduce the time spent on searching for the part of interest. At first, I did not know what the term "signpost" meant in an instructional guide because they did not cross my attention in the previous handbooks that I consulted. From the first and second part of my major learnings, the first two main takeaways are related to some literature review points presented in the second chapter of my capstone project which I will revisit in the following section.

Revisiting the Literature

After finishing the design of my product and noting my major learnings, I revisit the relevant literature for developing my instructional guide. The first part of my instructional guide focuses on the integration of the four skills in open-ended activities. I found the research presented by Egan and Parrish (2019) pertaining to using oral activities with the integration of speaking, listening and reading as a bridge to the writing activities as most relevant to developing the first part of my instructional guide. The

different open-ended writing activities were also an inspiration to construct the open-ended writing activities that are included in my instructional guide.

Berninger and Abbot's (2010) study further presents the impact of reading, listening, speaking and writing on one another through their description of the different activities that the test-takers need to complete as part of their tests. Analyzing the connectedness between the activities helped me construct the scaffolding activities illustrated throughout the open-ended activities and the pre-task activities in the sample lessons. Regarding the second part of my instructional guide, Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) differentiating principles of content, process and product were helpful in presenting the differentiating criteria for the designed open-ended activities. They also stated that it is essential to design activities or tasks based on the needs, interests and learner profile of your target audience which I took into consideration in the development of the second major section of my guide.

Parrish (2019) also provided a number of activity examples along with the teaching modalities according to different levels. I used the different examples that Parrish (2019) presented as a guide to design my activities in accordance with the needs of adult ESL low-intermediate, intermediate and advanced-level students in the differentiation part of my instructional guide. She further presented different suggestions of alternative assessments which provided an inspiration in the types of formative and summative assessments included in the third major part of my instructional guide.

Another important part discussed in my literature review constitutes the Communicative Approach applied in the different open-ended activities which is based on student-to-student interaction and negotiation of meaning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The different activities that are based on the Communicative Approach are jigsaw tasks, role-plays (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010), discussions (Morita, 2000), journal writing (Ahmed, 2020), and summarizing activities (Chi, 2009). Other open-ended activities follow the project-based learning approach which are longer than tasks such as designing a photo album, writing a research report, designing a newspaper or a web-based project, conducting surveys and gathering data about a topic of interest, delivering presentations and producing a radio program (Petersen & Nassaji, 2016). Literature on communicative and project-based activities helped me categorize the different activities presented in my instructional guide. I also used the different general types of open-ended activities presented in the literature such as jigsaw activities, role-plays, discussions, journal writing, summarizing and project-based learning activities along mainly the second part of my instructional guide.

Research on multi-level classes (Clement, 2007) demonstrates the active role of low-intermediate to advanced-level students in their learning and evaluating the teaching strategies used by adult ESL instructors. The different level students could also practice the same activity with different roles according to their level (Parrish, 2019). On this basis, I took into account the centrality of the learner in education in developing the active, cooperative and independent teaching strategies which are included in my instructional guide.

In the construction of my instructional guide, I also designed open-ended activities that promote higher-order thinking which are based on Mezirow's (1990; 1991; 2000) different reflection notions such as critical reflection and its sub-types of content reflection, process reflection and rational discourse. Furthermore, the activities in my guide reflect Knowles' (1984) and Mezirow's (1990; 1991; 2000) adult learning principles of accommodating divergent level students' needs. Eyring's (2014) research on general ESL classes among the other types of ESL classes along with the lack of literature or studies on this area was an inspiration to design a guidebook for mainly adult ESL instructors and students in general ESL writing classes.

Through revisiting the literature review, I found that I made new connections between multi-level classes and differentiated instruction that were not explicitly mentioned in the studies presented in the literature review chapter. Learning about the different open-ended activities, effective integration of the four skills, differentiated instruction and multi-level classrooms made me consider not only the importance but the urgency of meeting individual student's needs in multi-level classrooms. I also became aware of the different theoretical teaching techniques used with different level students to apply them with concrete examples in my instructional guide and my future teaching practices. Revisiting the literature presents the relevant background and context for designing my instructional guide and in turn has different implications for students and teachers along with policy implications.

Implications

Implications for Students

One major implication for students constitutes their active participation in activities that meet their different needs and interests. Another important implication for students includes the necessity of choice in using different materials according to their levels to construct a product or to complete an open-ended activity. It is also necessary for students to work in groups and then independently if they choose because students need to interact with one another in a classroom setting. Through the different recommendations provided in my project, the students could access materials and collaborate with other students according to their different needs. Furthermore, problem solving activities that promote higher-order thinking are essential activities for different level students because real-life tasks require the ability to think critically.

Implications for teachers

One important implication for teachers is that the different recommendations presented in my instructional guide are mainly designed for adult ESL teachers in general ESL writing classes. However, other ESL teachers could also use the different teaching strategies and modalities and adapt them according to their student's levels. The different recommendations for activity design were also presented to facilitate the teachers' task in designing different activities that meet the needs of low-intermediate, intermediate and advanced-level students.

Another possible implication for teachers constitutes the teachers' ability to spend more time on connecting and building rapport with their students than on designing activities since my project already presents different activity examples. Furthermore, the examples presented in my instructional guide are adequate for different level students. In this respect, my project implicitly aims to help teachers build a friendlier atmosphere with their students.

Policy Implications

Several language institutes use the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) along with the Transition Integration Framework (TIF) standards for Adult Basic Education or adult ESL programs in teaching the four skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. However, the TESOL standards and English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, which are based on differentiated instruction principles, are not stated as a requirement for teachers to follow in adult ESL writing programs.

The sample lessons presented in my instructional guide illustrate a call for change to recommend the use of TESOL and ELP standards to enhance appropriate differentiation instruction among different teaching practices. Furthermore, Knowles' (1984) and Mezirow's (1990; 1991; 2000) adult learning theories along with Tomlinson and Imbeau's (2010) differentiation framework were the basis for developing the different activities presented in my guide. The frameworks were integrated to promote further critical reflection and activity differentiation among the activities' design process.

The different implications presented enables the reader to reflect on the limitations and future directions of this project that will be explored in the following section.

Limitations and Future Research

One possible limitation could include only showing 90 minute sample lessons in my instructional guide as I realized that I cannot apply all the possible teaching time blocks in the sample lessons that I included. Another possible limitation is that I designed my guide for low-intermediate to advanced-level classes instead of beginning to advanced-level adult ESL classes. However, the low-intermediate level students are relatively close to beginning level students in some of their English proficiency levels. As a result, the activities designed for low-intermediate level adult ESL students could be easily adapted to beginning level students with some minor modifications. On this basis, a recommendation could involve designing beginning-level activities in future guides.

For future projects, the five teaching sessions, as presented in Chapter Three, could be implemented in a future action research after presenting my instructional guide to different adult ESL teachers in general ESL writing classes. Another recommendation for future research consists of designing pre-tests and post-tests to test the students' writing performances before and after utilizing the different integration techniques, activities, and the active, cooperative and independent teaching strategies. I would also love to view future projects that deal with differentiating fully fledged task-based activities.

In addition, future projects could also test the impact of the skills developed by

students through the open-ended activities presented in my capstone project on enhancing their autonomous learning level and further develop other independent-based learning materials if needed. Furthermore, future research could include developing separate instructional guides for reading, listening and speaking since adult ESL instructors are assigned to teach separate skill classes in several American language institutes, despite the fact that they need to be integrated through instruction. Therefore, they could involve essential teaching or learning techniques specific to those particular guides that I might have missed.

Through this section, I explained the possible limitations of my project and future research ideas. The following section will reflect on how the instructional guide will be used in the future and the benefits of the guide for the adult ESL teaching profession.

Communicating Results and Benefits for the Profession

My instructional guide will be ready for use by February 2022. First of all, using the instructional guide, I will organize professional development sessions in the language institute where I taught and other nearby language organizations about the different activities and differentiation, teaching strategies and the integration of different skills in activity design. I will also allow for three feedback sessions between the four professional development sessions. Then, the adult ESL general writing classes' teachers will implement the different integration techniques, the chosen activities that they view as beneficial for their students along with different selected teaching and learning strategies through five sessions according to their given schedule.

Afterwards, the teachers will evaluate the students' performances after they use the integration techniques, the different open-ended activities and a selection of strategies presented in my instructional guide as part of an action research project. The evaluation of performance is in comparison with the students' writing performances before using the open-ended activities along with the different integration techniques and strategies presented in my instructional guide. The adult ESL teachers will also receive feedback from their students concerning the adequacy of the open-ended activities and the different strategies applied in meeting their needs as students.

My capstone project provides an explicit description and explanation of how to differentiate different open-ended activities based on the students' levels. I hope that presenting example differentiation techniques regarding the teaching modalities and strategies applied in different communicative-based and project-based activities will also benefit adult ESL teachers who are new to differentiated instruction. I further hope that these examples will also help other ESL teachers who are familiar with differentiated instruction but need further illustration of how to effectively apply differentiation in activities. Furthermore, I believe that presenting concrete examples of how different level students could use distinct materials and approaches to complete the same activities will benefit adult ESL teachers in general writing classes and in other ESL classes in using open-ended activities to support differentiation.

My project further includes examples to integrate two language skills, three language skills and four language skills in open-ended activities. It is my hope that revealing detailed examples of how integrating a variety of language skills in the design

of different activities will benefit adult ESL teachers in their future teaching practices to meet their students' multiple needs in practicing the language skills. The different instances of integration will also benefit adult ESL teachers and other ESL teachers in increasing their awareness regarding the necessity to integrate various language skills in lessons as they are more interesting for students.

Conclusion

Developing my instructional guide helped me answer the research question: *How can open-ended activities that integrate the four language skills support differentiation in multi-level (low-intermediate to advanced-level) adult general ESL writing classes?* This chapter provided a critical reflection of the major learnings obtained as a researcher, writer and a learner regarding mainly differentiated instruction and the design of open-ended activities. It also revealed the connectedness of my project to the main studies presented in the literature review chapter, the project's implications, possible limitations, suggestions for future research, future plans and its benefits to the profession.

I embarked on my research project with the frustration of how to meet the needs of multi-level adult ESL students in general writing classes. However, with research and communicating with experts in differentiated instruction, I was able to design activities and include different integration techniques along with diverse teaching and learning strategies in my instructional guide. I hope that adult ESL teachers would use this guide while dealing with multi-level adult ESL students as the handbook provides answers about how to accommodate multi-level students' different needs with concrete examples.

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Appendix A

The preface of my instructional guide:

Integration type: reading, speaking, listening and writing

Subject: English

Level: low-intermediate to advanced adult ESL students

Stage 1-Desired results
<p>This instructional guide introduces various stages in practice such as the use of task-based (role-plays, jigsaw tasks, discussions, journaling, summarizing) and project-based activities to enhance the collaboration between low-intermediate students and advanced-level adult ESL students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The instructional guide presents different real-life topics such as volunteer work, emergency precautions, entertainment themes such as live parades, protecting the environment and homelessness through different activities that integrate listening (listening to an authentic text), speaking (role-play or a discussion about a topic/picture), reading (reading and authentic text) and writing (students will choose a topic and write about it (sentences, paragraphs or a whole essay according to their level)). -Students will use the open-ended activities (role-plays, jigsaw tasks, discussions, journaling and summarizing activities) to help them enhance their writing skills.
Stage 2- Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teachers use different forms of open-ended activities to accommodate multi-level students' level. -Students use their discussion ideas in writing -The writing tasks complement the other oral open-ended activities -Students collaborate with one another in jigsaw tasks and other open-ended activities in groups or in pairs. -Students noticing/learning will be assessed through a Google form survey regarding their use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation as well as the impact of discussion activities on writing, reading and listening, and determine the effectiveness of the activity to meet their needs. -The teachers' differentiated instruction will be assessed through summative rubrics by students.
Stage 3-Learning Plan
<p>Major learning activities involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Perform a role-play about volunteering in your community (the students could use different helping modalities)

- Learn about the different ways to preserve the environment through jigsaw reading/writing
- Write short stories and articles about how to help homeless people.
- Listen to a guest speaker (a philanthropist, a firefighter, a repairer, an immigrant story)
- Learn to write articles.
- Discuss the topics of philanthropy, global warming and study groups to practice presenting arguments in favor of and against.
- Reading more about topics of interest and summarizing the information.
- Discussion about what a real-life picture reveals
- Journaling activities about real life experiences
- Jigsaw reading of articles pertaining to philanthropy, global warming, etc.
- Writing a newspaper article about protecting the environment, as an example or other topics of interest

(The table template is adapted from Wiggins & McTighe (2011), p. 43)